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The Role of Mental Health in Modern Literary Works

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the role of mental health in modern literary works has become increasingly prominent, reflecting the growing awareness and importance of psychological well-being in contemporary society. Literature has always been a mirror of human experience, and as mental health issues have gained recognition and attention, they have naturally found their way into the narratives of modern authors. This shift not only enriches the depth and authenticity of literary characters and plots but also plays a crucial role in societal discourse, challenging stigmas and fostering a deeper understanding of mental health. Modern literary works now often include a wide array of mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, PTSD, and schizophrenia. This diversity in representation is vital in breaking down the barriers of misunderstanding and stigma that have long surrounded mental health conditions. By portraying these issues with sensitivity and nuance, contemporary authors help readers to empathize with characters who struggle with mental health, thus promoting a more compassionate and informed view of these conditions (Green, 2017).

Character development in modern literature is significantly enhanced by the inclusion of mental health elements. Characters are often depicted with a complexity that highlights their psychological struggles and coping mechanisms, making them more relatable and human (Honeyman, 2017). This depth allows readers to engage with characters on a personal level, understanding their vulnerabilities and strengths. Mental health issues can serve as a critical component of a character's identity, influencing their actions, relationships, and growth throughout the narrative. Thematically, mental health is a powerful driver of modern plots and themes. Stories cantered on mental health journeys, whether focusing on recovery, the impact of mental illness on personal and professional relationships, or the societal challenges and stigmas associated with mental health, resonate deeply with readers. These narratives provide insight into the resilience of the human spirit and the complexities of identity and existence.

Furthermore, modern literary works often use mental health as a means of social and cultural commentary. They explore how societal pressures, cultural norms, and systemic issues contribute to mental health challenges, offering a critical examination of the environment in which these issues arise. This commentary not only raises awareness but also prompts reflection and dialogue about the broader societal changes needed to support mental well-being. For both writers and readers, literature serves as a therapeutic and cathartic medium. Authors may process their own experiences with mental health through their writing, while readers find solace and connection in characters who mirror their struggles. The growing emphasis on diversity in these portrayals also ensures that a wider range of experiences and perspectives are represented, highlighting the intersectionality of mental health with various aspects of identity. the role of mental health in modern literary works is multifaceted and essential. By addressing mental health issues, contemporary literature not only reflects the complexities of human experience but also contributes to the broader effort to normalize conversations about mental health and reduce stigma (**Plath. 1971**).

II. MENTAL HEALTH IN MODERN LITERARY

The role of mental health in modern literary works is both significant and multifaceted, reflecting the growing awareness and societal discourse surrounding psychological well-being. Following are several key aspects of how mental health is portrayed and its importance in contemporary literature:

Representation of Mental Health Issues: Modern literature increasingly addresses a wide range of mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, PTSD, and schizophrenia. This representation helps to destigmatize these conditions, offering readers a nuanced understanding of the struggles faced by individuals dealing with mental health challenges (Jamison,1995).

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Character Development: Authors often use mental health as a tool for deepening character development. Characters with mental health issues are portrayed with complexity, showing their vulnerabilities, strengths, and coping mechanisms. This approach allows readers to empathize with and relate to these characters on a more profound level **(Hornbacher, 2008).**

Plot and Themes: Mental health can be a central theme or a driving force behind the plot. Stories may revolve around a character's journey towards mental health recovery, the impact of mental illness on relationships and careers, or the societal challenges and stigmas associated with mental health. These narratives contribute to broader conversations about human resilience, identity, and the quest for meaning.

Social and Cultural Commentary: Modern literary works often use mental health as a lens to critique societal norms, cultural expectations, and systemic issues. For instance, novels may explore how societal pressures contribute to mental health problems or how marginalized groups face unique mental health challenges due to discrimination and inequality (Yanagihara, 2015).

Therapeutic and Cathartic Functions: For both writers and readers, literature can serve as a therapeutic outlet. Writing about mental health can be a way for authors to process their own experiences or to shed light on issues they are passionate about. For readers, encountering characters with similar struggles can be validating and comforting, providing a sense of connection and understanding.

Diversity and Inclusion: There is a growing emphasis on diversity in the portrayal of mental health in literature. Modern works are more likely to feature characters from diverse backgrounds, reflecting different cultural attitudes towards mental health and highlighting the intersectionality of mental health with race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status (Solomon, 2001).

III. NOTABLE REVIEWS

- "The Bell Jar" by Sylvia Plath: This semi-autobiographical novel offers a profound look at depression and the protagonist's struggle with mental illness.
- "Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine" by Gail Honeyman: These novel addresses loneliness, trauma, and social isolation, depicting the protagonist's journey towards healing.
- "Turtles All the Way Down" by John Green: Focuses on a teenager dealing with obsessive-compulsive disorder, providing insight into the inner workings of her mind.
- "A Little Life" by Hanya Yanagihara: Explores the long-term effects of trauma and abuse on the mental health of its characters.

VI. CONCLUSION

The integration of mental health themes in modern literary works is crucial in reflecting and shaping societal understanding of psychological well-being. By portraying diverse mental health issues with depth and sensitivity, contemporary literature fosters empathy, breaks down stigmas, and prompts critical social reflection. These narratives provide therapeutic value for both authors and readers, offering solace and a sense of connection. Ultimately, modern literature plays a vital role in normalizing mental health discussions, encouraging a more informed and compassionate society.

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