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‘Trudging’ The Postmodern Sublime : Madness, Surrealism, and Sorcery in Elizabeth Nunez’s *Beyond the Limbo Silence*

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Surmontant le sublime postmoderne : folie, surréalisme, et sorcellerie dans *Beyond the Limbo Silence* d’Elizabeth Nunez

RAHIL DELLALI ET HOCINE MAOUI - BADJI MOKHTAR UNIVERSITY, ANNABA

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“It’s mad Bertha in her blood. That
Englishwoman tied to the bed in St. Ann.”
— Elizabeth Nunez, *Beyond the Limbo Silence*

Introduction

The figure of Bertha Mason, the infamous “madwoman in the attic” from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, and her literary double, Antoinette Cosway from Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, reemerges in Elizabeth Nunez’s *Beyond the Limbo Silence* as an ancestral specter—wounded, mystical, and insurgent. In this novel, Nunez does not merely revisit the trope of the silenced or pathologized woman ; she reinvents it through a Caribbean feminist lens, binding madness, spirituality, and female agency within a framework of postmodern aesthetics.

Beyond the Limbo Silence offers a layered, phantasmagoric narrative that weaves madness, obeah, surrealism, and the sublime into the psychological journey of its protagonist, Sara Edgehill. Through Sara’s fragmented experiences, Nunez interrogates race, gender, and memory while exploring the afterlives of colonialism in the female Caribbean body. Madness, in this narrative, becomes not a diagnosis but a sublime path to self-knowledge.

Despite Elizabeth Nunez’s growing literary recognition, critical scholarship on her work—particularly *Beyond the Limbo Silence*—remains limited. Unlike other canonical Caribbean women writers such as Jean Rhys or Jamaica Kincaid, Nunez has not been extensively studied in relation to aesthetic theory, spiritual epistemologies, or the sublime. This article addresses that gap by offering an original, theoretically grounded reading of the novel through the lens of the postmodern sublime, situating Nunez’s work at the intersection of feminist, decolonial, and spiritual frameworks.

This paper therefore examines how Nunez reconceptualizes the sublime—a concept traditionally coded as masculine, white, and European—through the lens of a Caribbean female subject. Drawing on philosophical, feminist, and postcolonial critiques, this study investigates :

- How the sublime is experienced through the gendered body as both grotesque and transcendent,

- How madness and surreal aesthetics destabilize rationality and liberate narrative space,
- And how Caribbean spirituality (notably obeah) reclaims the space of the irrational as a form of embodied resistance.

By placing the female body, ancestral trauma, and mystical practice at the center of sublime experience, Nunez deconstructs the aesthetic and ideological limits imposed on postcolonial female subjectivity. Her novel becomes a site of rupture and renewal—an imaginative space where pain, possession, and poetic vision merge.

1. The Postmodern Sublime and Gendered Aesthetics

The concept of the sublime, historically rooted in Kantian aesthetics, has undergone numerous revisions, particularly within postmodern and feminist discourses. While traditionally associated with overwhelming grandeur and transcendental intensity, the sublime has often been marked by a masculine, Eurocentric bias. This section traces the evolution of the sublime from Enlightenment philosophy to its postmodern reconfigurations, then examines its reinterpretation by feminist thinkers and its embodiment in Elizabeth Nunez's *Beyond the Limbo Silence*.

1.1. Kant, Lyotard, and the Paradox of the Sublime

Immanuel Kant famously defines the sublime as a feeling produced by the confrontation with something immeasurable—either vast (the mathematical sublime) or powerful (the dynamical sublime). In both cases, the subject momentarily feels overwhelmed but eventually reasserts their rational autonomy, hence reinforcing the triumph of reason. This framework aligns with Enlightenment ideals and the elevation of the rational, individual subject—typically male and European.

