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Ouverture

Hena Maes-Jelinek

> 'One awakens at times to one's frailty in the cradle of the mind in particles that settle on one's brow or hand or skin, sailing particles from distant mountains and valleys that seek their mysterious parentage in all substance or in the alchemy of sound in a rainbow. Such . . . is the implicit orchestra of living landscapes when consciousness sings through variegated fabrics and alternations of mood, consonance as well as dissonance, unfathomable age and youth, unfathomable kinships'.[1]

This short passage is quoted from a partly autobiographical essay which is also a superb poetic hymn to the livingness of nature. In it coalesce several fundamental elements of Harris's writing discussed from various perspectives in this issue: the abstract and the sensuous or, more exactly, the abstract ***through*** the sensuous; consciousness, individual, communal and cosmic, as it "sings" through both intangible and concrete environmental forms; Harris's perception of living nature as essentially dynamic,[2] expressing itself in a language of its own like the "whispering trees" that recur through the author's writing from his early poems on, the "singing rocks" in the essay quoted here or even in the human language partly acquired from "the sound of the rain falling, from the sigh of the leaves, from the music of the earth as we pressed on it."[3] The passage also suggests the musical design, at once silent and audible, that Harris hears at the heart of the universe (what Mallarmé called 'mobile musical architectures'), and to which he became attuned when voyaging in the Guyanese interior. It reminds us of the origins of his vision and of his exploration of an original language in which to express it, as he has explained in several essays and interviews. Admittedly, in its fusion and transmutation of apparently incompatible elements or sensory images ("the alchemy of sound in a rainbow"[4]), the extract quoted is not at first easy to grasp. Its concise density, paradoxical juxtapositions and associations, typical of much of Harris's writing, may have been influenced by his scientific training and be partly ascribed to his conviction that, while the language of fiction and the language of science are both partial, they should complement each other:

> Even as the language of science differs from documentary frames or linearities, so we must seek in the language of profoundest fiction startling differences from documentary codes.[5]

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[1] Wilson Harris, 'The Music of Living Landscapes', in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris. The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, edited by Andrew Bundy (London : Routledge, 1999), pp.40-46 ; 44.

[2] Cf. Ilya Prigogine, Belgian recipient of the Nobel Prize for chemistry, who criticizes the perception of nature as passive and writes : "The conception of a passive nature, subject to determinist laws, is a specificity of the West." *La fin des certitudes* (First published 1996 ; Paris : Editions Odile Jacob : 1998), p.20. My translation.

[3] Wilson Harris, 'The Fabric of the Imagination', in *The Radical Imagination*, edited by Alan Riach and Mark Williams (Liège : L3-Liège Language and Literature : 1992), p.78.

[4] See also "sound becomes fathom, tone, contour, depth", 'Metaphor and Myth', in Robert Sellick, ed., *Myth & Metaphor* (Adelaide : CRNLE Essays & Monograph Series, N°1 : 1982), pp.1-14 ; 5.

[5] Wilson Harris, 'The Age of the Imagination'. Thanks are due to Mr Harris for giving us primacy of publication of this essay as well as 'Aubrey Williams' also published for the first time in this issue.

This preamble is just one door through which one can enter Wilson Harris's writing, impelled by his own assertion that his vision and the art he developed were inspired by the 'living landscape' of the Guyanese interior.[6] But there are many doors, disclosed in this issue, opening onto his houses of fiction. I don't intend to comment much on them, leaving the reader to make his own discoveries, though I wish to point out that "reading Wilson Harris", and therefore to some extent criticism on his work, is an important topic discussed by several contributors. The art of reading, including Harris's, is the special topic of Brigitta Olubas' essay which describes a kind of "performative" reading, the adjective Mary Lou Emery applies to Harris's language, while Louis Simon links the art of reading with the growth and altering of the subjective consciousness. As I hope will be clear, the substance of this introduction is the fruit of a reflection initiated by my reading of the essays I was editing. If I may borrow a Harrisian statement, "I had a dialogue with them", while some overlapping between the essays may suggest an emerging dialogue between them, which, of course, doesn't mean that they present similar views of a given subject or novel. On the contrary, part of their stimulating interest lies in diverging, original interpretations of novels or aspects of Harris's fiction previously the object of criticism. It is also rewarding that some essays deal with the crucial period of his early writing, too often neglected, when he was struggling to find his own voice and style and belonged to a group of Guyanese artists who, in Louis James's words, "were exploring ways by which to dismantle the colonial structures implicit in the western concept of 'realism'." His comparison between Harris and Denis Williams, and Gemma Robinson's between Harris and Martin Carter, illustrate the intellectual and creative ferment of those years in Guyana and show that Harris's preoccupations throughout his fiction were already present in his formative period. Similarly, Robert Bennett's essay on the intertextuality between Harris's *Guyana Quartet* and T.S.Eliot reminds us, as Harris's early poetry also shows, that Eliot was an ambivalent model whom he admired but distanced himself from and, as Bennett argues, "re-wrote" in his own way, as we also see in *Black Marsden*.

