

Racial Attitudes in English-Canadian Fiction, 1905-1980

Terrence Craig

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Racial Attitudes in English-Canadian Fiction is a critical overview of the appearances and consequences of racism in English-Canadian fiction published between 1905 and 1980.

Based on an analysis of traditional expressions in literature of group solidarity and resentment, the study screens English-Canadian novels for fictional representations of such feelings. Beginning with the English-Canadian reaction to the mass influx of immigrants into Western Canada after World War One, it examines the fiction of novelists such as Ralph Connor and Nellie McClung. The author then suggests that the cumulative effect of a number of individual voices, such as Grove and Salverson, constituted a counter-reaction which has been made more positive by Laurence, Lysenko, Richler and Clarke. The "debate" between these two sides, carried on in fictional and non-fictional writing, is seen to be in part resolved in synthesis after World War Two, as attitudes are forced by wartime alliances and intellectual pressures into a qualified liberalism. The author shows how single novels by Graham, Bodsworth, and Callaghan demonstrated a new concern for the exposure and eradication of racial discrimination, an attitude taken further by the works of Wiebe and Klein.

The book concentrates on single texts that best portray deliberately or not, racist ideology or anti-racist arguments, and attempts to explain the arousal in Canada of such ideas.



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