

THE REASONS FOR MISINTERPRETATION OF MINIMALISM AND THE REPRESENTATIONS IT TAKES IN RAYMOND CARVER'S AND AMY HEMPEL'S WORKS

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Introduction

- Minimalism is an open form of writing, which allows the writer to include or leave out as much information as they want.
- For that reason it is often misinterpreted
- It is difficult to find a generally accepted definition of minimalism
- Its simplistic structure creates freedom of perception
- The works of Raymond Carver and Amy Hempel are vivid examples of the minimalist tools at work

Research Questions

1. How do limitations placed by literary minimalism widen the reader's framework of perception of a text, while logically narrowing down the commonly used techniques of idea transfer?
2. Is it possible to define minimalism?
3. What techniques are used in works of famous minimalists Raymond Carver and Amy Hempel to engage the reader into the process of storytelling and comprehension of their texts?
4. How does each author adjust those common techniques to their own storytelling style, while preserving the minimalist nature of their writings?

Defining Minimalism: Views

- Minimalism develops and extends the tendency in short fiction towards reduction, omission and suggestion. (Greaney, 2010)
- Minimalist fiction is nearly always based on a pessimistic view of life, where all the normal goals or controls no longer obtain. (Clark, 2014)
- White Trash Fiction, Dirty Realism, Around-the-house-and-in-the-yard Fiction, Post-Alcoholic Blue-Collar Minimalist Hyperrealism. (Herzinger, 2014)

Roots of Minimalism

- Minimalism was established in 1950, however its roots trace back to the 19th century
- 1890's works of literary impressionism share similarities with minimalism
- Imagism is the main connecting point of the two styles
- In both styles thoughts and emotions are implied rather than told. (Clark, 2012)

Features of Minimalism

- Minimalism dictates almost no use of adjectives and adverbs
- It has three main features:
 1. Efficiency – a proper balance between thematic and linguistic gravity
 2. Implication – low level of intrusiveness and exposition, i.e. suggestive
 3. Allusion – functions to compensate for limited exposition

Efficiency, Implication, and Allusion in Carver's and Hempel's Stories


- *Carver's Cathedral*
 - Casual setting
 - Suggestive
 - Protagonists who are not able to think much
 - Actions speak for their characteristics
 - Everything reveals itself in a gradual manner
 - Allusion in symbolism
- *Hempel's In the Cemetery Where Al Johnson is Buried*
 - Stream-of-consciousness style of writing
 - The reader explores together with the narrator
 - Details come forward as the characters think, speak, or act
 - Allusion in the setting

Storytelling



- Minimalist authors make the stories easy to remember
- A story within the story: a casual conversation where one side is the teller the other side is the listener
- Incorporation of side opinion through the listener
- Avoiding intrusion

Authors about Being Classified as Minimalists



- Anne Beattie “none of us have ever known what that means”
- Raymond Carver considered minimalism to be a tag that generalized important nuances
- Amy Hempel was not directly addressed as a minimalist

Conclusion

- Minimalism does widen the scope of perception of the reader, by narrowing down the amount of overall given information
- Readers have the freedom to make their own adjustments to the storyline, using the space and opportunities for creative expression, hidden between the lines
- With the incorporation of efficiency, implication, and allusion, minimalist writers make their writings relatable
- Proper understanding of the style is required to meaningfully interpret minimalist texts