WITHIN THE RESTLESS WAKE OF TRAUMA:

ORIGINS AND PURPOSES OF HAUNTINGS IN CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

by

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In this thesis, I have delved more deeply into a research paper I wrote for Dr. Seodial Frank H. Deena's graduate course in Caribbean Literature. I have extended my research by providing deeper historical background of the West Indies and the people who were subjugated and brutalized for the purposes of colonialism. The added historical research is necessary in making the connection between the origins of the cultural beliefs of the people of the West Indies (mysticism/spiritualism), the loss of identity they were forced to endure, the devastating trauma they experienced as their bodies were sacrificed to colonialism, and the consequential element of hauntings frequently found in the works of Caribbean writers. The Caribbean's history itself could be regarded as a restless spirit. Through history books that for years favored a flattering narrative of colonialism, its eulogy was erroneously delivered; its grave incorrectly marked. The overarching purpose of my research is to provide compelling evidence, through analysis of the works of Edgar Mittelholzer, Wilson Harris, and Jean Rhys, that the presence of hauntings in Caribbean literature is to expose the deep scars that have resulted from the insidious means of colonialism—hauntings which demand that the false narrative of American history be reviewed and set straight.

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INTRODUCTION: “A Shadow of History”

The story of the Caribbean is a story of colonialism and exploitation, with extreme trauma at its core. In an article she wrote about trauma theory, Sandra Bloom quoted psychiatrist Lenore Terr when she wrote, “…psychic trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assaults the person from outside. Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind” (Bloom). Terr could have been speaking specifically about the intense trauma experienced by the enslaved African people who were forced to serve colonialism’s objectives. It is no surprise, therefore, that many of the novels written by Caribbean authors present troubled, complex characters who must deal with the reverberating echoes of slavery and of indentureship, both of which were carried to the “new world” either aboard ships from Africa or from Asia and Central Asia. Ghostly apparitions in literature are often the embodiment of the past reaching into the present to demand redress, to exact revenge, or to bring about resolution. From Shakespeare to Charles Dickens to Neil Gaiman, novelists, playwrights, and poets down through the years have used the element of the supernatural to drive their plots, to deliver a message, and to engage their audiences in a world in which the dead still reside among and impact the living.

In today’s literary world, why is the element of the paranormal and ghostly apparitions so prevalent in Caribbean literature? With its dark, chaotic history of colonialism—punctuated by the trauma of genocide, slavery, and indentureship—and with its cultural fusion of Amerindians, Africans, and Indians, the West Indies[1] has produced authors who often include mysticism and the supernatural as key driving elements in their stories. In fiction, the primary purposes of

[1] The terms ‘West Indies’ and ‘Caribbean’ are used interchangeably; however, the West Indies specifically includes the Greater Antilles and the Lesser Antilles, while the Caribbean includes the areas of Mexico, Central America, and South America that border the Caribbean Sea.

hauntings and apparitions are often to maintain a connection between the dead and the living and to address an unresolved trauma. In the wake of colonialism's twisted version of history which has prevailed for years in text books, West Indian authors use the Gothic tradition of hauntings to summon the restless ghosts of slavery and exploitation, releasing them from the past and onto the page to address their grievances to the living and to demand recompense.

The attitude and purpose of European exploration can be summarized in the words of Christopher Columbus when, in a 1493 correspondence to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, he stated, "There I found very many islands, filled with innumerable people, and I have taken possession of them all for their Highnesses, done by proclamation and with the royal standard unfurled, and no opposition was offered to me" (Library of Congress). The geographical area of exploration and conquest to which Columbus was referring was the present-day lands of the Caribbean. For centuries, history books ennobled this era of imperial conquest by giving it the lofty title, 'Age of Exploration.' Although the history books have long suggested that he was a benign explorer who advanced the inevitable civilization of the native peoples of the previously unexplored lands, Christopher Columbus, carrying the flag of Spain, was clearly a conqueror with the conscience of an executioner. These were the same skewed narratives that attempted to place the explorer Columbus in a different category from the Spanish Conquistadors, when in fact, historical documents indisputably reveal that he was paid by Spain to completely disregard the rights of the inhabitants of the lands he explored. In his position as a transatlantic explorer, he was in fact a paid diplomat, representing the throne of Spain and as such, considered himself entitled to subjugate and enslave the people he encountered in his exploration and to take possession of their lands and all its resources, namely gold. Columbus's attitude as a conqueror is evident in his letter to Ferdinand and Isabella, when he wrote:

> ...the people here are simple in war-like matters, as your Highnesses will see by those seven which I have ordered to be taken and carried to Spain in order to learn our language and return, unless your Highnesses should choose to have them all transported to Castile, or held captive on the island. I could conquer the whole of them with fifty men, and govern them as I pleased. (Olson 114)

Before examining the impact of conquest on the native people of the Caribbean by the invading Europeans, one must first consider attitudes toward slavery prior to Columbus's voyages. The practice of widespread slavery can be traced back to the age-old conflict between Christians and Muslims in the area of the Mediterranean as the two groups contended for possession of the Holy Land. Surprisingly, in the middle of the 17th century, it has been estimated that there were more European slaves held in Islamic regions than there were Africans who had been forcibly shipped to the Americas as slaves. One major distinction, however, between the ways in which slavery was practiced by Islamic countries as opposed to how it was practiced by European colonialists can be narrowed to one word: race. As was the case in ancient civilizations such as Africa, Asia, Europe, and Pre-Columbian America, it was the custom of the warring Muslims to enslave captured enemies. As late as the 17th century, the enslavement of Europeans in northern Africa was a common practice. Robert Davis noted, "Slaves in Barbary [area of the Mediterranean along the northern coast of Africa] could be black, brown or white, Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish or Muslim. Contemporaries were too aware of the sort of people enslaved in North Africa to believe, as many do today, that slavery, whether in Barbary or the Americas, was a matter of race" (Davis).

The other major distinction between the two approaches to slavery was the attitude toward and the treatment of slaves. According to Bernard Shaw, the social expectations of slave

owners among Muslims required that they strictly observe the humanity of those people who were cast into slavery. This attitude of human decency with which the Islamic victors were admonished to exhibit toward slaves is in stark contrast to the egregious attitude of the Europeans whose treatment of the native people of the Caribbean and the African slaves resulted in the trauma of unspeakable shame, suffering, and death.

The indigenous inhabitants of the lands of the Caribbean--namely the Arawaks, the Caribs, and the Tainos--could not have been prepared for the trauma that was to come onto their shores from aboard the large Spanish ships. Only two years after his arrival in the Caribbean, Columbus had not only enslaved the indigenous people to work in mines (in his quest to acquire gold), but he had his men round up approximately 1600 indigenous people and take them to La Isabela in Hispaniola. From there, an estimated 500 of the fittest were taken to Spain to be slaves. By 1514, the population of the Tainos people, which is estimated to have been as many as one million people when Columbus first arrived, had been reduced to approximately 32,000 as a result of physical hardship, brutal mistreatment, and European diseases (Schimmer). Their decimation marked the first chapter of trauma inflicted by the hands of the Europeans in the Caribbean. As Martin Munro wrote of the native people of the West Indies, “These are the Caribbean’s oldest ghosts, almost invisible in history yet still present in the form of place names, fragments of language, ancient foods, and pockets of descendants speckling the islands” (Munro vii).

By the early 17th century, the English arrived in the Caribbean and began colonizing Antigua, Barbados, Montserrat, and Nevis. The French also arrived about the same time and established colonies in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Near the end of the 17th century, the sugar cane production of Brazil had been brought to many of the Caribbean islands. Until then, sugar

was an item afforded only by the wealthy elite of Europe. As the labor-intensive sugar cane plantations grew in the Caribbean, sugar became more readily available to the general European population, and the demand for what had once been a luxury item rapidly increased. Consequently, the plantation economy in the Caribbean rapidly grew, and with the greatly reduced indigenous population, the Europeans eventually turned to the active slave trade of the African west coast to fill the vacuum of labor.

It is estimated that by the 19th century, approximately 12 million men, women, and children from Africa were forced onto European sailing ships to endure the traumatic transatlantic voyage to the Caribbean. According to Ira Berlin, historian of slave trade in North America and the Atlantic World:

> Fear was omnipresent as the Africans, stripped naked and bereft of their every belonging, boarded the ships and met—often for the first time—white men. Brandishing red hot irons to mark their captives in the most personal way, these 'white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair' left more than a physical scar. Many enslaved Africans concluded the slavers were in league with the devil, if not themselves devils. For others, the searing of their skin confirmed that they were bound for the slaughterhouse to be eaten by the cannibals who had stamped them in much the way animals were marked. (Berlin)

As a means of justifying their brutal treatment of the Africans they took as slaves, the white slave traders and plantation owners assumed the attitude that Africans were an inferior race. By referring to the African captives as 'slaves' instead of people, the Europeans essentially stripped them of their human identity. This conveniently allowed them to ignore the fact that the Africans who had been taken from their homes, enslaved, and forced to board sailing ships to the

Americas had once been farmers, herders, traders, artisans, judges, and priests. Since they were considered an inferior race by the Europeans, African slaves were valued little more than a farm animal or a market commodity. Munro explained, "To be a slave was to be a kind of ghost, living a half-life in a foreign land, an existence that denied the African's humanity, making the slave a kind of non-being, a shadow of history" (Munro vii).

