THE ART OF WILSON HARRIS

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Wilson Harris, the Guyanese novelist, critic and poet, seeks to create new forms in the novel which will reflect his vision of the basic unity of man. This unity is free of cultural and racial ties, embodies a new state of consciousness, healed rather than divided, and is open to greater possibilities of human fulfillment for all men. Harris thinks that such a consciousness is possible if men can learn to avoid the destructive polarization and stasis which now rule their attitudes and behavior. He believes that through the use of the creative imagination men can go beyond ruling structures to a mediating force outside those structures.

This study deals with the way in which Harris seeks to portray the subjective imagination in his fiction. By focussing on the complexity of his multi-faceted characters, and his artist/creator/author protagonists in particular, this study analyzes Harris's descriptions of disintegrating inner and outer worlds and follow his breaking and broken individuals in their search for a reintegrated identity. By dispensing with normal conventions of style and language, by pairing
opposites, by telescoping times and characters, Harris seeks to involve
the reader in his fiction as he "digests" apparent contrasts in order to
move toward a whole and integrated psyche.

Synchronicity, the shaman figure, and the "eye of the scarecrow"
are three devices he uses to suggest ways whereby his characters, and
his readers, may learn to see more clearly and move toward a unified
vision. Harris discusses these devices in three interviews, which are
published for the first time in the appendix, and both his discussions
and creative fictional use of the terms are investigated in this study.
While Harris does not believe an actually perfected psyche is possible,
he does believe we can use a subjective imagination to free ourselves
from stasis and the tyranny of technology, and he does propose
imaginative means of moving toward that perfection.

The growing body of Harris's work, his constantly evolving style,
his positive vision of the world, and the increasing critical acclaim
extended to his novels, all suggest the need for a study of his fictional
art. This dissertation seeks to fulfill that need.
INTRODUCTION

Wilson Harris, the Guyanese novelist, poet, and critic, was born on 24 March 1921 in New Amsterdam, British Guiana, of mixed Amerindian, European, and African descent. He was educated at Queen's College, Georgetown, British Guiana, where he studied land surveying from 1939 to 1942. After qualifying for practice, he led many survey parties into the heart of the interior, into the rainforests of Guiana for mapping and geomorphological studies. From 1955-1958 he was the Senior Surveyor of Projects for the government of British Guiana and in 1959 he went to live in London.

Before he left Guiana for England Harris published mostly poetry: numerous individual pieces in a variety of publications and two full volumes compiled later. Though several short stories and most of his poems were published while he lived in Guiana, the bulk of his work has been published since 1960 in England and includes fourteen novels, two full collections of short stories and more than a dozen other stories, six full or monograph-length studies, and numerous shorter critical and theoretical essays. For a complete listing of Harris's novels, short stories, critical essays, and other work, the reader is referred to the bibliography.

Harris is increasingly recognized as a writer who creates new forms in the novel while advocating a reconciliation among races and nations. Speaking of man's involvement in the quest for community, he has said:
It is this quest that makes the imaginative artist profoundly responsible and this kind of responsibility has nothing to do with being a spokesman for a particular society. The world in which we live today is so dangerous and so riddled with problems that what is at stake is the birth or rebirth of community in the most genuine sense in which one could use that term.

It is Harris's commitment to the search for a renewed human community, through imaginative rather than political means, which is the central theme of his novels and the focus of this study. This commitment has, naturally enough, given Harris international visibility, numerous awards, and honors. Among other distinctions, he has received grants from the Arts Council of Great Britain (1968, 1970) and has served as a delegate to the National Identity Conference in Brisbane (1968) and the UNESCO Symposium on Caribbean Literature in Cuba (1968). He has been a writer in residence at Scarborough College, University of Toronto, Canada (1970); University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica (1970); University of Aarhus, Aarhus, Denmark (1973); and the University of Newcastle, Australia (1979). He has held fellowships from Leeds University in Caribbean Literature (1971), the Guggenheim Foundation (1973), the Henfield USA (1974), and the Southern Writers' Fellowship (1976). In addition, he has held a visiting lectureship to the University of Mysore (1973) and was guest lecturer at Yale (1979).

For four years the University of Texas in Austin has asked him to be a visiting professor (1972, 1980, 1981, and 1982) and in 1983 he will be the Regent's Lecturer at the University of California.

Harris's work is at the far end of the scale of social realism which has been maintained as the major style of West Indian Fiction. He deviates from the usual descriptive, realist type of Caribbean fiction, using landscapes to create meanings and images that radiate outward in widening circles from a central theme. One of the few West Indian
writers to actually live and work among Amerindians in the South American interior, he uses his extensive personal experiences with both indigenous peoples and local landscapes as the basis for most of his characters and locations. Though these have shifted in the most recent novels from the heartland of Guyana to Europe and even Mexico, the characters still trace their genealogical and psychic roots to the Guyanese interior.

In Harris's fiction characters may appear and disappear, become interrelated in intricate patterns of social and family relationships, and experience a breakdown of time and an explosion of space. A person may turn into a place, a place into an aspiration; what begins as flashback suddenly leaps forward into the future but returns either in the present novel or another to bring together fragmented elements of man and his landscape in a symbolic and imaginative fashion. Startling the reader, Harris's novels open up new ways of seeing the world and man's place in it both individually and collectively; men and landscapes take on a universal significance.

As the appended bibliography indicates, Harris's work has been the subject of a growing number of critical commentaries and interpretations. Many of these studies inform this dissertation and are acknowledged in future chapters. At this point two critics may be singled out for particular notice. Not only are they outstanding for the quality and quantity of their work, but their approaches highlight what is difficult and unfamiliar about Harris's work. The first critic is Michael Gilkes, who analyzes an alchemical theme in Harris's early work; and the second is Hena Maes-Jelinek who explores a theme of breakdown and breakthrough.
In Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel (1975), Gilkes points out similarities in the writing of several of the best known Caribbean authors who focus on what he conceives of as a common schizophrenia: a "division of consciousness." Gilkes recognizes that the general confusion of cultural and ethnic identities emerges, for example, in a writer like Edgar Mittleholzer as an obsession with the genetic blemish of his African ancestry and desire to win acceptance from his European antecedents; or it appears in a writer like V.S. Naipaul, though of unmixed East Indian ancestry, as a view of himself as a "cultural mongrel, an inheritor of a 'rubbish heap' of broken cultures." Gilkes believes that rather than deal with the divided consciousness as a hopeless condition, Harris seeks a "new state of consciousness," which will permit a new sensibility to be created through the cross-fertilization of cultures and races, victors and victims.

Gilkes sees Harris's use of juxtapositions and wedding of opposites to achieve unity as an expression of his interest in alchemy. While many have thought of ancient alchemists as merely trying to turn base metals into gold, to concoct an elixir vitæ, a deeper response to this activity centers on the concept of transubstantiation. Through a mysterious transition from one state to another, a melting and refinement, base elements could be converted into valuable ones by undergoing a transitional process similar to the process in which Harris's characters are involved. In the context of the Caribbean "melting pot" of cultures and characters, the application of such alchemical processes allows Harris, in Gilkes's view, to move toward a cultural fusion and renewed possibilities, or, in my view, to move from "base" individual cultural elements toward "refined" perspectives for all men.
Gilkes refers to Arthur Koestler, who sees a disassociation in modern man arising out of a split between the old brain, which is the seat of primitive emotional reflex, and the new brain which is the seat of experimental reason. This brain split can be healed by an alchemical process which transforms *homo maniacus* into a true *homo sapiens*. In his own novels Harris shows how twentieth-century man can be healed in a similar fashion through the alchemical transformation of a mind programmed by ritual reflexes (the static inbuilt codes of history) into a mind of open and unpredictable possibilities. Later, in the chapters dealing with specific novels I shall discuss the "tabula rasa" and "healed mind" figures which are either the catalyst for, or result of, this psychic alchemical process. These appear in Harris's fiction, for example, as Idiot Nameless, Fool, and Black Marsden, who are either capable of unravelling their own "historic garments" or of helping someone else, like Goodrich, learn to unravel his. They provide the catalyst for potential change and increasingly positive growth in the last four novels: *Companions of the Day and Night*, Da Silva da Silva's *Cultivated Wilderness*, *Genesis of the Clowns*, and *The Tree of the Sun*.

Gilkes's focus on an alchemical theme is particularly appropriate to Harris's novels since, in "History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas" (1970), Harris himself discusses the stages of the alchemical process and compares the elements to Caribbean literary elements. Harris compares the bush-baby syndrome to what C.G. Jung calls the *puer aeternus*, the immortal or archetypal child of dreams.5 Looking at this "immortal child of dreams" in alchemical terms, he discusses the three stages of the process: the first is *nigredo* or blackness, the *massa confusa*, unknown territory or undiscovered realm;
the second is albedo or whiteness, an inner perspective or illumination, or the dawn of a new consciousness; the third is the cauda pavonis, colors of the peacock, the variable possibilities of fulfilment we can never totally realize. Harris's use of the alchemical process has been expertly discussed by Gilkes and becomes increasingly clear as Harris's reader progresses from The Palace of the Peacock (1960) with its readily apparent use of the cauda pavonis colors and symbolism, through the body of Harris's work all the way to the less obvious, but equally important, use of characters, like Black Marsden, who incorporate several of the elements into a single, multifaceted personality. This multifaceted personality is so important to Harris's novels that it will provide a basic motif for discussion of Harris's work in the second part of this study.

In his essay "The Native Phenomenon" (1971), Harris discusses the frontiers of the alchemical imagination as a means to move beyond an opus contra naturam into an opus contra ritual. He believes a new definition of community is needed but not a jettisoning of ritual since it belongs to the memory of a group. Ritual needs to be used as an "ironic bias," that is, as something which unravels self-deceptions within self-revelation and allows man to see through the various "dogmatic proprietors" of the world into the play of contrasting structures and anti-structures to a drama of consciousness which lies beyond those limitations. Through an alchemical process of imagination man can "digest contrasting spaces" and tones, avoid the temptation to commit himself to a conservative bias or entrapping stasis, and "digest as well as liberate contrasting figures" in order to give full play to community and the creative imagination. There can be no such thing as
too much creativity for that would imply a state of perfection, of paradise. 6

Many of Harris's unusual terms, such as "dogmatic proprietors," "ironic bias," or "digestion of contrasting spaces" are difficult to understand and they will be discussed at greater length in Chapters 3 and 4 on Harris's style and vocabulary. At the moment I wish merely to introduce some of Harris's basic themes, goals, and terms in order to provide the basic structure for more detailed discussion to follow. For example, closely related to the idea of digesting contrasting spaces is the theme of understanding and coming to terms with indigenous peoples. Though a common response has been to view native populations as second class citizens, or at least not of great importance, these "natives" have, in Harris's view, a sophistication of their own equal in its way to that of their more "civilized" counterparts.

"Native" for Harris is not at all a pejorative term nor does it refer simply to people of a particular locale. For him it refers to one whose resources are so deep that they embrace, however obscurely, many contradictions; a "native" is, in fact, a universal man. In this sense Harris sees Karl Marx as a profoundly "native" phenomenon; so too are Herman Melville, William Faulkner, Amos Tutola, Wole Soyinka, Denis Williams and Alejo Carpentier, for they are not merely local ornaments of a given class or prejudice. Harris believes that if Caribbean writers are to move toward being "native," to go beyond being merely local historians, they must develop a new philosophy of history which relates to the arts of the imagination. 7

Through involvement with Caribbean "natives," through digestion of "contrasting figures" 8 which separate men, Harris believes man can come
to a more profound understanding of human nature. Such an understanding requires an involvement with the aboriginal facts of conquest, with essentially human or natural facts involving sometimes catastrophic changes. Harris believes that the conquest of aboriginal populations remains like a ruin of psychological premises, an expression of cultural biases in the midst of the Caribbean mind that could serve as a gateway for a new philosophy of history and anthropology.

Harris believes that if a community is to create a living future it must begin to penetrate and unravel its biases in order to bring into play a complex wholeness. This wholeness will be, in his words: "inhabited by other confessing parts that may have once masqueraded themselves as monolithic absolutes or monolithic codes of behavior" in whatever land they originated. Through a sort of alchemical process modern man can break down these biases, these monolithic codes of behavior, and move toward a community of Man.

Harris uses language imaginatively to enhance our vision rather than cerebrally to convey intellectual meaning, and, as Michael Gilkes has claimed: "by applying the open-ended scale of myth and archetype Harris discovers possibilities for the novel which are virtually endless." Yet it is the alchemical model that is the main theme of Gilkes's analysis, the theme that guides the reader through the complexity of Harris's symbols and metaphors, and the initially confusing structures of his novels, to a fuller understanding of the belief in a unity of mankind which forms the basis of Harris's fiction.

In the works of Hena Maes-Jelinek a rather different, though complementary, perspective appears. At the heart of Harris's work, she believes, lie the images of breakdown and breakthrough. Ivan Van
Sertima expresses her theory as follows: "the breakdown is a grave, almost fatal crisis within man; the breakthrough is the almost miraculous salvage and renewal of wholeness from fragmentation and ruin."\(^{11}\)

Maes-Jelinek feels that Harris, unlike other novelists, avoids creating a given or recognizable picture of man and his society because such would merely confirm a given, "static," world view instead of modifying or deepening that view. Through her studies she shows that when Harris evokes a configuration which can be recognized as a particular society he does so only to show that it must be broken down and a new vision created.\(^{12}\) As Ivan Van Sertima usefully glosses her argument:

Man, standing on the apparently secure floor of the given world (world of accepted values, rigid assumptions, ideologies, faiths, frozen reflexes), suddenly sees fissures opening up in that floor through which he falls, spinning blindly at first in what appears to be a void (ground of the world's night) but where in fact he begins to see with a profound and penetrating clarity buried roots of being (eclipsed selves, eclipsed potentials, eclipsed perspectives) and resensing and recovery of which stays his fall and enables him to retrieve a foothold on the breaking and broken world.\(^{13}\)

In Maes-Jelinek's own words:

[Harris] has never ceased to insist on the 'digestion of contrasting spaces' but he does not optimistically believe that they can be easily 'liberated.' They are part of man's nature (like good and evil) and of the physical world and can never be eradicated. But underlying those contrasts and struggles within man, between men and indeed among all forms of being in the universe, there is a harmony capable of emerging through the most solid walls (physical and mental) as Carroll's song (in Palace of the Peacock) emerges through the waterfall.\(^{14}\)

Maes-Jelinek believes that Harris takes on the role of historian and philosopher in a world in which the historian's view is usually trapped by the "unbroken" individual. Harris's new novel form, his breaking and broken individuals, demonstrate a new way of recording
history through the language of a vision or drama of consciousness. She explains that one of the ways that Harris breaks down the barriers between individuals and societies is through his free borrowing from various cultures. Harris never denies the specific character and experience of any cultural group, but his writing is meant to awaken men's sensibility and imagination to the real nature of their involvement in the world and to teach them to reject static ways. Though man, Maes-Jelinek says, cannot help being imprisoned within time and history he can achieve partial liberation by tending toward an "other," providing this other is not then allowed to become an absolute.¹⁵

Harris's novels usually deal with both inner and outer worlds, in both of which he discovers and describes polarized conditions. In the outer world there is a confrontation between victor and victim, oppressor and oppressed, which results in psychic deformation on both sides of the confrontation. Harris's novels describe not only the conflicts but the potential inherent in man for breaking through static ways of being and creating the possibility for rebirth. Gilkes, Maes-Jelinek, and this author agree that Harris seeks in his novels the fluid mode of expression which will allow him to express what he sees as the duality of life and the reciprocity necessary between existing poles of the world.

Maes-Jelinek sees the early novels moving from the breakdown of a character, his state of loss and deprivation, to a fiction where the protagonist/narrator is himself an artist, like Harris, who seeks some breakthrough which will allow him to come to a more complete understanding of himself and his world. The earliest novels (Palace of the Peacock, Secret Ladder, and Whole Armour), trace the breakdown of the
character in the course of the novel, whereas the middle novels (The Eye of the Scarecrow, The Waiting Room, Tumatumari, and Ascent to Omai) begin with the already broken figure. As I will show in Part Two of this study, the latest novels (Companions of the Day and Night, Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness, Genesis of the Clowns, and The Tree of the Sun) have narrators who have themselves undergone an earlier process of disintegration but are, at the time of the novel, well on the way to psychic understanding and re-integration.

The earlier breakdown suffered by these characters benefits them, for their initial state of weakness or emptiness no longer imprisons them within a given or final worldview. Each character becomes a medium, a "vicarious hollow" in which the past re-enacts itself. After the breakdown the characters are able to reach greater understanding of themselves and their fellow men. As I shall argue in the discussion of Harris's last four novels, when a character's broken memory yields a fragmented version of events, this fragmentation gradually allows for greater possibilities of psychic re-integration through an interpretation of events different from the first, confining one. The past becomes the main topic of these novels and is subject to the same crumbling and reshaping as the psyche of the character who relives it. Forms and characters are no longer rigid, they interpenetrate one another, create new forms in the process, and allow for a more positive restructuring.

Maes-Jelinek points out that a character's mode of perception is often shattered by some catastrophe (a plane crash, a death), which also shatters self-created barriers; even time itself breaks down.

The character, however, is at once the instrument and the object of his exploration, and his changing mode of apprehension usually brings about a breaking apart of his rigid and self-contained world and makes possible his insight into a deeper reality. So that
dismemberment, 'breaking down things in order to see through
things' becomes discovery, just as in the later novels the
diminished state of man (the scarecrow man) becomes a necessary
stage prior to a new growth in consciousness and imagination.16

Harris pursues destruction of a character in order to fuse him with
the object of his quest, and creates a new framework for the world and
the character. The new framework, the result of "digestion of
contrasting spaces," is more flexible and capable of continual
modification. Only through this flexibility of vision can characters
avoid being caught in the stasis of the rest of the world, avoid
"conscripting time" or even causing stasis themselves, and avoid being
the "dogmatic proprietors" of static modes of thought and behavior.
Harris believes that only when characters are able to continue being
flexible will they be able to arrive at a true reconciliation of
opposites and give birth to Man rather than a broken individual.

While wholeness is tentatively reconstructed or approached in the
narrative through an accumulation of images, and perceived by the
protagonist in visionary moments, it is never actually attained.
The narratives trace the characters' oscillations between the
finite world and their vision of the 'infinite' as they grope
towards a metaphysical reality which both fascinates and terrifies
them.

Harris insists that by processes of breaking down and breaking through
an individual may be capable of personal regeneration. Through the
individual lies social salvation, "but man must first come to terms with
himself and his environment before he can ever hope to change society."18

These themes of alchemy and breakdown/breakthrough, which serve as
unifying elements in the criticism of Gilkes and Maes-Jelinek, provide
extremely important keys to understanding Harris's work. The themes
have been greatly instrumental in providing the basis for this study,
which will seek further to illuminate that work and move beyond to a
careful analysis of the four novels Harris has written since Gilkes's
Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel (1975). Though these fine critics have done a great deal to lay a firm foundation for any study of Harris's novels, his continuously expanding vision and unique style are so complex that any body of criticism must be incomplete. It would be impossible for any single critic, and even so far for any group of critics, to do complete justice to a complex vision and style composed of Harris's degree of cultural eclecticism, his commitment to the creative imagination, his pursuit of an integrated consciousness, and his faith in man's ability to create that consciousness through imaginative fiction rather than through social or political agencies.

The rapidly increasing body of work by and about Harris, as well as his numerous honors and requests for his participation as a writer, lecturer or delegate, indicates the growing need for wider understanding and appreciation of his unique innovations and difficult literary style and theory. In this dissertation I seek to facilitate that understanding. The following commentary consists of two parts. Part One, "Contexts of Vision," characterizes Harris's fiction in terms of its narrative range and content, its relations to other West Indian fiction, and its distinctive stylistic techniques. Part Two, "Visionary Texts," narrows the focus to individual explications of Harris's four most recent novels. Following Part Two is an Appendix composed of three hitherto unpublished interviews with Harris. Of great interest in themselves, these interviews provide basic materials for a discussion of both his imaginative vision and the techniques whereby he seeks to embody that vision in fiction.

Given the difficulties of Harris's style, Chapter 1 of Part One provides an overview of Harris's novels from the early Guiana Quartet to
his later more experimental and imaginative fiction. Although a summary of plots and themes does injustice to the complexity of his fiction, at the same time it suggests the range and character of his concerns and may prove useful to those readers who are new to Harris or who find his techniques a formidable bar to their comprehension of the novels. Following this overview, Chapter 2 seeks to identify Harris's particular place in West Indian fiction through a discussion of such other major writers of the region as V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, and Edgar Mittelholzer. Neither of these chapters makes much of a claim for originality; both seek to provide informative contexts for the discussions of style that follow. Chapter 3 considers key features of Harris's style and vocabulary, while Chapter 4 examines his peculiar uses of myth and his extensive reliance on certain image structures. In these chapters, through a discussion of the fictional uses of synchronicity, shamanism, and what Harris calls "the eye of the scarecrow," I aim to go beyond existing criticism of Harris and to prepare a context for the more detailed readings of Companions of the Day and Night (1975), Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness (1977), Genesis of the Clowns (1977), and The Tree of the Sun (1978) that follow in Part Two.

Notes

1 Wilson Harris, "Shamanism," an interview with Michael Gilkes, London, 7 July 1977. A complete transcript of this previously unpublished interview is to be found in the appendix.


3 Gilkes, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel, p. xxvi.


7 Wilson Harris, "History, Fable and Myth," p. 25.


9 "Confessing" in Harris's terms is being able to admit to bias and with that admission comes the possibility for positive change.


PART ONE

CONTEXTS OF VISION
CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF THE FICTION

Written in language that is extremely dense and poetic, and treating settings and subjects that are unusual, Harris's fourteen novels resist easy categorical schemes. To be sure, they are all uncommonly short, ranging from 71 to 156 pages in length, but their brevity does not make them easy reading. On the contrary, Harris's style is so compressed, his imagery often so unfamiliar, that the attentive reader is likely to treat his novels, or large sections of them, as he would treat difficult poetry. Precisely because Harris invites microscopic analysis, however, one feels the need to step back from his novels in an attempt to gain perspective, to see them whole, or at least in larger terms. Here as elsewhere Michael Gilkes is helpful, providing us in *Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel* with a breakdown of the first ten novels into three groups. The first group, Gilkes believes, deals with "The Journey Inwards" and comprises *The Palace of the Peacock* (1960), *The Far Journey of Oudin* (1961), *The Whole Armour* (1962), *The Secret Ladder* (1963). Moving beyond their own inner struggles, the characters of the novels in the second group begin a search for "An Art of Extremity" as found in *Heartland* (1964), *The Eye of the Scarecrow* (1965), *The Waiting Room* (1967), and *Tumatumari* (1968). Gilkes's third category is "The Expanding Vision" and includes
Ascent to Orai (1970) and Black Marsden (1972) which lead into but are distinct from the last four novels: Companions of the Day and Night (1975), Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness (1977), Genesis of the Clowns (1977), and The Tree of the Sun (1978).

Harris's first four novels, known as The Guiana Quartet, focus on successive historical conquests and the victimization of various racial groups by white post-Columbian conquerors. Though the novels have primarily poor and uneducated characters, they trace the beginnings of man's search for himself, a self which is without specific racial or cultural ties and becomes representative of all men at all times. The characters suffer psychic disintegration as they lose or break free of restrictive historical and social patterns during their searches.

The plot of Palace of the Peacock (1960), centers on a journey made in an open boat by Donne, a white creole rancher known for cruelty and efficiency, his more sympathetic brother, and his racially mixed crew. On a superficial level the men search for Mariella which is, in typical Harris fashion, simultaneously an old Indian woman and the Amerindian settlement to which Donne's native work force has fled because of the ill treatment they have suffered at his hands. Though the men are described as individuals they are also closely related by both social and blood ties, ties which imply the interrelatedness of all men. The journey to the interior is literal and physically arduous as well as metaphoric and psychologically arduous. One by one the men suffer a series of misfortunes and die while struggling to get upriver, in Guyana, and upriver, too, in the streams of their own consciousnesses. They are struggling to reach into their own psychic interiors and come to terms with their imaginative and previously suppressed inner beings.
Palace concludes as the last men die realizing they have always possessed in themselves the elusive element they all pursued on the journey.

Not for the only time in Harris's fiction, one is reminded of T.S. Eliot; here, of those lines near the end of "Little Gidding" (1943):

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.¹

An even closer comparison may be (and has been) made with Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1899). Like Conrad's novel, Palace of the Peacock describes the inner quest of a relatively sophisticated man who moves not only upstream into geographically unfamiliar and dangerous territory but also makes a journey into himself. External events and elements of the physical world become analogous to inner conflicts and psychic barriers which must be overcome if the man is to find the unknown object of his quest, a psychic integration and peace.

The motif of the inner struggle and journey is relatively commonplace in West Indian writing and many authors use the theme, yet if authors like George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul suggest the need for an internal quest, they do not, Harris believes, move beyond either suggesting the need for greater understanding or parodying the conditions which gave rise to the need. Harris deals with the issue of the quest in literature in his essay "The Frontier on Which Heart of Darkness Stands".
In this context of parody it is possible, I think, to register a foreboding about the ultimate essence of *Heart of Darkness* and to sense an exhaustion of spirit that froze Conrad's genius and made it impossible for him to cross the frontier upon which his intuitive imagination had arrived. . . My view is that parody tends to border upon nihilism, a fact all too clear in modern fiction and drama. Parody is the flag of the death of god, the death of faith, and without faith imaginative art tends to freeze and cultivate a loss of soul. Perhaps god has been so conditioned by homogeneous or tribal idols that freedom of spirit seems a chimera. When I speak of the necessity for faith I am not referring therefore to cults of idolatry but to a conviction written into the stars as into one's blood that creation is a priceless gift beyond man-made formula or calculation of Faustian will.

Conrad's despair is so marked that one is conscious of infinite desolation within the very signals he intuitively erects which bear upon a radical dialectic of form. His parody—like Beckett's parody—remains formidable because it cuts to the bone and heart of liberal complacency. But the transition beyond parody which humanity needs neither Beckett nor Conrad fulfills.

Harris believes that through imaginative fiction it is possible to move beyond this nihilism, away from mere parody, toward a form of fiction that is capable of helping man free himself from static modes of thought and life. In his discussion of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* he explains what he believes the novel's form and function are:

> By form I mean the novel-form as a medium of consciousness which has its deepest roots in an intuitive and much, much older self than the historical ego or the historical conditions of ego-dignity which bind us to a particular decade or generation or century.

> The capacity of the intuitive self to breach the historical ego is the life-giving and terrifying objectivity of imaginative art that makes a painting or a poem or a piece of sculpture or a fiction endure long beyond the artist's short lifetime, gives it the strangest beauty or coherence-in-depth.

It is this desire to transcend the immediate historical setting and historical ego of man that leads Harris to create forms in the novel which seek to move beyond those of Conrad and of other West Indians. Harris attempts to express in his novels the archetypal elements of man's psyche rather than those elements created by the immediate, narrow, and deceptively homogeneous conditions of the historical moment. He does this by deliberately creating "meaningful distortions of images"
which allow for a "profound, complex and searching dialogue between confessing and confessional heterogeneous cultures that are no longer monolithic." The major difference, then, between Harris and Conrad (as Harris sees it) is that Conrad came to the "frontier" which depicted the stresses created by what Harris calls "monolithic cultures" or "static" cultures, but was unable to recognize the frontier or to move beyond it in *Heart of Darkness*. Harris deliberately seeks not only to pinpoint the static elements of cultures, but to advocate moving beyond them by means of an imaginative literature.

Part of what Harris values in Conrad's writing is his use of adjectives, the very use condemned by F.R. Leavis in *The Great Tradition*. Harris not only sides with Conrad against Leavis; he finds in the sensationalism Leavis disliked possibilities for imaginative development:

I would question Leavis's indictment of Conrad for an addiction to the adjective. The fact of the matter is that the intuitive archetypes of sensation and non-sensation by which Conrad was tormented are not nouns. They are qualitative and infinite variations of substance clothed in nouns. Nouns may reveal paradoxically when qualified, that their emphasis on reality and their inner meaning can change as they are inhabited by variable psychic projections born of the mystery of creation. There is a woodenness to wood, there is also a gaiety to wood when it is stroked by shadow or light that turns 'wood' into a mask worn by variable metaphysical bodies that alter the content within the mask. The livingness of wood is the magic of carven shapes that act in turn upon the perceiving eye and sculpt it into a window of spirit.

Throughout his novels Harris's nouns increasingly take on the quality of the adjectives that clothe them and thus add multiple layers of meaning. A word used in *Palace* will reappear in later novels and its significance will grow with use. Just as Harris feels we must break free from static modes of society and binding historical forces, he also seeks to break free from many of the confines of language imposed by
historic literary forms. This struggle against "nominalism," as one might express it, becomes increasingly evident in the course of the novels as Harris's vision expands and his style evolves.

One method Harris uses to break from traditional novel techniques appears in the second novel of the Quartet, *The Far Journey of Oudin* (1961). Harris uses a protagonist, Oudin, who dies before the story opens so the story takes place as a "flashback" in the mind of a dead man. As a "dead" man's narrative it is freed from the usual constraints of time imposed on living people and includes past, present and future events. The other characters we meet are members of an East Indian community in Berbice, a community harshly ruled by a cruel environment and the moneylender Ram. Oudin has been hired by Ram to kidnap the virgin Beti so that she may become Ram's bride and provide him with an heir for the "kingdom" he has accumulated at the expense of the other, uneducated and naive members of the community. The accumulation of material possessions is virtually the only way these poor people believe they can provide a buffer between themselves and the harsh, unrewarding life of farming a difficult land, but Ram seeks to take away even the meager physical comforts they manage to obtain. Though Oudin had previously done Ram's dirty work, he balks when it comes to kidnapping Beti and, rather than turn the young girl over to Ram, keeps her and marries her himself. They live together for thirteen years during which time Oudin, too, becomes indebted to the moneylender. At Oudin's death Ram hopes to regain his hold over the community by acquiring as his successor Oudin's unborn child as payment for his debt. Beti, sensing the importance of the debit note she is unable to read, eats the note and Ram is forced to offer her freedom in exchange for her unborn child.
Beti represents the common people who, uneducated and oppressed, are unable to do more than barely survive in a harsh environment. Oudin, who is more clever than Beti, and one of Harris's early examples of the Dopplegänger figure, is able to thwart Ram's attempts to rule the community. Because Oudin is psychologically strong he withstands Ram's various efforts and tricks and even in death succeeds in beating Ram. Because Oudin's note is destroyed, Ram, who represents the forces of tyranny and oppression, is unable to gain the complete power he has sought. Though, like Beti, these early Harris characters are relatively unaware of the significance of their actions or struggles, the attentive reader understands the need for a new vision which will free men from tyrannical authority, static and suppressive cultural elements, and oppressive histories. Though the characters of The Far Journey of Oudin were relatively unaware of the significance of their actions, the characters from now on have a growing awareness of their importance.

Harris's third novel, The Whole Armour (1962), is set on the coast of Guyana where the land is simultaneously eroded by the sea and enriched by silt deposits of the rivers. The inhabitants exist precariously, unwilling or unable to plant roots deep in the land and living helplessly day by day between alternating seasons of drought and flood. Cristo, the symbolically named protagonist, has been spurned by the community because he is different and educated. Ironically, it is only through him and later his son that a real future can become possible. When Cristo is willing to accept his responsibility and even a burden of guilt as a member of his community and work toward enlightenment and improvement for all, he finds peace for himself and offers the example for others to follow. Cristo journeys to the geographic and psychic
interior and confronts the aboriginal "folk" who live there. By virtue of this journey, Cristo becomes an everyman figure and (by implication of his name) a Christ figure. Eventually he comes to terms with his community, his environment and himself, but only when he is willing to accept responsibility as a member of the community.

The last novel of the Quartet, *The Secret Ladder* (1963), centers on Russell Fenwick, an educated, articulate and introspective land surveyor leading a government hydrographic expedition into the interior to chart the upper reaches of the Canje River. Like Donne's crew, Fenwick's is composed of a motley assortment of men who represent the many races of Guyana. During the seven days of the book's story, the men are all subtly changed. The more sophisticated crew members increasingly recognize not only the needs and fears of the men of their own survey group, but the needs and even terror of the primitive negroes who inhabit the interior. Through confrontation with the rebel Poseidon and his followers, Fenwick and his men realize the misunderstanding which has been created by the meeting of aboriginal and ancestral folk with technological men and equipment. Fenwick is eventually able to come to terms with the problem and to see that, instead of offering hydroelectric power to move the country and its people toward improved life styles, his technological advances threaten not only the style but the life of the folk. Fenwick realizes that these folk have been greatly underestimated but must now be recognized. Only by an understanding and appreciation of all the people, sophisticated men and those of the interior, will any men be able to move forward.

The journey to the interior is continued in the next four novels which Michael Gilkes groups as "An Art of Extremity." In *Heartland*
(1964), The Eye of the Scarecrow (1965), The Waiting Room (1967), and Tumatumbi (1968), the characters, who have already suffered a breakdown at the opening of the novels, seek to escape their fragmented condition; attempting to break through to more positive possibilities, they search for freedom from the restrictions imposed by their earlier acceptance of static, inflexible, social forms. In this group of novels, language patterns reflect the broken nature of the characters. Characters and time are telescoped in complex ways that anticipate the intricate complexities of style found in Harris's most recent novels where time, place, and characters are often so interwoven that meanings deepen and multiply.

Heartland (1964), the fifth novel, deals more explicitly with the theme of guilt and responsibility than The Secret Ladder (1963). Though it lacks the overt Christian symbolism of The Whole Armour (1962), man's guilt, both literal and assumed, is the center of the main character's attention. Zechariah Stevenson has been implicated in a financial scandal involving his father's company; as a consequence, he goes into self-imposed exile and attempts to vindicate himself by making good. Like Fenwick in The Secret Ladder, Stevenson undergoes an initiation into a new state of consciousness, suffers through a purgatorial process of self-discovery, and eventually integrates his two opposing selves, the imaginative and the technological.

The Eye of the Scarecrow (1965), which follows Heartland, is related in setting and theme to the Guiana Quartet but represents a break from the style and language patterns of the earlier novels. The unnamed narrator describes apparently unconnected and arbitrary events in hallucinatory images. Gradually the reader becomes aware of a theme
of reconstruction of sensibility that is created through the memory of the narrator in flashbacks to childhood and historical events. These flashbacks bring the narrator to an awareness of possibilities, previously unconsidered, that in life there can be death, the death of the unfeeling or unseeing existence; and in death there can be life, the life of previously unsuspected potential, and even a return to life after a physical death, as was the case in Palace and The Far Journey. In Palace the entire crew of the boat died in an earlier expedition but returned to relive and re-experience in order to learn from previous errors or blindness. In The Far Journey the events of the story take place after the death of Oudin, but his perspective is the key to understanding the novel. In both novels death is a form of release for the characters, release from the narrow confines imposed on vision by the habits of a lifetime. In this way the narrator is able to uncover inner spaces, rediscover buried or unconscious parts of the psyche, and discover new and liberating meanings for events.

In The Waiting Room (1967), language, overlapping times, and characters repeated from earlier novels become so entwined that it is sometimes almost impossible to discern which character is speaking or at what time. Like The Eye of the Scarecrow, The Waiting Room takes the form of a disjointed diary or log-book kept by a person who has suffered psychic breakdown and now moves toward reintegration. Susan Forrestal, blind, and deserted by her lover, marries a man who is featureless, both literally because of her blindness and metaphorically because of his lack of distinguishing characteristics. No longer able to see the world around her, Susan exists in the "waiting room" of her mind where she creates such a complex world that it is difficult for the reader to
decide whether she, the lover, the husband, or even the physical surroundings are real or merely imaginary. Though all the characters learn from one other, it is the reader who comes to the fullest understanding of the interrelationships between the characters and their surroundings.

Like Susan Forrestal, Prudence Solman of *Tumatumari* (1968) suffers a series of traumas which lead her to reconsider the events of her life. While the events of Susan's life were either seen in retrospect or apparently created in her mind, Prudence both reconsiders and experiences actual events. She has suffered a nervous breakdown brought on by the recent decapitation of her husband in an accident as he rushed home to be with her during childbirth. The child also dies and she fears her husband's Amerindian mistress, Raka, who cares for her during this time. She also unhappily remembers members of her family, particularly her father whose carefully maintained mask of social respectability suddenly fell away as he lay dying. This series of traumas makes Prudence reconsider life and its meaning, and leads her to seek for some coherence in her past, some explanation for the events. She creatively constructs or reconstructs her own history and sees that she must free herself from the "dead historical time" and build a life free from the errors, one-sided attitudes, and false images created by her husband and her father. In order to do this she must learn to see with the scarecrow eye, the eye which sees through surface realities and appears to her on the rock by the waterfall where her husband was killed. Once she is able to see with this eye she can see through the biases which trapped others and learn to accept Raka, learn to accept the "folk" as neither her husband nor her father could do.
The first four Harris novels, the Guiana Quartet, focused on characters who journey into themselves and the country seeking understanding as representative racial types. The next four novels dealt with more individual characters who, in an effort to reach understanding, went to extremes of psychic self-examination. In the next two novels, Ascent to Omai (1970) and Black Marsden (1972), this psychic effort is continued and expanded in an explosion of images and language. This explosion reflects the disintegration of the character but also offers the possibility of a reintegration into a better person. The more complete and integrated personality is a major focus of the last four Harris novels, which will be the subject of Chapters 5 through 8 of this study.

The disjointed speech and thought patterns found in Tumatumari (1968) and The Waiting Room (1967) are continued and intensified in Ascent to Omai (1970). Harris also continues the theme that modern man must reconcile his technological self with his imaginative self, for technology and invention, the novel declares, can enslave man, but slavery can be overcome by means of the imaginative use of memory which allows him to reinterpret his history and heritage and move toward greater personal and community freedom. This move is begun by the protagonist Victor who has made and lost a fortune in the diamond and gold fields and, as the book opens, is climbing Omai Hill in search of his dead father's old, abandoned claim. During his search he is bitten by a tarantula, becomes feverish and hallucinates.

Victor's hallucinations free him from the rigid, static control of his surface mind; he is able to see far beyond immediately visible connections to a greater understanding of himself and acceptance of his
father. This theme of a concentration beyond "daylight concentration" appeared as early as *Palace of the Peacock* in the "dead seeing eye" of the narrator (p. 13), and continues through the novels as the growing image of the scarecrow eye which appears to Prudence in *Tumatumari*. It is a theme central to Harris's fiction, a theme which he has spoken at length about in an interview (see appendix), and I shall consider some of its implications further in Chapter 4. Here it is worth quoting Harris's own comments on "the eye of the scarecrow":

When one writes an imaginative fiction concentration is not daylight concentration, it's a much deeper kind of concentration. As a consequence, your ego, the historical ego, is in some degree moved, or broken, or altered to allow a far deeper intuitive self to come up and, in fact, to begin to do things within the concentration which the writer applies to the book. This intuitive self comes up, strikes at the historical ego and then creates something which has a future beyond the comprehension of the writer himself. And, it has a past also which is much deeper and stranger than the writer understands. So his fiction reflects in some strange active way a mysterious past as well as a future. Now that means that the fiction has an objectivity that is not the objectivity of daylight consciousness. It is not on the surface of the mind, it is much deeper and the synchronicity thing seems to me to sustain this. It means that the images, the structures which we see around us, are not as absolute and sovereign as they appear to be.

This daylight concentration is all Victor is capable of until he was bitten by the tarantula and suffered hallucinations.

The hallucinations free Victor from socially imposed restraints which have blinded him, allowing him to enter his unconscious mind to seek for the understanding he was unable to reach on a conscious level. He remembers his childhood and his father who, depressed over his wife's death during Victor's birth, became a drunkard and a lecher. The literal climb up the hill suggests the great barriers, hills or mountains of mythology which can only be overcome by the truly heroic. "Seeing" through his inner eye his father's intense suffering, Victor comes to a
better understanding of his own life: his love/hate relationship with his father and longing for his unknown mother. The novel ends as Victor suddenly senses a great understanding and compassion, the first step in reintegration of his own warring elements.

He becomes an everyman figure whose story has reverberations of historical, psychological and mythological significance as he, like Prudence in Tumatumari, seeks a new birth in the "well of the past" and moves toward it in an unpredictable flash of spiritual inspiration. His quest for his ancestral origins and longing for a pre-lapsarian world are symbolic of the search of not only Caribbean man but all men. Only by going beyond his surface history and reality can Victor achieve the new sense of feeling and insight which will allow him to break out of his self-created prison and move in a new, more positive, direction.

