THE HAITIAN PEASANT AS DEPICTED IN
CONTEMPORARY HAITIAN NOVELS
1931-1939

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In 1940-1941, the writer visited Haiti and became acquainted with some of its more recent literature. As a result of a special interest in modern authors and their works, five outstanding novels published in the 1931-1939 period were chosen as suitable material for this thesis. All of these novels present various phases of peasant life. This is a new trend in Haitian fiction for during the nineteenth century, writers were concerned, for the most part, with the elite. Since no other study, to the writer's knowledge, has been made on the subject of the Haitian peasant novel, it is hoped that this one will inspire others to delve deeper into the field.

The Negro republic is preeminently an agricultural country, and the peasant is the backbone of the Haitian people. For that reason, the first chapter traces the background of the peasant, his educational opportunities, and his final possession of the land. A brief sketch of the development of Haitian literature is also given. Chapter II discusses the novels in general, with special emphasis on style, plot, and characters. Inasmuch as the four authors, like all Haitian writers, are totally unknown in this country, short biographies are included. Physical aspects of peasant life occupy the center of interest in Chapter III. Appearance, dress, home, food, and economic conditions are treated under this heading. Chapter IV discusses the novelists' presentation of social phases of peasant life: births, funerals, marriages, religions, superstitions, celebrations and feasts. Chapter V is a summary of the most important findings of the study.

First editions of all primary sources have been used, with the exception of Himola, by Antoine Innocent; only the second edition of this novel was
available.

The writer wishes to express her deep appreciation to Dr. Price-Mars, M. Dantès Bellegarde, and M. Pétion Savain, for their cooperation in furnishing necessary information for this dissertation, and to Dr. Mercer Cook for his sympathetic and patient direction in its preparation.
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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE HAITIAN PEASANT

Haiti, the first European establishment in America, was founded in 1492 by Christopher Columbus when he landed at the bay of Saint Nicolas, situated in the northern part of the country. Columbus changed the name of the island from Haiti to Hispaniola and succeeded in winning the friendship of its inhabitants, the Arawak Indians. The first recorded sign of antagonism between the Spaniards and Indians occurred after Columbus' departure from Hispaniola to Spain. The invaders mistreated the Indians, who in turn took revenge by burning the enemy fort, the Nativité.

Nicolas Ovando, Columbus' successor to Hispaniola, conquered the entire isle and enslaved the Indians. Sympathizing with the unfortunate condition of the Indians, Father Las Casas, a Dominican monk who had accompanied Columbus on his second voyage to the island, obtained the consent of the Spanish court in 1517, that Negroes from Guinea (West Africa) be shipped to Hispaniola. Thus, this year marked the beginning of the slave trade from Africa to Haiti.

The successful penetration of the French into Hispaniola ended seventy years of Spanish rule and English invasions. Having taken partial possession of the country, the French changed the name of Hispaniola to Saint Domingue.¹ Under the administration of Bertrand d'Ogeron, first governor officially recognized by the King of France in 1665, villages and plantations flourished. The increased African slave importation and the fertility of the soil provided an easy prosperity for the French colonists.

¹ The treaty of Ryswick in 1697 gave France the western third of the island.

² Dantès Bellegarde, La Nation haitienne (Paris, 1938), p. 54.
There were three distinct classes of inhabitants during this period: whites, freedmen and blacks. Because of the color of their skin the whites considered themselves superior to the other two classes. There were even shades of distinction in this group, which caused bitter quarrels and jealousies in matters pertaining to the colony and laws issued from France, the home government. The freedmen, free mulattoes and blacks, constantly fought for equal political, social and economic recognition with the whites.\textsuperscript{1} The unfortunate blacks were victims of the inhumane treatment imposed by the masters who took advantage of the slave institution. "The prosperity of Saint Domingue was founded on slave labour. Therefore slavery was the basis of both economic and social life of the colony."\textsuperscript{2}

The revolt in Saint Domingue may be attributed to no one cause, but such factors as contention between the colonial and national assemblies, reforms demanded by wealthy proprietors of Saint Domingue, the appeals of the mulattoes for political liberty, and the fight for the abolition of slavery by the Société des Amis des Noirs, were important in starting the long struggle for independence.

On January 1, 1804, the slaves and freedmen of Saint Domingue proclaimed their independence and called the isle Haiti, the original name given by the Arawak Indians. The years following the new freedom were especially difficult in land organization.

The economic organization created by Dessalines provided the roots for the peasantry which was soon to develop as a characteristic form of Haitian life. Among these fundamental conditions were the existence of

\textsuperscript{1} J. H. Léger, \textit{Haiti, son histoire et ses détracteurs} (New York, 1907), p. 36.

agriculture as a prevalent occupation, the immobility of all workers on the land, and a thorough schooling of the people in patient acceptance. 1

The land policy of Christophe was the same as that of Dessalines, that is, the lower class of people were serfs to the soil. Both rulers were interested in acquiring land for the state, then leasing it in large blocks to the higher classes.

Christophe’s land policy in the north did not affect that of Pétion, who was ruling capably in the south. 2 The latter ruler believed that the happiness of his people depended upon equality in economic distribution. Mr. Leyburn quotes two reasons for this change in land policy by Pétion.

The reasons he gave were first, that the people had ably defended their country and so deserved a reward; second, that he wanted all people to have a vital interest in the soil itself. 3

Pétion’s early land acts were designed to please his aristocratic mulatto friends, but by a law of 1809 “he began to give away state lands: fifteen acres of cultivable soil to every soldier in the army, to be held in perpetuity with proportionately larger grants to higher officers.” 4 In spite of the opposition to this law by the higher classes, Pétion persisted in executing his democratic ideas.

Able generals were given large tracts, partly as wages, partly as a stimulus to productive agriculture on their part. By another enactment, military invalids were rewarded with land. Eventually most of

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1 James Leyburn, The Haitian People (New Haven, 1941), p. 35.
Reign of Dessalines, 1804–1806.

2 Because of political controversy, two rulers were elected after the death of Dessalines. Christophe (1807–1820) became the ruler of the northern part of the country while Pétion (1807–1818) ruled the southern portion.

3 James Leyburn, op. cit., p. 53.

4 Ibid., p. 56.
the public domain was either put on sale at such a moderate price that thousands of humble Haitians "squatted" far into the hills, out of official view.\textsuperscript{1}

Thanks to the liberality of Fétion the Haitian workers became peasant land-owners and were no longer serfs bound to the soil.

In direct contrast with the sudden acquisition of land by the peasant, the development of education in Haiti was a gradual process. Leaders of the early periods of history had concentrated their attention on the economic and political organization of the country. Under Dessalines no effort was made to educate the laboring class; those who had knowledge and culture preserved them for themselves.\textsuperscript{2} Christophe improved the situation a little.

He established a few schools inviting as schoolmasters certain Englishmen familiar with the then popular methods of the Lancastrian System; but since the cultivators were busy on the plantations, only the children of the aristocrats benefited by the limited educational system and the social distinction between classes was increased.\textsuperscript{3}

Fétion established a Lycée for the higher class of people but showed a decided indifference towards the education of the masses.\textsuperscript{4}

President Geffrard (1858-1867) and his minister of public instruction, Elie Dubois, were the real promoters of public education.

Prior to Geffrard and Elie Dubois the peasants had received little attention from the government in spite of the fact that they were about the only group that paid taxes and in spite of the frequently expressed

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{4} Félix Courtois, "Fétion et l’école primaire", \textit{Le Soir} (February 21, 1942), p. 3.
regrets of the various ministers of public instruction.\(^1\)
Schools were established to promote the education of this underprivileged class.
In 1859 were counted 59 rural schools, while in 1860 the number increased to 90.\(^2\) The failure to give adequate educational facilities to the peasants is the principal cause of the large percentage of illiteracy in the country.\(^3\)
Prior to the American intervention in 1915 the number of rural schools had reduced from 505 in 1895 to 250 in 1913; the decrease was partly due to the lack of appropriations and housing facilities. By the American Occupation the number of rural schools was brought up to 489 in 1921. As Mr. Logan states:

The demand for rural education, moreover, is increasing; in some places as many as 200 students attend one school. Many of these schools are housed in small huts or sometimes not housed at all; frequently the peasants have had to offer their homes. Rural private schools and rural "presbyterian" schools in a slight degree remedy this lack.\(^4\)

Today, the problem of peasant education is a serious one in Haiti. Many difficulties arise in trying to find a solution to the situation. Mr. Leyburn criticizes the curriculum, one of the main problems:

Assuming that schools were available, as well as trained teachers willing to speak the folk language, the next problem would be the curriculum. The whole tradition of elite education is literary, not practical. Teachers trained in this tradition might teach Racine and Montaigne, but not soil conservation and new methods of planting.\(^5\)

\(^1\) Rayford Logan, "Education in Haiti", *Journal of Negro History*, XV (July, 1930), 423.


It is to be hoped that more definite steps will be taken towards the education of the masses. In the light of this educational background it will not be surprising to find that the actions and psychological reasoning of the peasant are in keeping with the state of ignorance to which he has been reduced.

The early periods of struggle for independence and organization gave inspiration for literary works to many writers, especially historians and sociologists. Such writers as Thomas Madiou, Beaubrun-Ardouin, Saint-Rémy, Émile Nau and Beauvais Lespinasse made valuable contributions to the history of Haitian society. As literature began to develop, French works exerted a great influence on the Haitian writers. In a short analysis of Haitian literature.

1 Thomas Madiou was born in Port-au-Prince, April 30, 1814. At an early age he went to France for his education and remained in the country until 1835. Afterwards, he returned to Port-au-Prince and received employment in the offices of the Secretary-General, Inginac. Soon Madiou decided to write a history of Haiti, giving documents on the past history of his country. Although he was interrupted many times in his efforts by military politics, he succeeded in giving a work to the public which related the history of Haiti from its origin until 1844. Madiou died May 25, 1844.

Beaupou Ardouin was born in Petit-Trou de Nippes, April 30, 1796. His career started as an employee in the Government Press in 1815; by hard work he finally attained the position of Senator. After having published a Geography of Haiti in 1842, he began a serious study of historical events of his country. Having the opportunity to visit Santo Domingo, he found many valuable documents and later on continued his research in Paris, while holding the position of Minister from Haiti to France. His Études sur l'histoire d'Haiti is more of a critical work on Madiou's L'Histoire d'Haiti than a historical analysis of events. Ardouin died August 30, 1885.

Saint-Rémy was born at Cayes in 1815 and during his youth had a Frenchman for his master, who gave him a good education at the Lycee de Versailles in France. Saint-Rémy took part in the political struggle of his country under the reign of President Boyer. He went to Paris and started his research on the historical origins of Haiti and became interested in the heroic figure Toussaint Louverture. In 1850 was published La Vie de Toussaint Louverture; in 1851 - Les Mémoires, giving the history of Haiti; in 1853 - Les Mémoires de Toussaint Louverture.

Émile Nau (1812-1860) edited in 1855, Histoire des Casiques. He gives a literary exposition on the life and struggles of the Indians who bravely defended their country against invaders.

Beauvais Lespinasse (1811-1863) was the author of the Histoire des Afranchis de Saint Domingue.
Mr. Bellegarde has written:

Que dans l'expression de leurs sentiments et de leurs pensées, les écrivains haïtiens aient subi l'influence de leurs modèles français en sacrifiant bien souvent à des modes littéraires passagères, rien de plus naturel. ¹

It has not been until recent times that the Haitian writers have started looking to their own surroundings for sources of inspiration and have found worthy material. Dr. Price-Mars has stated in his work, Ainsi Parla l'Oncle:

Heureusement qu'une réaction tardive ramena nos écrivains, poètes et prosateurs à puiser la matière de leurs œuvres dans le milieu où ils vivent et cette nouvelle conception d'art nous a valu, dans ces trente dernières années, une floraison d'œuvres intéressantes au point de vue haïtien.

Il n'y aurait qu'à glaner parmi les ouvrages de Georges Sylvain, Frédéric Marcelin, Fernand Hibbert, Justin Lhérisson, Massillon Coicou, Burr-Reynaud, Rey, Carolus, et tant d'autres que nous pourrions citer si nous faisions un tableau de la littérature haïtienne. pour démontrer le souci de plus en plus évident de nos écrivains de chercher autour d'eux des sources d'inspiration, des traits de mœurs, des études de caractère et de faits sociaux qui sont très propres à notre façon d'aimer, de haïr, de croire, à notre façon de vivre enfin.²

This new reaction on the part of the Haitian writers has been a means of conveying to others various aspects on a class of people that heretofore has been neglected. A better knowledge and understanding of the life and struggles of the Haitian peasant will be acquired only through the interest and sincerity of literary works.

¹ Dantès Bellegarde, "Haiti, Centre de culture française en Amérique" (Port-au-Prince, 1941), p. 16.

CHAPTER II

THE NOVELS IN GENERAL

The five works to be considered in this study are among the most important novels which appeared between the years 1931-1939: La Montagne ensorcelée by Jacques Roumain (1931); Le Drame de la Terre (1933) and La Vengeance de la Terre (1933) by Jean B. Cineas; Mimola by Antoine Innocent (1935); and La Case de Damballah by Pétion Savain. Chosen because they present various aspects of Haitian peasant life, these novels have been written by authors familiar with the customs and problems of this class of people.

