

The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine Campus
Faculty of Humanities and Education
Caribbean Studies Project
HUMN 3099

Student name: Jolie Wong
Student ID no.: 816000234
Degree Program: Bachelor of Arts: Literatures in English with a Minor in Linguistics
Supervisor: Dr. J. Vijay Maharaj

Title of Thesis:

Contemporary Poetics of Mythification in Indian-Trinidadian Poetry: Danielle Boodoo-Fortuné
and Shivanee Ramlochan

Declaration

1. I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.
2. I authorise The University of the West Indies to make a physical or digital copy of my thesis/research paper/project report for its preservation, for public reference, and for the purpose of inter-library loan.
3. I consent to have my attached thesis used in any publication comprising Caribbean Studies Projects by The University of the West Indies. I understand that I will receive no compensation. I hereby assign publishing rights for the contribution to The University of the West Indies, including all copyrights.

Signature of Student: _____ Jolie Wong _____ Date: ____07/05/20____

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
The Office of the Board for Undergraduate Studies

INDIVIDUAL PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

This declaration is being made in accordance with the University Regulations on Plagiarism (First Degrees, Diplomas and Certificate) and should be attached to all work submitted by a student to be assessed as part of or/the entire requirement of the course, other than work submitted in an invigilated examination.

Statement

1. I have read the Plagiarism Regulations as set out in the Faculty Handbook and University websites related to the submission of coursework for assessment.
2. I declare that I understand that plagiarism is the use of another's work pretending that it is one's own and that it is a serious academic offence for which the University may impose severe penalties.
3. I declare that the submitted work indicated below is my own work, except where duly acknowledged and referenced.
4. I also declare that this paper has not been previously submitted for credit either in its entirety or in part within the UWI or elsewhere.
5. I understand that I may be required to submit the work in electronic form and accept that the University may check the originality of the work using a computer-based plagiarism detection service.

TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT – Contemporary Poetics of Mythification in Indian-Trinidadian Poetry:
Danielle Boodoo-Fortuné and Shivanee Ramlochan

COURSE CODE – HUMN 3099

COURSE TITLE - CARIBBEAN STUDIES PROJECT

STUDENT ID - 816000234

By signing this declaration, you are confirming that the work you are submitting is original and does not contain any plagiarised material.

I confirm that this assignment is my own work, and that the work of other persons has been fully acknowledged.

SIGNATURE – Jolie Wong

DATE – 07/05/20

Acknowledgements

The completion of this paper would not have been possible without the help of my incredible support system. My sincerest gratitude goes to my family for providing me with the time, space and snacks needed to complete this project, to Gabriel for providing feedback on every section, to Kelan for long hours of listening to me explain and re-explain my thesis till it made sense, and to Dr. Maharaj for enthusiastically agreeing to supervise this paper. I would also like to thank Ms. Jennifer DeSilva and Ms. Megan Marshall for their patience and assistance through my difficulties with participating in this course.

Abstract

This project analyses a poetics of mythification that evolved out of the Caribbean modernist tradition exemplified in the debut collections of Danielle Boodoo-Fortuné and Shivane Ramlochan. These poets mythify the contemporary Caribbean situation through techniques that establish visibility and historicity for the Indian-Caribbean women whose historiography rendered her largely invisible and inaudible. This strategy is used to counter colonial myths that disenfranchised Caribbean people to facilitate their subjugation. Each chapter elucidates a facet of colonial myth and demonstrates how it is dismantled and countered by Boodoo-Fortuné and Ramlochan's poetics of mythification. Chapter one, "Myth of Caribbean History" examines how colonial historiography erased and distorted the Caribbean past, which estranges Caribbean individuals from their history and engenders fragmentary memory. Chapter two "Myth of Decolonization" focuses on the insidious framework of colonialism which has persisted in the decolonization process and perverted creolization efforts by dividing Caribbean people into cultural hierarchies. Chapter three "Myth of Gender Equality" scrutinizes the gender binaries maintained by ineffective decolonization processes and shows how a culture of rape endures under the guise of an equitable Caribbean society.

Keywords: myth, poetics of mythification, matrilineal genealogy, double agent.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Appendices	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter One: <u>Myths of Caribbean History</u>	6
Chapter Two: <u>Myths of Decolonization</u>	11
Chapter Three: <u>Myths of Equality</u>	18
Conclusion	31
Works Cited	32
Appendix A	a
Appendix B	A

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Danielle Boodoo-Fortuné: *Doe Songs*

“The Blue House” _____ a

“Five Songs for Petra” _____ c

Appendix B: Shivanee Ramlochan: *Everyone Knows I am a Haunting*

“Catching Devi and Shakuntala” _____ A

“The Red Thread Cycle: I On the Anniversary of the Rape” _____ C

Introduction

The Caribbean canon came into being in the early 20th century riding on the crest of many writers' exposure to modernism. Caribbean writers rejected the colonizing strictures of this European philosophical movement but were certainly impacted by its inescapable influence. The term coined by Edouard Glissant, 'irruption into modernity,' captures the encounter well. Simon Gikandi similarly speaks of the "modernization of African cultures in the Caribbean" (14) as a counter-discourse to colonial historiography that monopolizes history in a "highly functional fantasy of the West" (Glissant qtd. in Gikandi 9) that dehumanizes the colonized.

In *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*, Simon Gikandi states that "the central categories of European modernity - history, national language, subjectivity - have value only when they are fertilized by figures of the "other" imagination" (Gikandi 4). These categories would equally form the basis of a regional modernism which "implies an ongoing and unceasing reversionary and innovative strategy that has its roots in the deepest layers of that past that still addresses us" (Harris qtd. in Gikandi 4). Poets such as Derek Walcott and Lorna Goodison were influenced by this movement and established what one may call techniques of mythification which were later adopted and expanded by the contemporary poets being examined in this study, Danielle Boodoo-Fortuné and Shivanee Ramlochan. Moreover if postmodernism is considered a historical condition of disenchantment with the world that prompts a critique of idealistic modernist assumptions then Boodoo-Fortuné and Ramlochan can be considered as fully immersed in a postmodernist condition unlike their modernist impacted predecessors.

In many ways therefore this project aims to continue where Gikandi left off. One issue that emerges from his seminal work is the African-Caribbean androcentric dominance of the early canon, an outcome of the black-white dichotomy underlying the creolization process. This dichotomy also underwrites some of the issues confronting Caribbean feminism which has often been engaged mainly with a black diasporic criticism and thus a transplanting of the global north's agenda. Thus non-African, Caribbean feminist works are often overlooked. The belatedness of this body of work is important in this scenario. The first novel written by an Indian-Caribbean woman was published as recently as 1990 by Trinidadian writer, Lakshmi Persaud, only thirty years prior to this paper and twenty-nine years after the male Indian-Trinidadian writer, V.S. Naipaul achieved a pinnacle moment in his career with the publication of his ground-breaking novel *A House for Mr Biswas*, itself significantly impactful against the previous lack in representation of the non-African-Caribbean experience. Both these writers' works demonstrate nonetheless that Trinidad's cultural confluence offers fecund ground for mythogenesis. This paper updates the Caribbean literary discourse that their novels helped to generate by offering this first academic criticism of Boodoo-Fortuné's *Doe Songs* and Ramlochan's *Everyone Knows I Am a Haunting*, their debut collections published in 2018 and 2017 respectively. This study argues that this new generation of Indian-Trinidadian poets revision and critique the modernist, decolonization project of their precursors who revised the colonial canon to establish a creole identity through a poetics of mythification.

