

The Department of Hispanic Languages and Literature presents

Two Contending Mothers: Discrepant Allegories in Emeric Bergeaud's *Stella*



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Thursday, March 2 11:30AM

Javits 103

Stony Brook University

Despite being considered the first Haitian novel, Émeric Bergeaud's *Stella* (1859), has until recently been neglected or denied literary value by literary critics. *Stella*'s contribution to nineteenth century literature lies in the role of allegory in the novel and the absence of a national foundational myth. As a nineteenth century text, *Stella* raises questions of genre related to the genealogy between the creole story and the novel. As a representation of the Haitian Revolution of 1791, it portrays a conflicted approach to the legacy of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. The articulation of the Haitian Revolution and the French is embodied in the characters of *Stella*, a white French lady exiled in Saint-Domingue, and Marie L'Africaine, a slave and the mother of the Haitian fictional heroes Romulus and Remus. Nevertheless, rather than becoming allegories of national cohesion, they produce a series of non-encounters that ultimately point to an emergent literary and historical sensibility that is distinctly Caribbean.