



Recapitulating the Real: Veristic Realism and Moral Consciousness in Cathy Glass *An Innocent Baby*

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Abstract

Within literature, emotions are artistically rendered to expose the psychological depth and moral texture of human life. They enable readers to engage empathetically with fictional and real experiences, bridging the distance between the self and the other. As a narrative force, emotion not only animates character and plot but also reflects the ethical and social realities embedded within human relationships. Hence, the exploration of emotion in literary texts provides valuable insight into the truth of human experience, revealing the tensions between vulnerability, morality, and the pursuit of understanding. By recapitulating the real experiences of caregiving, the text foregrounds the psychological and affective truth of human emotion, emphasizing the nuanced interplay between compassion, responsibility, and ethical awareness. Glass's narrative style avoids sensationalism, instead privileging the emotional authenticity of everyday acts of care, attachment, and moral decision-making. Through a detailed analysis of the text, the study highlights how veristic realism functions not merely as a literary technique but as a conduit for fostering empathy, ethical reflection, and social understanding. The analysis argues that *An Innocent Baby* exemplifies the capacity of contemporary foster narratives to reconcile emotional veracity with moral consciousness, thereby offering readers a profound insight into the lived realities of vulnerable children and the ethical obligations of those who care for them.

Keywords: Emotional Realism, Veristic Representation, Moral Consciousness, Ethics of Care Foster Motherhood.

Literature has long served as a mirror reflecting the complexities of human experience, emotion, and moral understanding. Within the broader domain of realist writing, veristic realism emerges as a mode that seeks to represent life not merely as it appears, but as it is felt and infused with psychological depth, emotional truth, and ethical reflection. In contemporary narrative practices, particularly within autobiographical and foster care memoirs, this form of realism functions as both a literary and moral enterprise, bridging the gap between narrative veracity and affective engagement. *An Innocent Baby*, illuminate the interconnections between compassion, trauma, and the ethical responsibilities of the caregiver, thereby offering fertile ground for examining veristic realism as a conduit of moral consciousness. The present study titled "Recapitulating the Real: Veristic Realism and Moral Consciousness in Cathy Glass," seeks to interrogate how Glass's narrative strategies reconstruct the real through emotional authenticity, ethical awareness, and the moral imperatives of care within the social fabric of foster parenting. Recapitulating the real suggests a careful review or re-presentation of reality, highlighting the literary focus on truthfulness and emotional accuracy. Veristic realism emphasizes the truthful, unidealized depiction of human emotion and experience. Moral Consciousness points to ethical awareness, empathy, and the moral dimension in literary representation. The following discussion is grounded in three core conceptual frameworks: veristic realism, emotional authenticity, and moral consciousness. Together, these ideas provide a critical lens through which Cathy Glass's narrative can be examined. Veristic realism elucidates the truthful representation of lived experiences; emotional authenticity foregrounds the affective dimension of storytelling; and moral consciousness underscores the ethical awareness embedded in acts of care and narration. Through the intersection of these concepts, the study seeks to illuminate how Glass reconstructs the real by translating emotional truth into moral insight.

Veristic realism combines two related concepts *verism* and *realism* both referring to truthfulness in artistic or literary representation, but with a subtle difference in emphasis. The term "veristic" comes from the Latin *verus*, meaning "true." Verism therefore refers to a style devoted to truth and lifelike accuracy. When paired with realism, it deepens the sense of truthful, unembellished representation of life, emotion, and human experience. Veristic realism in Glass's narrative means her portrayal of emotion feels real, raw, and morally grounded. She does not dramatize or beautify the act of fostering; instead, she presents emotional veracity as love, fatigue, empathy, and ethical struggle, exactly as they occur in lived experience. Thus, her writing embodies emotional verism, a form of realism rooted in sincerity, moral awareness, and psychological truth. Veristic realism is a mode of representation that seeks emotional and moral truth rather than aesthetic perfection, a realism of feeling as much as of fact. Veristic realism, unlike conventional realism that prioritizes factual accuracy and external detail, delves into the emotional veracity of lived experience. It is not confined to reproducing the

