

ABSTRACT

The Narrative Fiction of Quince Duncan: Towards the Development of An Afro-Costa Rican Literature

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This study focuses on the narrative fiction of the Afro-Costa Rican writer Quince Duncan. The critical analyses centre around three salient issues in his works - the ethno-racial dynamics between the latinos and the Afro-Costa Ricans of West Indian descent, the African heritage, and the perception and literary manipulation of gender and male/female relationships.

The study is divided into five sections - an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The Introduction establishes the contribution that this study will make to the existing critical analyses on Duncan's works and traces the evolution of Latin American narrative which focuses on black subjects, beginning with the nineteenth century anti-slavery novelists to contemporary Hispanic writers of African descent. The similar but diverse situations in which the writers produce their works and the consequent non-uniformity of their creative writing is underlined. Attention is also paid to the development of literary trends in Costa Rica with the objective of establishing Duncan's place in this literary panorama. Though not adopting a phenomenological approach, significant biographical information about the writer and the development of his literary career is provided.

Chapter one critically analyses the fictional representation of the ethnic and social relations between the latinos and Afro-Costa Ricans of West Indian descent and highlights the interrelatedness of issues of race, racism, general cultural heritage and national identity, in a context of ongoing cross-cultural interfacing. Chapter Two examines the depiction of African-derived cultural practices as a source of cultural maronage for the Afro-Costa Ricans, as well as the author's own attempts to employ some of these forms for communicating theme. Chapter Three explores the perception and literary manipulation of gender so as to determine whether or not the author is satisfying a feminist agenda by subverting patriarchal constructs of gender.

The analyses in all three chapters underline the similitudes between the Afro-Costa Rican and the wider Afro-Caribbean experience. They underscore, moreover, the extent to which Duncan's works are informed by historical experiences such as slavery and colonialism which are focal to the theoretical framework of Caribbean and African diasporan literature in general.

The conclusion reinforces the positions taken in the three chapters, underscores the extent to which the portrayal of the three thematic areas contribute to painting a picture of the multiple and complex experiences of the Afro-Costa Ricans and highlights aspects of African continuities among them. It is repeatedly suggested in the thesis that a sense of ambivalence characterizes the author's treatment of ethno-racial and cultural issues, so that while it is evident that he recognizes the dual cultural heritage of the Afro-Costa Ricans he is not committed to the concepts of mestizaje or plurality.