“Uprooting Myths of origins in Erna Brodber’s The Rainmaker’s Mistake”

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Early settlers in a colonial Caribbean had seen it in utopian terms and in their representation of its tropical fecundity had gendered this landscape as a receptive and fertile female body which welcomed the insertion of male/colonial seed. In The Rainmaker’s Mistake Brodber offers an alternative rendition of this utopia by creating a magically realistic text that has at its core a myth of origin which explains Caribbean slave society in terms of a man discharging his semen in the earth and producing yam people. This paper explores the ways in which the Edenic world that is birthed in this mating process is linked to ignorance and child-like innocence; and the loss of this Eden portrayed as the acquisition of knowledge, the experience of coming-to-know that becomes a coming-of-age process linked to physical aging and mortality. The paper goes on to suggest that in this book Brodber deliberately juxtaposes the oppression at the core of this prelapsarian world with the trauma of locatedness and identity formation that comes in the dismantling of those old regimes and the granting of freedom. The paper concludes with an exploration of the ways in which Brodber’s latest novel offers a reformulation of Diasporic identity.

Bio:
Antonia MacDonald-Smythe was born and grew up in St. Lucia. She now lives in Grenada where she is a professor in the department of Liberal Studies, Senior Associate Dean in the School of Arts and Sciences, and Assistant Dean in the Graduate Studies Program. Professor MacDonald-Smythe writes on contemporary Caribbean women writers and more recently, Derek Walcott and on St. Lucian Literary Studies. She has published articles in Journal of West Indian Literature (JWIL), Callaloo and MaComere and is the author of Making Homes in the West/Indies.