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Consumption of Bias and Reptition as a Revisionary Strategies in *Palace of the Peacock* and in the Thought of Wilson Harris

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Résumé

Wilson Harris créée dans son roman *Le palace du paon* un espace de transformation intellectuelle d'une nature inédite. Cet espace se confond avec la matrice narrative de son roman. Celle-ci permet la génèse de l'identité guyanaise, non pas à partir des vestiges pré-coloniaux, ni grâce aux récits des historiens des vainqueurs mais avec des ingrédients philosophiques et littéraires de nature à transformer l'étoffe même de notre imaginaire et énergie créative. Il utilise pour ce faire la répétition comme stratégie narrative permettant de rompre la linéarité chronologique qui joint passé, présent et avenir. Ainsi faisant, il déjoue toutes les attentes de ses lecteurs les habituant ainsi à ce que Derrida appelle la logique spectrale qui permet l'influence mutuelle entre passé et présent. Ce travail est l'exploration des mécanismes de ce lâcher prise imaginatif mais aussi de toutes les voix qui répètent, à travers le temps et les continents, cet appel à l'hospitalité inconditionnelle envers l'Autre, c'est-à-dire une ouverture envers le paradoxal, le multiple, le différent en soi et en dehors de soi.

Mots-clés : postcolonialisme, répétition, imagination, archive, archive virtuelle, logique de la hantise, différence, Guyane anglaise, impérialisme, colonialisme, multiplicité, hybridité, expérimentation narrative.

Abstract

Wilson Harris has created in his novel *Palace of the Peacock* a space of intellectual transformation that differs radically from everything that preceded it. In this work, I focus on the narrative matrix of *Palace*, which enables the genesis of an evolving Guyanese identity. This identity derives neither from pre-colonial vestiges nor from the narratives of traditional historiography. In order to shape this dynamic identity, Wilson Harris uses philosophical as well as literary ingredients whose transformative power affects the way our imagination is structured. He uses repetition as a narrative strategy whose subversive force puts in question among other familiar narrative frames, the linear flow of time destroying in the process not only ingrained reading habits but most importantly oppressive, conventional mental frameworks. This work is also an exploration of how the voice of Wilson Harris meets other voices from other continents and other backgrounds that all call for an unconditional hospitality towards the Other in and outside of oneself.

Keywords : postcolonialism, repetition, hauntology, archive, virtual archive, archon, imagination, archive-fever, spectrology, revisioniary strategies, British Guyana, imperialism, difference, hybridity, West India, empire, narrative experimentation.

Table des Matières

Je dédie ce mémoire à mes parents et mes deux sœurs sans qui je n'aurais pu, ni voulu exister. Je le dédie à tous mes professeurs sans qui j'existerais dans une obscurité béotienne. Je le dédie également à mon ami Prathna Lor dont l'existence me donne envie de me dépasser.

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The Bias of Tradition

Introduction

It requires a high level of awareness of imperialism's rhetorical strategies to effect ruptures in the way they have been used by the West for centuries. Postcolonial resistance consists mainly in exposing and undermining the rhetorics of the dominant discourse. Contrary to a vigorously anticolonial stance that we find in the works of, among others, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Tayib Salih, Sipho Sepamla, redemption will not come from the restoration of a strong and so-called authentic nationalistic voice imperialism has effaced and suppressed. Helen Tiffin argues in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* that however much desirable, and legitimate, a return to a pre-colonial, culturally pure time is impossible: "[p]ost-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridised, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identities." (95) Since it is impossible to unearth an essentially national or regional identity to which ex-colonized peoples can return, the only way of regaining ownership of one's representation and identity is to accept that it has been profoundly transformed by imperialism. This transformation needs to be acknowledged because it is most likely to continue to translate into a growing cultural overlap and hybridity under the influence of globalism —the historical successor of imperialism in the late twentieth century[1] This is true for both the ex-colonies but Europe.

The discourse that rejects hybridity because it is the legacy of imperialism is itself oppressive. Indeed, it is not only the oppressor who forces onto the oppressed models of thought and being that are rigid and unchanging with a view to maintaining established hierarchies. It is also the victim who finds solace in rigid anti-colonial discourses that risk to

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[1] In the following passage, the authors argue that 'classical imperialism', that is the concrete movement to the colonial 'margin' for economic purposes, has ended in the beginning of the century. As opposed to 'informal imperialism' which was not a doctrine, 'classical imperialism' was rooted in the hegemonic discourse that provided its ideological basis. Imperialism and its hegemonic discourse have been unveiled, criticized but have not completely disappeared. They have transformed into globalism with its share of : "By 1914, the age of 'classical imperialism' had come to an end, but by this time imperialism had demonstrated its protean nature, its ability to change centres, to adapt to the changing dynamic of world power and ultimately to develop into globalism, its natural successors in the late twentieth century." (*Postcolonial Studies: the Key Concepts*, 143)

imprison herself in equally oppressive standardized narratives and in *ressentiment*. The négritude movement is an example of this. In it, identity is defined negatively and is therefore dependent on the oppressor's terms. It is a defensive and equally rigid position.

