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Black Literature and Humanism in Latin America

Richard L. Jackson

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In *Black Literature and Humanism in Latin America*, Richard L. Jackson explores literary Americanism through writings of black Hispanic authors such as Carlos Guillermo Wilson, Quince Duncan, and Nelson Estupiñán Bass that in many ways provide a microcosm for the larger literature. Jackson traces the roots of Afro-Hispanic literature from the early twentieth-century Afrocriollo movement--the Harlem Renaissance of Latin America--to the fiction and criticism of black Latin Americans today. Black humanism arose from Afro-Hispanics' self-discovery of their own humanity and the realization that over the years they had become not only defenders of threatened cultures but also symbolic guardians of humanity. This humanist tradition had enabled writers such as Manuel Zapata Olivella to write of a Latin America "from below" the slave-ship deck and "from inside" the mind of Africa.

Though many writers have adopted black literary models in their quest for a "poetry of sources, of fundamental human values," Jackson demonstrates that literature about blacks by blacks themselves is clearly separate from, yet instrumental to, these other works. Relating the vision of Latin American blacks not only to other Latin American writers but also to North American literary critics such as Eugene Goodheart and John Gardner, Jackson stresses the universal power of resisting oppression and injustice through the language of humanism.

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