

A B S T R A C T

MASK, MASQUERADE AND THE FEMALE IN FOUR TRINIDADIAN NOVELS

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Trinidadian novelists have employed the ideas of masking and masquerading and they have established a unique relationship between the female and the masquerade.

The masquerading tradition in Trinidad developed from the West Indian plantation experience and this has resulted in Carnival which writers have used in discussing questions of class and cultural conflict in the Trinidadian society. The West Indian historical experience therefore, figures importantly in Trinidadian fiction.

Cultural fragmentation and conflict have long been West Indian phenomena. Plantation slavery and colonialism have resulted in sustained attack upon the values, myths and symbols of the colonized man, but the Trinidadian folk have exercised their ability for satire, irony and humour in an attempt to deal with their existence.

The masquerade furnishes a form and instruments which Trinidadian novelists utilize in establishing their social critique. Other novelists have either alluded to the masquerade or used it figuratively in discussing social attitudes.

In Earl Lovelace's The Dragon Can't Dance, characters defy their "destiny" and transcend the limits of the masquerade to recognize a new sense of self. Samuel Selvon establishes the Trinidadian female in relation to the masquerade and critiques the West Indian's exaltation of colonialism.

Marion Jones and Merle Hodge in Pan Beat and Crick Crack Monkey respectively, explore class antagonism and alienation. In a presentation of two central characters, Earline and Cynthia, both writers recognize that an individual should define a personal relationship with the world even while there is a need to celebrate the folk culture.