

THE "UNBORN STATE OF EXILE" IN WILSON HARRIS'S NOVELS

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The theme of this conference calls for an examination of the influence of exile on Commonwealth writers and is particularly relevant to Caribbean literature since, whether they live in their own country or abroad, the work of Caribbean writers is seldom utterly free from a sense of exile. Some, it is true, have successfully portrayed their characters' identification with their native environment. But the effects of alienation are still a major concern for many of them, who deal with either the consequences of eviction and deportation in the past or voluntary expatriation in the present, a form of exile often chosen to remedy the earlier, imposed one.

Out of the many forms of expatriation experienced by Caribbean man at different periods of his history Wilson Harris has developed his own original conception of exile, which is central to his thought and characteristically possesses a negative and a positive side. The *Guiana Quartet* already abounds in exiles who were the victims of conquest: the Amerindian folk fleeing their land in *Palace of the Peacock*, the Caribs in *The Whole Armour*, and Poseidon and the descendants of runaway slaves in *The Secret Ladder* are all exiles living ignored and neglected outside the pale of institutionalized society. Already in these novels the protagonist's fulfilment depends on his capacity to rediscover those who were forced away from home under the pressure of circumstances, and to create with them a dialogue that would serve as a starting point to a new community. This discovery is part of the complex 'drama of consciousness' in which Wilson Harris's characters are involved. My purpose is to show that the voluntary, imaginative going into exile is for Harris a redeeming spiritual pursuit that must contribute to a reunification of modern man's divided inner being and to greater harmony in a broken world. I shall illustrate this proposition by discussing *The Eye of the Scarecrow*.¹

That exile deliberately chosen need not dry up the creative imagination—and each man for Harris is a potential artist or artisan of his own consciousness—is obvious in his own achievement, particularly those novels which, like *Black Marsden* and *Companions of the Day and Night* respectively set in Edinburgh and Mexico, show such sympathetic understanding of other peoples' cultures. Significantly, in *The Eye* a remembered vision of Edinburgh and the Firth of Forth starts in the narrator a train of memories all linked up with his Guyanese past. The heights and depths of the Scottish landscape, 'the reluctant smoke of sky and carriage of earth . . . drawn into singular consciousness of each other,' (p. 13) urge him to discover the beginning of a similarly open dialogue within himself between the fragments of his earlier life.

In the first part of the novel the first-person narrator (hereafter called N.) juxtaposes in his diary apparently unrelated memories of public and private events between 1929 and 1964. He recreates this period without any regard for chronology because, owing to a crash, he suffers from 'a void in conventional memory.' As a result the familiar logic of events from which the meaning of life usually arises is shattered. But on closer examination the map of Georgetown on which the narrator's memories are charted reveals subtle similarities between events and between attitudes or inner states in people who seem to have nothing in common. These latent connections are conveyed through a few basic metaphors. The scarecrow, for instance, suggests a crumbling of the individual personality (first glimpsed by N. in his friend L. [Location engineer]); it evokes equally the disintegration of the colonial power in Guyana personified by the scarecrow figure of the very ill Governor of the colony. In addition the scarecrow represents the void which is the inner reality of so many men's lives. It can be a spiritual or psychological emptiness (the inner breakdown experienced by N. in 1948) but it is also the state of unawareness which characterizes educated men (such as L.) as much as those who live in a materially bare world like the Water Street beggars and the poor tenants of Waterloo Street (see p. 30, 'the hollow darkness of their room'). Moreover, the dispossessed are themselves reduced to mere nothingness because practically non-existent, invisible to their more privileged fellowmen.

Another image evoking the unreality of the poor is the closed-in hearse which in N.'s childhood used to bear away the 'nameless paupers' of Georgetown and aroused in the sensitive child the suspicion that it was empty. Another funeral procession which returns to N.'s mind is that of the shot-at demonstrators of the Guyana strike of 1948 pressing along the foreshore on what used to be plantation ground and therefore reminiscent of slavery. They have vanished from the human scene, their individual lives unacknowledged and unrecorded, consumed by an ideal 'which bore such a close, almost virtuous, resemblance to the unprejudiced reality of freedom' (pp. 18-19). Freedom is symbolized by the ghost of a runaway slave, trapped in death while trying to escape, whom N. as a child imagined he saw hanging

from a tree outside his grandfather's house. It is the enslavement (masked by self-deceptiveness) rather than the potentialities of freedom that he now discerns in the lives of those who haunt his consciousness. He remembers in particular one occasion when he and L. were playfully looking at their 'flock of reflections' in the canal in the very place where he used to see the hanged slave. N. suddenly pushed L. into the water to use him as a gauge. It never occurred to his friend that he had been pushed, just as years later he was unaware of being driven into action by another and remained blind to his instrumentality. Three years after this incident N. escaped death after a serious operation and felt so relieved that he too was trapped in illusory strength and freedom while actually becoming 'a slave to the futility of hardness' (the hardness of all that is fixed and established).