In *Mythography: the Study of Myths and Rituals*, William Doty reminds us that myth is “an attempt to express the quality and range of human existence, its emotional, aesthetic, and moral aspects. Myth is not unsophisticated science but sophisticated poetic enunciation of meaning and significance” (94-95). Given that their poetics share these aims and goals, in this

study the term poetics of mythification is used to discuss what the poetic techniques are. Moreover, the study shows that through their poetics of mythification, Boodoo-Fortuné and Ramlochan (re)present a diversity of female Indian-Caribbean mythologies varied in their subjectivities and fluid identities but all at home in the poets' Trinidads. Boodoo-Fortuné's approach is ethnically generalized but resoundingly Caribbean, the imagery is localized and familiar. Her mythified Trinidad is populated by fluid mother/daughters: Carib great-grandmothers with feline hearts, and great-granddaughters who divine the spirits dwelling in natural and domestic spaces. Ramlochan specifies from other Indian-Trinidadian perspectives, naming locales such as Barrackpore, Her poetics engage with a Trinidad wherein Hindu goddesses manifest as daughters who kiss and run, and Lady Macbeth is the queen of carnival. These vital contributions demand a re-evaluation of mythology and its relationship to the Caribbean's conceptualization of history and poetry.

The concept and technique of the poetics of mythification have not been applied widely, particularly in Caribbean literary criticism. It has most prominently been utilized by Eleazar Melatinsky in *The Poetics of Myth* in which the work of James Joyce, a high-modernist writer whose "ideas of archetypes from the collective unconscious... transform the modernist conceptions of repetition, substitution of characters, and the fragility of the human psyche into a true poetics of mythification... expressed in mythical imagery and models" (145). Melatinsky accounts for the origin of the technique in 19th Century novelists who renounced realism in favour of the poetics of mythification which

presupposes some friction between Universal psychology and history, a syncretic and pluralist attitude toward mythological themes [that create a cyclical narrative structure] and... is also characterized by inter-changeability of roles (masks) to emphasize

mutuality and fluidity of narrative protagonists. Mythical parallels and symbols are used to structure descriptions of contemporary life and internal reflections (145)

This poetics of mythification found in modernist prose springs from a “vast knowledge of classical culture and religion, [and] modern theories of myth and psychology” (151) "using etymology to reconstruct history" (145). The distinctions between modernism and postmodernism continues to be subject to debate. For the purposes of this project the interpretation of postmodernism as a critical continuation of modernism, not a separate movement of entirely new ideas, is applied. Therefore when modernist ideas are referenced, it is the theory updated with postmodernism. Caribbean modernism incorporates: anti-realism, faction, collage, temporal distortion, and linguistic innovation. Within the poetics of mythification the assimilative reality constructed by a linear colonial historiography collides with the collage of diverse Caribbean mythologies. The collage form offers the simultaneity of past, present and future engendering fecund symbolic possibilities.

The relationship between Caribbean history and mythology can be traced to the ‘colonial myth’ insinuating that the enslaved Africans have no history; thus rejecting their humanity to justify their enslavement. The colonial myth is foundational to both the psychological subjugation from which the enslaved were controlled as well as the historiography of the ex-colonies. This has created a fragmentation of Caribbean individuals’ ontological consciousness, in which they are unable to contextualize their existence through the backwards glance of historical reflection. Walcott and Goodison have broken ground on a particular evolution of Caribbean Modernism wherein history is expressed as mythology to achieve a more authentic historicity for Caribbean peoples. Goodison, in particular, has pioneered a feminine style of this poetics of mythification which Boodoo-Fortuné and Ramlochan have expanded and evolved

through their diverse perspectives. This technique offers a counter-discourse to the colonial myth that: opposes the duplicitous objective of colonial historicity to facilitate an understanding of the historiography of colonial oppression, and offers an alternative, equally legitimate model for understanding to this from the perspective of the descendants of the oppressed groups, acknowledging the erasure of their stolen history by re-evaluating assumptions of historical facts and embracing cultural truths.

This project analyses how Boodoo-Fortuné and Ramlochan innovate a poetics of mythification that dismantle the colonial myth, and establish mythological realities that allow visibility and historicity for the Indian-Caribbean women whose historiography became one of subjugation and erasure. Each chapter delineates how these poets modify this technique pioneered by their literary predecessors to tackle a facet of the colonial myth. Chapter one, "Myth of Caribbean History" explores the authoring of Caribbean historiography by colonial powers and its ontological trauma on the formerly enslaved and indentured groups. Walcott and Goodison establish the representation of this erasure by imbuing memory within Caribbean landscape to which Boodoo-Fortuné responds. Chapter two, "Myth of Decolonization" counteracts the insidious framework of colonialism which has persisted in the decolonization process and perverted the creolization efforts to divide the Caribbean people into cultural hierarchies. Ramlochan does for Indian-Caribbean women what Goodison has to empower and diversify the representation of African-Caribbean women. Chapter four "Myth of Equality" focuses on the gender-based violence promoted by the colonial culture of domination which manifests as misogyny. Boodoo-Fortuné and Ramlochan elucidate and reject this misogynistic legacy by empowering Caribbean women through mythified realities.

Chapter One: Myths of Caribbean History

Colonial historiography has monopolized the Caribbean understanding of history as an objective, totalizing narrative of factual events. It defines history as a linear temporality in which the past becomes deadened, detracting from the memory of Caribbean people in what Walcott calls “the true history of the New World”, the inheritance of the Caribbean people- amnesia (“The Muse of History” 39). This amnesia licenses the legacy of imperialism by nullifying the atrocious exploitation of colonization, the transatlantic slave trade and indentureship. Thus Caribbean people are estranged from their history, unable to bridge the gap between the colonial and independent eras. Thus, they cannot identify the repercussions of colonialism in the present or predict future effects. Therefore, Walcott rejects “the concept of historical time in favour of the presumably timeless universality of myth” (Webb 3) to remedy the historical amnesia levied by colonialism’s traumatic blow to their consciousness.