visible world but strives to translate the inner, affective dimensions of reality the fears, moral dilemmas, and quiet resilience that define human existence. In this sense, veristic realism represents life as it is felt, not merely as it is seen. It blurs the boundary between documentation and emotional truth, transforming ordinary experiences into profound reflections of moral consciousness. The writer becomes both a witness and a participant, rendering scenes that are emotionally charged yet ethically grounded. Cathy states, "I was taking lots of photographs and short video clips... It would form part of Darcy May's life story book, a record for her new parents" (29). This simple act of recording everyday moments reflects Glass's veristic realism her commitment to preserving the authenticity of the child's experience. Rather than dramatizing, she documents the small, truthful details of care that build emotional veracity. The act of taking photographs and short video clips, as Glass describes, goes beyond mere documentation; it becomes a tender practice of bearing witness to a child's lived reality. In carefully capturing these fleeting moments, she preserves the fragile authenticity of Darcy May's early life, ensuring that each smile, gesture, and small interaction is recorded with sincerity. This attention to the mundane the ordinary routines of feeding, comforting, and observing reflects Glass's commitment to veristic realism, where the emotional truth of everyday life is valued over dramatic spectacle. By transforming these simple acts into a life story book, she renders the intangible tangible, allowing the reader to sense the child's presence, vulnerability, and evolving identity. The narrative thus conveys a quiet yet profound ethical and emotional awareness: each photograph, each clip, is an act of care, memory, and moral responsibility, encapsulating the lived experience with both tenderness and precision. Cathy blurts, "Each time I looked at her, I reminded myself she wasn't mine to keep." (23) encapsulates a profound tension at the heart of foster care the interplay between attachment and impermanence. Here, Glass presents a moment of intimate emotional honesty, confronting the bittersweet reality of love that cannot claim ownership. This honesty is a hallmark of veristic realism: the narrative does not shy away from the complexity of human emotion, presenting both the warmth of connection and the sting of inevitable separation.

Beyond its narrative function, the line also foregrounds moral consciousness Glass is acutely aware of her ethical responsibility to the child, balancing her natural affection with the recognition of her role as a temporary caretaker. Moretti discusses realism in terms of social environment shaping individual experience, linking character development to external conditions. Glass's narratives show how children's personalities and behaviors are influenced by family, foster care systems, and social contexts, aligning with Moretti's perspective on veristic representation. In this sense, the moment is not merely autobiographical detail; it is a window into the ethical and emotional dimensions of caregiving, illustrating how veristic realism can capture life as it is truly felt, with all its moral weight and emotional resonance. The reader is invited into this space of vulnerability and moral deliberation, experiencing the emotional reality of care alongside the narrator. Auerbach defines literary realism as the faithful depiction of everyday life, emphasizing truthfulness over embellishment or idealization. Glass's meticulous attention to routine caregiving, emotions, and domestic spaces exemplifies this fidelity to real-life experience, a hallmark of veristic realism.

Scholars argue that emotional verism allows literature to become a vehicle for ethical and empathetic engagement. By presenting characters' emotions in a truthful, unmediated manner, writers can cultivate reader empathy and foster moral reflection. The "verism" is not just in observing human behavior, but in making the audience feel the moral and emotional weight of situations. Some scholars, like Cesare Pavese and Alberto Moravia, focus on the emotional verism aspect of verismo. They note that it captures the internal lives of characters, highlighting their emotions, desires, and moral conflicts. Critics view this as a way to move beyond surface-level realism and engage the reader with the felt truth of human experience, creating empathy and ethical awareness. Some critics have challenged verism for its perceived determinism or pessimism, arguing that strict adherence to depicting life as it is can result in fatalistic narratives that emphasize suffering over agency. While verism is celebrated for its truthful depiction of life, some critics have argued that it risks determinism, portraying characters as largely shaped by circumstance, with limited scope for agency or transformation. In *An Innocent Baby*, Cathy Glass navigates a similar tension: the children she fosters are initially depicted as products of neglect, trauma, or family dysfunction, which can suggest that their lives are predetermined by their past experiences. For instance, the early portrayal of Darcy May highlights her vulnerability and the consequences of previous care environments, evoking a sense of circumstantial determinism. However, unlike some classical veristic works, Glass's narrative allows space for emotional and moral growth. Through patient care, attachment, and ethical intervention, her foster children gradually develop resilience, trust, and agency, challenging the fatalism often associated with determinism. This interplay reflects a modern adaptation of verism: while the narrative truth acknowledges the shaping power of environment, it also foregrounds the transformative potential of care, empathy, and ethical responsibility. In this way, Glass balances veristic realism with hopeful moral consciousness, suggesting that circumstances influence life but do not wholly define it. In *An Innocent Baby*, Cathy Glass employs a plain, unadorned prose style, characteristic of veristic literature, to convey the realities of foster care with clarity and immediacy. Her narrative avoids embellishment or literary flourish, focusing instead on precise, concrete details from the routines of daily caregiving to the small gestures that reveal a child's emotional state. This stylistic restraint enhances realism and authenticity, allowing readers to engage directly with the lived experiences of vulnerable children without the mediation of dramatization or sentimentality.