It cannot be overstated that the transatlantic slave trade was the business of taking away the self-ownership of the Africans and reducing them to an expendable commodity. In his memoirs published in 1789, Olaudah Equiano, an African who had been kidnapped from his home and transported to England as a slave, after having first been taken to Barbados in the West Indies, addressed what he knew to be white man's perception of Africans when he wrote:

> ...while they shew how the complexions of the same persons vary in different climates, it is hoped may tend also to remove the prejudice that some conceive against the natives of Africa on account of their colour. Surely the mind of the Spaniards did not change with their complexions!...Let the polished and haughty European recollect, that *his* ancestors were once, like the Africans, uncivilized, and even barbarous. Did Nature make them inferior to their sons? And should *they too* have been made slaves? (Equiano)

The horrors that African slaves and their descendants experienced marked the second chapter of trauma in the Caribbean. Those who survived the long, perilous voyage from Africa, were immediately thrust into a terrifying slave auction that separated relatives and friends. Equiano described such a scene in his memoir when he wrote, "O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God? who says unto you, Do unto all men as

you would men should do unto you...Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, husbands their wives? Surely this is a new refinement in cruelty…" (Equiano).

St. Vincent born Ashton Warner, whose mother was freed from slavery when she was purchased by a relative, was himself kidnapped while he was working as a young apprentice for a cooper and was forced into slavery. Warner later wrote his memoir, published in 1831, in which he described the harsh life of those slaves who were forced to work in the fields. He insisted that he would have rather died than to have to suffer the brutal conditions that came with being a field slave. Warner explained that on the plantation where he was forced into slavery, the slave quarters were located between three and four miles from the cane fields. Since they had to report to the field before five o'clock each morning, the slaves had to rise by four o'clock to be sure they did not arrive late. Those who failed to show up by the time the roll was called were severely punished. Warner wrote, "Before five o'clock the overseer calls over the roll; and if any of the slaves are so unfortunate as to be too late, even by a few minutes, which, owing to the distance, is often the case, the driver flogs them as they come in, with the cart-whip, or with scourge of tamarind rods" (Warner 34-35).

The physical trauma that the multitude of African slaves experienced would have been enough to have a reverberating impact on generations of their descendants. However, the psychological trauma that slaves suffered in the yoke of bondage took their unimaginable misery to an even deeper level. Through the conscious and determined efforts of white men such as West Indies plantation owner Willie Lynch, slave ownership meant breaking the spirit of the slave with such cruelty as had never before been witnessed. Lynch was so effective in his methods of breaking his slaves that he was invited to travel to Virginia to teach his brutal methods to the slave owners there. He instructed them to force their slaves to witness the

drawing and quartering of their most rebellious male slave and then, after killing him, to beat the remaining male slaves nearly to death. This was to be done, he explained, to "put the fear of God in him" (Lynch). He also instructed the Virginia slave owners to sexually violate their female African slaves. Lynch went on to tell them that if the women resisted their efforts to violate them, they were to "...not hesitate to use the bull whip on her to extract that last bit of resistance out of her" (Lynch). It must be noted that Lynch's methods in no way marked the beginning of cruelty against slaves in the Americas. However, his heinous methods did set the intensity of cruelty to a new level, and as a result, solidly established a deeper depth of trauma that slaves would suffer--trauma that extended all the way from the Caribbean to New England.

With the passage of Britain's 1833 Slavery Abolishment Act, the British Caribbean experienced a palpable shift in the economy as the resulting void in the labor force left plantation owners in need of workers. When the newly freed slaves refused to work under the conditions that the plantation owners offered them, the fields were abandoned, and plantation owners suddenly had to find a solution to their labor shortage. Their first recourse was to begin dealing in illegal slave trade. It was estimated that following the abolishment of slavery, approximately 82,000 slaves were taken from Africa to the West Indies. The British realized that in order to put a stop to the illegal slave trade, they would need to find a different source for cheap labor. The solution came from within the British Empire: India. According to Lomarsh Loopnarine, between 1838 and 1917, approximately 500,000 indentured servants from China and India were shipped to the West Indies. Loopnarine explained further that many of them were kidnapped and forced to go to the West Indies, or they were tricked into going. Those who went willingly to work as indentured servants in the Caribbean, "... were mainly rural peasants who were not totally aware of their terms of contract, nor of the severity of plantation work that awaited them

in the Caribbean" (Loopnarine). The extreme hardship experienced by indentured servants marked the third chapter of trauma in the West Indies.

Through the combination of extreme physical and psychological trauma forced on the bodies and minds of millions of African slaves and hapless indentured servants, the colonies of the Americas were built. It should be no surprise, therefore, that the restless specters of the abused, as well as the guilt-ridden instruments of abuse, continue to haunt the Caribbean. According to sociologist Avery Gordon, ghostly hauntings in literature not only emphasize the importance of what has passed, but they demand that the reader sees and acknowledges what remains. In the case of West Indian literature, what remains are the deep, abiding scars of slavery, as well as the tremoring environment in the aftermath of mutilation and exploitation at the hands of colonialism and capitalism. As Gordon asserts, "To study social life, one must confront the ghostly aspects of it" (Gordon 7).

Much was taken from the enslaved African people who were forced to take the perilous journey across the Atlantic Ocean to the West Indies. Not only did they lose their African names and their freedom, but most tragically, their identity as human beings was also taken from them. One of the few cultural possessions they were able to maintain as part of their new existence was their religious traditions. Contrary to the view of Europeans at the time of colonialism, many people of Africa believed in the idea of God as the divine Creator long before the Europeans introduced Christianity to Africans. According to Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor:

> ...the sense of the divine was not something introduced to Africa by missionaries or by anyone else; that the knowledge of God in African religion was not much different from the idea of God that Christian missionaries preached in Africa; and, more specifically to our purpose here, that belief in God

> engendered a moral response that for centuries before Christian arrival in Africa directed moral life and interaction on the continent and among its peoples. (Odozor)

In his article, Odozor cited the extensive work of John Mbiti, a noted African theologian and scholar of African Traditional Religion who studied the traditional beliefs of African people. According to Odozor, Mbiti's studies reveal that mysticism has long been an important element of traditional African beliefs. Odozor wrote, "Human beings maintain active and real relationships with the spiritual world, especially with the living dead, through offerings, sacrifices, and prayers. These act as a link between God and the human community" (Odozor). He further explained that as part of the "order of the universe," mysticism exists as a power to use for good "such as healing, rainmaking, or divination" or for harm, through "magic, witchcraft, and sorcery" (Odozor). Clearly, a belief in an active spirit world which is linked to and interacts with the mortal world came with the enslaved Africans to the Caribbean and has influenced Caribbean literature with its elements of hauntings and the supernatural.

Considering its history of trauma, the landscape of the Caribbean is unquestionably wrapped in "ghostly aspects." Mark Riley, in an article titled, "Place as Palimpsest," wrote, "There is no landscape, whether natural or thought, that is not inscribed, erased, or re-inscribed by histories and ghosts" (Riley 23). He followed that the "...'terrain' suggests a 'de-coherence' that exceeds the geographic setting; it is a place of haunting and ghosts" which transforms natural space into a "...fractured and residual place: a palimpsest" (24). Caribbean literature, with its frequent elements of hauntings and the present of the supernatural, presents complex characters and plots that respond to the false narrative of history and to the remaining traces of truth.

The focus of this study centers around three primary texts within Caribbean literature: Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*, Edgar Mittelholzer's *My Bones and My Flute,* and Jean Rhy's *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Each novel either contains ghosts as characters who drive the plot or contains an implicit haunted quality stemming from a terrible loss of Self. The presence of hauntings and the supernatural in these novels not only reflects the dark history of trauma in the Caribbean, but gives a voice to the multitude of slaves and indentured servants who, in life, had no voice. Sebastian Graham Galbo, in his review of Martin Munro's *The Haunted Tropics: Caribbean Ghost Stories,* explained the fundamental purpose of ghosts in West Indian literature when he wrote, "Specters assume the troubled forms of identity, sexual orientation, environmental destruction, and social invisibility, 'haunting' living subjects...these (post)colonial hauntings often function as protean mirrors through which the self undergoes rigorous scrutiny of both the dead and undead" (Galbo). Like Dickens' ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*, specters in West Indian literature direct characters and the reader to look backward in time in order to reflect on unresolved events or time periods and, in an attitude of contrition, to acknowledge the unconscionable crimes of one race against another.

The Caribbean's history is itself a restless spirit. Through history books that for years favored a flattering Eurocentric narrative of colonialism, its eulogy was erroneously delivered, and its grave was incorrectly marked. Offered in this study is compelling evidence that the presence of hauntings in Caribbean literature is to expose the deep scars inflicted by colonialism, with its atrocities of racism in the name of slavery, and to demand not only that the false narrative of America's history be reviewed through a clearer lens, but that the long-accepted history be revised to reflect the appalling truth. Only then will the ghosts that have struggled for hundreds of years within the restless wake of trauma, finally find long-awaited rest.

CHAPTER I: Adopting the Gothic Tradition in Mittelholzer's *My Bones and My Flute*

According to John Mullan, the study of Gothic literature reveals that it may have actually begun in 1764 as a joke when author Horace Walpole published a book, *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*, which touted a true, relic story of 12th Century Italy that was acquired from "an ancient Catholic family from the north of England." Even though the preface declared that the story was "founded on truth," it was eventually discovered that the so-called truth-based story was "a modern-day fake" (Mullan). Mullan went on to explain that the novel opens with the gruesome image of the death of a young prince of Otranto who is ironically crushed by the statue of a previous prince when it falls on him. From that point on, the castle comes to life with a supernatural presence until the restless spirit of the young prince is assuaged by the death of his father, Prince Manfred, who had orchestrated his heir's untimely demise out of lust for the beautiful, young woman whom the prince was engaged to marry. Mullan wrote that Walpole "...had discovered a fictional territory that has been exploited ever since. Gothic involves the supernatural (or the promise of the supernatural), it often involves the discovery of mysterious elements of antiquity, and it usually takes its protagonists into strange or frightening old buildings" (Mullan).