Moreover, acknowledging one's cultural hybridity must be accompanied with an awareness of the "block imperatives"[2] . These are structures of thought that are planted by imperialist discourse in our own language and imagination and which continue to reinforce social, psychological and cultural inferiority. The effort of releasing one's subjectivity from the residues of European domination must propel an ongoing process that involves, in the opinion of Wilson Harris, a constant "rereading and rewriting of the European historical and fictional record" (95). Subversion of the conventions and tenets of the dominant discourse that infiltrate this intellectual legacy must be ceaseless and dynamic: "The operation of post-colonial counter-discourse [...] is dynamic, not static: it does not subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but in Wilson Harris's formulation, to evolve textual strategies which continually 'consume' their 'own biases' (Harris 1985: 127) at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse." (Tiffin, 96)

Wilson Harris is a radically creative writer. His whole aesthetic project, i.e. his novels and essays, forms a consistent and deep vision of how narrative fiction can become a powerful tool of resistance to the dominant discourse which has become part of a tradition of thought both in the West and in its colonies. His project develops a "vision of consciousness" (TWS, 32) that functions as a powerful counter-discourse that constantly questions traditional models. The fiction of Wilson Harris is an illustration of what it means to be vigilant to the partiality of frameworks that neglect to question their own premises. His novels perform with great consistency the tenets of his profound philosophy. In the fourth chapter of his book *Tradition, the Writer and Society,* Wilson Harris characterizes his aesthetic project in general terms as "a

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[2] We find this term is some of the essays of Wilson Harris notably in this passage from "The Fabric of the Imagination" in which he talks about the dangerous comfort of changelessness, i.e. of the perverse effect on the psyche of the ex-colonized of the stultifying essentialisms inherited from imperialism and which were meant to maintain the status quo and to reinforce the power of the colonizer

"Concepts of invariant identity function in the modern world as a block imperative at the heart of cultural politics. The oppressor makes this his or her banner. The oppressed follow suit. Such is the tautology of power. There is comfort in this, no doubt, for those who command the destinies of the human race (or those who aspire to occupy the centre, and claim they are the establish-ment); no comfort whatever for those who descend into themselves and seek to breach a one-track state of mind…" ("The Fabric", 175)

contribution to an original conception of values." (TWS, 13) This thesis attempts to analyse the particulars of this contribution by paying attention to the signal aspects of Wilson Harris's writing. In order to do that, it is necessary to start by analysing the various types and levels of bias that are found in the traditional 19th century novel, which is both the vessel of imperialist thought and the model which Wilson Harris uses to define negatively his fictional writing. Bias is also located in traditional conceptions of the past, both as a conceptual category and as a narrative strategy. A crucial aspect of the revisionary potential of the work of Wilson Harris revolves around his creative manipulation of the past. I will examine in my first chapter the bias of the traditional novel. Then, I will examine the bias found within traditional conceptions of the past. I will demonstrate how Wilson Harris dismantles those traditional conceptions by writing against the modernist conventions of fiction.

The Bias of the Traditional Novel

Who is the other? Does he or she exist? Does absent deity, absent other, live within the complicated abysses that are opening up within the body of our civilisation? Fear of the conquistadorial other, the other human being, the other and stranger god, the alien native, the alien trader or merchant or lover or warrior, et cetera, has led to curious ambivalences, curious acceptances, in philosophies of the imagination.

— Wilson Harris, *"The Fabric of the Imagination"* (177)

The 19th Century Novel and Imperialism:

In *Culture and Imperialism,* Edward Said argues that the 19th century novel played a central role in the construction and representation of the colonized other. Its conventions and paradigms helped maintain imperialism as a dominant ideology. He argues that fictional narratives consolidated the imperialist discourse, i.e. the set of statements that can be made about the colonies.

With reference to these definitions, a postcolonial counter-discourse can therefore be understood as featuring a critical analysis of the tenets of imperialistic discourses such as Orientalism. It includes also all the literary strategies whose purpose is to undermine any preconceived notions that are found in fictional works about colonized territories and their inhabitants.

