

ABSTRACT

MYTH-TAKING AND MYTH-MAKING: MYTHOLOGICAL ARCHETYPES
IN SELECTED AFRO-CARIBBEAN WOMEN'S WRITINGS

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This thesis examines the use of Afro-Caribbean mythology in selected prose by some Caribbean women writers. The central thesis of this paper is that regardless of their personal, ideological and literary stances, some writers are actively engaged in mythopoeia: using myths or mythological archetypes to tell their stories. In telling their stories, they sometimes myth-make or mythologize their experiences, and in using mythological archetypes to complement their stories, they myth-take. The study therefore, explores the use of mythology as a thematic and stylistic aspect of the literature, with emphasis on the archetypes which are used in the myths.

The three main archetypes which surface repeatedly, and are distinctly Afro-Caribbean in configuration, are: the girl, the zombie, and the ancestor figure. The writers treat these archetypes according to their personal world views, but they generally examine oppressive situations surrounding these archetypes. This study examines the prevalence of these mythological archetypes in the texts and the patterns which evolve in the use of these archetypes. The writers seem to share

the common belief in the importance of nurturing a mythic consciousness, for healing and well-being. The study examines the vision of Caribbean socio-cultural reality which the writers are elucidating. Furthermore, the study questions whether the writers use mythological archetypes for a critical view of the world or for an ameliorative vision.

The research issues are approached by using the foundations of the following theoretical frameworks: Theory of Mythology, Feminist Theory and African Diaspora Theory. Post-colonial and structuralist theories are incorporated as deemed relevant. The research examines mythology in terms of how the writers anchor experience in classical, traditional mythological references and how contemporary experience is mythologized: that is, given hyperbolic amplified attention as is typical of the grandeur of mythic language.

Keywords: mythological archetype, mythic consciousness.