John Bowen asserts that "The genre of Gothic is a particularly strange and perverse family of texts which themselves are full of strange families, irrigated with scenes of rape and incest, and surrounded by marginal, uncertain and illegitimate members" (Bowen). He goes on to identify the common traits among Gothic literature. The first characteristic Bowen points out is that of "strange places." He writes, "It is usual for characters in Gothic fiction to find themselves in a strange place; somewhere other, different, mysterious. It is often threatening or violent, sometimes sexually enticing, often a prison" (Bowen).

The second characteristic of Gothic literature, according to Bowen, is that of “clashing time periods,” at transitional moments when there is a strong opposition between the present and the past, “...as everything that characters and readers think that they’ve safely left behind comes back with a vengeance” (Bowen). Characteristics of Gothic fiction also include “power and constraint,” in which constraint, entrapment, and forced actions are a major element of the plot. Bowen concludes by saying, “Gothic is thus a world of doubt, particularly doubt about the supernatural and the spiritual. It seeks to create in our minds the possibility that there may be things beyond human power, reason and knowledge...The uncertainty that goes with Gothic is very characteristic of a world in which orthodox religious belief is waning.” (Bowen).

In her forward to Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters*, Janice Radway explains: “What's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely” (Gordon xvi). The mysterious plot of Edgar Mittelholzer’s *My Bones and My Flute* is driven entirely by spirits demanding redress or seeking redemption.

The story opens as Milton, an artist who works for the established commercialized society during the time in which the story takes place, speaks to the audience (from twenty years after the events have taken place) in the old, established custom of the narrative storytelling style. In fact, Milton explains upfront that his employer Mr. Nevinson and his family discouraged him from simply publishing his diary notes which chronicled the details of the events that frame the story, insisting that he embellish the facts with “a lot of atmosphere and excitement into them” (Mittelholzer 49). Milton immediately follows with an assurance to the reader that the recorded account of the events is true, with “nothing that might be attributed to my imagination” (49). The effect that his candid introduction has on the story is to promise

accuracy to the audience and to establish a tone of mystery before the actual story even really begins. It effectively serves the reader much the same way that Shakespeare's informative prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* introduces that tragic tale to the audience, "What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend."

As mentioned before, Milton begins unfolding the peculiar events of the story at a point after the bizarre, enigmatic journey down the Berbice River has already begun--at the moment when he "received the first hint that there might be some other reason behind Mr. Nevinson's invitation to me to spend time with him and his family up the Berbice" (Mittelholzer 51). He adds that his suspicions are ignited by Nevinson's daughter Jessie, when he "got this first inkling that things were not what they appeared to be" (51). This realization reflects the premise that ghostly hauntings and the presence of the paranormal in literature are not merely elements employed by the author to entertain or shock the reader. As Radway wrote, "Haunting...is one way…we are notified that what's been concealed is very much alive and present...It always registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past or in the present" (Gordon xvi). Ralph Nevinson invites Milton to go with him and his family to Goed de Vries because he says that he wants to commission him to paint pictures of the jungle to hang on the walls of the head office of Nevinson's firm, the Berbice Timber and Balata Company. Eventually, however, Milton learns that the real reason Ralph Nevinson has invited him to travel to Goeds de Vries is to get the young artist to assist him in figuring out how to unlock the mystery of the cursed Voorman parchment, of which Nevinson himself is threatened with death unless he fulfills the requirement of the curse contained within the manuscript.

The fact that the story begins as the group is traveling toward their destination on a river reveals a familiar metaphoric element that is frequently present in West Indian literature. In the

context of religion, the waters of baptism are used to redeem and save the immortal soul. Water in nature can be unpredictable and tumultuous and can ultimately claim human life. Thomas Charles Lethbridge, in his book, *Ghost and Ghoul*, rejected the term "supernatural," insisting that occurrences of the natural world cannot be considered supernatural. He argued that just because something that occurs is not understood, it does not make it supernatural. Further, Lethbridge reasoned that "ghosts" are actually projections of traumatic events that are stored in the various elements of the environment upon which those events transpired, be it fields, forests, jungles, or rivers. He firmly believed in what has been termed the "stone tape" theory, which is the belief that tragic or traumatic events that cause extremely intense emotions (anguish as a result of pain, loss, or hopelessness) are "recorded" in the environment surrounding the location of the events. Therefore, supernatural phenomena is frequently said to have been witnessed on or near oceans, rivers, and lakes, where sudden and traumatic death frequently occurs. It should come as no surprise that with its history of such deep anguish, inflicted upon Amerindians, African slaves, and indentured servants of Central Asia, that the landscape of the Caribbean would have recorded countless traumatic events. *In The Haunted Tropics: Caribbean Ghost Stories*, Martin Munro observes, "Every island of the Caribbean is the site of a deep haunting. Before Columbus, the various indigenous peoples – the Arawaks, the Caribs, the Tainos – lived in relative harmony with the land, the sea and each other. Everything changed in 1492: the Amerindian people quickly were decimated, their presence erased by disease, wars and overwork" (Munro vii).

The significance of landscape in Caribbean literature is a topic addressed in Seodial Frank H. Deena's book, *Situating Caribbean Literature and Criticism in Multicultural and Postcolonial Studies*. Deena wrote, "The Guyanese land and landscape function like the gods in Greek Literature to defend the poor and oppressed… (Deena 63). He further states that the land,

in particular the “jungle and river falls...become ravenous wolves ready to devour the colonizers” (63). The idea of the land turning on and destroying its oppressor produces an image of the environment as a restless spirit, determined to revenge itself on its antagonists. Martin Munro wrote of the injured Caribbean landscape:

> The haunting effects of slavery are felt not only in humans, but also in the landscape, which remains marked by the cruelties and excesses of the past. Plantation slavery was an environmental disaster: the efficiency with which the forests were cleared to make way for sugar, coffee, cocoa and other crops mirrored the callous treatment of transplanted Africans. The land itself became a kind of slave, one that bears to this day the scars of the past, in treeless landscapes and eroded hillsides, polluted rivers and beach resorts that are like new plantations, sites of privilege and exclusion that show time has done little to exorcize the ghosts of the past. (Munro viii)

Given the eerie, supernatural tone of the story from the start, it would almost seem that the mysterious banks of the Berbice River in Mittelholzer’s story is occupied by the watchful ghosts of the Dutch plantation owners of the 18th Century and the multitude of slaves who suffered and perished under the weight of their difficult and nightmarish lives, with no real record of having ever existed as human beings. A little later in the story, when the Nevinson party arrives at the cottage of Goeds de Vries, it is learned that a woman named Matilda, who had previously handled the cursed document, had died by drowning in the river. The servant Rayburn explains, “Matilda tremble all over and swear de spirit call out to her in a soft voice and tell her to follow him and join him in de grave. Dat was how she get drowned, sir. She follow de spirit into the river and get drowned” (Mittelholzer 87).

One of the characteristics of Gothic fiction, "strange place," is not only found in the mysterious Berbice River and the surrounding jungle, but is waiting for Milton and the Nevinson family in the cottage at Goed de Vries, near the ruins of Voorman's plantation, which has been subsumed by the surrounding jungle. Although in the beginning, when Milton and the Nevinsons first arrive, the cottage seems charming and tranquil, with its rooms of various pleasing colors, eventually it reveals within its walls a menacing spirit that threatens to bodily possess the Nevinson women. The sexual conquest and possession of women in Caribbean literature metaphorically reflects the conquest and possession of the bodies of slaves and indentured servants, as well as the fertile land of the West Indies, which was raped and scarred through deforestation for the purpose of growing cash crops. Nevinson's timber company/saw mill, in the business of cutting down large, ancient trees for profit, is located in Goed de Vries, not far from the cottage where the Nevinsons and Milton will be staying. The close proximity between the place of past human and environmental suffering (sugar cane plantation) and the place of present environmental suffering (lumber company) provides a ghostly echo of a single note of discord.

In his article titled "Spectres in the Forest: Gothic Form and World-Ecology in Edgar Mittelholzer's *My Bones and My Flute,"* Michael Niblett draws a correlation between the saw mill at Goed de Vries and Jan Pieter Voorman's sugar plantation when he says:

> …it is interesting to observe the contrast drawn between the irreality the protagonists' experiences at Goed de Vries and the depiction of the saw-mill, which becomes an isolated site of everydayness amidst the horror. A number of references are made to the mill as representing a 'commonplace routine of existence,' from which Milton and the Nevinsons are separated by their involvement with the spectre of King Sugar. As suggested earlier, this separation

> is indicative of sugar's draining away of resources from rival economic sectors. But it can also be viewed as signaling the industry's strangulation of alternative forms of the production of nature. (Niblett 22)

The appearance of the dark shadow figure in *My Bones and My Flute* is signaled by a musty stench, like rotted vegetation, suggesting that an element of the haunting may have been the mysterious jungle itself manifesting its restlessness with the horrors of suffering and death it has witnessed and the abuse the land itself has endured.

The "clashing of time periods"--another characteristic of the Gothic fiction--is very much present in *My Bones and My Flute*. There is a powerful connection between the present (the early 1900s, when Milton and the Nevinson family are attempting to break the curse of the Voorman parchment) and the 1700s, when the slaves on the island revolted, killing white plantation owners and their families. This is also when Jan Pieter Voorman, who had already summoned dark forces to help him with his obsessive ambition to create a better flute, pronounces a curse on the parchment on which he, realizing he is going to die, writes instructions to have his bones, along with his flute, given Christian burial rites. The curse appears to illustrate the hypocrisy of those who practiced the Christian faith and yet participated in the dark practice of slavery. Just as the European explorers, conquerors, and plantation owners justified the ownership of and cruel treatment of African slaves by twisting biblical scriptures to suit their slave narrative, Voorman fell back on his Christian faith when he realized he was about to die and that the forces he had unleashed would claim his soul. Unless he called on the forces of Heaven to intervene on his behalf with proof of faith and repentance (through Christian burial rites), he knew that the dark forces he had foolishly called upon would claim his soul and commit it to a damnation of eternal misery and darkness.

