

ABSTRACT

Cultural Nationalism in Jamaican Poetry

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What is known, identified and celebrated today as Jamaican poetry and part of the distinctive body of Caribbean poetry is as a result of the convergence of a three dimensional set of forces at work even before the events of 1938 fuelled the Jamaican national consciousness. The search for a national identity and a national culture was inextricably linked with the political development of the country, that is, the movement towards political independence, at the same time as a Jamaican literary tradition was becoming recognizable. Throughout the cultural and political history of Jamaica before and after Independence, her poets gave expression to the socio-economic and other challenges and issues, which in turn contributed to the growing body of national literature and the establishment of a national culture. The poetic works of Francis Williams, Claude McKay, Una Marson, George Campbell and Louise Bennett illustrate this three dimensional framework very clearly. The extent to which the language, content and form of their Jamaican poetry shaped the development and identity of the national culture, in other words, contributed to our cultural nationalism and the extent to which that contribution was reciprocated become the burden of this thesis.

Keywords: Carlton Randolph Franklyn Lowrie; cultural decolonization; national consciousness; national culture; nation language; negritude; hybridity; interdependence of cultural terrains.