In this section, I will start by examining in some detail Edward Said's analysis of the centrality of narrative fiction in the formation of the imperial discourse. The analysis of the 19th century novel as a component and pillar of imperial ideology is crucial for this work. Indeed, in order to understand the revolutionary art of Wilson Harris, it is necessary to start by setting it against the background of "traditional," conventional realism embodied by the nineteenth-century realist novel. This comparison is very informative since the art of Wilson Harris critically questions the political and formal premises of the 19th-century novel. Reflecting upon the premises and status of the 19th century novel as a pillar of colonial discourse elucidates the overarching vision which informs the art of Wilson Harris. Indeed, the realism of the 19th century is restricted to a selection of items, characters, dialogues, situations whose aim is to consolidate the vested interests of the dominant socio-political class.

Those novels of "persuasion" as Wilson Harris calls them (because they always attempt to persuade the reader of the truth-value of their representations), will never lead to a "bursting of bonds" (*Tradition the Writer and Society*, 15). A nineteenth-century novel will never "erupt into a revolutionary or alien question of spirit, but serves mainly to consolidate one's preconception of humanity." (*TWS*, 40) It is therefore an art of "consolidation" against whose constraints Wilson Harris wants to arm our imaginations.

However, before describing precisely how Wilson Harris labours in his idiosyncratic manner to overturn all the "structures of feeling"[3] that underlie the 19th century traditional English novel, it is worth considering the ways in which the latter has been a cornerstone of imperialism. Once I will have established that the nineteenth century novel is and has been *the* vehicle of the ideology of imperialism, it will become easier to understand how art and fiction (and in the context of this particular work, the art and fiction of Wilson Harris) form the privileged site of socio-political resistance to the legacy of the empire.

In his introduction to his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said continues the argument developed in his preceding book *Orientalism* about the general relationship between culture and empire. In *Orientalism*, he had defended the idea that Africanism, Indianism, Orientalism, i.e. Western writing on Africa, India, the Far East, the Caribbean etc, had to be looked at as the necessary attendant to the West's effort and desire to reinforce its ascendency over distant lands. Edward Said highlighted the tight interdependence if not fusion between the physical occupation of a territory on the one hand, and the discourse that consolidates this material domination, on the other. This discourse hidden behind and sublimated by grand declarations about the West's responsibility to civilize the primitive inhabitants of distant loci is based on a stereotypical discourse in which ruling is the right and duty of "superior" beings.

To ensure the success and continuation of a world-wide pattern of imperial domination, the West has deployed a full-fledged cultural discourse in favour of overseas domination. Edward Said claims that one of the strongholds of this legitimizing discourse is narrative fiction. For Said, culture is the often disregarded battlefield of imperialism and the novel its

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[3] "In using the phrase 'structures of attitude and reference' I have this topography in mind, as I also have in mind Raymond Williams's seminal phrase 'structures of feeling.' I am talking about the way in which structures of location and geographical, reference appear in the cultural languages of literature, history, or ethnography, sometimes allusively and sometimes carefully plotted, across several individual works that are not otherwise connected to one another or to an official ideology of "empire." ("Overlapping Territories" , 52)

main weapon. According to him it is the stock of cultural knowledge –popular or specialized- that contributes to "the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences."(C&I, xii) And out of all the known cultural forms, Said argues, the novel is "*the* aesthetic object whose connections to the expanding societies of Britain and France is particularly interesting to study," (C&I, xii) as an instrument of the formation of the above-mentioned structures of references.

According to Edward Said, culture and fictional narratives should stop being perceived as "antiseptically quarantined from their worldly affiliations" (xiv). Narratives are not only linked to territorial conquest, they can be likened to speech-acts whereby territories are renamed and appropriated, occupied ("nations themselves are narrations," says Edward Said (xiii)). According to Said, fictional narratives become simultaneously the seat and the instrument of subjugation: "The power to narrate or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them." (xiii)

The Novel and the Cultural Bias of "Unbroken Tradition"

The other way that the novel helps further the political and ideological agendas of the empire is through circumscribing identity and tradition. This process requires the setting of intellectual and moral codes which distinguish "us" from our "others". This sort of partitioning is essentially exclusionary and aggressive. Its other danger lies in the fact that however much it helps fuel and normalize xenophobic practices it has always been wrongly perceived as detached from the imperial process. This partitioning moulded the perception the metropolitan centers had of their overseas territories and the "others" that inhabit them.