The first author, Jacques Roumain, the youngest of the group, is now in his thirties. During the American Occupation he was active in Haitian politics. Because of his disagreements with the Vincent government, he went to Paris where he studied ethnology at the Musée de l'Homme. On his return to Port-au-Prince, he was invited by President Lescot to direct the Museum of Ethnology. He has just founded the "Section haitienne du centre de hautes études", an organization already established in New York under the direction of M. Henri Pocillon, professor at the Collège de France. Roumain was one of the directors of the Revue Indigène, which sought a national literature based on Haitian folklore. His La Montagne ensorcelée conforms with the esthetic program of this group.

In contrast to the foreign studying by Jacques Roumain, the second author, Jean Cineas concentrated his activities in Haiti. Jean Baptiste Cineas, author of two books in this study, was born at Limbe July 5, 1895. Most of his education was received at Notre Dame College in Haiti, and after having received his B.A. and B.S. degrees he studied law. Having entered the teaching profession, Cineas became assistant inspector of schools at Cap Haitien. In
1930 he was elected deputy of Limbe and at the end of his term in 1932 became active as a lawyer. During this period he started his literary career by publishing novels, short stories, and critical articles in the newspapers. In 1941, he was elected Bâtonnier de l'ordre des Avocats of Cap Haitien and on February 12, 1942, President Lescoat named him judge of the Supreme Court.

His childhood surroundings have provided the thoughts which later dominate his works. "Une enfance inquiète, assaillie de malheurs publics et privés, une adolescence enfîvrée d'ambitions et alourdie de misères, telles furent les ébauches de sa connaissance de la vie."1 Fortunately Cineas, never influenced by material considerations, has remained an incorruptible writer. Because of his own life and observations it is not surprising to find Cineas pleading the cause of the oppressed.

Est-il donc surprenant que ses productions littéraires scrient d'abord autant de vibrant protestations contre les oppressions de classe, les injustices sociales et la trahison des renégats? Est-il surprenant qu'il ait d'abord exalté les valeurs permanentes et éternelles— la Terre? qu'il ait glorifié celui dont les mains galeuses pétrissent la glèbe pour tirer l'oeuvre de vie— le Paysan?2

Cineas is a writer who paints social evils but he strongly believes in the future of his country and his people.

The oldest of the authors is Antoine Innocent, born in Port-au-Prince, April 21, 1874. He received his education at the Lycee National; his talent as a student of diction won the esteem of Jules Roll, professor of arts, and of Lacoste, professor of diction.

Innocent made his debut on the stage in Molière's play Georges Dandin. His reputation was established in the comedy, L'Intérieur d'un Bureau, given

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1 Personal material sent to the writer by Dr. Price-Mars.

2 Ibid.
by Camille Bruno, director of the Lyoeé, especially for the President of the Republic, Florvil Hyppolite. During his fourteen years as a teacher in the Lyoéé, Innocent continued his dramatic career, crowning his success in such plays as Toussaint, Noirs et Jaunes, and Fort de Joux. Of Innocent's talent Dr. Price-Mars has said:

Quand je pense que l'auteur de Mmola moisit dans l'obsoue fonction de secrétaire-rédacteur du Sénat, je déplore plus amèrement les conditions matérielles et morales qui nous ont empêchés jusqu'ici d'avoir un théâtre national, où cet acteur à la voix ardente, au jeu puissant, aussi admirable dans le drame que dans la comédie, aurait pu monter au plus haut sommet de son art et stimuler par son talent la verve inemployée de nos dramaturges.¹

Innocent participated in many literary activities. He was one of the founders of the club, "Les Emulateurs" and collaborated in the Revue, La Ronde, a pleas of young writers who caused a literary renaissance in Haiti. As a result of the performance of Noirs et Jaunes, Innocent's excellent diction won him a position in the Department of Interior. Later he was reinstated as teacher in the Lyoéé.

At the request of Justin Lhérisson, he began to publish Mmola in Le Soir. This novel appeared in pamphlet form in 1906. A second edition of the same work is dated 1935.

An attempt to present L'Empereur at Cayes was the cause of a temporary exile for the writer, at the end of which he became director of the Haitian Theater. In recompense for his long services in Parliament, in 1938 he was presented the diploma of "Chevalier dans l'Ordre Honneur et Mérite", bestowed by President Vincent. At Present Antoine Innocent is a member of the Haitian Senate.

Concerning his knowledge of the peasant, Mr. Bellegarde has written:

¹ Ibid.
"Il connaît à merveille les moeurs de la population urbaine ouvrière et par
consequent les croyances et traditions de la masse populaire."¹

The last of the writers is Pétion Savain, born at Port-au-Prince, February
15, 1906. Having received first honors in his early school training, he en-
tered law school where he maintained the same high record until he graduated
in 1931. For thirteen years he was student of art at Damien and at l'École
Professionnelle. During his leisure time he devoted himself to painting, which
was later to become his major interest.

For many years he travelled across the plains and mountains of his native
country, studying and painting nature and people, hoping that some day he would
be able to reproduce his notes and impressions on canvas. The result of his
experiences was the writing of La Case de Damballah. By chance he showed his
notes to a friend who encouraged him to write a novel on the picturesque life
of the peasant. His work was received enthusiastically by the older generation,
but those of his own generation made no comments.

Savain has said:

Je fus à la vérité déçu de n'avoir jamais reçu un mot bon ou mau-
vais des camarades intellectuels de mon âge. Ce nouveau venu dans un
champ qu'ils avaient négligé de cultiver ne semblait pas leur plaire
et j'il me semblait entendre en sourdine cette sentence qui a toujours
pesé sur la tête des peintres qui ont un jour déposé la palette pour
la plume, depuis Michel-Ange jusqu'à Promentin: "Il peint si bien,
pourquoi donc se hasarde-t-il à écrire."²

Wishing to broaden his horizon Savain came to New York in 1940 and for a
year and a half has been studying art at the Student's Art League under Jean
Charlot and Stephan Hirsch. Although he has published one novel and hopes to

¹ Personal letter from Dantes Bellegarde to Dr. Mercer Cook, March 20, 1942.
² Personal letter from Pétion Savain to the writer, April 25, 1942.
publish two others later, Savaïn considers himself more of a painter than a writer. He says:

La Case de Damballah, mon premier roman, est sorti tout bonnement un jour de ma peinture. Je l'ai écrit ou plutôt peint—puisque je suis avant tout un peintre—par un besoin d'extériorisation, devant l'impuissante de mon art pictural encore jeune à ce moment. J'avais un message à apporter: celui de la beauté et de la misère de cette terre d'âiti avec ses paysans bons, laborieux, simples, heureux dans leurs misères et qui sont des jouets entre les mains de ces forces occultes vénérées depuis la lointaine Afrique et assimilées aux croyances du Catholicisme roman.

It is to be noted that all of these authors are highly intelligent and cultured men, talented in other fields besides writing. At present, none is earning his living by the literary profession probably because of the meager encouragement given by the Haitian reading public and because the Haitian novelist has no appreciable foreign public.

The first of the novels, Innocent's Môm, is in reality a bridge linking the old and new traditions in Haitian literature. Although its characters are predominantly middle class, the customs of the peasant occupy the center of interest. Môm is the grand-daughter of Aunt Rosalie, who was born in Dahomey, and transported to Saint Domingue during the slave trade. Under the bed in her room there is a mysterious box which she keeps tightly closed. Just before her death she instructs her daughter to throw the box into the sea. Mme Georges fulfills her mother's wishes but has misfortune two years later when she loses her husband and all of her children except one, Môm. Unhappy in boarding school and the victim of nervous fits, Môm causes her mother considerable worry. Because of a dream that Môm has had, Mme Georges consults a friend who explains that the household gods were in the box and have been displeased in some way; therefore certain sacrifices will have to be made:

1 Ibid.
the baptism of the gods, a feast in order to appease the ghosts of the angered ancestors, a pilgrimage to Saut d'Eau where the Miraculous Virgin descends, and the funeral feast. While on the trip to Saut d'eau Mme Georges becomes the intimate friend of Mme Dajobert whose son suffers from an unknown malady. Leon Dajobert is accompanied by his childhood friend Albert Deltan. Mme Georges accomplishes all of her duties. Both mothers die from the worry and care of their children. Limola becomes a priestess of Voodoo, while Leon goes crazy.

Jacques Roumain's La Montagne en Sorcée, the first novel named in this study, relates the hardships the peasants have undergone in the cultivation of the land, sickness and death. The people must place the blame on someone, therefore Placinette is considered a sorceress and judged guilty. Although a peasant herself, Placinette never associated with her neighbors; her ideas never conformed with those of her own people. Aurel, in love with Grace, daughter of Placinette, tries to explain to Dornéval (whose son has just died), Dorilas and Baptiste that Placinette is not the source of their misfortunes. Balletroy, chief of the district, turns Placinette of her bad reputation among the peasants, who plan a conspiracy against her. Balletroy, posing as a friend, betrays Placinette. She is killed and a few minutes later her daughter also. Aurel arrives with the authorities too late to prevent the tragedy.

The same simplicity in plot prevails in Le Drame de la Terre by Jean B. Cineas. Fré Dubré, chief of a section, celebrates at his home the "coumbite",1 which results in the mysterious death of Viejo, one of the guests. Ti-Komme, nephew of the deceased, goes to Napou-Laloi, "houngan"2 of the section and

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1 The coumbite is a gathering of neighbors at another neighbor's house to help him cultivate the land. The neighbor who receives assistance provides his friends with food and drink and is obliged to return the same service when called upon.

2 Priest of voodoo or witch doctor.
also a great rival of Frè Dubré, to find the guilty party. Mapou-Laloi gives him the impression that Frè Dubré is responsible for the death of his uncle. Mapou-Laloi takes advantage of the situation by talking in favor of his son as a good husband for Florida, daughter of Ti-Nomme. Just before the marriage Florida decides to elope with Dubréard, son of Frè Dubré. The young people laugh over the trick they have played.

Mapou-Laloi is furious and persuades Ti-Nomme to be an accomplice in the murder of Frè Dubré. The treacherous crime is committed and the two killers are caught. While in prison Mapou-Laloi commits suicide; his death is blamed on Ti-Nomme who sees that he has been the dupe of Mapou-Laloi through the entire situation. The jury sentences Ti-Nomme to twenty years in prison. Thinking the decision unjust the people burn Mapou-Laloi's house and consider themselves free from a terrible spirit.

Cinéas' second novel, La Vengeance de la Terre, is less dramatic than his first. Ulysse Turin, a peasant, fights desperately to save his land from Calvin Myrthil, a representative of the middle class. André Flosel, a lawyer, is a good friend of Turin and does all in his power to prove that Myrthil has no legal claim on the land. Turin, impatient with lawful means of solving problems, decides to take matters in his own hands. He goes to the "houn gan" and asks that a spell be brought against Calvin Myrthil and his family. Myrthil, after having suffered from many tragedies, pleads with Flosel for his safety; he asks that Flosel talk with Turin. In return he promises to withdraw any claims that he has made on Turin's lands. The spell is withdrawn and Turin's land is saved.

Compared with the rather calm and non-dramatic action of this last novel, La Case de Damballah by Péton Savain is a gripping and exciting story. Céline, a hard working peasant, gives birth to the child of Rebel while on her way to
market. The young father and mother decide to go to the mountains to establish a home and cultivate a piece of land. After a long and rather eventful journey they arrive at the house of Sor Na and Exigé, mother and foster father of Céline. While Céline is being welcomed by her family, Rebel goes to his own people and is greeted by his mother, Sor Na, his uncle Altidor, and a peculiar friend of the family, Mésius. Both families help in the construction of the house and the cultivation of the land for Céline and Rebel. There are celebrations and feasts but this safety does not last long because the heavy rains come and destroy the crops.

The second half of the story describes voodoo, the main god being Damballah. Tantine, guardian of the temple, is proud of her duties and only she is the possessor of the mysteries of this sacred dwelling place. Rebel becomes discouraged with the conditions of the land caused by the rain and leaves home secretly in order to seek his fortune in town. Days later Exigé announces that he has found Rebel sick in the hospital but has succeeded in slipping him away from the terrible place. To add to their worries Tantine tells the families that the precious snake has been stolen from the temple of Damballah. The rains continue and the peasants become more discouraged. Rebel dies and at the funeral Mésius murmurs something incoherent which makes the others believe that there is a mystery surrounding the temple of Damballah. An investigation results in the finding of jewels and other precious pieces which recall periods of Haitian history. Nothing is touched, but the group discovers that Mésius has disappeared.

After these events the peasants find that strangers are trying to take away the land or make them prove that they are the owners of the property. A bloody battle ensues between the two groups; Mésius returns in the midst of
this excitement and gives a detailed description of what has happened. The
temple of Damballah has been completely destroyed. The peasants win the battle
and peace is restored. They decide to erect another temple to Damballah; dur-
ing the ceremony Basius executes a frenzied dance, at the end of which he pro-
duces the precious snake of the original temple. There is much rejoicing among
the peasants.