The sea has facilitated the expansions of European territories through colonization and the transatlantic slave trade as well as the figurative and literal divisions between Caribbean nations. These ideas are encapsulated in Walcott’s mythification of the sea as an agent of colonial historiography:

Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The Sea is History. (“The Sea is History” 364)

This poem is elucidated by Walcott symbolizing the middle passage as an “amnesiac loss of the names and gods of ancestral Africa” (Ismond 106). However, he does not advocate for African revival which is "new names for old things, or old names for new things" (Ismond 106). The

Caribbean endeavour to revive the tribal memory has begotten a “literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves or a literature of remorse by the descendants of masters. Because this literature serves historical truth, it yellows into polemic or evaporates into pathos” (Walcott "The Muse of History" 37). Walcott’s combined heritage from both the colonizer and colonized positions him to reconcile the two as critical to establishing a Caribbean culture. Thus, he advocates New World renewal through a faith in which the old names of the colonial tradition are renewed through ‘the task of naming/discovery which is a prime necessity of the region as a new territory’ (Ismond 107). He engages with these renewed names/metaphors “to subvert the constructs of its history, and to recover timeless, primal values from the reaches of prehistory” (Ismond 107). Therefore Walcott utilizes the old names of biblical allusion to name/discover Caribbean history, wherein the New Testament becomes an allegory for emancipation. By overlapping biblical mythology with historical chronology, myth is used as “the first state of a still-naïve historical consciousness” (Glissant “History and Literature” 70), to anticipate and produce history:

and that was Emancipation—

.....

But that was not history

that was only faith,

and then each rock broke into its own nation;

.....

there was a sound

like a rumour without any echo

of History, really beginning. (“The Sea is History” 364)

Walcott rejects colonial history by marking the beginning of Caribbean history at independence when “each rock broke into its own nation” (364) and not at emancipation because that period maintained colonial governance reinforcing past hegemonic hierarchies. However, Walcott reconciles the European-African dynamic instead of rejecting the European influence on the region. Since the European modernist space is “too compromised (it carries all the baggage of enslavement and colonization) and the African terrain is inaccessible, [writers like Walcott have] sought to position his art and discourse in a "twilight" consciousness between the ancestral sources and the colonizing structures” (Gikandi 12). In Walcott’s twilight the sun has set on the British Empire and the present moment is the continuing process of decolonization and creolization. His mythification of history creates an in-betweeness of past and present as he believes “history is fiction, subject to its fitful muse, memory” (“The Muse of History” 37). This mythification also repeats “to the New World... its simultaneity with the Old [in which the] vision of man is elemental, a being inhabited by presences, not a creature chained to his past” (“The Muse of History” 37).

Boodoo-Fortuné’s work springboards from that of Walcott, adopting the Adamic role of renaming and his methods of mythification in wrestling with the inheritance of her myriad history. Her poem, “The Blue House”, responds to his “The Sea is History” grounded in a familiar Caribbean landscape. In Boodoo-Fortuné’s poem, the sea is everywhere, collocated in marine imagery such as “the boats”, “the shore” and “shells,” which are linked to the blue images of the boat that “is as blue as my great grandmother's house” and the “Grey-blue” “lore” (“The Blue House” 48). Paradoxically, these images reflect a distance from it as the persona only experiences “the murmur of the sea” (48). This represents the disconnection between the

contemporary Caribbean people and their 'tribal memory.' Memory itself is analysed through an engagement with landscape: the name of the great-grandmother who represents a not-so-distant past "is seaglass, in my memory, smooth, cool and unknowable" (48). This fulfils Walcott's prediction that "In time every event becomes an exertion of memory and is thus subject to invention. The further the facts, the more history petrified into myth. Thus, as we grow older as a race, we grow aware that history is written, that it is a kind of literature without morality" ("The Muse of History" 37). Therefore, the disconnection from the tribal memory is likened to seaglass, a symbol of the psychic fragmentation that has undergone the additional distortion of being forcibly worn to unrecognizable smoothness. For the contemporary person, the tribal memory is as volatile as "lore... tossed in the gust of each telling" and "footprints" "from the surf" ("The Blue House" 48) and "amnesia is the true history of the New World... [the] inheritance... of resignation, an essential fatalism. But it is not the pressure of the past which torments great poets but the weight of the present" (Walcott "The Muse of History" 37). This fatalist weight hinders the persona from pursuing her innate, genealogical connection with:

A boy with my bones
walks past me, a boat's old engine
perched on his shoulder
like a great rusted gull.
.....
ghosts in each other's history. (48)

In Boodoo-Fortuné's mythology, "ghosts... bloom up from bones [because] it is not so simple to bury a memory" ("The Gardener's Daughter Writes Home" 44). Through the concept of haunting, her poetics of mythification expresses a simultaneity of past within the present:

elemental woman gardens memories within her bones. The “boat’s old engine” (48) symbolizes the anachronous connection to the tribal memory, and the allusion to the albatross or “great rusted gull” illustrates the burden of this condition. Unlike the gradual progression of many European countries, Caribbean historical consciousness “came together in the context of shock, contraction, painful negation, and explosive forces [resulting in the] dislocation of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all” (Glissant, “Quarrel with History” 62). One cannot construct an identity under these conditions without immense trauma. This is symbolized by the persona’s severed lineage resulting in her fatalistic attitude of re-membering history as futile. The poem “neither explains nor forgives history. It refuses to recognize it as a creative or culpable force” (Walcott “The Muse of History” 37). Thus the persona will:

chant litanies of names,

but nothing comes to me.

Nothing lasts here

but the murmur of the sea. (“The Blue House” 48)

Chapter 2: Myths of Decolonization

Colonialism monopolized every aspect of the colonies from the institutions to the ideologies authorizing institutional exploitation. One such ideological tool is the hierarchical division of cultures used to justify enslavement. This has stratified the European cultures' dominance over those of the enslaved Africans by positing an arbitrary binary opposition between the two cultural groups. Within this colonial myth, European cultures are the products of established civilization and true religion whereas African cultures comprise a civilizational incapability and barbaric paganism. Thus the exploitation of involuntary, free labour was justified and disguised as charitable evangelism through offering salvation to the unenlightened savages. This charity was ironically enforced by the prohibition of African religious and cultural practices.

In *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post-Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity*, Puri disentangles the complex historical relationship between African and Indian-Trinidadians. After 1834 when slavery was abolished in Trinidad, enslavement was replaced by indentureship to maintain the plantation economy. Indentured labour and slave labour consisted of similar working and living conditions but differed in two ways: indentured Indians were not considered property or stripped of their humanity in the ways that enslaved Africans were, and indentureship was theoretically restricted to contractual limits (Puri 171). Indentured Indians entered a colonial society already hierarchized within the European/African binary opposition and were placed tentatively between the two groups and arbitrarily mixed with the problematic products of miscegenation. Puri laments:

it is one of the great ironies of decolonization in Trinidad that racial tensions have taken the form of lateral hostility between blacks and Indians (the two largest ethnic groups, with their own different but overlapping histories of exploitation), rather than vertical hostility directed by blacks and Indians together against the French Creole elite, the white ex-plantocracy, or transnational capital. (172)