Jean-François Lyotard, in *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* and *The Inhuman* : *Reflections on Time*, reappropriates the sublime within postmodernism. He characterizes it as a paradoxical state that blends “pleasure and pain, joy and anxiety, exaltation and depression” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 92). In Lyotard's view, the sublime resists closure ; it gestures toward that which exceeds the capacity of language and representation. Similarly, Philip Shaw, in *The Sublime*, frames it as a “mode of consciousness” that emphasizes “contradiction, confusion, and bafflement” (Shaw, 2006, p. 8).

The postmodern sublime, then, becomes an aesthetic of destabilization—an encounter with excess, ambiguity, and unrepresentable otherness.

1.2. Masculine Sublimity, Feminine Beauty

Embedded in Kant's aesthetic dualism is the gendering of experience : the beautiful is passive, harmonious, and feminine, while the sublime is disruptive, transcendent, and masculine. This gender binary has shaped aesthetic judgment and artistic canons alike, reserving the sublime for male subjects capable of “heroic” emotional confrontation.

Shaw reinforces this when he writes, “the sublime is greater than the beautiful ; the sublime is dark, profound, and overwhelming and implicitly masculine” (Shaw, 2006, p. 9). In contrast, femininity is consigned to the beautiful—restrained within the safe, the contained, the visually pleasing.

This dichotomy not only marginalizes women's aesthetic agency but also implies that women cannot withstand the terror and intensity associated with the sublime. Yet, many female experiences—such as menstruation, childbirth, or bodily pain—are inherently sublime in the Kantian sense : they invoke dread, awe, and transformation.

1.3. Feminist Interventions : Toward a Feminine Sublime

In response, feminist scholars have challenged the exclusive claim of men to the sublime. Anne Mellor, cited in Shaw, argues that the feminine sublime emerges through sensory, emotional, and ethical experiences that grant women a sense of elevated self-worth and inner freedom. The sublime, she suggests, can empower women through emotional intensity and moral transcendence.

Bonnie Mann expands this critique in *Women Liberation and the Sublime*, linking feminist and postmodern aesthetics through their shared anti-essentialism. She critiques how the Western aesthetic tradition, by privileging the sublime, consolidates male subjectivity and marginalizes the female body as passive or ornamental. Mann writes,

“If contemporary interest in the sublime has to do with a kind of aestheticized self-fashioning and self-understanding, then it is not surprising to find that the first flurry of interest in the experience of the sublime had to do with Euro-masculine self-constitution and self-understanding as well” (Mann, 2006, p. 31).

However, she argues that postmodernism, with its anti-foundational and pluralist ethos, opens space for a non-essentialist, embodied sublime that women can claim. This sublime, she contends, is not about conquest or transcendence, but about negotiating affect, trauma, and self-fashioning within a fragmented cultural landscape.

1.4. Embodying the Sublime in *Beyond the Limbo Silence*

Elizabeth Nunez's novel offers a poignant case of how the sublime can be reclaimed by a Caribbean, female subject. Sara Edgehill, the protagonist, undergoes multiple sublime encounters—not with majestic mountains or infinite space, but with her own body, her family's past, and her inner torment. Her sublime is not a celebration of reason, but a descent into a space where pain, history, and imagination converge.

Sara's grandmother, a “mannish” white woman, defies traditional beauty norms. Described as grotesque and emotionally sterile, she subverts both the beautiful and the maternal. Sara, meanwhile, internalizes her own “ugliness,” feeling alienated from her mother's femininity and from the aesthetic ideals around her : “I had grown from an ugly duckling into an ugly duck. No swan for me” (Nunez, 1998, p. 30).

Nunez's portrayal of Sara destabilizes the binary of beauty/sublime by exploring how women experience sublimity through their embodied marginality. The narrative renders pain and shame as thresholds to self-awareness, turning the grotesque and the plain into potential sources of spiritual elevation.

As Sara navigates cultural alienation, racial ambiguity, and bodily estrangement, she reclaims the sublime as her own. Her subjectivity is neither rooted in Eurocentric ideals of reason nor confined by patriarchal aesthetics of beauty. Rather, it emerges from a postmodern, feminine sublime that is messy, painful, and transcendent in its refusal to be contained.

