

ABSTRACT

Spirit Presences in Selected Caribbean Literary Works

Hannah Regis

This study argues that the forcible decimation of the indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean, the uprooted tribal peoples of Africa, the injustice and violence of the Middle Passage and the many other human atrocities in the region, have generated clashes of ideologies, cultures and indeed cosmologies. The grapple with the resultant crises of being and becoming has become a prime focal point of creative and critical architects in the Caribbean. By focusing on the facets and narrativized uses of spirit presences, I argue that the selected literary works of NourbeSe Philip, Grace Nichols, George Lamming, Erna Brodber, Shani Mootoo, Maryse Condé, Gisèle Pineau, Patricia Powell, Derek Walcott and Wilson Harris have provided new epistemologies for probing Caribbean woundedness as well as generating spaces in which past and contemporary trauma can be alleviated. This pursuit is achieved through the methodologies of qualitative content analysis and reparative reading. Fittingly, it draws on a blend of cultural criticism and a taxonomy of concepts namely, mythic time, vestiges, liminality, the Ceremony of Souls, ghost writing and haunting to demonstrate how spectral movements from beyond the grave erode lines that divide history on the basis of race, gender, caste, national and colonial identifications. Emphasis is placed on interrogating how spirit is wielded as a tool of revelation, a repository of collective memory, an expression of psychic trauma and a modality used to contest the impacts of social and economic injustices architected by imperial and neo-imperial systems.

Keywords: identity; spectrality; myth; epistemology; haunting; spirit