

ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to examine, across a corpus of six texts, the characteristics of the peasant novel in relation to two of its primary tenets - realism and optimism. However, no Caribbean literature can be considered entirely without reference to contemporaneous trends in metropolitan writing, given the cultural influence of Europe in the region. The paper therefore includes a brief survey of French social realism and Soviet socialist realism as literary doctrines influenced by ideas from outside literature. This also supplies an ideological frame within which the peasant novel can be evaluated.

The textual study is also preceded by an assessment of the representation of popular characters in Antillean and Haitian writing before the peasant novel and against which peasant literature was a conscious revolt. This will aid in determining the extent to which the aims of the latter were achieved.

The following texts were chosen on the basis of their being broadly representative of the genre in geographical, chronological and technical terms:

La Rue Cases Nègres

Diab'la - Joseph Zobel

Gouverneurs de la Rosée - Jacques Roumain

Compère Général Soleil -- Jacques Stephen Alexis

La Lézarde - Édouard Glissant

X Pluie et Vent sur Telumée Miracle - Simone Schwarz-Bart