From the three related metaphors of the scarecrow, the funeral procession and the hanged slave three related groups of opposites emerge: life and death (including the living death of the unaware and the unseen), freedom and slavery, truth and self-deceptiveness. N.'s declared purpose as he begins his diary is to discover what he calls a 'freedom of being' and to create, as we have seen, 'an open dialogue within which a free construction of events will emerge in the medium of phenomenal associations all expanding into a mental distinction and *life of their own*' (p. 13, italics mine). Rather than let the past fall into a predetermined mould, he will 'travel with the flood of animated wreckage,' (p. 15) the relics of the past, which, as 'flood' and 'animated' suggest, are still alive: they are part and parcel of the fluctuating ground of existence and indissociable from the consciousness they are helping to shape. If N.'s reminiscences bring to light a series of missed opportunities or 'misconceived beginnings,' they also hint at the resilience of the past and at the chances it offers of re-interpretation from different angles. Since it is in the individual consciousness alone that the past can live on as fluid substance, only N. as an individual can experience the crumbling of self-created defences that will free him from earlier prejudices and make possible the birth of a new vision.

A first clue to the way in which vision arises is given in the central part of the novel called *Genesis*, which probes deeper into the meaning of recreated experience. Shortly after the recovery that gave him a new sense of security young N. and his friend L. play at fashioning figures of mud. Disappointed at L.'s reluctance 'to enter into the spirit of the game of beginning to make everything new,' (p. 39) N. sees his friend to the street:

At last I turned and began to make my way back to the house; and stopped at the place where he and I had crouched, now scarcely able to believe the thing I created with *my* own eyes out of one of the pieces *he* had made and discarded on the ground. For an incredible instant all the sap of life rose anew . . . here was the beginning I sought, the old in the new, whether [L.] was capable of seeing it or sensing it or not . . . It was all there, the problematic creation and bewildering scale of our lives. (pp. 39-40, italics mine)

Here is in a nutshell the arousal of vision explored in the novel. N. first sees the mud figures as lifeless because they are the product of L.'s apparent woodenness. Then the very joylessness with which they have been made strikes him 'like a curious revelation of mystical sorrow' (p. 41). That is to say, he discovers the subjective element written into their wooden appearance, the distress due to the imposition of his will on L. and to the latter's submission. 'I felt cold and strange,' he writes, 'a religious stranger to all previous knowledge of emotion; and *emotion*—in such a void or context—became *new*, liberating' (p. 41, author's italics). In other words his new sensitiveness to the immaterial element discovered within the concrete figures has liberated N. from his ready assumption of L.'s indifference, and the void created has left room for a new emotion to arise that frees him from his earlier blindness. L.'s very unawareness of the 'inarticulate protest' (p. 41) in his figures, similar to the unconscious protesting eloquence of the beggars (see p. 17), makes it clear to N. that one can unwittingly inflict pain on someone who does not himself see in what way he is being exploited or frustrated. Once he understands that his new way of looking at the figures has transformed the apparently uninspired product of L.'s hands, N. is able to relate himself to him in a new way and to see that together his friend's achievement and his own vision of it offer the possibility of a new dialogue between them.

There is in *Genesis* a juxtaposition of two periods in N.'s past ('twice sixteen years of 'ebb and flow' p. 34), which speak to him as two separate areas of experience; they also seem to address each other as they foreshadow or echo N. and L.'s insights and self-deceptions over the recreated period. When the two friends find themselves as adults in the 'jungle of conception' during their nine-month expedition into the interior, they are still what they were as children: N.'s obsessive self-questioning and enquiries into the mystery inherent in all facts contrasts with L.'s acceptance of things as they are, an attitude that links L. with all the poor or ignorant characters in the novel. However, family and psychological ties between them are so inextricable that N. can only define himself in relation to his friend, who now serves him not as a physical but as a psychological gauge.