It is obvious that there are certain qualities which are common to all of
these novels. The intrigue is relatively simple and can be easily comprehended.
**La Case de Damballah** is more complicated than the others but this is due to the
fact that part of the book is given over to superstitious practices, a subject
which has many angles within itself. There is a reasonable explanation for the
general simplicity in plot which prevails throughout the novels. None of the
writers seem to be interested in the development of events which lead to an
exciting or gripping climax. The action is based on what the author wishes to
point out about the peasant. In **La Vengeance de la Terre** by Cinéas there is
the question of the peasant's rightful ownership of the land; in **La Case de
Damballah** superstition is the center of interest; **La Montagne ensorcelée** by
Jacques Roumain shows the disastrous results of ignorance; **Mimola** by Antoine
Innocent makes the reader conscious of Haitian folklore; the forces of Ignorance
and crime are again important in Cinéas' **Le Drame de la Terre**, but the action
in this novel is more logical and more complete than in the others.

In the plots there is always some force which challenges the peasant's
retention of his land: human force or physical force. With the exception of
**Mimola** the peasant is depicted as the proud possessor of a certain amount of
land which he cultivates energetically. But isn't there always an enemy agent
to disturb his peaceful living and to show that any group of people is confronted
with some type of problem? Nature sends rain to flood the land, 1 jealous rivalry leads to crime, 2 strangers try to claim peasant property, 3 the gods must be appeased 4 — all these problems dominate the life and actions of the peasant. In Mimola it is simply a case of putting faith in old folklore practices in order to bring about the desired results in saving the life of the heroine. Mimola deals primarily with middle class people but is valuable in this study because of certain peasant ceremonies which are vividly described.

The picture of the peasant is practically the same in all the novels. One finds that he is simple, hard working, united in fighting for his land, and having absolute faith in his gods. Ulysse Turin is determined to get rid of his rival Calvin Myrthil by lawful or unlawful means; 5 Dorilas must accuse someone for his misfortunes; 6 Ti-Nomme places all his faith in the "hougan", Napou-Lalo; 7 Tantine fears that there will be misfortune among her people unless the previous snake is replaced in the temple of Damballah. 8 In each

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1 La Case de Damballah and La Montagne ensoorcelée.

2 Le Drame de la Terre.

3 La Vengeance de la Terre.

4 Mimola and La Case de Damballah.

5 La Vengeance de la Terre.

6 La Montagne ensoorcelée.

7 Le Drame de la Terre.

8 La Case de Damballah.
case the peasant is confronted with a problem but seeks the help of his friends and gods in trying to solve it.

The minor treatment of love in the life of the peasant is to be noted in all of the novels. In *La Vengeance de la Terre* (Cinéas) love does not even enter into the story, in fact there are no women characters to give a feminine touch to the novel. "The heroine is the land itself around which the author develops his main center of action." In *Le Drame de la Terre* (Cinéas) love plays such a minor role that the reader forgets entirely that it ever existed in the novel. The romance between Florida and Dubréard is used only as a means to evoke the hatred between Lapol-Laloï and Fré Dubré. *Kimola* (Innocent) does not depict any blooming romance between two young people but it expresses definitely maternal love. All that Mrs. Georges does is in the interest of her daughter Kimola, whose life is in danger. Maternal and paternal love are exemplified in Innocent's *La Montagne ensorcelée*. The grief of a mother on the death of her son is described simply in a few words:

La mère dort affaissée sur une chaise; les larmes ont tracé des sillons huileux sur son visage.

No less striking is the father's grief:

Ils vont chez Dorneval car Dorneval est un homme de bien, un homme qui respecte son prochain, un bon chrétien qui est dans le malheur, qui a perdu son enfant, son premier garçon qui n'avait pas même trois ans.

This scene is intended to give an insight on peasant funerals; it is also a small event which leads to the climax. The romance of Aurel and Grâce is

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2 *La Montagne ensorcelée*, p. 34.

Indeed sincere but cannot occupy too much space in the short novel because the author must show the growing psychology in the minds of the other characters. It is to be noticed that women have a small role in the story, in fact Placinettes is an important female character. On the other hand no one character is more outstanding than the other because the chain of events involves mass action. In the first half of La Case de Damballah (Savam) the romance and final marriage of Céline and Rebel is important for the establishment of a home and the cultivation of the land. Once again the impression is that love is subordinated to the problem of the land and its fertilization. In the second half of the book the reader loses sight of Rebel's love for Céline or vice versa. More women are mentioned in this novel than in any of the others but no one woman may be considered the heroine of the story. However, it must not be taken for granted that the authors do not consider love important in peasant life; their main purpose in writing limits them to certain facts which exclude the elements of love or reduce it to a degree of minor importance.

In contrast to the similarities that have been found in the novels certain differences in style are to be noted. Probably the simplest and most direct style is in La Montagne ensorcelée. There are no unnecessary passages which retard the progression of the action and the reader easily follows the development of events. The description is clear cut, precise and realistic. The simplicity of the following passage fits into the daily life of a hard working peasant.

Aujourd'hui les hommes sont rentrés des champs pour le râsa du soir. Dans chaque cabane les femmes s'affairent autour des chaudrons. Seuls les enfants crient au dehors en jouant dans la poussière. Le fatigue écrase l'esprit autant que le corps. Et la main qui se porte au front moite de sueur est pesante de tout le rude labeur quotidien sous le soleil tropical.¹

¹Ibid., pp. 16-17.
In this passage the sentences are short, the words paint a simple but realistic picture and the reader is enlightened on the general atmosphere of the surroundings. Sometimes the passages are full of action like the following one. The author describes the flight of Placinette from her enraged murderers.

Mais quand elle se remit à fuir, la poursuite recommença. Elle percevait derrière elle leurs respiration haletantes, leurs grognements de chiens en chasse. Déjà ses yeux grands ouverts ne voyaient plus qu’une multitude d’éclairs, d’étoiles d’éblouissements. Elle trébucha, oscilla une seconde, tomba. Une vague hurlante déferla sur elle, les bâtons s’abattirent, elle n’eut pas une plainte mais ses os craquèrent sous les coups comme du bois sec. Ils ne cessèrent de frapper que quand elle ne fut plus qu’un petit sac mou de boue sanglante.

Although horrible and unbelievable, the passage is striking in its element of suspense and progression of action.

In direct contrast with the free, easy style of Roumain are the two novels of Cínés, Le Drame de la Terre and La Vengeance de la Terre, both of which are more complicated than Innocent’s La Montagne ensorcelée. The style of Le Drame de la Terre is highly descriptive but sometimes the long descriptive passages retard the action of the story. At the beginning of the book there is a beautiful discussion of the rain, part of which is cited here.

La Pluie! Esprit suprême et suprême pensée! La pluie? C’est la Vie. La pluie? C’est le salut. La pluie? C’est l’ingénieur habile qui corrige la routine, fait les champs verdoyants et fructueux. La pluie? C’est le dieu bienfaisant, miséricordieux qui chasse la misère, gratifie d’une bonne récolte, réassouit l’espérance dans les coeurs les plus désabusés... Et la pluie avait feu, devant la persécution insensée de ce soleil de feu dont on ne sait s’il faut l’admirer ou le maudire.

Without a doubt this is an excellent analysis of the powers of the rain but such description continues for pages, finally lapsing into an analysis of the country itself. Such lengthy passages become tiresome and rather monotonous,

1 Ibid., p. 107.
2 Le Drame de la Terre, p. 2.
but it must be said that they blend into the atmosphere of the story and are found mostly at the beginning of the novel. Sometimes long descriptions are given of the characters themselves in order to throw a light on the various personalities. However, such passages become less frequent as the action progresses; it is with the development of events that real interest is aroused. The action on a whole is continuous and reaches a definite climax, the murder of Frê Dubré. Even after the climax the element of suspense is prevalent when Mapou-Laloï kills himself in prison; the trial is interesting and in anxious anticipation one awaits the verdict of the jury. At the end, in the speech of André Flosel, the author brings out certain points in regard to the peasant.

It may be said that frequent interruptions in the action are for the purpose of enlightening the reader on various customs and practices of the peasant.

It is with more difficulty that one reads La Vengeance de la Terre because of the many historical dissertations that it contains. The author is over-anxious to justify the peasant's ownership of the land, therefore the action of the story is constantly delayed and interest is lost in the development of events. The story itself is weak and is subordinated to the discussions given by André Flosel. In place of the long descriptions found in Le Drame de la Terre there are many pages devoted to history itself. If the reader is seeking a purely fictional story, he is disappointed; on the other hand if one is interested in the economical and historical side of the Haitian peasant, La Vengeance de la Terre fulfills his desire in every respect.

The style of Mimola is highly descriptive but once again one finds that the descriptions are sometimes too long. In certain sections of the book however, the descriptions add to the general atmosphere of the story. As preparations are being made for Saut d'Eau one can almost feel the heat of the
Midi, un soleil de plomb pesait sur la nature engourdie. Une cha-
leur adoublante oppressait les poitrines avides d’air pur et frais...
Chaque maison, chaque individu était un foyer d’où rayonnait la chaleur.
Pas un souffle dans l’air. Les arbres, immobiles, repliaient leurs
branches alanguies. Le mer, sombre et calme sur le rivage, bouillonnait
dans le lointain, semblable à du métal en fusion, sous les rayons ardents
du soleil.
La montagne, comme un colosse harassé, s’assoupissait dans la rigide
immobilité d’une somnolente végétation. Ici, sous une galerie, au milieu
de ses enfants, demi-nus, une mère, en bras de chemise, s’étend, la figure
ruisselante de sueur. Là, dans un balcon, un Monsieur qui fait la sieste,
laisse tomber de ses mains un journal où le volume qu’il vient d’entamer.
Dans la rue passe un chien qui halète la langue hors de la bouche. Ià-
bas, attaché sous un arbre, l’âne endormi devant l’herbe rêve debout les
yeux fermés.1

Highly colorful and realistic, the passage shows the power of the author in
handling the description of the background of his story. The plot of the novel
is weak and the reader becomes interested in the description of the local cus-
toms of the peasant. Throughout the entire novel one can see that the main
purpose of the author is to bring into view Haitian folk-lore, therefore the
intrigue is subordinated to this idea.

The same criticism may be made of Savain’s La Case de Damballah, in which
there are too many diversions for the reader to understand clearly the con-
nection between the first half of the book and the second half. At the begin-
ning the story is simple, the action is continuous and realistic and one
follows with interest the activities of Céline and Rebel. But as the events
progress, more characters are introduced, unnecessary descriptions become more
frequent and the action becomes confused and muddled. However, the ceremonies
are entertaining and the simplicity with which the author depicts the Haitian
peasant gives the book a certain merit.

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Nicolai, pp. 56-57.
The dialogue in the novels is quite simple, the topics of conversation being those which concern the life of the peasant. The natural manner in which the peasant speaks adds realism to the story. Sometimes his thoughts are conveyed in creole, and other times in passable French. This language change varies in the novel according to the author. It would be exceedingly difficult for a foreigner with no knowledge of creole to understand a Haitian novel if all the dialogue were in the peasant dialect, therefore the authors have intermingled the two languages, sometimes giving translations when creole is used. On her death bed Aunt Rosalie speaks in her native tongue to her daughter Julie.

DJoulie, piti mo, m’a pé mouri. Si lan Guinoun pâte loin, moé te va le chimin mo. Min ça criol pas connin gran passé criol. Pren courage, tende piti mo.

(Julie, ma petite, je vais mourir. Je retournerais au pays de Guinée s’il n’était pas très éloigné. Mais il existe des secrets que le créole ne peut pas pénétrer. Prends courage entendis-tu, ma petite.)

Is not this type of speech more natural to the old African than the use of pure French? At least the language conforms to the background of the character. It is not easy to understand the creole in Le Drame de la Terre (Cinéas) because no translations are given, an omission which detracts from the interest of the story. The same criticism may be made of Mimola (Innocent) and La Case de Damballah (Savain) but such negligences occur on an exceedingly small scale.

Ulysse Turin has subdued his anger long enough against Calvin Myrthil, therefore his outburst of fury is a natural result of preceding events.

Maître, tonné crassé’m. Tonné fendé morally. Si la justice ne me donne pas raison, grâce à Dieu, il y a le "juge de paix morne." Le Juge de paix-morne lui, est juste.

(Que je sois écrasée par le tonnerre. Que la poudre me pulvérise.)

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1 Ibid., p. 7.

2 La Vengeance de la Terre, p. 105.
Turin has had the advantage of coming in contact with a higher class of people, but he has not discarded his creole for French nor his beliefs for those of cultured circles; his education has not attained this level. In contrast to his anger in the above passage, Turin shows another side of his character in the following conversation with André Flosel.

Si, je l'aime Maitre. Je la vénère comme ma vieille maman et je l'aime comme...comme ma madame. La Terre, c'est tout notre vie, à nous paysans. Que valons-nous, que pouvons-nous sans elle? La Terre? C'est nos deux yeux, notre cœur, notre âme. ¹

This passion for the land explains the understandably bitter hatred of Turin for Calvin Myrthil.