Victor, and symbolically Man, begin the rite of passage through the intercession of a trickster/shaman figure, a figure increasingly important in Harris's fiction and one discussed at length in both Chapter 4 and the Shamanism interview in the appendix. Victor, after being bitten by the spider, enters a trance or "limbo" state in which he acquires arcane knowledge as a part of his process of "becoming." This is the most overt use thus far of the trickster/shaman figure in Harris's novels; in later novels Black Marsden and Idiot Nameless are simultaneously shaman figures and shadows of the main characters.

Though Harris's next two books, The Sleepers of Roraima (1970) and The Age of the Rainmakers (1971), are really collections of short stories, they too suggest the need for a re-appraisal of the powers of the imagination. Taken from Carib myths and legends, the stories portray a young child undergoing initiation, coming to an awakening and
renewal by extending both personal and community history. The more straightforward and simple language of the stories reflects the youthful nature of the protagonist and is simpler than the language of Harris' mature and complex characters like Victor. Even in the young protagonist, however, Harris creates the feeling that only through creative force and freedom of the imagination can man create the improved community toward which he strives.

Harris returns to the novel form in Black Marsden (1972) in which "community" is also the main subject. The novel's protagonist is quite literally double: Clive Goodrich and Black Marsden are separate characters and complementary facets of each other's personality. Goodrich finds Marsden lying half-frozen in Dunfermline Abbey, Scotland and takes him to his own large home in Edinburgh to recover. Soon Marsden's friends begin to arrive: Jennifer ("Gorgon"), a beautiful but derelict nightclub entertainer; "Harp," an obscure musician; and "Knife," a beggar. Moving in and out of Goodrich's dreams, these characters take on different names and shapes as they act as spiritual guides to Goodrich and are revealed as additional elements of his own personality. Though the concept of the double, the multifaceted personality, appears in Harris's first novel and continues throughout the body of his work, it takes on the most complex nature and significance in Black Marsden.

Since Clive Goodrich and Black Marsden simultaneously "project themselves" upon each other, and Knife and Jennifer "step forth" from Black Marsden, they not only become facets of the same personality but represent Harris's ongoing interest in syzygy. Marsden leads Goodrich into the journey to Namless, an interior and previously unexplored
territory, which is to be a proving ground for Goodrich's abilities to integrate the diverse parts of his psyche and "digest the catastrophes" of his existence. Marsden, the unconscious part of Goodrich's personality, refuses to accept the stasis which governs Goodrich's life and leads him on a journey through a series of metamorphoses as he seeks to construct a "new eye of the scarecrow" in order to "tunnel through" the obstacles to an integrated psyche. 9

Since Goodrich keeps a diary of his real and imaginary experiences in Namless he is able to trace the growth of his self-confidence and self-knowledge, realizing that he needs to change from within in order to achieve a more integrated psyche which balances his realistic and visionary halves. Goodrich begins the process with a recognition that while he gives material goods to Marsden and his friends he in turn receives psychic benefits. Through Marsden Goodrich learns that he must continue to wrestle with his problems and seek expanded vision, but can never complete the struggle, for that would imply the very condition of bias from which he has been striving to free himself. Clive Goodrich has been able to overcome his personal biases in his search for greater fulfillment, both for himself and his community. Harris implies that this is the course we must all take if we are to create a new and original wealth of opportunities from contrasting cultures, landscapes, and ideologies.

Clive Goodrich, who began his quest for understanding and a sense of community in Black Marsden, continues his search in Companions of the Day and Night (1975), the first of Harris's four most recent novels which I shall consider in detail in Part Two. Here he serves as a framing device, an editor for the collection of paintings, sculptures,
and writing of the now dead Idiot Nameless/Fool, and filters through his own revised and better integrated psyche the images and events of Nameless's diary. As he studies the collection and seeks to put it in order, Goodrich is both a created and a creating force. He is an editor, so involved in what he had originally regarded as trash, that as he begins to comprehend the importance of the works, he comes to view the collection as "magical contact with the gods" (p. 15). Just as the initially diverse characters of Black Marsden become elements of a multi-faceted narrator, so too do the various characters in Companions become facets of Idiot Nameless's personality, which in turn is a part of Goodrich's increasingly complex psyche. By putting the collection in order Goodrich simultaneously orders his own psyche, lives through the journey of Idiot Nameless, journeys into himself, and comes to greater understanding.

Da Silva is, at first glance, a less obvious repetition of character than is Clive Goodrich. Originally seen in Palace, Da Silva dies but reappears in Heartland only to die again. By the time he reappears in Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness (1977) he has progressed from being the unsophisticated porkknocker in the jungles of Guyana to being an urbane artist in London who traces his roots to South America. Though he is more realistically portrayed than most of Harris's protagonists, Da Silva is closely related to them. He is a composite character: artist and writer; new and old world man; creator and created force, aware of the shadows which haunt his psyche and seeking to integrate them into a complete and unified man. Of all Harris's characters Da Silva is the most optimistically conceived.
Harris’s characters may exhibit a growing sense of awareness of their relationship to others both past and present, and Da Silva may offer the greatest hope for an integrated man who can literally and metaphorically become the father of future generations as he does at the end of Da Silva; but there is no false suggestion that man is about to attain perfection.

*Genesis of the Clowns* (1977) repeats the theme of a physical and mental journey into the interior of Guyana and into the mind in order to reconcile the parts of a divided self. Frank Wellington, a government surveyor, and his work gang explore and record the course and currents of a remote river. Unexpected events and tensions make Wellington increasingly aware of his relationship to the men and the land. Like the mixed crew of *Palace*, Wellington’s crew are related both by emotions and blood and struggle for an improved world—one which is not yet truly attainable.

Though the character Da Silva appears in several of Harris’s novels as a unifying device, *The Tree of the Sun* (1978) is the only novel which is truly a sequel. It begins at the point Da Silva’s *Cultivated Wilderness* (1977) ended. After eight years of marriage Jen, Da Silva’s wife, conceives and as Da Silva ponders the growing child he remembers a painting he began on the morning of conception which contained a growing image. This "foetus" is both the real child and the child of his imagination through whom Da Silva is able to relate himself and his wife to their own antecedents, to the former childless tenants of their house, and to the whole community of man. Da Silva and Jen offer a type of resurrection for Julia and Francis Cortez by having the child the Cortezes could only dream about. The couples are further
united when Da Silva edits the journal Julia kept and the letters Francis wrote, in which they tell of their great love for each other and the pain they feel because they are unable to have a child. Harris suggests that the da Silvas's child belongs to all of them and is a symbol of the unity of old and new world, living and dead, dreamers and doers.

These last four novels—Companions of the Day and Night, Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness, Genesis of the Clowns, and The Tree of the Sun—are mature indications of Harris's growing abilities to create new and interesting forms in the language of the novel while at the same time deploying those forms so as to advocate a unity among men. So important are these novels to an understanding of Harris's style, themes, and vision that they will become the focus in the second part of this study. At the moment, however, it is time to turn from an overview of Harris's fiction to a consideration of his peculiar place in West Indian literature. Harris's place in West Indian literature has been amply discussed and documented by others. Gilkes's fine study, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel, proved particularly useful in the composition of the discussion that follows. Chapter 2 will examine Harris's relation to three key Caribbean writers: V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, and Edgar Mittelholzer, who share Harris's concern for the problems of a divided West Indian psyche but deal with the problem in more conventional ways. Though different from each other in important respects, they are more like each other than Harris is to any of them.

Notes


5 Wilson Harris, "The Frontier on Which Heart of Darkness Stands," p. 139.

6 Michael Gilkes, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel, p. 68.


8 Syzygy is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "the conjunction of two organisms without loss of identity; a pair of connected or correlative things; and, in Gnostic theology, a couple or pair of opposites."

9 Wilson Harris, Black Marsden (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 94.
Harris's emigration to London was typical of many of the West Indian writers of his generation. In the early decades of the twentieth century when West Indian fiction began to appear, the masses to whom it might speak and of whom it was written hardly constituted a reading public. At other levels of the society a combination of two main elements discouraged writers: the long history of indifference to the arts and sciences, and the resistance of the colonized middle class to a native literature that was not in the English tradition they had been educated to consider the only literature possible. By the early 1950's those who wished to make their livings by writing followed a pattern of emigration, usually to England but sometimes to America. Nearly every West Indian novel since then has first been published by London firms for sale to members of the British public.

Not only was there a British reading public for those who chose to emigrate to London, there was also the increasing possibility for international recognition as well, something undreamed of in the West Indies. Besides the discouragement of a non-reading local public and poor printing methods which resulted in low quality production of a writer's work, there was the increasing temptation to go to London where writers like Edgar Mittelholzer and George Lamming had had novels...
published within three years. Few writers returned to their homelands for more than brief visits since they could not hope to survive in societies where chronic unemployment for one quarter of the population existed and writers were seen as either crazy or affected. When asked about the problem of limited audience in the West Indies George Lamming replied:

It causes a problem, because the common people are often too busy looking for bread. You know, when a man is really rummaging for bread, you can't be too hard on him when he says, 'I have not the time for books.' The people whose lives are the substance of the books do not have an opportunity to see that life returned to them in literary form. ¹

The self-imposed exile of most West Indian writers resulted in widespread alienation, the price paid for achieving their ambitions. It is this alienation and the resulting psychic split which serve as main themes for most Caribbean writers. While the movement out of the small and somewhat narrow West Indian societies allowed the writers to gain a perspective on their heritages, it also resulted for most in rootlessness. V.S. Naipaul refers to this "regional barrier" in 1958:

I am never disturbed by national or international issues. I do not sign petitions, I do not march. And I never cease to feel this lack of involvement is all wrong. I want to be involved, to be touched even by some of the prevailing anger. ²

Although such a division of consciousness and the resulting search for identity are not themes peculiar to the Caribbean, they carry a particular force in this area. West Indian writers suffer not only a psychic split but a racial and cultural division which is often emphasized in their daily existence and recorded in the literature where natural extremes of weather and landscape take on exemplary or symbolic meaning. These divisions and resulting conflicts cause many writers to
feel a great need to preserve and protect themselves from traumatic forces whether natural, historical, or social.

The theme of resistance to psychic disintegration is of course a common one; it is found, for example, in *The Heart of Darkness* in the conflicts of Kurtz and Marlow, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in the journey along the Mississippi River, and even in Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Even so, the story of a hero who suffers psychic disintegration or disorientation has a unique element in West Indian fiction in that the journeys of self-discovery and reintegration of psychic forces are usually made by heroes who, like their authors, are racially and culturally mixed. The Guyanese author and critic Michael Gilkes has observed that West Indian cultural mixing was bound to influence writers who contained in themselves the blood of many races even as he represents five of the six races found in Guyana. The search to identify their cultural or racial background is surely common to all West Indians, but for those sensitive and probing West Indians who seek to make their livings by their pens, the issue of identity is naturally more pressing. Moreover, since the West Indies presents a complex and heterogeneous society, the success or failure of novelistic protagonists is likely to describe, not a single man or a particular group, but a more generalized or composite man. In some works, like those of Wilson Harris, the protagonist, freed from specific cultural constraints, becomes representative Man.

While many writers went to England or America to find publishers, others sought more basic help by trying to return to their "roots" in Africa or India. Colonialism had dimmed but not extinguished ethnic memories in the brief history of the area. Not merely a political
definition or an economic arrangement, colonialism became for many the very base and structure of West Indian cultural awareness. While under colonial rule, they were cradled by an absent or foreign mother culture and never had to stand on their own. Moreover, as the populations of the West Indies are predominantly non-white hostility toward coloreds did not exist, as it did, for example, in Alabama or Georgia.

This freedom from physical fear has created a state of complacency in the West Indian awareness. And the higher up he moves in the social scale, the more crippled his mind and impulses become by the result of complacency. ⁵

This complacency may in part be the reason for the general acceptance by West Indian authors of the prevailing period styles in metropolitan or international fashion, which provide the models for most West Indian literature. To be sure, literary production has risen with growing national movements, and West Indian authors have often addressed the problems of colonialism and independence. Like other developing literatures, moreover, West Indian authors have incorporated in their novels creation myths of the past, local scenery, and local patterns of speech; ⁶ they have described peasant life and have emphasized the existence of an indigenous community, both national and racial. But whether they have forged a national literature or an autonomous vision may be doubted.

Perhaps the best known Caribbean writer is V.S. Naipaul. Originally a Trinidadian, he follows the traditions of nineteenth century British literature but transfers his stories to the Caribbean. A third-generation West Indian, he left the islands in 1950. Naipaul is a "masterly reporter" ⁷ who brings a novelist's style and phrasing to a journalist's material. This approach keeps him on the edges of the events and lives he depicts: he is sceptical of the culture and politics
of his homeland, criticizing the slogans and false hopes which have kept West Indians trapped in colonial confines. What others sought to describe through realism and protest Naipaul describes with humor and satire, pointing up the problems but offering no hope for change or method for making a change.

Naipaul explains how he combines British and Trinidadian elements in his satire:

To us, without a mythology, all literatures were foreign. Trinidad was small, remote and unimportant, and we knew we could not hope to read in books of the life we saw about us. Books came from afar; they could offer only fantasy. . . All Dickens' descriptions of London I rejected; and though I might retain Mr. Micawber and the others in the clothes the illustrator gave them, I gave them the faces and voices of people I knew and set them in buildings and streets I knew [in Trinidad]. Dickens' rain and drizzle I accepted as conventions of books, anything like an illustration which embarrassed me by proving how weird my own recreation was, anything which sought to remove the characters from the make-up world in which I set them, I rejected.

The English books which Naipaul read described complex societies which excluded him and, he felt, made nonsense of his fantasies. He became increasingly convinced his society was poor and haphazard; he felt his society was poor because it had no mythology or tradition, haphazard because it had never been written about. He had no local literary models; in fact, not even the English language was really his though it was the language he had grown up using. He knew he wanted to write but knew only Trinidadian society and it seemed small, remote and unimportant; it embarrassed him.

Naipaul and other West Indian authors often mimic English or American models as they feel they have no viable models of their own. Naipaul's critics agree that he not only imitates but also satirizes other imitations through swift, comic treatments, usually in the form of picaresque narrative and comedy of manners. As imitations, Naipaul's
carpenters, writers, and other workers create nothing new; they have no dignity and no hope, they offer us interesting and entertaining stories of people and countries, but they disturb us by their lack of resources and opportunities. The reader concludes that the characters are trapped in societies which they must leave if they are to find true or lasting success.

While Naipaul's fiction describes West Indian chaos and creates local color through extensive detail, it suffers from uneven construction and depends heavily on conventional devices and repeated phrases. The author is neither a participant in society nor completely removed from it; he seems unable to find an objective position that will allow him to be comfortable with his society and still make constructive criticism of it.

In such novels as *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) and *The Mimic Men* (1967), Naipaul's criticism singles out numerous targets for his highly subjective satire: politicians, missionaries, tourists, social climbers, administrators, and even writers. He also satirizes institutions that he feels contribute to the superficial nature of the society: the educational system, political systems and parties, anything which is lacking in principles and contributes to the stifling of authentic self-fulfillment. He derides the emphasis on material success for its own sake, materialism which results only in mimicry rather than authentic emotional or moral involvement.

Naipaul's plots are simple. There is no great complexity or seriousness of action, the focus is on the characters and telling their story well. *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *The Mimic Men* and *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963) are told from
the point of view of a participating narrator who frames the story and seems more of a continuity device than a three-dimensional character. These shallow characters have no control over their lives and, since we are told in advance what will happen, we, too, are separated from involvement in the action and the action is cut off from any connection with contemporary reality. This technique removes any possibility of mystery or surprise but allows Naipaul to concentrate on the details of description and the technicalities of writing.

In *Tradition and the West Indian Novel* Harris refers to this style of writing as "comedy of manners" or "novels of persuasion." These terms suggest for Harris the mainstream literary tradition which:

rests on grounds of apparent common sense: a certain 'selection' [of details] is made by the writer, the selection of items, manners, uniform conversation, historical situations, etc., all lending themselves to build and present an individual span of life which yields self-conscious and fashionable judgements, self-conscious and fashionable moralities. The tension which emerges is a tension of individuals--great or small--on an accepted plane of society we are persuaded has an inevitable existence.

The very separation which Naipaul creates between his characters and his readers is the separation which Harris seeks to eliminate. Harris's readers are forced to participate through "broken" language in the disintegration of psyche suffered by his characters. This experiential disintegration brings reader and character closer together, as I shall try to show in Part Two of this study in the explications of four of his novels. In these novels the chaos we see and experience is not merely the difficulty caused by conflicting social elements and the lack of interpersonal communication, as is the case with Naipaul's characters; rather the chaos in which we participate results from deep personal traumas and eventuates, or promises to eventuate, in a reintegrated psyche and community.
Naipaul, on the other hand, claims to be seeking only a true communication with society, but he shows through his characters that such communication is not only non-existent but impossible. Gilkes notes that because Naipaul considers communication so difficult he also sees true freedom as a mirage and psychic wholeness as a constantly receding vision. Merely preserving and protecting oneself from disorganized and disintegrating elements of the world at large becomes, then, a main goal in Naipaul's novels and an end in itself.

Hoping to find an organized and integrated community in London Naipaul felt very much an outsider, and sought to discover more of himself by returning to India, the land of his ancestors. India was to provide dignity, purpose and order, but Naipaul found it was the opposite of what he had expected, as he shows in _An Area of Darkness_ (1964). His later fiction depicts his sense of exile and displacement as well as what he considers the effects of colonialism on the modern world.

In 1971 Naipaul explained in an interview with Adrian Rowe-Evans that his style had evolved from the early reactionary style, from analytical attempts to find a release in humor, through an expanding writing style, to attempts to reconstruct his disintegrating society. He sought in his later fiction: "to impose an order on the world, to seek patterns," without which he said he "would fail to find that degree of intellectual comfort" necessary to his psychic survival and "would have gone mad." In the early four or five novels Naipaul sought to "record" his reactions to his society, to report on it and satirize it rather than analyze it or understand it. It is this satire which George Lamming and others found so objectionable:
Mr. V.S. Naipaul argues that... he could not endure the West Indian community because it was philistine. Of course, it is a philistine society; but so, I'm told, are Canada and White South Africa. Therefore, one can't say philistine and leave it at that. This would be to describe their present, and in doing so by the absolute judgement of philistine, condemn them permanently to a future which you have already chosen. I reject this attitude; and when it comes from a colonial who is nervous both in and away from his native country, I interpret it as a simple confession of the man's inadequacy—inadequacy which must be rationalized since the man himself has come to accept it.  

Lamming feels that rather than being separated by ethnic differences, what should hold Indians and Negroes together in Trinidad is their common background as West Indians, a background whose basic feature is the peasant sensibility, the very quality which holds Lamming of African descent and Samuel Selvon of East Indian descent together as West Indians:

Neither Sam [Selvon] nor I could feel the slightest embarrassment about this; whereas Naipaul, with the diabolical help of Oxford University, has done a thorough job of wiping out his guts... His books can't move beyond a castrated satire; and although satire may be a useful element in fiction, no important work, comparable to Selvon's can rest safely on satire alone. When such a writer is a colonial, ashamed of his cultural background and striving like mad to prove himself through promotion to the peaks of a 'superior' culture, whose values are gravely in doubt, then satire, like the charge of philistinism, is for me nothing more than a refuge. And it is too small a refuge for a writer who wishes to be taken seriously.  

Lamming and Selvon are not the only ones who have reacted negatively to Naipaul's satire. In a 1980 review of Naipaul's most recent works, The Return of Eva Peron and "The Killings in Trinidad," Jane Kramer says:

Again, it is the missing idea that haunts Naipaul, the palpable absence that gives everything he describes a kind of negative illumination and leaves nothing real except a savage frustration finding its release in blood and torture and sexual humiliation, in the castrating fury of the impotent. Argentina's rulers and vigilantes are like Salin in 'A Bend in the River,' spitting between the legs of the woman who has shamed him. Their woman is an idea that eludes them. And rather than look for her, they shame one another with the brothel-victim charms of an Eva Peron, the
madan turned saint in an incompletely country, taking out her pay in
abjection and sentiment, her bright red lips feeding on their lost
souls. Men without progenitors, without issue.
So we have another book of Naipaul's journalism, written with
obsession and eloquence. A topography of the void.16
Naipaul's characters suffer from an inner emptiness; a void exists
where they should have a core of stability, strength and courage.
Feeling trapped in lives and situations over which they have no control,
they seek escape only to learn that they take their misery with them,
exchanging only the place not the nature of their suffering. Such
characters as Biswas of A House for Mr. Biswas (1961), Ganesh of The
Mystic Masseur (1957), or Ralph Singh of The Mimic Men (1967) cannot
understand why they live in apparently hostile environments and, lacking
understanding or even the motivation to search for it, they are unable
to correct the difficulties. Constantly in conflict with their environ-
ments, whether natural or social, they live in decaying buildings
(Biswaś), or once beautiful homes which are deliberately destroyed
(Ralph Singh), or worse yet, feel threatened and intimidated by something
so commonplace as a thunderstorm (Mr. Stone in Mr. Stone and the Knights
Companion, 1963). Overcome by loneliness and helplessness they futilely
seek escape in fantasy (Miguel Street, 1959), accumulation of material
possessions (Biswaś and Ralph), or even sexual encounters (Ralph Singh).
The characters live in a void, both inner and outer, and are powerless
to change their situations.
Naipaul explains his negative attitudes toward his characters and
their society:

It is not easy to write about the West Indian middle class. The
most exquisite gifts of irony and perhaps malice would be required
to keep the characters from slipping into an unremarkable
mid-Atlantic whiteness. They would have to be treated as real
people with real problems and responsibilities and affections—and
this has been done—but they would also have to be treated as
people whose lives have been corrupted by a fantasy which is their cross. Whether an honest exploration of this class will ever be attempted is doubtful. The gifts required, of sublety and brutality, can only grow out of a mature literature; and there can be advance towards this goal only when writers cease to think about letting down their sides. 17

In strong contrast to Harris who seeks in his fiction an imaginative means of improving the world and characters who can come to grips with a divided world, Naipaul's characters are alienated, motivated by negative forces and lacking in purposeful direction. They want to establish relationships which are stable and genuine, based on a personal authenticity, an inner core of self-identity. When the characters flee from a place, seeking release from their loneliness and isolation, they change the scene of their struggle but not the emptiness within. Ralph Singh sums up the pattern of Naipaul's characters in The Mimic Men:

Our grievances were our reality, what we knew, what had permitted us to grow, what had made us. We wondered at the ease of our success; we wondered why no one had called our bluff. We felt our success to be fraudulent. 18

Ralph, like most of Naipaul's characters, seeks an external solution to an inner problem and emptiness and finds that psychic wholeness has eluded him.

Even in Naipaul's non-fiction and recent works such as The Return of Eva Peron it is the idea of searching for something missing that dominates the writing. The combination of negativism, frustration, humiliation, and even fury leave the reader feeling that Naipaul's journalism, though eloquently written, is, after all, merely "a topography of the void."

Naipaul stands in strong contrast to Harris; while one is consistently negative and offers no hope for change, the other is continually stressing the positive, if confusing, elements of man and his world.
The negative view which characterized Naipaul's early novels can be traced throughout the body of his work. Characters begin as unaware, uncomfortable in their surroundings because they are uncomfortable in themselves, and seek escape from their alienation, loneliness and isolation. Unfortunately, they seek only external solutions to inner emptiness. Though Harris's characters are often alienated from their surroundings and other characters they struggle through their alienation and psychic disintegration toward greater understanding of themselves and their world, both physical and social, and by implication move in a positive direction both for themselves as individuals and for the community of mankind.

Naipaul is not alone, however, in his negativism and sense of being isolated from tradition and society. George Lamming, born in Barbados in 1927 of African ancestry, shares something of his anomie.

In the Castle of My Skin (1953) was the first West Indian novel to become a classic and is still one of the most often read Caribbean works. Lamming's six novels chronicle the sweep of West Indian history of which he was a part as he grew up in Barbados and Trinidad during the 1930's and 1940's as the island colonies struggled for their independence. Though he is an outspoken nationalist, he is yet another writer who had to leave home to find publishers and a reading public.

Lamming uses local Barbadian speech in a poetic style to portray social problems and changes. Originally a poet, he still heavily emphasizes the aural and visual, causing some critics to claim that his prose is not prose but very difficult poetry, more easily comprehended when read aloud because of the rhythms and dialect elements. Lamming gives dignity and significance to local material in literature and
comments on the foibles of West Indians without resorting to protest, exoticism, idealisation, or the biting satire of Naipaul.

While only two of Lamming's six novels deal with Europe, the other four trace patterns and vocabulary of West Indian history from colonial times in *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), through the gaining of independence in *Season of Adventure* (1960), to post-independence struggles and riots in *Water with Berries* (1972), and finally to a summary in his most recent novel *Natives of My Person* (1972), which reaches back to the beginnings of colonialism and, through allegory, suggests the recurring patterns of the history of the area. Though each of the novels is complete in itself they are all part of a developing vision of the pressing problems of decolonialization on the politics and psychology of the West Indies.19

Lamming seeks to write "good" books which will accurately depict the people of the West Indies, not merely depict characters who will be popular for a while. For Lamming this means not only using the language, people, and surroundings of the Caribbean but using them in such a way as to show a political commitment and leave a lasting impression on readers. For him "bad" books appear to be extremely exciting for a year or two and everybody talks about them, but five or six years later nobody can remember anything about them. A "good" book may not even be particularly noticed when it first appears, but it will become increasingly important because readers will find it addresses itself to issues which are of long-term concern. Though their methods of achieving the goal differ, both Lamming and Harris believe writers should have a beneficial effect on their readers by dealing with issues of social importance. As Lamming notes:
Although I would make a distinction about 'function,' I do not make a distinction about 'responsibilities' [for the artist]. I do not think that the responsibility of the professional politician to his society is any greater than the responsibility of an artist to his society. You may have a man who is a good writer. Then I think that one of the best political contributions that he can make to the society is to write good books.20

Lamming believes that this relationship of artist to the drama of politics is one of the basic themes running through everything he writes. In Kas-Kas he discusses how he believes special difficulties face the creative imagination writing in and of a society which is simultaneously in transition and very explosive. Writers of serious intention must be organically related to the political movements of their societies. Yet for West Indians this is made very difficult by their simultaneous need to protect themselves against the demands of what Lamming calls their "external reality," the pressures of a society which is not very appreciative of artists and offers them little chance for successful publication or acceptance.

For Lamming, In the Castle of My Skin is relevant to intelligent and sensitive readers in any part of the English-speaking world because, like Harris, he believes the theme of internal and external drama is universal. His greatest pleasure, he says, would be to know that the cane-cutters and the laboring class would read and understand this novel because the book is about them, but he realizes he must depend on educated classes elsewhere to make up his reading audience, for the very people of whom he writes have neither the education nor the time to read his books.21

The difficulties faced by a creative imagination are the topic of In the Castle of My Skin which centers on "G", a child who is both the young Lamming and an often romanticized product of a "creative
imagination" in the process of developing amidst the turbulent changes of his society moving from colonialism to independence. G, like other colonial intellectuals, becomes uncomfortably aware of the rapid and not altogether pleasant changes taking place as his country moves from the traditional social structure into the greater opportunities for social and personal independence of the twentieth century.

The autobiographical In the Castle of My Skin depicts the dilemma faced by West Indians who manage to gain an education and move from one social stratum to another, a move which virtually necessitates a move from one culture to another, a move often from home to exile. Lamming described this move in an interview:

Education was the only thing that was going to rescue me from total disgrace. It's a direct result of the social stratification of the education itself that after a boy had gone to the high school he would not have been expected to keep the same company that he kept before coming. His problem was that he found himself living in two worlds... When he was with the boys in the high school, he was always in a quandary about whether he should speak to the village boys... society was built in such a way that when you left one school and went to another, you left one world and went to another. 22

This move away from familiar places and ways of life is the subject of Lamming's second novel, The Emigrants (1954), which shows how the isolated self may become cut off from West Indian reality by a cocoon of racial apathy and colonial self-hatred; the novel also shows, however, how group consciousness can transcend the isolation of geographic and ethnic sources, transforming the variety of cultural beginnings into a unified whole. Lamming vividly describes West Indian identity in the words of a Jamaican carpenter in The Emigrants:

England, France, Spain, all o' them, them vomit up what them didn't want, an' the vomit settle there in that Caribbean Sea. It mix up with the vomit them make Africa vomit, an' the vomit them make India vomit, an' China an' nearly every race under the sun... It beginn' gradjally to stir itself, an' you can understan' what
happen if you imagine you vomit take on life an' start to find out where yuh stomach is. 23

Clearly, Lamming agrees with Harris, in theme if not in method of presentation, that West Indians must become aware of their dilemma, reject a destructive separation, and confront their diverse cultural realities—the "stomach" sources of the "vomit." To that extent may they realize total selfhood and a true group consciousness.

Though quite different in style, Of Age and Innocence (1958) and The Pleasures of Exile (1960) deal with facets of the same theme: the need for West Indians to change their value basis and structure in order to permit growth of interracial harmony and artistic expression based on West Indian needs and possibilities rather than on those externally imposed. Lamming believes that if West Indians could create their own standards for unity they would not have suffered the difficulties he describes in Season of Adventure (1960), which analyses the failure of nationalism of San Cristobal but which could be tied to virtually any West Indian attempt at independence. All of Lamming's books center on a protagonist's psychic division and struggle to locate the "something missing" which will allow West Indians to achieve a wholeness not now possible.

Lamming is in search of a new vision of the human community but knows that political change in the Caribbean must be accompanied by a profound change in the attitudes and vision of the people. Natives of My Person (1972) traces such a search for community as a journey into the psyche of both colonizer and colonized by a writer who feels himself a part of both worlds. Lamming, who feels it is the artist's responsibility to write "good" books which will articulate at the deepest levels of the psyche the drama of redemption, has used his fiction to explore
the self, to present an argument for the necessity of art and the imagination in shaping a new vision of Caribbean unity and real human freedom.²⁴

Lamming and Harris share many thematic elements though their styles are quite different. Both have deep concern for the artist as a responsible member of a community which, though it may have widely divergent ethnic groups, should seek a unified consciousness. By journeying realistically into the psyches of educated and creative individuals, Lamming shows the development of naive youth into responsible adult. By working through characters of heightened sensibilities he utilizes local materials (characters, setting, language) to create portrayals of West Indians as they become aware of the destructive facets of their societies and the negative influences of separation/segregation. Through the description of originally alienated artist figures he argues for improved attitudes and vision. Yet, though these ideas are shared by Lamming and Harris their individual presentations are quite different. While Lamming creates primarily realistic portrayals and describes the African influence on Caribbean life, Harris emphasizes the total community rather than a faction within it. While Lamming uses some symbolic elements, Harris's novels are so complexly symbolic as to become almost symbols in themselves.

Differing from the Trinidadian Naipaul, the Barbadian Lamming, and the Guyanese Harris is the Guyanese author Edgar Mittelholzer. The last of the three background authors to be discussed but the earliest to write, he too was greatly concerned with an exploration and understanding of self. Born 16 December 1909, in New Amsterdam, Guyana, of French, German and Negro stock, he was the dark son of European looking parents
and lived the divided consciousness he wrote of so extensively in his novels. A great disappointment to his father, a confirmed negrophobe\textsuperscript{25}, Mittelholzer felt himself wronged by nature and sought to emphasize his German blood: "Just one drop of that great blood. Just one drop in your veins, and it makes you different from everyone else. German blood!"

It is this dark heritage, his "mark of Cain," that affected not only Mittelholzer's personal life but the lives of his fictional characters.\textsuperscript{26}

Understanding Mittelholzer's attempts to achieve psychic wholeness is a step toward understanding the peculiar split of the Caribbean which preoccupied Naipaul and Lamming. Gilkes points out in "Racial Identity" that in all three writers the European presence is ambivalent, something to identify with but not something accessible to West Indians, for whom psychic wholeness is a constantly retreating vision always just out of reach.\textsuperscript{27} Naipaul, Lamming, and Mittelholzer share the problem of a crisis of identity, a feeling that something is "missing," something without which a true communication with society is impossible.\textsuperscript{28}

Mittelholzer, even more than Naipaul and Lamming, seeks to establish an identity and preserve a psychic balance in a threatening and divisive world. It is this problem of psychic balance and wholeness that is at the center of Mittelholzer's fiction and, indeed, of West Indian fiction.

In Mittelholzer's writing two ways of life, two opposing attitudes, are constantly juxtaposed: urban and rural, European and West Indian, foreign and local, intellectual and physical. This division forms the pattern for Mittelholzer's life and for the lives of his characters. Often through sheer power of will, he sought in his own life to integrate disparate factors. His attempts led to failure, despair, an
obsession with death, and finally to death itself when he died rather mysteriously in a fire in the middle of a field in England on 6 May 1965.

The first of the generation which established West Indian writing abroad in the 1950's, Mittelholzer dedicated himself to a literary career. He wanted to become rich and famous by writing novels for the people of Britain to read and at a deeper level wanted to be recognized and accepted by his European "parents." W.O. Dow, a close friend of Mittelholzer's wrote that:

Anonymity was not for him, and his greatest test came when the publishers agreed to accept Corentyne Thunder, but suggested that, as Adolph Hitler had made German-sounding names mud in England, he should write under a nom de plume. The first work that had got so far—a temptation? No, not for Edgar A. Mittelholzer. Off went a cable. 'Refuse write under nom de plume.'

Mittelholzer had decided very early in life to become a writer and pursued his goal relentlessly. As Donald Herdeck notes in his biographical sketch of Mittelholzer, in spite of his early experience of rejection slips when he first went to London, he set himself the task of writing a certain number of words a day: so many on the subway going to work, so many during tea break, so many on the way home. He stuck to his schedule and produced an impressive list of twenty-two novels, a short "fable," a travel book, an autobiography and numerous articles, short stories, and poems. His compulsion to write, however, resulted in some themes being overworked, especially that of the sins of the father being visited on the sons, or even on the daughters. He is also often preoccupied with sexual relationships, even on one occasion having a daughter seduced in the same manner that the mother had been. Donald Herdeck also comments that Mittelholzer's sometimes rather lurid sexual
descriptions may have been one source of his difficulty in acquiring
publishers and provide one more example of his own inner conflict.

The theme of the divided consciousness provides the prevailing
pattern in Mittelholzer's work beginning with Corentyne Thunder (1941).
He was so acutely aware of his own psychic division and his failure to
integrate those parts that his characters suffer the same difficulties
and failures, share his morbid concern with death, and increasingly
indicate his personal involvement in his fiction.

As Gilkes notes, the biggest problem of interpreting a Mittelholzer
novel comes from the attempt to separate the overlapping layers of
meaning and sift the real insights from the self-conscious and trivial
incidents. There is, however, at the base of all the writings a tragic
vision which pushes Mittelholzer's work from the merely narrow and
trivial to the truly tragic.

If there is a tragic element which rescues Mittelholzer's work from
the category of the merely trivial, then it is to be found in the
Faustian theme that underscores so much of his writing: the split
consciousness which, unless repaired through an associative
effort—an "at-onement" of the Spirit and Flesh, Strength and
Weakness, leads to depression and the consequent death-wish.\(^{31}\)

Goethe could almost be speaking for Mittelholzer when he has Faust say
to Wagner:

\begin{verbatim}
You are aware of only one unrest;
Oh, never learn to know the other!
Two souls, alas, are dwelling in my breast,
And one is striving to forsake its brother.
Unto the world in grossly loving zest,
With clinging tendrils, one adheres;
The other rises forcibly in quest
Of rarefied ancestral spheres.\(^{32}\)
\end{verbatim}

Like Mittelholzer, Brian Liddard of A Twinkling in the Twilight
(1959) is a self-divided man who deliberately separates his head and
heart, suffers from a rigid double psyche which leads to romantic
delusions, and finally succumbs to self-hatred and suicide. Brian Liddard follows the patterns set earlier in Faust, Heart of Darkness, and Death in Venice where the characters Faust, Kurtz, and Aschenbach crumble under the onslaughts of instinct and "its demons from underground."33

One weak characteristic of Mittelholzer's style emerges in A Morning at the Office (1950), where knowing he is writing primarily for non-West Indians, the author has a tendency to lecture his readers regarding basic history and attitudes of the area and barely manages to refrain from preaching. However, by being very direct in his descriptions of what West Indians take for granted, Mittelholzer prepares the groundwork for a reality which could become the basis of a new and integrated vision of West Indian identity.34

The gifts of meticulous detail of A Morning at the Office also appears in Mittelholzer's most ambitious work, the Kaywana trilogy: Children of Kaywana (1952), The Harrowing of Hubertus (1954), and Kaywana Blood (1958). The details are derived from a great deal of historical research, presented with impressive control of the complex relationships of the Groenwegel family in Guyana between 1612 and 1953, and presented through more than half a million words. The most important feature of this work is Mittelholzer's creation of an awareness of national history in the Caribbean where before only a feeling of deprivation or history of colonial powers had existed.

Because of his own views of "good" versus "bad" blood Mittelholzer often inadvertently destroys the humanity of his "socially unacceptable" characters by portraying their sadistic and often intense but cold sexuality. Gilkes summarizes these inner conflicts which indicate a
need for psychic integration: an inherited strain of "bad" blood leads to a degeneracy and eventually a death-wish from an inner division between strong and weak, spiritual and sensual. If this duality can be recognized and directed toward good, the result is a greater strength than was earlier possible. Mittelholzer, himself seeking psychic wholeness, projects his personal history onto the history of Guyana. Part African slave, part white slave owner, he projects the conflicting elements of his own psyche on to his characters and at times seems thereby to weaken the novels. A close reading, however, shows the author to be aware of this and it in fact gives a central unity to the trilogy. Gilkes discusses Mittelholzer's duality:

For the conflict in the trilogy between 'strength' and 'weakness' is also the conflict between white and black, master and slave—the basis of that forlorn, sterile round of protest which, in erecting static biases of color or class, forces the West Indian to confront the 'white' world in an attempt at self-identification.

This is in fact the basic conflict found in Caribbean literature.

The theme of psychic division is most obvious in the works of Mittelholzer and, in fact, provides the dominant theme for his novels. Through a constant pairing of personalities and their character traits Mittelholzer examines and depicts his philosophy of genetic taint and the resulting social difficulties. Of all West Indian authors he is the most emphatic in his attempts to "graft himself onto a European parent-stock" and the most sensational in his presentation of the attempts. His novels provide detailed analyses of representative figures of the various social and ethnic layers of society in the West Indies. His persistence and determination in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds paved the way for other writers to pursue the
"pleasant career" of writing as West Indians, of West Indians, and, increasingly, for West Indians.

Naipaul stands in strong contrast to the often overworked or even lurid style of Mittelholzer in which the author's personality is so entangled with his impassioned and violent characters that the reader feels the author must bleed along with them. In Naipaul's novels, a simple style, journalistic manner and abundance of satiric detail present West Indian problems from the safety of an uninvolved reader's own armchair. Naipaul's expertly drawn characters have no solutions and no hopes but move impressively through fascinating stories toward total psychic voids. His inner characters seek escape not only from emotional distress and psychic imbalance but from the very surroundings in which they exist. Their sterile and hostile worlds make them concerned only with acquiring possessions, not true understanding. Naipaul creates realistic figures who should have the inner resources to come together with other West Indians and fashion a better world, but they are unable to see beyond their own narrow psychic confines to do so.

Lamming, on the other hand, combines local speech patterns into poetic prose to trace regional history. He believes, and shows through his characters, that a personal involvement with political events is necessary to survival. For this reason he writes "good" books which detail the external/internal struggles of West Indians as characterized by "G" of In the Castle of My Skin, who shows the difficulties faced by the creative imagination both in the West Indies and in exile. More positive than Naipaul, Lamming seeks a recognition and integration of the various cultural and ethnic elements that make up the West Indian heritage. Far from being an idealist, he depicts national and political
failures, but believes that through an open-minded approach to history men not only will be able to come to grips with their own psychic divisions but will be able to heal social divisions as well.

Wilson Harris shares the concern of Naipaul, Lamming, and Mittelholzer for an integrated and balanced West Indian psyche, and he is equally aware of the terrific costs resulting from a split consciousness. He goes further than these authors, however, in expressing stylistically the effects of that psychic division, in exploring its nature, and in proposing means for its integration. His novels seek to balance the parts of the psyche, and even to move beyond the West Indies to a hope for Universal Man.

Critics agree that man's psychic division is the major theme of Caribbean literature. While other authors describe the anguish suffered by West Indians caught in apparently static social structures, Harris writes of the pain but offers man hope instead of despair. Naipaul, Lamming, and Mittelholzer used traditional English models for their works. Unable to break from traditional, rigid forms, they continue the pattern established by colonizers and primarily maintain the frame of mind of one colonized. Harris, however, has sought throughout his fiction to break those static molds, to free his fiction and himself from the entrapping forms imposed by outsiders. It is now time to examine Harris's techniques of stylistic liberation.

Notes

1 Ian Munro and Reinhard Sander, "George Lamming," in Kas-Kas: Interviews with Three Caribbean Writers in Texas (Austin, Texas: African and Afro-American Research Institute, 1972), p. 11.


