

SUMMARY

“Psychopathology in post – 1975 American Short Fiction: A Study of Selected Literary Works from the American Continent” is a reflective study focusing on the interpretation of psychological characteristics as seen in fiction. It can be seen as extending to human life in general due to the timeless truth of human interactions in society. There are lessons for humanity in fiction which should not be just dismissed as a product of fantasy. Fiction is closer to reality than many tend to believe. Like all literature it has the potential to save the human race itself if heeded.

The study is divided into four chapters, the first two dealing directly with the main corpus of the investigation, namely, short fiction. The first chapter, “Literary Evidence of Psychopathology”, shows the deviancy of human conduct implicit in the post – 1975 fiction of the Americas. Four works have been examined in detail. One work by Roberto Bolano, *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, is professedly a biography but is handled in the mood of fiction, and therefore it has been treated as short fiction. In the second chapter, “Themes of Psychic Aberration” the concept of deviancy is explained further and the major bulk of short fiction with which the study is concerned is examined in depth and detail. The works are the short stories of eleven North American writers and four long short works of Alice Munro, the Canadian woman writer. There are fifteen stories in all considered. In the third chapter the corpus extends to four works of long fiction from the upper and southern American Continent to reiterate the conclusions in the first two chapters. The fourth takes a sweeping view of psychological literature and the mandate of fiction in informing life. This is followed by a detailed list of works made use of in the course of the research.

The methodology evolved for the study was prior examination of modern works of psychological research before actually entering the domain of post - 1975 (and pre–1975 where necessary) literature. A few informative works on introductory psychology along with advanced books on clinical and abnormal psychology were looked up to. Also there were books on social psychology, family psychology and criminology that informed the direction of the research. It was impossible to acknowledge all the sources from which the psychological insights were derived, but they were there all along.

The conclusions derived from the study show a clear dichotomy as regards the works of the Upper Continent and Latin America. The North American and Canadian works reveal the tensions

inherent in a progressive society where material success is paramount. In the Canadian example, however, there is less aggressiveness. The Latin Americans are characterized by a fervor that over-exploits creativity, and very often it hovers about a place and its politics. The panacea to these deflections from normal conduct is seen in a better composure of the self and an introspective handling of the environment.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY

The study "Psychopathology in post – 1975 American short Fiction" aims at placing before society the benefits to be derived from an introspective reading of literature. In the post – 1975 period several changes have occurred on the world scene which will continue to impact the psychological patterns of international society for a long time to come. We call ourselves individuals residing in post modern society. This should lead us to examine the trends and prospective tendencies of the world we live in, paying due attention to the psychological content of our lives. The literature of the pivotal period should enrich our lives if we only care to take lessons from it. Literature can never really be detached from the period it was written in. In it we can find examples of lives similar to our own and of how crises were created, handled or how they can be possibly averted. The example of the Americas for being of strategic importance has been chosen to illustrate this point. The mind is its own place, as Milton said.

Society should first of all develop a will to treat fiction as a replica of life. Movies and books of the American Continent influence the dress patterns and social behavior of the Third World to a large extent as we see everyday. This should have a positive influence alongside, that of instilling discretion in the minds of the people to prevent sliding back into the morasses the advanced people made for themselves. Discretion and discrimination should be watchwords. Fiction should be utilized in such a way as to fashion advantage out of adversity.