2. Surrealist Features and Liberty of the 'Great Female' in *Beyond the Limbo Silence*

In *The Dismemberment of Orpheus : Toward a Postmodern Literature*, Ihab Hassan, in the chapter entitled "Interlude : From 'Pataphysics to Surrealism," discusses the avant-gardist inventions, notably pataphysics. Hassan contends that the surreal realm started with Alfred Jarry's pataphysics in which

"fact is equivalent to dream, past to present, reason to madness, space to time, and self to other. There are no limits. Parody, paradox, and hallucination are techniques of veracity" (Hassan, 1982, p. 51).

These paradoxes open space for an unlimited creative realm both within and outside discourse.

According to Hassan, surrealism is "grounded on the mysticism of the subconscious" (Hassan, 1982, p. 71). He declares André Breton the leader of surrealism, promoting the "total freedom of thought" and quoting from Breton's *Manifestoes of Surrealism* the definition of surreal practice : "surrealism is based on the belief of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought" (Hassan, 1982, p. 72). These liberties of dream and imagination are crucial for women, as surrealism allows an unprecedented freedom of the mind. Moreover, Hassan credits surrealism and the avant-garde with restoring "the Magna Mater, the great female principle cast into oblivion by the efficient West" and reinstating her into the "psychic life of men" (Hassan, 1982, p. 74).

In *Beyond the Limbo Silence*, Nunez invokes surreal hallucinations to depict the psychological breakdown of Sara Edgehill. Sara's surreal experience, induced by the overwhelming whiteness at the convent school, leads to a sensory disintegration :

"What happened that evening is still blurred in my mind. I remember the shock of looking into a sea of white faces drowned in white cotton. [...] I began to feel this new, colorless world close in on me. [...] Gradually the nuns merged one into the other, their faces lost in the voluminous folds of their habits, each growing increasingly indistinguishable from the other. I could feel them pressing me with more kindness, and then I was sucked down into a vortex of bottomless whiteness, my legs flailing limply from my body. White clouds, strangely ponderous and heavy, now converged upon me, enveloping me, smothering me. I gasped for

breath and the clouds entered my lungs and expanded my chest further and further outward until I exploded and my body broke up into tiny fragments of white paper that gently floated up out of the vortex and hovered along the four corners of the ceiling” (Nunez, 1998, pp. 54-55).

This surreal rendering of suffocating whiteness and sensory dissolution reflects the sublime through terror and disintegration. The passage encapsulates how the sublime destabilizes the boundaries of selfhood through excessive affect.

Jennifer Wawrzinek, in *Ambiguous Subjects : Dissolution and Metamorphosis in the Postmodern Sublime*, asserts that inhabiting the sublime is “to confront one’s borders and boundaries” and “to come up against an excess that defies representation, an otherness that confounds the self” (Wawrzinek, 2008, p. 13). This confrontation, amplified by the surrealist aesthetics in the novel, embodies the postmodern collapse of spatiotemporal certainties.

Following Wawrzinek, Bonnie Mann explains that the sublime space is

“the space of terror/exhilaration where the referent is recast as an instance of speech rather than an extra-discursive thing that stands in relation to speech” (Mann, 2006, p. 81).

Thus, Sara’s fragmentation becomes a performative act rather than a passive dissolution.

Sara’s last name, Edgehill, symbolically suggests a constant position on the verge—on the edge of despair, madness, and self-reclamation. Nunez’s use of surrealism and sublime imagery magnifies this existential precariousness, embodying a postmodern, feminine negotiation of identity.

3. Obeah, Dementia, and the Mythic Surrealistic Aspects in *Beyond the Limbo Silence*

Proclaiming the roots and the pre-colonial heritage are among the foreclosures of the postmodern sublime. In the novel under study, Nunez restores the obeah practices of the Caribbean region that persisted and defied the colonial repression. In *The Cultural Politics of Obeah : Religion, Colonialism and Modernity in the Caribbean World*, Diana Paton defines obeah as African and Anglo-creole Caribbean practices that were first rejected as repulsive and primitive, only to be “later classified within the sacred traditions of the West Indies.”