Perhaps Voorman borrowed the concept of pronouncing curses upon men from the scriptures, when Moses warned the Israelites, “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee” (Deuteronomy 28:15 KJV). On the other hand, Voorman may have committed an act of irony by delving once more into the power of dark forces in hopes of ensuring himself the Christian burial he so desperately wanted. In either case, the curse that Voorman placed on the manuscript enabled him, as a ghost, to reach out across the span of nearly two centuries to touch the lives of Milton and the Nevinson family, as well as those who went before them in touching the cursed parchment. Mittelholzer implemented the Gothic tradition of “clashing of time periods” for multiple purposes in *My Bones and My Flute*. First, by tying the events of the past to the everyday existence of the present, he sends a message to the reader that unless the wrongful deeds of the past are faced and resolved, the haunted past, like a ghost carrying a curse to the living, will be inextricably bound to the present. Second, through his clashing of time periods, Mittelholzer reminds the reader, “through Voorman’s dark nights of suffering,” of the world’s need for self-reflection and redemption (Mittelholzer 43).

A third element present in the ghostly plot of *My Bones and My Flute* typically found in traditional Gothic fiction is that of “power and constraint.” Once Milton and the Nevinson family reach the cottage at Goed de Vries, the supernatural force that began as the haunting sound of a ghostly flute on the boat ride down the Berbice River escalates and closes in on Ralph Nevinson and his party. Even the jungle has closed in on the old Voorman sugarcane plantation and has swallowed it up entirely, thereby reclaiming the plantation land from the Dutch owner. By now, Milton and the entire Nevinson family have handled the cursed Voorman manuscript. The two

Nevinson women seem to be more dramatically affected by the supernatural powers than are the men, and they become the focus of the hauntings within the cottage. Mrs. Nevinson begins having a recurring nightmare in which she is hypnotically compelled to follow the haunting sound of a flute along the river and down a narrow track and into the jungle. Always in the dream, she is aware of a menacing presence following her. Before she can find the source of the flute music, she is stopped by a spectral entity. She explains, “I felt a bony hand grip my own from behind, and a voice whispered in my ear. I can remember the words distinctly. ‘No farther today’’ (136).

In conjunction with the nightmares Mrs. Nevinson starts having, a tattoo that resembles a flute appears on her ankle. The tattoo appears to be suggestive of slave tattoos as a symbol of ownership or possession. At the height of her agitation, Mrs. Nevinson is about to burn the ancient parchment (thinking that the document’s destruction would end the eerie sound of the mysterious flute), when she sees a hand reach from behind her “as if some creature had been standing behind me, waiting--watching me” (129). She goes on to explain that the spectral hand knocked the burning match and the manuscript from her hand. When asked to describe the hand, she says, “It was greyish and sort of covered with fur…” (130). According to Niblett, the “Blacker Ones,” as described by Voorman in his manuscript, “...have about them elements of the bakoo (a short, destructive, Poltergeist-like spirit) and the massacooramaan (a hairy, human-like creature with Amerindian and African antecedents, found in deep interior waters and inclined to topple the boats of travelers” (Niblett 8). This illustrates Mittelholzer’s decision to tie together the superstitions of the Amerindian and the African cultures in order to tell a story that conjures ghosts of restless slaves--both Amerindians and Africans--to come forth from the past to demand redress of the present.

While the significance of Milton and the Nevinson family (who represent the materialistic/capitalist society) as witnesses of the frightening tale goes without question, the importance of the character named Rayburn should also be considered. The crucial role of the "hard-working and trustworthy" African Guyanese caretaker of the Goed de Vries cottage is easily underestimated. Even though he is not directly impacted by the curse of the Voorman document and his interaction with the Nevinson party is limited, he becomes an essential character in the resolution of the plot's conflict. As opposed to Milton and the Nevinson family, whose light-colored skin reflects minor traces of their 18th century African ancestry, Rayburn represents the undiluted African lineage. Due to his deeper knowledge of the Amerindian superstitions, he is better equipped to deal with the supernatural element that is haunting the group.

From the beginning, when Rayburn is first introduced, he appears to have a working understanding of and respect for the supernatural. He is first observed by Milton when the party arrives at Goeds de Vries as "a solitary figure standing on the pier" (Mittelholzer 84). This description is symbolic of the role Rayburn will play in laying to rest the restless spirit of Voorman. In Ramchand's introduction to *My Bones and My Flute*, he observes, "When the party travels up river in pursuit of the sound of the flute, it is Rayburn who is sitting at the bow" (33). Again, this description strongly suggests that Rayburn's position as a bowman is paramount to the success of salvation for Milton and the Nevinson family and of achieving redemption for the restless ghost of the Dutch plantation owner. Ramchand goes on to say, "The purgatory through which the inheritors of the plantation order must pass; the humanity that knows the torment of the planter and gives him rest; the peace that comes when the pilgrimage is guided by the one who has suffered most and has the most to forgive; all of these are stations in

Mittelholzer's allegory" (33). It should be noted too that Rayburn seems to be the only character who had access to the canister containing the cursed manuscript but did not open it. Since Rayburn was much more familiar with the ways of mysticism, like a natural Guyanese islander who is familiar with the jungle, it is likely that he instinctively knew to avoid close contact with the mysterious contents of the canister. Rayburn, therefore, is immune to the threat of the curse. It is through his immunity that makes redemption possible for those who transgressed and are held firmly by the promised curse. It is through his immunity and his guidance that the demons of the past are finally exorcised.

Caribbean literature frequently contains elements of hauntings and what might be termed as 'supernatural forces.' Mittelholzer effectively uses the vehicle of the Gothic tradition in *My Bones and My Flute* to transcend the living present with restless ghostly apparitions of the past. Not only do Caribbean authors write stories that conjure the restless spirits of those who suffered under slavery and of those who enforced it, but they call upon the restless spirit of the environment that was brutalized and scarred as surely as were the ill-fated men and women who miraculously survived the Middle Passage from Africa, only to face a life of desperation and hopelessness. Not only was the environment of the Caribbean forced to submit to the callous demands of servitude and to surrender its fertility to capitalism, but it was forced to bear witness and to record the anguish of those who suffered through the brutal events that continue to haunt the Caribbean landscape and repeatedly manifest themselves on the pages of Caribbean literature.

As Gordon asserted, "To study social life, one must confront the ghostly aspects of it" (Gordon). It is through the ghostly witnesses of history that authors of Caribbean literature such as Edgar Mittelholzer deliver their haunting messages, calling for confession, restitution, and

redemption for crimes against humanity and against the environment. Through the exorcism of mankind's demons (born of guilt) can its internal conflict be resolved and given peace. Only then can it be said, "We knew that never had we experienced such peace as the peace in that twilight clearing" (Mittelholzer 225).

CHAPTER II: "While you still have a ghost of a chance": The Unity of Existence in Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*

Wilson Harris's intricately poetic novel, *Palace of the Peacock* (1960)*,* is a departure from many novels written by Caribbean authors in that it tells the story of restless ghosts as central characters that drive the plot. With its setting in Guyana, Harris positions the Faustian ghosts/spirits of colonialism's past in an examination of Self while the main character Donne embarks on an arduous journey in which a type of redemptive rebirth is his ultimate destination. While other novels within the genre of Caribbean literature housing ghosts and hauntings implicitly suggest a need for acknowledgement and redress, *Palace of the Peacock,* rich with symbolism, presents a plot that explicitly revolves around the theme of guilt carried to the grave and the requirement of acknowledging that guilt before the dead Donne's profound restlessness can finally end and a spiritual transformation or rebirth can take place.

Even as the story begins, Harris's narrator refers to the relationship between the past and the present when he says, "I dreamt I awoke with one dead seeing eye and one living closed eye" (Harris 19). The simultaneous state of blindness and clarity of vision suggests that there is a connection between the living and the dead; between remembering and forgetting. This duel, yet disconnected existence of the past and the present is reflected in the relationship between Donne and his nameless twin brother who narrates the story. Kenneth Ramchand, in his epilogic essay, "Pursuing the Palace of the Peacock," suggests that the "twin" narrator and Donne may in fact be "two halves of the same person" (134). Ramchand's view is supported by the I-narrator when he says of Donne, "He was myself standing outside of me while I stood inside of him" (26).

Asako Nakai, in her book on colonialism and post colonialism literatures, *The English Book and Its Marginalia*, wrote, "Harris's surrealistic narrative does not make room for a single

voice from the other--everybody there is a twin or a kin to each other, and his/her voice sounds like a massive, still uncanny unison of the Guyanese collective dream" (Nakai 96). This mise-en-abîme effect of placing one version of oneself alongside a separate version is a particularly efficacious device that Harris uses to juxtapose Donne, the circumspect narrator twin, against Donne, the ghost of a merciless, oppressive opportunist. As the brutish, remorseless instrument of colonialism representing colonialism itself, he must come to terms with the choices of exploitation and abuse he made while he lived. His twin Self narrator is Donne's objective version, unsullied by his mortal choices, who, with fascination, witnesses scenes from Donne's life through his "one dead seeing eye and one living closed eye" (Harris 19). He speaks to Donne about his inability to see and his dependency on Donne's memories when he says, "Nothing kills your sight...And your vision becomes the only remaining window on the world for me" (22).