Puzzled by a fiction which in no way met their expectations of what a novel, especially the West Indian novel, should be, some early critics impatiently dismissed what they saw as extravagant incoherence.[7] Reviewing *The Uncompromising Imagination*, Michael Dash deplored that there were only four West Indian contributors to the volume and that "[f]or many of the region's critics, Harris has made a career out of being esoteric."[8] In an otherwise favourable review of *Carnival,* highly appreciative of Harris's poetic language, Stewart Brown nevertheless wrote that "[s]een in the context of a South American magical-realist tradition Harris's work is much easier to comprehend, to read. *He no longer seems a freak, an incoherent visionary*, but emerges, rather, as a truly revolutionary writer, an outrider of the Adamic spirit."[9]

[6] Wilson Harris, 'A Talk on the Subjective Imagination', *New Letters*, 40, 1 (October 1973) : 37-48.

[7] See, for example, Reshard Gool, 'To Harris with Love', a review of *The Eye of the Scarecrow, New World Quarterly*, 3-4 (Cropover Issue) : 73-75.

[8] J.Michael Dash, '*Wilson Harris, the Uncompromising Imagination* (ed.) Hena Maes-Jelinek (Mundelstrup : Dangaroo Press, 1991)', in *Wasafiri* 15 (Spring 1992) : 33.
Unfortunately, though others writing in the Caribbean were solicited, only two West Indians, writer and critic, have contributed to this issue, Fred D'Aguiar (Guyana) and Paget Henry (Antigua), both working in the United States. But one must draw attention to the ground-breaking criticism of Michael Gilkes, A.J.Seymour, C.L.R.James, Kenneth Ramchand, Marc McWatt and Al Creighton.

[9] Stewart Brown, 'The Poet as Novelist. . .a Review ? *Carnival*', *The Race Today Review*, 17, 1 (February 1986) : 41. Italics mine.

Even Derek Walcott who, in the sixties, was very impressed by the "power" and "vigour" of Harris's imagination, curiously failed to understand what one might call the intuitive, visionary rationale informing his early novels. In his reviews of Harris's fiction and of his first important essay, he clearly resists the novelist's conception of his art and wrote of *The Eye of the Scarecrow* that it was an "unreadable prose-poem. . . . It is one thing to respect the power and energy of Harris's imagination ; it is something else to groan under the burden of incomprehension." Reviewing C.L.R. James's *Wilson Harris : A Philosophical Approach*, Walcott stated that "[Harris] is probably the most audacious explorer of our psychic condition so far, but the truth is that he is becoming unreadable. There is a decadence of syntax that results from a poet's fascination with his own brilliance, and this seems to be the cul-de-sac that Harris has reached ,"[10] a statement eloquently belied by his later work and the illuminating comments collected here.

Writers who, like Harris, are in advance of their time naturally run the risk of not being understood, and it may be unfair to quote Walcott from journalistic comments which he might now wish to retract. My purpose in doing so is to emphasize how much Harrisian criticism has progressed since the sixties. At least three contributions in this issue (more if one takes into account the essays of young critics) clearly show that Harris's fiction can no longer be considered, as it sometimes was in the past, as the limited preserve of a handful of academics. I chose Karen Cornelis' essay from a batch of good papers written by undergraduates who were reading *The Carnival Trilogy* and *Jonestown* in class with my colleague, Professor Duytschaever, at the University of Antwerp. Francine Juhasz Houtman is a professional analyst who explains how her discovery of Harris's fiction opened her eyes to new ways of helping her patients in everyday life. Joris Duytschaever explains the "Wilson Harris Opera Project", i.e. the adaptation of *Jonestown* into an opera by the Flemish playwright, actor and director Tone Brulin, first performed in Antwerp on 10 June 1999 before a responsive audience. Thus Harris's writing inspires other forms of art : the poems offered here as a tribute to him by Fred D'Aguiar and Nathaniel Mackey and the multi-media "opera", an orchestration of text, music, dance and visual effects.