In the jungle N. makes another discovery, which suggests that the mysterious sometimes breaks spontaneously to the surface of the visible world or of consciousness. As he stands with L. on a suspension bridge, he becomes aware of the alternative concretization and dissolution of forms discernible in all life:

A ripple, a footprint almost, appeared in the middle of the water and vanished. I stood still and waited . . . the body of the stream ceased to breathe, growing still as the mound of sleeping sand, the contours of which I saw, fiery and distinct, in the middle of the river; in fact the river over the sand bank was a glittering shell and enclosure, a coffin of transparency, skeleton-key deep, the colour of its shallow bed like the hot blast of snow. The dazzling sleeper of spirit, exposed within the close elements, the refraction

and proximity of sun and water, awoke all too suddenly and slid, in a flash, like speechless gunfire, from crown to toe, along the slowly reddening whiteness of the sand, turning darker still like blood as it fell; and ultimately black as the river-bottom descended, vanishing into a ripple, a dying footfall again, darting across the deep roadway of water and rising once more, distinct web and trace of animation upon a flank of stone. (pp. 48-49)

The sudden awakening and subsiding of 'the dazzling sleeper of spirit' in nature (the mysterious dimension in the heart of all life) corresponds to the ebbing and flowing of layers of past experience in N.'s consciousness, a movement also characteristic of Raven's Head, the mining town L. has been commissioned to re-locate because it is said to contain rich gold deposits. Raven's Head is one of those 'mysterious locations [that] had been plumbed to disappear and return once more into the undisclosed astronomical wealth of the jungle' (p. 54). It is also the name given to Hebra, the prostitute the two men send for, who identifies with all the victims of men's will. Although at first N. and L. take her for granted, we see that she too wants to come to life in her own right. When he becomes aware of the blind lust he and L. 'sought . . . to perpetrate upon her, all alone, without conceiving of the shameful (or shameless) existence of another,' (p. 52) N. begins to see her and those who like her are kept under as the 'unborn folk' or, as L. says later, 'THE UNINITIATE' (p. 103). This expression refers to all who are excluded from privileged society as well as to the victims of man-willed or natural catastrophes, people who are invisible to the rest of mankind since so little account is taken of them.

By assimilating Hebra to the elusive Raven's Head, N. shows that she can move and emerge to the surface of real life. N. and L.'s efforts to reach Raven's Head merge with her own 'surfacing' to form the double movement necessary to any genuine relationship: eyes opening to the mysterious reality of the other, which concealed as it may be within the jungle of appearances, will sometimes pierce through and come into view. Hence the necessity for N. to be attentive to the emergence of that reality, or to try and meet it, breaking down appearances in order to discover it in others without whom he must remain incomplete. As he later writes, he wants to get rid of self-indulgence and acquire enough insight 'to sympathize with the derangement of all creatures within history and circumstances who wander the face of the earth as if they were the 'living' unfulfilled part of oneself and one were the 'dead' fulfilled expression of their self. . . .' (p. 102).

It seems to me that the capacity to perceive and to follow beyond the static world the original movement of life and death in the conjunction and parting of the visible and the invisible (or to perceive it within any form of opposites) is what Wilson Harris means by 'freedom of being.' It is the freedom to move fluidly without imprisoning oneself or others within pre-conceived frames. Significantly, N.'s reconnaissance journey into the 'jungle of conception' serves to chart 'a new map of the fluid role of instinct' (p. 76).

The third part of the novel, called *Raven's Head*, re-creates the voyage to the mining-town, which eventually enables N. to perceive THE DAWN OF FREEDOM (p. 95). Although Raven's Head is never described or shown to have a material existence (except on the ancient photographs of ruins taken by L.), it clearly emerges as the meeting ground between N. and others or 'the other.' If N. keeps reminding himself of the phrase *In my Father's house are many mansions*, it is because Raven's Head can take all possible shapes. There are also many approaches to it which roughly correspond to the travellers' attitude in life. But the way to Raven's Head is necessarily a regression into a formerly neglected territory, whether the inner subterranean black rooms of the unconscious or the dark recesses of a still wild and primitive outer world. N. and L. are hindered in their progress by obstacles that are obviously facets of their own character. Since the beginning of book III they have merged into one *persona*, the driver of the expedition. When a crash occurs, they clearly collide with a concrete embodiment of their own ineptitude.