Vision is a recurring theme that weaves throughout *Palace* as Donne and his I-narrator twin Self grapple with their inability to see. The narrator tells Donne, "You fell and died instantly, and yet you were the one who saw, and I was the one who was blind" (22). In referencing Harris's redefinition of understanding in terms of imagining, Nouri Gana discusses the "failure of [in]sight" when she wrote, "According to Harris, we have lost the capacity to imagine, and have grown fond of superficiality and fallacious clarity; we have been trained to see things in blocks, in frames, in moulds, and not in motion. It is this tendency toward fixedness, toward self-preservation and survival that shackles and trammels us most, aborting our embryonic imagination" (Gana 157).

Donne's cruelty and greed which defined his life has condemned his ghost to return to the task that marked his failure as a human being: an obsessive drive to possess material wealth by means of slavery. His drive to possess wealth is evident when he tells the narrator, "'Now I'm a

man. I've learnt,' he waved his hands at the savannahs, 'to rule this. This is the ultimate. This is everlasting. One doesn't have to see deeper than that, does one?' He stared at me hard as death. 'Rule the land,' he said, 'while you still have a ghost of a chance'" (Harris 23). Donne's supposed understanding of his purpose in life--to accumulate and possess--reflects the European attitude that drove imperialism and colonialism. He is dreamed back to life multiple times by his twin Self to face the failure of his destructive life in which he concentrated his efforts on despoliation and territorial gain. Simultaneously, *Palace* takes the reader on a journey to examine the exploitation and cruelty of slavery and colonialism, as well as the abuses of capitalism as a whole.

Like Donne, whose long-held perspective shifts when he finally sees the condemning truth of his wrongdoings, the reader too must travel with Donne and his ethnically-mixed crew, and there witness humanity's self-condemning truth of exploitation, slavery, colonialism, and post colonialism. In *Ghostly Matters,* Avery Gordon writes, "Slavery has ended, but something of it continues to live on, in the social geography of where peoples reside, in the authority of collective wisdom and shared benightedness, in the veins of the contradictory formation of New World modernity, propelling, as it always has something to be done. Such endings that are not over is what haunting is about" (Gordon 139). With chapters devoted to moments and events that illustrate the social shackles forced upon black Americans since emancipation and with the disproportionally low standards of education and economic stability allotted to the black population, history indisputably supports Gordon's statement.

In the literary world, Wilson Harris is best known for his richly symbolic writing style. Ikenna Dieke says of Harris's use of symbolism, "Harris's fiction transforms the symbolic object into a spiritual truth, extrapolating from fictional language some deep spiritual significance,

leading to a fundamental transformation of mind and persona, a kind of metanoia" (Dieke 291). It is no wonder then that Harris selected a river to carry his characters and his plot in *Palace of the Peacock*. Water in literature often symbolizes cleansing, enlightenment, transcendence, or regeneration. In *Palace*, the unnamed river that carries Donne and his crew deep into the interior of Guyana is symbolically a strong, unrelenting flow of energy that forces them to move toward a realization of the very nature of humanity. Rivers as moving bodies also symbolize fertility. The social rebirth of humanity, as represented by Donne, finds its delivery on a river that winds through the fertile jungles of Guyana. As Caribbean artist, playwright, and poet Derek Walcott stated in his poem titled "The Sea Is History," "Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs? / Where is your tribal memory? Sirs, / in that grey vault. / The sea/has locked them all. The sea is history" (Paris Review), it can also be said of the rivers that wind through the scarred and traumatized lands of the Caribbean. Just as Nevinson and his group in *My Bones and My Flute* begin their transcendent journey on a river into the jungle interior of Guyana, Donne and his crew are carried toward their destination on a river that is so central to the progression of the story that it effectively serves as another haunting character, silently yet effectively projecting the central character toward a moment of reckoning. It should be noted that in ancient myths and legends, the journey from the physical world to the spiritual or mystic realm takes place over water. The dual nature of water to give life and to take life makes a river an ideal setting for a story that begins with death and ends with a type of rebirth. The rivers in *My Bones and My Flute* and *Palace of the Peacock* are liminal spaces in which there is a state of disorientation for the main character(s) and for the reader--a churning space in which a major transition begins to take place.

In the opening scene of *Palace*, the I-narrator describes the moment in which Donne, a "horseman...on the road coming at a breakneck stride" is suddenly shot dead by Mariella, the Amerindian woman Donne had brutally abused. The narrator notes, "Donne looked at her as at a larger and equally senseless creature whom he governed and ruled like a fowl" (Harris 20). This close scrutiny of Donne's perspective of Mariella exposes the general viewpoint [blindness] of white colonialism that viewed Amerindians, African slaves, and indentured servants from Asia as expendable creatures rather than human beings. It may seem anticlimactic when one considers that the villain gets his 'just desserts' from the outset of Harris's story. The narrator says, "The horseman gave a bow to heaven like a hanging man to his executioner, and rolled from his saddle to the ground" (Harris 19). However, this is just one of several scenes in which Donne must relive his death, thus setting transitional moments from a state of obliviousness to an absolute awareness of the avaricious nature that defined his mortal existence.

Not only is there a demand for Donne's confrontation with his past, but there is an ultimate necessity for a kind of confession, thus appeasing the past's restless ghosts. In *My Bones*, Nevinson, along with his family and the young artist Milton (the narrator), must propitiate the unsettled spirits of colonialism or forfeit their lives. Whereas Mittelholzer takes his reader on a dark and frightening journey down the Berbice River to face the unsettled ghosts of both the victims of colonialism and the malefactors of it, in *Palace*, Harris puts the reader into a boat with its ghostly crew to traverse a perilous, unnamed river through a Guyanese rainforest in search of gold and cheap labor/slaves.

Because Harris's story is told through the perspective of those not of the physical realm, it can be argued that it lacks the characteristics of a traditional ghost story. On the other hand, it may be the truest form of a ghost story in that it reveals the unsettled ghosts of colonialism's

victims and of its victimizers who are themselves haunted by their tangled pasts. Srdjan Smajic, in his article, “The Trouble with Ghost-Seeing,” wrote of the Victorian ghost story, “Yet, if believing demands a certain kind of seeing--if to believe one has seen a ghost means, first of all, to believe that one’s bodily sight can be trusted--it is precisely by dramatizing the dubious reliability of physiological sight, I will argue that the ghost story invokes a form of spectatorship that meets the ghost on its own spectral terms” (Smajic 1110). The haunting that takes place in Harris’s *Palace* is not the apparitions of those who are long deceased, engaged in actively frightening the living and demanding redress for grievances, but the shadows of the past reappearing before the ghostly form of Donne and his crew and demanding an acknowledgment of grave transgressions against humanity that were committed in the name of capitalism. Janice Radway notes this link between trauma, memories, hauntings, and capitalism in her forward to Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters*:

> ...sociology as we have come to know it (and the various other human sciences) cannot tell the true history of the losses occasioned by the slavery and racism that have been so enabling for capitalism. It cannot precisely because its very definition of the social primes us to “see” and thus to describe the reality of certain obvious things, thereby blinding us to the ways in which those things are expressly produced and fundamentally enabled by a history of loss and repression. Sociology does not well attend, then, to the living traces, the memories of the lost and the disappeared. (Gordon ix)

The liminal space of the river, carrying a crew that is neither alive nor in a place of eternal rest, but hovering restlessly between the two realms, can be seen as a type of purgatory. In fact, there are several allusions to Christian belief within Harris’s story. In life,

Donne was driven to inflict suffering on others by his desire for money. The corruption that the lust for money brings to society is a repeated theme in the Bible. Seodial Frank H. Deena noted the references to God's warning about lusting after money when he wrote, "Numerous biblical incidents and characters warn against the danger of losing money....Solomon's lust for more wealth led him to disobey the prohibitions of God's law concerning the accumulation of large amounts of gold, silver, horses, and wives" (Deena 74). Deena went on to remind the reader that it was for "thirty pieces of silver" that Judas betrayed Jesus Christ (74). Just as the desire for wealth twisted the otherwise notably wise King Solomon and sealed the eternal fate of the formerly devout apostle Judas when they disobeyed and betrayed God, Donne too rejected the eternal nature of his spiritual being when, in mortality, he pursued wealth by means of extreme cruelty and abuse.

Palace is rich with other allusions to Christianity. First, the Amerindian woman that the irascible Donne was guilty of brutally beating is named Mariella, a variant of Mary, the name of the mother of Christ. Also a biblical reference is the fact that the journey on the river takes place over the course of seven days--the number of days the narrator of Genesis said that it took God to create the world. Perhaps the most obvious biblical connection in *Palace* is the description of the carpenter. Just as Christ, who is often referred to as "the redeemer," was his moral father's [Joseph] apprentice as a carpenter, so the young carpenter that Donne sees working at his craft "had touched him and done something in the wind and the sun to make him new" (Harris 102). On the fifth day of Donne's journey, the deconstructive process of his transgressive spirit begins to manifest. As he stares at the familiar vision/memory of the "horror and hell he had himself elaborately constructed from which to rule his earth," he is shocked to realize that the dream had returned him to "a ruling function of nothingness and to a false sense of home" which was "the

meaning of hell" (101). This painful realization of his misspent mortal life opens the figurative window to Donne's ability to see the carpenter. He describes the carpenter as having a "...rectangular face...chiseled and cut from the cedar of Lebanon," (102).

