



African Religious Influences on Three Black Women Novelists: The Aesthetics of Vodun, Zora Neale Hurston, Simone Schwartz-bart, and Paule Marshall

Maria T. Smith

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This study, focusing on select novels by women writers of the African Diaspora, illustrates that a surprising degree of commonality exists among works with obvious geographical, cultural, and linguistic differences an affirmation of the philosophical essence of the Vodun religion as an antidote to Western spiritual and cultural moribundity. A close reading Zora Neale Hurston s "Their Eyes Were Watching God", Simone Schwarz-Bart s "Pluie et Vent sur Telum??e Miracle", and Paule Marshall s "Praisesong for the Widow", demonstrates the way in which these works allude to the Vodun pantheon and ancestor veneration in order to valorize a worldview that recognizes the interconnectedness of all living things, visible and invisible. This is accomplished by locating each novel within its socio-political context and developing African diasporic literary tradition wherein African-derived beliefs have become sources of cultural resistance. After this reconstruction, the author is able to explicate the representation and function of Vodun as it is employed by each of the authors under consideration.

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