

Abstract

Lambert Félix Prudent
University of the Antilles
ESPE Academy of Guadeloupe
CRREF (Center for Resource and Research in Education and Training)

The development of Creole literature in the Lesser Antilles

Starting with a discussion on the appearance of the first Creole texts in an oral society, the conference will then move on to the 1970s with the emergence of a handful of committed writers who decided to make their language the vector of an artistic activity, defying the established order in French. The last third of the 20th century indeed saw the development of diverse fields of Creole writing and the opening of the debate on what one hardly dared to call a literature. As in Africa or Haiti, West Indians and Guyanese have adopted a graphic system, organized linguistic studies in their university, launched an exploratory education in their schools, and fed the publishing houses with poems, plays, novels and especially stories and tales that today constitute the main corpus of books published, sold and purchased by a growing and increasingly loyal public. Published in 1984, *Kouté pou tann! Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie créole* is the milestone of this emergent stage.

Since then, hundreds of books have been published, new authors have given interviews to the press and signed their works in bookstores, prizes have been awarded to winners at competitions, and a form of criticism and evaluation has emerged. This could only be done through school curriculum development, teacher recruitment contests and in adjacent university studies. If it can still be questioned in its social representativeness and its economic and aesthetic significance, Antillean Creole literature exists materially as a collection of books that is obtaining more and more readers. We are proposing here to question the modalities of its existence. After the first inventory of the corpus available in bookstores, libraries and databases and specialized sites, we will examine the issue of the disparity of literary genres and we will come to the reaction of potential audiences and the problematics of success. Finally, we will proceed to an evaluation of how the universities and academic authorities treat these literary texts, bearing in mind that the question of Creole identity has been undergoing a serious upheaval, since in the last thirty years, our cultural context has been dominated by the so-called movements of Creolité and Creolization.