With the passing of time, Harris's writing is clearly reaching a wider, more diversified readership and is at last being recognized as relevant to different forms of the humanities and of art. Nevertheless, as Stuart Murray argues, the difficulties of teaching Harris and of making his work accessible to young audiences must not be underrated in the context of more conventional approaches to literature. Moreover, as he points out, Harris's writing is frequently absent from key theory and subject readers used in teaching. Regrettably also, when an extract from his writing ***is*** included, it is almost inevitably from *Palace of the Peacock* and *Tradition, the Writer and Society*, and this has a limiting effect.[11]

[10] Derek Walcott, 'The explorer is in danger of disappearing : New books in brief', *Sunday Guardian*, 27 February 1966 : 8, and 'Tracking Mr Wilson Harris', *Sunday Guardian*, 24 April 1966 : 5. Ironically, some of Walcott's criticism of Harris's use of myth could apply to his own *Omeros*. I am grateful to Gordon Collier for giving me access to Walcott's early journalism. He has used it in his own original way in 'His true alien spiritual love : Walcott wrestles with Harris (A Maes-querade)', in Marc Delrez and Bénédicte Ledent, *The Contact and the Culmination. Essays in Honour of Hena Maes-Jelinek* (Liège : L3-Liège Language and Literature : 1996), 229-240. See also Gordon Collier, ed. & Intro., *The Journeyman Years : Derek Walcott's occasional Journalism for " Public Opinion" and the ' Trinidad Guardian'* (Amsterdam/Atlanta : Rodopi). Forthcoming.

[11] One fairly recent exception is the extract from *The Angel at the Gate*, in Caryl Phillips, ed., *Extravagant Strangers* (London : Faber and Faber, 1997), pp.126-134.

However essential these texts are as the revolutionary, seminal conception of Harris's opus still eliciting new interpretations, their repetitive reprint has sometimes suggested that he is a one-novel writer, whereas the development and myriad facets of his fiction from *Palace* to *Jonestown,* its recurring yet always modified imageries are fundamental aspects of the multiple dimensions of his art, of its language and modes of expression, of its metaphysical, religious, psychological, social and political meanings. Each novel represents a major phase or link in Harris's unfinished creation, a different possibility of reality that Harris explores through ever deepening variations, so that, taken as a whole, the successive novels illustrate his conception of life as a process of infinite possibilities.[12] Unfortunately, except in the essays by Dominique Dubois and Francine Juhasz, both in this issue and generally, there have been few comments in recent years on the novels of what might be called Harris's middle period, one major reason being that, though significant landmarks in his work's evolution, these novels are all out of print and can only be borrowed from well-stocked libraries.[13]

Though it was not his intended meaning, Walcott's early view of Harris's writing as powerful yet hardly accessible raises the question of the possibly misunderstood genius whose dazzling, bold language offers some vague uplifting pleasure while its inherent meaning remains mysterious. It should first be pointed out that the mystery in Harris's writing is ***not*** in his own supposedly inaccessible language but is part of the existential process and of the complex reality he presents, its inexpressible archetypal and spiritual features. The inexpressible in its appropriate form, briefly analysed by Dominique Dubois, is discussed in Mary Lou Emery's essay on Harris's ***performative*** language, in particular his use of *apophasis,* "a dynamic for expressing inexpressibility", while she also probes "the dynamic of sensory metamorphosis [or sensory transference] in his writing", an analysis corroborated by the writer's own comments on Aubrey Williams included in this issue.[14] She suggests that "Harris . . . makes a mystical state of being coextensive with the practice of creative expression". To this can be added, I think, the secular dimension of creativity in his fiction. For the secular and the religious are inseparable, as Paget Henry's philosophical essay implicitly makes clear by bringing to light the relationship between self-formation, the world of Spirit and contemporary social life, and by emphasizing the relevance of the Spirit to every-day politics, as expressed in *Carnival*. The political dimension associated with the cultural is also a major strand in Robert Bennett's article.

The religious (especially Gnosticism expounded by Michael Mitchell and Mary Lou Emery), the secular, the animal or creature in nature,[15] the vestiges of human experience, their innumerable interrelated facets in the many-layered texture of both life and fiction are aspects of

[12] Cf. Ilya Prigogine: "I think that the creation of the universe is above all a creation of possibilities". Prigogine conceives of the universe as being "in construction". Interestingly, like Harris in several essays, he alludes to Giordano Bruno "who had understood the "potentialities" of matter". Ilya Prigogine, *De l'être au devenir*, published TV programme by the Centre de production de Liège de la RTBF (Brussels & RTBF Liège : Alice Editions, 1998), pp.26, 44 and 55. My translation.

[13] See Joris Duytschaever's essay on the difficulty of buying Harris's novels in England.

[14] The essay in this issue is totally different from one with the same title originally published in *Third Text*, 34 (Spring 1996) and reprinted in Harris's *Selected Essays. The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, pp. 222-225. See in that essay : "[when] I came upon Aubrey Williams's paintings for the first time . . . I was possessed by a sensation of music secreted in colour", p.223.