There are several accounts of the journey and of what happens once they reach the proximity of Raven's Head, the country of exile and of the 'unborn folk,' but these are not mutually exclusive. They weave together the processes of dislocation and awakening vision described in the first two parts, and they present in different lights discoveries made through various modes of perception; each account further develops or gives a new emphasis to insights already gained. In the dream version of the journey the CRASH, due to a collision between the driver's car and a cow, kills the cow and shatters the driver's 'own barrier of stupidity and indifference' (p. 68). In N.'s diary, however, it seems to have derived from a quarrel between himself and L. over Hebra, whom N. murders in order to possess her more completely. In the earlier version his blindness is accidentally exploded and he does not feel responsible for the death of the animal. In the diary version his responsibility for the death of Hebra cannot be evaded. What matters is that, through his imaginative experience of the deaths he has caused, he is made to share the condition of all who have been stunned either by the hazards of life (the cow) or by encounters of a personal or historical nature (Hebra); this opens N.'s eyes to the livingness of apparently lifeless people. The crash in this novel is an imaginative reconstruction of catastrophe showing that collisions between persons and peoples need not be wholly destructive and can be turned into creative encounters. For N. it is the turning point in his quest for freedom. He is now aware of a frontier of existence upon which a boy and his grandfather emerge, who belong to the 'flock of himself' and are opposite reflections of his being. Their 'indistinct dialogue,' which he had previously ignored but to which he now feels compelled to listen, recalls the 'dialogue of genesis' (p. 43) between similar *personae* whom he had struck and banished from his consciousness as a boy.

On the other side of the frontier of existence (the side usually called death) N. sees the accumulated heritage of the past :

And it is from this stunned, breathless, post-mortem . . . vision of recollection that a conception—or misconception—of the reality of the thing emerges after centuries, ages of haphazard penetration and shifting movement it seems. (p. 77)

To offer 'misconception' as an alternative to 'conception' may seem surprising since one might expect N. to find Truth on the other side of life. But the 'other,' whose condition he now shares, also alternates between blindness and insight. N. himself says : 'we (one obscure member of us, at any rate) may stumble . . . in the end . . . upon the flashing settlement and page of truth' (p. 77). The truth he discovers, however, is that there is no fixed, no final truth. This is an essential notion in Wilson Harris's vision of life and death. 'The centre shifts,' he wrote in an early poem.² His characters do not make discoveries of an infallible or comfortable nature. Just as N. earlier saw the appearance and disappearance of 'the dazzling sleeper of spirit,' so he now opens his eyes to an alternative process of birth and death, of appearance and disappearance of life. Death here is the state of those who are not seen, of involuntary and voluntary exile; it is the state of the unborn, who will sometimes come to life of their own initiative or be brought to life by someone else's vision. By relating the emergence of 'the other' upon the slate of consciousness or its eradication from it with the natural alternation of life and death, Wilson Harris points to the possibility of modifying the apparently relentless polarizations of ordinary life. He does not optimistically suggest that they can be done away with altogether, only that to do away with the main source of evil, i.e. conquest as an art of devouring or possessing others and imposing one's will on them, to do away with this is to open up a breakthrough to a new community and develop a sense of unity.

I have so far referred to N. as the one who after the crash moves further and further away from his familiar self. But by the time he reaches the void (or state of death) from which he is to emerge again as from a womb, he is no longer the narrator writing his diary but the 'Idiot Nameless'³ interpreting their common experience for L. It seems that self-exile passes through the other but aims through him at a state which is neither the self nor the other yet is potentially both. When N. has been hollowed of all that he was, he at last becomes a medium through which a free dialogue between opposites can emerge. As 'Idiot Nameless' he is also the scarecrow, that seemingly unreal being willing to atone for the murder of Hebra and the guilt of the community as the uninitiate so often do. He has reached then the 'ground of loss' of all the scarecrows and depressed beggars of his youth. Although it frightens him, he agrees to this 'self-mutilation and self-extension' (p. 84)—mutilation of what one is and extension into what one isn't. He agrees to it because he realizes that only self-surrender can free him from the deadly instinct of possessiveness.