The dialogue in La Vengeance de la Terre is sometimes too long and uninteresting with its historical discussions but a difference may be noted in La Case de Damballah. The conversations are frequently interspersed with riddles by Mésius.

-Crie, reprenait Mésius.
-Crac.
-D'où l'eau debout?
-Cannes. ²

Not only are these riddles found in La Case de Damballah but also in La Montagne ensorcelée. They seem to be a pleasant form of recreation for the peasants, a particular delight for those who ask the riddles.

Désilus se glisse de leur côté. Il est aimé d'eux à cause de ses contes et de ses devinettes. Déjà la marmaille se bouscule du coude, car pour écouter des histoires il faut se mettre à l'aise; le menton dans le creux de la main, la bouche large ouverte et les yeux aussi attentifs que les oreilles.
-Crie?
-Crac.
-Mouin là, quimé m'? (Je suis là. Attrape-moi?)
-L'ombre. (L'ombre.) ³

¹ La Vengeance de la Terre, p. 156.
² La Case de Damballah, p. 95.
³ La Montagne ensorcelée, p. 21.
Most of the characters depicted in the novels belong to the peasant class, but a few are members of the bourgeoisie. It is only in the novel *Mimola* that the characters who dominate the story belong to the middle class of society; other exceptions may be found in Cineas' characters André Flosel and Pierre Deslys. The authors have succeeded in giving to the characters a certain simplicity which is typical of their kind. The psychological reasoning of the peasant is in accordance with his social and educational background. Who can persuade Dornéval that Flacinette is not the cause of the sickness of the small boy Pierrelien? As he knows nothing of medical science, he blames a so-called sorceress in his simple ignorance. Ballotroy offers a reasonable explanation which is not convincing to the skeptical Dornéval.

*Nous n'avez jamais entendu parler de fièvre intestinale? Les enfants mangent n'importe quoi, des mangoes pleins de vers, de la viande qui n'est plus bonne, voilà tout.*

Ballotroy shows that he has had a little education, at least enough to know why children become sick sometimes. But it is interesting to note the peasant's attitude towards hospitals; Exié explains in the following passage where he succeeded in finding Rebol:

*Compère Rebol était à l'hôpital. À l'hôpital, compère, quel malheur! L'hôpital avec toutes ses drogues, ses poisons et les docteurs de la ville qui ne savent soigner que les maladies naturelles. Le pauvre nègre y entre mais jamais il n'en sort. L'hôpital! Bon Dieu, on y meurt mal.*

Why should the peasant have faith and confidence in the hospitals if he has not been educated to the level of understanding modern treatment for sicknesses? Is he justified in assuming this attitude of fear and uncertainty? In his


discussions of the health problem in Haiti Mr. Leyburn states the value of clinics after the American Occupation.

From 1804 to 1860, then, there was practically no proper care for sick people. In the latter years of the century, a few trained physicians, with sadly deficient equipment, practiced in the town. Not until after the Occupation was the rural mass of the population even touched by the medical knowledge which had been developing all over the civilized world for decades. Clinics, wholesale vaccinations and inoculations and campaigns of enlightenment have in the past twenty years worked wonders. The Vodun practitioner however, still is the "expert" who treats most of the illnesses, and healing remains one of his major functions.1

There is no basis for the peasant's criticism of the hospitals, at least of the General Hospital in Port-au-Prince. All possible effort is being made to reduce the sickness and disease existing among the lower class of people, but reluctance to accept modern facilities and lack of confidence in modern treatment have hindered progress. Nevertheless, a large number of peasants go to the hospital and seem satisfied with the attention they receive; naturally there are always those who adhere closely to tradition.

Although ignorant, the peasant is clever and uses certain knowledge to the best advantage. There is "Chênel" Dubré who knows how to read and write a little, therefore he exerts a dominating influence over his uneducated friends. When Ti-Nomme defends himself at the trial does he not play on the sympathy of the magistrate? There is a pathetic note in his plea for freedom.

Magistrat, depuis longtemps, j'ai été poursuivi par une série de dévines sans nom: mort subite de ma vieille mère, perte d'animaux, récoltes perdues: tout cela n'est pas naturel.
Dernièrement un de mes oncles mourut subitement à un coumble du sieur Dubrésus Macaya. Je fis sur les instances pressantes de ma famille, "plusieurs sorties". Tous les devins consultés s'accordèrent sur ce point: le même esprit malaisant s'acharne après ma famille et jure ma ruine.2

1 James Leyburn, op. cit., p. 277.
2 Le Drame de la Terre, p. 122.
The explanation is reasonable according to the thinking of Ti-Nomme.

The peasant shows definitely a bitter hatred towards those who try to take away his land. This may be seen clearly in La Case de Damballah and La Vengeance de la Terre. The latter is the only novel of the group which portrays the sentiments of the middle class towards the peasant. André Flosel is an understanding and sympathetic friend who is willing to help the peasant in cultivating and maintaining his land. Calvin Myrthil is the opposite of Flosel; he tries to cheat the peasant out of what rightfully belongs to him.

It has already been stated that all of the authors have a philosophy underlying their works. Because of the isolation of the peasant from the outside world, he should not be blamed entirely for the crimes he commits. The closing speech of André Flosel in Le Drame de la Terre brings out the point that men through all ages have tried to get revenge on those who have wronged them. Therefore, Ti-Nomme isn't to be blamed for ignorance because it is the folklore, the history of ages, the belief of ancients. This same idea reminds one of Mimola's aim. The purpose of the book is to show that the origin of the African divinities is the same as that of the Roman, Greek, and Hindoo.

No one is justified in trying to destroy the beliefs of the peasant. Considerable time must elapse before some of the voodoo practices are dispensed with. In the meantime the higher things of life must be put at the disposal of the peasant in order to uplift him from his state of ignorance, which is clearly shown in La Montagne envoisées and La Case de Damballah. However, the peasant is justified in fighting for the ownership of his land which has rightfully belonged to him for generations and which he is constantly struggling to maintain. La Vengeance de la Terre is the novel which upholds this idea.
The reader may ask if these books are really novels or long short stories.

Esseenwein attempts a definition of the short story:

A short story is a brief imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single chief character by means of a plot, the details of which are so selected, and the whole treatment so organized that a single impression is produced.  

The following essentials are necessary for a novel according to Edgar:

1. Narrative - the devices by which an author communicates movement to his story.

The novel is not a static creation but is essentially restless and full of movement. Not only must the theme unfold itself, which gives us the idea of motion, but the characters too are in a state of perpetual oscillation, their exits and entrances must be provided for, and the author must constantly intervene to indicate the nature of their activity.

2. Plotting - a dexterous manipulation of the action for the purpose of stimulating curiosity.

3. Description - to stimulate in the reader a sense impression, visual, auditory, tactile, or olfactory, of the object observed, and therefore the mere report of our senses should suffice for a definition of the process.

4. Analysis - the novelist's attempt to represent the motives and the conscious or unconscious thought processes of the characters to whom he sees fit to apply the test. It is therefore an important element to characterization.

5. Dialogue.  

Taking as a standard those elements already mentioned of the short story and the novel, some conclusion may be formed about the classification of the Haitian books. *Le Montagne enchantée* conforms to the elements of a short story in every respect except one: there is no preeminent character. The rest of the books adhere to the essentials of the novel. But this does not mean that these novels cannot be easily reduced to a short story by eliminating many of the historical and sociological discussions. As far as plot is concerned the same thing could be done with *Le Drama de la Terre*, however, it must

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be said that as a novel the book is well organized.

The Haitian novel does not equal the American novel in length; none of the Haitian novels is more than 250 pages or very detailed. It has already been seen that the novels deal with some social problem in Haiti. In addition to the present day war novels, the same trend has taken place in the United States. It is impossible to name all of the outstanding novels of recent years but five well known ones will illustrate this social and war trend. Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* vividly described economic conditions in California and the Joads seeking work. McWilliams' *Ill Fares the Land* goes farther than Steinbeck's novel and shows that the sugar farms in Colorado and Michigan and the berry farms in New Jersey are no better than the conditions in California, where work hours are long and pay is small. *Native Son* of Richard Wright shows the deplorable condition of the lower class of Negro and the tragic result in the life of the leading character due to his social background and environment. The *Pied Piper* of Nevil Shute makes the reader aware of the war situation but is full of human drama; an old man bravely leads a group of refugee children across France at the time of the German invasion. The present interest in Russia and Communism has brought to the attention of the American public, the novel by Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, which portrays the psychology of a Communist and the background of the Moscow

trials.

The Haitian novelist limits his material at times; on the other hand the material is presented but not organized in an interesting manner for the public. The popularity of the Haitian novel depends upon factors outside of literature: friendship, influence, politics etc. In our own country the novel is unknown because there have been no English translations of this type of Haitian material. The peasant has been chosen as the hero of the novels not only because he represents the underprivileged class of people, but because the subject is original and might attract the attention of the foreigner. Thus far, the foreigner has remained blind to the originality of the subject and has concentrated his attention on other fields.

It was not until after the American Occupation in Haiti that the writers of the country became interested in the peasant and considered him worthy of attention. Previous to this period all of the novels except Mômola treated the middle class and the elite. The information in the novels is worthy of consideration and gives an insight on the life and customs of people practically unknown to the rest of the world.
CHAPTER III

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF THE PEASANT AS DEPICTED IN THE NOVELS

The treatment of the physical aspects of the Haitian peasant in the five novels is altogether a sympathetic one, sincere in its description and showing the circumstances under which this group of people has lived for years. Although certain phases of peasant life are presented, the reader is apt to wonder about the completeness of the picture; in some instances only the best side of the peasant is shown, which, without a doubt, leaves a favorable but deceptive impression. Is this an intentional omission on the part of the writer in an effort to make the reader sympathize with an unfortunate class of people? Why is there a vagueness in the novels on the question of color? Must one take for granted that all peasants are black, or that color varies in this group of people as in other social groups? What accounts for the vigor and strength of most of the peasants who are described? Is it to be assumed that disease is not common in poverty stricken conditions? How does the economic status of the Haitian peasant compare with that of the French peasant? Some light may be thrown on these questions by the novelists' discussion of the peasant's personal appearance, food, and physical surroundings.

Few women characters appear in the novels but most of those that are described are beautiful, strong and healthy. This is true in La Case de Damballah and La Montagne enragée. Céline is different from Grâce but each possesses a beauty of her own.

Céline était une belle nègresse saine et forte. Fruit incestueux des grands pins et de la terre brune et grasse, elle avait leur parfum et leur sauvage luxuriance. Une vraie vierge de la vraie Bible qu'on n'avait pas blanchie. La madone noire des Ermites devait être comme ça.¹

¹La Case de Damballah, p. 15
The comparison of Céline to a real virgin of the Bible who hadn’t been whitened is a dynamic phrase within itself and shows that, although low in class, she possesses an extraordinary beauty of which she may be proud. Grâce, with her beautiful lips, shining teeth and profound eyes attracts the attention of Aurel.

Et lui aussi trouve belles ses lèvres mauve-carmot, ses dents plus éclatantes que les grains de grenade, et beaux ses yeux profonds comme une onde nocturne et beau, tout en elle; le mouchoir blanc qui serre ses cheveux, sa robe bleue, ses bagues.¹

Obviously there is no mention of color in these two passages, but the absence of this detail may be excused in La Case de Damballah since the author has taken the pains to illustrate some of his characters, all of whom are black. This helps the reader to form some idea concerning the color question, but no such aid is given in La Montagne ensorcelée. In Mimola Mme Dajobert does not belong to the peasant class but she is the offspring of a white man and a Negro slave. When young, her beauty was simple, striking, and as extraordinary as that of Céline.

Francine avait grandi sous les regards égoïstes de sa mère. Elle avait poussé rapidement dans l'atmosphère nouvelle imprégnée d'un souffle vigoureux et bienfaisant. Dénudée et de jeunesse elle était devenue en un clin d'œil, la grande demoiselle à la taille svelte aux hanches légèrement arrondies, bien proportionnées au reste du corps. Elle était si bien faite, il y avait tant d'harmonie dans les lignes et les contours qu'on eut dit vraiment qu'elle avait été jetée au moule. Et dire que tant de beauté n'était enveloppée que de simples vêtements. Pas de boucles d'oreilles, pas de chaînes, rien de ces enrichissements capables de donner plus de relief à la beauté rendue plus éloquente par sa simplicité.²

In direct contrast with the beauty of the younger peasant there is Placinette, an old woman who is almost hideous in looks.

¹ La Montagne ensorcelée, pp. 47-48.

² Mimola, pp. 45-46.
Placinette est très vieille; elle est à l'âge où les os s'effritent sous le poids de la vie, à l'âge où le regard préoccupé d'un proche destin, se fixe continuellement sur la terre impatiente.

Son visage est blet et jaune; elle regarde Balletroy du coin de l'œil et de bas en haut, avec des rides méfiantes aux coins de ses lèvres caillouses.