Within the context of Christian belief, the significance of this description is clear. When King Solomon decided to have a temple constructed for the glory and worship of God, he instructed his builders to use timbers from the cedar of Lebanon (1 Kings 7:2). In the biblical sense, the cedar of Lebanon symbolizes strength, firm-rootedness, and eternity. Another symbol of Christian significance is that of the swallow which "flew in and out like a picture on the wall framed by the carpenter to breathe perfection" (Harris 102). Biblically, birds were utilized as messengers from God, such as the dove that returned with an olive branch to assure Noah that God had kept his promise to spare him and his family from the deadly flood (Genesis 8:11). In the Catholic faith, images of the swallow appear in paintings depicting the Annunciation of Mary, as well as in paintings of the Nativity. The swallow as a symbol within Catholicism represents the resurrection of the crucified Christ. True to his signature lyrical and richly metaphoric writing style, Harris effectively employs images and symbols of Christianity to convey a story of transgression, Self-examination, and transformation.

Much of Caribbean literature reflects the history of the egregious transgression of racism and slavery, as well as the abuse committed against humans and against the Caribbean landscape. The element of ghostly hauntings within Caribbean literature becomes the disembodied spectral voice of the past that demands self-examination of the human condition as a prerequisite to an essential transformative healing. Ultimately, Donne and his crew are on a journey toward a healing of Self, representing humanity as a whole. Carl Jung, in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, calls this healing or returning to a state of wholeness "unus mundus"--the "one world" (Jung 760). But

first, there must be an acknowledgment or a looking inward to identify the fracture that divides one's mortal (physical) existence from his/her spiritual existence. Harris illustrates this through his repeated reference to windows, through which Donne gains a clearer perspective and a profoundly greater understanding of the eternal nature of the human soul. It is the seventh day of his journey, when the narrator says that "...the creation of the windows of the universe was finished" (Harris 111). Donne becomes aware that the window "...supported the life of nature and gave a full and invisible meaning and perfection in the way I knew my hands and feet were formed and supported at this instant...This was the palace of the universe and the windows of the soul looked out and in" (112). Carl Jung stressed the importance of uniting the whole man/humankind when he wrote:

> ...the third and highest degree of conjunction was the union of the whole man with the unus mundus...the potential world of the first day of creation, when nothing was yet 'in actu,' i.e., divided into two and many, but was still one. The creation of unity by a magical procedure meant the possibility of effecting a union with the world—not with the world of multiplicity as we see it but with a potential world, the eternal Ground of all empirical being, just as the self is the ground and origin of the individual personality past, present, and future. (Jung 762)

Hauntings in Caribbean literature, as manifested in Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*, is the reverberating reaction to the rending of humanity's wholeness in the wake of slavery. Nowhere is the history of traumatic repression and loss, authored by capitalism, more evident than in the Caribbean. Although the element of ghosts and hauntings certainly provides an enthralling layer of engagement for the reader, in Caribbean literature, that element serves a much greater purpose than to simply entertain through fear and suspense. As Gordon wrote, "Reckoning with ghosts is

not like deciding to read a book: you cannot simply choose the ghosts with which you are willing to engage. To be haunted is to make choices within those spiraling determinations that make the present waver. To be haunted is to be tied to the historical and social effects" (Gordon 190).

Just as the reader experiences and follows Donne's unsettled ghost in the story of *Palace,* the ghosts that haunt the pages of much of Caribbean literature lead the reader to a transformative acknowledgment of Self transgression of humankind. In the aftermath of traumatic historical events as were experienced throughout the region of the Caribbean over the course of hundreds of years, the extreme inhumanity that marked those disturbing pages of history continues to stir the ghosts of those who suffered most and causes them to move unseen among the living. This assertion certainly correlates with the point that Martin Munro made in his introduction of *The Haunted Tropics* when he wrote:

> Given the history of the Caribbean, it is not surprising that much of the [Caribbean] region's literature bears a haunted quality: ghosts are everywhere, be they Amerindians, the African ancestors, the slaves, the planters, the indentured servants, the victims of dictatorships, foreign invasions and natural disasters, or the modern exiles...Caribbean fiction in general is a collection of ghost stories, tales of haunted people, memories and places. (Munro x)

The final chapter of *Palace of the Peacock* offers the reader a resolution--a reuniting of Self to bring about renewal and a redemptive wholeness. After reaching the transcendent moment inside the palace, where Donne and his crew rid themselves of "the chains of illusion" that each had made in life and to which they had become shackled, the narrator says, "It was the inseparable moment within ourselves of all fulfillment and understanding" (Harris 116). He goes on to say that in that moment, his soul is no longer divided, thus achieving the "union of the

whole man" of which Jung spoke. The journey of remembrance the reader takes with Donne and his crew through the interior of Guyana toward their ultimate destination symbolizes the very purpose of hauntings in Caribbean literature. Through hauntings, the reader is led by his "true invisible otherness and opposition" toward the realization that mankind is tied to its own history and must face and remember the trauma of slavery in all its forms--a trauma that, like Donne and his twin Self, has left humanity divided (116). Then, perhaps it will be as Harris's narrator concludes, that each will hold "...at last in his arms what he had been forever seeking and what he had eternally possessed" (117).

CHAPTER III: "There are always two deaths": The Death of Spirit and Body in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*

In Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, hauntings are neither the result of an enigmatic curse placed on the present by an unsettled ghostly past determined to set matters straight, as *My Bones and My Flute* presents, nor do they represent a journey toward unification of past and present--of spirit and body--as conveyed in *Palace of the Peacock*. Rather, Rhys employs the subgenre of metafiction to address the inaccurate representation of the Caribbean and its people through the dark, mysterious character of Antoinette Cosway [Bertha Mason] as a prequel to Charlotte Brontë's romantic novel, *Jane Eyre.* Where Brontë kept the Jamaican-born Bertha locked away in a hidden room with no voice to convey her story, Rhys not only provides the young, white Creole Antoinette with a voice, but tells her rich, haunting story of anguish and loss in the post-emancipated West Indies.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Rhys painstakingly explains the tragic details of Antoinette's life leading up to her unfortunate marriage to a nameless husband [whom the reader can assume to be Edward Rochester of Brontë's story] and to her eventual journey to his home in England--an emotionally tumultuous journey that carries her toward a complete loss of voice, identity, and freedom. As a brushstroke of literary irony, Antoinette Cosway--the orphaned daughter of a former plantation owner--represents the spiraling loss of identity and voice that slaves experienced when they were forced to leave not only their homes but everything that was familiar to them in Africa. In her protagonist, Rhys has created a character who represents the historical suppression of women, the fragmentation of identity, and the trauma of displacement. It is also through Antoinette that Rhys explores the reverberation of crisis that resulted from the cruelties of colonialism, racism, slavery, and indenture ship.

Rhys utilizes the device of dual, intertextual narration in which the oppressed Antoinette expresses her experiences while her husband as oppressor conversely reveals his perspective of Antoinette while expressing his Eurocentric version of her experiences, thereby justifying his cruel actions toward her. This dual narration is reflective of the historically contorted narrative of exploration, colonization, and subjugation as recorded by the benefactors of slavery in order to justify their crimes against humanity. Through her husband's narrative voice, Antoinette is viewed as a spectral image, never clearly seen, and certainly not understood.

From the beginning of the story, Antoinette is a deeply torn character, simultaneously representing both the colonized and the colonizer, yet accepted by neither group. The loss of economic and social stability after the Emancipation Act of 1833 was the impetus for her father turning to heavy drinking, which ultimately led to his death. Deena aptly observes that economics is "the core of Antoinette Cosway/Mason/ Rochester's tragedy" (Deena 112). The position of affluence which she and her family had once enjoyed was replaced with painful social alienation/exclusion and isolation. The story begins when young Antoinette, her sickly younger brother, and her mother have been left to fend for themselves while surrounded by their hostile servants and neighbors, each group looking down on them as inferior. Later, she explains to her husband the meaning of a song that the insubordinate house servant Amelie sang, "It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you and me, I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why I was ever born at all" (Rhys 93). Deena explains, "Whites alienate Antoinette's family on the basis of her low economic status, while blacks alienate them on the

basis of her high economic status" (Deena 113). Having lost all familial ties to her past, and without the acceptance of either group, Annette's social alienation is absolute.

Psychological damage caused by social alienation is at the heart of the impact of slavery that incessantly haunts racial relationships today. Orlando Patterson, in his book *Slavery and Social Death*, wrote, "This is the essence of natal alienation which, in addition to its crushing psychological impact for every individual slave, also entailed their inability as a group to freely integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social realities with the inherited meanings of their natural forebears, or to anchor the living present to any conscious community of memory" (Patterson 5). Patterson defines "natal alienation" as "the loss of ties of birth in both ascending and descending generations" and says that he prefers the term because "it goes directly to the heart of what is critical in the slave's forced alienation" (7). Cut off from any connections to his rightful social order, the slave became "a social nonperson...socially dead person" (5). Patterson reminds his audience that "In the intrusive mode of representing social death the slave was ritually incorporated as the permanent enemy on the inside--the 'domestic enemy'...the slave was symbolic of the defeated enemy" (39). Therefore, not only did the slave exist as a non-human, but he existed as a symbol of the conqueror's enemy. The only group to which the slave belonged that separated him from his captives was that of African. The agonizing dishonor and alienation that was branded onto the psyche of African slaves, and which kept them emotionally shackled, festered into a legacy of shame and anger for many generations of their descendants. The deep trauma of this social death inflicted upon the African slave has resulted in a ceaseless wide-spread haunting that continues to cast its oppressive shadow over present-day black/white relations.

