

BLACK AMERICAN FICTION AND MARXISM:  
A STUDY OF SIX NOVELISTS  
(1928-1958)

by

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Certificate

I am satisfied that the thesis presented by Mrs. Usha Shourie is worthy of consideration for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and is a record of the original bona-fide research work carried out by her under my guidance and supervision, and that the results contained in it have not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree/diploma. I certify that she has pursued the prescribed course of research.

Dated: August 28, 1981.

  
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## Clarification

I have used American spellings in this dissertation and retained the original spellings in the quotations.

I have followed the conventions of the MLA Style Sheet (2nd Edition).

The following abbreviations have been used in the Notes and References and Selected Bibliography :

B A L F	:	<u>Black American Literature Forum</u>
C L A	:	<u>College Language Association</u>
D A	:	<u>Dissertation Abstracts</u>
D A I	:	<u>Dissertation Abstracts</u> <u>International</u>
N A L F	:	<u>Negro American Literature Forum</u>

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## Abstract

In this dissertation, an attempt has been made to analyze the works of a few selected black American novelists who during their life, were involved with Marxism in some form or the other. This study includes a detailed analysis of fifteen novels, including a collection of novellas, written by six authors; namely, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Chester Himes, Ralph Ellison, and John O. Killens. The main object of this dissertation is to identify the values held by the various protagonists with a view to finding out whether the Marxist leanings of their creators have left any impact on their values.

In the process, it has been discovered that despite their ideological involvements, these black intellectuals, as writers and artists, have maintained their artistic independence. Strongly anchored in the American milieu, yet deeply conscious of the Negro reality, they have portrayed their characters in such a way that each emerges with a unique identity of his own. But in view of their Marxist involvement, a paradoxical situation seems to exist: it appears that the values that these protagonists uphold, far from being proletarian or Marxist, are almost identical to those held by an average middle-class American.

The dissertation has been divided into eight chapters. The first chapter includes (i) a brief literary historical background against which the black novel moves from mild protest to radicalism, (ii) a survey of the critical works on the authors dealt with, (iii) a brief history of the American Communist Party, and its role among the American blacks, (iv) relevant theoretical precepts of the Marxist ideology and the Marxist literary aesthetics. The second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters have been devoted to the analyses of the works of the individual authors. The eighth chapter is a summing up of the argument.

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