This success of the colonial hierarchy was also accomplished through binary opposition between the two subjugated cultural groups. “In 1888, the British colonialist James Anthony Froude... mobilized: [binaries of] the thriftless African/the thrifty Indian; the lazy African/the hard-working Indian; the childlike African unable to control his sexual appetites/the calculating and ascetic Indian” (Puri 172-173). This hierarchy was enforced through colonial policies such as the “lowering of sugar wages that resulted from the increased supply of labour exacerbated race relations between these two poorest segments of Trinidadian society” (Puri 172) and the divisive, differential interference in Carnival and Hosay wherein “the subordinate assimilation of Afro-Trinidadians and the subordinate segregation of Indo-Trinidadians” led to them becoming “subordinate natives” and “subordinate foreigners” respectively (Puri 176). This created enmity within the African community for the partiality favouring the East Indian community. It likewise engendered a “Hindu high-cultural notion of intercultural contact as “contamination”” (Puri 196)

Therefore, the majority of early writers who considered themselves ‘Trinidadian’ or ‘Caribbean’ in the new post-independence era were those who fell into the colonial category of “subordinate *natives*” (Puri 176). Thus, the African-Caribbean dominance of the burgeoning literary canon facilitated decolonization through a creolization defined by and centring Africanness, eventually misconstruing the Caribbean as a complete subset of the African diaspora. In an attempt to establish a counter-discourse, the colonial imposition of European

hegemonic cultures was inverted in a way that maintains and reinforces the colonial structures of the myth of cultural binaries. This resulted in the erasure by assimilation of the East Indian and other cultures within the region within an Afrocentric framework. Thus, a proper counter-discourse to the colonialist cultural monopoly is the equal representation of diverse cultural perspectives.

Lorna Goodison is among those writers who adopted an Afrocentric approach to creolization within their work. Goodison follows in the legacy prominently established by Louise Bennett's centred image of the empowered, black Caribbean women. While this formed a vital counterbalance to the European, androcentric character of colonization, as well as the androcentric Caribbean canon, its long-standing singularity has eclipsed alternative representations of Caribbean women. Gikandi explains that writers like Goodison draw from an African source of meaning:

not in search of a cure for alienation and displacement, nor to overcome the psychological gap denoted by the middle passage, but to evolve a genealogy of his or her origins; this genealogy leads to the development of a radical consciousness of history, but it also actualizes the trauma of imperialism which has overrun the ancestors. (10)

Goodison mythifies the matrilineal line of her family's genealogy to represent both a model of colonization as well as a method of decolonization. Her great-grandmother is the titular, "Guinea Woman" characterized as "[s]lender and tall like a cane stalk/ with a guinea woman's antelope quick walk" (Goodison 64-65). Goodison's "blue-eyed grandmother/ the first Mulatta/ [was] taken into bukra's household/ and covered in his name" ("Guinea Woman" 64-65). The allusion to miscegenation infers a reality of enslavement and, in many cases, the sexual abuse of enslaved women by their male owners. Goodison signifies miscegenation as a dismantling of enslaved

persons' connection to their African cultures. This cultural hegemony assimilates the enslaved, represented by the covering in bukra's name. The grandmother's master/father, an apt symbol of colonial patriarchy, "controlled the child's antelope walk/ and called her uprisings rebellions" (64-65) thus erasing her connections to her enslaved mother, who symbolizes the African motherland. The 'antelope walk' illustrates the feminine wildness and connection to nature recurrent in Goodison's oeuvre. Goodison's creolization is marked by the return to an African cultural origin through the great-grandmother's "features blood dark appearing in the children of each new breeding" (64-65). The oratorical tone is used to portend to the succeeding generations, "Listen, children/ it's great grandmother's turn" (64-65). In mythifying a real genealogy, Goodison incorporates fact within her poetics of mythification to represent a Caribbean reality and a model of creolization. Imbuing a supernatural agency in the Guinea woman by symbolizing her return through the bloodline of the successive generations signifies the potential, not to restore, but reconnect to cultural roots in a region severed from its ancestral homelands.

However, this connection to the African motherland is but one among other mythological realities of Caribbean individuals, many of whom do not share Goodison's African ancestry. It also does not apply to those who, like Goodison, possess European heritage but, unlike Goodison, do not reject and attempt to erase this facet of their identity. Therefore, any method of creolization solely representing a single cultural source will, by the nature of representational singularity within the colonial structure, achieve totalizing dominance. This dominance will, in its inadequate representation, erase other cultures through assimilation. Creolization can only be an effective strategy of decolonization when its definition incorporates and establishes as equal the diverse cultures hosted within the region. Thus, mythologies from persons of East Indian descent, among others, become vital to equalizing the nuanced perspectives within assimilated

groups. Additionally, the inclusion of these nuanced perspectives dismantles the insidious myth of cultural binaries which can lead to the reconceptualization of race as not divisions but celebrations of difference.

Thus Ramlochan's poetics of mythification, by exploring a subjective experience of being East Indian in Trinidad, combat the colonial portrayal of Indian and African-Caribbean women as internally monolithic and binary opposites. Donnell coins the term "double agent" to combat the notion of double colonization wherein Caribbean women, instead of being "inevitably doubly disempowered... mobilise gender, as well as ethnicity and cultural identity, as a site of resistance and affirmation" ("Twentieth-Century" 138) to foster a "differentiated understanding of 'Caribbean woman' as both subject position and positioned subject" (139). The colonial binary oppositions were employed to divide and conquer the doubly colonized groups of women to maintain its racist and patriarchal power. Therefore, Louise Bennet's empowering representation of the "strong, black Caribbean woman... rooted in the soil [with] robust physicality and agency" (deCaires Narain 44-45) had been weaponized against the Indian-Trinidadian woman, casting her as: "voiceless, without agency and reduced to functioning as a commodity... to her sexuality [where] the battle between Indians and Africans takes place on her body" (Donnell "Twentieth Century" 173). Racist and patriarchal powers have been prominent in the cultures of the Asian and African continent as well. However, within a colonial society premised on domination, these issues demand to be analysed contextually, not posited as endemic to colonialism but, as enforced within.

Ramlochan appeals directly to rural Indian-Trinidadian women in "Catching Devi and Shakuntala" through Goodison's technique of the mythified matrilineal genealogy. Her work is grounded in the quotidian reality of Indian-Trinidadian life by reference to places such as

Barrackpore and Mosquito Creek; and Hindu cultural items such as ‘puja oil’ and bhajan books as the base upon which she crafts her poetics of mythification. The poem calls for the spiritual freedom of these women:

Pull the girl out of that body tonight

Be her grandmother...

swelling roti like bruises under skin.