“For a long time obeah was the ultimate signifier of the Caribbean’s difference from Europe, a symbol of the region’s supposed inability to be part of the modern world” (Paton, 2001, p. 1).

In *Narratives of Obeah in West Indian Literature : Moving through the Margins*, Janelle Rotriques explores Obeah’s spiritual, cultural, and religious echoes on the narratives of Caribbean writers both in the West Indies and its Diasporas. Rotriques stresses the fact that Obeah emerged during the slave practices of ‘maroonage’ and spiritual divination. Obeah

“emerged in conflict ; its literature, therefore, tends to speak of incoherence, fracture, dislocation and marginality [...] Obeah simultaneously complements and complicates the concept of a national West Indian culture and literature” (Rotrigues, 2019, p. 14).

In *Creole Religions of the Caribbean : An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo*, Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert argue that the African slaves transported during the Atlantic slave trade had to recreate their religions and spiritual practices after relocation in the Americas. According to Olmos and Gebert, “Africans experienced multiple levels of acculturation : an initial adaptation to new languages and customs in an interchange with slaves of other cultures, and later with the culture of their masters” (Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2011, p. 21). Katia Frye defines Obeah as a “system of beliefs rooted in creole notions of spirituality which acknowledges the existence and power of the supernatural world and incorporates into its practices witchcraft, sorcery, magic, spells, and healing” (qtd. in Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2011, p. 155).

In *Beyond the Limbo Silence*, Nunez places both Obeah and Voodoo at the heart of her narrative of spiritual healing and madness. Sara’s madness by the end of the novel could be a side effect of the obeah and voodoo practices she undergoes under the supervision of Courtney, a Yoruba priestess in disguise.

Although obeah spells are part of Caribbean culture, the practice remains prudently secretive. Almost every Caribbean home would have contacts with an obeahman or woman for protection. Sara’s mother bathed her in an herbal bath during her childhood polio and gave her a sack of herbs for protection upon her departure to the United States. When Sara’s hostess discovers the mojo bag, Sara exclaims : “Soucouyant diablesse. The Orehu. I carried to Wisconsin a bag of herbs blessed by an obeahman” (Nunez, 1998, p. 82).

Sara’s great-grandmother Bertha—a shadowy figure throughout the narrative—had an affair with an obeahman, which cursed the family with nervous frailty. Sara draws a parallel to the mad Bertha of Jane Eyre, asserting :

“I had read Jane Eyre. I knew about the mad Berthas, the white Creole women in the West Indies who had gone mad with their guilt. Neither fish nor fowl, neither European nor African, but now born and bred West Indians, they were left to face the relics of slavery, the scuttle that was left behind when the Europeans left. And the guilt, mostly the guilt. Our mad Bertha, my grandmother’s mother, was made even more insane when she tried to cross over” (Nunez, 1998, p. 75).

When mad Bertha “crossed into the black blood,” she was forever alienated—a recurring predicament in Caribbean literature where racial categories are blurred and painful. This trajectory exemplifies what Bonnie Mann describes as “spatiotemporal acrobatics” that splinter the subject (Mann, 2006, p. 51).

4. Reclaiming the Self : Beauty, Shame, and Embodied Subjectivity

In *Beyond the Limbo Silence*, the tension between external appearance and internal identity becomes a central site of conflict for Sara Edgehill. From her early years in Trinidad to her academic journey in the United States, Sara is haunted by the perception of her own physical inadequacy. Her struggle with beauty—understood as both an aesthetic standard and a social expectation—reveals how femininity is constructed, internalized, and resisted. In this context, her “ugliness” becomes not only a personal burden but a site of postmodern sublimity, where pain and alienation catalyze self-fashioning.

