



The Antinomies of Realism

Fredric Jameson

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The Antinomies of Realism is a history of the nineteenth-century realist novel and its legacy told without a glimmer of nostalgia for artistic achievements that the movement of history makes it impossible to recreate. The works of Zola, Tolstoy, Pérez Galdós, and George Eliot are in the most profound sense inimitable, yet continue to dominate the novel form to this day. Novels to emerge since struggle to reconcile the social conditions of their own creation with the history of this mode of writing: the so-called modernist novel is one attempted solution to this conflict, as is the ever-more impoverished variety of commercial narratives—what today's book reviewers dub “serious novels,” which are an attempt at the impossible endeavor to roll back the past.

Fredric Jameson examines the most influential theories of artistic and literary realism, approaching the subject himself in terms of the social and historical preconditions for realism's emergence. The realist novel combined an attention to the body and its states of feeling with a focus on the quest for individual realization within the confines of history.

In contemporary writing, other forms of representation—for which the term “postmodern” is too glib—have become visible: for example, in the historical fiction of Hilary Mantel or the stylistic plurality of David Mitchell's novels. Contemporary fiction is shown to be conducting startling experiments in the representation of new realities of a global social totality, modern technological warfare, and historical developments that, although they saturate every corner of our lives, only become apparent on rare occasions and by way of the strangest formal and artistic devices.

In a coda, Jameson explains how “realistic” narratives survived the end of classical realism. In effect, he provides an argument for the serious study of popular fiction and mass culture that transcends lazy journalism and the easy platitudes of recent cultural studies.

The Antinomies of Realism Details

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From Reader Review The Antinomies of Realism for online ebook

Jean says

I have a basic question about this book. Why are the antinomies *necessary*? Mightn't it be possible to think about realism without having to engage in Hegelian dialectical analysis?

Chris Tempel says

learnéd, frustrating, narrowminded, covering a lot of novelistic ground, academic chic, one hell of a sunday at barnes and noble

Alex says

Loved it, of course. Learned a lot about "Realism" and secondary scholarship on "Realism." Last chapter ends with analyses of *Inception* and *Cloud Atlas*... if you're still riveted.

Chapters on Zola, Tolstoy, Pérez Galdós, and Eliot. I already loved Z and E, didn't care much for T, and hadn't heard of PG. Now I've changed my mind about T and might go pick up some PG.

Humphrey says

Jameson makes a number of good claims here, but I can't help think most of them aren't that new. It seems that one major issue, though, is the exclusion of American realism (and the scholarship about it). This isn't to simply pooh-pooh a project for not being broader, which one can of course always do: American realism messes with expected recits in interesting ways that I think complicate Jameson's account.

Tom L says

by turns frustrating and illuminating, bathetic and sublime. dialectical in the way that only jameson can be. his latest instalment in the poetics of social forms.

Colin says

pretty boring really

May says

ok, so this book is not for everyone, but the chapter on the eight different conceits in war stories is just terrific. the eight are: 1) the existential experience of war; 2.) the collective experience of war; 3.) leaders, officers, and the institution of the army itself; 4.) technology; 5.) the enemy landscape; 6.) atrocities; 7.) attack on the homeland; 8.) foreign occupation.

Kristin Canfield says

I wanted more from this book than it was willing to give. That said, I now understand why so many people have recommended Jameson to me given my interest in the late 19th century, narrative theory, and genre. If you are interested in any of those things, this (or one of Jameson's many other books) might serve you well.

Humphrey says

Compelling at points, desperately in need of an editor.

Sergio Valverde says

This guy needs an editor. Pretentious, unbearable style. He may have interesting things to say re literary realism but he writes deplorably