Be her mother... with a cocoa pod

wet under her book of bhajans. (Ramlochan, “Catching Devi and Shakuntala” 51)

In this mythology a girl can leave her body to explore the lives of her mother and grandmother who have been characterized by their domestic and religious trappings wherein a culture of hidden violence is implied. In Ramlochan’s poetics of mythification, the “erotic is a meeting place of history and experience, of the material, the carnal and the spiritual. It is that distinctly female space from which Indo-Caribbean women transform, yet maintain, themselves” (Donnell “Twentieth-Century” qtd. Kanhai 176). She illustrates this by extending a matrilineal genealogy that maps the progress of removing social constraints on contemporary women:

Be the daughter that rises from her,

shortskirted and fullflamed

improbable & darkskinned

like wet mango leaves slick with puja oil on your palms. (51)

When the next generation of daughters are “slick with puja oil” (51), represented by a metempsychosis without death, the grip of misogynistic control becomes impotent. Ramlochan highlights various issues affecting Indian-Trinidadian such as colourism seen in the “improbable & darkskinned” daughter whose improbability is the perception resulting from hereditary efforts to decolour complexions for social mobility. Another issue that would provide nuanced representations to creolization is forced marriages particularly in rural Indian-Trinidadian communities that rob women of their sexual freedom. This is illustrated in the intergenerational juxtaposition of “the kajal your grandmother wept out before her wedding... [and] your daughter’s darkmouth on her lover” (51). Thus, Ramlochan uses a mythological disembodiment of women to separate them from their bodies which have become sites of abuse:

to pull every girl out of her body tonight

to ransom every woman from three canal

to cure every remedy in a ruined field

tell your daughters to run, run,

kiss,

flee. (51)

Within Ramlochan’s poetics of mythification, Indian-Trinidadian women can find justice; they can be ransomed and their legal remedies, which can entail the reliving of their rape, can be cured. In this mythological reality these women’s consent will no longer be disregarded, as it has been historically. Ramlochan’s focus on their perspectives dismantles the assimilative action of

creolization which has subjugated and commodified them for cultural politics. Sheila Rampersad writes that the Indian-Trinidadian woman has been

pulled on one hand by the Indian community which extrapolated its cultural integrity from her racial endogamy, and on the other by the African community which utilises her... [to test] the Indian community's wish to be truly Trinidadian, that is, creole... [in a debate not asking] whether the Indian woman should be exploited or not, but **who** has the **right** to exploit her. (qtd. in Donnell, "Twentieth-Century" 173)

In this mythological reality, mothers can tell their daughters to kiss and run, signifying their double agency to define and express their sexuality independent of patriarchal cultural politics.

By including the names Devi and Shakuntala in a collection populated by Hindu gods and goddesses, Ramlochan employs the two female icons as empty signifiers. Their presence can thus be subjectively interpreted: one can delve into the fecund figurative possibilities of divine manifestations or can interpret it as the simple naming of women in honour of these figures. As the formerly indentured group did not face the same cultural erasure and dehumanization levied on the enslaved by colonialism, their cultural inheritance remains influential in their present consciousness. Part of Indian-Trinidadian women's inheritance is a patriarchal, "historical pressure to be obedient, subservient and compliant in line with Hindu mythological precedent of Sita" "the virtuous, long-suffering and faithful bride of Rama" (Donnell "Twentieth Century" 173) whose myth is told each year in the celebration of Ramleela. Thus Ramlochan draws from the mother goddess Devi who represents shakti or female energy, and manifests throughout Hindu mythology as other goddesses. One such goddess is the fierce, dark-skinned warrior Kali who wears snakes as garlands reflected in: "your daughter's darkmouth on her lover, their hair in oiled snakes weeping bright" (51). These divine manifestations are linked to Indian literary

history in Shakuntala, the titular forest dwelling queen, and descended to the quotidian in rural Indian-Trinidadian women. This extends Ramlochan's matrilineal genealogy to bridge the Indian mythological and literary traditions to the contemporary Indian diaspora. Ramlochan's poetics of mythification expands the mythological tradition of gender roles to include a variety of interpretations of femininity, allowing these women to become 'double agents'.

This historiography of neglect inherited by Indian-Caribbean women results from the myth of decolonization that assumes the colonial hierarchy had been properly dismantled through creolization. The repercussions of this myth are the vestiges of binary hierarchies that maintain divisions and animosity between the formerly enslaved and indentured groups. Indian-Caribbean women face a double-colonization even within the early post-independence period due to their relative absence within the Afrocentric literary canon which modelled decolonization from the colonial framework. Therefore, Ramlochan's poetics of mythification function for Indian-Caribbean women as Goodison's did for the empowerment of African-Caribbean women. The manifold representations of Caribbean women allows for their transition from doubly colonized to double agents which will be further explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Myths of Gender Equality

Resulting from the misconception that decolonization successfully dismantled the structures of colonialism, these structures have continued to distort the post-independence conceptualization of gender, and sexuality. Patriarchal ideologies, such as the gender binary opposition, have been present in several cultures outside that of the European colonial powers, including within the African and Asian cultures that migrated to the Caribbean. Thus, Caribbean women were subjected to misogyny in every cultural sphere wherein each reverberation enforced another. Equivalent to the European/African dichotomy, the gender binary postulates that men and women are characteristically opposed and hierarchized wherein masculinity is superior to femininity. Colonialism, being predicated on patriarchal dominance and achieving regional hegemony, institutionalized systems wherein masculine superiority justifies and normalizes the sexual abuse and exploitation of women.

This institutionalized misogynistic violence exteriorized on the bodies of Caribbean women. Under enslavement, African women were dehumanized to breed a free source of labour for their owners. During indentureship, Indian women were imported to satisfy the demand of male, Indian sexual desires and a purist, Indian endogamy. Beyond indentureship, Indian-Caribbean women's bodies continued as a site of cultural and political negotiations between African and Indian-Caribbean men. Institutions of marriage and religion were used to entrap these women within their domestic and reproductive mores. These institutional restrictions do not police the sexuality and freedoms of their male counterparts. Instead, female sexuality is punished for the danger it poses to the patriarchal power of the various cultural groups. As with the European/African binary, subjugation must be enforced on the lower strata to maintain the

dominance of the upper strata, spawning a permissive culture of rape. This chapter uses Boodoo-Fortuné's "Five Songs for Petra" and Ramlochan's "I: On the Third Anniversary of the Rape" to deconstruct the myth of equality premised on the misconception that colonialist patriarchy had been demolished, and the assumption that its demolition inevitably led to an equitable Caribbean society.