De son madras s'échappent des cheveux crépus et gris, comme poussiéreux.¹

Sor Na is also an older woman but she is still strong and continues her daily work.

Mais à regarder ses cheveux crépus tout noirs, reluisant d'huile de palme christs, qui encadraient un visage à la peau mâle et ferme, on voyait tout de suite que c'était une nègresse qui n'avait pas fini de travailler. Son regard brillant et sa bouche charnue au dessin net donnaient une expression de franchise à toute sa personne.²

Short descriptions are given of particular features of the peasant; for example, the long yellow teeth of Sor Na³ or a small girl with shining eyes like an onyx.⁴ Such details render the characters more realistic.

Men characters in the novels are more fully described than the women. In La Montagne ensorcelée mention is made of color when speaking of young people in general. "Les jeunes noirs ne sont plus respectueux: ils disent que Désilus a l'esprit dérangé, mais les anciens ne sont pas de cet avis."⁵ Very often "nègre" or "gros nègre" is used, the latter meaning a peasant who possesses more land and more animals than others of his section. Ulysse Turin.

¹ La Montagne ensorcelée, pp. 54-55.
² La Case de Damballah, p. 66.
³ Ibid., p. 76.
⁴ La Montagne ensorcelée, p. 29.
⁵ Ibid., p. 17.
the owner of Desparges, is a large and strong peasant, who, by his very presence gives the impression of authority. He is the only peasant described in

La Vengeance de la Terre.

Un paysan, grand et fort, charpente d'acier, sans âge, portant aussi bien quarante ans que soixante, les traits énergiques et frais, virgules de deux courtes moustaches grisonnantes, la tête couronnée d'un madras, les pieds mi-emprisonnés dans des sabates de caoutchou, la vareuse et la culotte de gros bleu impeccables: un ensemble de distinction, de force et d'autorité.¹

The descriptions given of André Flosel and Pierre Deslys, friends of Turin, but of a higher class, show that the two men lived in a more refined civilization than that of the country.

André Flosel: grand, svelte, élégant, fin profil d'artiste, bien doué pour tous les arts: peintre-amateur, musicien, poète à ses heures, causeur éblouissant, conteur nuancé, homme du monde accompli, progresseur intéressant, avocat distingué, jouissant de la vie en dilettante mais impuissante à donner son plein rendement, par manque de volonté et de réelle ambition.

Pierre Deslys: plutôt petit, mais bien fait, d'une laideur expressive relevée par des yeux magnifiques. d'un mascuialisme (laisser aller dans l'habillement) original, détestant le monde, rural invétéré, homme de réalisation, menant une vie de grand seigneur sur son habitation "La Tourterelle" dont ses nombreux amis étaient accueillis avec une princière et cordiale magnificence.²

In La Case de Damballah the reader knows nothing of the general appearance of Rebel, one of the main characters, except "ses grosses lèvres violettes, contractées par de grandes misères passées."³ Once again small details are given of certain features of the characters. Altidor is happy when his nephew returns home. "Un sourire illumine sa face, une bonne figure seche et longue, avec une petit barbiche de cabri et des boulettes de poils blancs clairsemées

¹ La Vengeance de la Terre, p. 24.
² Ibid., pp. 35-36.
³ La Case de Damballah, p. 15.
sur les joues. 1 Vespas is not young but his beard hides the hideous wrinkles of his face. "Si on lui coupait toute cette broussaille de barbe, on pourrait voir des rides profondes sur sa peau terreuse." 2

La Montagne ensorcelée emphasizes the strength of the peasant on describing Dorilas.

C'était un paysan haut et large redouté par sa vigueur. Ses bras étaient semblables à des troncs nouveaux.
Ses yeux colériques s'injectaient souvent de sang. 3

The author of La Case de Damballah gives the reader a brief description of a zombi, which will be discussed later.

C'était un vieillard ridé, ratatiné comme une pomme de pin avec une barbe de mousse sèche. On ne pouvait distinguer ses vêtements qui se confondaient avec la couleur de sa peau. 4

Mapou, the hougan is more precisely described at one of the voodoo ceremonies; the picture is not pretty but exceedingly vivid.

C'était un petit homme court et sale. Il portait sur son gros ventre une barbe de pote jaunie.
Ses épaules voûtées supportaient une tête énorme, broussailleuse aux mâchoires puissantes de vieux nègres entêté. Son visage, aux traits immobiles, cachait jalouusement ses pensées comme les halliers sombres et humides de la Voûte des Nègres Marrons, leurs mystères.
Ses yeux, bilieux, injectés de sang, avaient un regard étrange qui changeait toutes les choses autour de lui. 5

Children seldom appear in the novels; only one physical description of a child is given. Lifaite, the son of Céline, when a baby, was stricken with the chicken pox.

1 Ibid., p. 77.
2 Ibid., p. 86.
3 La Montagne ensorcelée, pp. 22-23.
4 La Case de Damballah, p. 52.
5 Ibid., p. 36.
Son visage ratatiné, rongé par le petite vérole, avait quelque chose de tragique et de lamentable comme ces arbres pousse au bord des ravines et courtes, qui laissaient voir des bras décharnés, sur lesquels couraient les veines comme des lianes parasites.\textsuperscript{1}

The above passage gives for the first time, the description of a child with a disease, a subject rarely mentioned in the novels. But it is in \textit{Mimola} that one learns of the various types of physical defects and diseases which exist among the peasant group. There is a belief that the Holy Virgin at Saut d’Eau is capable of healing any type of malady, therefore a pilgrimage is made to this sacred place. The author describes the type of people who visit Saut d’Eau.

C’est la terre du bonheur, de la guérisons, la ruche où bourdonne tout un essaim de misères, de souffrances et de maux de toutes sortes. Sourds, muets, aveugles, paralytiques, épileptiques, ulcéreux, cancéreux, scrofulieux, lépreux, culs-de-jatte, perouls, manchots, ankyloses, hydroptiques, goitreux, que sais-je encore sont jetés là comme les épaves sordides d’un naufrage.\textsuperscript{2}

Does this not prove that the peasant is not entirely of a strong and healthy nature, and is subject to all types of diseases? This unpleasant picture shows at least another side of the question involved; the peasant is not exceptional as far as health is concerned.

Simplicity is the characteristic quality in the Haitian peasant dress though there is more elaboration on special occasions. Unfortunately, little stress is placed on the attire of the peasant in the novel; it is mostly from \textit{La Case de Damballah} and \textit{Mimola} that the desired information may be obtained, although one description may be found in \textit{La Vengeance de la Terre}.

Ulysse Turin makes an impression on his neighbors with his impeccable heavy blue trousers and jacket, old rubber shoes and a large handkerchief.

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Mimola}, p. 93.
around his head.\(^1\) Sor Na dresses as a typical woman of her section—a long blue blouse tied at the waist by a belt of the same material, and a large handkerchief tied in a knot on the nape of her neck.\(^2\)

Elle ne séparait jamais de son grand mouchoir noir noué sous sa nuque et dans lequel elle mettait sous ses tresses courtes, les objets précieux qu'elle n'aimait pas enfouir dans son corsage: ses allumettes, son tabac, sa pipe de terre et son argent.\(^5\)

Practically the same type of clothes is worn by Aunt Rosalie on Sunday.

Le dimanche, vêtue de son caraco (longue blouse portée par les paysannes) de brabant, chaussée de grosses pantoufles, la tête prise dans un mouchoir rayé de couleur de bleu, noué par deux bouts sur un front creusé de rides, et dont les deux autres pendaient sur la nuque, elle s'acheminait vers la chapelle la plus proche.\(^4\)

For baptisms, any color may be worn. When Lifaita is baptised Tantine buys a long blue dress trimmed with lace.\(^5\) On the contrary, Mimola wears a white dress with a veil of tulle extending to her heels.\(^6\) There seems to be no preference to color on other occasions either. At the celebration of the "coumbite" Céline looked pretty in her white dress while Fébel was handsome in his suit of black bombazine.\(^7\) At the celebration of Saint Marie Madeleine, once again Céline displayed her beauty in her mixture of colors.

Ce soir-là elle était vêtue d'une belle robe d'indienne à pois

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1. La Vengeance de la Terre, p. 24.
2. La Casa de Damballah, p. 66.
3. Ibid.
5. La Casa de Damballah, p. 123.
7. La Casa de Damballah, p. 96.
verts. Un mouchoir rouge lui serrait les tempes, laissant passer
deux tresses qui pendiaient jusque sur le cou.\textsuperscript{1}

Sometimes the "père-savane"\textsuperscript{2} is dressed as simply as the ordinary peasant.

In La Montagne ensorcelée Jean Marie, the "père-savane" tries to give the
impression of dignity for a funeral.

Vêtu d'un vieux pardessus noir, une manière de soutane coiffé
d'un melon à reflets verts, le long personnage salue les groupes
avec une dignité onctueuse et pénètre dans la case.\textsuperscript{3}

Pré Ti Dor, although not a hougan, is a servant initiated into the religion
by his father and knows the language of his ancestors and the sacred formulas.
This occasion is not so sacred as that of the funeral, hence his dress is more
awkward than that of Jean Marie.

Il avait l'air engoncé dans son accoutrement: un costume de
grosse toile bleue. Il était coiffé d'un chapeau de laine grossière
au ruban effiloqué, chaussé de pantoufles en peau de cabrite avec
des bas troués que laissait voir un pantalon trop court.\textsuperscript{4}

In all cases the clothing of the Haitian peasant shows his poverty but his
sincere effort to attain a certain level of beauty and importance according
to the occasion.

The peasant home fits into the economic status and religious convictions
of this class of people. In the home of Aunt Rosalie were found two dilapi-
dated straw chairs, an old bed, a broken trunk and an earthen dish turned
down under the worn table. To complete the appearance of the room were a
mortar and a pestle, which leaned in a corner. The tightly closed box of

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., p. 41.

\textsuperscript{2} The "père-savane" takes the place of the priest.

\textsuperscript{3} La Montagne ensorcelée, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{4} Kimola, p. 126.
the old African was the only object that aroused much curiosity.\textsuperscript{1}

In comparison with the surrounding houses, the home of Saintina, mother of Céline, excels the others in size and cleanliness.

C'était une bonne case blanchie à la chaux avec une haute toiture d'herbes sèches. Elle était propre, bien entretenue, quoique très vieille... Une tonnelle couverte de giroumon semblait la soutenir comme une béquille. C'était même la seule qui comptait trois pièces et une galerie de toutes les paillotes de la butte. Elle tenait encore le coup respectable comme un riche vieillard au milieu de ses enfants.\textsuperscript{2}

Although the house of Saintina is different from the one of Aunt Rosalie both possess one thing in common- articles or an altar dedicated to the gods.

There is nothing secret about Saintina's faith in her gods.

Elle installa alors dans sa chambre un petit autel où devant un crucifix s'étalaient des crochets, des pots de terre rouge et trois plaits de faïence. Une petite lampe, faite d'un morceau de noix de coco et d'une mèche baignant dans de l'huile de palme christi, faisant danser les ombres d'un tas d'objets sur trois images de saints, fixées au mur. A chacune de ces images elle faisait des invocations et des offrandes suivant la divinité vodou qu'elle représentait.\textsuperscript{3}

It is to be noticed with what precision and care Tantine keeps the precious temple of Damballah, one of the main gods of voodoo. The atmosphere within the dwelling is indeed mysterious but completely sacred.

C'est une belle case à la paille toute neuve, régulièrement taillée, et bien entretenue. Un seuil d'herbe devant l'unique porte montre qu'on y entre rarement. Elle est assez grande avec ses deux pièces donc la plus petite est un réduit sans ouverture, encombré d'accessoires du culte. Il y fait un noir étouffant de relents. Une seule porte d'entrée aux dessins naïfs et bizarres peints à l'indigo, donne accès à la lumière dans la chambre principale. Elle y verse une lueur crue qui s'atténue peu à peu, en courant

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., pp. 4-5.

\textsuperscript{2} La Case de Damballah, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 66.
jusqu'à l'autel, pour se fondre dans la clarté paille de la veillée. Alors, les yeux habitués à la pénombre distinguent, sur les murs frêles, des images de saints et des illustrations découpées dans les magazines. On y respire un air lourd et moisi, montant d'un assemblage bizarre d'objets hétéroclites, mystérieux pour le paysan qui en ignore l'usage.¹

Without a doubt the gods play an important role in the life of the peasant, therefore much care is given to the sacred dwelling place.

Food or the preparation of various dishes is one of the most interesting phases of peasant life. There are two distinct classifications of food: that which is used in everyday life and that which is used for ceremonies and feasts. More information is given on the latter but now and then general descriptions are found on the fields.

Désilus, lui, est assis sous les guaviers. Il se repaît de leurs derniers fruits: les uns verts comme des citrons pondent encore aux branches, les autres trop mûrs, jonchent le sol, écorées, et embaument l'air d'une pourriture sucrée.²

Les hommes eux se dirigent vers les champs de patates et d'ignames.³

Les paysannes, à pied ou à bourrique descendent les sentiers étroits allant porter au marché lointain, les produits du sol, quelques volailles, du lait.⁴

Mention of the guava tree. of fields of batatas and yams, of peasants going to market with fowl and milk show the types of food which are plentiful the year round if weather conditions are favorable. This holds true with fields of coffee, corn, and the avocado trees.

