ABSTRACT

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.