



THE HUMAN FIGURE AS A MOTIF IN MODERN AMERICAN STORIES

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ABSTRACT

The human figure, with its myriad forms and expressions, has been a timeless motif in literature. In modern American stories, this motif serves as a powerful vehicle for exploring themes of identity, social dynamics, and the human condition. This article examines how contemporary American authors employ the human figure to convey complex narratives, reflecting societal changes and individual experiences in the 21st century.

KEYWORDS: Human figure, Modern American literature, Identity, Social dynamics, Cultural shifts, Personal struggles, Immigrant experiences, Racial discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

The depiction of the human figure in literature has evolved alongside societal transformations, mirroring the zeitgeist of each era. In modern American literature, the human figure is more than a mere character; it embodies the intricate interplay of personal and collective identities. This study explores the significance of the human figure as a motif in contemporary American stories, analyzing its role in highlighting social issues, personal struggles, and cultural shifts. In modern American stories, the human figure often symbolizes the quest for identity. Authors like Jhumpa Lahiri and Junot Díaz delve into the complexities of immigrant experiences, using their characters to navigate the tension between cultural heritage and assimilation. In Lahiri's *The Namesake*, the protagonist's struggle with his dual identity reflects the broader immigrant narrative in America. Similarly, Díaz's characters grapple with their Latino heritage while striving to find their place in American society.

Contemporary American literature frequently employs the human figure to critique social dynamics and inequalities. Toni Morrison's works, such as *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*, use characters to examine the legacies of slavery and racial discrimination. Morrison's portrayal of the human figure as both a victim and a survivor offers a poignant commentary on the enduring impact of systemic racism.

In addition to racial issues, gender dynamics are also explored through the human figure. Authors like Margaret Atwood and Roxane Gay address themes of feminism and patriarchy in their narratives. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* presents a dystopian society where women's bodies are controlled and commodified, while Gay's short stories in *Difficult Women* highlight the resilience and vulnerability of women in contemporary society.

Modern American stories often use the human figure to delve into existential themes and the human condition. David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* and Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* feature characters struggling with mental health, addiction, and the search for meaning in a fragmented world. These narratives underscore the isolation and disconnection that characterize modern life, using the human figure to evoke empathy and introspection.

The human figure as a motif in modern American stories also reflects cultural shifts and the evolving American landscape. In works like Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* and Tommy Orange's *There There*, characters embody the historical and contemporary experiences of African American and Native American communities, respectively. These stories highlight the resilience and adaptability of marginalized groups in the face of historical trauma and ongoing challenges.

CONCLUSION

The human figure remains a central motif in modern American stories, serving as a lens through which authors explore a wide array of themes, from identity and social dynamics to the human condition and cultural shifts. Through the nuanced portrayal of characters, contemporary American literature offers a profound reflection of society, encouraging readers to confront their own assumptions and engage with the diverse experiences of others. As American society continues to evolve, the human figure will undoubtedly remain a vital and dynamic motif in its literary tradition.

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