¹ Ibid., p. 134.
² La Montagne ensorcelée, p. 17.
³ Ibid., p. 31.
⁴ Ibid., p. 30.
Partout les maïs récoltés achevaient de sécher, pendus en grosses grappes jaunes aux branches des avocatiers. Les cafiers assombris par l'ombre des grands arbres étaient leurs branches menus chargées de fèves rouges et vertes.¹

When Rebel starts out on his trip there are three things that are important to him: coffee, tafia, and tobacco. The first two are stimulants on and occasions.

Les paysans se réunissaient ce soir la chez Dornéval dont le fils se mourrait. Les veillées sont bien agréables: pour alimenter la palabre et combattre le sommeil, on vous sort du tafia et du café chaud.²

Tafia by itself, is necessary on all occasions.

Le tafia est le nerf du travail agricole. Pas de tafia, pas de travail.³

When some special event is being celebrated in the peasant home the meals are naturally more elaborate than ordinary ones. Céline's family is happy over the baptism of the small boy Lifaité, therefore the evening meal is a joyous one as well as plentiful: chicken, string beans, bananas, white wine, corn bread and cake.⁴ At the "combre" the amount of food increases because the peasant naturally has a large appetite. To eat fifteen bananas, a quarter of a cassava and a large bowl of broth is not frightening at all; some yield to the temptation of fresh meat and tafia.⁵ At another "combre" is served a small millet, greasy and piping hot, mixed with kidney beans and pieces of

¹ La Case de Damballah, p. 32.
² La Montagne ensorcelée, p. 20.
³ Le Drame de la Terre, p. 10.
⁴ La Case de Damballah, p. 125.
⁵ Le Drame de la Terre, p. 22.
small pork sausage.\(^1\)

The greatest variety of food is found at a feast in honor of Saint Marie Madeleine: millet, rice, corn, vegetables and roots of all types cooked in various ways, meats, mangoes, melons, avocados and other strange fruits; a feast of green, red, blue and orange liquors, rum and bottles of tafia.\(^2\)

In some cases food varies in order to appease different gods. During certain seasons of the year Aunt Rosalie prepared the "tom-tom", "cham-cham" and the "moussa". The "tom-tom" is a mixture of ripe, green bananas, batata and yams, combined into a batter and made into large balls. The "cham-cham" consists of maize, hoholi, ground pistachio and pimento, pulverized and mixed together. "Moussa" is corn flour cooked with the water of boiled chicken. These dishes were prepared in order to please the African gods.\(^3\) Other foods are sacred for Mme Georges as she fulfills her duties for the gods. To the funeral ceremony she brings "un pot de café, du riz au lait, chocolat bonbons, dragees, acassan, des tranches de melon, acra (boulette faite de petits pois pulverisés) maïs et pistaches, un coui contenant de la farine de maïs et des fioles, remplies de liqueur."\(^4\) At the feast "manger-marassa" she brings "des fragments de poule bouillie ou frite, calalouombo, pois; igname, malanga, banane, patate, tom-tom, tohaca, sorte de mélange de pois et de maïs concasse, cuits ensemble."\(^5\) For funerals the food changes according to the household.

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On dévore à belles dents, le plantureux plat de maïs moulu, de pois, de viande assaisonné de légumes et trônant au milieu d'un montible de vivres qui ferait trembler des estomacs moins exercés.  

As can be seen, food plays an important part in the life of the peasant, not only as a means of satisfying his hunger, but in providing an outlet for his religious and social activities.

Economically speaking the Haitian peasant is poor and is frequently the victim of the physical forces of nature. It has already been seen that sometimes heavy rains or dry spells destroy the crops, therefore he is constantly at the mercy of his own land for a livelihood. His home and his dress show that he lives in poverty and is reduced to a primitive state of existence. How does his condition compare with that of the French peasant?

The French peasant is not interested in the appearance of his home or his personal dress because his chief concern is in the land.

Une autre raison qui fait que les paysans ne cherchent pas à rendre leurs demeures plus agréables et plus confortables, c'est que pour eux, la maison n'est qu'une retraite où se trouvent la table et le lit, surtout la table. Leurs vraies demeures, ce sont les champs, les vignes qu'ils cultivent, qu'ils soignent sans cesse, où ils passent toutes leurs journées. Le jour qui se lève les appelle au dehors, et pour eux, il ne se lève jamais trop tôt. L'hiver, quand le mauvais temps les empêche de sortir, ils sont furieux, ils restent sur le seuil mécontents, sans aucun goût pour les besognes de l'intérieur.  

This same love for the land and this same restlessness in spirit when weather conditions are not favorable for the crops are typical of the Haitian peasant. The French peasant may not be as superstitious as the Haitian peasant and blame some god for his misery, but it must not be assumed that his passion for

1  
Le Drame de la Terre, p. 25.

2  
The soil is not as great as that of the Haitian peasant.

Le paysan français aime sa terre d'un amour tout-à-fait inconnu en Amérique et la travaille avec passion. Un écrivain français a dit: "Le paysan ne connaît qu'une religion, celle de la terre. Il possède la terre bien moins qu'il n'en est possédé. Il lui donne sa vie, elle le devore vivant." Et cela se comprend, puisque c'est la même terre qui a été faite de leur peine et souvent de leur sang. C'est cette passion pour sa terre qui le fait sauter sur les armes, qui le rend prêt à sacrifier tout, fortune et vie, pour repousser l'ennemi qui veut l'envahir.\(^1\)

This is also true of the Haitian peasant who detests anyone who tries to take away his land. He will fight for its possession as the French peasant does.

There is no indication in the novels that sometimes the Haitian peasant is richer than he seems; the impression is given that he is exceedingly poor. The French peasant is extremely economical and conservative, two qualities which account for his meager existence; his wealth cannot be judged by outward appearances.

The Haitian peasant has made little progress because of his state of ignorance, but the same reason cannot be attributed to the French peasant.

On reproche souvent au paysan français de ne pas aimer le progrès. C'est un reproche bien mérité. Il est certain qu'il ne vint que lentement aux méthodes de culture actuelles, mais la véritable raison de cette lenteur n'est pas l'ignorance ou le manque d'intelligence; c'est l'orgueil et l'esprit d'indépendance qu'il faut accuser: le paysan français préfère travailler plus, produire moins mais rester son propre maître.\(^2\)

From an economic and educational point of view the French peasant is more advanced than the Haitian peasant.

Il ne lit que son journal, le soir, et encore ne lit-il toujours. Mais il est très intelligent, d'esprit fin même, et plein de bon sens. Sa nourriture est simple et faite presque toujours de ses propres produits. Il boit du vin à tous les repas, mais toujours peu. Il est

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\(^1\) \textit{Ibid.}

\(^2\) \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 128-29.
très personnel et très indépendant.\footnote{Ibid., p. 128.}

It cannot be denied that French agriculture has developed more than Haitian agriculture, but the historical and social background of Haiti has prevented the country from taking the steps necessary for its improvement.

The various physical aspects of the Haitian peasant as presented by the novelists are encouraging to those who might attempt to elevate the economic and social status of this group of people. Simplicity in dress and home are dominant characteristics of peasant life, little emphasis being placed on elaboration except for special occasions. The fertile soil is the source of an abundant supply of food, when weather conditions are favorable; the originality in preparing dishes satisfies the appetite of the peasant as well as the anger of the gods. Although certain diseases exist among this class, the peasant usually is strong and healthy, a fine product of the country. Color is rarely discussed in the novels while beauty seems to be confined to the young people. The economic poverty of the Haitian peasant is accentuated when a comparison is made with the French peasant, who is more prosperous. The general physical picture favors the Haitian peasant, but whether this same attitude persists in the description of his social life remains to be seen.
CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF PEASANT LIFE AS PORTRAYED IN THE NOVELS

One of the merits of the five novels lies in the description of social customs and practices of the haitian peasant, a subject often misrepresented or misunderstood by those who do not grasp the full meaning of certain activities performed by this group of people. Usually, such topics as the zombi or ressurecting the dead, and cannabalism are associated with Haiti, both of which cause much discussion among cultured circles. What will be the authors' attitude towards this conception of primitive Haiti? Marriage ceremonies are not important in the formation of the home; does this mean that marriage is not considered an important institution? Courtship, feasts and funerals, even birth, all show an optimistic attitude on the part of the peasant towards life, and in some cases, afterlife. The discussion of these various social aspects in the novels gives a broader and more realistic picture of this class of people.

Birth is rarely mentioned in the novels. There are two possible explanations for this fact: (1) the poverty of the peasant woman compels her to work incessantly for a living; this same poverty does not allow her the luxuries which accompany motherhood; (2) the peasant woman's strong and healthy nature simplifies the process of childbirth. Céline gives birth to the child of Rebel while on her way to market, after which, she continues her route as if nothing had happened.

Un quart d'heure après, Céline était sur son âne. En route, les douleurs revinrent de plus en plus fortes. Au Gros-Morne elle n'y tint plus, poussa un long cri de cabri qu'on égorge et se jeta sur le bord de la route. Heureusement qu'à la queue de la file se trouvait Sor Sine, la mambo d'Oriani. Une délivrance, pour elle, était un jeu d'enfant. Même en plein air. D'ailleurs, les gens de là-haut, fruits...
de la terre siliceuse des plateaux, c'est solide comme du bambou.¹

The delivery was easily and quickly done, not interfering greatly in the
daily routine of Céline. Her anxiety to continue her journey arose from the
possibility of the appearance of a policeman who might take her to a hospital,
and her desire to obtain a magic charm in order to drive away all evils from
her child. The peasant's attitude towards the hospitals has already been dis-
cussed and later on it will be shown that superstition plays an important
role in peasant beliefs. From a modern point of view the quick recovery from
child birth seems incredible but is not extraordinary among primitive peoples.

Funerals are sad occasions yet gay in some respects. This gaiety does not
mean hilarious celebration but a general gathering of friends and relatives,
who eat and talk at the home of the deceased on the evening before the burial
day. The stifling and lamentable atmosphere at Dorneval's house stresses the
solemnity of the occasion.

Dans la case se pressent comme harengs saurs. les commères du voisinage,
et jacassent et pleurent et se lamentent...

Un peu d'encre brûle, mais plus forte est l'odeur de sueur et de
décomposition. La chaleur monte: chaque nouveau visiteur l'alimente à
la manière d'une fourche jetée dans un boucan. Les mouches volent, nom-
breuses et grasses. Une des femmes en préserve le front et la bouche
ouverte de la dormeuse avec un vieux journal.²

The passage is striking in its description of the odor caused by the crowd,
packed into a small room like herring. Odor does not always come from the
crowd but sometimes from the gradual decay of the body itself. There is no
embalming process, therefore friends merely wash and dress the corpse. In
the following passage the burial ceremony is hastened because of the gradual
decay of the body.

¹ La Case de Damballah, p. 13.
² La Montagne ensorcelée, pp. 53-54.
Le petit cadavre est là entre les bougies fumeuses. Un crucifix de cuivre ouvre ses bras sur sa poitrine. La tête noire se détache avec netteté sur le linge blanc. Les lèvres sont gonflées et décolorées. Les mains ramenées sur le ventre ont pris une teinte cendrée; la paume est rose pâle. On sera obligé de faire l'enterrement le jour même. Mauvaise odeur. Il faut chasser les mouches.  

The "père-savane" performs the duties of the priest and recites several prayers in Latin.  

In comparison with the funeral of Dorlas' son, that of Viejo is more elaborate, probably because of his reputation and the circumstances under which he died. Unfortunately, the body of Viejo begins to decay so there is once again the rush for burial.  

Le cadavre de Viejo se gâtait! Phénomène bizarre! Miracle sans pareil! Un médecin expliquerait cette prompte décomposition par la chaleur, le mauvais état physiologique du mort, la virulence de l'appendicite qui l'a emporté. Ignorance. Erreur... La douleur de l'assistance redouble et les mugissements... Vite, le cercueil. Plus tard, il sera impossible de manipuler le cadavre déjà en putréfaction.  

As long as the people think that some evil spirit has taken away a person, special ceremonies are performed in order to save the soul of the dead. For Viejo there is a ceremony of this type which consists of the benediction by the person officiating, sprinkling the body with holy water; the remainder of the water is drunk from the container by those in attendance. Special food is distributed in order to please the spirits and then the congregation forms a circle to sing songs. Various dances are performed for the the spirits of "Papa-Pie", "Maitresse Zilie" and "Soupou-Fannah."  

The gay side of funerals is given in La Case de Damballah with the death

1  
Ibid., p. 37.  

2  
Le Drame de la Terre, p. 38.  

3  
Ibid., pp. 41-55.
of Rebel. The author stresses the conversation of the men rather than the
details of the feast. Rebel was the victim of a spirit, therefore certain
precautions are necessary.