[15] On this subject see Harris's discussion of Titian's painting 'The Allegory of Prudence' in several essays, and his comment : "When the human animal understands his genius, he roots it in the creature, in the forest, in the trees, in other words in the language that we *are*. . . .", 'The Fabric of the Imagination', p.78.

what Harris calls "the genius of creation".[16] On the question of genius, his only affinity with the Romantics lies in his adherence to Keats's notion of "negative capability » which overlaps with his conception of the universal unconscious and is concretized in the nameless narrator of *Palace of the Peacock* as well as "Idiot Nameless" in *The Eye of the Scarecrow* and *Companions of the Day and Night.*[17] It could be argued that Harris's frequent references to the unfathomable and the unattainable are Romantic in nature. But unlike some Romantics, Harris does not idealize the unattainable, does not turn it into an absolute but sees it as the source of asymmetric, variable forces. Similarly, genius is neither individual nor absolute. This emerges from Michael Mitchell's exploration of the many dangers and temptations represented by modern versions of Faust in *The Infinite Rehearsal* as the novelist re-visions the role of Marlowe's and Goethe's hero and presents him as an ambivalent figure. For Harris genius is "community-in-creator",[18] an expression which combines the archetypal multitudinous sources of creativity, the endlessly renewed faces or shapes of all living creatures and nature erupting in the creator/artist. It is also illustrated by shifts in narrative voices and by the mutuality between writer and his living subject :

> Hope had commenced his book when he met queen Butterfly, the priest had inserted his hand in Hope's when he met the goddess June. And this was a signal of the phenomenon of creativity, linkages between characters and authors, linkages between a painted world that paints the painter even as the painter paints, a sculpted world that sculpts the sculptor as the sculptor sculpts, a written world that writes the writer as the writer writes . . . .[19]

In some novels, particularly *Carnival*, Harris repeatedly alludes to the "genius of love" (a potential source of terror as much as of ecstasy), but it is in *Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness* that the eruption of "the genie" ("the spark" in *The Tree of the Sun*) as expression of variable, formerly unconscious forces, is most eloquently represented in Da Silva's re-visions of his paintings. In that novel he also clearly conveys the political implications of the artist's creativeness in Da Silva's sketch of the Commonwealth Institute's "INSOLUBLE CROSS-CULTURAL DEITY/SOLUBLE UNIFORM" with its dual, interacting composition of *institutional tone/universal non-tone*,[20] the latter one possible representation of collective or, as Harris calls it, the universal unconscious. The phrase epitomizes what he sees as the roots of creativity : adversarial contexts and the collective unconscious, also the sources of consciousness and moral being.[21] "Universal non-tone", the "zero conditions" out of which the narrator in *Da Silva da Silva* hopes that "original vision" (*Da S*, 70) will emanate, reminds

[16] Wilson Harris, *Carnival* (London : Faber and Faber : 1985), p. 163. Henceforth *C* in parenthesis in the text.

[17] Cf. John Keats, "the poet has . . . no identity", *Letters of John Keats*, edited by Robert Gittings (Oxford University Press : 1970), p. 157. On the Romantic conception of genius, see Drummond Bone, 'The Emptiness of Genius : Aspects of Romanticism', in Penelope Murray, ed., *Genius. The History of an Idea* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 113-127.

[18] Wilson Harris, *The Tree of the Sun* (London : Faber and Faber, 1978), p.64. Henceforth *TS* in parenthesis in the text.

[19] *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill* (London : Faber and Faber, 1993), p.147. Henceforth *RSH* in parenthesis in the text.

[20] Wilson Harris, *Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness* (London : Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 69. Henceforth *Da S* in parenthesis in the text.

[21] See 'Adversarial Contexts and Creativity', *New Left Review,* 154 (November/December 1985) : 124-128.

us that the very origin of the creative momentum, "the indestructible nucleus . . . of creation. . . . the very nail of moment in the universe"[22] remains inaccessible.