16 Kramer, "From the Third World," p. 32.

17 Karl Miller, "V.S. Naipaul and the New Order," p. 82.


21 Ian Munro and Reinhard Sander, "George Lamming," p. 11.

22 Ian Munro, "The Theme of Exile in George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin," World Literature Written in English, 20 (1971), p. 55.


24 Ian Munro, "George Lamming," p. 143.


26 Michael Gilkes, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel, p. xii.

27 Michael Gilkes, Racial Identity, p. 10.

28 Michael Gilkes, Racial Identity, p. 50.

29 From a letter of tribute by W.O. Dow included in a catalog of Edgar Mittelholzer's work, prepared by the Georgetown Public Library, Georgetown, Guyana, 1968, as quoted in Michael Gilkes, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel, p. xiii.


33 Michael Gilkes, Racial Identity, p. 34.

34 Michael Gilkes, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel, p. xv.

35 Michael Gilkes, The West Indian Novel, p. 84.
CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION IN CREATIVITY

Though Harris incorporates in his novels many of the themes, character types, and landscapes used by other Caribbean authors, his vision, and the techniques he employs to achieve that vision, are unique. Committed to the view of the creative imagination as a liberating force, Harris joins such other visionary artists as Blake and Yeats in the quest for an imaginative transformation of a world dangerously caught in rigid and inauthentic patterns of thought and behavior.

Even in his earliest work Harris was aware of the methods and attitudes shaping the fiction of other West Indian authors who based their novels on realistic details accumulated to form a picture of manners, conversations, situations, and settings which are, if unfamiliar to sophisticated readers abroad, very familiar to those who live in the West Indies. As was shown in Chapter 2, these portraits describe people through an individual span of life in a particular place and time; they yield "self-conscious and fashionable judgments, self-conscious and fashionable moralities."1 Their end result is to maintain the status quo. Harris believes that rather than allowing men to free themselves from the restrictive vision which has been created and maintained by a
series of conquerors and conquered, these "comedies of manners" perpetuate the repressive and suppressive way of the world. Any tension which emerges is a tension of individuals on an accepted plane of existence which, the reader becomes convinced, is inevitable.

While Naipaul and the others write of the "void" in society, the historylessness of the West Indies, Harris takes a more positive approach. He believes that no social order is inevitable or ultimate and that an individual life, however brief, need not be identified with the oppressive conditions others describe. Harris believes instead that through imaginative fiction it is possible to see beyond immediate conditions, beyond the one-sided view of human life and restricted vision of human capacities, beyond the worlds created in other authors's novels. As Ivan Van Sertima explains, Harris's use of the term "conscription of light" suggests a one-sided view of life, a freeze of vision. It is the conscription of whatever passes for truth at a given time or in a given situation to serve as the ruling light on behalf of a particular cause or race, culture or order. It is the tendency to put things into fixed and immutable categories under the illusion that by so doing one can master and govern reality. It leads ultimately to a stasis of values for it fixes upon and idealizes, sometimes to the point of idolatry, some partial aspect or plane of reality, investing it with a timeless and absolute order, as though it were the final shape of truth.

In Tradition, the Writer and Society Harris uses the example of Aztecs who sacrificed hearts torn out of the breasts of living human beings to show the horrible contradictions which developed between men who built a world and the world which forced them into helplessness.

It is this very helplessness which is the main theme of the novels Naipaul and others write. In the same essay Harris explains how he believes that when exploited man, whether ancient Aztec, modern Caribbean, or any other man, "becomes aware of the original rhythms
within the oppression of the world," he can bare the contradictions he perceives in a manner which may be terrifying but contain the secret for changing them. He believes that the cleavage that exists between historical conventions and the arts may be resolved through the arts of the imagination, a resolution he seeks through explorations of new forms of the novel, his unusual use of synchronicity, the shaman figure, and the "eye of the scarecrow."

Harris believes that creativity in art or criticism is never easy, but in a world of accepted or static values, like that portrayed in the novels of a Naipaul, or even a Conrad, creativity becomes increasingly difficult since its very nature is a disruption of already existing subjective platforms. For this reason, creating a new world structure in fiction or the physical world calls for a profound effort on the artist's part to change man's vision by revealing those factors which, when placed in proper combination, produce a new, unified, and more positive "architecture" of existence. Through a combination of hidden and obvious, material and immaterial elements, and through the use of a truly creative imagination, Harris believes man can change his traditional, static, and frequently oppressive world to create in its stead a purposive, vital, universal and manifestly human community. He is not advocating the overthrow of any form of government, per se, for that would merely imply replacing one form of tyranny with another. In Harris's terms this would be a change of polarizations but not an improvement. What Harris is advocating is a universal realization that we are in fact succumbing to artificial poles, allowing ourselves to be ruled by a "static gestalt" rather than partaking in an open dialogue with possibilities. I shall return to this issue in the next chapter.
and discuss it in the context of Harris's remarks in the appendix interviews.

The focus of Harris's novels, then, is on this opening of consciousness and the forging of a new human identity. Man, Harris believes, has an "architecture of consciousness" and inhabits "shapes of time." In his essay "History, Fable, and Myth in the Caribbean and the Guianas," Harris discusses how man's architecture of consciousness yields the shapes of an age. He believes that by applying great concentration to the structure of an age, man may be able to discover "cornerstones" which will allow him to create a new and liberating architecture. The new architecture should contain "doors" through which man can pass rather than serve as oppressive and static "frames" which trap him and "eclipse" his potential. Only by means of an open dialogue with appearances and his values will man be able to move beyond the previously accepted limitations of society. This open dialogue is enhanced by increased use of man's subjective imagination; an imagination which is able to create and express not only new forms of consciousness, a new architecture of consciousness, but a new form of fiction to describe it. There is something akin to Blake's distinction between the corporeal and the visionary eye in Harris, as well as a search like Blake's search for an imaginative escape from inauthentic "self-hood" into authentic "identity." For, close as Harris's "static gestalt" sometimes seems to be to Marxian notions of "reification," it is far closer to Blake's view of a fallen existence that requires an "apocalyptic" rather than a "political" redemption.

Harris argues that, rather than being a void without history, the West Indies has an overburden of sheer raw material of life.
historical movements from various continents came so rapidly that West Indians were unable to digest the shocks. By reaching back through these crises of history to find latent, unrealized human capacities within the clash of cultures and movements of people into South America and the West Indies, Harris hopes to create an art based on "subsistence of memory," an art which will allow men to increase their imagination's perspectives of resources.

In Harris's fiction, then, the state of mind or imagination of his characters corresponds to the concept of "place": the monumental architecture of old world city-scapes equates with rigid, ingrained habits of thought and acts as an impediment to open, authentic consciousness. However, jungles and savannas, underdeveloped spaces devoid of architectural monuments, are positive symbols representing an opportune deprivation or dispossession from which comes the possibility for fulfilling man's previously eclipsed potentials. In the tension between material and spiritual worlds, between urban and natural spaces, lies the significance of the landscape for Harris. It becomes simultaneously a "dream" and an "actual stage" and serves as a prime mover to consciousness because in it man discovers a reflection of his own unconscious state with which he must eventually come to terms.

The map of the savannas was a dream. The names Brazil and Guiana were colonial conventions I had known from childhood. I clung to them now as to a curious necessary stone and footing, even in my dream, the ground I knew I must not relinquish. They were an actual stage, a presence, however mythical they seemed to the universal and the spiritual eye. They were as close to me as my ribs, the rivers and the flatland, the mountains and heartland I intimately saw. I could not help cherishing my symbolic map, and my bodily prejudice like a well-known room and house of superstition within which I dwelt. I saw this kingdom of man turned into a colony and battleground of spirit, a priceless tempting jewel I dreamed I possessed.
It is typical of Harris's style to have overlapping, interconnected, and simultaneously human as well as landscape elements. Throughout his novels the forest becomes the "soil of memory," an aboriginal cradle for mankind and landscape within which man must lose himself to find himself. As Michael Gilkes has written:

The social and geographical contrast between Guyana's extensive, densely wooded and mountainous (but virtually unpopulated) interior and the overcrowded main city on the alluvial coast provides Harris with a natural metaphor for man's highly developed, but superficial, outer existence and his neglected, underdeveloped inner being.

Harris believes that we need to "unravel" our garments of history if we are to be able to detach from our pasts in a meaningful way and reach down to these neglected inner beings. Harris believes that only when we achieve freedom from the negative aspects of history, along with the subjugation of race and culture which they involve, will we be able to discover a true unity of mankind and be able to express it in our arts.

However, when we widen our view of race and nationalism we must also broaden our manner of questioning and searching. Harris believes he does this when he uses what appear initially to be extravagant diction and images in his experiments with the novel, because for him words must be closely relevant to dialogue, narrative, setting and action. What appears at first confusing becomes clearer when the reader realizes that Harris is creating new forms in language and the novel to meet the challenges of his vision of a broader and more heterogeneous society.

Harris has not, of course, been the only author to create new forms in the novel to reflect the changes he saw in his society. His novels began to appear in the early 1960's, a time crucial for both West Indian
and English fiction, when many writers ceased to believe in literary traditions which had been handed down to them. Catastrophic events in history and tremendous scientific advances left many writers, and especially West Indians, in a psychic void. Authors like John Osborne, of what has come to be known as the "kitchen sink school," reacted to the loss of certainty and stability in the world by turning to narrow and highly specific realism. Beckett and others resorted to experiments in the absurd. These experiments may be technically brilliant and innovative but frequently undermine the very purpose of art for Harris: to widen man's vision and to provide him with the means of freeing himself from racial and cultural restrictions, to create new and more meaningful societies which are able to take advantage of all possibilities, even those previously eclipsed. Harris describes this problem in Tradition, the Writer and Society:

It is here that the blighted puppetry of the novel and the theatre which invests in the absurdity of sacrifice, becomes—in spite of itself at times, in spite of the reactionary echoes of the past—the protest of feeling against that unfeeling acceptance of destiny which is promulgated in the name of service or tradition. It is an unconscious protest against tradition, when a tradition hardens into the very premature convulsion all tradition should instinctively seek to overthrow in the name of an act of fulfillment, however obscure. It is idle to deny the danger of infection which always approaches the practitioners of the art of the absurd, who may themselves merely 'stiffen in a rented house.'

Harris believes that authors like Naipaul only solidify cultural structures by mirroring the very partial images which trap us. As was shown in Chapter 2, though many West Indians of Harris's generation see themselves in radical terms, they consolidate in fictional form and subject the most conventional and documentary techniques of the novel. Though they write of political and social changes these authors are unable to free themselves from local biases and social restraints. In
"A Talk on the Subjective Imagination" Harris explains that man cannot live in a world that is wholly given, wholly objective, deprived of community, and still relate to a heterogeneous scale and truly subjective imagination. Because most West Indian authors are unable to free even their forms of fiction, they are not able to free their societies or to move beyond mere criticism to positive and constructive suggestions. Ironically, Naipaul used a reporter's style but suggested that there could be an advance toward an honest exploration of West Indian middle class problems and depiction only when "writers cease to think about letting down their sides," something he, in fact, has been unable to do. In Ascent to Omai Harris describes his own goal in the novel:

My intention, in part, is to repudiate the vicarious novel—vicarious death-mask, sex-mask—where the writer, following a certain canon of clarity, claims to enter the most obscure and difficult terrain of experience without incurring a necessary burden of authenticity, obscurity or difficulty at the same time. The truth is, I believe, that the novel has been conditioned for so long by comedy of manners, it overlooks an immense poetry of original and precarious features which, in fact, we can only begin to expose again by immersing ourselves in the actual difficulty of the task; by immersing ourselves in language as omen, as an equation of experience. Harris does not write in the style of the "novel of persuasion" and believes in a unity of humankind; he, therefore, has no "side to let down." As he discusses in Tradition, the Writer and Society, he seeks imaginative growth and enlargement as measured on a "scale" or "ladder. Such growth is indicated in his fiction by words and images associated with man's growing awareness, his "drama of living consciousness"; a drama in which he believes all writers must be involved both passively and creatively. Within his own world, Harris sets out to create a form of fiction which will express the dynamic nature of community which he seeks. For him the novel should be an intense
visualization within which he enters overlapping potentials of nature to break through social polarizations. As he writes in "History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and the Guianas":

The essential objectivity or life of art does not reside in the given historical prejudices of the artist or poet or novelist or sculptor but in what is virtually intuitive and subconscious terrain that may acquire its conscious application later in the extensive re-appraisal stage by critical intelligences who may be better placed to appreciate the intuitive breakthrough in a work of art executed within a certain eye on prisons of history. This view of art as an extraordinary drama of consciousness whose figurative meaning lies beyond its de facto historical climate is anathema to the materialist or conventional realist, though I know that Lukacs, a Marxist critic, toyed with the idea and that the Irish poet Yeats attempted to articulate it when he wrote 'Man can embody truth but he cannot know it.' 17

In Tradition, the Writer and Society (1967) Harris also examines the subjective/objective dichotomy in human experience which is central to creative and critical achievement. He believes that modern man is foundering between subjective illusion and objective process and that only through an intuitive fusion and creative force can both subjective and objective progress be gained. 18 This dichotomy is often expressed in his novels by pairing of words (for example eternity/season, virgin/whore). Apparently contradictory at first, the word pairs reveal basic connections essential to positive human growth. Through his unusual forms of fiction Harris is trying to show us not only an alternative world, but also the imaginative means by which he believes we can achieve it.

In "A Talk on the Subjective Imagination" Harris probes the nature of the relationship between imagination and creativity in literature:

Clearly there is a signal lack of imagination daring to probe the nature of roots of community beyond fixed or static boundaries. Also there is a signal lack of imaginative daring to probe the function of roots as a criterion of creativity and capacity to digest and liberate contrasting spaces. When I say digest and liberate, it seems to me that any wholesale digestion and
liberation of contrasting spaces obviously is a monolithic illusion. Or a monolithic imperative. In the same token, wholesale liberation could be monolithic utopia. And yet it seems one thinks all the time in terms like these because, to a major extent, we are dominated by what I call homogeneous imperative. We are dominated by that, and therefore fail to see that that homogeneous imperative very often masks or conceals from us the heterogeneous roots of a community.19

Harris draws a distinction between artificially drawn qualities of homogeneity depicted in most novels and the actual homogeneity of archetypal forms. Jolande Jacobi could easily have been speaking of Harris in The Psychology of Jung:

He who speaks in primordial images speaks with a thousand voices; he enthralls and overpowers, while at the same time he lifts the idea he is trying to express out of the occasional and the transitory into the realm of the ever-enduring. He transmutes our personal destiny into the destiny of mankind, thereby evoking in us all those beneficient forces that have always enabled mankind to find a refuge from every peril to outlive the longest night. This is the secret of effective art. 20

According to Harris the effective artist or creative writer both transcends and undermines generally accepted social values since the truth which he pursues is not self-evident and is neither purely circumscribed nor purely produced by economic circumstances. Indeed, Harris believes that a society's economic homogeneity as described or advocated by others is an illusion, especially when used as an artificial method for regulating the social or moral opportunities of those it claims to help.21

Perhaps because an increase in imaginative arts, especially in the West Indies, often involved a reaction against the economic structure of colonial society and occurred in conflict with long-held intellectual and legal concepts, the poet or artist is sometimes symbolized by Anancy the Spider, a trickster figure brought from Africa. The truly creative artist must utilize elements of past times and generations, of victor
and victim, and walk a tightrope toward change by becoming a shaman figure capable of a new, creative vision. When he stretches his abilities to the limit the artist becomes, in Harris's vocabulary, the "eye of the scarecrow", which identifies with submerged authority and eclipsed possibilities, and which must conceal as well as elaborate arts of the imagination. The use of the "eye of the scarecrow" and role of the trickster/shaman are important to Harris's concept of a truly creative artist and are discussed at length in the appendices. For Harris, the artist stands at the "heart of the lie of community and the truth of community," and must bear the possibility that society may try to crush him; but through the trickster figure, the trickster gateway, however, can emerge the "hope for a profoundly compassionate society committed to freedom within a creative scale." In his essay "The Interior of the Novel" he describes the artist's role:

Within the new art of fiction we are attempting to explore a vacancy in nature within which agents appear who are translated one by the other and who (in a kind of serial illumination) reappear through each other, inhabit each other, reflect the burden of necessity, push each other to plunge into the unknown, into the translatable, transmutable legacies of history. Their uniqueness lies in this curious openness to originality as well as change: a constitution of humility in which the author himself is an agent in a metaphysical dimension compounded of losses and gains: and behind him—as a fantastic, obscure, compelling necessity to express something to do with 'one' and 'agent.'

The author becomes a complex ghost of his own ancestral landscape, history, or works. His poem or novel becomes in Harris's terms "subsistence of memory," and the reality of his existence as "agent" or "clown" turns upon his faith in the resources and powers of the artist and eventually of man generally to invoke a "presence" within an "absence." Herman Melville was able to function as such an agent to create Benito Cereno which, in Harris's view, is both the product of
subjective imagination and a prophetic work. Harris sees the novel as an index of the community which contained a coming terror, caught the tide of that community and swept forward into another century. "Benito Cereno secreted a pressure for a revised 'canvas of existence' before the pressure of fate, pressure of value turned into bias, became a catastrophe." Harris argues that:

It was with works of disturbing imagination such as Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym and James Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner, both published in the 1830's, Melville's Benito Cereno, in the middle of the 19th century, and Conrad's Heart of Darkness at the beginning of the 20th century, that the logic of man-made symmetry or absolute control over diversity, the logic of benign or liberal order, disclosed hideous biases within a context of heterogeneous bodies and pigmentation. For the truth was that the liberal homogeneity of a culture becomes a ready-made cornerstone upon which to construct an order of conquest and by degrees 'the horror, the horror' was intuitively manifest. Conquest is the greatest evil of soul mankind or womankind inflicts on itself and on nature.

It is this false concept of social homogeneity or unrealized bias that Harris seeks not only to avoid in his own fiction but bring to the attention of others. Instead of rejecting society or being overwhelmed by its conflicts as are some other authors, Harris seeks to look through society to see not only its horrors but its possibilities for change, to turn contradictions and conflicts into fertile ground for progress, and transform a prison into a "womb of creative change." Because the writer is the means by which a society can progress from bias and stasis to change he must "digest contrasting spaces" of his society. His writing is no longer a pane of glass through which society looks at others or a mirror to reflect its own status quo; instead it calls attention to itself and its creator. In Harris's later novels the protagonist is an artist like Da Silva (in Da Silva Da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness and Tree of the Sun), or a writer like Clive Goodrich (in Black Marsden), or
a combination of both as is Frank Wellington (in *Genesis of the Clowns*). The protagonist is forced to recognize his own hidden being or the duality of another, which then allows him to perceive and face his own duality. Once this duality is recognized the protagonist is able to move toward his own fulfillment and point the way toward greater fulfillment for the entire community. The character is often unaware of the magnitude of his own creativity and potential, but the reader sees beyond that limited vision to a greater hope and creativity.

A subjective imagination then becomes simultaneously the cause and the subject of Harris's art, the created and creating function capable of transforming man's world and his responses to it. Harris explores the creative power of the imagination, its innumerable possibilities of development and self-renewal, and its ability to change relationships of opposition into relationships of reciprocity. Like Victor, who suffers nearly total character disintegration in *Ascent to Omai*, or Da Silva in *Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness*, who must come to grips with his relationship to the women in his life, characters in Harris's novels are shocked into recognizing the limitations imposed on their consciousness by the prejudice and bias of their societies. This recognition frees them from conservative elements and allows them to move forward. Again, Harris is diametrically opposed to most authors in his view of the inherent potentials for man within these difficult and divisive situations:

There appears to me to exist today all the proportions as before of a terrifying cleavage in all the psyche of man standing once again (as in the Renaissance or the Middle Ages) upon the brink of a great change or equally great catastrophe. 28

This social cleavage and the drama of consciousness which describes it are conveyed to Harris's readers through a great feeling of agitation
created by pairing words with their opposites in gnarled and twisted syntax which startles the mind and shakes conventional expectations. Images are created through metaphor, simile, and action which detach themselves from superficial meanings, and which create a depth and range of reality to be measured on a new and visionary scale. For Harris, the improper use of language communicates "dead" reality via static or frozen forms, while the proper use of language shatters that dead reality to present in a Blake/Yeats sense the "inapprehension of substance," the living reality which underlies or demonstrates the unity of being. 29

Harris began his search for the stylistic means to express his concept of this unity of being in the 1940's and 1950's in Guyana with a small group of writers who met regularly at the house where he lived. They read their current works, responded to each others' attempts and provided each other with the stimulus to continue writing. A.J. Seymour described the manner in which Harris probed in and through language and words to create new forms:

Sometimes during a meeting we would discover that Wilson Harris was evolving a series of personal meanings on a particular word in the development of his private vocabulary. There are at least three that come to mind as teasing his imagination one time or another—grotesque, caricature, and scarecrow. In our discussions, we would hear Wilson begin to use the particular word fairly regularly, as if he was investing it with a full spectrum of meaning, and the word was taking on associations for him far beyond the agreed scope of common peripheral understanding. He was playing the lover with these words and meanings, and we would be amused and poke fun at him over his new love-affair. 30

Seymour believes that this internalization of words was associated with the technique Harris developed of the principle of the imploded consciousness, the tapping of the pre-consciousness, the freeing of rich fluid images, memories and feelings to be translated into metaphor and
Harris did what he expects his characters to do: he went deep into himself in an agonizing memory review to come to an appreciation and reconciliation of the parts of man's psyche. He sought an inward dialogue and the language to express it so that conventional modes of thought and expression could be exploded, like his language, and allow inner and outer world to be integrated rather than at odds as they are in the world today. Harris defined this concept of implosion:

Implosion becomes a scale of reciprocities and alteration of vision from within rather than imposed by geography or history from without.

Harris believes that only when man comes to terms with himself and his environment will he be able to use rather than be destroyed by the powers they both contain. This theme of destruction, of man's fall, is not new in literature but in Harris's fiction it is no simple intellectual fantasy which it seems the reader passively observes from the safe ground of an armchair as one does when reading Naipaul's fiction. Characters in a Harris novel fall and spin, experience breakdown of self and world, while the reader participates through the breaking and broken ground of the language itself, through startling images, relationships, and juxtapositions which upset customary associations and reflexes. Changes in a character's perception are amplified in what are often disturbing ways through an explosive flux of images that constantly annihilate and disassemble the given and free the imagination from its static modes of thought, from rigid values and tyrannical faiths of any one time, reality, or identity.

Three recurrent devices, or image structures, or concepts (each of these descriptions is, at separate moments and in separate contexts, appropriate) are of particular help to Harris in his quest for the
achievement of psychic wholeness. There are: synchronicity, shamanism, and the eye of the scarecrow. Though the concept of synchronicity was not invented by Harris or even by Jung who gave it that name, it is important to understanding their theories, and especially important to a full comprehension of Harris's novels. Synchronicity has been traced back in time and use to primitive cultures, but, as Harris and Jung argue, it has important applications for modern technological man. Synchronicity haunts Harris's novels rather than appearing in specific and identifiable contexts, as do shamanism and the eye of the scarecrow. Though shamanism is not unique to Harris's novels, his use of the concept is. In contrast, however, the term "the eye of the scarecrow" is unique to Harris's work and appears frequently both directly and conceptually. Understanding these three key terms will facilitate an understanding of Harris's philosophy as it appears through his fiction, essays, and interviews, and the next chapter, therefore, seeks to interpret some of the meanings and implications of these terms, particularly in relation to such novels as *Black Marsden*, *Companions of the Day and Night*, Da Silva da Silva's *Cultivated Wilderness*, *Genesis of the Clowns*, and *The Tree of the Sun*.

Notes

1 Wilson Harris, *Tradition, the Writer and Society*, p. 29.


3 Wilson Harris, *Tradition, the Writer and Society*, p. 19.

4 Wilson Harris, *Tradition, the Writer and Society*, p. 15.

Michael Gilkes's Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel is important here. In addition to discussing Harris in relation to alchemy, he has connected Harris to a visionary tradition that includes Blake, Swedenborg, Yeats, Jung and Eliade.


Michael Gilkes, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel, p. 4.

Wilson Harris, Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 26.


Wilson Harris, Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 34, p. 36.


Wilson Harris, Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 7.


Wilson Harris, Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 60.

Harris's use of the "eye of the scarecrow" will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4; for a complete transcript of the previously unpublished interview see the appendix.

Wilson Harris, "History, Fable and Myth," p. 16.


Wilson Harris, "The Interior of the Novel," p. 147.


28 Wilson Harris, *Tradition, the Writer and Society*, p. 57.


31 Wilson Harris, *Kas-Kas*, p. 51.

32 Wilson Harris, *Kas-Kas*, p. 51.
CHAPTER 4

THREE STRUCTURING IDEAS IN WILSON HARRIS'S FICTION

Synchronicity, the shaman, and the eye of the scarecrow are three key devices Harris uses in his fiction as a way of bringing to our attention patterns of psychic disintegration taking place in the minds of his characters and, by implication, in the minds of all men who suffer from a divided consciousness. The careful reader, alerted by the author's use of these devices or concepts to trace the disintegration and later reintegration of the psyche, may become aware of the possible relevance of such ideas to his own life. For if Harris's characters learn to recognize patterns of synchronicity, and to see beyond the immediate patterns to greater patterns, if they learn to accept and make use of shaman figures which can lead man to an improved condition previously not possible, and if they begin to see with the eye of the scarecrow through the limitations previously imposed on them to more fulfilling possibilities beyond, then perhaps the reader can also learn, and more easily than the characters, to move out of the restrictive, static social forms toward an improved world community.

Though Harris's characters become increasingly aware of their divided consciousness as they endure traumas and seek renewal, they are often less aware of patterns of existence and influences on their lives and psyches than is the perceptive reader. Synchronicity appears in
Black Marsden, for example, but Tenby is only vaguely aware of it; the eye of the scarecrow appears to Prudence Solman in Tumatumari and helps her move toward greater understanding yet she is not fully aware of it either; certainly most of the characters in Harris's novels are unaware of the shamanistic role played by Idiot Nameless, Black Marsden and others as they grope toward psychic integration. Understanding these terms helps the reader move toward greater comprehension of the novels and appreciation of the originality of Harris's style.¹

Synchronicity, the first of three structuring ideas to be discussed in this chapter, was not a word coined by Harris but was used earlier by C.G. Jung and Anton Ehrenzweig and can be traced in concept back to the Lacondon Indians of Central America.²

To explain his use of the term, Harris cites the example Jung gives of the synchronicity that occurred when one of his patients told him of a dream of a beetle not found in that part of the world. While the patient was telling Jung her dream there was a tapping on the window. When Jung opened it he found the beetle though no one knew how it came to arrive at that moment. Harris sees the synchronistic elements here as 1) the woman telling Jung of her logically structured dream; and 2) the beetle suddenly appearing at that moment from another area.

An important distinction must be made here between synchronicity and synchronism. Synchronism is merely the coincidence in time of two events. As first used by Jung in 1930, synchronicity, however, refers to coinciding events which exist in an acausal relationship that can only be verified at a later time³ and which have the same or similar meaning.⁴ This coincidence of events may take the form of inner perceptions of dreams, visions, hunches, or forebodings with other
events occurring in the past, present, or future. According to Jung the explanation for the synchronistic phenomenon is an a priori and causally inexplicable knowledge based on an order of the world which is independent of man's will and in which archetypes play the role of ordering factors. Though people mocked Jung at first for using the synchronicity idea, he did not create it and was not the only theorist to deal with it. Anton Enrenzweig discusses synchronicity in The Hidden Order of Art (1953), and anthropologists currently study its uses for dream interpretation among the Lacondon Indians of Central America who interpret their dreams in terms of correspondences rather than cause and effect relationships.

Jung believed that the meaningful coincidence of inner image and outer event revealed the spiritual and corporeal aspects of the archetype. As he explains in The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche:

Synchronistic events rest on the simultaneous occurrence of two different psychic states. One of them is the normal, probable state (i.e., the one that is causally explicable), and the other, the critical experience, is the one that cannot be derived causally from the first. . . In all these cases and others like them there seems to be an a priori causally inexplicable knowledge of a situation which at the time is unknowable. Synchronicity therefore consists of two factors: a) an unconscious dream/image comes into consciousness either directly (i.e. literally) or indirectly (symbolized or suggested) in the form of a dream, idea, or premonition; b) an objective situation coincides with this content. The one is as puzzling as the other. How does the unconscious image arise, and how the coincidence? 5

Jung believed that to the triad of classical physics--space, time, and causality--should be added the synchronicity factor which possesses properties that "may help to clear up the body-soul problem." 6 Most important to him was the concept of the causeless, meaningful orderedness that could throw light on the psychophysical parallelism. As Jolande Jocobi explains in his study of Jung:
For physis and psyche may be regarded as two aspects of the same thing, ordered according to a meaningful parallelism; they are, as it were, 'superimposed' on the other; they are synchronous and, in their cooperation, not understandable on the basis of causality alone. But this 'acausal-orderedness,' as Jung calls the unconscious factors, is nothing other than the archetype, when it becomes perceptible to the conscious mind. [It] is the introspectively recognizable form of the a priori psychic orderedness. 7

Central to the works of Wilson Harris is the idea that, coexisting with and possibly outside of time, there is some consciousness that is "unruined" and greater than human consciousness. In Tradition, the Writer and Society Harris explains his theory that occasionally human consciousness becomes aware of the unruined consciousness through unexpected, sometimes apparently supernatural intimations, which take the form of parallels, correspondences, coincidences, continuities, premonitions, and intuitions. Harris believes that it is possible to become aware of these tenuous elements of unruined consciousness which are capable of transmuting man's life and which, in fact, correspond to the concept of archetype Jung uses: the introspectively recognizable form of an a priori psychic orderedness. 8 Harris points toward this concept in Tradition, the Writer and Society when he says that the "exploitation of natural rhythms" is a means of discovering the secrets of the universe and that the liberating function of art is to speak in primordial images.

Now, it is not an easy matter to see the human being today. So many walls fall between us and our fellows. Money, myth, and numerous obsessions. Yet when we look at the human we must be prepared not to overlook these obsessions but to work them into the structure of art so that all these levels of man are present. It is the only way we can come close to the real power of man, by showing the interaction of all the levels of his life, thereby not only baring his conflict, but the rhythms within the welter of his existence. These rhythms, being after all the source of man's generation of energy yesterday and today, are also the source of man's energy—tomorrow. The real hope for man lies not in promises
of splendour or in virtuosity but in the revelation of original and authentic rhythms within the gloomy paradox of the world.3

The existence of such original and authentic rhythms has been the subject of literature and commentary going back to the beginnings of recorded history, as Harris indicates further along in the same essay.

The distinction, that Ruth Benedict makes, in her analysis of our social structure as related to primitive civilizations (Patterns of Culture), between Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies, signifies only the end to which rhythms were put and the kind of civilization that developed. That distinction in itself does not attempt to posit a preconception before rhythm but points to the kind of insights and illusions, altering into fresh patterns in order to cope with each accretion in material and insight. However overwhelming the problem for society, the persistence or discovery of new or original rhythms justified the hope for a change or a solution since the creative powers of man still continued intact.10

These rhythms and synchronicity are tied together in Harris's interview:

What [synchronicity] discloses is that there are connections between apparently intact, water-tight areas of experience. That images that seem to be total and sovereign are parts of a greater whole, and that this greater whole will remain a ceaseless, haunting capacity which we pursue. But, in pursuing that greater whole, we revise our conceptions of the images that begin to constitute themselves in the parts of that whole; so you begin to make connections where you never dreamt connections existed.11

In the same interview Harris gives an example of synchronicity in Black Marsden in relation to the John Hornby figure. There are actually two Hornby's; an historical John Hornby who disappeared and is recorded in anthologies, and the Harris John Hornby. The historical figure has a sort of legendary position; he is, according to Harris, a kind of "solitary figure up in the stars." Harris wanted to create an explorer who would disappear in the Canadian wilderness and, opening an anthology, came upon the name of John Hornby. The Hornby Harris created is aware of the historical Hornby; speculating on his own place in space and time, in what he calls the "very boot of humanity," the fictional
Hornby realizes that, unlike the historical Hornby whose name he shares, he's "unsung, unknown, and unheralded." When the fictional Hornby goes out into the wilderness into the snow, he leaves his cabin behind but looks back and sees it in the distance. He can't get at the actual cabin any longer but he has a sense of a cabin descending from the sky.

Black Marsden was published in 1972. In 1977 when the Russian satellite crashed in Canada, Jim Howard, one of Harris's friends and critics, wrote to tell him that an expedition in pursuit of the last journey of John Hornby had stumbled upon some bits of wreckage from the satellite. The synchronist theme varies slightly here in that, since years had passed, it's not a simultaneous connection. Nevertheless, as Harris explains in the interview, there are three parallel lines: the first is the actual Hornby who disappeared into the wilderness; the second is Harris's Hornby; and the third appears when Howard writes to say that if the novel had appeared a year after the expedition people could legitimately have said that Harris had been influenced by the fallen satellite in shaping the novel. The synchronist connection occurs when the three parallel lines become parts of a greater whole. What Harris is suggesting is that there is some mysterious connection, outside of the rules of causality, between the cabin his character sees descending from the sky (in 1972) and the satellite that actually crashed (in 1977), and this acausal connection is involved in the nexus of the two Hornby's.

From this example it is evident that Harris believes that an imaginative fiction is immersed in a much stranger reality than people usually believe. A novel may have a strange objectivity that impinges on the world outside the shape of the book itself. There may be a kind
of futurity in it; it may have something to say through itself and beyond itself. Harris believes that this happens in imaginative fiction because a writer's concentration is not only "daylight concentration," but a much deeper kind. As a consequence, the historical side of man, the ego, is in some degree moved, broken, or altered to allow a far deeper intuitive self to come up and, in fact, to begin to do things within the concentration which the writer applies to the book. The intuitive self comes up, strikes at the historical ego and creates something which has a future beyond the comprehension of the writer himself. It has a past also which is much deeper and stranger than the writer understands. The fiction reflects in some strange active way a mysterious past as well as future. As a result, the fiction has an objectivity that is not the objectivity of daylight consciousness; it is not on the surface of the mind but much deeper. The concept of a deeper level of consciousness leads Harris to believe that images and structures around us are not as absolute or "sovereign" as they appear to be.

Harris believes that most cultures practice gestalt psychology, articulating a solid view of the world based on their own curiously appealing vestiges. An example of gestalt psychology appears when, in the synchronicity interview, Harris speaks of the Houses of Parliament in London being placed next to the Thames simply because a nationally important palace was once there. The tendency, he believes, is for man to make a shape and to build it up from an image related to the life of his culture. When this happens he tends to overlook how partial the image is and allow it to become a "static gestalt." Harris uses this term as Anton Ehrenzweig did in The Hidden Order of Art (1953) to designate a structure that becomes so highly articulated as to become
the embodiment of the world. People associate themselves with it absolutely, commit themselves to it, build all their loyalties into it, without realizing it is only a partial picture of reality.

Harris believes it is not only possible but necessary to escape from this static gestalt. Harris refers to Anton Ehrenzweig who points out in *The Hidden Order of Art* that as man descends beneath the surface mind there are much older, stranger, archaic elements that lie under the static gestalt. One recalls that in *Tumatumari* Roi Solman is struck on the head and has a kind of "metaphysical lesion" which allows him to relate to the world around him in a strange and peculiar way; clearly he has to free himself from static gestalt. Harris believes the paradox of Ehrenzweig's position is that when man descends deeper and deeper, though these elements appear to be archaic, they also seem to have some mysterious comprehension of not only the past but the future and therefore cannot be truly archaic.

While Ehrenzweig believes there are some "older, stranger, archaic elements" under the static gestalt, Harris deviates from this position by saying that in his judgment all structures are biased and partial. Thus, even when man descends, if he still clings to the notion of "a structure," he remains involved in biases. It follows that if man has no release from structure the nature of the cosmos must be one of "incorrigible" bias. If, on the other hand, there is no basic structure, but a kind of mediating and unstructured force that goes between structures, man can begin to resolve his dilemma, escape from bias, and move toward true freedom.

Harris tries to indicate the way in which man can become aware of these biases and, if not escape them, at least transform them and open
up new possibilities. In *Black Marsden*, Hornby is steeped in the biases of his age but is also tied to external elements like the Russian satellite. He has nonverbal roots in many directions, even beyond the novel. He is penetrated from so many different angles that, in Harris's terms, Hornby begins to pick up a "susceptibility" to the future which is reflected in the novel. Though not intended to be a deliberate prophecy, Harris believes the book reflects a futurity which is written into the living present because that present is not wholly structured but partial and, therefore, biased.

In his interview on synchronicity, Harris states that there are so many faces of the psyche of nature that a man's perception of it tends to conform to the one boundary which is the experience of his short lifetime. The boundary is subtly and complexly disrupted because nature is not what man thinks it is; perception of nature is always a cultural perception, not a true perception. For example, in *Black Marsden* Clive Goodrich's perception is widened during his travels with Black Marsden. Previously contented to float along through life, secure in his belief that he controls his own world and to a large extent his destiny, Goodrich becomes increasingly aware of outside forces until:

There was a third vision or sensation as the road swung and they began to descend. The air seemed saturated by a dream—a film—an almost transparent cloud of dust which came over the rim of the basin and drifted across Namless Theatre. Goodrich felt an irrational correspondance with the milky way when the spaces between the stars are filled with a nameless cloud of particles; but now one was looking up—not vertically into the spaces of night—but horizontally into the spaces of the day. The delayed action of the rocks before they plunged possessed its quintessence here: quintessential shock or deliberation of movement, seminal ruin, seminal catastrophe. (p. 84)

Harris says that this "seminal ruin, seminal catastrophe" is as close as he comes in *Black Marsden* to stating that there is an essence which
mediates between structures, and that therefore man need not be wholly locked into the "charmed circles," or biases, or dread, or fear.

One way to overcome this type of bias, this entrapping stasis, is through the recognition and use of a second complex element of Harris's imaginative world. The shaman figure serves in Harris's fiction to indicate the need for, and the potential of, revising the static structures of man's existence. Shaman figures are intimately related to myths and the telling of myths, and Harris feels that in a heterogeneous society the function of myth is enormously important because it helps man revise static or "idolatrous" attitudes, which can do great harm to the very causes man serves. The function of the shaman figure is to guide men toward true freedom as they come together in a heterogeneous society. In examining the myths of their cultures, and recognizing both similarities and differences, men may understand how certain myths may be so taken for granted as to become dangerous and eclipse alternative perspectives and potentials. The very heterogeneity of Caribbean society should prevent any absolute acceptance of single myths and thereby help man avoid the dangers of committing himself wholly to what is, after all, only a partial pattern of the total world.

Harris uses European, African, Pre-Columbian, and Asian myths from both the past and the present in the creation of a greatly varied and heterogenous complex of myth, which creates new meanings through interplay, juxtaposition, and friction. These myths are rooted in the needs of a heterogeneous society and attempt to express a state of the imagination which is created by a combination of cultural needs and motivations, rather than by absolute or restrictive images. Through the combination of these cultural motives one thing plays against another so
that man is constantly capable of coming out of fixations which could lead eventually to conflict.

At times of conflict or crisis the shaman figure is likely to appear in a tribe or society. The shaman figure is a-social, without fixed culture or form. For this reason the process of the shaman resembles a psychic breakdown. Far from being a "gross superstition" as some anthropologists believe, the shaman represents an indispensable, creative attempt to see through or break down either a vestige from the past or an overburden of the repressions resulting from conquest. The shaman figure makes of every inner divergence, every subtle omen of change, "a subsistence of memory" to feed imagination in the future. One should be aware, however, that there is a trickster element in the shaman, which reflects an ambivalence and may lead sometimes to a self-consuming pride.

Harris also believes that we forget that behind the crucified Christ there are not only shamanistic elements but female elements, (mother, virgin, whore), and they too suggest suffering and sacrifice. However, through involvement with the theme of sacrifice man is no longer committed to a total function of sacrifice or a dominant issue of sacrifice, but to a more "pregnant" issue. The positive elements of the feminine are paired with foul elements of hope and progress, or the destructive element of the Gorgon figure, and all appear in Harris's novels. Through a syncretic use of mythology, Harris is able to argue that man needs to see beyond apparent contradictions of these paired elements to the greater, if not perfect, unity beyond.

Harris's intention in his novels is to sense the enormous depths of this unity, of "native reality," which builds on universality because he
believes man is involved in a great struggle or quest for a community in which he can have authority in freedom, and in which it is possible to sense the genuine imperatives of sacrifice as well as the genuine potential for great beauty. This, for Harris, is the quest that gives to the imaginative artist a profoundly responsible role, but it is not a responsibility which has anything to do with being a spokesman for any particular society. Harris believes that the world in which we live today is so dangerous and riddled with problems that what is at stake is the birth or rebirth of community in the most genuine sense of the term. Unfortunately, a consequence of this goal—since it is self-deception to believe that "community" may be politically defined in terms of any one state—is a form of exile for writers.