4.1 The Tyranny of Beauty : White Femininity as Gaze

Sara’s sense of inferiority is first shaped by her mother’s embodiment of idealized femininity—delicate, light-skinned, and admired. In contrast, Sara is described as too thin, too dark, too androgynous. Her mother tries to “fix” her daughter’s body : straightening her hair, dressing her in fine clothes, feeding her milk and starches. Yet none of these interventions succeed. As Sara recounts, “I had grown from an ugly duckling into an ugly duck. No swan for me” (Nunez, 1998, p. 30).

This maternal gaze functions as a disciplinary mechanism, echoing Michel Foucault’s notion of surveillance. The mother becomes the vehicle through which Eurocentric beauty standards are imposed, rendering Sara’s body both visible and deficient. The pain of not being beautiful becomes a psychic wound, reinforced by Sara’s awareness of her racial ambiguity and her failure to conform to hegemonic femininity.

4.2 Grotesque Femininity : The Grandmother and the Collapse of Aesthetic Norms

Nunez complicates this beauty narrative by introducing Sara’s grandmother—a towering, white, mannish woman whose body resists both racial and gendered norms. Her physique is not simply unattractive but excessive, muscular, and hardened. “She dwarfed my grandfather,” Sara observes, “and had a body unlike that of any woman I knew in Trinidad” (Nunez, 1998, p. 3).

Rather than presenting her as a tragic figure, the grandmother becomes an embodied critique of aesthetic essentialism. Her whiteness, instead of being an asset, is framed as alienating, even grotesque. “Her whiteness was additional proof that she was mannish” (Nunez, 1998, p. 5). In this inversion, whiteness is no longer the measure of beauty but a marker of coldness, distance, and emotional sterility.

The grandmother’s defiance of gendered beauty complicates the binary between the beautiful and the sublime. Her body, rigid and sinewy, projects a form of sublimity not grounded in the natural or the picturesque, but in the uncanny and the monstrous. This aesthetic disruption offers a proto-feminist reading of the sublime as a space of otherness, where marginality becomes a source of symbolic power.

4.3 Internalized Shame and Postmodern Subjectivity

Sara's feelings of inadequacy do not remain static ; they evolve as she moves across geographies and cultures. In the all-white convent school in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, she encounters a new gaze—this time benevolent but still authoritative. When Sister Agnes calls her “a lovely young woman,” it unsettles Sara's established self-image. Her eyes, once a source of shame, are now “bottomless wells” (Nunez, 1998, p. 73).

This single word—“lovely”—triggers a subtle rupture in Sara's self-perception. It reveals the constructed nature of beauty and demonstrates how identity is produced through discourse and affect. As Judith Butler argues, subjectivity is shaped through interpellation : the way individuals are “hailed” by societal norms and linguistic signs. Sara is reconfigured not by internal transformation alone, but by the power of the Other's word.

Her oscillation between shame and pride, visibility and erasure, reflects the postmodern condition of fractured identity. Sara's subjectivity is contingent, unstable, and multiply mediated. Her engagement with beauty is not about conforming but about negotiating power, memory, and desire within a regime of signs.

4.4 Aesthetic Agency : Reframing the Body

Later in the narrative, Sara begins to exercise aesthetic agency—not by becoming beautiful in the conventional sense, but by inverting its codes. She evaluates white femininity through a Caribbean lens, finding it pale, sickly, and exaggerated : “Some pale I thought them ill... I saw plump ones and ones so thin they could be blown away by the wind” (Nunez, 1998, p. 84).

Her reversal of the gaze is not just ironic—it is political. Sara reclaims the right to define beauty on her own terms, and in doing so, asserts a resistant subjectivity. A waitress in garish makeup becomes a “clown.” The grotesque is re-inscribed not in her body but in the dominant aesthetic regime she once internalized.