In "Five Songs for Petra," Boodoo-Fortuné adapts Goodison's technique of mythifying matrilineal genealogies to address the relationship between colonialism and binary gender opposition in the Caribbean. All of Boodoo-Fortuné's narrating personas are fluid mother/daughter subjectivities, the titular Petra is the persona's great-grandmother whom she has never met, introduced through two contrasting perceptions:

They say my great-grandmother was mad,
but I like to think she flew into herself,
got trapped in her feline heart
and decided to stay there (76-77)

The first perception, of the wider society represented by "they", indicts Petra of madness while the second is the persona's mythified interpretation. These perceptions are reconciled by Dawes' examination of Boodoo-Fortuné's cosmology of 'haunting' wherein her poetic mythification constitutes "an existence defined by a strange osmosis between the spirit world and the temporal world [that diagnoses] a kind of madness, not as a condition of mental illness, but as a leap into... a spiritual sense of self" (12). The feline comparison engenders the volatile domesticity of cats' sexual moniker "pussy," and icon as "the primary lunar animal, the traditional witch's familiar" (Walker 149). This encapsulates the entanglement between wildness, femininity and deviant sexuality highlighted by juxtaposing Petra and her lover:

He was already married when he met her

.....

mother of his mad

children, she who would dare,

with her sharp white

teeth, to try and eat him alive (76-77)

The description of “mad children” references the first perception of Petra by the wider society that identifies her madness as insanity whereas the image of menacing teeth collocates with Petra’s feline wildness or madness. Walker explains in *The Woman’s Encyclopedia of Myths* that in classical times “everything that made a man feel attracted to a woman came to be synonymous to witchcraft... [and] moon-madness” (162) or “lunacy” (575). The sexual implication in the act of eating him alive is perceived as dangerously seductive in its ability to tempt a man “already married when he met her” (76-77). The lack of negative implication of his infidelity or sexual inclination infers a normalization that evidences the successful imposition of those gender binaries prominent during colonial rule defining male sexuality as an unobjectionable standard from which female sexuality deviates. This results in the classification of women whose sexual agency challenges patriarchal standards as ‘mad,’ exemplified by Petra.

Petra displays Donnell’s double agency by refusing these patriarchal standards of male sexual desire, culminating in her lover’s expulsion:

the beasts around the bed

would not let him in.

The house bulged

with books and bared

teeth (76-77)

The juxtaposition of beasts and ‘bared teeth’ portrays Petra as menacing, revealing her power to dismantle the patriarchal imposition to which she is subjected. The house’s appropriation of Petra’s teeth symbolizes the reclamation of domestic spaces; fitting Petra’s “leaning house” (76-77) into Dwyer’s concept of “ruins as revelatory fragments of a larger historical narrative” (Dwyer 434). The persona attempts to connect with Petra by inhabiting her house:

I slept there once, long after her death,
my body rocked between the walls by
a slow August earthquake.

.....

That was how I found her (76-77)

The “strange osmosis between the spirit world and the temporal world” (Dawes 12) in this mythology recurs wherein Petra’s spirit, through her house, cradles and rocks her great-granddaughter. By applying her poetic mythification to establish a spiritual link between the present, in the contemporary persona, and the past in the present, represented in the house, Boodoo-Fortuné proposes a non-linear temporality wherein there exists a simultaneity of past and present. “The syllables of her name/ rolled through the broken windows like/ swollen fruit and grating metal” (76-77) reinforces this wherein the “swollen fruit” and “grating metal” similes represent the coexistence of fertility and ruin, in which the fragmented past can bear fruits for the future. The female body is thus linked with landscape through the shared colonial exploitation of their fertility.

Boodoo-Fortuné explores the female body as a repository of history or as “a site of ruin, an animate embodiment of decay and trauma which serves as one of colonialism’s mnemonics in

the present” (Dwyer 437). In the same way the Caribbean landscape was harvested for colonial indulgence, so too was the female body:

What is this body
if not a map of punctures,
a glossary of bruises? (Boodoo-Fortuné, “Coronary II” 58)

The metaphors of maps and glossaries infer that the female body can be used to locate and reference the historiography of abuse Caribbean women have suffered. “The body becomes not only a manifestation of the injustice of empire and therefore a metaphorical site of history, but is also one physical site where brutal acts are enacted and ultimately, history made” (Dwyer 437-438). Thus, in Boodoo-Fortuné’s poetics of mythification, the ruins of the female body can be used to remember and re-member the past.

Boodoo-Fortuné mythifies Glissant’s idea that “in the absence of local historiography, Caribbean landscape is its own monument... to re-establish a dialectic between landscape and history and between culture and the natural world” (DeLoughrey 268). Thus Petra’s spirit also inhabits the landscape around her house as the “broken hill” correlates to the “leaning house” (76-77). This also links Petra to the medieval iteration of “witch” as “nymph” “since both descended from pre-Christian priestesses [and as] spirits of nature the "nymphs" were believed to embed their souls forever in certain parts of the natural world” (Walker 732) “Even now, "nymphomania" connotes sexual obsession, like the moon-madness” (Walker 732). Petra being a “half-Carib woman with a forest in her bones” (76-77) correlates to the trees on this hill being “burdened with moss and too much hunger” (76-77) which alludes to “To Enter My Mother’s House” in which:

The Heron god created daughter

.....

[giving her] the longing

left over from creation

.....

[Thus, she] is always hungry (Boodoo-Fortuné 7-8)

The condition of hunger and longing is shared by all mother/daughters of the Caribbean including Petra and her great-granddaughter, "If I go mad, like she did/ I wonder if you would stay" (76-77). This longing is compensated in Boodoo-Fortuné's poetics of mythification by the matrilineal inheritance of the female body and the spiritually-imbued natural and domestic spaces. This inheritance represents a "process by which social and subjective identities are formed... [and] a dialectic between the land and its residents... rooted in the region's violent history, and unprecedented upheaval and relocation of European, Asian, and African peoples and cultures, rapidly condensed, creolized, and reformulated" (DeLoughrey 265). This creates an alternative historicity that empowers Caribbean women and can rival the constructed legitimacy of patrilineal name and property succession that, in the colonizer's families, enabled the inheritance of estates that included plantations and housing as well as female bodies. Despite Petra possessing no surname to bequeath the persona because "Her name [merely] juts from the borders of his own" (76-77), the persona inherits the domestic and natural spaces in which women have been historically trapped which has been re-membered as a mythified empowerment.

"I: On the Third Anniversary of the Rape" the first of Ramlochan's five part poem, "The Red Thread Cycle", illustrates how sexual violence is used as a means of silencing women to maintain the supremacy of patriarchy. The poem concatenates mythologies of various cultures

that established Caribbean civilization and locates their reverberations in contemporary Trinidad. Through the use of mythologically-resonant language:

one touches upon primitive energies, captures elements of the unconscious and sub-rational qualities of the human situation... The search for a cure of souls that might point to the requirement of a distinctive and definable level of belief mingles with the vague-yet irreducibly full- echoes that follow on the patterning out of mythical allusion.

(Righter 43)

This poem demonstrates a wielding of the inherited mythological form that questions the boundaries between the conscious and subconscious. In articulating the contemporary reality of rape the poem delineates cycles of violence in colonisation, assimilation, erasure, and silencing.

“I: On the Third Anniversary of the Rape” the persona reflects on the reporting of the crime:

Don’t say Tunapuna Police Station.

Say you found yourself in the cave of a minotaur, not knowing how you got there, with a lap of red thread.

.....

Give the minotaur time to write in the police ledger. Lap
the red thread

around the hummingbird vase (Ramlochan 35-36)

This trauma is mystified by defamiliarizing the police station as the minotaur’s cave. The classical Greek minotaur, the half-man, half-bull, dwells at the centre of King Minos’s labyrinth.