Harris feels he brings out of Guyana, South America, and the Caribbean a kind of deep-seated sensation, a debt to "place" which for him is important because of its extraordinary "cargo." He agrees with Mircea Eliade in believing that there is a reality which runs through a place but runs deeper than that place; such a reality implies a sense of community in which the writer is profoundly responsible as a shamanistic imagination, but not as a spokesman. Artists, Harris believes, should not propagandize by speaking for a particular place or time. In fact, Harris believes it is a great danger for people to be pushed forward as "community" spokesmen since that "community" can be only a composite of groups in which unity is either artificially imposed or a false vision. Rather than merely being a spokesman for a particular time or place, he says that:

With the mutilation and decline of the conquered tribe a new shaman or artist struggles to emerge who finds himself moving along a knife-edge of change. He has been, as it were, cross-fertilized by victor and victim and a powerful need arises to invoke the lost
generation in a new creative, visionary light. It is a task which is profoundly personal (and archetypal) and therefore, accompanying an enormous potency for change—for vision into resources—runs the danger of self-enchantment or hubris. 17

Recognizing his debt to place but recognizing also the restrictions which can occur by being too closely confined by specifics of a place or time, Harris hopes he and others can avoid pitfalls and further free themselves to develop more fully. For this reason Harris frequently adapts old myths in his novels: Perseus and Andromeda in Palace of the Peacock, Christ in The Secret Ladder, and Oedipus in Genesis of the Clowns. New content enters, as for example in The Secret Ladder where the Andromeda figure is no longer the purely European Andromeda but has picked up new ramifications appropriate to the Canje area of South America. The reader must unravel a kind of static image and realize that new content allows a new complex to come into play in a subtle way freeing both European and Caribbean elements.

In the ancient myth of Andromeda and Perseus both suffer because of the pride of their parents. Andromeda's mother believes herself to be as beautiful as the gods, thereby invoking their wrath. The punishment falls, however, on Andromeda who is offered up as sacrifice to the sea monster sent to plague the town and devour its citizens. In the myth of Perseus, the oracle has prophesied that Danaë will bear a child who will become the killer of his grandfather, King Acrisius. Fearing his assassination but fearing the gods who protect blood relationships more, King Acrisius first imprisons Danaë. Later, finding that she and Zeus have created the child Perseus, Acrisius sends Danaë and the child off to sea in a closed box. They land safely on shore, however, and are taken in by local peasants, and live happily until King Proteus's jealousy and fear of the young hero cause him to try to have Perseus die
in battle with the Gorgon Medusa. Perseus, however, with the help of the gods, not only kills the Gorgon but returns safely and marries the King's daughter Andromache with whom he lives for many years. One day during a contest Perseus accidentally kills his grandfather who is a spectator by hitting him with a discus. Thus the prophecy is fulfilled that Acrisius's grandson would kill him.

In *The Secret Ladder* Harris modifies the myth by combining the figures of Acrisius and Poseidon. Harris's Poseidon serves as both a "sea monster" figure who threatens the scientific workers and a grandfather figure who is accidentally killed by Bryant the worker who most identified with and cared for him. Catalena, an abused wife of another of the workers, is sent to live with Poseidon who suspects her of being a spy for the scientists. Threatened by Poseidon and his men with rape and even death, she is suddenly rescued by Bryant who makes Poseidon fall, striking his head and killing him, killing his "grandfather." Harris combines elements of both ancient Greek myth and the South American peoples to create a new form which is meaningful as both a specific South American story and as an archetypal pattern.

Another way in which myth functions, may be illustrated through discussion of the Da Silva figure in the novel named for him. Da Silva da Silva is a "dying god" precisely because his life, his inner life, and his self-portraits involve other masks: Magellan, Cuffy and Henry Rich the English aristocrat who are now dead but have a type of residual, cultural effect on Da Silva. He is a self-creating creator whose powers of psychic regeneration lie in all the complicated investitures of traditions which he and other people must unravel. Only when he is able to unravel these traditions will he be able to learn how
a self-spawned, self-born hero, who seems to exist on a monolithic plane, is susceptible to the furies and burdened with both guilt and innocence. Harris's reader loses sight entirely of the "nameless crew" of Palace who were involved in Da Silva's earliest quest for self understanding. They become minor elements in his larger, more complex psyche as he sees ever more clearly not only their importance to his growth but his own increasing powers of understanding. Ultimately, having died and been "reborn" in other novels, we see in Da Silva the thrust of the dying god who is reborn in such a way that it allows him to see more deeply into the past. He is able, at last, to create a real future rather than simply succumb to those imprints of the past which would push him to repeat throughout history the same catastrophes, alienations, and divisions we saw between the self-spawned god and the nameless crew of Palace of the Peacock. Harris suggests that this progress is possible because of the curious way the dying god dies through others and releases something that needs to be freed both in himself and others.

For Harris the dying god is one aspect of the self-creating creator; a second is the grouping of muses or madonna figures. In Da Silva there is an evolution of consciousness. Harris cites the example of the flying madonna or bird which flies instinctively from one mark to another by means of unerring instinct that has been partially lost by the human consciousness. Because this evolution has occurred man has lost some instinct but has gained the capacity for hindsight. As Da Silva looks back at canvases he painted seven years earlier, he sees things begin to emerge, things he had been unaware of or unable to see before:
The spirit of the genie, akin to naked consciousness, which had transported him back across and through the dressed years lay now in an objective signal beyond all immediate sensual proof. He could not discern it.

It flashed unseen now to be seen later as other than uniform head or signalling box. It flashed now to be endorsed later as the mystery of freedom's divergence from a collective light, the mystery of an inner response to an invisible painted milestone built into non-sense data of the living present. (p. 75)

Harris seeks, then, not a deliberate adaptation of myth but an imaginative truth of myth which expresses a responsibility for authority and freedom. This responsibility may appear to be so strange that the reader has to allow what appear to be contradictions or contrasting spheres of experience to play on each other and thereby transform and modify what could otherwise become a polarized condition. When polarization occurs there is no solution except through a conflict between the spheres of influence and experience, between the factions of a society. Seeing the duality in myth or society is, Harris believes, only the first step toward eliminating those polarizations.

One example of the duality of myth in Harris's fiction is his use of the bone flute as it is related to the shaman figure. Both elements of myth are capable of digesting contrasting spaces, of bringing together formerly polarized or apparently contradictory elements.

One way the bone flute does this is by simultaneously containing both male and female elements. The shaft form of the bone is obviously a male element but it contains the "womb" shape associated with the female element and in which the sound is made which results in music. Out of the bone of an enemy killed in warfare the conqueror creates an art form and beautiful music. These bone flutes actually existed and were one way of expressing not only a conquest over one's enemies but the actual incorporation of that person into the victor's culture. This
is an example of the "digestion of contrasting figures" and spaces which Harris seeks in a less violent form. Da Silva himself functions as a living bone flute. He is able to bring to life and fulfill the dreams of the apparently dead Francis and Julia Cortez as recorded in their letters and journals. He "talks" with them and through them comes to understand not only their dreams and frustrations and their effects on his own life directly and indirectly, but he also comes to a greater understanding and appreciation of his own dreams and personal fulfillment. He contains the "bones" of Francis, Julia, and the others by digesting the contrasting spaces of living and dead, mediating between past and present, as well as between the present and the future, and turning negative elements into positive forces. He truly becomes the father figure both literally and metaphorically by going beyond his local culture and time to become the father of his time. He is a shaman figure capable of bringing himself and others to greater understanding and strength, having successfully undergone his own rite of passage. I shall discuss Harris's use of the Da Silva character at greater length in Part Two, Chapter 6.

The bone flute myth contains the elements of contrast and is used for example in Palace (1960), Sleepers of Roraima (1970) and Age of the Rainmakers (1971). Caribs used the bones of enemies to fashion flutes, creating an expression of their own community out of the very bodies of those who were in conflict with that community. The flute forms a bridge between cultures and allows man to "digest contrasts and once again... thrust toward community," a community with a possibility for rebirth rather than an artificial community with one group ruling the other, one group oppressing the other, one group suppressed by the
other. The world is riddled by suppression because tyranny unfortunately breeds tyranny. In *Ascent to Omāi* Harris tried to point to this tyranny and the possibilities of freedom and of learning freedom through suffering and deprivation. It is easy for tyranny to breed tyranny and for those who have been beaten down to become in their turn the tyrants of tomorrow.

Harris believes that it is difficult to overcome tyranny and create a new sense of community in which sovereignty has to be yielded in order to find a new dimension. The constant temptation, he feels, is to cling to what appears to be sovereign and absolute. Therefore, we need to learn to see all images as partial in order to grow and to see connections between what appear to be mutually exclusive images but are not. Harris seeks in his fiction an art of combination, rather than alienation, which will point toward combined motives and clarity of hope and growth, clarity of achievement, of maturity. If all images are partial and we cling to what appears to be total or sovereign, we deceive ourselves by investing in a totality which does not exist. Believing one system or structure to be sovereign, we feel we have no alternative but to eliminate or exterminate those people or systems which do not fit into that structure. If we invest in an absolute condition, maturity and potentials are eclipsed and the artist simply becomes a spokesman for a group, consumed by the doom which will consume all those to whom he speaks. This is part of what Harris sees as the dead end of much twentieth-century writing because it leads inevitably to all sorts of totalitarian fixations. ¹⁹

The "dream of perfection" does not take into account the fact that risks are constant. What perfection means is that there is a ground of
fate with many roots in man's life. If man were to live only according to his upbringing, he would relate to one root which comes up through society, and believe that root to be the only logical one. However, there are other roots which lie outside and away from that and these roots may never come into one's consciousness at all. If they do it means that man becomes involved in risks of a different order than the risks he would be involved in if he kept safely to the path in which he had been conditioned and educated. Those risks which man takes are both supported and challenged by the nature of place, the fate which grows out of his soil. In other words, there is a certain kind of perfection which brings man to the shamanistic level, and has to do with limited conditions of humankind. The shaman figure relates to what is at the "bottom of the ladder" or the "top of the ladder" of social structure.  

Harris believes that the ideal figure at the top of the ladder can never be totally apprehended, but at the bottom of the ladder exists the pressure of fate where the ground is riddled and torn. At the bottom of the ladder people live essentially by instinct and that instinct becomes fate which is one of the conceptions that lie at the heart of tragedy. Harris regards tragedy as one of the greatest achievements of any culture. Above tragedy, however, exists the ideal figure at the top of the ladder.

In Harris's philosophy enormous risks taken by a truly creative imagination could be productive because there is some sort of guiding hand, a shamanistic element or archetypal force which thrusts up and sustains man so that he may not completely fail. Harris believes it is true that man creates his own fate to a large degree because he is conditioned to grow up in a particular way so that the risks taken are
to some extent the risks which are most accessible. Only when he is able to move beyond narrow cultural confines can man take on a shamanistic role and move toward a community of Man rather than men.

The cultivation of a fate which lies buried deep in the soil of a society involves effort and work so that a thing which is far down and has not seen the light of consciousness for ages may come up and thrust out before man can begin to move upward. As he climbs toward an ideal he may be hit by stones of the world and the ladder may shake. The truly creative imagination undertakes risks in his community, goes against static forms and reaches toward expression of the ideal which may not yet even be recognizable.

Harris sees the artist's dilemma as similar to that of a bird which evolved from a dinosaur. The bird, like truly creative men, overcame enormous risks over the ages and was finally able to fly; but it still has "skeletal" ties to the lower form (the dinosaur) from which it evolved. A "perfection of fate" is not a totalitarian model, for then the dinosaur would remain perpetually in existence. However, both dinosaurs and men experienced modifications which allowed for new beings to appear. Major European writers have not learned that lesson of evolution and flexibility. Harris believes that writer after writer has been fascinated by apparent idealists like Hitler or Mussolini who seek a sort of perfection, just as Black intellectuals today are fascinated by Amin or some other dictator. Harris feels this perpetual dilemma has nothing to do with "genuine perfection." Once any form has been accepted as "perfect" it precludes further evolution and begins not only to oppress those who accept it but to die itself.
Though genuine perfection remains a riddle, a mystery, it relates to the deep-seated roots which come up and make enormous risks available to us. Harris believes with Anton Ehrenzweig that a hidden order of art may eventually break out and allow for a whole and healed psyche, an order which comes from an evolution of vision moving toward an imageless perfection. Man often relates to what is new in terms of terrifying but familiar images; his fear is sometimes all that he possesses in the face of unfathomable odds. However, man can circumvent this fear when he begins to sense that the images which he believes to be total and sovereign are all partial, and he can begin to come to grips with the accumulation of motives that allow him to recognize strange, even synchronistic, connections in his world.

It is because he seeks to avoid totalitarian structures and find synchronistic connections that Harris does not go along with what is fashionable; he seeks freedom from the tendency toward the totalitarian novel, or an authoritative condition. He sees the great responsibility of the creative imagination as residing in this move toward freedom, the only way a community can die and be reborn. Though the world is polarized man can still realize a sacrifice that is bearable; he can still learn something about the "naked" shape that exists at the heart of tradition and has its investiture in the "clothing" which naked bodies wear. At some point man comes into dialogue with that body and begins to "unravel" the unbearable violations and to recognize a vision of original sacrifice. The shaman figure, without cultural form or dress, is able to unravel the "garments of history," free himself from totalitarian structures, and lead man toward a unity of mankind.
Harris feels that the problem that confronts and is expressed by V.S. Naipaul and others is that if man simply relies on "local" experience he is doomed; rather than pulling something up from the very depths of the soil of place and time, he is then responding to and being oppressed by an imposed structure. Harris believes the writer must be an "unstitcher" precisely because that is the only way in which he can create a genuine community without being overwhelmed by stasis.

Man must be sensitive or his history will imprint itself on him so remorselessly that there will be no capacity within the body politic to revise the nature of sovereignty; he will become locked, wholly locked, in a model of sovereignty which is historic. But history is not only what is written; there are many areas that are unwritten but still imprinted on the psyche. If history leads to a condition in which there is implacable sovereignty it means that the very best within the tradition is vitiated. It is this sensitivity toward something beyond the immediate environment that Harris seeks to portray in his novels and characters, a feeling for the history of man rather than of nations.

The third element which Harris uses to show how man may move toward greater understanding is the eye which is able to see through static modes of behavior and traditional structures and which appears in Harris's fiction as "the eye of the scarecrow." This "eye" originated in African and American Indian tales as an element of the Trickster-Fool character who corresponds to the principle of original energy, prefigures the shape of man, and predates the cultures and history of man.

During the Middle Passage when slaves were brought from Africa to the Americas, and even later in Caribbean festivals, the Trickster figure appeared as a participant in the limbo dance. This is a physical
representation of the emotional and psychological contortions and distortions necessary not only for the slaves' survival but also for man's survival in today's hostile world. The central part of the limbo dance involves movement of the dancers under a pole held parallel to the ground. As the dance progresses participants must increasingly contort their bodies to pass under the constantly lowering pole without touching it or knocking it down. The dancers contort their bodies as they bend over backward until they resemble spiders, bodies parallel to the ground and limbs extended. Once past the pole the dancers spring upright to repeat the process as long as possible. The body which appears reduced, broken, in the dance appears afterward with limbs intact and reassembled. This reshaping ritual originated as a transition ritual of men moving from slavery to "freedom" in the era of the Middle Passage and in some measure retains that value today in Caribbean festivals though today the slavery is less overt.

The middle passage limbo dance is portrayed in The Tree of the Sun as Da Silva/Francis undergoes the shamanistic journey toward greater understanding and fulfillment:

Leonard stopped for a moment on an open concrete pitch that bordered the pool to shout a word of encouragement to a limbo dancer from the West Indies who swept under a pole held horizontally by two white youths.

First the dancer merely lowered his head and shoulders as he passed under the bar but gradually as the pole was taken inch by inch, foot by foot, closer to the ground, he began to bend his trunk and limbs backwards; his legs and feet acquiring astonishing agility and protean spirit.

. . . The limbo dancer beside the pool re-fashioned himself into a series of distortions as he kissed the deck of symbolic slave ship, symbolic free ship, with the back of his head between pole and ground.

'Middle passage ritual,' said da Silva to Francis as he made a series of rapid sketches, a series of dancing shapes in pursuit of a universal architectonic or self. (pp. 47-48)
Francis/Da Silva suddenly realizes while watching the limbo that the dance is a key to understanding the history of not only the Caribbean peoples from which they both have come, but the key to understanding the middle passage all men experience in numerous other forms as well.

'Middle passage...?'... His eyes were opening in his skull. 'On every urban ship the gods are there in each new building programme like implicit dancers, horizons as well, under which history moves by global degrees. Cramped economic degrees, dwarfed economic degrees, embedded nevertheless in the womb of space as in a canvas of deeds that lag behind a universal conception of the body of truth. (p. 48)

In his unique manner Harris continues, tying together limbo, myth, old world building, slavery and freedom, Christianity and its implied suffering, with fate and hope in a few lines of dialogue whose effect is to suggest the unity of all men across time:

In a limbo dancer or building or monument one glimpses chains and broken chains, divided spaces, wounded angles in resurrections, movement and distortion towards the inimitable (never-to-be-wholy-achieved) re-assembly of limbs into high rise Osiris, god-beetle, anancy spider, mast of new Christian ship, unfinished land, unfinished pier in the sea and the sky on the precipitate ladder of fate. (p. 48)

This multiple layering of images and symbols will be further discussed in Chapters 5 through 8 which deal with Harris's last four novels.

Though the Oxford English Dictionary traces the origins of limbo back to Dante's Divine Comedy, where it is that region on the border of Hell, which is the abode of the just who died before Christ's coming and of unbaptised infants, limbo also signifies more recently the Caribbean dance form which traces its origins to the name for a kind of coarse calico or a dark blue fabric, "ulem-bu" (web), which was corrupted to "limbo" by the white European merchants.

The limbo dance in the Caribbean depicts the movement of slaves into freedom and in Harris's fiction the Trickster/Fool/Shaman figure
becomes more than merely the slave or even human initiate moving from one status to another, one office to another, or one role to another. As Harris describes it in his "eye of the scarecrow" interview, this figure becomes the Initiate Human Archetype between one condition of being and another. Caribbean man, as representative Man, is in limbo between structures and systems. He is in a realm of pure possibility where novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise. Man in a more settled, homogeneous society does not face the overt psychic threats that slaves did but neither does he enjoy, save in grave crisis, the creative tension and potential latent in such a condition. By means of the shaman figure and use of the eye of the scarecrow, man, in Harris's philosophy, can learn to see and utilize this inherent potential.

Harris identifies suppressed humanity, the natives of Guyana, with the original, invisible reality of the Trickster-Fool or Clown, because they have been reduced to the same primordial state as the Fool and deprived of identity. In this condition, however, they enjoy true spiritual freedom because they are not involved in any fixed order.

The Initiate Human Archetype, or Scarecrow, is a central symbol in all of Harris's novels. As early as Palace of the Peacock (1960) the scarecrow appears as a double with two kinds of eyes: the dreamer's eye, the underground eye which to some extent is closed because it cannot yet see the subterranean levels of existence; and the dreamer's brother's eye, the upper eye, the daylight or surface eye, which is wide awake and rules his sight, rules his world. In Black Marsden (1972) the eye unravels biases, it tunnels through reigning and ruling conceptions and
breaks them up so that they may be overcome. Jennifer tells Goodrich that he is "one of them" because he has the eye of the scarecrow. 25

The eye of the scarecrow makes it possible for meaningful distortions to enter into existence, to relate one thing to another in a way that was not previously possible. This scarecrow eye is conscious all the time that nothing articulated into a solid position is as solid as it appears to be. A beautiful day is not as fixed and solid as it appears to be because it exists on a turning globe and there are curious mutations of the light that cannot be seen but which affect man's unconscious in what Harris calls a "non-sense" way. He believed that the light in the tropics was excessively bright when he lived there as a child, but says that he now knows he was blind to a lot of it because he could not contrast it to other kinds of light. 26

In Companions of the Day and Night (1975) the scarecrow eye not only sees the world in a different way from a man's eye, but has an additional function, that of resistance to gravity. 27 Throughout the novel there are motifs of verticality and the falling figure. As the body spins and falls it seems to unravel the costume that it wears. Even the body that it wears is unravelled because there is some essential unstructured spirit that is falling as it wears these costumes. The figure becomes a mediating force between structures. Ivan Van Sertina sees this as a doing away with the garments of history, doing away with the foibles of any age's fashionable ideologies and illusions. Because the Scarecrow/Fool is not dressed in these garments of history he retains his nakedness, and the social garments of cultures and times into which he descends are like masks which he wears and waives, roles which he as easily doffs as dons. 28
'I see nothing,' said the Idiot. 'I am going blind. I am falling. Nothing except economies of nakedness... Idiot Nameless retired against the pyramid of the sun. The echo of a voice 'I' had come out of the ground as out of bone and blood he banked in a wave of gods. Banked floods (surf or sea of emotion), banked shores (wave of obsessions). Which was inner strand, which outer chasm or precipice? He ascended, eyes riveted, nailed to the steps leading up to the top of the pyramid of the sun. How many human hearts he wondered had been plucked from bodies there to feed the dying light of the sun and create an obsession with royal sculptures, echoing stone? It was time to take stock of others as hollow bodies and shelters into which one fell. Hollow newspapers into which one fell, news-worthy sacrifice, wrinkled skin. FIRING SQUAD OF RAIN. Headline, Heartline. STOCKMARKET SHELTER, CITY RAINS. Deadline. CANVAS REQUIRED, SACRIFICE REQUIRED. For centuries it seemed to him now he had been ascending, descending, sliding, falling into rain inch by inch, into shelters of paint, shelters of stone. Sacrificed paint. Sacrificed stone. Lament for the dying sun. This was the altar of his malaise, Idiot shelter, Idiot fascination, fall into the sculptures of the greatest men (upon whom? from whom? times rained). Fall into the skin of emperors, admirals, conquistadores, kings at the corner of a street, Great Ladies, Beatrice, Joanna, centre of a square, Way of the Dead, as though these were his sacrificed bodies and he (Fool, Clown) were high priest of the elements after all. High priest of stone rain. Rain Emperor. (pp. 56-58) 

In American Indian mythology this Idiot/Clown/Fool is prestructural and therefore prior to any fixed shape, fixed sex, or fixed cultural form. This amorphous entity without fixed identity is moving up through primordial formlessness toward the evolution of a shape and a structure, through stages in awareness and determination of its own extensions, proportions, and capacities. It behaves almost like an Idiot because it has no programmed reflexes. Its instincts are not coded into it. Its left hand may fight with its right because it can hold dialogue with its parts as though they are free bodies. It is not aware of social laws as we are; it breaks them all, breaks free of tradition and custom.29 

The scarecrow represents the shadowy figures in which cultures are conscious of a mediation between structures but cannot openly state it. Nevertheless that is what Harris believes the scarecrow is doing. Man
has the tendency to believe that as he descends through structures he will come to one that rules everything. Harris, however, thinks that if man descends always into structures he will come to the place where he will have to confess to an incorrigible bias which can never be corrected. It cannot be corrected because structure carries bias with it.

In *The Hidden Order of Art* Anton Ehrenzweig recognized this paradox of finding something very archaic in the world which seems to comprehend all times; Roi Solman experienced it in *Tumatunari* when he struck his head and saw, as with a "scarecrow eye," both his historic situation and a metaphysical one. Because the scarecrow eye sees through surface "realities" it sees both the archaic side as well as the comprehensive side where Harris feels the mediating force is located. Harris believes that if only the chronological story of *Tumatunari* or *Companions of the Day and Night* is read the mediating element or the element of verticality is omitted. This verticality is stated all the way through but sometimes in peculiar ways so that the end of the story, in *Companions* for example, seems to come before the beginning as though it already existed within the moment when Idiot Nameless is falling through the pavement. This fall from the pyramid through space and time comes at the beginning of the novel but is really at the end of the chronological story.

As this example indicates, Harris feels that an imaginative novelist should not concern himself with recreating linear time or historical fact and he modifies both when he deals with the Oedipal, incest, theme in *Genesis of the Clowns*. Though this novel will be analyzed at greater length in Chapter 7 it is helpful to note here that Harris uses the incest theme subtly, the reason being that incest was not part of
recorded history but a rumor. Since Harris believes that great myths can reappear where least expected, he plays with the myth so that it appears in a disadvantaged society in order to redeem it. This redemption is possible when man learns to see through and beyond restrictive or negative historical issues to greater, more positive possibilities beyond.

Harris concedes that by normal literary standards Genesis is a very strange novel but believes that there was no other way he could write it. If he had attempted to write it in the Mittelholzer fashion, for example, he would have augmented the incest theme, made it sensational and presented a straight, realistic portrait. To have done this would have been to have violated the truth, since he is not sure incest occurred; it is only an intuition he has based on rumors.

Though there is no historical proof that incest occurred after the Middle Passage he has a deep conviction that it did because of the imbalance of the sexes which existed in Guyana (disregarding the Amerindians) from the earliest colonization of the coastlands until about 1920 when the number of men and women reached a balance. Until this time there were always more men than women and as a consequence Harris believes that incest was inevitable. The inevitability of incest is also suggested by the practice of slave owners breaking up cultural and even family groups to prevent slave unity but thereby providing the opportunity for incest to occur even without the knowledge of the participants.

Even though incest was not something which could have been avoided completely, since it was impossible to trace family connections, Harris sees it as a sort of burden of guilt shared by Guyanese. It is not,
however, something he feels should be exploited in literature, in the Mittelholzer fashion, because no actual incidents of incest are recorded and his knowledge is not therefore historical but intuitive. Because he feels it is a factor which shaped man's consciousness, albeit unconsciously, Harris deals with incest in subtle ways; for example, in *Genesis of the Clowns* he places a father figure, rather than an actual father, in connection with a "daughter." Harris suggests that by becoming aware of the factors (like incest) which contribute to our perceptions, consciously or unconsciously, we become more adept at making valid judgements. By learning to see through and beyond cultural biases and prejudices which cloud our vision, we learn to take action which results not only in short-term, personal gratifications, but to make decisions which benefit man in a more universal sense. In this connection, the role of the eye of the scarecrow is to enable man to see through and beyond the biases which had previously trapped him.

For Harris, then, the eye of the scarecrow allows man to see through social structures and historical constraints to a greater "innocence" and freedom. So much is suggested by his choice of lines from Edwin Muir's poem on Oedipus as epigraph to *Genesis*:

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I am one
Who as in innocent play sought out his guilt,
And now through guilt seeks other innocence,
Beset by evil thoughts, led by the gods.
        . . . I have judged
Myself. . .
Past sight or thought: that hearing it we may ease
The immortal burden of the gods who keep
Our natural steps and the earth and skies from harm. 31
```

Harris sees the eye of the scarecrow working in this way: it is the eye that does not accept apparent structures but begins to mediate between the strangeness of its surroundings and other backgrounds to
bring about meaningful distortions that help it look through a moment into the whole fabric of shadows and lights around the globe, past sight and thought to the ideals beyond.

In Black Marsden, Knife is presented as an eye of the scarecrow figure, a kind of skeleton harp, skeleton knife, skeleton of civilizations. He is part of Black Marsden's peculiar group which comes to live with Clive Goodrich and corresponds to instruments of the culture, instruments which allow the scarecrow eye to tunnel through biases. Here too, the scarecrow is not so much a thing as a process, "a dialectical process whose dynamics obscure distinctions to evoke an almost unendurable unity, silence and sacrifice" (Eye of the Scarecrow, p. 47).

He helps Goodrich move from guilt to innocence: he is a mediating or Christlike figure. Unlike Goodrich who is a product of a particular society, Knife can retain his innocence because he is not cast in any socially determined mold and in fact rejects Goodrich's attempts to identify him with a particular society in Jamaica.

Goodrich's world is so polarized that what rules it is violence. Finally there is no way of transforming the world except through violence between the polarized roots. Knife, therefore, becomes the guide and the only principle that could guide Goodrich. He alerts Goodrich to his separation from the world as well as to his unconscious communion between his ego and his Self. Once Goodrich becomes conscious of this segregation, he can reach a synthesis of the dialogue between the two parts, bringing unity out of separation. Even the scarecrow's shape is suggestive of its unifying or mediating role: two sticks in the form of a cross, the archetypal symbol of the intersection of two
contrasting realms often, as with Goodrich, the earthly and the celestial.

The concepts of structures and the mediation between structures was not something that Harris believes he could have stated intellectually (at the time the novels were written), but it was all there intuitively. The mediation is suggested by phrases like "seminal ruin" or "seminal catastrophe." Though apparently negative, "seminal ruin" and "seminal catastrophe" refer to conditions of deprivation capable of positive transformation. The skeleton which becomes a harp is no longer just a harp, but becomes a knife and has a tone to it. The forces of unyielding structure personified in the "assassin," can be confronted in terms that do not allow it to be the utterly insupportable monster which it appears to be when man is locked into an order of things and is unable to see how partial it is.

This "assassin" thrives in a world where men do not confess their partialities. The whole ground of the assassin lies in this: "there is no way forward unless I kill you." Harris believes that if that is the truth of the world, if the logic of the world is incorrigible bias, then there will always be room for the assassin. When man has confessed that his biases are not as incorrigible as they seem, then for the first time he can face the assassin whose power will begin to diminish from that moment. The assassin is not as sovereign as he at first appears to be; because there is another perspective of change which lies in the canvases of existence. Only with realization of partiality can man support the thought of the assassin, because, dreadful as it may seem, it is no longer conclusive.
Harris seeks to dramatize in his fiction his belief that we can transform the world through opportunities which appear at first to be deprivations. The Oedipus "deprivation," that of incest, is only one of many imposed on peoples who lost far more than their families and their languages. Another concept, that of the double, relates to the manner in which these deprivations are transformed. This double or shadow appears in *Palace* as the Narrator and his brother and continues through the novels to Knife's shadow which is seen even in another world. There is a definite impression in *Black Marsden* that all the figures have shadows walking beside them, and not just shadows of themselves.

Through the use of the eye of the scarecrow man is able to begin to see these doubles, to learn to support and bear the anguish associated with the assassin, and to open himself to new possibilities. This rich texture of possibilities can exist because for the first time man realizes that these structures which have ruled him and are characterized by polarizations and incredible violence are not as absolute as they seemed. Thus, through deprivation itself, man can begin to transform the world, for what seems to be fixed, static, reified, has another side to it, allowing man to transform materials that only seem to be intransigent.

There are West Indian writers who say that there is nothing in the West Indies. Harris however, believes that what appears to be poverty actually is rich opportunity since man there can gain a sense of the mediation between forms and structures; the very deprivations push in that direction. Without the scarecrow eye there would be no sense of the subtlety and complexity of man's other eye. It is through the staring eye which seems deprived, through that kind of apparition of
insensibility and death, that it is possible to begin to understand and undermine death. Initially the eye seems utterly remote from life because it can stare at the sun without being blinded; but, it is important to understand, it is this very capacity that allows it to transform various boundaries.

The scarecrow eye, the double, works by creeping up through a kind of hindsight or foresight; clearly it illumines the future as well. Moving into the future man is aware that the future possesses strange influences which are already at work in life though he may be unaware of them. Though man appears to sit in one place, he and the world are always moving into the future. Because of what he has experienced in the past he faces the future with the sense that he is not as solid as he once thought he was; there is a shadow with him which is already aware of the illuminations coming out of the future. Those illuminations are already addressing societies whose responses to the illuminations will have a great deal to do with the kind of freedom man secures in the future, just as hindsight teaches a great deal about the freedoms that have been won out of the past. There is always a double, a sense of going back into the past as though the shadow leaves and returns to the past to inspect it and bring back news. The shadow also goes into the future and comes back with news of the future. There is a very real sense of the shadow going with the solid person. Sometimes this shadow appears to jump out because of a change in psychic "light" that is cast; at other times this shadow seems to disappear.

In Harris's novels, it is not just the specter of another person who is there, but the ghost of other civilizations, other societies as well, the specter of an Amerindian force that appears through society as
well as a European force, or an African force or, indeed, all of this in multiple layers. As man begins to activate his own resources, other resources come into play even though he is not consciously aware of them. He can become aware of them and activate something in himself when he begins to see with the eye of the scarecrow. When he sees more clearly, becomes aware that both conscious and unconscious effects are at work, and recognizes that his understanding of these forces is only partial, he can begin to set up a dialogue. For Harris this is a mysterious dialogue because it lies beyond the framework of the novels and man's normal vision, and yet can affect him. Only then can a mediating element be activated between man and the past, between one civilization and another, between one culture and another, between one man's scarecrow eye and another's, between Harris's novels and his readers.

Part Two of this dissertation provides detailed explications of Harris's four most recent novels: Companions of the Day and Night, Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness, Genesis of the Clowns, and The Tree of the Sun. Though not explicit devices in these novels, Harris uses synchronicity, the shaman figure, and the eye of the scarecrow to suggest that mediation between structures is not only possible but necessary for man if he is to avoid the "assassin", escape from incorrigible biases, and use his potentials rather than eclipse them as he has in the past.

Notes

1 Three previously unpublished interviews with Wilson Harris are to be found in the Appendix; among other things, they provide discussions of synchronicity, shamanism, and the eye of the scarecrow.


4 Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, p. 441.

5 Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, pp. 444-447.


7 Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol, p. 64.

8 Wilson Harris, Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 18.

9 Wilson Harris, Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 14.

10 Wilson Harris, Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 17.

11 Wilson Harris, "Synchronicity."

12 Wilson Harris, "Synchronicity."

13 Wilson Harris, "History, Fable and Myth," p. 22.


15 Wilson Harris, "Shamanism and the Function of Myth."

16 Wilson Harris, "Shamanism and the Function of Myth."


18 Wilson Harris, "Shamanism and the Function of Myth."

19 Wilson Harris, "Shamanism and the Function of Myth."

20 Wilson Harris, "Shamanism and the Function of Myth."

21 Wilson Harris, "Shamanism and the Function of Myth."

22 Wilson Harris, "Synchronicity" and "Shamanism."


26 Wilson Harris, "The Eye of the Scarecrow."

27 For a complete transcript of the previously unpublished manuscript of the "Eye of the Scarecrow" interview, see the appendix.


29 Ivan Van Sertima, "Ritual as Native Phenomenon," pp. 74-75.

30 Wilson Harris, "The Eye of the Scarecrow."


32 Wilson Harris, "The Eye of the Scarecrow."

33 Wilson Harris, "History, Fable and Myth," p. 21.
PART TWO

VISIONARY TEXTS
CHAPTER 5

COMPANIONS OF THE DAY AND NIGHT (1975)

Part One, "Contexts of Vision," described the range and content of Harris's fiction; his relationship to three significant West Indian authors: V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, and Edgar Mittelholzer; and three of his key terms as they appear in his fiction: synchronicity, shamanism, and the eye of the scarecrow. Now it is time to turn to explications of his four most recent novels: Companions of the Day and Night, Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness, Genesis of the Clowns, and The Tree of the Sun. These novels, the latest and most complex examples of Harris's unusual style and innovative techniques, continue to dramatize his positive vision of Man, as they urge that the creative imagination be used to break through surface realities and to discover rhythms previously hidden by cultural biases. By moving beyond these limiting biases, Harris's characters come to a greater understanding of themselves and the forces which create them and are created by them. Harris's readers, too, may participate in these liberating and liberated perceptions and thus move toward a unity of all men. Though the theme of psychic division is not new in literature, Harris's approach to healing it is, as these novels demonstrate; and his new approach to the problem results in new approaches to the novel form and language. By sifting through the multiple layers of characters and meanings, Harris's
readers move closer to the very solution he advocates for a divided consciousness: an improved and illuminated subjective and creative imagination.

Following Black Marsden (1972) and continuing the characters and themes employed there, Companions of the Day and Night (1975) depicts Clive Goodrich's efforts to "translate" into a novel the diary experiences of Idiot Nameless's journey in Mexico. As Goodrich studies the collection that Black Marsden has sent him, he becomes simultaneously a creating and created force. He is an "editor" who becomes so involved in the materials he originally perceives as trash that he soon comes to regard the collection as "magical contact with the gods" (p. 15). As he puts the collection of paintings, sculptures, and diary pages in order, and lives through the journey of Idiot Nameless, he at the same time journeys into himself, orders his own psyche, and comes to greater understanding of himself and the nature of his world.

Black Marsden had served as a shaman figure in the novel named for him, leading Goodrich toward greater understanding of himself and his world. Marsden sends Goodrich the Nameless collection because he "was aware of [Goodrich's] susceptibility to 'objects' that symbolized, in various degrees, the 'soul' or 'glory' of cultures and civilizations past" (p. 79). With his improved vision, Goodrich is now able to translate the Nameless collection into a coherent and significant whole. As Marsden and Goodrich became facets of the same larger psyche in Black Marsden, so now they gain new dimensions by the addition of the experiences and visions of Nameless, and through those experiences they are enabled to offer greater hope for the future of other men who will
journey from narrow confines of self and history toward a unity of human understanding transcending times and cultures.

Harris sought in this novel to express (and regain for himself) a "vision of sacrifices built into survival." This vision is the result of a dialogue set up between the European Nameless and the cultures and myths of Mexico. It is a dialogue that touches upon the enigma of sacrifice. Pre-Columbian sacrifices occurred when hearts were torn out of victims and presented to the sun in Aztec rituals whose aim was to ensure continued life. The fears experienced by the pre-Columbian Aztecs that the sun would sink into the ground and forever disappear unless brought/bought back by the offerings of human life resulted in great sacrifices which Harris incorporates into the themes of his novel and traces through the history of the area up to and including the present time. He also implies that modern life will continue, at least for Goodrich and Marsden, because of the sacrifice of Nameless's life, a sacrifice Harris directly compares to the sacrifice made by Christ.

Though as modern men we may scoff at the pre-Columbian belief that the sun might disappear and either go into or leave a huge black hole, a similar belief, and perhaps only a slightly less superstitious one, is held today by those who maintain that our own universe will disappear into a "black hole" in space. As Goodrich observes in the "Editor's Introduction":

But there was something else that one sees in the landscapes and cultures into which Nameless descends. In what degree are 'black holes of gravity' susceptible to interpretation as an area of anxiety in twentieth century man when they come into rapport with pre-Columbian investitures of fear built into sacrifices to a sun that might fall into the ground and never rise again? (p. 14)
Scientists have demonstrated that such holes do exist, but their relationship to Harris's novels is through the fear which they engender, directly or metaphorically, in modern man.

More than any of his other novels *Companions of the Day and Night* is more fully understood if the reader is familiar with a few background facts of Mexican history and mythology, although, as is usual in Harris's novels, the significance of historical sites and events referred to goes far beyond immediate history or mythology. Harris ties together a European narrator/editor, Clive Goodrich, with Dr. Black Marsden who seems to have no neatly definable origins, and they, in turn, are united with Idiot Nameless/Fool who has actually created the collection which Goodrich edits and which becomes one more stage in Goodrich's learning process.

We learn that the novel Goodrich creates is based on the journal and art collection of Idiot Nameless, made during a trip to Mexico. It appears that Idiot Nameless, having checked into the Gravity Hotel in Mexico City, sets out from there to explore the immediate environment and, in particular, the site of Montezuma's market place now buried beneath the contemporary buildings. Idiot Nameless explores, too, the surrounding countryside and volcanoes near the city. His explorations progress from city to countryside to woods, as the landscape becomes increasingly natural, and, as he moves through historic layers, Idiot Nameless seems to move closer to his "natural" self. He also moves through his own accumulated layers of culture and their influences on him. By incorporating historic names into his narrative, Harris is able to tie together new world and old world characters and concepts as Nameless moves by stages from familiar and accepted static attitudes
back in time through other attitudes to the less familiar but probably no more superstitious beliefs of pre-Columbian men. By the end of the novel the initially strange names are familiar and take on additional meanings in context with the familiar: Tenochtitlan, Montezuma's market place, becomes the substratum of modern Mexico City where men are still bought and sold and no less sacrificed to appease modern "gods"; Teotihuacan, the Pyramid of the Sun of ancient Aztecs, is both the site of Nameless's death and the metaphorical height from which he descends into himself with increased understanding; Popocatapetl, a nearly 18,000-foot-high volcano outside Mexico City, is both part of the landscape and appears as a "headless man", perhaps a symbol of Nameless's (Man's) condition in a difficult world. Even knowledge of the Aztec Emperor Montezuma, whose superstitions and inflexibility brought about his death, gives added meaning to Nameless's search and discoveries.

Mexico itself is still a land of dichotomies, embodying apparently irreconcilable differences which are often combined in the practices and attitudes of modern Mexicans. Like Mexico City, which is built layer upon layer, culture upon culture, on a lake of mud which both protects and limits it, Mexican beliefs are built up layer upon layer of pre-Columbian and Spanish ideas which result in a complex pattern allowing for cultural breadth and variety but sometimes resulting in open conflict among groups of people. Beneath the contemporary streets of the city are Aztec canals and temples as well as Tenochtitlan. Modern buildings are often built of the rubble of Aztec structures much as contemporary beliefs rest on a foundation of ancient beliefs. Both buildings and culture were systematically torn down by the conquering Spaniards but
could not be totally obliterated in a land whose people are fiercely independent and often secluded from modern influences. Even today contrasts are very much in evidence as Indian populations struggle against Spaniards, ancient religions like the Aztecs' worship of the sun conflict with Catholicism, and the very wealthy fight to maintain their power against the growing influence of the extremely poor masses.

Aware of Mexico's contrasts, "layered" history, and explosive potential, Harris makes this country the setting and symbol of what might be termed his palimpsest sense of history. When Idiot Nameless journeys to Mexico City ("a dream he had long entertained") he is "astonished at his emotion of descent into a past that seemed his own future" (p. 19). Seeking Sister Beatrice, a saintly nun who lived in Mexico City, and her fellow nuns Rose and Maria, Nameless discovers her granddaughter the whore, comes in contact with the ancient beliefs Beatrice sought to replace with Catholicism, visits the Pyramid of the Sun, Teotihuacan ("the place where the gods were made"), and is himself "made" there through his experiences. Harris begins the novel with a quotation from a Puerto Rican folk song: "St. Joseph and Mary arrive at Bethlehem, they ask for an inn and it is denied them." This simultaneously ties together historic and modern themes of sacrifice and rejected salvation, themes which will continue throughout the novel.

Nameless, too, is rejected by those with whom he comes in contact. By the end of the story, when he visits Mrs. Black Marsden, he appears to her rejected, compassionate, and not lonely but totally alone. He began his journey less then two weeks before Easter, was swept up in a parade going into a church to celebrate mass, was seduced by Beatrice's granddaughter (in much the same fashion Beatrice herself had seduced a
fool each year to play the role of Christ), and suffered a "fall" through histories and cultures. By means of these experiences, Nameless became a part of the ritual of sacrifice still associated with the religion which dominates Mexico today, yet his sacrifice, as filtered through the mind of Goodrich, hints at a new beginning as it also ties together Mexican and European, old and new world elements.

The dead images at the beginning of Goodrich's narrative are gradually replaced by more hopeful and life-giving, life-bearing images. He describes the "autumn leaves of manuscript" (p. 14) which look like so many leaves from a tree whose branches have grown bare in winter's cold. But these dead images fuse with their opposites in what Harris calls an "increased circulation of the light," until, by novel's end, we are left with the hopeful image of a young child. Though Nameless's death in a fall from the pyramid of the sun fulfills the early promise of his death made at the beginning of the novel and reinforced when he is struck by the image of a pyramid on a curtain at the Marsdens', a curtain which billows up and strikes him, there is also the image of a miraculous conception. Just before his death Nameless learns from Mrs. Black Marsden (who is also simultaneously a sort of split-personality of Sisters Rose and Maria) that Sister Beatrice's last deed was to take in a child which had been left on her doorstep wrapped in wrinkled newspapers, wrapped in the "garments of history." The multiple layers of sacrifice, like the multiple layers of Mexico's history which Harris uses, lead Nameless to a greater understanding of himself and through this understanding Goodrich, too, learns.
Nameless was drawn to Mexico and to Sister Beatrice to seek answers to questions he could not even concretely state, but through his experiences he learns to see more clearly:

To taste is to see. To taste is to descend into black spaces, multi-form spaces, eyes of gravity in the fire-eater's model. Firing squad of sensations. Two holes. Two eyes. Numberless number. Numberless dying. Numberless living. . . It was the beginning of the child of humanity—the beginning of the obscurity of pity, the obscurity of antecedents, the new fall or Fool born outside of his time. Forced into conception. . . A conception of unsuspected dimensions written into the passive birth or death of objects reflected into history. . . (p. 52)

Continued in both Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness and later in The Tree of the Sun, this image of a conception, a child, grows increasingly positive as Harris's narrators become better able to see the realities of their worlds rather than investing in static and invalid forms. The child is a product of the imagination of Nameless in his dream conversation with Sisters Maria and Rose. The child, Harris implies, is also the product of Joanna's realization that Sister Beatrice sacrificed more than anyone had previously recognized in her struggles to continue doing what she believed was right even in the face of conflicts which resulted in her death.

'What I do feel now', her voice was struggling to maintain its paradox, its force like a displaced sibylline feud of pride and prejudice, 'is that her trial of values, her scandal, her supreme trial of values, her supreme scandal, is the exposure of a dead world dressed in all the garments of history and even now—at this late state—it has led me to conceive, miraculously conceive. . . ' (p. 50)

Though she is more than eighty years old Joanna, like Sarah in Genesis, "conceives" a child. Through her generosity toward others and her search for an improved world, she forces Nameless/Goodrich/the reader to question the habits of cultures, the "garments of history" to which we needlessly and painfully sacrifice ourselves and others. It is
certainly a key to understanding the passage in the novel to recognize the "habit" Sister Joanna and others wear is both the dress of a nun and the cultural and traditional habits we all "wear."

Harris's concept of "wearing" cultural and traditional habits is reminiscent of Thomas Carlyle's philosophical theory that "all human beings are, have been and forever will be, in Movement and Change." As he writes in *Characteristics*:

Thus in all Poetry, Worship, Art, Society, as one form passes into another, nothing is lost: it is but the superficial, as it were the body only, that grows obsolete and dies; under the mortal body lies a soul which is immortal; which anew incarnates itself in fairer revelation; and the Present is the living sum-total of the whole Past. 2

This line of thought is continued in what has become known as Carlyle's "Clothes Philosophy," which is expounded in numerous chapters of *Sartor Resartus*. Carlyle is doubly appropriate here for, just as the editor of *Sartor Resartus* patches together the story of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, so, too, does Clive Goodrich of *Companions* patch together Idiot Nameless's story. Both editors are concerned less with a chronological reconstruction of events in the lives of the main characters than they are with the analysis and comprehension of the "reality" they find within the characters. As George H. Ford explains:

In effect this Clothes Philosophy is an attempt to demonstrate the difference between the appearances of things and their reality. The appearance of a man depends upon the costume he wears; the reality of a man is the body underneath the costume. By analogy, Carlyle suggests that institutions, such as churches or governments, are like clothes. They may be useful 'visible emblems' of the spiritual forces which they cover, but they wear out and have to be replaced by new clothes. 3

Carlyle's "Clothes Philosophy" has some connections with Jung's interest in the layered nature of the human personality. As Ford suggests:
The Clothes Philosophy has much in common with the theory of archetypal experiences developed in the 20th century by the psychiatrist Carl Jung. Carlyle extends his analogy, however, into many other areas. Clothes hide the body just as the world of nature cloaks the reality of God and as the body itself cloaks the reality of man's soul. The discovery of these realities behind the appearances is, for Carlyle, and for his hero, the initial stage of a solution to the dilemmas of life.

Harris, whose relations to Jung have already been discussed in Chapter 4, incorporates a "Clothes Philosophy" into his novels. His narrators and characters frequently refer to accumulated layers of historic selves or cultural patterns. In Companions Sister Joanna describes the metaphysical difference between Europe and Mexico. In Europe (with some qualifications), "a metaphysic has been ironed out, fought over for centuries, and finally established lucid and firm for all to obey" (p. 49. But in Mexico:

a cleavage exists within the ethics of sacrifice entertained by divided civilizations, different cultures rooted in pre-Columbian, post-Columbian worlds, pre-revolutionary, post-revolutionary states. And within that cleavage action is largely meaningless until one strips away from it a body of encrusted habit that trades on the exploitation of culture by culture. (pp. 49-50)

It is through the artist's model, granddaughter of Sister Beatrice, that Nameless comes to his fullest realization of his own relationship to the nuns, to the child, and to the Christ-like role he too must play as a compassionate and abandoned sacrificial victim. After her initial procession and rape Beatrice seduced a Fool each year to play the part of Christ at Easter. Idiot Nameless/Fool is seduced by her granddaughter and finds himself wearing garments of sacrifice:

'I am implicated in a tension of bodily and bodiless pasts, tongues of darkness, tongues of light, unconfessed elements.' The Fool shivered. . . [a workman tosses him a coat] The Idiot slipped into it, shivering still, as into another's grave, Stone Emperor's blood, bullet-ridden workman. The smell of vulgar death was in his nostrils. 'No,' the overcoat said to him. 'Not death, heroic strife. No, not death I say, a hero's grave, yes death, brute death. . . Whose coat. . . death do I wear?' (p. 66)
By continuously questioning, contrasting and revising his concept of past and present events, the Fool is able to bring about a "circulation of light" and freedom of vision (akin to the vision or the eye of the scarecrow) which in Harris's vocabulary implies a freedom from static forms and eclipsing traditions. It is only through the rape of Beatrice's virginal stasis and the "circulating body of whoredom" of her granddaughter that the Fool can escape death, or be liberated from the fatal traditions which had limited his growth and prevented him from seeing his relationship to others. The alchemical concept of the circulation of light, is used here to suggest the flow of vision, the active exercise of one's imagination, which revises and reassesses present and past, Spanish and Aztec, Christian and pagan concepts, new and old world values, bypassing "bloodclots of vision, fixed ways of seeing and feeling in a vessel of any given culture, time or place." The individual may, as is the case with the Fool, be involved in an involuntary process which frees him from his blindness and transfuses him with new insights, new feelings, new visions, "laying siege to the heart of darkness."  

In the process of going through the journals of Idiot Nameless's travels in Mexico, Clive Goodrich recognizes the form of a growing vision. Idiot Nameless dies when he falls from the pyramid of the sun. He falls through cultures and histories, his garments unravel, garments of history and culture; he is likened to the spark of conscience, or a unity of vision, in the lives of men. When asked by the angry and impertinent workman where the spark has fallen, into what and whom, the Fool replies:  

Into institutions... Into everything that models the shape of the world we live in, the kind of demands we make of each other and
have been making for so long we can't even remember when we started. Into the highest canvases, if you like, sculptures of the land. For if we are to move them, transform them in the slightest real way, we need to regress into them as sacrificed bodies into which a spark fell and still falls. . . We need to see from within the roles that are played by others in our name, and in the name of the nameless forgotten dead, the nameless forgotten living. We need to regress into our most formidable and implacable rituals for they dress us up like mummified children at a fair. . . (p. 65)

It is only through a union of opposites—male/female, god/goddess, Nameless/Beatrice—that a true fulfillment begins to take shape. Once he (or Beatrice/Joanna), is able to recognize his vulnerability and polarity, as well as a need for the Other (whatever that Other may be), the Fool is open to all the potentials of growth and to the reconnecting of the diverse elements of his soul (p. 60). As Ivan Van Sertima has argued, the Fool, man's consciousness, must, through Beatrice:

pursue and recover that lost element of Conscience, whose shadowy role she plays, being the light/dark principle, virgin/whore muse of heaven and hell. Joined in substance they may provide the nucleus or seed of a new heterogeneous identity. Theirs is the union vital to the generation of a new universe or dimension of feeling, vital to the birth of the new 'child of humanity.'

Until man can achieve this unity he is "destined to fall into apparently self-created seas and lands and skies as other cloaks of sacrificed existences" (p. 70).

Within these self-created lands and seas and skies man will continue to "cannibalize" others, to feed off them whether spiritually or economically, and to wear the masks imposed by culture and tradition. Goodrich begins to recognize this "cannibal" tendency and begins, therefore, to be able to free himself from it.

Perhaps every man knows he is being dreamt into existence by others, conceived by others; a sense in which he likewise dreams others into existence as husband/father to places and times, as Fool to every ghost-child he entertains or hunts with pitiful, pitiless ambition. A sense in which every revolution of the hunt, every religion of the sexes, is related to a potentiality for childbearing, ghost-bearing, capsules of ambition—the unborn
child/ghost of hope for some, the never-to-be born child/ghost of aborted future for others. Related therefore to a ceremony of expectations and of silent mourning concealed perhaps from oneself but active in every career night and day as fate. (p. 44)

The Fool comes to see through Beatrice's fellow nuns, Sisters Rose and Maria, and to recognize in Joanna's "window-pane laugh," that to be born is to be unmade, to be broken in "the dream-play of history in compensation for unfulfilled models of sovereign subsistence" (p. 77). By being "born" through others, by recognizing his connections to and need of them he can appreciate that:

to be born was to descend into a depth of frustrated appetite and need arching back across centuries—a rage for lost anchorages, lost securities that made him a vulnerable body of time with a reflected/glimpsed capacity to engross others within roles that were curiously unconscious of self-brutalised, self-cannibalised antecedents and peerages of the depths and the heights. (p. 78)

Because he suffers from "the falling sickness" the Fool searches for a cure, seeks to understand the "fall of man," and at the end of his life after climbing to the heights of the pyramid of the sun, the heights of ancient traditions, he "falls" literally and metaphorically from the pyramid (p. 79), from traditions, through the institutions of man and into new understanding. Having experienced both the depths and the heights of his own journey and those of others he has learned true compassion. Harris further emphasizes the theme by having Nameless stay at the Gravity Hotel and suffer from an "excess of gravity." This can be interpreted as both a problem of an excess of seriousness as well as a reference to his falling sickness and the fall of man. Prior to his death, and just before he visits the home of Sisters María and Rose, he feels himself becoming a "log," a flying log, which falls from a cloud, from a "cloud-plane" to the ground where he takes a "cloud-taxi" and
visits "Rockefeller Cloud Center" in New York, all images of "clouded" or imperfect vision.

Increasingly alone, he senses both the horror and the beauty of his situation and is riddled with holes by the sky-god, holes which would allow light to pass through to him and enable him to see better. He recognizes that he must either move through the doors of experience slowly, digesting the elements as he goes, or face the difficulty of being unable to properly contend with the world lit by "dwarfed light" and "haunted by a mission of thwarted beauty at the base of the world" (p. 72).

Utterly alone, but not lonely, the Fool makes his final visit to Mrs. Black Marsden and through her to Sisters Maria and Rose whose parts she has come to play. Though Nameless has come to an understanding of his relationship to others, not all people have reached the same degree of comprehension. Mrs. Black Marsden "confesses" many things to him but is unable to accept him fully. Though he seems to her to be Christ, "if anyone could be Christ in the late twentieth century," she recoils from his request to stay with her for a night and a day and turns him away. "He looked at her then. And his eyes were alone. Not lonely. Unfathomable alone. Wholly compassionate, wholly seeing," (p. 83). She wonders whether she has just rejected the Fool/Christ and what effect that will have on history to come.

She felt a kind of rage at herself and she slammed the door fast in his face. The sound echoed through the house like the fall of a heavy mask to the floor, an uncommon mask generations would invest with rage and begin to seek, as threshold to inner faces, inner encounters. (p. 83)

Though the Fool dies on Easter weekend, he has completed the circle of rejection Harris indicated by the lines from the Puerto Rican song,
for just as Mary and Joseph were turned away with the Christ child from
the inn, the Fool/Christ is turned away from the door of man today.
However, Harris has built in a hope for the future in the knowledge
 gained by Clive Goodrich as he "re-tailors" Nameless's journal, and in
 the form of the child which was left on the nun's doorstep. This child
 reappears as the child Julia and Francis have through Jen and Da Silva
 in the next novel, Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness. Harris
 also suggests the redemption of man through a reconciliation of
 opposites and through a process of education at the hands of those who,
 like Idiot Nameless, can serve as our guides into a better world free of
 static forms and traditions. As readers we too become involved in the
 palimpsest. We "edit" Harris's novels in order to move toward the kind
 of understanding Goodrich also seeks as he edits the Nameless collection.

Notes

1 Wilson Harris, "Reflection and Vision," in Commonwealth
Literature and the Modern World, ed. Hena Maes-Jelinek (Liege, Belgium:

2 Thomas Carlyle, "Characteristics," in Critical and Miscellaneous

3 George H. Ford, introduction "Sartor Resartus" by Thomas Carlyle
in Norton Anthology of English Literature, ed. M.H. Abrams and others.


5 Ivan Van Sertima, "Into the Black Hole," unpublished manuscript,
p. 16.

6 Ivan Van Sertima, "Into the Black Hole," p. 16.

7 Ivan Van Sertima, "Into the Black Hole," p. 21.
CHAPTER 6

DA SILVA DA SILVA'S CULTIVATED WILDERNESS (1977)

The creation of an awareness, a "presence," within the major character is the dominant theme of most of Harris's books and Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness is no exception. In each of the novels of the Guiana Quartet, the protagonist, representing collective as well as individual entities, suffers through processes of disintegration. After the Quartet, however, Harris's novels open with characters who, having already suffered disintegration, tend to gain knowledge and to re-integrate their psyches through an interplay of imagination, memory, and projection into the future. Instead of undergoing disintegration in the course of the novel they re-experience their lives in terms of their own personal existence and also in terms of their membership in a particular cultural group and in the human community as a whole.

Da Silva in Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness re-experiences his life's journey in his imagination, and through re-experiencing it comes to understand for the first time the immense symbolic significance of the events. Literally, the artist Da Silva paints scenes from his experience and imagination; figuratively, he "paints" his way about his flat, out the door and down the streets of London.

Harris thus combines, in his own unique fashion, two twentieth-century fictional conventions: the novel of retrospective reflection and
the Künstlerroman, the portrait of the artist as a young man. Himself
the author of an integrative fictional vision, Harris describes an
artist in the process of creating a whole from scattered memories and
imaginative syntheses. Da Silva's canvas is analogous to Harris's
novel, and if we seem to have in the latter a finished product we are
reminded by the former of the difficult process of imaginative creation.
Just as Donne, in Palace of the Peacock, suddenly realizes that he has
relived an earlier expedition, so Da Silva becomes aware of a greater
meaning of events in his own life.

There was a subtle intrusion of epic, a subtle mythical code of
implicit heroism or pathos or terror, diffusions of influence or
style East to West, West to East, North to South, South to North,
that took root in his brush as he painted techniques and frames,
glittering saddles of Chinese dragons from Hong Kong, gunpowder,
neolithic wheat, pre-Columbian maize, aeroplane saddles, into
distillations of ancient barbarism and modern power politics
masquerading as purist masks of technology across the imprisoned
centuries from which the magi-prodigals set out again and again,
the star-gazing prodigals within each tent of ancient and modern
commonwealth. (p. 73)

And, when he learns that his wife Jen is pregnant, a pregnancy that has
haunted him throughout the novel but of which he has been consciously
unaware:

He was immediately filled with joy. And then fear. Fear of
responsibilities he could not gauge; fear almost at the depth of
his love for Jen; fear at the orphaned status of man in the animal
kingdom and the ceaseless necessity to contemplate losses of
primordial subjectivity and unerring compass built into a uniform
glove through which the faculty of the human imagination was born
for middle-ground regained heaven and earth or stumbling light and
darkness; fear at a daemon of species as the first prodigal in
nature. (p. 77)

Unlike Clive Goodrich who had to learn to move step by step with
the help of the shaman figures, first Black Marsden and then Idiot
Nameless, Da Silva recognizes the "garments of history" in which he has
been dressed, garments which govern the actions and interaction of
people, the ritual habits of the cultures and times into which he descends. He has struggled against the forms which have tried to contain him, appearing to both Jen and Manya as a "mad man." He sees correspondences between persons living and dead, between events of today and their historical counterparts, and begins to judge these elements and seek for a more favorable comprehension of his own place in time and role in events. Da Silva's growing awareness of these parallel or converging elements provides an example of Harris's use of synchronicity.

Da Silva feels mental ties to history as Da Silva Magellan, social ties to others as a "father" to Paul as well as protector to Paul's mother Manya. He senses family ties to his own father who was also a Magellan and to his adopted father, Sir Giles, whose young wife Da Silva never knew; he also feels responsibility to Jen, his own wife, and their unborn child. Because of his Arawak-Portuguese blood he is aware of the multiplicity of roles he must play as both Commonwealth man and New World man.

Harris sees the Commonwealth Da Silva as an attempt on his part to explore a "vacancy" in nature within which agents appear who are translated one by the other and who "reappear through each other, inhabit each other, reflect a burden of necessity, push each other to plunge into the unknown into the untranslatable, transmutable legacies of history." Da Silva explores these multiple facets of the Commonwealth through his own genetic legacies as well as those of others. Though his journey is sedentary compared to those of Donne in Palace of the Peacock and Victor in Ascent to Omai, his journey is complicated, involving a deep introspective movement through deeds and confrontations to a comprehension of his life and position.
He seeks to see into and through Manya, Cuffey, and Jen as well as himself for he seems to believe, like the fool in _Companions of the Day and Night_: that "if we are to move them [institutions], transform them in the slightest real way, we need to regress into them... we need to see from within the roles that are played by others in our name, and in the name of the nameless forgotten dead, and the nameless forgotten living" (p. 65). In one of his moments of insight Da Silva recognizes that regression through socially accumulated layers of institutions and psyche will enable him to heal his divided self. Playing upon the parable of the prodigal son, he recounts how:

The word prodigal came home to me with a force I could not then recognize. And yet, little though I knew it, it had settled into a pool of paint over my eyes; I was blinded by tears; and at the heart of my age I began to await the genie's return back through a wilderness of flight from duty that becomes meaningless, performance that becomes hollow, objective journey back, objective homecoming of spirit. (p. 30)

This "paint" clouds Da Silva's vision until the end of the novel when all the various images of fertility and pending birth suddenly come together and he sees for the first time on a conscious level the signs and symbols, the hints toward synchronicity, that had suggested to his subconscious that a new force was coming into life, that of a child both literally and metaphorically.

For Harris the child is an a-social being: the simplest form of the naked soul able to unclothe itself, to shave off social accumulations and to look with naked eyes/naked spirit, and to escape the past and all the things coded into the human psyche. This "nakedness" has become the equivalent of consciousness, Fool, and God for Harris.

While Clive Goodrich was able to achieve this "nakedness" only through the somewhat forceful intercession of first Black Marsden and
then Idiot Nameless, Da Silva has reached the point of understanding more directly. Perhaps he contains within his psyche the ghosts of the other Da Silvas who "lived" in earlier Harris novels. Now, like the bird evolved from the dinosaur, or the bone flute of Carib mythology, Da Silva contains remnants, cultural memories, or threads of historic garments which influence his perceptions. Having suffered through the process of psychic disintegration in earlier "lives," he is learning to see through and beyond surface realities by means of the scarecrow eye. Da Silva can, by novel's end, accept the responsibility not only for his own life but for that of the child he and Jen have created. Like Cristo, in The Whole Armour, Da Silva and his child present an ever more positive hope for man's future.

The positive hope Da Silva embodies in his educated consciousness and expresses on canvas rests on the notion of the availability to all men of cultural residues and a "skeleton" consciousness. Such residues and such a consciousness must be striven for, however. Harris dramatizes the embodiment of a vestigial ("bone of the dinosaur") consciousness when he has certain characters speak in a manner apparently beyond their surface capabilities as when Legba Cuffey exhibits an "encyclopedic" memory (p. 12). Cuffy's name, one should note, is historical and when he speaks his utterances represent an accumulation of history, a group consciousness. The historic Cuffey was a revolutionary figure in the Caribbean, Legba was a god in Haiti and the West Indies, and both appear in Da Silva's Brazilian mural as manifestations of his own solidarity with his West Indian past and as signs of his synthesizing powers as an artist.
Cuffey is but one example of Harris's overlapping characters. Not only names are layered, the characters themselves often coincide, appearing sometimes to be so interwoven as to appear inseparable to the reader. Though this technique appeared as early as *Palace of the Peacock* with the "twins" of the Narrator and his brother, the intermingling of psyches becomes increasingly complex in the course of the novels. Here we have characters who appear in Da Silva's life and may appear in his paintings. They may speak to him from his paintings as well as to him in public. In *Companions* Harris used the technique to incorporate all the various facets of the female into one form: Beatrice/Joanna/Rose/Maria/Mrs. Black Marsden all seemed to flow into and through each other, thus multiplying the significance of their deeds as they embodied in their composite form the image of "the mothers of Guyana."²

In Da Silva da Silva's *Cultivated Wilderness* it is the male characters who overlap and interinanimate one another, rather than the women, perhaps to signify that they are the "fathers" of Guyana. Da Silva the artist had advertised for a black model to use for his Brazilian mural. He needed a man who could serve as the model for the historic figure of Cuffey and the god Legba. Harris includes an aspect of synchronicity when the model who answers Da Silva's advertisement not only is named Legba Cuffey but also limps. Da Silva confronts Cuffey as Legba, Legba in turn confronts Cuffey, and Da Silva confronts the composite Legba Cuffey, each addressing the "lame image" of the other (pp. 9-11). Da Silva Magellan staggers like a child learning to walk and Cuffey has a misshapen foot (p. 11). Da Silva (like a more famous "lamefoot," Oedipus) is indeed trying to learn to walk in a social and
psychological sense and to solve a sphinx's riddle of his own. The suggestion of autochthony here reinforces Da Silva's mythical role as a representative modern hero. Unlike other writers' protagonists who leap, as it were, from learning to walk to running a marathon, the protagonist of a Harris novel is not given a simple solution to his problems or a happy-ever-after ending. Rather, the implication is left with the reader that the condition of Da Silva's world is improving but that he must continue to struggle to maintain and to grow.

To be sure, Da Silva is the most psychologically integrated and positive of Harris's protagonists so far. Through his understanding of his relations to other individuals and other cultures, Da Silva transforms these personal and historic relations into aesthetic relations of form and color on his canvases, within the frame of which he seeks to establish a dialogue between strength and weakness, between "the elements of change" (p. 10). Once again Da Silva is Harris's surrogate, the symbolic and assimilating artist:

Da Silva assimilates each brush stroke into his canvases as if to heighten and deepen the enigma of change through a crevice or crack in the muse of space as if his turtle's eye were this woman's child's eye woven into the painted dress she wears as into topographies of tradition. (p. 72)

Increasingly in his novels, Harris has used the image of the artist or painter as a creative force in society. Victor sketches while writing a novel in Ascent to Omri, Frank Wellington doodles in the margins of the pay book in Genesis of the Clowns, and Goodrich seeks to edit and give form to the Nameless collection of papers, sculptures, and painting in Black Marsden. As always, however, what is important is the process of painting, not the finished product. What Harris seeks is the growth of the individual through his perceptions and his attempts to
portray those perceptions in aesthetic form and not the "completion" of either self or art object.

Indeed, the completed canvas becomes a metaphor for the static condition Harris wishes to avoid. This is especially obvious with Da Silva, for the canvas as it is being painted has the most intense meaning for him. He only gradually becomes aware of the elements that appear in his works as they haunt him and change in shape and size depending upon his own state of mind and awareness. Not until his conscious mind becomes aware of their "shape" and "texture" is he able to intelligently interpret his paintings. Da Silva recognizes the meanings in his artistic forms when he learns that Jen is pregnant; this knowledge explains the repeated growth of images, the foetal shapes and "seeds of paint."

Da Silva and the reader receive hints of growth in a comparison of two time periods and events. Seven years separate the two incidents with Kate who visits him about Manya's neglect of her son Paul. At the time of the first visit the images are dead, still: an "unlighted television set", an "unlighted coat", "ruined bath house in a cul-de-sac", "corpses of fashion", "winter sun", "winter box" and "unlit stone" (pp. 16-19). These images are exchanged for more potent ones seven years later: "seed of a sketch", "seed of paint", and a footnote that " burgeons and ascends into a life-size mural."

'What do you yourself see?' 'I see the anguish of being healed. I see a loss of expectation in the resurrected living who thought they were about to die. I see myself. I see one of the obscure impulses to prove survival in the nature of revolution, in the healed dead as they step back to the dead dead in order to reach forwards to the living living. A question of proof.' (p. 37)
By the time Jen tells Da Silva she is pregnant these images have coalesced in his mind, the subtle hints have blossomed into realization and he now is prepared for and can accept her news.

Da Silva reacts to his surroundings as a painter with an historical perspective. He "paints" his way down London streets and through areas of decay where the "paint seeped out of the sky, in orchestrated delicacy touched by unfathomable peace, . . . as if to alert him to the reality of the radiant city within every city, the reality of the genie's gift, the genie's potential reconstruction" (p. 63). One is reminded again of Blake, both of the Blake who "wander(ed) through each chartered street,/Near where the chartered Thames does flow" ("London," 1794) and of the Blake who could see (in Harris's terms) "the reality of the radiant city within every city," the Blake who hoped (in his own terms) to build Jerusalem among the "dark Satanic Mills" ("And Did Those Feet," 1810). Blake's visionary eye, like Harris's eye of the scarecrow, allows for a vision beyond the corporeal.

Da Silva not only paints people as composites of themselves and historical and imaginative figures, he creates an image of society as multi-faceted as his characters. The Commonwealth becomes metaphorically as well as graphically a tent of three levels with a central pole. The levels of the tent are equated to the three major areas of the world where the Commonwealth derived its strength and its existence: the lower deck (Canada, Australia, India, Bangladesh and New Zealand), the middle deck and area of the middle passage (Africa), and the upper deck (the Caribbean). This architecture is made of people: representative individuals like Legba Cuffey, groups of people like Queen Jenine Gold as queen and representative of all her subjects, and Da Silva both an
individual and representative man. Da Silva's double name plays on the image of being a man "of the forest" or natural man as well as the man who cultivates or "civilizes" part of the forest or wilderness. Da Silva seeks through his imagination to cultivate or put in order the wilderness of his mind, of Holland Park, London, and of the rest of the world. He has the double, or scarecrow, vision of new and old world amplified by his artistic vision.

Light was real, as concrete, as wood or brick or marble or glass, perhaps more real, perhaps more concrete as living body within an aged costume. Here was the inimitable substance of a new architecture. (p. 63)

Harris incorporates the symbols of technological modern man (the airplane) with the artist and creator in the first paragraph of the book describing Da Silva's recurring dream.

The instant the aircraft crashed into the lake everything seemed still yet threaded into explosion and seizure by the elements. Da Silva saw himself a stranger to himself in the mirror of the lake as a giant chair drew him up and a brush stroke of water rose into the air to paint the sky. Perhaps he had been painted there himself by another hand a breath's passage away from the earth. Perhaps this was a new involuntary beginning, another cultivated wilderness. (p. 3)

Da Silva (man) crashes into the lake to emerge with a renewed vision. Throughout the book, water's role is important, for example in the form of pools which provide a source of vision or a catalyst for thought and reflection. There is a pool-like tennis court at the back of Da Silva's flat, another near the "Wilderness" theatre, a pool-like sky which Da Silva sees reflected in the windows of people's homes, and the pool used as an image for contrasting areas of London. Just as names and characters appear and connect in a Harris novel, so too does the imagery of water tie together the different cultures and times. Like the flow of the water, the "flow" of Da Silva's artistic vision
yields increasing understanding, a growth of "circulation of the light,"
images he paints on canvas:

Da Silva painted the lake, he painted the buried rivers that flowed
beneath the London streets, he painted a canal in ancient
Tenochtitlan on which Montezuma sailed and it was as if they all
moved together and were one principle of advancing, complex, shadow
or light within the mystery of a tidal body that vanished to
reappear again where one least expected it. (p. 15)

For Da Silva the rain and water cleanse his environment; sky and
earth "copulate," revealing layers of potentialities which mingle with
everyday illusions of bodies, streets, and elements of vision to yield
an "unstressed awareness" and "implicit strength" (p. 13). Again, the
stress is on images of pregnancy and increasing awareness and strength
through awareness. The fertile fields of the artist's imagination have