In this context, Sara's earlier sense of bodily shame transforms into a sublime encounter with her own marginality. By disidentifying with both white and black beauty ideals, she forges a space of aesthetic and ontological difference—messy, painful, but also liberating.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Nunez's *Beyond the Limbo Silence* is a profound narrative of aesthetic, spiritual, and gendered transformation. Through the journey of Sara Edgehill, Nunez offers a powerful redefinition of the sublime—a concept long dominated by Eurocentric, masculine, and rationalist ideologies. Instead, she positions the sublime within the female Caribbean body : fragmented, haunted, mystical, and alive.

This study has explored how Nunez reconstructs the sublime through multiple frameworks :

- A philosophical reworking of Kantian and Lyotardian notions of overwhelming affect,
- A feminist resistance to aesthetic and gender essentialism,

- A postcolonial reclaiming of spirituality via obeah and ancestral memory,
- And a narrative strategy grounded in surrealism, ritual, and madness as liberation.

Sara's body becomes the site where colonial, familial, and cultural tensions converge. Her madness, often pathologized, is reframed as a sublime act of resistance and rebirth. The figure of Bertha, inherited from Western literary tradition, is not simply rewritten but re-empowered—she becomes ancestor, spirit, and symbol of womanhood unbound.

Ultimately, *Beyond the Limbo Silence* offers a postmodern sublime that is decolonial, embodied, and feminine. In reclaiming madness, ugliness, and spiritual vision, Nunez gives voice to a subjectivity that refuses containment and finds beauty in the borderlands.

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Abstract

Elizabeth Nunez's *Beyond the Limbo Silence* revisits the figure of the "madwoman" within a postcolonial, feminist, and Caribbean framework. Moving beyond Eurocentric and masculine aesthetics, Nunez integrates madness, surrealism, and spiritual practices such as obeah into her redefinition of the postmodern sublime, locating this experience within the gendered, racialized Caribbean female body. Despite the recognition of Elizabeth Nunez's contributions to Caribbean literature, there is a noticeable lack of critical scholarship examining her work through aesthetic theories of the sublime, feminist agency, and spiritual epistemologies. How does Nunez's novel subvert and reconfigure traditional notions of the sublime by grounding it in the experiences of Caribbean women? The study draws upon philosophical frameworks from Kant and Lyotard, feminist critiques by Anne Mellor and Bonnie Mann, and postcolonial perspectives on spirituality and identity. The novel's narrative strategies—through the use of surrealism, spiritual possession, and corporeal suffering—are analyzed. Sara Edgehill's journey is studied as an embodiment of a fractured but resilient subjectivity. Madness, typically pathologized, is reframed as an act of sublime resistance and spiritual awakening. Obeah emerges not as superstition but as a valid form of ancestral knowledge and empowerment, while surrealist hallucinations destabilize linear temporality and Cartesian rationalism. The analysis reveals that *Beyond the Limbo Silence* dismantles the patriarchal, Eurocentric configuration of the sublime. Through Sara's embodied experiences of madness, shame, and spiritual trance, Nunez illustrates a form of sublime consciousness that is fragmented, mystical, and resilient. Sara's eventual acceptance of her ancestral madness and her aesthetic agency reconstruct a decolonized, postmodern feminine sublime. Elizabeth Nunez's *Beyond the Limbo Silence* reconfigures the sublime as an aesthetic and spiritual experience rooted in Caribbean female subjectivity. Madness, grotesqueness, and spiritual vision become sites of liberation rather than pathology. The novel thus proposes a new sublime—feminine, embodied, and resistant to colonial and patriarchal narratives. Further comparative studies could explore how Caribbean women writers reclaim other traditionally oppressive aesthetic categories—such as the grotesque, the monstrous, or the uncanny—to articulate hybrid, postcolonial identities beyond Western paradigms.