Throughout the 'drama of consciousness' N. has had glimpses of what he refers to as IT, the unnamed reality at the core of appearances. IT takes many forms in Wilson Harris's fiction. Anyone familiar with *Palace of the*

Peacock will remember the pale moon-patch on the water and the description of IT during Donne's ascent of the waterfall as 'the atom, the very nail of moment in the universe.'⁴ Possibly, IT is the moving centre. In *The Eye of the Scarecrow* it appears to change with the altering vision of N. IT is at first the violated feelings of the exploited of the past written into their achievements and 'rising anew out of the . . . melting pot of history' (p. 49) as if crying for release; it is also described as 'the accumulative ironies of the past, the virtuous rubbish-heap and self-parody of ancestors in death' (p. 56)—ironies because it is ironical that this very rubbish-heap should contain IT, the nameless dimension. It then becomes the scale N. felt he needed and has been looking for in order to construct a new age (p. 75). It is also described as 'a crumbling scarecrow . . . [possessing] nevertheless a backbone and a single eye,' (p. 75) the inner eye capable of dispossessing the outer, physical eye and of dispersing illusions. Finally IT confesses or attests to 'a continuous and miraculous conception of 'living' and 'dead' nature, rehabilitation of the lost One, the unrealized One, the inarticulate One' (p. 108). By implication IT attests to the endurance of Raven's Head (the vestiges of the past and the never-dying need to explore them).

The novel ends with the MANIFESTO OF THE UNBORN STATE OF EXILE written from NIGHT'S BRIDGE (bridge of night) by Idiot Nameless. The "Manifesto" is a poetic statement which sums up the creative process of consciousness in which N. and L. have been involved. It still contains many questions because the mystery of life or of 'origins' cannot be elucidated however far or deeply one travels towards it. Hence the importance of intuition in N.'s voyage of discovery. In spite of its many questions the manifesto offers an answer to the anguish and despair that guilt and fear of the void, fear of the future also, have aroused in N. at several stages. The answer demands that he (or man in general) should use his imagination to give movement to the static achievements and eclipsed figures of the past that it was tempting to preserve as they had always been for the illusion of security they gave. I think it is this use of the imagination that Wilson Harris was describing in the talk he gave last year in Liège when he said that 'vision is a curiously active potential, a *moving* threshold of consciousness through the doorway of reflected [i.e. passive] objects.' (italics mine)

The manifesto of Idiot Nameless starts with a declaration of faith in language as

[The] medium of the vision of consciousness. There are other ways . . . of arousing this vision. But language alone can express the sheer—the ultimate "silent" and "immaterial" complexity of arousal. Whatever sympathy one may feel for a concrete poetry . . . the fact remains that the original grain or grains of language cannot be trapped or proven. It is the sheer mystery—the impossibility of trapping its own grain—on which poetry lives or thrives. And this is the stuff of one's essential understanding of the reality of the original Word, the Well of Silence. (p. 95)

About the 'Well of Silence' Nameless also writes that

"silence" which language alone can evoke, [is] a depthlessness of sound heard and digested in the blood-stream of the mind which is the closest one can come to entering the reality of the living circulation of the "dead." (p. 97)

By saying 'it is the closest one can come,' Nameless not only emphasizes the difficulty of reaching 'the other' and what lies beyond, he also suggests that one does not reach that beyond finally. Or, as he further explains, identifying oneself with 'the person of obscurity' is the closest one can come to the 'living distinctive otherness' (p. 101) which may or may not respond to one's quest. This brings us back to Raven's Head and its duality: it was first described as 'person of obscurity' and is a real though elusive settlement; it now emerges as 'the Raven's Head in which we are still to be born like creatures who may learn to dwell in a state of penetrative relationship and self-exile' (p. 107). This is the Raven's Head N. never reaches consciously although he hopes he has discovered a capacity '*to resume . . . the 'potential' ground of self-exile, the unborn state of the world*' (p. 100).

I hope to have made it clear that exile in Wilson Harris's fiction is an imaginative distancing from one's known identity with the double purpose of understanding oneself and 'the other,' who may have been waiting at the door of life. It is not a fixed goal but a continuous progress through the moving contrasts of existence. This for Wilson Harris is clearly the way in which a genuinely revolutionary future can be built. *The Eye of the Scarecrow* reaches no definite conclusion. Nameless recalls at the end the black rooms he has visited, and the process of remembering seems to start all over again for there is no end to the need for 'assessment and reassessment' of what he calls 'the burden of individual guilt and collective history' (p. 108). Nameless concludes with his POSTSCRIPT OF FAITH IN DARK ROOM OF IDENTITY. The postscript is addressed to L., who, as 'the other,' is part of the 'inviolable soul or presence' in which they have briefly met (a reminder of the climax in *Palace of the Peacock*). The title of the postscript suggests two explanations: one, that Nameless is in the dark room of identity when he writes it and therefore still engaged in his endless quest for an equally nameless other; two, that he has faith in the dark room of identity, in his namelessness, as conducive to "'new" community' (p. 101).

