



Place, Language, and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature

Dorothy E. Mosby

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In *Place, Language, and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature*, Dorothy E. Mosby investigates contemporary black writing from Costa Rica and argues that it reveals the story of a people formed by multiple migrations and cultural transformations. Afro-Costa Rican writers from different historical periods express their relation to place, language, and identity as a “process,” a transformation partly due to sociohistorical circumstances and partly in reaction against the national myths of whiteness in the dominant Hispanic culture. Black writers in Costa Rica have used creative writing as a means to express this change in self-identity—as West Indians, as Costa Ricans, as “Latinos,” and as a contentious union of all these cultural identifications—as well as to combat myths and extrinsic definitions of their culture.

Mosby examines the transformation of identity in works by black writers in Costa Rica of Afro-West Indian descent as particular national identities find common ground in the expression of an Afro-Costa Rican identity. These writers include Alderman Johnson Roden, Dolores Joseph, Eulalia Bernard, Quince Duncan, Shirley Campbell, and Delia McDonald, all of whose works are analyzed for their use of language and their reflections on place and exile. Their works are also read as articulations of generational shifts in the assertion of cultural and national identity. Mosby convincingly argues that Afro-Costa Rican literature emerged out of the African-derived oral traditions of Anglo-West Indian literature. She then goes on to show how second-generation writers included this literary tradition in their work, while fourth-generation poets refer to it only through occasional allusions.

With the current growth of interest in Afro-Hispanic and Afro-Latin American cultural and literary studies, this book will be essential for courses in Latin American and Caribbean literature, comparative studies, Diaspora studies, history, cultural studies, and the literature of migration.

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