“Minos was a Lord of Death and an underworld judge... [thus the] mystic meaning of the labyrinthine design was a journey into the otherworld and out again... almost always connected with a cave” (Walker 523). Thus the policeman/minotaur is at the centre of the persona’s

otherworld or labyrinthine justice system which she must enter and escape. “The cave was universally identified with the womb of Mother Earth, the logical place for symbolic birth and regeneration” (Walker 154). Thus, the recollection of the incident each year signifies the persona’s self-regeneration. The red thread conjures the Greek Fates and thread, or that which proceeds through a course connecting successive elements, represents this as a fated step in the journey of abused women. In connection to the labyrinth, it signifies Ariadne’s spool which Theseus used to escape after slaying the minotaur. Ariadne is one of the Greek women of weaver myths, in company with Philomena whose tongue was cut off post-rape leading her to depict the crime with her loom to seek revenge. This practice was transferred to the more permanent material of vases. Hence the “hummingbird vase” becomes the silenced persona’s way to not:

say forced anal entry.

Say you learned that some flowers bloom and die
at night. say you remember stamen, filament,
cross-pollination, say that hummingbirds are

vital to the process. (35-36)

In this euphemism, the ‘stamen’ becomes a phallus, the ‘filament’ the red thread, and cross-pollination the act of rape. The death and rebirth as “some flowers bloom and die at night” corresponds to the labyrinthine journey which the hummingbird, with its multi-directional flight, symbolizes the ability to navigate and escape.

Ramlochan’s poetics of mythification allows women to draw on an alternative language or system of signs to voice their experiences of gender-violence. NourbeSe Philip argues:

Rape, writing and language [has] become inseparably linked: the Caribbean writer confronts this most profoundly in the proposition that she must create in a language– the father tongue, English, the public language in which the private self was forced to find expression– while the creole mother tongue... was silenced or dis/placed into marronage. (Forbes 80)

The groups of subjugated Caribbean people were forced into using the languages of their colonizers, languages with a system of signs saturated with cultural, racial and gender binaries that undermine their agency and perpetuates negative myths about them. Therefore, with the gender binaries that persist in the Caribbean, women cannot express their abuse through “the father tongue” without implicating themselves. This inevitably leads to a silencing even within a society that criminalizes rape:

Say engineer of aerosol deodorant because pepper spray is illegal,
anything is illegal
Fight back too hard, and it’s illegal,
>your nails are illegal

Don’t say you have a vagina, say
he stole your insurance policy/ your bank boxes, your first car
downpayment

Say
he took something he’ll be punished for taking,
not something you’re punished for holding

like red thread between your thighs. (35-36)

Colonial vestiges are present in the criminalization of victimhood wherein methods of self-defence are illegal. Therefore, those that defend themselves feel the silencing pressure of self-incrimination. Being a woman is incrimination within patriarchal culture that perceives women as seductress, whose sexuality infringes upon male power. Within the objectification of women expressed in law-enforcement, possessions such as “your bank boxes, your first car downpayment” (35-36) are ironically valued more than human women.

Within this alternative language the persona, who has been linked to Ariadne and Philomela, becomes Lady Macbeth as “the Queen of Carnival” (35-36). The cyclical history of conquest by assimilation, from the Greeks and Romans in Europe to European colonization in the New World, culminates in the inheritance of mythologies as well as institutional hierarchies of oppression which the enslaved Africans combatted through cultural syncretisation. This mythological contextualization undermines the inherence of Britain’s supremacy and exposes the institutionalized power under which women are othered and subject to violation. It also acknowledges the Caribbean as an original site of globalisation in which various cultures commingle yet maintain cultural distinction. The persona is encouraged to:

Recite Macbeth for the tropics.

Lady Macbeth was the Queen of Carnival

and she stabbed Banquo with a vagrant’s shiv during J’ouvert.

She danced a bloody dingolay (35-36)

The Greek, English and Caribbean mythologies are threaded together with the Greek mythology, Shakespeare’s literary reinterpretation and the African interpretation of the French masquerade to delineate the literary canon from which Caribbean mythification is built. In Trinidad, Carnival

was born out of a cultural silencing wherein enslaved Africans were prohibited from participating in French masquerades. Thus, the enslaved used their own mythic traditions to create an alternative expression. J'ouvert coincided with emancipation thus became an expression of freedom. Coincidentally Caribbean carnival resembles the Greek carnival that evolved from Dionysia, the festival of Dionysus the god of wine and revelry, husband of Ariadne. In Dionysia, followers disguised themselves as satyrs and paraded the streets as J'ouvert Jab-Jabs do, covered in transgressive mud and paint. The invocation of Lady Macbeth reminds of her soliloquy:

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty. (Shakespeare 1:5:30-38)

She begs for a transgressive transformation, to be stripped of her femininity which, influenced by gender binaries, she believes hinders her desires for regicide and usurpation. Through her mythic ritual, she enables herself to transcend her perceived gender confinements to commit murder. Ramlochan's persona is tempted to commit the symbolic regicide of breaking the gender hierarchy. She fantasizes wearing the stereotype of the suspiciously usurping woman embodied by Lady Macbeth as her "mud and glitter so far steeped that going back is not an option" (35-36) and taking revenge into her own hands to dance that "bloody dingolay" (35-36).

Conclusion

This project introduces the concept of poetics of mythification to Caribbean literature through the debut collection of Boodoo-Fortuné and Ramlochan. These contemporary Indian-Caribbean women employ their poetics of mythification to counter colonial myths intended to divide and conquer the groups of formerly enslaved and indentured people. Colonial authorship of Caribbean history has created an amnesia that quashes Caribbean people's ability to conceptualize a chronology of their past that connects to their present experiences while the trauma of colonial horrors continue to shape their identities. Boodoo-Fortuné illustrates this amnesia through a mythified existence wherein the past haunts the present but traumatized fatalism induces persons to ignore latent connections and reject the re-membering of their fragmented histories.

Early attempts at decolonization creolized Caribbean literature through a return to an African tribal memory which worked conjointly with colonial laws to divide the African and Indian-Caribbean people. Ramlochan counteracts this division's assimilative double-erasure of Indian-Caribbean women by creating a mythified Trinidad in which these women can be sexually and otherwise empowered. Through their poetics of mythification, both poets empower Indian-Caribbean women to become double-agents who wield their sexuality and mythological traditions to repudiate the multifarious cultures that promote their silencing through abuse.