Already in *Palace of the Peacock* Wilson Harris had used the word 'nameless' to link together the many shapes of otherness and to describe a 'kinship and identity' beyond national and racial identities. In *The Eye of the Scarecrow* this 'kinship and [nameless] identity' are related to the attainment of freedom when the crumbling of the fixed and labelled personality opens the way to vision and creation:

The education of freedom—(and you have been one of my unconscious tutors in whom and with whom I grew into the heart of "negative" identity . . .)—begins with a confession of the need to lose the base concretion men seek to impose when they talk of one's "native" land (or another's) as if it were fixed and anchored in place. In this age and time, one's native

land (and the other's) is always *crumbling* : crumbling within a capacity of vision which rediscovers . . . the constructive secret of creation wherever one happens to be. (pp. 101-102)

This statement is clearly a warning against isolation and immobility within a homogeneous identity, whether national or private, to which Wilson Harris opposes the 'negative identity' ⁵ his character has arrived at. Again 'negative identity' is an open and dynamic condition which, as already suggested, leads away from the self towards the other but implies resistance to the fascination of the other. In *Black Marsden*, which takes up and counterpoints the theme of *The Eye*, Goodrich, the main character, feels compelled to resist just this kind of fascination when Black Marsden, depleted beggar in one world and would-be dictator in another, threatens to engulf him and to imprint his own (Marsden's) face on him. There is as great a need as in the earlier novel to work out a genuine 'philosophy of revolution' on the very scene into which the exploited have vanished. But discovery is taken a step further, becomes a two-way process in which retreat from the other is as necessary as advance, so that the awakening to the other's existence described in *The Eye* is set within a larger perspective, is only one phase in the alternative movement of advance and retreat. Horizons are also widened within the character's consciousness. Goodrich's inner theatre corresponds to the global theatre of mankind. When he visits Nameless country, he sees a landscape in which the contrasts of Scotland and South America have merged. He also observes signposts of tropical and Mediterranean civilizations. The frequency with which sky and sea or sky and earth in the vicinity of Edinburgh evoke contrasts in other landscapes and cultures, or the contrasts within the world, points to the scope of Wilson Harris's vision and the way in which imagination in his novel bridges apparently irreconcilable elements :

In the comedy of an interfused reading of the elements a capacity for genesis is born or reborn within us : a capacity . . . to re-sensitize our biased globe into moveable squares within and beyond every avalanche of greed and despair . . . ⁶

Once again this capacity to re-think the world is linked with the individual's freedom of being, the sense of being 'alone' that Goodrich experiences after his vision. Then he is animated with the same spirit as the piper who warned him to retreat from Nameless. It is the spirit of survival that Wilson Harris hears in the Scottish pipe as in the Carib flute of bone.

¹ Wilson Harris, *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, first published in 1965 (London, 1974). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

² "In Memoriam 1948," *Kyk-Over-Al*, 2, N° 7 (December 1948), 6.

³ Several passages in the novel have prepared the reader for the replacement of N. by Idiot Nameless when he reaches the state of self-exile. See for instance, 'No wonder the ghostly idiot stranger and spectator in one's own breast . . . started prompting one . . .' (p. 20).

The Idiot, Fool or Clown in Harris's novels finds its origin in the West Indian spider or trickster, who outwits the oppressive authority or the exploiter. He plays much the same role as the Fool in traditional literature, who, as Enid Welsford explains, is a creator of spiritual freedom : 'Clownage,' she writes, 'may act as . . . a wholesome nourishment to the sense of spiritual independence of that which would otherwise be the intolerable tyranny of circumstance.' Enid Welsford, *The Fool, his Social and Literary History* (London, 1935), p. 317.

The Fool in Harris's fiction is nameless because he is associated with the nameless 'un-initiate' and because he expresses a deep inner reality that all men share and discover when they break down the imprisoning identity of the self as the I-Narrator does in this novel. In *Companions of the Day and Night* Idiot Nameless is one possible incarnation of the Nameless Imagination.

⁴ Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (London, 1960), p. 130.

⁵ 'Negative identity' is obviously related to Keats's 'Negative Capability.' In "The Phenomenal Legacy" Wilson Harris quotes from a letter by Keats to Richard Woodhouse : 'It is a wretched thing to confess; but it is a very truth that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature—how can it, when I have no nature?' Wilson Harris adds that even as a very young man he had an instinctive affinity with the content of this statement. *The Literary Half-Yearly*, XI, N° 2 (July 1970).

⁶ Wilson Harris, *Black Marsden* (London, 1972), p. 66.