This question has obviously obsessed Harris from the very beginning.[23] In her discussion of the inexpressible in Harris's work, Mary Lou Emery rightly points out that he qualifies the impossibility of presenting an "almost" unimaginable creator when he said in an interview "and yet one can still present it".[24] It seems, however, that it is the unknown (and largely unknowable) itself which is the seed of creation, what he has variously called a creative "enigma of values",[25] "the riddle of the creator", "riddles of spirit",[26] or "the mystery of intact reality".[27] Vera Kutzinski talks of "unfathomable hands beneath or within the psyche and nature of the language of the imagination". The last words of *Jonestown* are, we remember, "the unfathomable body of the creator".[28] It offers one explanation among several of Harris's strong objections to realism, as Paget Henry argues, while simultaneously signifying that originality is less the creation of something utterly new than the recovery of eclipsed traces of reality (a question I shall come back to). On the other hand, what abounds in Harris's fiction from *Palace* to *Jonestown* are images and metaphors that embody the creative process itself, as Russell McDougall shows. Dominique Dubois explains the various meanings of the "tree of the sun", a metaphor that expresses an in-depth community of being between man, nature and the cosmos, a community of origins too if one approaches these origins through the heights and depths of the universe. So does the metaphor "Phallus of the sun" (*AG*, 69) which prefigures the creative cosmic intercourse between phallus/log and the "genesis-cloud" in *Jonestown* (*J*, 133ff). One striking feature of these as of so many of Harris's metaphors is their compact expression of "compositional life" (*RSH*, 87) , similar in a sense to the scientific expression « mathematics of chaos",[29] discussed by Carmen Concilio, and used by Harris in his later novels, especially *Jonestown*. Such a feature shows Harris's equally revolutionary capacity to capture in one metaphor both an abstract/reduced formulation, and the multifariousness, of reality, « a hidden mathematics within the body of language" (*J*, 6).

Harris himself has often explained the creative process as an encounter, an imaginative, endlessly gestating bridge between the unconscious and consciousness in both writer and concentrated reader.[30] Several essays published here deal with this issue and explore its manifold expression and interpretative potential. Francine Juhasz, in particular, approaches

[22] Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (London : Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 130. Henceforth *PP* in parenthesis in the text.
[23] See, for example, "Who or what is the creator of man, the human being ?", *Tradition, the Writer and Society* (London : New Beacon Books, 1967), p.20. Questions about " who" or " what" lies at the heart of creation recur in *Heartland* (London : Faber and Faber, 1964), pp. 40, 74, 78.
[24] *The Radical Imagination*, p. 57.
[25] Wilson Harris, 'The Enigma of Values', *New Letters*, 40, 1 (October 1973) : 141-149.
[26] Wilson Harris, *The Angel at the Gate* (London : Faber and Faber, 1982), pp. 51 & 72. Henceforth *AG* in parenthesis in the text. On this subject, see Paget Henry's essay.
[27] Wilson Harris, 'Comedy and Allegory', in Hena Maes-Jelinek, Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford, eds., *A Shaping of Connections* (Mundelstrup, Dangaroo Press, 1989), p.128.
[28] Wilson Harris, *Jonestown* (London : Faber and Faber, 1996), p.234. Henceforth *J* in parenthesis in the text.
[29] See David Porush : "mathematics of chaos . . . the revolution of the science of so-called chaos is . . . to show that systems that behave in what seemed like random or disordered fashion actually could be described by mathematics », 'Fictions of Dissipative Structures : Prigogine's Theory and Postmodernism's Roadshow', in N. Katherine Hayles, ed., *Chaos and Order. Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science* (Chicago : Chicago University Press, 1991), p.58.
[30] See, for example, "Clues in the narrative . . . may surface in a reader's imagination and throw a bridge from the collective unconscious into the domain of consciousness". 'Comedy and Allegory', p. 131.

the relational components of the psyche from a psycho-analytical perspective and interweaves the representation of her quest with the Harrisian texts that helped her find a model to stimulate her patients to "waking" and "healing" dream. Andrew Bundy, among others, uses Harris's expression "dream-book" to describe his fiction as a whole. Which brings us to dream as creativity or at least as an essential condition in the creative process, a point made by Louis Simon. In his introductions to *The Four Banks of the River of Space* and *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*, W.H. (See Paula Burnett's comment on this use of initials) explains that he has edited the protagonists' "Dream-book" at their request, while *Jonestown* opens with Francisco Bone's request itself. Anselm, Hope and Bone emerging from W.H.'s unconscious to offer him the material of his fiction[31] are individualized faces of the "multitude" which, as Bone says, inhabits one (*J*, 5). At the same time, it is as if, like the moving beam of a lighthouse, the writer's consciousness brought successive figures out of the shadows. At the beginning and the end of *Jonestown*, Bone seems at once closer to, yet still distant from, the many-layered reality he is exploring in his Dream-book than the other two protagonists. One must remember that even the deepest layer of reality, the eruptive life towards which the author and , at another remove, his protagonists progress is not a homogeneous whole but is itself subject to "breaches that invite a strange intercourse of parts that surrender themselves to new associations or the birth of ideas, the re-visionary birth of creativity".[32] In other words, this is the moving, composite centre at the heart of reality *and* fiction, another difference from T.S.Eliot's "still centre". At the other pole of the encounter, the protagonist follows the dictates of the "living dreamer" within himself.[33] Harris describes this movement towards each other of the erupting ("compositional") reality and the "living dreamer" in the following terms :