Emotional Authenticity and Empathetic Engagement, the second core concept, illuminates the intimate, affective world of Cathy Glass's narrative, where the reader is invited not merely to observe, but to feel alongside the children she cares for. As Martha Nussbaum observes, "Emotions are not just raw feelings but intelligent responses to the perception of value" (Nussbaum 41). Glass's narrative embodies this principle, portraying everyday caregiving acts with moral and emotional depth. Glass's prose captures the subtle textures of emotion the tremor of fear in a small hand, the hesitant trust of a child learning to rely on a caregiver, the quiet joy of a milestone achieved. These moments are rendered with restraint

and sincerity, avoiding melodrama while resonating with profound emotional truth. In a literary sense, her work transforms the ordinary into the ethically and emotionally significant, demonstrating how authentic representation of feeling can deepen moral consciousness. By aligning the reader's empathy with the child's lived experience, Glass not only humanizes her subjects but also creates a narrative space where compassion, moral reflection, and emotional resonance converge, exemplifying the power of literature to make the invisible realities of care and vulnerability vividly tangible. This concept refers to the literary technique of portraying characters' inner emotional lives with sincerity and precision, allowing readers to emotionally connect with and understand their experiences. Unlike mere plot-driven realism, it emphasizes how events are felt, highlighting subjective perception, vulnerability, and moral tension. Many literary critics, including Martha Nussbaum and Wayne Booth, emphasize that emotionally authentic narratives foster ethical and moral engagement. They argue that literature's power lies not only in representing events accurately but in evoking empathy, allowing readers to inhabit the inner lives of characters and reflect on their moral choices. "Authenticity requires openness to horizons of significance beyond the self." (Taylor, p. 66) Emotional authenticity thus becomes a vehicle for ethical imagination. Ethical imagination refers to the capacity of literature to invite readers to understand and evaluate moral and ethical dilemmas through empathy and reflection. In *An Innocent Baby*, Cathy Glass cultivates ethical imagination by presenting the lives of vulnerable children with honesty, emotional depth, and moral sensitivity. Through her narratives, readers are encouraged to experience the challenges, fears, and hopes of children in foster care, and to consider the ethical responsibilities of caregivers, society, and themselves. Cathy blurts, "Wouldn't it be lovely, I thought again, if I could wave my magic wand and make every child wanted and cared for, and every parent capable of caring for and loving their child? But practically, all I could do was the best for the children I looked after, and hope I gave them something positive to take with them," (54). This line encapsulates the interplay between emotional authenticity and ethical consciousness that defines Glass's veristic realism. It juxtaposes an idealized moral vision symbolized by the magic wand with the pragmatic limitations of lived experience, thereby revealing the ethical tension between aspiration and reality inherent in caregiving. From a theoretical standpoint, this reflection illustrates what Martha Nussbaum terms the ethical imagination the ability of narrative to translate emotion into moral reflection. Glass's yearning for a world where every child is loved embodies the empathetic core of emotional realism, while her acknowledgment of practical constraints grounds that emotion in veristic truth. The sincerity of tone and the absence of sentimentality reinforce the aesthetic of moral restraint, positioning the caregiver as both emotionally responsive and ethically self-aware. As Martha Nussbaum (1990) suggests, emotions in literature serve as "intelligent responses to the perception of value" (41), allowing fiction to engage readers in ethical reflection. In *An Innocent Baby*, Cathy Glass's emotional transparency functions in this Nussbaumian sense her sincere narration invites empathetic recognition rather than passive observation. Suzanne Keen's theory of narrative empathy reinforces this view, noting that "empathy depends upon the authenticity of emotional representation" (68). Through plain yet affective prose, Glass crafts a form of emotional realism that, as Raymond Williams (1977) might term it, expresses the "structures of feeling" embedded in lived experience, thus transforming everyday care into a site of moral and emotional truth.