provided him with a growing sense of hope.

The possibility of salvation or renewal through a comprehension of
the forces of one's environment, implied by the repeated water imagery,
is also quite literally a part of Da Silva's experiences. As a child he
was adopted by Sir Giles Marsden-Prince after a flood and cyclone
destroyed the orphanage where he lived. Even as a child playing under a
table he pretended the table was a boat and Sir Giles's brown shoes were
smaller boats that sailed into his waters when Sir Giles entered the
library where he played.

Harris uses a type of resurrection theme in addition to the
salvation theme implied by the constant presence of water. There is
frequent reference to someone who lives through another person, is born
at the time of another's death, or is suddenly cured when death seemed
imminent. Both Da Silva and Manya were rescued from an orphanage
destroyed in a flood then taken to better lives in a new country. Da
Silva was born on the day his adoptive mother died, and his adoptive
father died trying to rescue a young child from a busy street. Paul's father, suffering from leukemia and with only a short time to live, sought to live on in the creation of a son only to be "miraculously" cured. There is a positive trend, too, when one person's death is no longer apparently the prerequisite for another's life. Da Silva, following Sir Giles's example, tries to rescue a young child and survives. He also becomes a sort of adopted father to Paul and is even able to gain benefit and a revitalized consciousness by sharing in the abortion and birth experiences with Manya and Kate. Later, in the most positive way of all, he shares with his own wife Jen the pregnancy which provides the conclusion of the book, the culmination of threads of thought in Da Silva's mind and paintings, and the hope for man's future. Harris's positive vision, however, is never complacent; it takes a full look at the worst and understanding grows out, sometimes, of that look. Da Silva is aware of the repetitions of lives and deaths through time:

Poor healed Magellan. . . never ceases to prove himself. Dies on every foreign beach. Poor shot Cuffey. . . He never ceases to live. Lives in every foreign bar. (p. 49)

Through understanding histories, personal and social, Da Silva sifts out the pain in his world to learn what it is that makes a "prodigal return" possible. By vicariously dying with Cuffey and suffering pain with Manya when her relationship with Paul is threatened, Da Silva comes to grips with his own pain and renews his painter's personal vision. Da Silva's "unlit canvases" suddenly release a "child-genie of objective love," and his hands retrace lines in his paintings, releasing "child-light at the top of his brush" (p. 25).

The image of resurrection is repeated in the peacock which appears when Cuffey dies. Da Silva sees it first when "like a newborn painter"
he crawls through the legs of the camera as Cuffey lies on the ground. The image of being born, emerging through the legs, is repeated as the peacock is described as having to work its way into the action surrounding Cuffey by coming "through the legs of the fence" (p. 58).

Suddenly aflame, suddenly drawn or redrawn by a complex hand to mingle with the feathered eyes in the peacock's coat until a new instinctive flag or crutch of humanity half-emerged, half-retreated into space. (p. 58)

Images of birth are combined with images of unravelling a flag ("garments of history") or of a cradle, or of a nakedness of vision—"regenerated eyes that focused with newfound compassion" (p. 58).

The peacock which appeared in _Palace of the Peacock_ as the primary image reappears here as a symbol for the same totality and fulfillment experienced by Donne and his crew. It is well paired here with the repeated images of water and other motifs found in _Palace_. As Fleming Brahms has observed, the peacock functions as an image of "unity and diversity, constant change and eternal continuity; a profound and difficult vision of essential unity within the most bitter forms of latent and active historical diversity."³

The continuity of life is stressed in the novel as, appropriately, Da Silva believes that physical death is not final death. Even though both Sir Giles and Jen's father are physically dead he sees them as alive since they live in his memory and in Jen's. Even as death occurs life goes on: there is the tinkle of a piano while dancers limber up for an afternoon ballet in Holland Park as Cuffey lies dying. He is the ghost of history and tradition which haunt Da Silva and force him to renew his vision. "No. He's more than an actor. He's real. His ghost technicality is the mother of invention. _If only you could see it from within yourself_" (p. 60).
The resurrection of his paintings, resurrection of individuals, and resurrection of his hopes are tied together in the women who appear in Da Silva's life. Each of the three women is, or has been, pregnant. Each appears self-sufficient but has scars of experience and basic needs that Da Silva becomes aware of as he continues to grow and his vision is clarified, brought into focus. It is not they who change but Da Silva's vision of them that is modified.

Predictably, the women who appear in Da Silva's world are both individuals and facets of the universal woman. Sir Giles' wife, Kate, Manya and Jen all embody a particular type of personality and yet each is incomplete and needs the others to form the total women or muse. Hena Maes-Jelinek suggests: "The muse is also the archetypal mother, and she is usually of mixed white and Amerindian origin. She is obviously meant as a link between modern man and primitive imagination." Modern man, Harris feels, is always trying to take advantage of her even though she is trying to free us from the cells of time in which we are locked.

Manya, is a curious example of a madonna figure. Coming from Brazil as an orphan she was adopted by officials at the British Embassy at the time of the same cyclone and flood which left Da Silva homeless. Later, in London, when Da Silva meets her, her house is the only one still habitable in the disintegrating row of houses on the cul-de-sac where she lives. "The other houses wore cracked or crooked glasses, eyeless windows, that seemed to wait upon Manya's to echo ultimately a sea of desolation which was unlike the rich masts and tides Da Silva had painted within the new houses in Addison Road" (p. 16). As she is a model with a reputation for chaos, it is not surprising that her flat
should be described as littered with morsels of half-eaten food and strewn with "corpses of fashion." She lives in an abused "environment of changelessness and unconsumed morsels of spirit that left a trail of disorder in their wake" (p. 18). She horrifies Da Silva and yet he is drawn to her, loathing her for her "darkness of sense." If she is a madonna figure, Da Silva is unable to recognize this, unable to help her.

Sir Giles offers an explanation for Manya's condition in the world: "Where innocence is hammered or deceived or rejected it frames itself increasingly with terrible poison" (p. 41). Da Silva imagines Manya as a Medea figure. Both savaged and savage, she has suffered the possible loss of her son and sought by whatever means at her disposal to retain him. Da Silva understands something of this savagery since as a painter he also had to strike blows, to save and despoil. When he thought that the portrait of Sir Giles' young wife might be sold at auction and be unappreciated by its new owner, he struck at the painting with a hammer to damage it so no one else would want it, planning to repair the damage later himself. Just as this attempt failed so, too, did his attempts with Manya fail, when he tried to understand her relationship with Paul's father, Magellan. Both men had been shocked and repulsed by Manya's chaos and sought to change it, even uttering the same words to stop her and complete their understanding of her. She is the figure of a conquered tribe and her departure brings first guilt and then relief to Da Silva. Only her black coat remains behind as a symbol of her existence and her role in his growing awareness as an artist and visionary. Manya, like Cuffey, also represents the image of "conquered man" with whom Da Silva must come to terms in order to reconcile with
that element in himself. Only by removing the outer, social, layers of personality can he cut through social convention, remove the garments of history and locate the universal man within.

Da Silva's insufficient response to Manya is indicative of his own inability to recognize and integrate the elements of his heritage and of his psyche. In relation to Kate his response is more effective. Unlike the primitive Manya, Kate represents sophisticated, cosmopolitan womanhood. A businesswoman, she has stifled her emotional side and allowed her intellectual side to rule. She has placed protective barriers in front of her natural self and, as it were, prepares a face to meet the faces that she meets. For this reason, in conversation with her, Da Silva figuratively uses his artist's knife to cut through the layers of paint, accumulated layers of personal history. In so doing, he reveals the scars beneath, in particular the scar of the abortion Kate had had some years before. Guilt-ridden on account of the abortion, she has revealed it on a television program. Now, in an attempt to relieve her guilt, she seeks to take the child Paul away from Manya who, she believes, is neglecting him. Manya fights visciously, against Kate, seeking to retain and protect her son. Despite the solicitude of both women, Paul remains the neglected child of humanity. He is the first symbol of hope and rebirth for man, but begins as a negative one. Described as "having unkempt hair, thin shoulders, beautiful dark eyes," he stands with "his back to a ruined slab of meat, a public bath, a morsel of survival in his own blind right baptized by the sun" (p. 19).

The sense of decay which pervaded Manya's flat is personified in Paul. The otherwise hopeful imagery of water in the novel appears in relation to Paul in the form of a decaying and deteriorating public
bath. He is also tied to a theme of historical exploration as he wears a pullover with "MAGELLAN" stitched on it. The name ties together both the New World explorer and Da Silva Magellan, an explorer in an even newer sense, an explorer of the mind. The shirt was purchased from a club called the Auction Block, where Cuffey worked, where Manya met Paul's father, and where "victims" may still be found. Harris uses such names to tie together New and Old World themes: modern auction block for society's victims like Manya and Cuffey or New World victims sold into actual slavery; conquered individuals lost in a technological world, or conquered tribes overcome by stronger powers, all are victims and suffer eclipsed potentials.

When Da Silva first sees him, Paul is standing still but staggers forward "in the canvas" crying "Bad cat. Wicked cat," as Da Silva releases a bird caught by a cat near Manya's house. Manya, in contrast, makes no distinction between the sparrow and the cat, between victim and victor, sympathizing with the sparrow but catching the cat to her breast as "if it were a lover, as if Da Silva were making love to her in paint through creatures that both blocked and reopened a territory of intercourse between species and species" (p. 16). Even as a young boy, then, Paul offers the strongest form of judgement in the novel. Though Paul is first presented in fairly negative images, Da Silva sees him as a hope for the future and as a "challenging conception" in the "Pool of the Madonna," as the first section of the book is named. Yet, Manya's failure to distinguish between victor and victim is not in itself negative. It is part of her natural spontaneity and, as Ivan Van Sertima has argued, serves to open channels of communication. Unlike
the sophisticated Kate, Manya does not suffer from "bloodclots of vision."^5

Just as Da Silva fails to be able to fully perceive Manya's nature and needs, so too, despite his ability to see beneath Kate's layered defences, he is unable to completely perceive Kate's nature. As artist, he must come to terms with both Manya and Kate, two facets of the muse figure in the novel, before he is able to move forward with his own "child" of consciousness and awareness, as represented by the foetus Jen is carrying at the end of the novel.

Harris measures Da Silva's progress in terms of the imagery of clothes, reminding us again of Carlyle's "clothes philosophy." Throughout the novel clothes have carried negative connotations. Though Harris seldom lists particulars of dress, Da Silva reacts strongly each time clothes are described. Whether it is Manya's unkempt flat with clothes strewn about, Jen's dark and heavy winter coat and thick gloves, or the immaculate coat and skirt Jen wears the morning after their honeymoon, which make Da Silva almost hate her, garments represent a negative element in Da Silva's life and paintings. Early in the novel, Da Silva's inadequate response to Manya's plea for help in the matter of keeping her child is symbolized in a clothing metaphor. As he passively watches, Manya tosses her black coat behind her. The coat is a sign of her status as an artist's model, a symbol, perhaps, of her "creativity," and her discarding of it may be read as her relinquishing of both her social and her maternal roles. Da Silva sees the "soiled coat of the madonna," in the "dry cleaner of the sky" (p. 39), which may suggest that the discarding of the coat is not total but temporary, and that it will be returned in a renovated state. In fact, at the very end of the
novel, a coat does reappear when Da Silva meets his wife, Jen, at the underground station. She is wearing a heavy coat, and she tells him she is pregnant. Now, for the first time in the novel, clothes, though heavy and bulky, are no longer viewed as a barrier between people, or an impediment in the way of communication.

And then he caught her to him with the joy by which he had been first consumed; he felt her gloves against the back of his head; he felt the handle of the shopping bag against his fingers as his arms encircled her fleecy coat; he felt his masked feet touch her masked feet.

He was almost tempted to laugh or cry at the paraphernalia of winter costume, thick gloves, furred coat, high suede boots, until his lips touched hers with a naked instantaneous delight.

He encircled the globe then, a global light whose circulation lay through and beyond fear into unfathomable security. (p. 77)

Da Silva's dislike of clothing (the "garments of history") is here overcome, but we are not allowed to forget that Da Silva's perceptions are not yet perfect. Clothing's opposite, nakedness, is also a metaphor in the novel, however, which works to point to Da Silva's inadequacies, but also to measure his growth of perception and power of communication. During the early discussion with Kate about the possibility of her removing Paul from his mother's custody, he "shrank a little at first from Kate's naked practicality which was unlike Manya's essential nakedness" (p. 21). He is fascinated by Kate and seeks to probe into her layers of protective covering in order to understand her, to get to the source of a "curious scar" he senses she bears. Using a knife on the canvas of her psyche, "a surgeon's scalpel," he probes and discovers that underneath the "transparent dress of madonna of Tao Playschool, there is a curious new rib that had been refined into place with a force that revived or deepened perspectives of guilt and freedom in the present and the future" (p. 21). He sees Kate as a "mutation of primordial voyages into the self and across seas beyond tyranny of the
self through which to begin to define (redefine) again and again limits to paradise" (p. 21).

As Da Silva becomes increasingly aware of the feelings of Manya, Kate, and Jen, he is able increasingly to think in terms of another and to realize that though he was unaware of it he had all along been dependent on others both individually and socially. Ironically, Da Silva remarks in the beginning of the novel on the way in which he took so many things for granted. It is not until the conclusion of the novel that the full impact of those assumptions strikes him. He laughs at the mutation of legend, then stops laughing as he realizes that the mutation was:

affecting a closed order of things that he had long taken for granted as uniform solid until he began to glimpse a renewal of premises of subtle spirit, subtle truth, arising paradoxically, ironically, from diminished expectations of material glory. That was the mutation, both of the arousal of suppressed cultures, suppressed tones of feeling within the implacable historical conventions as though to unravel them in some degree and to announce a new sensuous inner body, a new responsible freedom--by the same token--within the sacrifices of paint. (pp. 9-10)

He was taking far too much for granted: his relationship to Jen, his understanding of Jen, Kate and Manya, and his historical role as individual and as artist. Just as he becomes the child that Sir Giles and his wife could not have and shared a parental interest with Kate and Manya in Paul, so his future and the future of society are tied up in the pregnancy which he and Jen have created; both literally and figuratively it is an artistic awakening. Da Silva and Jen are both of mixed New World and Old World ancestry; they produce a child who will combine these elements, provide a link between past and future, harness potentialities rather than eclipse potentialities, and give meaning to the paradox of a "cultivated wilderness." The title of the novel then
takes on triple significance. The double Da Silva name implies a man
doubly emerging from the forest—first, as a man becoming civilized and
second, as a man gaining a vision, both artistic and social, and
reestablishing contact with his inner self. These two achievements are
amplified by a third repetition of the idea of Da Silva cultivating his
wilderness by making both the land and his imagination useful.

'Of course,' he said, it's all there. In one of my canvases. I
see it now. Womb of a painting. Foetus. I distinctly recall the
beginnings of a subtle enlargement . . . Let's go home, Jen.'
(p. 77)

Notes

1 Wilson Harris, "The Eye of the Scarecrow."

2 Wilson Harris, "The Eye of the Scarecrow."

3 Fleming Brahms. "A Reading of Wilson Harris' Palace of the

4 Hena Maes-Jelinek. "The Writer as Alchemist, the Unifying Role
of Imagination in the Novels of Wilson Harris," Language and Literature,
1, No. 1, p. 31.
Many of the themes which appear as early as *Palace of the Peacock* (1960) continue through the body of Harris' work and reappear with ramifications, extensions, or refinements in *Genesis of the Clowns*: the interrelationships of men of different races and geographic areas; the stifling of individual potential when a single world view is allowed to rule; the need for a "Copernican revolution of sentiment" which would allow all men to attain true freedom and reach their full potential; and the "scars" which all men bear as a result of psychic errors and suppression by others. Characters and time are exploded, imploded, telescoped or overlapped, as men realize the nature of their relationships to others, dead or alive, even to those not yet born. In seeking the means for a true communication among these characters Harris also seeks the means by which his readers can achieve a valid dialogue with their fellow men.

The obvious plot of *Genesis* is simple enough: Frank Wellington has lived in London for thirty years, but between 1942 and 1948 he led expeditions into the interior of Guyana to survey the land and chart the rivers. In 1974 he receives a letter from an anonymous source telling him of the suicide of Hope, a member and foreman of those early expeditions. The actual time span of the novel is the few minutes needed to
read a brief letter. In another sense, however, the action covers the period from 1942 to 1974, which includes the years of the expedition, the year of Hope's suicide, and the years during which Wellington unconsciously struggled with issues he begins to resolve only after the letter arrives. As with Harris's other novels, the simple plot outline is deceptive and provides only the bare framework for the probing questions brought to the fore by the reminder of Wellington's past. In an attempt to resolve these questions, Wellington resurrects the "clowns" in his own buried past and, seeing them in new light, is better able to understand the roles they created in a "shadowplay of a genesis of suns," (p. 86) the dark comedy in which he and his crew were involved.

From book to book, as we have seen, Harris's protagonists have increasingly taken the role and character of artists or creators. Both Da Silva of Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness and Frank Wellington of Genesis are artists and writers who attempt, even if unconsciously, to advance by way of their artistic expressions to a greater understanding of their relationships to others. Da Silva tends to see things in a historic perspective, while Wellington views the world in economic terms. In both cases exploited men are reduced to a primordial state, deprived of identity, and represented finally by the Nameless Fool or Clown, the rejected slave or god, who is spiritually free because he is not a part of any fixed order whether historic or economic. In Genesis, as Wellington reads the anonymous letter, he remembers the companions of his earlier expeditions, or, rather, they "appear" to him, one by one, in his mind. In fact, he sees them coming to his paytable, as if he were still the leader of an expedition. His original views of them merge with new and better perceptions so that,
through a process of retrospective correction and revision, Wellington moves to an improved conception of humanity with implications of hope for the future. As Harris explains in an interview:

We have to begin to conceive of something which I would tend to describe as comedy of psyche and by that I mean that when one begins to look at character, one is drawn to a much deeper ground of experience, which would lie in certain kinds of myth perhaps, which would lie in the sensation one has that because images are partial, they have roots which one ceaselessly explores in order to find connections with other partial images that cannot be taken for granted. 1

Wellington becomes increasingly aware of the partial nature of images as he participates in a "comedy of the psyche": as his former crew members come one by one to his "paytable of the ages," they collect not only the wages due to them for their work in the 1940's but also the wages due for what Wellington now sees as underpaid psychic efforts, stretching in some cases right up to the present time. In this process Wellington gradually progresses from his initial role as colonizer, who sees his employees as mere "furniture" (p. 82), to a role as a member of the human community, related by dreams, goals, needs and desires to all the other men of his crew. As his vision clears he moves from being a "head among the clouds," away, that is, from narrow self-interest, toward becoming a head among the "clowns" himself. Though he could never, in Harris's philosophy, attain perfection, his move here is a strong and positive one.

Born of white "creole" parents, Wellington is educated and a scientist; so he seems more able to control his environment with tools of his trade than those, like the Amerindian Reddy, who perceive the world as a plaything of sometimes capricious gods. Wellington's various "tools" (theodolite, dumpy level, and his scientific education as whole) allow him to measure currents in the river, in the men, and even in his
own mind. This knowledge also allows him to see cultural differences in
the men, which account for the variations in their behaviors and values.
He perceives the "different suns around which their cultures revolve" as
the men invest their "capital" in both monetary and existential senses.
Wellington struggles to understand these men and his own reactions to
them:

The light itself counselled itself, addressed itself to me, sold
itself to me as I chipped away at my own condition of 'uncanny
absurd climax' in the encounter between alien cultures.
I felt I was looking deep into a massive and formidable
hesitation of forces in myself and in my age, and that there
glimmered far down, far beneath in the bed of the river figures in
a mysterious landscape, figures that embraced each other save that
the very function of their embrace possessed a value other than
itself which had so turned in on itself it may have involuntarily
safe-guarded itself or, on the other hand, eclipsed itself all
together. (p. 124)

Even though Wellington recognizes these encounters between cultures he
cannot fully realize, even in 1974, that these conflicts are resulting
in the stronger cultures taking advantage of the weaker ones, overcoming
and "eclipsing" them.

Wellington himself has been subject to an eclipsed potential as a
scientist; too caught up in specific measures and graphs, he has been
unable to see beyond surface appearances. During the process of his
enlightenment, he begins to see associations previously hidden, associa-
tions between himself and his men, as well as associations between the
members of his crew. In 1974, while he examines the pay sheets, he
drinks from a goblet, which becomes simultaneously a physical shape out
of which he gains life-sustaining fluids and the symbolic goblet
portrayed on the stamp of the Guyanese letter which told him of Hope's
death:
The stamp on the letter from Guyana carried a winged goblet attached to strings of light within a dark river from which the ghosts of landscapes drink. (p. 81)

On the same day he receives the letter from Guyana he receives another letter from a Scottish solicitor whose address is Hope Street, Dumfermline, Fife, telling him of a small inheritance from a relative. That letter, too, has a stamp, displaying "the horns of ancient Scottish vessels from which the ghosts of kings drink" (p. 81). The goblet, then, becomes a complex symbol, both an actual object possessed by Wellington and an artistic representation (on a stamp); it also represents both Guyanese and European elements. As such, the goblet becomes a catalyst in Wellington's clearing vision; it allows him to see both European and Guyanese elements. Wellington is able to see ghosts of landscapes and kings. The ghosts become real to him as he addresses each in turn, noting among his men the contributions made by Cummings Day, Moseley Adams, Evan Hope, Marti Persaud Frederick, and Reddy. Using "genesis cheques" to begin to repay psychic debts across the paytable of the years, Wellington evaluates each man, including himself, and in some cases adds to the payment of appreciation for work or courage.

At this time he is able to realize that his previous involvement in his work had blinded him to other things of great value. Science had been an escape for him, a sort of "sleep." Not yet fully freed or awakened, he measures himself on the scale of social value and decides, perhaps a bit flatteringly, that "Frank Wellington, government surveyor, would fetch a good price, a god's price on a market stall of instruments for sale," (p. 96). The Carib bone flute appears here in a modified form as the "old bone of a theodolite" which Wellington admires and
thinks must contain some old surveyor's ghost (p. 96). The theodolite is tied, too, to the shaman/trickster figures:

I turned away from the old shell of a theodolite on an antique stall with its miscellaneous assortment of articles. Cupids stood hand in hand with Anancy figures inscribed on a battered clock. The theodolite had intrigued me. It possessed an old-fashioned telescope within which the markings on the diaphragm used to be made with spider's web. (p. 96)

Not only does Anancy the Spider appear here but so, too, does the trickster god since, as I have shown in Chapter 4, Anancy the Spider and the trickster god are interchangeable concepts. If Wellington were to use this theodolite he would be looking through the "womb" shape of the theodolite and through spider's web threads to measure his world. The measurement would thus allow him to combine elements of the trickster and shaman and scarecrow figures to see through or beyond surface appearances. Wellington begins to do this as he first questions and then seeks answers at the paytable of the ages: "What about the imaginative cultivation of certain truths as far as we can discern them in the river of time that changes its bed, that meanders...?" (p. 99).

Wellington now recognizes a need to see with an eye other than the surface eye, to use his inner or magically scarred eye to see truths which are initially hidden from view but essential to his own well-being and the unity of mankind.

Wellington, whose feet are "riveted" in both Guyana and Europe, evolves from mere colonizer to "father statistic" for Reddy and Hope. Initially seeing the men only as so much "furniture" (p. 82), useful but interchangeable and impersonal objects, he becomes increasingly aware of them as individuals with distinct qualities and needs, and by 1974 is able to pay them their due. The men look up to him as the expedition leader whose power is respected as employer, enforcer of policy, and
source of their pay. He has power enough to take what he wants with impunity. He even takes advantage of possibilities to sleep with Lucille (both Chung's wife and Hope's god-sister) and Reddy's (unnamed) sister, unconsciously knowing his superior power will protect him. By taking advantage of these "weaker" people, he thus continues the practices of colonizers which began with the middle passage and continued even into this century. As a "father statistic" he also becomes involved in incest, a practice which arose as a result of the early imbalance of the sexes in Guyana. What had begun with slavery and indentured servants, however, continued as a "tyranny of affections... built into the folk," a practice that will take a long time to change?"²

In his earlier arrogance he was also aware that local habits of thought would permit him to take Lucille or Ada since they, like all women, "belong to everybody" (p. 97). In the 1960's Wellington was so powerful that, even without realizing it, he caused those less powerful than he to redirect their anger away from him and to take out their frustration in other directions. In Hope's case this frustration is turned against himself and results in his suicide.

Based on an actual member of Harris's expeditions into the interior of Guyana in the 1940's, Hope is simultaneously a real person and the metaphorical representation of eclipsed men.³ Hope is the key to the puzzle of the novel (it is not an accident of course, that the Scottish solicitor should live on Hope Street). By filtering Hope's story through the psyche of Frank Wellington both Wellington and the reader learn far more than would be possible if the story came solely from Hope. Watching Hope struggle to understand the events of his life and free himself from tyrannical constraints, Wellington and the reader can
begin to see the suffocating effects of static conditions. Hena Maes-Jelinek puts it as follows:

On the very brink of death Hope may have seen another 'head strong among the Clowns' and turned toward the 'gift of life without strings' (p. 148) which is the token of true freedom. Hope's aggression towards the other is now turned against himself, so that, as both assailant and victim, he has encountered as his own the fate he has imposed on the other and by doing so has obliterated the tyrant in himself. In dispossessioning himself he returns to namelessness and thus becomes once more an object of compassion, the only real source of hope in Harris's novels.4

Hope is Wellington's foreman and witness of the pay sheet by which the men of the expedition are paid: in money, in history, and in fate, as Wellington comes to learn. On a surface level Hope is a somewhat absurd child of the folk, not only a naive "son of woman," which in this case implies a somewhat derogatory attitude, but also a product of the conflict between cultural groups. The awkward combination of all these elements produces a conflict in him which leads to his desire to become a capitalist, an authoritarian/totalitarian figure. Hope sees capitalism as a means to control an environment in which he feels victimized both because he lacks the "tools" of a Wellington and the asceticism of a Marti Frederick, the local East Indian entrepreneur. It is ironic that his own appetites lead him to become the victim of the appetites of others, for it is his greed and sensual appetites which make him susceptible to victimization by Frederick who controls most of the business enterprises in the area. Harris creates a double irony by having Frederick become a businessman in order to get revenge in monetary terms against the one he feels is responsible for the death of his father. It was Corporal Hope of the police force who for no apparent reason killed Frederick's father. Now, by controlling the financial elements of the people, Frederick is able to get revenge for
his father's death by slowly strangling the financial assets of others like Hope. The irony here relates to the duplication of names. Corporal Hope is not, in fact, related to the hope of the expedition yet he is victimized by the vengeful Frederick, who punishes all men for the error of one. Harris's point is that only when men become aware of such polarizations can they escape from these repetitive and destructive patterns.

Harris sees capitalism as a "death mask of an age." With the capitalist accumulation of goods men like Hope lose their individual identities and make "radical bargains with life" in order to counter the successes of others like Frederick. These bargains become monstrous when they lead men to become preoccupied and moody, losing track of their relationships to other men in their quest for increased property; the bargains bring men to the brink of death, whether physical or emotional. Becoming hopelessly entangled in these bargains with life, Hope moves closer to a totalitarian position, itself a form of death in Harris's terms, and simultaneously closer to the possibility of his own suicide.

Though he begins as an inferior Black Marsden figure, bringing both life and messages to Wellington, Hope continues to be trapped by his philosophy and historical patterns. At the same time he makes Wellington aware of the potential for a real gift, the gift of oneself and life freely and openly given to Wellington by Lucille and Reddy's sister. Hope himself is unable to update his historical perspective, to see women at other than a premium and so is trapped in the position of a victim by his own faulty vision.
hope's increasing jealousy of Frederick and his move toward a totalitarian position lead Wellington to see Hope as a "dead man" even as early as Christmas 1946, nearly thirty years before his actual suicide.

I was not sure I had heard distinctly all that he said but I was listening intently now as if I were involved in a rapid-fire translation of the coded message on a dead man's lips. As if we addressed each other around the globe and across the years like satellites of mother-earth. (p. 140)

Hope is a man "chained to his deeds"; he "buys and sells chains" of his own and of others. These psychic chains eventually cause him to lose the control he had fought so hard to gain.

Unable to marry and have children of his own, Hope becomes a father figure for Lucille but, finding his "daughter statistic" in bed with a man one night, he shoots first the lover, a black man ironically named Frank Wellington, and then himself. The anonymous writer who tells of Hope's death questions whether Hope would have shot Frank Wellington, the white creole employer, if he had been found with Lucille. He rhetorically asks Wellington if Hope would have stayed his hand or murdered his "father statistic." Harris implies that Hope might in fact have fired anyway, since the man who was shot was named Frank Wellington though he was black and bald, quite the opposite of Hope's former employer. The anonymous writer questions:

What combination of blind circumstances was this as if a light falls and still drips from my pen into a complicated bargain of names signifying the dress, the address of centuries within which lies an unlimpsed recognition of how vulnerable one is, how essentially there one is everywhere at the classical paytable of love and fear.

Perhaps you were there in the shadows of that last paytable midnight and he did not fire. Then history may possess an unwritten anecdote, an eclipsed but naked spiritual fact. (p. 146)
Wellington has been subconsciously pondering the interconnections of people and fates which are incorporated into the history of a place. Now, through the catalytic action of the anonymous letter writer, Wellington is finally able to consciously accept his own ties to others across the "paytable of the years," to conceive of history as anecdote, not merely facts, as something solid only in the minds of those unable to free themselves from static gestalt.

It was a radical bargain of emotion Hope sought to affect with life and death. .. And here I have been perusing your own theories on what you call a 'rigged state of emotion.'

It is clear now he was blind to the irony of 'blood-relations'. As I mentioned a short while ago you were his 'white' Guianese Father-Statistic, Mistress Ada his 'black' Guianese Mother-Statistic.

So beyond a shadow of doubt a frame of mind possessed him, a 'right' to bind others, to bind numbers into his 'rigged co-operative family' through antecedent master and antecedent slave.

Once those antecedent emotions became identical forces wholly aligned to each other (rather than detached from each other as comedy of opposite investitures to unravel states of deception) the seed of totalitarian spirit was born. (p. 147)

Chained to his own radical bargain with life and a rigged state of emotion, the only recourse open to Hope is self-destruction, though the actual event occurs long after Wellington perceives its seed in Hope. Though Wellington is unaware of it, there is an element of synchronicity here. Events which had at first seemed unrelated become increasingly clear as Wellington ponders them and tries to put them into some coherent order.

Wellington sees the seeds of understanding in his own doodles in the margins of his pay book. He begins to be "plagued by an interior sun" which casts light on his sketches and makes him feel "riveted into a breathless tapestry of revolving continents, landscapes and rivers
once possessed" (p. 86). Wellington remembers his earlier doodles and notes that:

My busy hand paused, intervened with contrary dancing sketches in the margins of the field book. Involuntary sketches they were perhaps like extensive crew of freedom and fate beached on the stilled page of the globe, in the stilled eye of the globe... and much later he begins to see connections and significance in the sketches:

I cannot even now after all these years brush them aside as fantasies, evasions or statistical doodles. They related to economic codes, were as pertinent or impertinent as sheer technical fact often is. And the more thorough, the more specific and comprehensive my scientific work became, they—on the other hand—seemed all the more to stand in the light of buried sun that possessed a spatial reason deeper than all apparent unreason. As though they were the shadowplay of a genesis of suns—the shadowplay of interior suns around which I now turned whereas before they had turned around me in processional sentiment. (p. 86)

Looking at his doodles Wellington realizes increasingly his own connections with his workers as well as their connections to each other. Only by setting aside his scientific way of seeing the world is he able to see with the scarecrow or double eye to the antecedents of all men, and, in fact, to see beyond the very narrow confines of self-interest.

In strong contrast to Wellington's initial strength and self-interest is Reddy, the Amerindian member of the expedition, who is least adequately compensated for his efforts. Reddy's role as a primitive man, who still perceives the world in mystical ways, is important for in the opposition between Reddy and Wellington one find again the opposition between primitive and technological man that has occupied Harris throughout his fiction from The Palace of the Peacock onwards. Reddy's antecedents were "clowns of light," and walked in the "shadow of the gods who once ruled the Guiana highlands." At the end of one survey upriver Reddy asked to accompany Wellington to the coast, only a day's journey
by land but constituting "a great divide for him he had never crossed before. He had feared it too much" (p. 113). It took Wellington the longest to calculate Reddy's pay, to make it appropriate to the great fears and curiosities he had suffered. According to Reddy's gods, water flowed down from the pole of the sun to the mountains and illumined the land. Light was guaranteed only so long as that process continued. This belief explains his terror when, during his journey with Wellington to the coast, he sees the river current apparently flowing the wrong way (upstream). He begins to see Wellington as a father figure. Only later is Wellington aware of Reddy's change of attitude and the courage he silently exhibited.

My first error of misconception in sorting out Reddy's cash in 1942 and 1948 was to devalue the currencies of light built into his fears. His was a heroism I failed to understand, a submission to terrors which money alone could never assuage. Perhaps at this late stage in time I may be able—I say it again—(but who knows?) to assess all that it meant to him to become a member of a crew which seemed to him the embodiment of motivations that shook the very ground under his feet. (p. 114)

Wellington completely misunderstands the way Reddy views the tides and even the ground on which he walks. Indeed, the very notion of "tides" was alien to his philosophy and gods.

He saw his rivers descending from the pole of the sun, a function of the sun, the extensive seed of the sun planted in mother earth. He saw how I appeared to possess that pole in my instruments [the surveyor's pole] and, therefore, alien as I was to him in my assessment of the waters as tides (a non-tidal flow and tidal flow 'mathematically' bound together) he had no alternative but to see in me the masked god of light from olden times returning to address him now, in almost unimaginable terms, across the paytable. (p. 114)

For Wellington these things are a technical "banality" while for Reddy they possess unimaginable terror; only because he sees Wellington as a "father" figure is Reddy able to control his terror and continue working. Wellington questions what pay is possible to compensate him
for his terror, the loss of his gods, and even the loss of his belief in his family. Surely, if the waters can go against the gods and they are natural forces, then man himself can be easily corrupted. This explains why Reddy believes that his sister has been corrupted, as indeed she has, by sleeping with Wellington. Feeling helpless, he turns to the only power available to him, the gun with which he approaches Wellington though he does not shoot him. Wellington, on the other hand, recognizes Reddy's great innocence and feels a responsibility to him and his family. However, this sense of responsibility is not adequate either to compensate Reddy for his terror or to prevent Wellington from taking advantage of Reddy's sister when he sleeps with her.

Looking back, Wellington sees the "terrifying otherness" (p. 126) of his men as they faced the terrors of the strange world to which he took them. Increasingly able to comprehend their terror, Wellington progresses from being a "head among the clouds," trapped by his own unclear vision, to being a "head among the clowns," one who is freed by being able to see with the scarecrow eye the habits which eclipse man's potentials (p. 110). He is, by novel's end, able to transform the new world/old world confrontation into a relationship of reciprocity. He can finally pay Reddy in "currencies of light" (p. 112), the only wages that can atone for the lost light of his ancestors and gods.

The void that Wellington feels was created by the conquest of tribes begins to disappear when he realizes that these cultures have not been totally obliterated but have "gone underground" and are still alive. As Harris stated in an interview: "Their reappearance seems to me essential if one is genuinely to come into some ground of authority, which would make freedom a reality." By combining feeling and
imagination, his memories and his doodles, Wellington begins to see with the scarecrow eye and make possible the unity of neglected inner selves which had been previously hidden behind the facade of a sophisticated European colonizer. This ties into Harris's philosophy that within men are hidden facets which must be brought to light, apparent contraries which must be reconciled in order to bring forth an already existing reality and unity of mankind.

We are perhaps now in a position to understand the meaning of the title. Only when Wellington begins to function as a clown himself is he able to give full restitution for his earlier participation in systems of oppression. "Clown" is related to such other terms as fool and idiot in Harris's fiction, and is as close as Harris comes to a concept of god. But if the novel, like all of Harris's novels, resists in some respects translation into easy didactic meanings, it is in certain ways very accessible. Wellington's relationship, for example, to the two major figures in the novel rests on the foundation of a pun: only when Wellington is "reddy" will there be "hope" in life rather than in death, a true genesis of the clowns.

The imaginative writer, Harris feels, must deal with diverse cultures and alter the institutions which eclipse man's potentials to allow for the greatest possible freedom for man. Whether political, economic, or psychological, when any one institution is allowed to become sovereign others are eclipsed. Only by "confessing their biases," (admitting to static gestalt) can the partial nature of those institutions be made apparent and allow for an opportunity for a dialogue between areas of experience or cultures which may at first
appear to be incompatible. This is the over-riding theme of Harris's early novels and has continued through *Genesis of the Clowns*.

Notes

1 John Thieme, "The legacy of Conquest--an Interview with Wilson Harris," *Caribbean Contact*, 7, No. 11 (March 1980), 17.

2 Wilson Harris, "The Eye of the Scarecrow."

3 Information based on a personal communication from Wilson Harris.


CHAPTER 8

THE TREE OF THE SUN (1978)

Da Silva da Silva is, for the third time in Harris's work, the protagonist; once again Harris seeks through the description of the artist's vision a degree of understanding that will allow men to move beyond their narrow confines of history, geography, race or culture to a more complete realization of their potential, to a freedom from suppression. Once again characters are not stable, consistent entities, but merge into one another in often bewildering ways; time, too, is collapsed, telescoped, reversed. But despite the novel's complexity, the overall theme is evident: the need for a liberation from conscripting visions and static gestalts of various kinds.

The plot is, as usual, simple. The Tree of the Sun begins at the point where Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness leaves off, at the point where Da Silva and his wife, Jen, learn after eight years of marriage they they are to become parents. This new beginning, as I argued in Chapter 6, is the harbinger of a new beginning for all men. Throughout Tree of the Sun, Da Silva's vision is progressively enlarged, as he learns to see previously hidden connections. His attempts are aided by the opportunities he is given of "seeing" through the eyes of Francis and Julia Cortez, the earlier tenants of his home. Julia's letters and Francis's journal describe situations and characters they
either knew or created and give Da Silva the insight to see himself and his social and historical heritages in a new perspective.

One day after he and Jen make love, Da Silva feels compelled to go into his studio and paint. He entitles the work "The Tree of the Sun" but after his initial strong impulse abates he rolls up the canvas and forgets about it until two months later when Jen announces her pregnancy. Suddenly he sees connections between his feelings after making love and the announcement of the pending birth. Previously hidden from him, the feelings "root" him to Jen and his home. They also tie him to his native Brazil, his adopted England, create a twin heritage of new world and old world cultures, and allow him to see that he, like Julia and Francis, is related to many others in sometimes strange and mysterious ways.

Even before he encounters their manuscripts, Da Silva has unconsciously painted into his Brazilian mural a whole series of characters, actual, fictitious, historical and contemporary. These include the Aztec and Inca kings Montezuma and Atahualpa, an Inca princess, Spanish Conquistadores, as well as Julia and Francis, his wife Jen, all of whom trace their family lines back to Peruvian and Brazilian antecedents. By incorporating all of these into his painting Da Silva analyzes, interprets, and molds his own responses to the world. He even incorporates those people already dead who had intuitively known when alive that he would influence them and be influenced by them at some future time. This is another example of the "roots" Harris believes exist for all of us, roots which may be unseen for years but suddenly and significantly appear.
Da Silva's understanding grows as the painting does:

'The very morning,' he repeated, 'two months ago, when our child was conceived. I knew it then. It was then I began this.' He tapped the canvas, stopped and thought in himself—'I had a rooted feeling then. An ear in the heart of the ground. An eye in the middle of the wood. A hand uplifted. . . It was early. I got up, came into the studio with the warmth of your body still upon me.' The studio was cold, a cave. Perhaps I dreamt it all, who knows? The tender assassin who creates the paradox of the globe. I began to paint the blow of creation before I could properly see it on my own brow as upon that of others, to paint an ice-age tree of love before I could properly feel it in my own crucifixions of lust as in the naked appetite of others, a foodbearing tree nevertheless, the execution of a seed of light, the miracle of branches of dawn, the complex blood of dawn that resembles a break—a pattern of relief—in a body of darkness.' (p. 4)

Da Silva's ability to sense these connections between himself and these "others" allows him to recognize the "tender assassin," the paradoxes of his world and the "blow of relief" which Harris seeks for himself and for all men. Only by recognizing the roles that others play in his own life can Da Silva, or any man, resolve apparent conflicts and move toward a positive and united world view. Da Silva begins to see the "charred circles of the assassin," which must be disrupted in order for man to be freed from stasis and locked suppressive systems. Harris believes that artists are able to suggest the means by which man can free himself, for the artist's very creativity—if it is true creativity—implies a disruption of conventional approaches and accepted methods. Author and painter, Da Silva is doubly creative.

As Da Silva studies his painting a "warm brush of feeling painted him alive," making him see connections to which he had previously been blind. As already stated, he has unconsciously painted in the Aztec Montezuma, Francis and Julia Cortez, even his own wife Jen. It is as though Da Silva has characters flowing from his imagination through his fingers and brushes into existence on a living canvas of changing
reality. These characters speak to him and through him, suggesting possible unions of apparent opposites. In a sense, then, the artist is the shaman figure expressing and being the mouthpiece of others' expressions at one and the same time. He talks to them and "was himself being taken over by them page by page as he began to sketch them; as he became immersed, sometimes apparently fleetingly, in expectations of painting them" (p. 11). Harris implies that Da Silva not only moves toward these others through the actual painting but through his relation to "the tree of the sun": "They were laughing and joking together, Francis and Julia, as he came upon them through the tree of the sun this painted morning" (p. 12).

The tree motif appears not only in the painting but in the two carpets that Da Silva has in his bedroom and studio; studying their patterns, he is able to trace the branches that tie together his English home and a Mexican sky, old world and new world people. Faces appear on the branches and seem at first to be wholly identical but later are seen to be individual yet related.

Da Silva saw himself as another face in the carpet on which he stood, another face in the mural he painted, as if he had been parachuted there into that tree by nature's self, conjuring parachute of self, map of extremities, divisions, alliances between appearance and appearance, past and future. (p. 9)

Initially seeing only in terms of his painting, Da Silva is able eventually to see in terms of verbal images too. He first realizes that the tree of the sun carpet symbolizes for himself and Jen "their joint root or tenancy or ownership of the house in which they lived and in which others had lived since the turn of the century and long before" (p. 9). When, during repairs following a fire, he finds letters from Julia and a journal of Francis Cortez, Da Silva begins to tie together
feelings and ideas which had appeared earlier but which he was unable to understand. Through a combination of painting and writing, Da Silva comes to know Francis and Julia and to grasp their relationship not only to each other but to Jen and himself. Through Da Silva's greater understanding Harris leads the perceptive reader to a greater understanding as well.

The reader's understanding is also enhanced as Harris plays back and forth through times and characters, thus uncovering unsuspected interrelationships. Through the telescoping of events and images Da Silva and Francis merge, overlap and separate. Da Silva, the artist and editor, both paints the other figures (Francis, Julia, Jen) into the "Tree of the Sun" mural and edits Francis's journal and Julia's letters.

In the process of editing Da Silva brings Francis and Julia together in his imagination where they converse and clarify issues they were unable or unwilling to resolve in life. Though both Francis and Julia sensed when alive that Da Silva would recreate them after their deaths, it is only through the editing that they communicate fully, and as they learn to communicate Da Silva also learns and comes to a greater appreciation of himself, his wife, and his relationship to other people, both living and dead. More importantly, he gains an increased appreciation of the importance of his growing child.

This reliving of another's life and experiences is an example of the way Harris uses the motif of the Carib bone flute which appears in a good number of his works, most obviously in Age of the Raimakers and Sleepers of Roraima. Just as the Caribs used an enemy bone to fashion a flute and create music, Da Silva uses the "bones", the letters and journal, to create a new awareness.
A spirit of everyday craftsmanship, low-keyed sophistication, ascended there out of a trench of previous buildings and Francis wondered again about the shaft in his limbs, about his manifesto or revolutions and lives. And it seemed, all at once, in being painted anew into existence, into resurrection, one comes alive to a humour of cosmos that distances one from oneself... in drawing one back to oneself the very geography of divided circumstance, on this bank or that of the reflected cosmos, creates a stranger population in a self that seeks to return to itself as a new creation. (p. 20) [my italics]

This shaft in Da Silva's limbs ties him to the bone flute and Francis. The composite character has a triple function: it is a human form of the bone flute; as a phallic form it is influential in Da Silva's "giving birth to" the writing which unites characters and times, and it "sings a tale with the song of the earth, song of a melancholy homecoming to a universal city he loved on both banks of father time," song of the living Da Silva and the "dead" Francis (p. 20).

Francis, brought to life through Da Silva's thoughts, painting and editing, feels as though he has been hit, as though he has suffered "another assault by a painter's brush" like those kept beside Da Silva's palette. He continues, however, with an "inner sense of that shaft or song until he [comes] to the junction of Holland Park Avenue and Holland Road" where Da Silva lives. He notices buildings and remembers people and "yet he could see them as if they were there forever pooled in his own consciousness" (p. 21). He has become a sort of "ghost of the landscape" similar to Reddy in Genesis. Only once in the novel is the reader reminded that Da Silva is not omniscient, that he does not include in his newly expanded consciousness all the elements of the other characters. An incident is mentioned which is not fully described and Da Silva suffers a mild sense of panic because he is unable to conjure up the image to which Francis refers. He is reminded that, while improved, his vision is not yet perfect, and, while these other