Alcinoüs, un des premiers, est venu. Naturellement. Car il faut
préparer la cérémonie de la dégradation; Rebelné était un initié. On
ne saurait laisser enterrer quelqu'un avec un lom dans la tête. L'esprit
protecteur doit être libéré pour servir à une vie nouvelle. À la tombée
de la nuit, Alcinoüs est entré dans la chambre mortuaire. Après en avoir
chassé tous les occupants, il en a fermé toutes les issues. Alors seul
avec le mort il a procédé à la cérémonie rituelle. Dehors, Tantine
organise le manger-les-morts, dernier repas du défunt.1

The general psychology of all this festivity is the belief that the deceased
ought to pass his last night joyously, therefore, in this case, happiness
reigns instead of sadness.

The funeral of Aunt Rosalie in Kimple does not differ in theory from the
ones already described but the simplicity of the following passage gives the
impression that the atmosphere was cleaner and free from the disagreeable
odors that are sometimes found in these peasant homes.

La table de l'Africaine avait été transformée en oratoire. Elle
était enveloppée d'une nappe blanche sur le petit autel. Dans une
soucoupe un peu d'eau bénite dans laquelle plongeait un minuscule
rameau servant d'aspersoir. De dessous la table dont les pieds
étaient pris dans les plus verticaux de la nappe, montait la fumée
roussâtre de l'encens.2

The care and concern for the dead shows that the Haitian peasant considers
death a serious matter. He displays the same sentiments and emotions as those
of cultured circles. Evidently he believes in an after life because of the
pains taken to appease the gods and for the welfare of the deceased. Al-
though crude in some ways, his reasoning is logical and fits into his social
environment. Both his catholicism and his primitive superstition are

1 La Case de Damballah, p. 171.
2 La Montagne ensorcelée, p. 8.
responsible for this attitude in metaphysical problems.

"Although peasants in Haiti are rarely married by the formal ceremony, the family is a dominant characteristic of peasant life."¹ The union of two young people takes place by the general agreement of the parents or relatives of the couple concerned. There is a representative from each family who is charged with the task of writing and answering proposals for marriage. The letters in Le Drame de la Terre are most enlightening, showing that the peasant has a type of poetic taste. Only one letter is necessary to illustrate the style and sentiments noted in proposals.² Frère Dubré's representative writes a letter to Ti-Homme asking that his daughter Florida consider the former's son, Dubréard, as a suitable husband.

Monsieur Fleuridor Petit-Homme, sa Madame, sa fille Florida, en compagnie toute la famille:

Je prend ma plume triomphale pour vous écrire cette lettre banale et vous raconter l'amour aveugle que mon fils Dubréus, moi-même, avec toute ma mère et toute ma famille, il a planté pour vous Mademoiselle Florida et toutes les personnes de votre maison.

C'est un sentiment universel. Quand Dieu a construit Adam et Ève dans le Paradis terrestre, il a fallu qu'Adam ait une compagne. Il a bâti l'amour inventa tous les genres, fouilla tous les merveilles de la terre: les villes, les palais, les églises et tous les éléments architecturaux de l'homme et de la femme. Cette ainsi que chaque soi, lors l'an découvrit le soleil marié avec la lune. Et c'est mon gage qui semble le soleil comme votre fille belle comme la lune. Dans l'espoir de la filiation de nos deux familles dont auquel nous fortifions les noyaux de la corde, je vous saluie avec respectuosité, tendresse et charité.

Cormelo Dubréus Zacaya. Dubréard Dubréus, son fils. Et tous les

1 James Leyburn, op. cit., p. 194.

2 For the other letters: cf. Le Drame de la Terre, pp. 78-84.
autres familles ne pas savoir le faire. On donc interpelle suivant la loi.1

Despite the frequent errors in this attempt to be romantic, the idea that the letter conveys is sincere and direct. Often, the words are misspelled ("écrire" for "écrire", "pou" for "pour" "soi" for "soir" etc.) and the French is mixed with creole expressions ("pas rété" and "lors lan décou"). There is a certain cleverness in comparing the couple to the sun and moon, or linking the present situation with that of Adam and Eve. This method of writing is indeed more elaborate than that found in the other two novels.2 The letter written to Placimette by the representative of Aurel's family is simple, written in excellent French, and showing that the family will be responsible for the conduct of their son towards Placimette's daughter.3

Great emphasis is placed on the appearance of the letter. The one written to the parents of Céline is very pretty.

1 Ibid., pp. 75-76. The following is a translation of his extraordinary French.

Mister Fleuridor Petit-Homme, his wife, his daughter Florida, together with the entire family.

I am taking my triumphant pen in order to write you this banal letter and to tell you about the sephalous love that my son, Dubréus, as well as myself, my wife and my entire family, have developed for your daughter Florida and all the persons of your household.

It is a universal feeling. When God created Adam and Eve in the terrestrial Paradise, he created Eve so that Adam would not be alone. And love invented all nature, probed into all the wonders of the earth: towns, palaces, churches and all the admirable substances of man and woman. Thus, each evening when it set, the sun married the moon. It is my son who resembles the sun just as your beautiful daughter resembles the moon.

Colonel Dubréus Macaya, Dubréard, Dubréus, his son... This document is in accordance with the law.

2 La Case de Damballah and La Montagne ensorcelée.

3 La Montagne ensorcelée, pp. 49-50.
C'était une jolie lettre, écrite sur du beau papier blanc brodé tout autour avec des grappes de fleurs en couleurs et deux petits pigeons blancs qui se caressaient du bec.\textsuperscript{1}

The letter does not say that Rebel wishes to marry Céline, because he already has a son by her; the establishment of a home and the rearing of a family are the important things.

Elle [la lettre] disait que lui, Rebélé Aurel, était un garçon sérieux et de bonne conduite, qu'il voulait s'établir avec mademoiselle Céline Fidélia pour créer une famille avec la grâce de Dieu.\textsuperscript{2}

After the parents give consent to the proposals, the couple concerned is considered married and no special ceremony is required. Married life for the peasant means a companion who will help in the cultivation of the land and who will rear a large family. The abruptness of a proposal is not shocking at times to the Haitian peasant woman. In the case of Sor Na and Exigé there was no sentimentality attached to the latter's proposal.

Un soir en rentrant des jardins, ils marchaient en silence côté à côté puis il lui avait dit brusquement: "Sor Na, je deviens vieux et ça m'emêle de vivre seul. Vous n'auriez pas voulu vous établir avec moi?" Saintine, la gorge serrée par l'émotion, ne put articuler que ces seuls mots: "Oui oui, compère Exigé!" Ils se prirent alors la main et continuèrent la route en silence.\textsuperscript{3}

The facility with which this home was established shows that no formalities are necessary in the case of older people. Long courtship is a minor detail for marriage and holds no importance in the development of love. The novels do not specify any definite age for the establishment of a home. Perhaps the unrestrained freedom of the Haitian peasant in love accounts for the large population among this group.

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{La Case de Damballah}, p. 46.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 71.
Celebrations and feasts are great diversions in the hard, monotonous life of the peasant. One cannot be separated from the other because both accompany the same occasion. There are no specified days for peasant celebrations but different occasions call for special attention. It has already been shown that the "combitae" is a sort of celebration which brings out the unity of the peasants in the cultivation of the land; that special celebrations are given when an angered god has been appeased; and that the feasts, "manger-les-morts," "manger marassa," and "manger-les-âmes," are the most important ones in peasant life. To this list may be added the cockfight and a celebration in honor of Sainte Marie Madeleine, the main entertainment being the dance with the drum as an accompanying instrument. Dancing is a part of the Haitian peasant and it is in this form of recreation that he forgets worldly cares. The rhythm of his music penetrates into the heart of the young and old and plunges each into frenzied ecstasy.

Le démon de la danse envahit bientôt tout le monde, jetant jeunes et vieux dans les tressaillements hystériques dans les contorsions éxtatiques du Vodou. Les faces d'ébène luisantes de sueur reflétaient la lumière rouge des flambeaux.\(^1\)

Dancing is an important item in voodoo ceremonies and is an expression of peasant sentiment.

When the question of religion and superstition is discussed, both must be placed in the same category because the peasant's conception of religion arises from his numerous superstitions.

Aunt Rosalie has a confused idea about God because of the teachings of Catholicism, nevertheless, she holds firm to her African beliefs.

Un autre trait non moins frappant de l'Africaine c'est qu'elle

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 39.
aimait le "bon Dieu" dont sa mère lui avait révélé l'existence quand elle était au pays d'Afrique...

Or, cette notion confuse, incohérente d'un Etre supérieur s'est développée chez tante Rosalie au contact de la religion catholique, la même qui enseignait que le nègre était inférieur au blanc, et comme tel, appelé à servir. Néanmoins, tante Rosalie l'aimait bien sincèrement le Dieu des bourgeois, ce Dieu injuste, inhumain au nom de qui se commettait tant de crimes et d'atrocités... Ainsi donc elle l'avait retrouvé dans la gêne de des nègres, ce Dieu dont elle n'a jamais su se faire une idée exacte, et dont le culte ressemblait apparemment à celui qu'elle pratiquait pour ses divinités. Ces autels décorés d'images saintes ne lui rappelaient-ils pas la petite plateforme en maçonnerie consacrée au culte de ses dieux lares? Ces hymnes religieux, ne présentaient-elles pas quelque analogie dans le rythme et la cadence avec ces airs primitifs de la sauvage Afrique? Elle en était convaincue. Et c'est pourquoi chaque dimanche elle allait régulièrement à l'église pour mieux se familiariser sur les autels.

According to the above passage, the simple beliefs of Aunt Rosalie have been confused by the allegedly false teachings of Catholicism toward the Negro. Is it not logical that the old African woman try to unite her own beliefs with those of the whites? The similarities between the two religions are close enough to form a happy medium and allow for contradiction. It seems as if the author is trying to bring out the fact that there exists a relationship between the two religions and that the worship of African divinities is merely a crude stage of Catholicism.

In *La Montagne ensorcelée* Placintette shows Balletroy that he is not a true Catholic and still secretly worships the voodoo gods. Placintette speaks:

_Bon, je vais te poser une question. Balletroy, tu es un bon catholique; tu ne laisses jamais passer Pâques sans descendre à la ville pour communier; tu vas prendre le corps de not' Seigneur; est-ce que ça t'empêche de faire ton petit manger marassa?_ Bôhé. Pourtant le prêtre blanc te dit: _le vaudou est un péché, le bon Dieu du vaudou, c'est le diable, si tu seras Damballah, Legba ou Erzili l'enfer t'attend._ Bôhé.

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Here, there is no link between Catholicism and voodoo and Placinette gloats over the fact that Balletroy rests in a non-decisive state of mind. Unable to make a choice, he practices both religions.

As Placinette pointed out, Damballah, Legba and Erzilie are three important voodoo spirits. Each requires a certain ceremony for his satisfaction. La Case de Damballah is particularly informative on these spirits.

As has been seen Tantine keeps the temple of Damballah exceptionally clean; nothing is neglected. Because of her close watch and her scientific knowledge she has been able to handle the fortunes and misfortunes of people. The different colored flames are important for different gods.

Ainsi Papa Damballah Ouédé veut le blanc de baleine; Bogou Ferraille, la bougie de cire rouge; et Baron, la noire; tandis que pour Maîtresse Erzilie et pour tout ce qu'on veut purifier, on emploie la cire blanche. Ces petits bougies, on les marque de sept ou neuf nœuds suivant le nombre de demandes qu'on fait; et chaque jour on confie au loas ses peines et ses appréhensions devant la lumière pure de la cire vierge.\(^1\)

Such infinite care of the gods shows the importance that is attached to them. Other gods require special attention also.

Chaque vendredi, Tantine lave leurs petits plats jumeaux en terre cuite assembles trois par trois. Puis elle les graisse d'huile d'olive et les place devant l'image de saint Côme et saint Lamiel, les patrons des marasses de Guinée; ces jeunes innocents qui vont de l'avant pour protéger la famille et lui ouvrir le chemin du bonheur. Aussi trois fois par an, elle ouvre la porte de la case aux servantes qui viennent y déposer du maïs grillé, des bonbons, des tablettes et de toutes ces choses qui font les délices des enfants. Car personne n'oserait manquer à ces promesses sous peine d'attirer sur la famille les pires calamités.\(^2\)

A special day is set aside for Papa Guédé who is guardian of the dead; the day is known as the Toussaint and is highly respected by all. Candles are lighted in the niches of the tombs and the "pères-savane" go from one to another singing sacred songs.

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\(^{1}\) La Case de Damballah, p. 136.

\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 137.
Guedé dont l'autel est la croix des cimetières et des tombes abandonnées. Guédé qui préside ici dans l'asile des morts dont il est le maître souverain. Comme on ne lui fait pas de service, on lui offre sous sa croix du petit-mil du sésame, de l'acasaan, des tablettes au sirop et surtout sa boisson favorite. C'est une mixture faite de piment et de muscade infusées dans de l'alcool et qu'il boit avec volupté. On le gâte dans la personne de ses initiés, en ce seul jour de l'année qui est à lui.¹

One of the most important goddesses for the men is Erasilie Freda Tocan, who offers her protection to the masculine sex, provided they fulfill certain requirements.