Works Cited

- Boodoo-Fortuné, Danielle. "Coronary II". *Doe Songs*, Peepal Tree Press, 2018, pp. 58.
- , "Five Songs for Petra". *Doe Songs*, Peepal Tree Press, 2018, pp. 76-77.
- , "The Blue House." *Doe Songs*, Peepal Tree Press, 2018, pp. 48.
- , "To Enter My Mother's House". *Doe Songs*, Peepal Tree Press, 2018, pp. 7-8.
- Dawes, Kwame. *Coming Up Hot: Eight New Poets from the Caribbean*. Peekash Press, UK, 2015.
- deCaires Narain, Denise. "Landscape and Poetic Identity in Contemporary Caribbean Women's Poetry." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 38, no. 2-3, John Hopkins University Press, 2007, pp. 41-64. <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/ariel/article/view/31224/25307>
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. "Ecocriticism: The Politics of Place". *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, edited by Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell, Routledge, London and New York, 2011, pp. 265-274.
- Donnell, Alison. *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary History*. Routledge, 2006.
- Doty, William. *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*. 2nd ed., University of Alabama Press, 2000.
- Dwyer, Dania. "Re-membering History: Aesthetics of Ruins in West Indian Postcolonial Poetry". *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, edited by Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell, Routledge, London and New York, 2011, pp. 432-440.

- Forbes, Curdella. "Marlene Nourbese Philip: This Space/Dis/Place Between: The Poetics and Philosophy of Body, Voice and Silence". *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, edited by Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell, Routledge, London and New York, 2011, pp. 78-84.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*. Cornell University Press, 2018. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/book.58024.
- Glissant, Eduoard. "The Quarrel with History". *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, translated by J. Michael Dash, University Press of Virginia, 1999, pp. 61-66.
- . "History and Literature". *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, translated by J. Michael Dash, University Press of Virginia, 1999, pp. 69-86.
- Goodison, Lorna. "Guinea Woman." *Lorna Goodison: Selected Poems*, University of Michigan Press, 2007, pp. 64-64.
- Melatinsky, Eleazar M. *The Poetics of Myth*. Routledge, 2000.
- Puri, Shalini. *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post/Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity*. Macmillan, 2004.
- Ramlochan, Shivancee. "Catching Devi & Shakuntala." *Everyone Knows I am a Haunting*, Peepal Tree Press, 2017, pp. 51.
- . "Red Thread Cycle I: On the Anniversary of the Rape." *Everyone Knows I am a Haunting*, Peepal Tree Press, 2017, pp. 35-36.
- Righter, William. *Myth and Literature*. Routledge & Paul, 1975.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Wordsworth Classics, 1997.
- Walcott, Derek. "The Muse of History." *What the Twilight Says: Essays*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, pp. 36-64.

-----."The Sea is History." *Derek Walcott: Collected Poems 1948-1984*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986, pp. 364-67.

Walker, Barbara G. *The Woman's Encyclopaedia of Myths and Secrets*. Harper San Francisco, 1983

Webb, Barbara J. *Myth and History in Caribbean Fiction: Alejandro Carpenter, Wilson Harris, and Edouard Glissant*. University of Massachusetts Press, 1992.

Appendix A: Danielle Boodoo-Fortuné: *Doe Songs*

THE BLUE HOUSE

The only thing I have
is my face.

Everything else is lore,
Grey-blue, deep-furrowed,
tossed in the gust
of each telling.

I walk the shore, sift words
from the surf with my footprints.
One of the boats here is as blue
as my great-grandmother's house
on the hill. Her name is sea-glass,
in my memory, smooth, cool
and unknowable.

A boy with my bones
walks past me, a boat's old engine
perched on his shoulder
like a great rusted gull.

We pass without speaking,

ghosts in each other's history.

I kneel, roll shells between my fingers,

chant litanies of names,

but nothing comes to me.

Nothing lasts here

but the murmur of the sea.

FIVE SONGS FOR PETRA

I

They say my great-grandmother was mad,
but I like to think she flew into herself,
got trapped in her feline heart
and decided to stay there.

II

He was already married when he met her.
Her name juts from the borders of his own,
half-Carib woman with a forest in her bones,
mother of his mad children, she who would dare,
with her sharp white teeth, to try and eat him alive.

III

They say my great-grandmother lived alone in the leaning house.
I slept there once, long after her death,
my body rocked between the walls by
a slow August earthquake.
I smelled her in the damp floorboards.
The syllables of her name
rolled through the broken windows like

swollen fruit and grating metal.

That was how I found her.

IV

He was already married when he met her,
but there was something about her that caught him, pierced his skin.

Her love was an unsheathed claw.

He waited, tunnelled around the flute
of her hip to find the sound
of himself.

But soon, the beasts around the bed
would not let him in. The house bulged
with books and bared teeth.

When she began to sing to the trees,
he decided it would be best
to remain whole.

V

There is a door that leads
down a broken hill. Trees grow there,
but are dark, burdened with moss
and too much hunger.

If she walked here with her dogs,
barefoot and half-blind, then
I might still find her.

If I go mad, like she did,
I wonder if you would stay.

Appendix B: Shivanee Ramlochan: *Everyone Knows I am a Haunting*

CATCHING DEVI AND SHAKUNTALA

Pull the girl out of that body tonight

Be her grandmother, sifting flour through fingernails,
swelling roti like bruises under skin.

Be her mother bound for Brasso with a cocoa pod
wet under her book of bhajans.

Be the daughter that rises from her,

shortskirted and fullflamed

improbable & darkskinned

like wet mango leaves slick with puja oil on your palms.

In a house on a hill giving birth to the sea,

all your daughters are waiting .

In the arms of the mangrove snaking under Mosquito Creek,

all your mothers are braiding.

In the kajal your grandmother wept out before her wedding,

In the kalsa spilling over,

In the bower of that Barrackpore night

in your daughter's darkmouth on her lover,

their hair in oiled snakes weeping bright,

bindis licked askew and limping over kisscured skin,

pleading

to pull every girl out of her body tonight

to ransom every woman from three canal

to cure every remedy in a ruined field

to tell your daughters to run, run,

kiss,

flee.

THE RED THREAD CYCLE

I: On the Third Anniversary of the Rape

Don't say Tunapuna Police Station.

Say you found yourself in the cave of a minotaur, not knowing how you got there, with a lap of red thread.

Don't say forced anal entry.

Say you learned that some flowers bloom and die
at night. say you remember stamen, filament,
cross-pollination, say that hummingbirds are

vital to the process.

Give the minotaur time to write in the police ledger. Lap
the red thread
around the hummingbird vase.

Don't say I took out the garbage alone and he grabbed me by the waist
and he was handsome.

Say Shakespeare. Recite Macbeth for the tropics.

Lady Macbeth was the Queen of Carnival

and she stabbed Banquo with a vagrant's shiv during J'ouvert.

She danced a bloody dingolay and gave her husband a Dimanche Gras
upbraiding.

I am in mud and glitter so far steeped that going back is not an option.

Don't say rapist.

Say engineer of aerosol deodorant because pepper spray is illegal,
anything is illegal

Fight back too hard, and it's illegal,

>your nails are illegal

Don't say you have a vagina, say

he stole your insurance policy/ your bank boxes, your first car
downpayment

Say

he took something he'll be punished for taking,

not something you're punished for holding

like red thread between your thighs.