characters exist in his mind, they are not completely his creations, they have an essence of their own.

Through their combined vision Francis and Da Silva are able to sense:

varieties of profound malaise that conditioned them, even as it re-shaped them, to conceive a therapy of originality within the shell of time, its carpets or walls or beams that cohered nevertheless into patterns of relief or doors through the tree of the sun. . . (p. 10)

Francis and Julia, too, find relief, as they are resurrected and brought to fulfillment in Da Silva's mind. While living, because of their inability to have a child, they had been at odds. Now, however, communicating with each other in and through Da Silva, they see in Da Silva and Jen's child the child they could not have. More than this the child implies a hope for the future of others, if man can only learn to see properly, to use a "therapy of originality."

The miracle of Francis's and Julia's resurrection upon the tree of the sun, at this moment of time, when Da Silva learnt that his wife Jen was pregnant, hung upon a flash of consciousness. (p. 15)

Harris so entwines characters that the flashes of intuition that influence one also influence the others; all have mixed antecedents, new and old world connections, and they increasingly become aware of these connections to the others. Francis digs his pen into the "page of masques of tradition on the other side of the grave (in the land of the living), on this side of the cradle (in the land of the unborn), until both positions became co-existent with day to day lives" of all times "since the earth began" (p. 30). Francis is driven "to write into existence" the son he was never able to have with Julia but which Jen and Da Silva conceive and believe to be related to Julia and Francis through the tree of the sun, the tree with branches of all mankind.
Further intermingling of times and characters results from the connections drawn between contemporary figures and their historic antecedents. Jen is related to an Inca princess, Julia to the Inca Sun King Atahualpa. Francis has a composite name which relates him to the Spaniard Francisco Pizarro, who destroyed Atahualpa, and Hernando Cortez who killed Montezuma. He is also compared to Montezuma; the two share similarly lined faces, give signs of blows suffered and possess the passions of warrior and priest. Because Da Silva and Francis overlap there is additional significance given to Da Silva's own roots, which reach back to Brazil and the Amerindians. Francis is the most complex of these interrelated characters in terms of his whole name, Francis Harlequin Rigby Cortez. The name not only combines the historic Pizarro and Cortes, but the images of the Harlequin figure who wears parti-colored tights much as Francis wears parti-colored cultural elements which stifle him. Francis has an imaginary son, Harlequin Rigby, by Eleanor Rigby the actress, and thus in the totality of his historical connotations combines old and new world figures over a period of four hundred years. It is typical of Harris to combine such diverse elements, to tie together images, characters and themes of the book in a single name.

Although it is not apparent in his name, Francis is also related to both Atahualpa and Montezuma. Atahualpa and Montezuma suffered from excesses of superstition and pride, and allowed their priests to foretell great successes. Foregoing appropriate defences because they believed themselves invincible, both kings were also the last sovereigns of their tribes. Their fates were shaped by the superstitions of their people who believed the invading Spaniards to be incarnations of returning gods
whose coming was told in local lore. Harris suggests that if, like Atahualpa and Montezuma, we allow ourselves to be ruled by static beliefs and rigid social structures we not only perpetuate those static forms but prevent others from appearing that could bring greater freedom for mankind. If either of the Indian kings had been able to see beyond the standard patterns of belief and behavior they might have been able to survive rather than meet ignominious deaths—Atahualpa by strangling after "accepting" Christianity and Montezuma by stoning, perhaps even at the hands of his own people. The divisions between new world and old world peoples begun by conquering Spaniards and conquered Indians are maintained today in the cultures and suspicions of Mexicans and Peruvians, and are examples of the "charmed circles of the assassin" of which Harris wants men to become aware.

True creativity, Harris believes, is the means by which man can move out of these charmed circles. If the move is deliberate the process may be more readily accomplished, but no less painful, as Da Silva learns. As an artist he "creates" in paint the characters that tie him to other men and his environment, and, through that paint sees further connections, connections which also allow him to move outside the "charmed circles."

Before her death, Julia had written a series of letters ostensibly addressed to Francis but read only years later by Da Silva after they had been "resurrected" from the ashes of a fire in the apartment. As Julia and her thoughts are "recreated" by Da Silva her dreams and aspirations about communicating with Francis and having his child are also "resurrected" and appear in the form of the child Jen and Da Silva will have. Francis also writes himself into existence through Da
Silva's editing and both Francis and Julia see from beyond the grave their links to Jen and Da Silva through their "mutual" child.

It may have been father time's grief, it may have been father time's lust, that set in train a pattern of subconscious and unconscious pages on that memorable day of loss and pain he endured [when Julia died]. Until he was driven to write into existence—as fruit of his own body—a self-made/self-created son and self-made/self-created wife for that son. (p. 31)

Francis has created a son, and a wife for that son, much as Da Silva "creates" Francis through his journals twenty-five years after his death. In each instance of creation the character is more fulfilled as a human being. This dialogue between creating and created forces is for Harris the key to greater human understanding:

Clay [Eleanor] and gold [Jen] are premature spirits of awakening perhaps, da Silva thought, as he turned another page in Francis's book, premature pre-existent beginnings to creation, that summon up therefore a harsh spur or reminder of potentialities mixed into fields of indifference to life, callousness mixed into hope, war into peace, reluctant or unfulfilled lives into apparently lived or living or born lives.

And thus he was drawn to Eleanor and Harlequin and distant Leonard as to his own children, his own half-created past and half-created future, peculiarly tragic, peculiarly hopeful, in its capacity to relate to strangers, to the gaiety and the madness in others who are utterly strange to oneself yet utterly true to oneself as to a dialogue between creator and created. . . (p. 31)

Harris sees a fine line between the forces of creation and the forces of destruction. There is the "blow of shape in a woman's body," the "blow of Julia's illness like a locked door between them" (p. 15), the "blow [Montezuma] received from the hand of the conquistadores. . . the blow that was but a glancing blow" and his death "from the blow he received" as he thought about the brute assassin, "threaded into paradoxical arrow of liberation or tenderness" (p. 1). These blows may create, as with love making, or destroy by the same act done with force when a woman is raped; they may free men from the tyranny of a ruler, as
when Montezuma is killed, or they may destroy as when Atahualpa is killed by Spaniards greedy for gold.

In an even more complex use of imagery, Harris exploits the allusive potentiality of the image of the tree which connotes not only food and shade but, in Christian mythology, the redemptive suffering of Christ. In the novel Da Silva's painting is call "The Tree of the Sun," and when Julia "speaks" in the painting, she speaks as follows:

'One nurses each electric signal as if a trial run commences of the resurrection of the body, petal, leaf, stem, one tastes as one drinks from a cup as bitter as hell or lightning body beyond a shadow of doubt like the lazy fig tree smitten by Christ before he came to the cross himself and the nails were driven into his hands.' (p. 16)

This image of a tree which is simultaneously life sustaining and life destroying is an example of what Harris believes are the paradoxes which we must struggle to understand if we are to move beyond the "charmed circles of the assassin," the static boundaries of our cultures, to true freedom. Since our knowledge is limited by the short span of our lives Harris believes that we must be open to the "translation" of our selves and our ideas by others, on both sides of the grave. This translation may come in the form of artistic expression in paint or words, or in numerous other forms, which relate man to man as kindred spirits able to assist each other. More than any other Harris novel, The Tree of the Sun traces the development of relationships, chosen deliberately, rather than resulting from family relationships or blood ties, as was often the case in the earlier novels.

Julia designates the union of apparent opposites, the relationship of herself to others known and unknown, living and dead, as a "chorus of voices"—she had sensed before her death that someone would come later, read her letters, sense a relationship to her, and live for her those
important events she had not been able to experience, the most important being to have a child. Julia is a member of the chorus of voices who speak in and through Da Silva, in and through his paintings.

"Is it a violent universe we inhabit (or impose upon ourselves) as conquest by deity? Is it a savage formula entangled in the origins of human culture, I mean conquest, to which we unwittingly subscribe in all our elaborate projects of soul conscripted by structure? Doubtless it is—who would deny it—'she stopped again, then continued softly as if a chorus of voices dwelt in her throat, 'a violent universe in many of its uniform faces but there's another inexplicable face within the carpet that's utterly different, that's not violent. Close to it, yes, because of the expedition, or apparently ruthless pace, of features of compassion so woven within a stricken moment that it seeks to strike, even as it rescues; fierce rescue of line into incredible eyes drawn by holy and daemonic masters schooled for timeless ages by the hand of god.' (pp. 16-17)

Harris believes that we can only move toward this nonviolent "face," toward a unity of psyche since our lives are so short and the reality of nature and cultures is extremely complex. However, he also believes that to conceive of any one structure as the base for all others is to allow ourselves to be trapped in charmed circles of the assassin, to be governed by static structures. Julia continues:

I see it differently for my part within myself. I see the eyes of god, the ruthless hand that paints one's breath to save it, as a measure of the incompatibility of my understanding. And that leads me to prize freedom above all else in time; to restrain from investing in absolutes... Incompatibility is an ugly word. It breeds intolerance. Less ugly if one accepts the many faces of a conjurer's universe. To accept incompatible visions, to accept what is like and unlike oneself, to accept the tricks of nature as a versatile warning that truth exists but stands on unfathomable foundations, and still to believe in the unity of the self, is to run fleetingly (but sometimes securely) in a presence of glory... (p. 17)

Da Silva has the ability to accept and digest seemingly incompatible spaces and shapes, an ability which thus allows him to create positive forces out of the apparently negative losses of Julia and Francis. He can see himself as a "cannibaliser of other lives and deaths around the
globe, raider of others' private lives" (p. 42), and yet he also learns "the potentiality for compassion." Julia senses the presence of Da Silva in the future much as Da Silva senses the existence of his child. The unborn play through the living present in order to secrete in the living present capacities to absorb the catastrophes of the future. By learning from the despair of Julia and Francis, Da Silva is better able to cope with his own world and problems, to create life out of apparently "dead" elements whether they are of paint, of people, or of dreams.

This image is symbolized by the ironmonger Leonard Rigby, Eleonor's husband, who like a modern Hephaestus takes "dead" iron and transforms it into the living beauty of art in metal, creating scenes of the lives of ancient Greek warriors and gods. Similarly, Da Silva takes "dead" paint or the words of dead people and transforms them into a living child or reality to govern his own existence and even mold others' lives as well, including perhaps those who read Harris's novels.

Moving thus backward and forward in time through overlapping characters, Harris suggests man's need to see into and through others to the unity of men beyond the obvious cultural, superficial differences which separate men and prevent them from establishing true communication with themselves and each other. However, communication will remain impossible as long as men are locked into the charmed circles of the assassin with no way out except through conflict and destruction.

At sixty-one Harris is still in his prime, and, one hopes, there are many more fictions to come from his pen. His newest, Angel at the Gate, is due to be issued this year (1982), and should provide one more piece in the growing picture of a truly unique imagination, an imagination focussing on creativity, the unity of men, and on the
positive human and social results that a combination of those can effect. Though there are growing numbers of scholars and critics of Harris's fiction, the body of his immense and complex achievement is only beginning to be explored and (to use one of his favorite metaphors), unravelled. His novels are sure to provide stimulus for many more people to seek toward the very creativity Harris himself aspires to, a subjective imagination which enables men to move toward freedom for all and away from eclipsing forces of history.

Note

1 One recalls, too, the Harlequin figure in The Heart of Darkness, the Russian adventurer dressed in multi-colored rags and tatters who seems to represent a composite of European colonialism in Africa.
APPENDIX

THREE INTERVIEWS WITH WILSON HARRIS

SYNCHRONICITY
SHAMANISM
THE EYE OF THE SCARECROW
Interviewer: Synchronicity is something which you have said occurs in your novels. Could you explain for us what synchronicity is and, perhaps, how you use it?

Harris: Synchronicity was a concept raised by Jung in one of his essays in which he pointed out that basically the principle is this: that if you have two parallel lines of events, let us assume that each line has built into it the normal cause and effect connections. It's a line in itself, it's intact in itself. So that's one thing. On the other hand you have another line of events which also has its cause and effect built into it. There is an intact position there as well. Now these two lines could relate acausally. In other words, they relate to each other by processes other than cause and effect.

Jung gives a startling example of this with one of his patients who came to him and was telling him of a dream of a very rare beetle which did not exist in that part of the world at all; this was in Europe. While she was telling him of this dream there was a tapping on the window and when he went to the window and opened it, there was the beetle.
Now no one knows how that beetle came there. Let us assume, for example, that an explorer was passing through who had brought this beetle from some far country and it escaped. I don't know. But it arrived there at that moment. So you have two lines of events. One is the woman telling him of her dream. Her dream has its own logical processes built into it. She is speaking to Jung; therefore, there is a logical exchange of words and ideas and discussion between them. On the other hand, the beetle comes from another area. The coincidence of these two constitutes the synchronist position.

Now you will find that that was something that people mocked Jung for. But this notion has now been picked up and explored by people like Koestler who has written a book called Chance. It deals with coincidence. There was a man Ira Progoff who has written a book, and there are other people who have done this. I have discovered also that synchronicity is not something that was invented by Jung. It existed among the Lacondon Indians of Central America. They interpreted their dreams by procedures akin to synchronicity. That is, they didn't look for cause and effect, they looked for correspondences. So it's a very strange and ancient "spirit" if you want to call it that, which Jung rediscovered through his correspondence with his patient. And yet, scientists now, some scientists anyway, are looking at [synchronicity] because it makes us aware that the nature of the universe is much stranger than we think, that our capacities to comprehend the connections may be very limited capacities, but there are connections.

Now my judgment of this is, as an imaginative writer, that what it discloses is that there are connections between apparently intact, water-tight areas of experience, that images that seem to be total and
sovereign are parts of a greater whole, and that this greater whole will
remain a ceaseless, haunting capacity which we pursue. But, in pursuing
that greater whole, we revise our conceptions of the images that begin
to constitute themselves in the parts of that whole; so you begin to
make connections where you never dreamed connections existed.

Now in Black Marsden the curious thing that arose was this: I
needed, when I wrote the novel, the explorer in Canada in the wilderness.
I wanted an explorer who would disappear. I opened a book, an anthology
of some sort, and came across the name John Hornby. That was an actual
man, a recorded man who had actually disappeared. Now I introduced two
figures: one is supposed to be my Hornby, the other is the historical
Hornby. The Hornby that I created, if you like, speculates on his
position in space and time and sees the other Hornby who has some sort
of footnote in the history books, has a record; his exploits are in some
degree recorded. He sees the other Hornby as a kind of figure up in the
stars, a sort of solitary figure in the stars. He [the historic Hornby]
has some kind of legendary position whereas he [the Harris Hornby]
exists in the ground in what he calls the very boot of humanity. He's
unsung, he's unknown, he's unheralded. When this Hornby goes out into
the wilderness into the snow, he leaves his cabin behind. When he looks
back at it he sees this cabin in the distance. He can't get at it any
longer and I had a sense of the cabin descending from the sky. These
are crude particulars of the novel.

This novel was published in 1972. Jim Howard who is doing a book
on my novels wrote to me around '77 (whenever it was that the Russian
satellite crashed) to tell me that the people who had stumbled upon some
bits of wreckage from this satellite were an expedition in pursuit of
the last journey that John Hornby had made. The synchronist thing here varies slightly in that it's not a simultaneous connection; years have passed. Nevertheless, you do have parallel lines, three lines here in fact. The first is the actual Hornby who disappeared into the wilderness. Now he influenced me in that I chose his name for my character. So that's another parallel line. But the third parallel line which occurs some years after is that Jim Howard wrote to say that if my novel had appeared a year after, people could have legitimately said I had been influenced by the fallen satellite to create the kind of shape I created. So it's a kind of synchronist connection in the sense that these three parallel lines become parts of a greater whole.

The novel, therefore, an imaginative fiction in my judgment, is immersed in a much stranger reality than one usually thinks to be the case. One usually thinks of a novel as something that you write; it may even be a kind of luxury. You really think of it as having a strange objectivity that impinges on the world outside of the shape of the book itself. It has something to say through itself and beyond itself; you rarely think of fiction in that way. There's a kind of futurity planted in it. Why is this? In my judgment this is so because when one writes an imaginative fiction, concentration is not daylight concentration, it's a much deeper kind of concentration. As a consequence, your ego (by that I mean the historical side of you), the historical ego is in some degree moved, or broken, or altered to allow a far deeper intuitive self to come up and, in fact, to begin to do things within the concentration which the writer applies to the book. This intuitive self comes up, strikes at the historical ego and then creates something which has a future beyond the comprehension of the writer himself. And, it has a
past also which is much deeper and stranger than the writer understands. So his fiction reflects in some strange active way a mysterious past as well as a future. Now that means that the fiction has an objectivity that is not the objectivity of daylight consciousness. It is not on the surface of the mind, it is much deeper and the synchronicity thing seems to me to sustain this. It means that the images, the structures which we see around us are not as absolute and sovereign as they appear to be.

Now there is an interesting aspect to this which has been raised by Ehrenzweig and only this week I have been reading this. I have told you of his *Hidden Order of Art* and what I discovered in connection to the dying god. In the last week or two his widow sent me a book of his which I had not read before, a book which has to do with gestalt. Gestalt is the way you shape things up. For example, if you look, you will see those are horses. That's a simple illustration. Or suppose you were to see six bags on the pavement and you look at them and you say "that looks like the body of a man." The bags may have some sort of "anatomy," you might see something that looks like legs and a head. Now that's gestalt. You articulate something in terms of what you see. But what is lacking about it is this: you know that what you are looking at is partial, because it's not actually the body of a man, the three or four bags. This is where I find myself entering into dialogue with Ehrenzweig.

At a certain point I deviate from Ehrenzweig; I'll tell you at what point I do. The position is that most cultures today tend to articulate a very solid position which is based on all sorts of vestiges that may appeal to them in curious kinds of ways. So that, for example, if you were to take the sorts of institutions around us some of these
institutions are placed in areas where people have experienced perhaps some event which seems to them of national importance. I mean the Houses of Parliament are placed on that ground next to the Thames; this relates to a palace which was once there. The tendency is to make a shape, to build that shape up from some image which related to the life of that culture. I mean this is a far, far deeper thing than finding those six bags. When that happens the tendency is to overlook how partial that is. It becomes a static gestalt. It becomes [a] highly articulate structure, and it seems to be the embodiment of the world. People associate themselves with it absolutely, commit themselves to it; all their loyalties are built into it.

Now what Ehrenzweig points out is that as you descend beneath the surface mind there are much older, stranger, archaic elements that lie under the static gestalt. For example, as in Tumatumari the man is struck on the head and he has a kind of metaphysical lesion and that is how he is able to relate to the world around him in a strange and peculiar way, because he is no longer investing in static gestalt. Now the paradox in Ehrenzweig's position is this: that when you descend deeper and deeper, though these elements appear to be archaic, they seem to have some mysterious comprehension of the past and the future. So how could they be archaic?

Now where I deviate from Ehrenzweig is that, in my judgment, all structures are biased and partial, all structures. So even when you descend, if you still cling to the notion of a structure you are still involved in a bias. And if, in fact, you have no release from structures, then the nature of the cosmos is one of incorrigible bias. If on the other hand (now this is where I stand) you have a kind of
unstructured force that mediates between structures, then you begin to resolve the position.

Ehrenzweig wrote his book about thirty years ago. He knew nothing then of the discoveries that have been made in science, for example, the neutrino. No one can capture the neutrino: it is not a structure. Science has been overturning notions of matter. Therefore, intuitively I find that what I have been doing in the novel all along, and I think this applies to all my novels, is that the structures or images are all partial and there is a mediating force that cannot be structured between them that arbitrates between them. When you sense this you have a chance to revise the canvases of existence around you, because those structures, those images, cannot be taken for granted.

Come back to Black Marsden. The John Hornby figure whom I created cannot be taken for granted; he has roots that spread in all sorts of directions. These roots in fact seem to be of a nonverbal character because they have to do with the Russian satellite. In other words, the whole age in which one lives, one is so steeped in it, that one is penetrated from many different angles. So you begin to pick up a susceptibility to the future. It is not a direct, deliberate prophecy; but a futurity is written into the living present because the living present is not wholly structured. It is partial and in being partial it has a bias. When it confesses this bias, it opens itself up to other possibilities. You can't escape from bias, but you can revise and transform bias. For example: the nature we see around us. Suppose you had a life span of 5000 years. This spot on which we stand would be wholly different. If you had a life span of 5000 years you could probably go in the desert and within 1000 years you could find that a
flower had grown, geological changes had occurred, the rock begins to yield. In other words, there are so many faces of nature, the psyche of nature has so many faces, that your vision of nature, your perception of nature, tends to conform to one boundary because that is your experience within your short life time. That boundary is subtly and complexly disrupted because nature is not what you think it is. Your perception of nature is always a cultural perception, not a true perception. So that is how synchronicity relates to this matter.

Interviewer: That is a brilliant exposition that makes it far more clear to me. This has haunted me for a long time. I asked that man about it at your New York lecture; he was a painter...

Harris: Yes, I remember him. Now the ideas I introduced at that talk were wholly new to most people who were there and they couldn't instantly grapple on to them. But one of the implications is, as you may have noted, that Black Marsden is a strange figure because he could be a figure of disaster as well as blessing. Black Marsden could have taken Goodrich's face. On the other hand, it is as if in some peculiar way this was a profound game in which Goodrich was being tested and tried. The wisdom that Goodrich gained when he sent Marsden away was part of the trial. If he hadn't been overshadowed by the danger he would not have been capable of making that decision. Now this decision remains one of the difficulties of the book. The decision never comes up immediately. You are told of the decision, but you are not told that he made the decision because this decision is coming up from that deep area which I call the mediating area, the unstructured area that mediates between structures. Coming up from there, as it comes up it has to break through all the conditions which are planted in Goodrich:
the way he has been educated, his kinds of biases, his face. Now all of us are conditioned. You may be making a decision, a decision you don't know because that decision is breaking through and may not appear for some time. When it appears you may think it has just happened but it hasn't just happened, it could have been happening for years, coming up for years. That is what happens to Goodrich. The decision he makes in the end was one which was coming through, breaking through all these layers; and that's why you get this peculiar kind of almost arbitrary quality woven into Goodrich's behavior at times.

Now if I wanted to articulate this decision in immediacy, which is static gestalt, that would appeal to readers more quickly because that's how they interpret the whole. But I wasn't doing that. I was showing that static gestalt is one-sided and that when you have suddenly decided that those bags are a man, you have done that because for centuries and centuries your antecedents have been involved in a kind of mobility, a mobility that has allowed them to take different fabrics and put them together and sense relationships between different fabrics. Art is like that. You create something on a wall; the wall is stone but you create a shape that you call a deer. Now the stone is a fabric in itself. How did you come to decide? How did you come to make that decision? This comes out of ages of change, shifting impulses. Now if you invest in that thing as an absolute thing, you begin to deny all the things that have gone into it and which point ahead of it and through it at another kind of future.

This is one of the positions in Black Marsden; the novel is written like that. For example, that scene when he is going through the desert and you get all these things, the dust and the different visions you
have of the rocks. He has a sense of these rocks shaping themselves up like cathedrals. He has a sense of the assassin within him and behind him. That is the part when he is going through with Knife, when he makes this journey in the diary with Knife. This journey takes him up to the point where he is told that he should go through the pass, when the pipe appears, the Scottish lament which meant "you mustn't go through, there is danger," and Knife said to him "No, the whole thing is turned around. You can go through." But he distrusted Knife and he didn't go through because in some strange way he felt that if he were going through he might be going through into the nameless country and to death, and he wasn't yet equipped to die. He pulled back, but in pulling back he sensed that he had gained something, nevertheless, of what seemed beyond himself. In that whole journey through the South American wilderness you have this notion of the whole universe as it collapses. The particles that float are the very particles out of which you build a new universe, even as they float. He has a sense of coming up and seeing the rocks clustered together like cathedrals and a strange sensation of the assassin. It is as if he could bear the burden of the assassin within himself because he could sense that the kind of wound that is inflicted by the assassin is the kind of wound which one has to sustain and bear within oneself if one is to be profoundly human.

The ribbon of road along which they travelled continued to ascend gently and after a mile or so, a new almost weighted stillness was added to the presence of the rocks in the basin below; they (the rocks) stood now less upon the rim of the basin and more clearly within the contours of an ancient lake or sea waterless now as a desert. Goodrich was fascinated by this transparent sea within a terrestrial cloud on the bed of which the rocks clustered into cathedrals and palaces, circles of repetitive fate or natural doom. There was a great perhaps terrible charm to that buried rock-city or petrification of times from the height they had now reached. . . .
It came upon him suddenly—this sense of great danger—of a timeless assassin standing at his elbow. There, said the assassin, *lie my charmed circles forever and ever* . . . (Black Marsden, p. 84, author's italics)

Above all the assassin functions as if the malaise of a society will articulate itself into static gestalt. The assassin becomes a kind of figure who dwells in that kind of space. The poisons which he secretes in himself are built up in the ways in which society polarizes itself. If you have a world in which you exist in charmed circles forever and ever, you create polarization.

Now you can see the intuitive thrust of it. This is as far as I could get with him. But you can see looking back at it how clear it is, if you understand gestalt. I had read nothing of static gestalt then. I suppose if I had known that I could have extended the book. You can see that his sense of the assassin comes when the assassin says "There lie my charmed circles forever and ever." You can never escape from them. Then it goes on: "And yet as the dark figure addressed him secretly, mockingly, privately (at the heart of his secret book, upon a private page memorized inwardly for insertion into his diary)." This whole passage is occurring within Goodrich's diary, but it is a diary which is like a movement. As he writes, he could be writing himself into a chance for life or oblivion. "Goodrich was aware of a deeper enigma, a curious privilege to dream, (and to be able to support and unravel the dream) of the assassin." (Black Marsden, p. 85). By unravelling the dream of the assassin, he is breaking out of the charmed circles, he is breaking out of the static gestalt. What he is facing is the formidable price that cultures have inflicted on themselves in terms of this static gestalt, in terms of this articulation which we seek in terms of novels and everything, to believe that we can articulate a
transparent world. For Naipaul the world is totally transparent; the books he writes are wholly transparent. That is the ignorance of static gestalt, the belief that you can walk around and see everything, that everything is transparent, that you can put it down on the page without realizing how one-sided this so-called transparency is.

Yesterday perhaps the charm, the terror, the fascination of it might have been insupportable. Today—since his immersion last night in the Samsonian mask of the bull, the curious light upon the horns of the bull—he could endure the danger of coming into the neighborhood of death-dealing masks and gods. (Black Marsden, p. 85)

Now this Samsonian mask was when he had the dream of the bull that appeared with the horns. This is when he goes to bed outside and Knife tells him that there is a woman who wanders around this place and comes to visit people but she is rarely seen.

It occurred to Goodrich that on his long journey that day—an immensity it seemed to him now—he had seen a few wings circling overhead but not a foot on the ground.
'There are animals around,' said Knife as if he read his thoughts. 'That's how a hidden population travels. We're lucky to come on wheels.'

The great curtains of tropical night were descending upon the Director-General's mediterranean stage. In the western sky it was steel, a steely avalanche raged. In the eastern sky it was dark, a mysterious avalanche descended and a kind of perfume came from the stars. Goodrich's nose wrinkled involuntarily (as it had when he sensed the burnt room in the farmhouse) and he wondered if, by any chance, the woman of whom Knife had spoken had returned and stood somewhere in the darkness. He discerned her already with sensuous eyes on the tip of his nose. Then Knife came out of the farmhouse with an armful of wood. This he arranged on the ground, applied a match, fanned the flame. (Black Marsden, p. 78)

Now I think that's where they eat, and then:

When they had eaten Knife offered Goodrich another cup of Namless beverage. 'Come on,' he said when Goodrich refused. 'I know it makes you feel a little sick at first but you need it in this part of the world. Trust me. I am a seasoned campaigner.' Goodrich capitulated and swallowed a mouthful. Soon he had another and another. He kept a sharp eye now (scarecrow sharp with the Namless beverage) upon the shape of night beyond the fire. Still there was no sign of the woman. Knife had spread the blankets on
the ground. It was inclined to be somewhat misty but on the whole quite warm beside the fire, under a blanket.

Knife was off the moment he put his head down but Goodrich was so tired his senses were keyed up upon the borders of sleep in associative parallels and faculties. There was a gentle sighing wind and the sound of a shaking door or a window from the wrecked building. Also a hooting noise, an owl or some other creature. An occasional twitter and sparking like a fire of crickets in a clump of grass.

He counted god's sheep, felt no sickness this time from the Namless beverage but tension, almost an ague, the sense of his own limitations, the sense of ripening into the Director-General's comedy of relations.

Then it came between curtain and curtain of night he saw the woman emerge from the farmhouse. She came straight over to him but he found himself unable to move, curled tight into the ripe scene he had become. She began to undress methodically and as she stood in profile against the fire, her head in shadow, he dreamt he could see with the severed eyes of his nose the pointed eyes of her breasts. Then she turned to face him.

An animal-smelling face nuzzled into him but it was not the woman. It was not a dog. It was not a sheep. It was the constellation of the bull, Goodrich exclaimed, the tall bull of night on its knees beside him with the longest horns he had ever seen reaching into the stars. They picked him off the ground and held him steady. He wanted to lie back, curl up again. He was about to slump when the bull pushed him forward, caught him between its horns, braced him with its forehead, pushed him on again. Now he was pushed on the forehead of the bull straight upon her: up right coitus—upstanding coitus—into which she had been drawn upon the head of the bull between the upright and upstanding pillars of night.

Pillars of night which he (Goodrich) had uprooted (so it seemed to him now). In one sense (it was true) they had uplifted him, pushed him off the ground into her thighs, between her thighs; in another sense it was his Samsonian avalanche, his uprooting of everything into a collaborative revolution of establishment. (Black Marsden, pp. 79-80)

Now that is what saves him from the assassin, the memory of that bull, the collaborative uprooting of everything. And thus he could uproot the charmed circles, because he was not locked into them; so he could bear the assault of the assassin, something which he could not have supported before because it would have terrified him utterly. The notion that one has made the assassin, one has created the assassin in terms of the kind of society in which we live, in which we polarize ourselves so absolutely and seek only power, so that the strongest
polarization triumphs over weaker ones and crushes them down. Then in terms of that power you survive.

The conquistador is a kind of assassin. There is the other rude assassin, not only the romantic like Che Guevara, but an assassin who has some compassion and pity and goes for what he regards as the prime target of corruption so that you can go into a town and not desolate it.

There are distinctions there. What is happening is that Goodrich could endure the danger of coming into the neighborhood of death-dealing masks and gods. Now all of this is possible if you assume that there is an arbitrating essence between structures. So the Samsonian bull, the uprooting, the collaborative thing has to do with this essential arbitration between structures, that cannot be structured itself. It's in this very area where Goodrich is making his way through this landscape in which he has this extraordinary sensation after the dream.

Knife's bus rattled and Goodrich was aware of a change of scenery.

It was the same world as yesterday but a curious subtle fleshing (if that was the right word) appeared upon the rocks. Perhaps, thought Goodrich, it was something to do with the light. Whatever it was—light or film of new vegetation—it had subtly awakened the landscape, the bones of the landscape, as a sleeping but treacherous giant stirs refreshed by age-old cataclysmic dreams. (Once there had been an earthquake, once a volcanic eruption across Namless. Once—once only in the living memory—there had been a shift of ice down the mountains burying an entire village.) (Black Marsden, pp. 82-83)

Now that is possible too, because earlier in the novel I comment somewhere about that place in Peru where this man looks down from snow-clad mountains into the depths of the Amazon. You have this contrast between winter and summer, but here he goes along and you get the sense of what the landscape is doing. You have these "cathedral clusters, as well as pavement spires or dinosaurs in the midst of the pace of infinity," (Black Marsden, p. 83). You have this sense that:
They (the rock clusters) all subtly moved as if one detected the most curious refugee church of mankind in action, walking bones, uprooted bones all fleshed by an avalanche where the very nature of things ceased to be a self-conscious theme and became the subconscious theatre or liberation of men from fanatical pursuits. Thus there was a submission to movement, yes, in cultural phenomena of Namless Theatre—but so intuitive, so unspectacular—it became opus contra avalanche. (Black Marsden, p. 83)

You have all these dimensions of movement, and this is the one I was speaking of, this is where he comes across:

There was a third vision or sensation as the road swung and they began to ascend. The air seemed saturated by a dream—a film—an almost transparent cloud of dust which came over the rim of the basin and drifted across Namless Theatre. Goodrich felt an irrational correspondence with the "milky way" when the spaces between the stars are filled with a nameless cloud of particles; but now one was looking not up—not vertically into the spaces of night—but horizontally into the spaces of day. The delayed action of the rocks before they plunged possessed its quintessence here: quintessential shock or deliberation of movement, seminal ruin, seminal catastrophe. (Black Marsden, p. 84)

This seminal ruin, seminal catastrophe is as close as I came in this novel to stating that there is an essence that mediates between structures, and thus, you are not wholly locked into these charmed circles, or biases, or dread, or fear, or whatever. So there it is, and the novel seems to prove itself when it picks up an associative parallel outside of itself as if the novel is making its way into a nonverbal struggle.

The novels I am working on are so peculiar. If I were working in terms of the conventional novel I would be working in terms of static gestalt. If you go back to Palace of the Peacock (as early as Palace), I now understand some of the things. For example at the end of the novel where the tree is uprooted, the tree walks, there appears in the tree this lightning painting like flesh, and then Carrol's song comes (Palace of the Peacock, p. 146). Now I see what is happening there, the tree is the uprooting of a certain kind of bias, or fear, or dread. It
moves in the landscape, when it moves it picks up a painting, then
Carrol's song comes as if the wood itself is singing, as if the tree is
singing. What is happening is that certain boundaries—-one is the
verbal boundary—are disrupted by the metaphor of the walking tree. The
painting is a nonverbal act, but it comes into the novel in the form of
a metaphor and then the song has the sense of the rasping voice of the
peacock. It's not the kind of song that you can pin down, [there is a]
kind of movement: the tree walks, the bias as it walks, then there is
the charmed circle of the tree which is disrupted. The tree has
different manifestations: it could appear to be not moving, wooden and
stupid. In Palace you have all those different associations of "tree";
so the tree walking is the uprooting of that kind of bias.

For a long time I pondered on that kind of thing. I wondered why
it is that when one has that kind of vision that seems so deep, why is
it that the world around you changes hardly at all? What I judge is
this sense: that what the imaginative artist is doing is compressing
times together so that in fact this may have no immediate bearing on the
society at all. It has a bearing in terms of futurity, just as Marsden
does. In other words, imaginative art has nothing to do with power
politics. People think it has. It has to do with a kind of vision that
is real, but which the society as a whole may not correspond to at that
moment. Nevertheless, it is real. The compression is so startling
that, in fact, it carries the tone of futurity rather than an immediate
action.

When you try to analyze neutrinos, as some scientists are doing
today, they seem to bear out the notion that you do have a kind of
seminal catastrophe, seminal ruin, but seminal which is at the heart of
a kind of arbitrating essence. We have such difficulty grappling with such terms that we tend to think of it as catastrophe. There is a school of mathematics today which involve themselves in what they call "happy catastrophe." The butterfly comes out of a happy catastrophe. There is a kind of architecture which we see today in California and elsewhere which might have to respond to earth tremors, and if they can respond, those architectures would relate to what could be called happy catastrophe. In other words, they would digest the shock and carry within themselves a seminal ruin that makes it possible for them to digest the shock. If you were to build over that earthquake belt an adamant structure you might make yourself even more prone to destruction.

Interviewer: There was something relating to this in a theory of how life possibly began. There would be fairly rigid, unconscious elements, and in the movement from the molecules to the first organic particles of life where consciousness begins, there is a leaping. Where did the leap occur? How did the leap occur? There is an accident where something loses itself, it breaks up. In other words, what was originally X becomes X-, so that the X- introduces an opening to a Y-. This is similar to what you mean as seminal ruin. In other words, it has to break up, something has to happen that is structural dislocation in order to allow for another structural dislocation to produce another new possibility.

Harris: There are various ways of approaching it. In my talk in New York on The Rainmakers I spoke of it as an arbitrating element. You have a sense of arbitration between the sky god and the earth god. As the sky god sent rain down to the earth and sculpted the earth, the earth god would strike back at the sky in terms of the great cloud
sculptures. You are constantly dating your apprehension of what creation means. If you were to simply root it in a formidable, structured sky god then you would lose this subtle relationship between sky and earth. Between the two, I am suggesting, is this arbitration which cannot itself be structured. It's mobile, it's utterly mobile. Enrenzweig came close to that except that when he wrote his first book in 1953 he was intent on locating descending structures.

Interviewer: In other words, he felt that the problem lay in what you call daylight concentration. Underneath you could find true structures when in fact no true structures exist.

Harris: You could find these true structures underneath the static gestalt. It was a daring thing for him to write at that time, because the book fell by the wayside completely. Academics and universities disregarded it entirely. In Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness Da Silva enters a certain age and mask, then he paints himself into another mask, he is surrounded by masked figures.

Interviewer: This Da Silva figure is so critical to your later novels that there may lie a theme central to the novels.

Harris: As a matter of fact, in the four books Palace, Heartland, Da Silva, and Tree of the Sun, I point out in an interview that Da Silva in Palace comes to you covered in newspapers and the lines are running. There you have the seminal, catastrophic motif of the painting on the canvas.

Interviewer: In another sense you are using another image, because the newspaper is the news of the day breaking up.

Harris: Da Silva is covered with the news of the day breaking up. I hadn't thought of that when I wrote the book.
Interviewer: Thank you, for explaining the unusual use of synchronicity in your novels.
Interviewer: In the University of Kent brochure where you are listed, Wilson, as a special author, there is this description of your work: you are called "the Guyanese who has experimented with the mythical form of the novel as a way of adapting this European genre to South American history and landscape." How do you react to this description of your work?

Harris: I do not think that I would put it myself in that way "as a way of adapting this European genre to South American history and landscape." But perhaps one could illustrate the ways in which I find I have been using myth, or mythical form, in my novels by looking at The Secret Ladder and what occurs there, and also at Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness.

Now in The Secret Ladder one has clearly the use of the Perseus-Andromeda theme. I have always felt that in a heterogeneous society the function of myth is enormously important because it helps us to revise static attitudes. Through myth one has the possibility of looking at dangers which could encompass one within some area of myth that one takes for granted. For example, in The Secret Ladder one has the ancient African. I wrote that novel at a time when I had not anticipated
the rise of the African themes in the Caribbean. Clearly that is an important element in the Caribbean but it also sustains certain dangers which one has to look at carefully. For example, in The Secret Ladder the death of Poseidon occurs when Bryant is responsible for his death without intending his death. One could see this strand drawn out of the Perseus myth, the death of the grandfather. It's a very important incident in the Perseus myth. The other element is the element of sacrifice. One could see the Bryant involvement with ancient Poseidon, whom he regards as his grandfather, as an involvement in an area that could become idolotrous. In fact, he does harm the one thing that he prizes most. Bryant sees Poseidon as a kind of African grandfather. He reinforces his affections; this leads to an idolotrous stasis and this may result in greater harm being done to the very cause he serves.

Bringing in the Greek myth one revises that complex and relates to that complex as something which is inevitably partial; it could never have a total shape of significance. This is one of the realities of myth.

Interviewer: This is what you mean by the myth for "getting one out of a corner?"

Harris: Getting one out of a corner, getting one out of a fixation that becomes so absolute and total that one could be devoured by it. I found that I was able to, perhaps deliberately, relate the myth of Perseus and the grandfather very subtly. It seems to me in a heterogeneous complex that it is possible for one myth to act on another myth in this way. One has the European myth acting on the African myth. I don't think in an area like the Caribbean or the South Americas with this enormous heterogeneity that one should be fixated in any absolute
condition of myth because in a strange way this seems to me to destroy the imaginative truth of myth. We have this in the involvement of Bryant with the grandfather; this has to do with the whole business of the way myth is distended from or within the historical womb and the necessity to see that womb in all its complex parts.

The other issue which arises and has to do with Andromeda also plays very subtly in *The Secret Ladder*. We have this curious figure of Catalena, the Portuguese woman who is rescued and becomes a sort of Andromeda figure. But there is an enormous validity in the Andromeda figure because when one looks at the whole issue of sacrifice one wonders to what extent the feminine muse is at the heart of sacrifice. We usually think of sacrifice (especially in the Christian theme of sacrifice), we think of the crucified Christ. We forget that behind the crucified Christ there are all these Andromeda figures. They are figures of the feminine, the female, the mother, and all the suffering that is instilled, implicated, in those figures, therefore the whole theme of sacrifice. Once again one is no longer committed to a total function of sacrifice, to a mere dominated issue of sacrifice. One is able to look at something much more pregnant.

That is how the Andromeda figure comes into the myth. Those are two areas in which there is a quite deliberate utilization of European myth; in fact it comes at the point in the novel where we find the foul sisters, the immortal foul sisters Hope and Progress. One has here the curious ushering in of the Gorgon sisters and the destructive female element. In other words, it seems to me in the heterogeneous complex that we have all these various areas of myth: European, African, Pre-Columbian, Asian. All these various areas of myth can play against
each other. They are rooted in profound necessities which reside in that society. These necessities have to do with the clarity of a state of the imagination which is created by a combination of motives rather than by absolute, sovereign images. There is a combination of motives and one thing plays against another so that one is constantly capable of "coming out of the corner" as you said, coming out of a total fixation, a binding fixation which could lead eventually to a conflict, to insane conflict.

Interviewer: In fact this very variety of mythological references in your work seems to suggest a good deal more than merely establishing a particular social or cultural context. As you pointed out, you use so many different kinds of myth that it is impossible to talk about a South American historical landscape as the aim or purpose of what you are doing. One thinks, for example, of Yeats using the Irish myths and legends to create a particular Irishness in his poetry. But I don't find this quality in your own work.

Harris: No, that is not my intention. My intention is to sense the enormous depths of the native reality which builds on universality, because I believe in a great quest or struggle in which we are involved and the quest for a community in which we have authority in freedom and in which it is possible to sense the genuine imperatives of sacrifice as well as the genuine potentiality for great beauty. It is this quest for a community that makes the imaginative artist profoundly responsible and this kind of responsibility has nothing to do with being a spokesman for a particular society. The world in which we live today is so dangerous and so riddled with problems that what is at stake is the birth or rebirth of community in the most genuine sense in which one could use
that term. So that in a curious way a writer is in exile because that community is so imperiled that for him to believe that it exists in any one state or any one situation is a self-deception.

Interviewer: I am thinking that the writer is involved in discovering a reality beyond the superficial facts, because as you point out, society is more involved than it appears if one simply looks at history as a collection of facts. There is Mircea Eliade's attitude to myth which he refers to as sacred history, not history in the historical sense. As he puts it, "it is the sacred that is preeminently the real. To tell a myth is to say not what happened historically but what happened ab-originally, before history begins." It is fair to say that your work deals with this kind of reality.

Harris: Yes, I would say that, but in a certain very real sense. In the sense that what one brings out of the Guyanas and the South Americas and the Caribbean is that kind of very deep-seated sensation and one is therefore indebted to that kind of place; so one brings that out. One is not saying that place is not important; the place is important because of this extraordinary cargo which one brings out of it. But in fact, as Mircea Eliade is saying, there is a reality that runs through that place which runs deeper than place. I would relate this to a community in which the writer is a profoundly responsible imagination and that responsibility has nothing to do with being a spokesman. I do not believe that artists' propaganda. And I think this is a great danger, that people should be pushed forward to become spokesmen. They are pushed forward in terms in what is called "grounds of dignity," all of which are admirable aspects of the body politic.

Interviewer: Perhaps necessary in the Caribbean.