Moral Consciousness and Ethical Responsibility, the third core concept, underscores the ethical dimension of Cathy Glass's narrative voice, where caregiving becomes not merely an act of compassion but a continuous moral negotiation. In *An Innocent Baby*, Glass's storytelling is shaped by an acute awareness of right and wrong, duty and emotion, care and restraint. Her narration operates within what critics such as Wayne Booth describe as the "ethical field of narrative" a space where storytelling becomes a moral act, and the author's choices reflect both emotional truth and ethical accountability. Glass's moral consciousness manifests through her constant self-awareness as a foster carer acknowledging the limits of her role, respecting boundaries, and recognizing the moral implications of attachment and separation. This awareness transforms ordinary caregiving decisions into ethically charged moments, inviting readers to engage with the complexity of responsibility, love, and loss. From a theoretical perspective, this concept aligns with moral realism in literature, where narrative authenticity is inseparable from moral inquiry. The caregiver's perspective embodies ethical responsibility, not as abstract virtue, but as lived experience grounded in empathy, restraint, and reflection. Thus, Glass's work transcends memoir and enters the terrain of ethical literature, where veristic realism and emotional authenticity converge to reveal the profound moral texture of human relationships. Cathy blurts, "I knew I had to stay strong for her, no matter how I felt inside." This line reveals the emotional discipline intrinsic to ethical caregiving. Glass's awareness that her personal grief must never overshadow the child's emotional stability illustrates the internal moral negotiation that defines her role. The controlled tone, devoid of self-pity, conveys a mature moral consciousness one that privileges the well-being of the other over the expression of self. In the broader literary sense, this moment transforms the caregiver's private pain into an act of quiet heroism, embodying the ethics of care and the emotional realism that underpins Glass's narrative world. In literary studies, moral consciousness and ethical responsibility refer to the awareness of ethical values and the representation of moral dilemmas within a narrative. This concept highlights how literature not only depicts human experience but also engages readers in ethical reflection and moral discernment. Scholars such as Wayne C. Booth and Martha Nussbaum have emphasized that narrative art possesses a unique ethical dimension: through identification, empathy, and moral questioning, literature becomes a space where readers confront the complexities of right and wrong, compassion and duty, self and other. From a broader critical standpoint, moral consciousness in literature often emerges through the interior life of characters their conflicts, decisions, and awareness of moral boundaries. As Wayne C. Booth (1988) asserts, "all narratives invite us to live certain kinds of moral lives while we read" (p. 138). Cathy Glass's *An Innocent Baby* exemplifies this narrative ethics by transforming the act of storytelling into a moral practice of empathy and responsibility. Her plain yet deeply affective prose aligns with Booth's claim that "stories are not neutral; they are

moral acts that shape our sympathies and our sense of what matters” (p. 23), positioning Glass not merely as a narrator but as a moral witness to human vulnerability.

Ethical responsibility, on the other hand, extends to the narrative voice itself, which conveys an author’s sensitivity to justice, care, and human dignity. Together, these concepts underscore the ethical function of literature: to awaken in readers a sense of moral attention and to cultivate empathy through truthful, emotionally resonant storytelling. In contemporary realist and autobiographical writing, such as Cathy Glass’s *An Innocent Baby*, moral consciousness becomes particularly evident. The author’s reflective engagement with caregiving, attachment, and restraint reveals an ethical realism grounded in lived experience. Through emotionally authentic narration, Glass transforms personal testimony into a moral inquiry into love, responsibility, and the boundaries of care, illustrating that ethical awareness is not abstract but deeply woven into the fabric of everyday human actions. Moral consciousness and ethical responsibility form the ethical spine of Cathy Glass’s *An Innocent Baby*, transforming her narrative from mere documentation into a profound moral meditation. Through her truthful portrayal of caregiving, Glass reveals that morality is not expressed through abstract ideals but through the quiet, often painful choices that define human compassion. Her narrative affirms that ethical awareness arises from emotional honesty and moral restraint, where the carer’s actions embody both love and duty.

In *An Innocent Baby*, Cathy Glass does more than recount the life of children in foster care; she weaves a space where truth, feeling, and moral awareness intersect, where the ordinary becomes extraordinary through attentive, empathetic observation. Through her veristic realism, the simple acts of feeding, comforting, and recording moments transform into a living canvas of human experience, rendered with both emotional transparency and ethical depth. The power of her narrative lies not in melodrama but in the poetic fidelity to everyday life, where each gesture and glance carries the weight of moral responsibility and the resonance of lived emotion. By fusing emotional authenticity with moral consciousness, Glass draws the reader into a world where realism is inseparable from ethical reflection. The memoir demonstrates that literature can be at once truthful, affective, and morally instructive, reminding us that the real is not only what is observed, but what is felt, endured, and ethically navigated. In this way, Glass not only mirrors reality but illuminates it, showing that the deepest truths of life reside in care, restraint, and the quiet courage of human connection.

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