> The 'living dreamer' in Anselm meets them again [the dead characters whose life he recreates] as 'live absences' or metaphorically sculpted or painted presences. Each metaphoric sculpture or painting subsists on a sensation that flesh-and-blood in the re-creative imagination embodies a correspondence with - and a pregnant distance from - the materials a sculptor sculpts, the fabric upon which and with which a painter paints, and that such numinous correspondence and distance provide the narrative substance of Dream with imageries that become 'live fossil stepping-stones' into an original space or dimension that is the genesis (curiously *unfinished* genesis) or infinite birth of the imagination. (*FB*, p.xi)

"Correspondence with" and "distance from" suggest a precarious balance like that achieved by Bone at the end of *Jonestown*, a balance at once part of the substance and the object of the dream, or the "state of suspension"[34] towards which Harris's protagonists ceaselessly move. And as Harris himself explained, their "floating" between two poles "breach[es] linear bias or

[31] Harris also explained that he was "visited" by one of his characters who tore up the script of a lecture he was to give and told him to speak spontaneously "out of his vulnerability". *The Radical Imagination*, p. 69. Vera Kutzinski discusses Jonathan Weyl's "visit" as described in *The Radical Imagination*, p.103, and Paula Burnett mentions a similar occurrence reported by Harris in another lecture.
[32] *The Radical Imagination*, p. 76.
[33] Wilson Harris, *The Four Banks of the River of Space* (London : Faber and Faber : 1990), p.x. Henceforth *FB* in parenthesis in the text.
[34] On this subject in *Companions of the Day and Night*, see Pierre François' remarkable analysis in *Inlets of the Soul. Contemporary Fiction in English and the Myth of the Fall* (Amsterdam/Atlanta : 1999), pp.254-289 ; 279.

storyline function".[35] Moreover, the end of the above quotation implies that imagination is both the instrument and a never achieved goal *in the making*. This explains the variety of titles, conveying different approaches, Harris gives to his many essays on the nature of the imagination. The title in this issue does not just mean, as one might think, the age or period in which imagination prevails but its antiquity and agelessness, its ceaseless genesis through an endless "past that leaves its ruined clues" and "each ruin participates in the origins of consciousness".

The characters' retracing of their steps towards the ruined past, recovering emotions now understood or perceived in a new light,[36] also opens onto Harris's conception of time, a complex issue which deserves more than the brief commentary possible here. He has himself sufficiently insisted on his rejection of linearity, a point inevitably raised in many contributions. Time cannot be dissociated from other major aspects of his work, notably his treatment of history dealt with by Karen Cornelis, Dominique Dubois, Robert Bennett and Paula Burnett. Harris does not ignore calendrical time, stating that even in quantum physics changes occur in "historical time",[37] and conventional time can usually be clearly reconstructed in his fiction as, for instance, in *The Eye of the Scarecrow, Companions of the Day and Night* or *Jonestown.* Nor is it simply discarded in favour of timelessness but is rather the dimension we live in and *through* which, when breached, timelessness can be apprehended. Timelessness is not the mere absence of conventional time either ; it is an extra-human dimension with some attributes similar to space with which, as Paula Burnett points out, it interpenetrates. Though Harris says that "[t]here is no absolute beginning" (*J*, 5) "no determined beginning, no determined ending",[38] he does not refer to a static eternity.[39] As there is a "womb of space", so there is a "virgin womb of time" (*J*, 5), an "apparent sexuality" to time which plays a "pregnant role",[40] as Denis Williams, quoted by Louis James, pointed out : "for Harris the union of object and subject is temporal in its power ceaselessly to modify the present in free association with the past." Harris also alludes to an extra-human dimension called *living time* which he sees "partially" captured in "draperies upon living time" in Aubrey Williams's paintings among others.[41] After the crew have passed "the door of inner perception" in *Palace of the Peacock,* they enter this living dimension which in another context Harris calls time as "native ancestral aboriginal capacity"[42] : "[t]hey saw and heard only the boiling stream and furnace of an endless life without beginning and end" (*PP*, 94 and 99).

The ruptures in conventional time, the shifts between, and blending of, past, present and future (see Paula Burnett's comparison with the Maya) coincide with the spatial movements of advance and retreat in many novels, for instance at the end of *Heartland* and *The Tree of the Sun*. It is this movement, excluding any one-directional vision, which informs the characters'

[35] Vera Kutzinski, 'The Composition of Reality : A Talk with Wilson Harris', *Callaloo*, 18, 1 (Winter 1995) : 15-32 ; 19 and 31.
[36] Emotions play a considerable part in the reconstruction of the past. It is not an exclusively psychological, still less an intellectual process.
[37] *The Radical Imagination*, p. 22.
[38] *Fossil and Psyche* (Austin, Texas : Occasional Publications. African and Afro-American Studies and Research Center, 1974), p. 10.
[39] "Eternity is unbearable womb of endless progression", 'The Quest For Form',*Kunapipi*, V,1 (1983) : 21-27 ; 22.
[40] *Fossil and Psyche*, p. 2.
[41] See *Selected Essays*, pp. 222-223.
[42] *Fossil and Psyche*, p.2.