Although Antoinette is a socially dead person among the people of her community, she feels deeply connected to the land. Her fragile relationship with her emotionally detached mother has left Antoinette with a feeling of abandonment. The love she held for her home of Coulibri had at one time given her a sense of belonging--an emotional, familial connection that had otherwise been denied her. Her childhood home is burned to the ground during a violent attack by members of her black community. After escaping the attack, Antoinette is sent to live with a relative, where she is told that her mother is gravely ill. Of this news, she says, "This did not seem strange to me for she was part of Coulibri, and if Coulibri had been destroyed and gone out of my life, it seemed natural that she should go too" (Rhys 120). By the end of the story, it is her connection to Jamaica that ultimately becomes the single, delicate thread that provides Antoinette a connection to Self. When that thread is eventually broken by her removal from Dominica to England, so is Antoinette. She says to her husband, "I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate. I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you have spoilt it. It's just somewhere else where I have been unhappy, and all the other things are nothing to what has happened here. I hate it now like I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you." (134)

In her article, "Unquiet Ghosts: The Struggle for Representation in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*," Mona Fayad observes, "A story, any story, carries within it the possibility of repression, the exorcising of 'ghosts' that would otherwise 'haunt' the narrative and intervene with it" (Fayad 438). Fayad further explains that the achievement of Jane Eyre's happiness is made possible only with the death of the confined and oppressed Bertha. She adds that "In the history of patriarchy, the wellbeing of man depends on the reduction of woman to ghost…." (438). Her observation aptly applies to the brutal machinery of colonialism in the Caribbean

which was fueled and made possible by reducing humans to slaves--to property. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys chronicles the slow, agonizing process of Antoinette's reduction. Although scholarly discussions of the novel often center around the themes of white colonial rule and the rigidly patriarchal dimensions of society, it also bears study as a retributive ghost story in which the protagonist Antoinette, the daughter of a slave owner, is cursed and haunted by "the iniquities of the father upon the children" (Exodus 20:5, KJV).

Rochester takes up his work of chiseling away his wife's fragile identity when he refuses to call her by her actual name and instead insists on calling her "Bertha." Through the cruel act of assigning her an identity of *his* choosing, he doggedly embarks on the process of stripping away what little remains of Antoinette's psychological bearings. Rochester's flagrant assertion of control over his wife through his refusal to call her by her actual name is reflective of slavers' practices of imposing names of their choosing on enslaved Africans. The purpose of this practice was to remove all semblance of personal identity and to reduce African slaves to a position of chattel. On the topic of the psychology of identity loss by means of personal name loss, Leseli Fitzpatrick wrote:

> The punitive measures which European colonizers, slavers, and slave masters enforced, sought to prohibit African names and naming practices, and this became the focus of investigation on the impact of slavery and European domination on the African psyche and culture. Ali Mazrui in *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* discusses the consequences of the European intrusion and imposition of different naming cultures on indigenous Africans...Mazurui examines the indigenization of African names during the Pan-Africanist era in response to European Christian names, where to Africans the name signifies the spirit. He says, 'Personal names

are inseparable from the issue of identity'. (Fitzpatrick 18)

Fitzpatrick goes on to explain the deeply personal significance of names in many African cultures--the somber consideration that went into the naming of a child and the ceremonial practices that occurred during that process. To illustrate her point, she described the naming practices among the people of West Central Africa when she wrote, "Naming among the Congolese also holds immense importance. Among the Kongo ethnic group for instance, a newborn was not regarded truly human until the bestowal of a name" (31). Therefore, the loss of slaves' personal names and the forcing upon them of foreign names had far more meaning to the African slaves than a simple name change. It meant a loss of Self, a reduction to a state of being nonhuman, and the beginning of deep, psychological scarring that would have an endless ripple effect on generations of descendants.

After enduring the trauma of the Middle Passage and the anguishing loss of freedom, the African captive experienced the crisis of losing his identity as a human being. Orlando Patterson speaks of the renaming of African slaves in *Slavery and Social Death* when he says, "The changing of a name is almost universally a symbolic act of stripping a person of his former identity…" (Patterson 55). He goes into a more in depth study of the names that were imposed on African slaves when he says, "On Worthy Park estate, for example, they had such names as Beauty, Carefree, Monkey, Villain" (57). To emphasize the control that slave owners displayed by the naming of their slaves, Patterson quoted historian, Michael Craton, "To a significant degree, all these single slave names were distressingly similar to those of the estate's cattle, so that it is almost possible to confuse one list with another in Worthy Park ledgers" (57). In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette seems to recognize the beginning of her loss of Self when Rochester insists on calling her "Bertha." Antoinette tells her trusted, strong-willed black nurse maid from

Martinique named Christophine, “When he passes my door he says, ‘Goodnight, Bertha.’ He never calls me Antoinette now. He has found out it was my mother’s name. ‘I hope you will sleep well, Bertha”--it cannot be worse’...” (Rhys 103). Again, after her husband had called her by the name of Bertha, Antoinette says to him, “Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me someone else, calling me by another name...” (133).

Not only does Rochester refuse to call Antoinette by her name, thereby taking from her an important part of her identity, but he also expresses his disgust with Creole *patois* she frequently speaks. Cecily Jones, in her article, “White Women in British Caribbean Plantation Societies,” references Jamaican-born plantation owner Edward Long in her discussion of how creole white women were viewed in British-ruled Jamaica during colonialism, “While holding white Jamaican women in esteem, Long nevertheless lamented the contaminating effects of close daily association with ‘a herd of Negro-domestics’ manifested in indifferent mothering skills, corrupt speech, and indolence” (Jones). Rochester expresses his disapproval of Antoinette’s non-European mannerisms when he describes her, “Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either. And when did I begin to notice all this about my wife Antoinette?” (Rhys 61). Rochester’s critical observation implicitly suggests his doubt regarding Antoinette’s racial lineage. Repeatedly, he conveys his disgust toward the influence of the “Negro-domestics” with his wife’s use of *patois*, the Creole language that connects Antoinette to Christophine. Lady Maria Skinner Nugent, the wife of George Nugent, lieutenant governor of Jamaica at the turn of the 19th century, kept a daily journal in which she provided details of domestic life in Jamaica. Of Nugent, Jones wrote:

> [Maria Nugent] despaired of the degenerative effects of ‘creolisation’ on white women, whose dubious domestic and social manners marked them out as neither

> 'European' nor 'Caribbean' (Wright 1966). Nugent shared Long's belief that proximity to coloured and black female domestics represented the source of white creole women's degeneration, evidenced in their disconcertingly corrupt drawl, debilitating languor, and unrestrained self-indulgence. Such women were intellectually barren, 'perfect viragos,' slatternly housekeepers, poor wives and mothers and shrewish mistresses of enslaved peoples. (Jones)

As a white creole woman who is considered neither European nor Caribbean and whose precipitous social standing, as the daughter of a former plantation owner, is destroyed in the years that followed emancipation, Antoinette is a pariah, alienated by white society and former slaves alike. This loss of belonging, along with the ever-present atmosphere of resentment that emanated from the nearby community of former slaves, would be the force to carry Antoinette toward her loss of Self. This is perhaps Antoinette's greatest tragedy--to be connected to place but to be denied acceptance by the people of that place.

Although *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not explicitly a ghost story, a complex form of haunting is present nevertheless, as Rhys invokes the specters of oppression, marginalization, and identity loss for the tragic protagonist. After being taken from her home in Jamaica and forced to live an obscured life in her husband's home in England, Antoinette is locked away in the care of a woman named Grace Poole, of whom Antoinette says, "Her name oughtn't to be Grace. Names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes, and her looking-glass" (Rhys 162). Not only is this comment from the protagonist an expression of name importance, but it reflects the necessity of maintaining familiarity with one's Self. In refusing to allow Antoinette her mirror, Rochester has taken yet another form of identity from her. Antoinette laments over this seemingly small loss

when she says, “There is no looking-glass here and I don’t know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me...Now they have taken everything away. What am I to do in this place and who am I?” (162). Antoinette’s grave feeling of psychological disorientation and traumatic loss of Self parallels the reverberating sense of loss which slaves and indentured servants experienced within the grip of colonialism throughout the lands of the Caribbean. In both instances, the deep scarring of the human spirit creates an incessant haunting that pervades the passage of time and challenges the inaccurate historical accountings of European colonialism.

The loss of everything that was familiar to African slaves, with the loss of their freedom and identity, combined to purge them of hope. When speaking of her mother’s death, Antoinette says to her husband, “There are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about” (116). Antoinette is suggesting that the loss of Self, such as that which her mother experienced after her home is destroyed and her young son dies, creates a person who, bereft of hope, is only half-alive, waiting lifelessly for the eventual death of her body. Similarly, after being forced from her home in Jamaica to live at her husband’s family estate in England, Antoinette’s delicate psychological thread snaps, she loses her grip on reality, and she becomes the [mis]perceived “madwoman in the attic” (Brontë 570). When Jane Eyre, who is in love with Rochester, discovers that he is already married and has been keeping his enigmatic wife locked away in a hidden room at his estate, Rochester says to her, “Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations. Her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard!—as I found out after I had wed the daughter: for they were silent on family secrets before” (Brontë 570). This is the crux of Rhys’s literary disagreement with Brontë’s tale, which asserts that Rochester was the victim of deceit when he was burdened with a

psychologically damaged wife. In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Rhys gives voice to Brontë's silenced victim Bertha/Antoinette and thereby fills in the empty spaces of *Jane Eyre* with details that she unearths in the Caribbean land of Jamaica.

