

"INTERROGATE YOUR MYTH":
THE TREATMENT OF BLACK STEREOTYPES
IN ERNA BRODBER'S FICTION AND SELECTED NON-FICTION

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ABSTRACT

"Interrogate Your Myth": The Treatment of Black Stereotypes in Erna Brodber's Fiction and Selected Non-Fiction

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This dissertation looks at the creative activities of Erna Brodber as expressed in her fiction and non-fiction writings, as well as in her role as social activist. It specifically examines Brodber as a public intellectual, comparing her works and her interests to those of other well known Caribbean intellectual figures. An analysis of Brodber's works is undertaken, with particular emphasis placed on her presentation and treatment of stereotypes of the black man as inferior to his white counterpart; as lacking in theological ethics; as animal; as machine; and as innately ignorant. The study looks further at stereotypes of women as discussed in Brodber's sociological paper that triggered an interest in this research area, and examines stigmatization of the female as analogous to black stereotypes. Brodber's establishment of an intellectual space amongst her rural community members; her attempts to disseminate knowledge of black history and to reconfigure the simple folk within that

history; as well as her writing of her community's history are also examined.

The contention throughout the thesis is that Brodber's works, irrespective of the genre to which they belong, constitute a powerful discourse, dismantling pre-established genre barriers and establishing an essential continuity. Her stylistic devices as expressed in her fiction are seen to be influenced by her training as a sociologist and a historian. In her roles as researcher and investigator, Brodber probes various situations and long-held beliefs, unearthing truths in her academic papers. These are the genesis of the messages, concerns and recommendations for improvement of the blacks' condition which are built on in her fiction. Here she manipulates the outcome of her stories to convey new truths, which should replace the myths and stereotypes blacks have been exposed to throughout slavery and its aftermath. Her recommendations to those who people the African Diaspora are outlined in the issues and concerns that are explored in each of her works, and are given detailed analysis here.

Keywords: Stephanie May-Dean Fullerton-Cooper; Erna Brodber;
Stereotypes