"dreaming" experience[43] and makes possible what Harris called "backward resurrection" (*TS*, 34). And, as with space, Harris's characters sometimes achieve or experience a "state of suspension" between time and timelessness,[44] an ephemeral balance of a psychological, spiritual and aesthetic rather than scientific nature. Indeed, in spite of his many references to modern physics (mainly the quantum view of parallel universes) Harris's original conception of space and time is not limited to the space-time concept, and Louis James rightly alludes to his "guarded reference to 'Einsteinian mathematics'. Also, in spite of his affinity with some of Prigogine's views, mentioned above, he would clearly reject the latter's conviction that the "arrow of time" makes it irreversible.[45] Hence, Harris's view of humanity's condition has not evolved, like Prigogine's, from one of being to becoming ; it posits both being ***and*** becoming.

Such rejection of "an absolute identity to time", admitting of a "double movement between two time-scales",[46] as in *Eternity to Season,* underlies reversibility, clearly the crux of Harris's narrative oscillations through multi-layered space and time. It is central to Vera Kutzinski's essay which also develops a new kind of scholarship[47] by tracing Harris's compositional method through the successive drafts of *Carnival,* bringing out the many potentialities of the writing process, which Harris further explores or retreats from, like the advance/retreat progression of some of his characters. Reversibility is a key to a cross-culturality rooted, as Harris insists, in the universal unconscious partially represented in forms of art apparently unrelated in space or time (see his frequent parallel between a Titian painting and Mexican Quetzalcoatl) but also evident in what Louis James calls the "cross-disciplinary vision" of Anselm in *The Four Banks of the River of Space*. Harris himself has often commented on reversibility of which he finds a striking example in Michelangelo's Rondanini Pietà with the Son giving rebirth to his dead Mother.

The duality coterminous with reversibility is, of course, a theme running through most essays since both as existential reality and the fluctuating conciliation of its adversarial parts, it informs all aspects of Harris's writing. Andrew Bundy brings to light what Harris calls "the hidden rapport . . . between adversarial cultures"[48] in his comparison between the Grail and El Dorado legends, arguing that the latter reverses the former and is now a potential field of exploration for analysts of the "hidden psyche". His essay also brings to mind Harris's repeated allusions to "[t]he debt that civilisation owes to savage and indigenous cultures".[49] Arturo Cattaneo's erudite essay delves deep into Harris's myth-making to interpret "archetypal

[43] On the link between time and dreaming and their joint effect on the liberation from conventional vision in *The Four Banks of the River of Space*, see Andrew Bundy, 'Time's Dreaming Aperture in Wilson Harris's "Architecture of the Tides"', forthcoming in Jean-Pierre Durix, ed., *Theory and Literary Creation* (Dijon : Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 1999).
[44] See, for example, "we floated on the mane of time", *Carnival*, p.168 or the "inner body of time" through which da Silva achieves a "middle-ground perception" in *Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness*, p.70. On a similar point in *Companions of the Day and Night,* see Pierre François, op.cit., p.261.
[45] Ylia Prigogine, *L'être et le devenir*, pp.52 and 53. See also David Porush, "as we all know, time moves in one direction only", op.cit., p.59.
[46] 'An Interview of Wilson Harris conducted by Hena Maes-Jelinek', *Caribana*, 3(1993) : 23-30 ; 27.
[47] There is a short perceptive comment by Ian H.Munro on the manuscript of *Ascent to Omai* and a photo of some manuscript pages in *New Letters*, 40, 1 (October 1973) : 34-35. See also Jack Healy's essay cited by Vera Kutzinski : 'The Texas Manuscripts with Special Reference to the Mayakowsky Resonance in "Ascent to Omai"', *Ariel*, 15, 4 (October 1984) : 89-107. Though Healy comments on the general implications of Harris's writing method, his essay (as its title indicates) concentrates on a specific aspect of the novel.
[48] 'Merlin & Parsifal, Adversarial Twins' (London : Temenos Academy N°9, 1997), p.5.
[49] 'Metaphor and Myth', p.1. See also 'Adversarial Contexts and creativity', p.126.

situations . . . cutting across space and time", disclosing parallels between Greek myths and Harris's rendering of Amerindian myths as so many examples of cross-culturality, and demonstrating that Harris's original oxymorons are essentially dynamic figures of duality and paradox. This is complemented by Russell McDougall's essay on Harris's myth-criticism, which also "dialogues" with Brigitta Olubas'. McDougall defines metaphor as generating reversibility and concentrates on the bone-flute and the rainbow/phallic bridge, major examples of the metaphor's converting power, as central related figures in Harris's reading of pre-Columbian myths.