Harris: Perhaps necessary but all of this could falsify the deepest significance that resides in this sort of urgent motivations that arise within the imaginative personality.

Interviewer: I was reading recently a work on shamanism, I've forgotten the author's name, but I remember the author wrote that the shaman links heaven and earth, sacred and profane through his own arcane knowledge. He is a sense of what is called the pillar of heaven. Now this kind of imagery appears in your work quite a lot; it is the imagery of the ascent or descent of a particular pillar, be it of fire, or rock, or what have you. I am thinking, for example, at the end of Palace of the Peacock of the ascent, or again the ascent of the water on the pole with Fenwick waiting on the river. Is there an element of shamanism that you deliberately employ in your writing or did it begin with Palace of the Peacock as an unconscious, unsought for element? Because it seems to me to relate to your use of mythology and your attitude to what is "real."

Harris: This goes back to what you were saying in the first place. There wasn't a deliberation in Palace, but when I look back I can see the shamanistic elements. Before I deal with that, perhaps I could come back to the issue of adapting myth.

Now I gave an example of The Secret Ladder in which there is a certain kind of adaptation of myth because one has the deliberate Perseus-Andromeda themes, though these themes are used in such a way all the time that one is unravelling a complex of myth. New content enters in the case of the Secret Ladder; the Andromeda figure is no longer the purely European Andromeda figure. That Andromeda figure has picked up new content to do with the necessities that reside in the Canje area and
obviously the same applies to Bryant and to Poseidon. So one is unravelling a kind of static image and new content engages; and therefore the whole sort of complex which we discussed before comes into play. But there is another way in which myth functions and in which there isn't even that element of tenuous deliberation that is in Palace of the Peacock. This comes very clearly in Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness because I had not sensed the strange importance of the self-creating creator which Ehrenzweig speaks of in The Hidden Order of Art.

I was really astonished when I read that book because I discovered that the theme is at the heart of Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness, with modifications because one has Da Silva as a dying god precisely because his life, his inner life, his self-portraits, involve other masks: Magellan, Cuffy, Henry Rich the English aristocrat. One has all those complicated investitures of tradition within which he resides and he unravels them in order to learn much more profoundly how in fact the theme of the hero, this is one aspect of it, the theme of the self-born, self-spawned hero, who is susceptible to the furies, who seems to exist on a monolithic plane, this self-born, self-spawned hero is burdened with guilt or innocence, as the case may be. We lose sight entirely of the "nameless crew," all that were involved with him. The entire complex comes back and attacks a living society, a living person within society, so that one had that kind of modification of the self-creating creator, as Ehrenzweig puts it. There is a modification, nevertheless; you could see this thrust of the dying god that is reborn and may be reborn in a manner which allows him to see more clearly, more deeply into the past so that he is able to create a real future rather
than simply to succumb to the imprints of the past which would push him on remorselessly to repeat the same catastrophes, the same alienations, the same divisions between the self-spawned god and the nameless crew. This occurs because of the curious way the dying god dies through others and, in a sense, releases something that needs to be released in himself and through others as well.

Now that is one aspect of the self-creating creator. The other aspect is the curious grouping of muses or madonna figures. I think Ehrenzweig lists three: we have the exact number in Jen as the flying madonna at a certain level, Manya and Kate Robinson, [or] there is the madonna of the state. That strange grouping which Ehrenzweig discovers when he looks deeply into Mozart and Goethe. I had no idea of the importance of that kind of constellation. That is the opposite to what I was saying in The Secret Ladder, in which I had a certain kind of deliberation between the Perseus and Andromeda figures. But here it was a wholly intuitive thing and I was utterly startled to find the significance of that kind of constellation. Furthermore, we see that we have the oceanic madonna figure which plays through Kate in the curious Madonna Pool. We also have the flying madonna and this comes out of the ways in which one senses a certain evolution of consciousness. The animal, the bird that flies instinctively from one mark to another mark, that kind of instinct has been modified in the human consciousness, precisely because this evolution has occurred and man has lost or partially lost that unerring instinct, but in losing that gained something else, the capacity for hindsight. So that Da Silva looks back at his canvases painted seven years before and sees things begin to emerge. This is how the genie, the lamp, comes into play.
Interviewer: Here you have another myth, of course. It is unconscious and needs to be released but also controlled.

Harris: But it is enormously interesting, I think, to see that we have the flying madonna or the aerial figure, and we have the water madonna, the oceanic madonna, and that kind of conciliation is in some degree the conciliation which Ehrenzweig is bringing into play with certain modifications. It is interesting to reflect on this, because when we look at Hudson's The Green Mansions (and this relates to your question on shamanism), we could see that Rima is his aerial madonna, which corresponds to the Manya figure. When you go to Carpentier you have the earth-water madonna in Rosario. Those figures, both of them, in terms of their own unique content, appear in Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness. So that you have a development that astonished me to discover—that kind of constellation, with modifications. But it is quite wrong to speak of adapting. It is wrong to speak of it even in terms of The Secret Ladder context, because it is not a deliberate adaptation. What one is doing all the time is relating to a certain kind of imaginative truth in myth.

Interviewer: What I suppose Jung calls an archetypal image rather than a mythological one?

Harris: Well, I don't know how to describe it. I can only see that the thrust of responsibility which has to do with authority and freedom is so strange that one has to allow what appears to be contrasting spheres of experience to play on each other in such a manner that we begin to modify and transform what would become a wholly polarized condition of being. When that polarization occurs, one breeds conflict because there is no way out of the impasse save through conflict.
Interviewer: Talking about Ehrenzweig's book, it occurs to me that he does discuss Mozart's *Magic Flute* in terms of a shamanistic thrust. What I found fascinating in reading that section is that he discusses the role of the magic flute itself as a curiously bisexual symbol. It struck me immediately that here again you have a shamanistic quality and I don't know if you felt it when you were writing, but you do use the bone flute in your novels in that curious way, in that the flute has that double significance and is capable of penetrating but also of containing. Did you actually feel that consciously when you employed that image of the flute?

Harris: There again one speaks of myth. I did not dream that the Carib flute had this enormous bearing on *Palace of the Peacock*. Toward the end in particular when Carroll is whistling through the various horizons it seemed to me that this related in a very strange and remarkable way to the Carib flute because the Carib flute was a very serious attempt to Caribs made to undermine their own hubris and to begin to contain contrasts, to digest contrasts so that in fact, once again, you see this thrust towards a community, a real community with a possibility of rebirth in it rather than a possibility of having alienated groups, one group ruling the other, one group oppressing the other, one group oppressed by the other. Our world is riddled by that in one shape or form, because tyranny unfortunately breeds tyranny. And this is a very difficult thing to learn. In *Ascent to Omai* I was trying to point to this and point to the possibilities in fact of freedom and learning freedom through suffering and tyranny and deprivation. But it is much easier for tyranny to breed tyranny and for those who have been beaten down to become the tyrants of tomorrow. To return, therefore to
Palace of the Peacock, I had not sensed it. But the flute idea is there, just as I hadn't sensed the Ehrenzweig concepts. This flute idea has an enormous significance. The whole idea of music in the Tree of the Sun which takes up from the point of Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness with Jen's pregnancy. This is the seed from which the whole novel grows. Apart from the idea of painting in Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness there is a thrust to music and a thrust to sculpture. All these different arts are arts which point to the unfinished nature of a community and out of this unfinished nature it is possible to begin to grow again.

Interviewer: It is necessary to have a kind of space, an open end, to this kind of idea of community; otherwise it becomes static. Are you saying that, like the Navajo Indian, you can't weave the blanket without leaving that little break in the stitch so that the soul can escape?

Harris: It's a question that we have a tendency, because of long centuries of conquest, to involve ourselves in implacable sovereignties.

Interviewer: It's more comfortable.

Harris: It's very difficult to create a new sense of community in which sovereignty has to be yielded in order to find a new dimension. This is very difficult; and the clamor all the time is to cling to what appears to be absolute and sovereign. All images are partial and when we cling, therefore, to what appears to be a total condition of sovereignty, we deceive ourselves about the nature of the world in which we live, because we invest in that image a totality which it does not possess. In doing so we have no other alternative but to exterminate others which do not fit in. It is in this sense that we have to see all images as partial. But the partiality of an image may help us to grow,
because it becomes a motive that relates to another motive, and another motive. There is a combination of motives, a sort of *ars combinatori* theme, combination of motives. And the clarity that in fact emerges out of that combination is a clarity of hope and growth, the clarity of achievement, of maturity. Whereas, if we invest in an absolute condition, that [absolute] maturity is eclipsed precisely because of the conditions we have been describing. That [is the artist's] responsibility. If the artist simply becomes a spokesman for a group, he is consumed by the doom which will consume all those to whom he speaks; and that is part of the dead end of a lot of twentieth century writing, because inevitably it has led to all sorts of totalitarian fixations. We can see some of the major European figures, Ezra Pound and others, who became eventually locked into a ritual order that led to a totalitarian monstrosity.

Interviewer: The dream of perfection, in fact.

Harris: Well, it is the dream of perfection, but a perfection which does not take into account the fact that risks are constant. What perfection means is that there is a ground of fate: fate has many roots in one's life. If you were to live perhaps according to a certain condition, which is a condition to a large extent associated with your upbringing, you relate to one root which comes up and that root is the saving hand. There are other roots which lie outside of that, away from that, and these roots may never come into your consciousness at all. But if they do, it means that you become involved in risks of a different order than the risks you would be involved in if you had kept safely to the line which related to the way you had been conditioned and educated. But, those risks which are taken on the extreme side are also
assisted by a certain kind of fate which grows out of the soil. In other words, there is a certain kind of perfection. And this brings us to the shamanistic level, which has to do with our limited conditions as humankind. It has to do with the sense that what is at the bottom of the ladder is at the top of the ladder. Therefore, the dazzling figure of grace which is at the top of the ladder and is a dazzling figure because it can never be apprehended in a total investiture. At the bottom of the ladder, where you have the difficult pressure of fate and the ground is riddled and torn, that kind of fate which is going up there is transformed at various levels. Fate is in fact a little higher up. One has instincts at the bottom of the ladder. That instinct becomes fate. But fate is one of the conceptions that lies at the heart of tragedy, which is one of the great achievements of any culture. But then you go higher up, above tragedy; you move to that dazzling figure. The enormous risks which a certain kind of imagination could take may be possible because there is some kind of guiding hand which is thrusting up and which sustains him so that he may not entirely topple into the abyss. This has nothing to do with a static condition, because in a sense he had to discover that kind of a fate for himself. There may be many roots of fate in a line; and if you happen to be at this end of the line, that proof is the one which is most pertinent to you because you are conditioned and educated to grow up in that way, so that what risks you take are to some extent conditioned risks which you would easily take, or risks which are most accessible to you. In a sense you feel a kind of security that has to do with your family, your friends. If you live in an area where you have family and friends and certain things that are "on your side," that is your fate. In a sense the risks that
you take are assisted and guided by that kind of fate. But, at the
other end of the line, there is a deeper kind of buried fate which you
don't see at all. And to move out of that line means, in fact, a
decision on your part which has to do with freedom.

Interviewer: This is risk taking?

Harris: It is an enormous risk taking to move out to that end.
And even the cultivation of that which is buried deep in the soil
involves effort and work on your part, so that that thing which is far
away down and has not seen the light of consciousness for ages may come
up and thrust up and then you begin to climb that ladder. But, as you
climb that ladder you are hit by the stones of the world and the ladder
is shaking. Nevertheless, it relates to a certain root which is buried
very deep and is coming up. So you have this tension between risk and
some strange, deep-seated apparatus which comes up and is the guiding
hand. That has nothing to do with the totalitarian condition.

Interviewer: What has struck me as you have spoken about this is
the image of a rhizome growing under the ground and sending out each
year a different shoot farther along the unseen, hidden rhizome. In
fact, Jung's biography, Memories, Dreams and Reflections, does in fact
talk about his life as being rather like a rhizome growing underground
and sending up the visible shoots at different points of his development.
What startled me was the accuracy of your image in relation to what Jung
talked about in terms of the inner life.

Harris: I can't instantly recall that. But I would imagine there
are many ways of describing this. When one thinks of what Jacques Monod
has said that every living creature is also a fossil. A simple way of
demonstrating this is to look at certain birds that fly which have a bone in the wing that relates to a dinosaur.

Interviewer: In fact, isn't there a theory abroad now, in America, that the dinosaurs didn't become extinct, they became birds?

Harris: Birds have a bone which, if you look at it in terms of the "night sky of biology," is just a faint star in the night sky. But nevertheless, it relates to the enormous shape of the dinosaur, so that we have the fate of the dinosaur drawn up into the ladder of the flying bird. That bird involves enormous risks over ages and ages, for that bird to fly as it flies. But, it relates to a strange fate that has to do with a deep-seated reality bone of the dinosaur perpetually remaining in existence. This is not the case: a profound transformation, modification, occurred which allows for a new creature to appear. And this is very hard for people to understand.

When you look at many of the major European writers they have not learned that lesson. One could list writer after writer, major writer after writer, who was fascinated either by Hitler or Mussolini, just as black intellectuals today are fascinated by Idi Amin or some other dictator.

Genuine perfection is a riddle, a mystery, because it relates to this deep-seated root which comes up and makes these enormous risks available to us in terms of some creature that flies and moves like a strange fiction that exists. But the shapes have been constantly transformed and undermined and modified. Therefore, you have this hidden order that breaks the surfaces in order to heal something else, to make something else which comes out that is whole and healed, but is coming out in terms of an evolution. One has to call it an evolution in
terms of one's vision, because the dazzling perfection of deity is not available to one as an image. The dazzling perfection of deity has an imagelessness in it. Man's condition is such that very often he has to relate to what is new in terms, sometimes, of terrifying, familiar images. The emotion of fear is sometimes something we know. Love is something we hardly know at all; therefore we bring an emotion into play which tells us something of the necessity which exists in us to be loved and to love. And that emotion seems to spring out of fear, because fear is very familiar, a familiar condition, whereas love is an unfamiliar condition.

Interviewer: Fear, of course, also protects. Without fear one feels totally without armor, the reaction one needs when faced with real danger.

Harris: And fear may have its protective side, in that it may help us to save ourselves. When we speak of the perfection of fate, it is a perfection that resides in the ways in which the species also preserves and changes itself, even through dimensions of fear.

Interviewer: What you are arguing for, it seems to me by definition, is not merely difficult but emotionally almost impossible; because if one is protected by a sense of fear as a matter of intuition, if it is a reaction that is reflexive, one doesn't have to think about being afraid. Then, how does one circumvent this?

Harris: You circumvent it because you begin to sense that the images in which you invest as total, sovereign images are all partial. And therefore you begin to relate to an enormous clarity which resides in the accumulation of motives that allows them to come out of these
conditions. But we have to recognize this strange similarity of dissimilarities at times.

Interviewer: Here we have the subject of what has frequently been called, and with some justice you must admit, the difficulty of your novels. I think it is V.S. Naipaul who said that all art eventually (you may not agree with this) is local, but a writer and the receiver of his work must share the same equipment. I don't like the context of the writer and the receiver/consumer of his work, but there is some justice in that remark in that without that equipment, without what Ehrenzweig called unconscious scanning, without the ability to receive a number of partial images at once without succumbing to the need to consolidate one image, if one doesn't have this equipment, what is the next step?

Harris: I don't agree with the use of the word local. For example, when one looks at the native phenomenon one is looking at the whole potentiality for universality and I assess that in terms of the various roots which go out along a line. You could take one root out at the extreme end which is deeply buried, deeply native, and you help it to come up, and it comes up as a remarkable bird that flies with the star of the dinosaur in its wing. So that on the question of equipment I come back to what I said before—that the profound responsibility which resides in the creative imagination is towards the community that is not totalitarian. And this is where I cannot go along with what is so fashionable on many levels, because this tendency towards, if not a totalitarian novel, an authoritarian condition, exists in many societies. The great responsibility of the imagination resides in this and is the only way, it seems to me, that this community can die and be reborn. We have discussed some of the ways: the flying madonna, the oceanic madonna.
These are quite different figures, but precisely because we have that kind of conciliation you can speak of the self-creating creator, once you have modified it in terms which we have discussed.

Let me give you an illustration from Da Silva da Silva's *Cultivated Wilderness*. We have the strange kind of play that occurs in Holland Park when Cuffy dies. There are two poles: at one is unbearable violations which you associate with Cuffy.

Interviewer: Slavery, the Middle Passage?

Harris: ... as well as unbearable violations that have occurred in any part of the globe. You have that pole. Now that is an unbearable pole, but you can pull out of it a theme of sacrifice that is bearable. You can still learn from it something to do with the naked shape. When I say the naked shape I mean that at the heart of any tradition there must exist a body that lives. The tradition, after all, has its investiture, and that investiture is the clothing which naked bodies wear. At some degree we come into dialogue with that body as we begin to unravel these unbearable violations, so that we have some kind of vision of original sacrifice. In *The Secret Ladder* I was attempting to show that with the Andromeda figure: that behind Christ the male god lies the female who is also crucified. You have all these elements which relate to a genuine vision of sacrifice. If you become committed to one absolute shape you impoverish that shape. If you are committed to one total shape the irony is that you impoverish that shape, because that shape has its roots in other shapes.

Now the other pole relates to Henry Rich the aristocrat and has to do with the question of freedom as it presents itself to us, as so idyllic that it is unattainable. The Henry Rich figure, the age of
Cromwell—you can see some of these imperatives of freedom so that within these two poles you mint out of the one pole something to do with sacrifice, and from the other pole you mint something to do with the beauty of freedom. You have within those poles that complexity of nakedness, the complexity of nakedness within you. The local conditions could be seen as these poles in themselves, in which case you would have no possibility of a genuine community in which you understand sacrifice and in which you can interpret sacrifice, because all sacrifice would be buried in unbearable violation. On the other hand you would have no society in which you can relate to freedom, because all freedom would be unattainable. It would just be an idyllic pole.

This is the problem that arises in Naipaul. If you are simply to rely on equipment in a local sense you are doomed. If, however, by local, in depth is meant, then I would go along with him and say that the equipment he is seeking is an equipment which one has to usher into being by this kind of involvement. It is not a hopeless involvement because, after all, one is dealing with native roots, which may lie at great depths but are still native. One is not imposing something; one is pulling something up from the very depths of the soil of place and time.

Interviewer: I am sure by local Naipaul doesn't mean a sense of native depth. He does mean a communication between writer and reader is extremely limited if the reader is simply not equipped emotionally or mentally to understand what the writer is writing. I think this is his real concern. But there is another remark, if I may invoke Naipaul again, that seems to me perhaps even more interesting. And that is the one he makes about the novelist in particular being an unstitcher of
systems. It struck me again when you talked about the need to unravel the clothing of a particular institution or particular attitude so as to get at the complexity of it, to get at the multiplicity of images. We are talking about unstitching and it seems to me much more applicable to your own work.

Harris: I don't know in what context he uses it. But in the sense in which you present it to me I would accept it, because I do believe the writer is an unstitcher, precisely because that is the only way in which one can create a genuine community without being overwhelmed by a certain stasis. One of the paradoxes of European art is that some of the very major writers have eventually been caught in that complex. They have been fascinated by a condition. This is one of the things I sought in Black Marsden to present; the Black Marsden figure has a great deal to teach us if we can accept his ambivalence. I think Europe has a great deal to teach us if we can accept its ambivalence. You can begin to relate to these extraordinary strategies of the imagination, as in the Ehrenzweig writings. So you have this ambivalence with the Black Marsden figure: he can be a terrifying figure; and yet, in the sense that Goodrich could see his own face coming out, there you have the intuitive dimension of nakedness and unravelling of poles.

Interviewer: The point about the West Indies and the Caribbean being historyless is, I think, pertinent here. You said somewhere that what the Caribbean needs, and perhaps what the world needs, is a philosophy of history that has not, in fact, been written. You are looking in your work, it seems to me, for an alternative history to get back once again to the idea of a sacred space, or a sacred alternative
attitude to events. You said that perhaps such a philosophy may lie buried in the arts of the imagination.

Harris: Yes. It comes back to what we were saying about roots, the roots of fate. Unless one is sensitive it means that the history that one becomes involved in is a history that imprints itself on us so remorselessly that there seems to be no capacity within the body politic to revise the nature of sovereignty. It becomes wholly locked in a model of sovereignty which is historic. But, in fact, is this what history is saying when one looks deeply at the traumas and problems and residues of history? History, after all, is not only what is written; there are many areas of history that are not written at all, but they are still imprinted in the psyche. And if history leads to a condition in which you have an implacable sovereignty, it means that the very best within the tradition is vitiated.

Interviewer: The point is well taken. And it seems to me that with your work, perhaps, this history is being written. Would you consider that a fair comment? Would you, in fact, identify yourself with the writing of this kind of history?

Harris: I wouldn't put it as "this kind of history." I feel that history has much more to offer us than what we accept in terms of total images, that history has another side in which it is saying that the total images are partial. And if we see this, we have another clarity within another area of another kind of clarity other than the apparently lucid pole of history, which dominates us so absolutely that it could lead to the vitiation of tradition. What is best in a tradition? What is best has to do with all these various roots which stretch away and make it possible for us to move out into areas and take risks. That is
one of the natures of history. It may have several natures. But the imaginative psyche is in concert with that kind of history, in that it can see that what we accept as history most implacably and dogmatically is a fiction.

Interviewer: Which is a nice point actually at which to end. The fiction which you are writing then, it seems to me, is more real than the definition of the word fiction seems to suggest, if it deals with the genuine complexity of reality rather than with historical fact. Wilson, thank you very much indeed.

Harris: Thank you.
Interviewer: A while ago you were talking about the "light." Now one begins to realize to some extent this tremendous preoccupation you have had with eyes. The eye, the peculiarity of the eye, is a very central symbol to all of your work. In Palace of the Peacock you have the dreamer. He has an eye; but that eye is the underground eye, which is to some extent closed because he cannot yet see the subterranean levels of his existence. The upper eye, the daylight or surface eye, is wide awake and rules his sight, rules his world because all the conceptions that have come out of that other eye which his brother has, and his brother rules the world. That is the conception, the reigning and ruling conception. I presume that the eye of the scarecrow is the walking a line and one is tempted to let the mob have its way in opinion because it is easier.

Harris: If you let the mob have its way, then you simply succumb to a form of death. To come back to the question of the eye of the scarecrow, this is used in various ways. Indeed, as you rightly say, it was there even in Palace, with the two eyes. In Black Marsden it is the eye that unravels biases, that tunnels through. Remember when Jennifer says, "you are one of us because you have the eye of the scarecrow."
She called that the judgement day scenario, the capacity to tunnel through. You can see that the eye of the scarecrow makes it possible for meaningful distortions to enter into existence.

If you look at this scene around you, here in Holland Park, you could just take it for granted and then you are stuck in it. If you can sense that it is as if the whole cosmos is overshadowed, then there are luminous shadows and the brightness we are seeing now has to do with the luminous quality of the shadows. On a rainy day you wouldn't see that shadow; even the sharp shadow in between the leaves has a luminous quality. That is why it springs out at you. On a day that is clouded those shadows wouldn't jump out at you. If you could transport yourself instantly to another continent, you might be blinded at first, or you might be astonished to find that this light is not as bright as it appears now, because you might be under a tropical sun that has vertical rays and you would have to creep back towards evening to find that same quality of light. This would astonish you because you associate this with midday.

Those meaningful distortions have to do with the eye of the scarecrow. This scarecrow eye is conscious all the time that nothing that you articulate into a solid position is as solid as it appears to be. This day which is so beautiful is not as fixed and solid as it appears to be because it exists on the globe, a turning globe. And there are curious mutations of the light around us which we cannot see but which affect us. This is the non-sense part. This eye of the scarecrow and its mutations have been quite strange, remarkable, right through the novels even up to Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness, where I spoke of non-sense data.
When I look back at the tropics, which seemed an excessively bright world to me when I lived there as a child, I can see now that I was blind to a lot of it because I couldn't really contrast it to other kinds of light. In India, for example, the light is so peculiar that you almost have a sense at times that some of the statues in the temple would resist gravity. The light is so peculiar that if you look at a piece of mud on the ground it becomes almost like a bone. The light seems to exhaust the flesh of the mud and reduce it in your eyes to a kind of bone. That is the eye of the scarecrow, how it relates one thing to another.

In Companions of the Day and Night I mentioned this concept of resistance to gravity. If you read Companions very closely you will find right through the novel a number of motifs to do with verticality, with the falling figure. So even though the novel seems to be written on a linear plane (that is you go from one thing to another on a linear plane), in fact, the novel carries this verticality from the start. The man who is painting on the street is conscious of the lake under his feet. He is conscious of the fall through the street into the lake underneath where he sees Montezuma, the ancient Montezuma, moving on a canal. At the very beginning of the novel you are already involved in the fall of Idiot Nameless who falls from the top of the pyramid. It is as if you are starting with the Idiot Nameless buried in the soil of Mexico City under the ground. It isn't until you get to the end that you learn of Idiot Nameless' fall. But at the very beginning you are already immersed in that fall because it is as if this falling figure is ceaselessly falling. It is a timeless fall, so that you don't simply identify it in time. It exists everywhere. When he goes, for example,
to the nun in New York there is a great curtain that billows up around his head when he is speaking to the nun. This curtain has the pyramid painted on it. It is as if the pyramid strikes his head and when he fell he also struck the pyramid. Then he has a sense of the two nuns: one is the nun of bone and you play on this notion of bone and blood, the notion of the splintered body as it picks up the rose and the bone. That falling body as it falls all the time seems to unravel the costumes it wears. Even the body that it wears is unravelled because there is some essential unstructured spirit that is falling through these costumes. That brings us back to what you were talking about earlier about the mediating force between structures.

Interviewer: This concept comes up in the idea of the prestructural state in American Indian mythology and the Idiot who is shapeless and therefore before the fixed shape, before the fixed sex and fixed cultural form. Many people have difficulty with this concept or cannot grasp it.

Harris: You must realize that when you are moving on ground like this, at times you feel a bit of alarm because you are moving into an area that needs to be continuously seen and perceived afresh. What you were saying in terms of that figure is that it is one that mediates. It is one of the shadowy figures in which those cultures are conscious of a mediation between structures but could not state it like that. Nevertheless, implicitly that is what the structure is doing. This would baffle many people because the tendency is to think of structures that as you descend you come to some structure that rules everything. That would appear to be in part the thrust of Ehrenzweig, but that was thirty years ago. My point is that if you descend always into structure, I think you will find that you will come to the ground where you will have to
confess to incorrigible bias, bias you can never correct. It cannot be corrected because structure carries bias with it. Ehrenzweig confessed a paradox that as he descended there was something very archaic in the world into which he descended. It was something also that seemed to comprehend all times. He can you have that? Curiously enough that happens in Tumatumari when Roy Solman strikes his head. He has an archaic side but he has a comprehensive side too. And I think that one comes to this position where you find the mediating forces. In Companions if you read the linear surface of the novel, you may omit these motifs that have to do with the verticality of the novel.

Interviewer: I find it impossible to read that novel with any assumption about the linear quality.

Harris: Anyone who would try to read it that way would fail to see that that is an irony. The verticality is stated all the way through but sometimes in peculiar ways so that sometimes the end seems to come before the beginning, as though you already exist within the moment when Idiot Nameless is falling through the pavement. That is the beginning of the novel; it is the end, yet it's really the beginning.

Interviewer: This is true of The Far Journey of Gudin as well.

Harris: Now in Genesis of the Clowns when the lightning storm occurs Wellington believes that he has been shot. That comes very early in the novel, but in time it comes after the expedition. Late in the novel Wellington visits Hope, who goes away, and it is conceivable that he comes back and finds Wellington in bed with Lucille. It's not absolutely stated, but it is implied this may have happened. Hope may have raised his gun to him, then desisted and didn't shoot him, spared
him because Wellington was like his father. But Wellington is only a few years older than Hope.

It was after that they went to Abary, the lightning storm came, and the whole tent seemed to collapse. There was a crack like a gun, like [a] gunshot, and Hope appeared in the tent and Wellington had the feeling that Hope was pointing a gun at him. This came after the incident at Christmas, when Wellington visited Hope's place to tell him that they had to leave on an expedition early in January. He also met Lucille, who came out of the back room dressed in a very light garment and he was very attracted to her. Hope told Wellington that he was going away for a few days. It is never explicitly stated, but it is implied that Wellington came back when he thought that Hope was away and that he went to bed with Lucille. Then Hope turned up unexpectedly and pointed his gun at him, then desisted. It is after that that they went on the expedition; so the scene which is painted early in the novel came after the visit, after Wellington visited Hope, after the Abary incident. But it comes early in the novel.

Do you see where the Oedipus idea is flickering through? Wellington is a father figure; Oedipus killed his father and slept with his mother without knowing it. Wellington is the father figure: Hope points the gun at him. All the women in the novel are all strangely modulated into each other like mothers of Guyana. They are all knitted into each other, but nowhere is it stated explicitly that they are incestuously woven together. The novel desists from doing that in order not to foster the notion of incest. Now I believe that incest occurred after the middle passage because there was an acute imbalance of the sexes. I believe that people without knowing it were committing incest
because their brothers and sisters were not even known to them. In Palace of the Peacock you have this secret notion of Schomburgh who may have slept with his sister and is filled with a horrific sensation that he has been overwhelmed by some witchcraft, that Carroll is his son. Yet he doesn't want that because Carroll is the child of his sister. Now in Genesis of the Clowns the incest theme is very subtly played through, but never made explicit because incest is not in the history books. It is a rumor; it is never a historical fact.

I don't think an imaginative novelist should concern his work with historical fact. I was playing with the idea of incest, but playing with it in an immense way in which the ancient Oedipus myth visits this disadvantaged society in order to redeem it. The great myths of the ancient world can reappear where you least expect them to appear. They don't necessarily have to confine themselves to great monumental conventions. Wellington is the father of Hope, symbolically speaking. He is only three or four years older than Hope, but he is the father. Hope is about to shoot him for sleeping with Lucille. Remember that this woman has a daughter as well, whom Hope virtually falls in love with; so you also get the inversion of the incest theme. Lucille resembles her mother very closely and it is in the end when the black Wellington sleeps with the daughter that Hope kills him. At the moment he fires the gun it is the daughter not the mother who is there. And it is the daughter he shelters almost incestuously. When Hope points the gun at the black Wellington there seems to be the notion in his mind that if he knew that this man was also Frank Wellington he would have known that whatever essence existed in the white Frank Wellington whom
he spared also existed in the black one. Therefore, he might have seen
the irony of fate.

Interviewer: At least he would sense it subconsciously.

Harris: If he had seen that fate was playing with him ironically, that here was a Frank Wellington returning. He didn't know the name of the man who was sleeping with his daughter Lucille who so closely resembled her mother. There you get the Oedipus myth. That is a very strange novel, *Genesis*. But there was no other way that I could write it. If I had attempted to write it, in say, the Mittelholzer fashion, I would have augmented the incest and made it sensational and presented a straight realistic portrait which could have appealed to people for all sorts of sensational reasons. To have done this would have been to have violated the true facts which are that I am not sure that incest occurred. This is only an intuition I have based on rumors. There are no historical grounds on which I could have assumed that incest occurred after the middle passage. I have a deep intuition that it occurred because the imbalance of sexes in Guyana has been the case from the earliest colonization of the coastlands. This is disregarding the Amerindians for the moment. This imbalance has been there right through until about 1920 or so when it began to even out. There were always more men than women. As a consequence it becomes almost inevitable that you would have had occasions of incest. You may have even had it in the middle passage; people may not have recognized each other. Suppose a man was there and his young daughter or sister came through later as a slave. He had known her when she was three years old, let us say he was twenty when he was transported. Now he is thirty-five, fifteen years later his daughter comes at eighteen; he doesn't know her. His desire
for a woman is so strong, if he could get that woman he would have her. How would he know she is his daughter? There were no records to make it totally clear that these people were related.

Interviewer: Records in fact were destroyed or deliberately not kept in order to break down family or tribal units to prevent cohesive groups or activity on the part of the slaves.

Harris: I always had the feeling that incest is part of the burden of guilt one carries coming out of Guyana. I have had that feeling since very far back, almost from early youth. But I also had the feeling that it is not something to be exploited because the facts are intuitive facts. Thus you get Genesis one of the few novels in which I made a greater thrust into this issue than in any of the others.

Now to return to what I was saying. To come back to the scene of the tent. In linear context, that would really occur after the visit to Albuoystown. But that sort of complex and subtle disruption bears on the way incest has overshadowed the minds of people before they were born, so that they were involved in it before they were born. Thus, instead of presenting it as a logical sequence you have to see its irrationality, its illogicality in a fiction that works that way. There is also the epigraph from Edwin Muir which comes from a poem on Oedipus: "I was the one who stumbled into guilt and now through guilt must seek other innocence." So the eye of the scarecrow works that way. It is an eye that does not accept the structures which appear to you immediately fixed, as this day around us is immediately fixed, the kind of sky and light. It is only when you begin to mediate on the strangeness of the light against other backgrounds of light that we can bring about that meaningful distortion that helps us to look through this moment into the
whole fabric of shadows and lights around the globe. In emotional matters the same thing applies.

Interviewer: Could you discuss a little of your ideas regarding Knife, his significance, who he is and what he is in Black Marsden?

Harris: Knife is presented, as are the others, as a figure who has to do with Black Marsden's peculiar operation. When he appeared in the Abbey he was supposed to correspond to curious instruments that are inserted into a culture. You have a kind of skeleton harp and skeleton knife, the eye of the scarecrow that tunnels through.

Interviewer: Skeletons of civilizations.

Harris: He gives the feeling that one could have the twanging harp in one's flesh, that if one could strip away the flesh the very skeleton could be converted into a harp. The skeleton which seems to be a deprived kind of structure can be converted into a harp; the mind of the skeleton is the life of sculpture. Knife is also some instrument that one carried within oneself and you begin to see Knife as a two-dimensional figure. When Goodrich first sees Knife, though Knife is a white man, he has a strong image of the Black Jamaican he met in Kingston. This Knife was the man who came into the restaurant or pub. He has a curious feeling about Knife who had a face like a beehive, like a cemetery in which all sorts of people were buried, as if his face would suck all the beggars in and bury them. This very Beehive-Knife comes into the restaurant and gives him a note and some money. But, when he sees the white man he sees this other Knife and is utterly amazed later to discover that he has made such an error. That is what Black Marsden sees as eye of the scarecrow, as judgement day scenario. So Knife exists both in terms of a world in which you are conscious of
the dangers that can exist within a society and Knife is related to the assassin of whom we spoke earlier. Knife is a figure that can be borne by Goodrich because of the Samsonian avalanche in which he is involved. All of that helps him to begin to disrupt the charmed circles within which Knife becomes the ruling principle.

You live in a world that is so polarized that what rules it is violence, because there is no way of transforming the world except through violence between polarized roots. Knife, therefore, becomes the guide, the only principle that can guide you. How can you do these dreadful things that constitute conquest? But Goodrich can bear that kind of torment for the first time because he is no longer locked into that order. Therefore he can carry Knife as a figure who teaches him the necessity to transform the world, whereas he couldn't have done it prior to a certain kind of experience. The same is true of Black Marsden, who teaches Goodrich to come into his own position, lonely as it is. His loneliness is very great: he stands, as it were, alone at the heart of the city. He could never come into that loneliness, aloneness which is pregnant with the future, if Black Marsden had not threatened him in another dimension. It was possible for him to sustain all these figures, Black Marsden, Knife, and all the others. Part of the shadow that Knife casts is the shadow of the assassin, the shadow of the man who cleans up the streets and goes out and exterminates all the beggars.

Interviewer: On the Austro-Hungarian border at Schopbrun there is a church built out of the bones of thousands of people who died from a pestilence. Monks were ordered to collect and bury all the bodies and later they were dug up and they made a church from the bones.
Harris: That is a fossil church, but the fossil has all the echoes and memories in it. It is curious that you should say that, because it was the walking bone that Goodrich saw. The bone was fleshed with light, yet it was a walking bone; it could shred itself and acquire a kind of flesh, a refugee church of man. What is curious about this is the sheer impossibility of entering into those novels. When you look back on them, it was a phenomenon really to have undertaken novels like that. The philosophical justifications for them are not immediate. What we discussed about structures and mediating between structures is not something that I could have intellectually stated. But it is all there intuitively. It is stated in different tones: seminal ruin, seminal catastrophe, because that is what your bone church means. Your bone church also means the refugee church of mankind and seems to me to symbolize the refugee status of mankind, in which the bones are scattered everywhere. When you see it like that, you convert the deprivation: the bones no longer become just bones; the skeleton which becomes a harp is no longer just a harp. Even when it becomes a knife it has a tone in it, the possibility of confronting the assassin in terms that do not allow the assassin to be the utterly insupportable monster which he appears to be when you yourself are locked into an order of things that seems wholly unable to see how partial it is.

The assassin thrives in a world where one does not confess to one's partialities. The whole ground of the assassin lies in this: "There is no way forward unless I kill you. You are so adamant and so incorrigible that I cannot move unless I kill you." If that is the truth of the world, if the logic of the world is incorrigible bias, then there will always be scope for the assassin. When you have confessed to your
biases that they are not as incorrigible as they seem, that is the first time that you can face the assassin. His power over you will begin to diminish from that moment. You see that he is not as sovereign as he appears to be. There is another perspective of change which lies in the canvases of existence. Then you can support the thought of the assassin, dreadful as it is; it is still dreadful, but you can support it, because it is no longer conclusive.

Interviewer: As you were speaking it occurred to me that the double, the shadow, really, which begins with the first novel and the Da Silva brothers, continues through the novels to Knife's shadow, which was seen in a different world. There is a stronger impression in Black Marsden that all these figures have shadows walking beside them, not just shadows but shadows of themselves.

Harris: This double concept has to do with the way one transforms deprivation. In a world such as ours you are aware of the sense of intense deprivation which people suffered; they have lost their original languages, both Africans and Amerindians. There are other deprivations, such as the Oedipus one, the one of possible incest. These deprivations could become opportunities through which you could begin to transform the world. That is a paradox. When one takes the position that we were discussing with Knife and Black Marsden, which is set in Europe and seen through this eye which a strict Scottish writer would not have used, what one is able to do is to suggest that you begin to support and bear a certain kind of anguish to do with the assassin, with Knife. And yet this has a rich texture of possibilities, because for the first time you realize that these structures which have been ruled by assumptions of incredible violence, those structures are not as absolute as they seem.
Thus, through the deprivations, which would have appeared to be fixed, you begin to transform the world. There is a double in it. Each thing seems to have another side to it that allows you to work through materials which you would not have utilized at all under other circumstances.

Naipaul says, for instance, that there is nothing in the West Indies. But what I would say is that there exists in the West Indies what appears to be poverty but has a rich aspect to it, because you are able to gain this sense of mediation between forms and structures which you would not have gained. The very deprivations push you in that direction. Without the staring eye you wouldn't sense the subtlety and complexity of the other eye. It is through this other staring eye which seems to be deprived, through that kind of apparition of insensibility and death, that you begin to undermine death. It seems utterly remote from life because it can stare at the sun without being blinded. Without seeing it in that way you would take it for granted and fail to see the way you can transform various boundaries.

Take the non-sense idea, the non-sense data of existence. You can look back with hindsight and sense that this is part of the mystery of freedom, because you can look back and see that you were in dialogue with some sort of illumination that was coming out of a piece of stone. That stone becomes a lamp with hindsight. When you were actually close to it you didn't see the light that it cast on part of your life. The light was cast, but you were not aware of it. This is where the myth enters of the genie of the lamp that was rubbed. The lamp, after all, was thrown away on the rubbish heap. You could pull it out of the rubbish heap; you rub it and it shines. That is how De Silva lived with
his paintings. All of the paintings had an element of non-sense in them because he painted them and didn't realize he had a profound dialogue with them. Later on he could perceive this.

That is how the double works, the creeping up of a certain kind of hindsight, or foresight position. Clearly it illumines the future as well. As you move into the future you are aware that the future possesses these strange milestones, which are already at work in your life though you are not yet conscious of them. Though we sit here we are already moving into the future. Because of what we have experienced in the past, we face the future with the sense that we are not as solid as we think we are. There is a shadow with us which is already aware of the kinds of illuminations coming out of the future. Those illuminations are addressing us already and our responses to those illuminations will have a great deal to do with the kind of freedom which we may secure in the future, just as our hindsight into the past teaches us a great deal of all the freedoms that we have won out of the past. So there is always this double, this sense of going back into the past as though the shadow leaves us and returns to the past to inspect the past and bring news back; and the shadow goes into the future to inspect the future and come back to us with news of the future. That sense you have of the shadow going with the solid person is very real, very true. Sometimes this shadow seems to disappear because of the kind of light that is cast. At other times it appears to jump out at you. In Ascent to Omai the doppelganger is much more pronounced [than in the other novels] but it is not always so obvious.

Interviewer: It seems that it is not just the specter of the other person who is there, but the ghost of other civilizations, other
societies as well, the specter of an Amerindian force that appears through society as well as a European force or African force in multiple layers.

Harris: They are all there because in a sense as you begin to activate your own resources these other resources come into play even though you are not aware of them. When you activate something in yourself you become aware of them.

Interviewer: This goes back to what we discussed earlier about the structure of the novels, the "holes" in them, the spaces and working in and out through them.

Harris: These forces, incomplete as they are, arouse in you a sensation of forces which exist in you but which you are not conscious of. The dialogue, then, that is set up is a mysterious dialogue, because it lies beyond the framework of the book. And yet the activation of these resources is what is so strange. You are activating the mediating element between yourself and the past, between one civilization and another, between one culture and another. A very rich fabric begins to come into play just as we look around. This day then would be pregnant. When we look around we are aware that these trees are not just stuck into the ground as a kind of backcloth but they relate to light elsewhere around the globe. The kinds of densities that alert you are what bring this place to life. Otherwise you could just sit back and the scene becomes a painted background, a painted proscenium around you. The densities that suddenly disrupt the pattern are what bring into play so many shadows coming out of other landscapes.

Interviewer: This kind of interplay is what first fascinated me with your novels. But, it is the very quality that keeps others from
reading the novels, because it requires a great deal of effort. Thank you.


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BIographical Sketch

Marion C. Gilliland was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1944. She grew up in a military family, receiving her education in a variety of towns and states before coming to Gainesville. She received her B.A. in language arts at the University of Florida in 1966, and subsequently taught for several years prior to returning to the University of Florida to complete her M.A. in theater with a minor in art history in 1971. After completing her Ph.D. in English at the University of Florida in 1982 she plans to continue teaching humanities.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Alistair M. Duckworth, Chairman
Professor of English

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Ira Clark, Co-chairman
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