



Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction

Laurie Vickroy

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In an exploration of how contemporary fiction narratives represent trauma?that response to events so overwhelmingly intense that normal responses become impaired?Laurie Vickroy engages a wealth of the twentieth century's most striking literature. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *Jazz*, Marguerite Duras's *The Lover*, Dorothy Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina*, Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother*, and Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story*, among others, are the source of Vickroy's study investigating the complex relationship between sociocultural influences and intimate personal relations portrayed in trauma fiction and how those portrayals direct this difficult material to readers.

Vickroy's study is unique in its use of trauma, postcolonial, and object relations theories to illuminate the cultural aspects of traumatic experience that shape relationships, identity formation, and the possibilities for symbolization. Vickroy argues that contemporary trauma narratives are indeed personalized responses to this century's emerging awareness of the catastrophic effects on the individual psyche of wars, poverty, colonization, and domestic abuse. She examines these texts as postcolonial attempts to rearticulate the lives and voices of marginalized people, to reject Western conceptions of the autonomous subject, and to recognize the complex negotiations of multicultural social relations.

Trauma is a compelling and evocative topic in the contemporary world and as reflected in its literature. In unraveling trauma's effects, the texts studied in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* reveal the intricacies of power and the relationship between society's demands and the individual's psychological well-being.

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