Rochester's oppressive, imperialistic treatment of Antoinette bears striking similarities to the attitudes of slave owners toward the people they enslaved. He either viewed his wife as a child and treated her as such, or he saw her as a threat--the embodiment of everything he hated about Jamaica--and exacted his cruelty upon her. Just as the white European positioned himself as the empirical conqueror, and he quantified the enslaved Africans (and later, the indentured servants) as valuable, yet dispensable resources for furthering his ambitions, so Rochester became Antoinette's conqueror. When, in the end, he decides to take her to England, and upon seeing the blank, lifeless expression in her eyes, he comments:

> If I was bound for hell let it be hell. No more false heavens. No more damned magic. You hate me and I hate you. We'll see who hates best. But first, I will destroy your hatred. Now. My hate is colder. Stronger, and you'll have no hate to warm yourself. You will have nothing...I did it too. I saw the hate go out of her eyes. I forced it out. And with the hate her beauty. She was only a ghost...Nothing left but hopelessness. (Rhys 154)

The haunting of the lands of the West Indies, whose ghosts manifest themselves in the pages of Caribbean literature, began to form in the early stages of trauma as a result of loss and hopelessness suffered by slaves and later by indentured servants. The restless ghosts of the Caribbean remain unsettled and may continue to reach out with their haunting messages while the truth of their trauma lies buried beneath the layers of the historically prevalent false narratives. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys is correcting what she clearly holds to be Brontë's

contribution to those false narratives by exposing the truth of cruelty, suppression, displacement, and trauma. Authors of Caribbean literature such as Rhys, Wilson, and Mittelholzer have created haunting stories and characters that demand acknowledgment, contrite confession, and reparation. As Antoinette said of the past, “...no one speaks of those days now. They are forgotten, except the lies. Lies are never forgotten, they go on and they grow” (119).

CONCLUSION

Within the study of multicultural and transnational literature, Caribbean literature, with its varied elements of hauntings, reflects the history of deep, psychological trauma that was inflicted upon African slaves, and later upon indentured servants, by white Europeans and the cogs of colonialism in the "new world." Through the writings of West Indian authors such as Mittelholzer, Wilson, and Rhys, the dark past of colonialism manifests itself within the pages of literature. The study of multicultural and transnational literature provides a bridge that connects the individual to the world and corrects the fallacies that have long existed between people of dissimilar cultures, beliefs, and experiences. Arguably, Caribbean literature does more than merely create a connection between people who historically have been separated by distance and by differing cultural perspectives. Rather, it summons the restless ghosts of one of humanity's darkest moments, in which one race of people, on a global scale, capitalized on and completely reduced another race to the degrading status of 'property'.

Why is the element of ghosts and the supernatural a frequent theme in novels and poetry written by West Indian authors? This thesis asserts that the prevailing presence of hauntings in much of Caribbean literature is employed by its authors in order allow the specters of the past to speak from the shadowy pages of their writing to express outrage at the atrocities of slavery and indentureship, to demand long overdue redress, to force the reader to acknowledge the reverberating trauma caused by the forces of capitalism, and to engage today's audience in a dialogue with the ever-present past. As Avery Gordon explained, before addressing the turmoil and discord of society that are rooted in historical human events, "one must confront the ghostly aspects of it" (Gordon). Authors of Caribbean literature conjure the origins of troubled spirits through their writing, and in so doing, expose the unresolved trauma of slavery and colonialism.

The prevalent element of hauntings in much of Caribbean literature suggests that what appears to be dead, though no longer breathing--no longer *bleeding*--unflaggingly dwells among the living and must be confronted and appeased.

Many West Indian authors utilize the literary properties associated with the Gothic tradition. Just as European authors of the 18th century implemented the elements of hauntings and the supernatural in presenting the chilling discord of cruelty and decadence found in towns and cities, Caribbean authors use those same elements to reveal the horrors of slavery in the West Indies. In both the traditional English Gothic and the Caribbean novel, there exists a persistent feeling of apprehension experienced by the audience of a coming doom or catastrophe. Mittelholzer's *My Bones* presents scenes that "frighten and involve" the reader in such a way as to provide a personal sense of presence within the story (Mittelholzer 27). In this way, the reader too feels the weight and the magnitude of colonialism's repercussions. *My Bones*, with its focus on restless spirits and a curse that attaches itself to anyone who fails to follow its warning and its directive, illustrates Radway's assertion that a haunting is a state in which "repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known" (Gordon xvi). Arguably, there is no greater "unresolved social violence" than that which was suffered by the countless thousands of African people who were stolen from their homes and brutally forced into slavery.

In all three of the novels presented in this literary research, water plays a significant role in the plot. The element of water in literature has multiple symbolic meanings, including cleansing, death, and rebirth. The journey toward resolving a deadly curse in *My Bones* begins on a river which ushers the protagonist and the Nevinson family to a place of reckoning, in which resolution and freedom are granted only after the demands of the past are finally met and put to rest. In the case of Harris's *Palace*, the journey on a river is integral to the plot as the dead

protagonist Donne faces and ultimately releases the guilt he carried to the grave. It is water that carries him to a place in which he must undergo an absolute awareness of his guilt--a place of contrition where a transformation or spiritual manumission occurs. Water for Antoinette, in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea,* ushers her to her death after she has undergone a loss of Self at the hands of her English husband--a loss which turns her into an apparition of the woman she had once been. Her loss of identity and her journey on the Atlantic Ocean toward her death echo the loss of identity and the unimaginable trauma that Africans experienced when they were forced to endure the harrying nightmare of the Middle Passage and the dehumanizing processes of slavery.

Another element consistent in all three novels which effectively reveals the purpose of hauntings in Caribbean literature is that of central characters who represent the capitalistic/materialistic society of colonialism and post colonialism in the West Indies. Mittelholzer's *My Bones* takes the wealthy lumber magnate Nevinson deep into the Berbice forests of Guyana to undergo the challenge and the terror of satisfying the demands of the restless spectral past. Donne in *Palace*--a slave trader in life-- must come to terms with the cruelties he had once inflicted upon African slaves. Rhys's Antoinette represents the tattered lineage of plantation society, the repercussions of the ruthless exploitation of slaves (and later, of indentured servants), and the prime target of the indignation felt by former slaves who had borne the painful brunt of European expansionism and capitalism.

In each of the novels presented for analysis in this thesis, the marriage of spiritualism and Christianity within the texts not only nods to the amalgamation of beliefs among the various peoples who make up the Caribbean, but in the fusion, it serves to support and strengthen the demand for an acknowledgement and confession of transgression. The presence of ghosts and the supernatural in West Indian literature, constant with the Gothic tradition, effectively performs the

task of the relentless Confessor, demanding redress and recompense from the grave. In *My Bones*, the central characters experience a duality of their beliefs as they acknowledge the exigent curse that attaches itself to them from the grave and, in order to break the curse, they must simultaneously perform a Christian burial rite for the skeletal remains and the flute belonging to the deceased plantation owner who is haunting them through the curse. Of the three novels, the most obvious example of the coalescence of beliefs within the text is found in *Palace*, with its spectral central character who is repeatedly confronted by his reprehensible past and must go through a type of contrite confession before he can attain eternal peace. The duality of beliefs found in Caribbean literature, in which the professed Christian conviction of a Eurocentric society is challenged by spiritualism and contradicted by the actions and responses of that same society, offers fodder for further research.

As previously stated, hauntings in the Caribbean--as reflected in much of Caribbean literature--are not only the result of extreme trauma imposed on the countless African people who were forced into slavery and on the indentured servants who were used to move the cogs of capitalism, but hauntings also reflect the trauma of the Caribbean landscape that was raped and scarred for the purposes of capitalism. The environment in and around the West Indies was not only forced to submit its fertility to the insatiable demands of capitalism, but it was forced to witness the trauma of slavery's atrocities. It is no surprise, therefore, that so much of Caribbean literature contains strong elements of ghostly hauntings or an interplay between plot, character development, and the supernatural.

It is important to consider the poignant message Rhys delivers in *Wide Sargasso Sea* regarding dual narratives. Not only does the author challenge Brontë's perspective of Rochester's Creole wife, but she gives her a voice to explain the outcome of her life and to

defend her decisions. Rhys's dual narrative pits Rochester's Eurocentric narrative/perspective of events against his wife's narrative, thus allowing her audience to witness the fallacy and cruelty of his judgment. Caribbean literature gives voice to the otherwise silenced victims of trauma experienced by Amerindians, enslaved Africans, and indentured servants to bear witness to the fallacy of the single Eurocentric narrative of history.

In fiction, the primary purposes of hauntings and apparitions is often to maintain a connection between the dead and the living and to address an unresolved trauma. In response to colonialism's twisted version of history that has prevailed for years in text books, West Indian authors use the Gothic tradition of hauntings to summon the restless ghosts of slavery and exploitation, releasing them from the past to address their grievances to the living and to demand recompense. The dark, spectral past of the West Indies manifests itself to the present by creating a multitude of restless ghosts that haunt the region and present themselves in the pages of Caribbean literature. Through the writings of authors such as Mittelholzer, Wilson, and Rhys, the purposes of multicultural literature are achieved through academic study and discussion of novels that expose the deep scars of physical, mental, and social trauma that were inflicted on the African race, as well as on Amerindians and indentured Asians, for the aims of capitalism. The result of that trauma is an unsettled past that, like restless ghosts and hauntings found in Caribbean literature, continues to dwell among the living, relentlessly demanding confession and redress for the insidious wrongs that were committed.

The research that went into this thesis has revealed the depth and breadth of trauma against the enslaved African people who were stripped of their identity as Africans and as human beings. There is an indisputable connection between the extreme trauma that African slaves in the Caribbean (and the so-called "new world") experienced and the continued negative

psychological and social impact on their descendants. The recurring element of hauntings and the supernatural that appears in much of Caribbean literature represents the unsettled state of the past that refuses to be ignored and silenced. Within that literature, which follows the Gothic tradition, the demand for confession and recompense is heard in its ghostly hauntings and the unsettled nature of the supernatural that is often present within its pages. The core of Caribbean literature as a subgenre of fiction comes from within the restless wake of trauma. In acknowledging and comprehending the extreme depth of psychological trauma that was committed against an entire race of people, and how that trauma continues to reach out and haunt not only their descendants, but the larger community of humankind, a social healing can begin.

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