

ABSTRACT

Below, the Afro-American world of Ellison, the Indo-Trinidadian world of Naipaul and the Euro-Dominican situation of Rhys. An important feature of the thesis is the way in which these writers inform the confessional mode.

The Confessional Mode and Problems of Identity in Selected American and West Indian Literature

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This thesis attempts to show the operation of the confessional mode in the works of various writers who belong to different ethnic backgrounds, yet have been able to utilize this particular form to express a common predicament, namely, the problem of identity.

The thesis differentiates between confession and autobiography, as well as between the religious tradition of confession and the pattern of confession as it appears in twentieth century fiction, where the protagonist is generally an anti-hero, or a marginalized person facing some grave moral predicament, searching for a lost sense of self and ultimately arriving at catharsis. It is for this reason that Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground has been given prominence as the common ancestor of modern confessional fiction. It is also for this reason that I have chosen to explore the relation of each selected text to Dostoevsky's seminal work.

The technique employed is one which entails isolation of the confessional element in a number of texts chosen out of a wider body. Through the utilization of this technique it is possible to make constant comparisons between texts arising out of different societies, such as, the French existentialists, the American-Jewish world of

Bellow, the Afro-American world of Ellison, the Indo-Trinidadian world of Naipaul and the Euro-Dominican situation of Rhys. An important feature of this thesis is therefore, to observe how ethnicity informs the content and direction in which each novel moves.

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