Maitresse n'accepte jamais qu'une femme la serve, car le culte d'Erasilie est une véritable union. Celui qui le pratique ne peut plus se marier ni s'établir s'il est célibataire. Mais, quand on est déjà lié avec une femme, alors on fait à Maitresse la promesse de lui accorder un jour de la semaine où l'on s'abstient de toute relation sexuelle. Celui qui est sous la protection d'Erasilie réussit dans toutes ses entreprises. Mais, malheur à lui s'il ne remplit pas ses obligations. Alors le lom peut contrarier toutes ses affaires et même lui faire abandonner sa femme en créant toutes sortes de brouilles dans son ménage.²

In Mimola there are many services to be fulfilled for the household gods. Mme Georges, in order to save her daughter's life, must (1) have three white plates and three earthen pots baptised, but must hide the objects in some corner of her house from curious eyes; (2) distribute coffee to the poor near the church in order to appease the souls of her ancestors; this ceremony is known as "manger-les-âmes"; (3) make a pilgrimage to Saut d'Eau or Ville Bonheur (4) celebrate a funeral feast commonly known as "manger-les-morts" and finally "manger marassa" or a feast for the twin plates.

In substance, most of the voodoo ceremonies consist of the same rituals, some being more elaborate than others. The most vivid ceremony described is the one in which Mimola and Mme Georges participate; the ceremony is a long

¹ Ibid., p. 140.
² Ibid., p. 146.
and detailed one— the baptism of the twin plates.

The day of the baptism all the friends and relatives congregated in a special tunnel, called the "hounfo", which was decorated with flags, flowers, and various colored ribbons. Fère Jean officiated at the ceremony which began by the baptism of the twin plates, sprinkled with water and given a sacred name by the godmother or godfather. Afterwards, the music played (saxophone, trombone and drum) for the different dances that were executed.1

The next day Frè Ti Dor (houngan) arrived with his followers, commonly known as "hounsis".

Chaque hounsi portait sur sa tête un petit paquet de linge. Sur un âne on voyait une espece d’étui métallique et une tige en fer, trois tambours d’îmigale grosseur ayant la forme de cylindres terminés par un tronc de cône et recouverts à la partie supérieure de peaux de bœuf fixées au moyen de lanières et de cheville. L’étui métallique, c’est le hogan- le premier ou le plus gros des tambours, c’est le houn; le second ou le moyen, le hounlij; le troisième ou le plus petit, le houla.

A côté de Frè Ti Dor marchaient une femme et un homme; les deux dignitaires de la société, la hougouniicoo et le frè servent à la place de danse. L’una avait sous les bras deux drapeaux dont les hampes débor- daient par le bout de la toille qui les enveloppait, et l’homme tenait dans une main un sabre ou une machette ficelée dans une gaines de papier.2

All this elaboration gives a mysterious atmosphere to the ceremony and makes it more impressive. For the occasion Mme Georges had brought a dish of corn flour, a pot of water and a phial filled with liquor. The dance begins the ceremony and is one of the main features of the occasion. A circle is formed and the participants do simple steps while waving their flags and banners. While the music becomes faster and the songs grow louder, Frè Ti Dor bows reverently to the north, south, east and west, then draws strange signs on the ground with the cornflour that Mme Georges has brought. Since the "hounfo"

1 Mimola, pp. 128-30.
2 Ibid., p. 131.
has been duly initiated the crowd rests and waits for the ceremony for the
dead at six o'clock. This service is known as "manger-les-morts." A few
feet from the "hounfò" is located the white tomb of Aunt Rosalie.¹

On y avait apporté une grande serviette blanche, des blancs de ba-
leines, trois assiettes blanches, un pot de café, riz au lait, chocolat
bons-bons, dragées, asassin, des tranches de melon, agora (boulette faite
de petits pois pulvérisés) maïs et pistaches, un coui contenant de la
farine de maïs et de fioles, remplis de liqueur. On déposa tout cela
sur la serviette étendue dans toute sa largeur devant la sépulture. On
y avait creusé trois trous de même largeur, et devant chaque trou brûlait
un blanc de beleine. Les hounsi, habillées de blanc étaient acroupies
auprès de Frè Ti Dor, assis sur une chaise basse, qui prit dans main
sa clochette et son acon, calabasse à col, recouverte d'une maille enfilée
de grains de sorali, de hounguèves d'osselets de couleuvre, et terminée à
la base par un noeud de ruban. Toutes les têtes baissées vers le sol, il
s'exprima dans le langage africain en secouant ensemble la clochette et
l'acon; c'était l'invocation des morts... Pendant ce temps Frè Ti Dor, lui,
faisait des croix sur chaque trou avec de la farine de maïs, y jetant un
peu de tous les aliments déposés sur la serviette, y versait de la liqueur,
de l'alcool et de l'eau. Il appela une Georges et Lala qui l'imitèrent.
On procéda ensuite au sacrifice. Frè des trous gisaient deux poules
blanches qui becquetaient dans le creux de la main de hounsiévan du melon
hache en petits morceaux, des grains de maïs et de pistache grillés,
mêlés ensemble. Tenant chaque poule dans une main Frè Ti Dor fit signe
t à une Georges et Lala de s'agenouiller, et passa en plusieurs fois ces
malheureuses têtes à plumes qui pliaient, sur leur tête, leurs épaules,
dans le dos et sur la poitrine. Il en fit le même avec ses fidèles.
Puis prenant la première poule par le cou, il la tourna vigoureusement
comme un moulinet, jusqu'à ce que la tête se détachât du corps. Cela
faire, il arracha quelques plumes qu'il colla avec le sang de la victime
au bord de chaque trou. L'autre eut le même sort. On prit des poules,
on les plume et les apprêta pour le calalo-des-morts, (Aliment spécial
apprêté pour la circonstance) qu'on accompagnait de hounse ou moussa
dans le patois créole. Le repas funèbre étant prêt, on vint le servir
dans des assiettes blanches, qu'on enfout dans les trouxs.
Ainsi eut lieu le manger-les-morts ou le repas funèbre.²

The most interesting part to note in the above passage is the sacrifice of
fowl and not of humans, which eliminates the idea that the Haitian peasant may
be cannabalistic in his weird voodoo ceremonies. Other outstanding features

¹ Ibid., pp. 133-34.
² Ibid., pp. 134-35.
seem to be dancing, costumes and food.

Superstition plays an important role in peasant activities. The zombi is a favorite topic of discussion by foreigners who constantly associate such a creature with primitive Haiti. According to La Case de Damballah, the zombi does exist for the peasant and is considered a source of evil if the necessary precautions are not taken. When Rebel meets a zombi Tantine advises him what to do.

On se frotte la figure et les mains de feuille de basilic. On récite la prière des morts ou l'oraison de Saint Michel. On jette quelque chose devant son trou. Un biscuit, un petit paquet d'allumettes ou un bout d'igname. Et surtout du hareng saur de la morue, du ti-salé. Tout ce qui a beaucoup de sel, afin que le reste de son âme rentre dans son corps et qu'il ne devienne pas dangereux.\(^1\)

Leyburn has quoted from Jules Faine the meaning of the word zombi.

Zombi... designates in general a revenant, a phantom, an unworldly spirit. In popular belief, certain sorcerers have the power, by means of charms and spells, to cause apparent death to individuals and then to bring them back to life again, even after they have been buried. The resuscitated persons, only half conscious, are then isolated in distant parts of the country, utilized for field work. Nourished on food from which salt is rigorously excluded, they are thought to be able to regain their natural senses and all their mental faculties if they taste the least grain of this substance. Such legends, circumstantially garbed and presented as actual facts by certain unscrupulous authors, have served as the theme of books which have made a great commotion in foreign countries. Taking advantage of the credulity of a public avid for exotic matters, for mysteries, for the supernatural, these writers have gained, in certain cases, the greatest success of publicity.\(^2\)

Zora Neale Hurston, in her book, Tell My Horse, discusses the zombi at great length, claiming that she has actually seen an authentic case; she is sure that there are zombies in Haiti.\(^3\) Leyburn does not seem to be convinced of this fact, for he says:

\(^1\) La Case de Damballah, pp. 54-55.

\(^2\) James Leyburn, op. cit., p. 163.

\(^3\) Zora Neale Hurston, Tell My Horse (New York, 1938), pp. 188-209.
The reader cannot suppress a query as to whether the supposed zombi might not have suffered simply from a special kind of insanity.\textsuperscript{1}

Whatever the truth of the situation may be is of no concern to the peasant; he lives in his own beliefs.

When Lifaité, son of Céline, is sick with the whooping cough, Tantine has faith in one remedy, which is not effective.

\textit{La petite cordelette rouge qu'elle lui passa autour de cou n'apporta pas de grands soulagesments. Non plus la petite souris grise boucanée comme un ortolan, qu'elle lui donna à manger.}\textsuperscript{2}

The magic of the Haitian peasant provides an outlet for his innermost thoughts and beliefs although they may appear ridiculous to outsiders.

The Haitian peasant definitely shows an interest in social activities which prevail in every day life. The woman is not greatly detained from her daily duties by child birth, due to her poverty and strong nature. Funerals are important, not only because of their solemnity or gaiety, but also because the deceased has entered a new world; this shows a belief in afterlife. Feasts and celebrations are a distraction in the life of the peasant, anxious to appease the gods. This same care and concern about the gods is part of his religious and superstitious convictions. There is no attempt on the part of the writers to justify the actions of the peasants, but to clarify the social customs and practices by showing that they answer the daily needs of this group of people; if formal ceremony is not important in marriage it is due to the peasant's belief that the institution is necessary only for the cultivation of the land and the rearing of children. His pattern of living is governed by the problems which are common to his own social class.

\textsuperscript{1} James Layburn, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 164.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{La Case de Damballah}, p. 144.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Handicapped by early periods of foreign invasions and slavery, Haiti remained an undeveloped country in the hands of her conquerors. In 1804, she gained her independence, thus beginning her struggle for world recognition. Under Pétion's administration the peasant came into the possession of his own land, but from the dawn of Haitian history to the present his education has been shamefully neglected. Haitian authors have only recently become aware of the existence of this underprivileged group and of its fictional possibilities.

Between 1931 and 1939, five important novels were written on the life and struggles of the Haitian peasant. These novels were: La Montagne ensorcelée, by Jacques Roumain; Le Drame de la Terre and La Vengeance de la Terre, by Jean B. Cinsas; Himola, by Antoine Innocent; and La Case de Damballah, by Pétion Savain. Though all of these authors belong to what might be called the Haitian elite, they have written sincerely and sympathetically of the peasant. In general, they attribute the latter's ignorance and backwardness to the fact that he has been continually isolated and exploited. They depict him as an essentially human and likeable individual, friendly and easy-going until he is compelled to fight for what is rightfully his. While the novels are not primarily propagandistic, they convey the idea that the Haitian peasant is not the cannibalistic savage that certain sensational authors of other nationalities would have us believe.

Keenly aware of the beauty of the Haitian landscape, the authors' style is highly descriptive, so descriptive, in fact, that the plot is often reduced to a position of minor importance. On the other hand, the physical and social aspects of peasant life dominate the center of interest. The characters'
actions, conversations, and reasoning conform to their educational and social background. So attached has the peasant become to the soil, that in at least one of the novels "La Terre" is the heroine.

Just as the land is part of the Haitian peasant, so are his religion and superstition; both play an important role in his daily activities. These two dominant forces are the source of all his beliefs and of his philosophy toward life. The Haitian peasant attempts to satisfy his inner feelings and to solve his problems by combining voodooism and catholicism. In most of the stories, however, the former seems much more effective than the latter.

Certain factors detract from the literary value of the novels. The authors are so engrossed in describing the landscape that they sometimes fail to take cognizance of the monotony of their long descriptive passages, which retard the action. To make the characters more realistic, the creole dialect is frequently used in the dialogue; unless these passages are translated, the reader has difficulty in understanding the conversation. Moreover, the organization of the novels is sometimes faulty: digressions, unnecessary characters, and complications have been noted in the thesis.

In general, however, the works are relatively simple, and shorter than the average American novel. According to the novelists, all phases of peasant activity are characterized by simplicity. This is due primarily to his abject poverty. Such events as marriages, funerals, and "coubites" call for special celebrations and feasts; otherwise, peasant life is strenuous and somewhat monotonous. Schools, hospitals, and the courts are apparently unimportant in his scheme of things. He lives, he works, he dances, he suffers, and he dies. Of frills, and fashions, and modern facilities he knows nothing.

Unfortunately, the Haitian novels are limited to an exceedingly small reading public. Illiteracy is high in Haiti, and a book has little chance of
reaching the masses. Outside of Haiti, the works are almost totally unknown. No Haitian novel has yet been translated into English. In France and Canada, the works might, under normal conditions, receive a hearing, but Haitian publishers lack the means of publicizing their offerings. As a result, the publication of a novel in Haiti is a risky and an expensive venture. Notwithstanding these deterrents, novels are being published in Haiti, and some of them are carrying a message of vital human significance.
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