Yet one must refrain from idealizing Harris's synthetic metaphors or resolutions of duality, because they are not final and, as he never allows us to forget, they contain an element of terror. Applying the bone-flute metaphor to his relationship with Jones (one of mutuality *and* treason), Bone suddenly recalls his "conversion of a primitive morsel into a feast of terrifying conscience within the furies of history" (*J,* 18). Furies and daemons are inescapable archetypal dual figures in Harris's creative process. Furies have a "potency for terror [especially as agents of revenge] and simultaneously, paradoxically, for the regeneration of cosmic love,"[50] while the daemon is the Greek genius but also has a capacity for evil, as we see in *Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness*. The artist, Harris says, "experiences a tension between daemon and divine".[51] Daemons and Furies and their transformed counterparts (see the Blessed Furies) appear in various guises in *Jonestown*, a favourite with critics, which has inspired different approaches. As already suggested, Louis Simon concentrates on the "consciousness-altering capacities of writing and reading" stimulated by the novel's self-reflexive narrative. Paula Burnett's exhaustive essay privileges the multiple resonance of the Maya in the text ; Stephanos Stephanides deals with translatability as creativeness, a little discussed aspect of Harris's work,[52] : "The translation", he writes, "*claims* the text of the past for future generations and thus becomes an allegory of its resurrection". Finally, Carmen Concilio illustrates the complementarity between science and art mentioned above.

It will be clear, I hope, that the aspects of Harris's work evoked in this *Ouverture* are interdependent. Most are evoked in Hope's deeply significant "manifesto of the ship of the globe" in *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill,* characteristically as much question as answer :

> 'when one descends into breakdown - part-physical, part-mental - and is drawn up into space, what equation exists between the multi-dimensionality of the mind and the multi-dimensionality of the ship of the globe written in one's senses and non-senses ? How shall I begin to put it ? How shall I translate the untranslatable truth ? For me - half-drowned, half-spatial creature (and more, much more I am, less, much less am I) - the equation that exists between metaphors of madness and metaphors of genius is the fluid nucleus of the mystery of truth (neither purely mental - of the body of the mind - nor purely physical - of the spring of the body).'
>
> Hope's manifesto was the language of such nuclearity. He felt an eruption in himself so acute, so dismantling, so reconstructive, it dawned on him that such a mysterious

[50] 'Apprenticeship to the Furies', in *Selected Essays*, p.227.
[51] 'Some Aspects of Myth and the Intuitive Imagination', in *Explorations. A Selection of Talks and Articles, 1966-1981*, edited with an Introduction by Hena Maes-Jelinek (Mundesltrup : Dangaroo Press, 1981), p.99.
[52] To my knowledge, the only other essay on translation as creativeness, though less researched is Hena Maes-Jelinek's 'Altering Boundaries : The Art of Translation in *The Angel at the Gate* and *The Twyborn Affair*, *WLWE*, 23, 1 (1984) : 165-174.

> nucleus was the substance of the voice of the dumb that had uttered his name. Mixed metaphoric senses in voice-ness, voicelessness, speech prior to speech, dumbness prior to eloquence.[53]

This passage is a crucial expression of both Harris's philosophy of existence and vision of culture, counterpointing "the substance of the voice of the dumb" to the dominant voices. In Hope's intuitive progression towards the source of creation, all contraries begin to interact, all partial elements in the existential process: part-physical, part-mental, ascent and descent, one's senses and non-senses, Hope as half-drowned, half-spatial creature, voiceness and voicelessness. As Merleau-Ponty writes,

> Our view of man will remain superficial as long as we don't go back to the origin [of expression], as long as we don't recover the primordial silence under the noise of words, as long as we don't describe the gesture which breaks that silence.[54]

The parallel Hope draws between the multi-dimensionality of the mind and the multi-dimensionality of the ship of the globe evokes corresponding partialities within the human person and on the world map. In their representation of such composite reality in inner and outer worlds Harris's narratives move towards a harmonization of elements both within the human person and between cultures, a very different proposition from a surface hybridity. It is through this in-depth cross-culturality, cross-fertilization of old worlds and new worlds, that he has imaginatively opened the way to a new authentic Caribbean fiction.

[53] *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*, p.75.
[54] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (Paris : Gallimard, 1945), p.214. My translation.