Keywords

Postmodern Sublime, Madness, Surrealism, Obeah, Caribbean Literature

ملخص

تُعيد إليزابيث نونيز في روايتها *Beyond the Limbo Silence* تقديم شخصية "المرأة المجنونة" ضمن إطار نسوي، كاريبي وما بعد استعماري. لا تكتفي نونيز بإعادة سرد النمط الكلاسيكي،

بل تعيد تشكيل الجلال ما بعد الحداثي عبر جسد المرأة الكاريبية المجزأ، المسكون والأسطوري. رغم تزايد الاعتراف بأهمية نونيز الأدبية، إلا أن دراسات قليلة تناولت أعمالها ضمن منظور نظريات الجلال، والأجساد، والروحانية ما بعد الاستعمارية. كيف تعيد روايتها صياغة مفهوم الجلال التقليدي عبر تجربة الجسد الأنثوي الكاريبي؟ استناداً إلى فلسفات كانت، ليوتار، ومقاربات نسوية كميلور ومان، يستكشف هذا البحث كيف تمزج نونيز بين الجنون، السريالية، وممارسات الأوبها لتوليد هوية متجددة. تُستعمل السريالية لتفكيك الزمن الخطي، بينما تُعيد الأوبها تأكيد المعرفة الروحية كأداة مقاومة ثقافية. تكشف الدراسة أن نونيز تبتكر تصوراً جديداً للجلال يتجذر في التجربة الأنثوية المستعمرة، حيث يُعاد تأطير الجنون كتنحرر، والعار الجسدي كسلطة جمالية، والروحانية كسلح مقاومة وإعادة بناء الذات. تقدم رواية نونيز تصوراً للجلال الجسدي المؤنث، المقاوم للاستعمار والهيمنة الذكورية. تحتفي الرواية بإمكانية الخلاص من خلال الألم، والذاكرة الأسطورية، والرؤية الروحية. يمكن للأبحاث المستقبلية دراسة كيف توظف كتابات كاريبيات أخريات مفاهيم القبح، الوحشية، أو الغرائبية لإعادة تشكيل الهوية النسوية خارج النموذج الغربي.

الكلمات المفتاحية

السامي ما بعد الحداثة، الجنون، السريالية، الأوبها، الأدب الكاريبي

Résumé

Beyond the Limbo Silence d'Elizabeth Nunez revisite la figure de la "femme folle" dans un cadre féministe, caribéen et postcolonial. Loin d'une simple relecture, Nunez reconfigure le sublime postmoderne en le liant à la corporalité féminine fragmentée, hantée et mystique du sujet caribéen. Malgré l'importance croissante de Nunez dans la littérature caribéenne, son œuvre reste peu analysée sous l'angle des théories esthétiques du sublime, de l'épistémologie spirituelle et de l'agentivité féministe. Comment *Beyond the Limbo Silence* déconstruit-elle les paradigmes eurocentriques du sublime à travers l'expérience du corps féminin caribéen ? En s'appuyant sur Kant, Lyotard, Mellor, Mann et d'autres théoriciens postcoloniaux, cet article examine comment Nunez articule folie, surréalisme et pratiques spirituelles (notamment l'obeah) pour forger une nouvelle subjectivité. Le roman mobilise le sublime non comme élévation rationnelle, mais comme immersion corporelle dans la douleur, la mémoire ancestrale et la mysticité. Le surréalisme sert à déconstruire la temporalité linéaire, tandis que l'obeah offre une résistance spirituelle à l'ordre colonial. L'étude révèle que Nunez refonde le sublime sur la base d'une expérience féminine décoloniale : la folie devient libératrice, la honte corporelle se mue en agentivité esthétique, et l'héritage spirituel, longtemps réprimé, se transforme en force de résilience identitaire. Elizabeth Nunez offre une vision radicale du sublime, réorientée vers l'altérité féminine, corporelle et postcoloniale. *Beyond the Limbo Silence* célèbre la reconstruction de soi à travers la douleur, la spiritualité et l'imaginaire mythique.

Une étude comparative future pourrait analyser comment d'autres écrivaines caribéennes mobilisent les esthétiques du grotesque, du monstrueux ou de l'étrange pour subvertir les canons occidentaux de la représentation féminine.

Mots-clés

Sublime postmoderne, Folie, Surréalisme, Obeah, Littérature caribéenne