Quite paradoxically, however, Edward Said argues that imperialism has metaphorically made the world a "smaller" place, bringing closer the West and its colonies. It has set in motion a globalized process that continued over the past century and that put into dialogue the narratives and histories of the colonizers and colonized. As a result, the rival cultures, which imposed or have seen imperialist ideologies imposed on them, cannot be studied as distinct, monolithic blocks anymore. Their interdependence and mutual influence invalidate any claim to cultural purity. Some ways of reading overseas natives and their cultures have therefore become outdated.

The narratives, in which "[Western] consciousness was represented as the principal authority, an active point of energy that made sense not just of colonizing activities but of exotic geographies and peoples" are unsustainable in the modern day world. (Said, xxi) The proper reading of those geographies and peoples involves an awareness that the historical experience of empire is a shared one and that it has influenced equally the cultures and societies of the West and its colonies. Moreover and given the centrality of fictional narratives in the imperial project of domination, Edward Said believes that authors produce works that will be the result of the mutual shaping of historical experience by narratives and vice versa. To put it simply, history is as much influenced and fashioned by narrative as narrative is by history.

Alternatives to the Imperialist Discourse: Nationalism vs. Cross-culturalism

It is not necessarily the extent to which they are critical of the imperial ideology that makes narratives and authors subversive of the fortifications of imperialism. Edward Said illustrates this point with the paradox and irony of Joseph Conrad's anti-imperialist narratives (in *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo*) which he states actually reinforced imperialism, instead of helping readers question it. Edward Said argues that Joseph Conrad's failing as a critic of imperialism is that he reinforced the very system he was criticizing not because he was not critical enough of it, but because he did not acknowledge or defend the possibility of alternative realities. It is such realities that Wilson Harris labours to insert in the language and therefore in the imaginations of his readers. His aim is to fit language to those highly complex realities and to fit those realities –as much as that can be done- to the reality of language.

For Edward Said, Joseph Conrad's own intellectual make-up renders useless his anti-imperialist stance for all his lucid understanding of the perverse mechanisms of imperialism:

> [I]f it is true that Conrad ironically sees the imperialism of the San Tome silver mine's British and American owners as ·doomed by its own pretentious and impossible ambitions, it is also true that he writes as a man whose Western view of the non-Western world is so ingrained as to blind him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations. All Conrad can see is a world totally dominated by the Atlantic West, in which every opposition to the West only confirms the West's wicked power.[4]

The inherent limitation of his narratives therefore lies in the fact that they were caught in a logic whereby everything was irredeemably lost to the absolute dominion of the West:

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[4] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xviii

What Conrad cannot see is an alternative to this cruel tautology. He could neither understand that India, Africa, and South America also had lives and cultures with integrities not totally controlled by the gringo imperialists and reformers of this world, nor allow himself to believe that anti-imperialist independence movements were not all corrupt and in the pay of the puppet masters in London or Washington.[5]

Indeed, for Joseph Conrad, nothing authentic can exist outside of Western imperialism because any rebellion against the latter is a sign of the fickleness of the colonized peoples manipulated by an external Western force: "because all natives have sufficient existence by virtue of our recognition. We created them, we taught them to speak, and when they rebel, they simply confirm our views of them as silly children, duped by some of their Western masters." [6] The alternative path consists in changing our attitude toward those imperialism taught us to treat as our "others" –we have the choice to "characterize our own present attitudes: the projection , or the refusal , of the wish to dominate, the capacity to damn, or the energy to comprehend and engage with other societies , traditions and histories." (*C&I*, xx)

The representation of absolute domination that Joseph Conrad has shaped through his narratives, has unfortunately prevailed even after decolonization, and its ravaging effects went unquestioned by art consumers and producers (in movies, novels etc.) who came after him and kept on reproducing colonization the same way he did. What is missing from this biased account of the imperial past is "the political willingness to take seriously the alternatives to imperialism, among them the existence of other cultures and societies." (xx) What Edward Said advocates therefore is openness to what Wilson Harris calls "otherness", an acknowledgment of the hybrid landscape that imperialism has left behind it. He does not call for the rise of nationalist voices. According to Edward Said, "Western imperialism and third world nationalism feed off each other." (xxiv) Consequently, nationalism cannot be counted among the serious alternatives to imperialism as it is with its purifying drive its very symmetrical third world equivalent. Its ethos feeds the "culture of complaint" and is in turn nurtured by separatist, nativist impulses.

Imperialism and colonization have transformed the face of the earth, and decolonization has ended the effects of neither of them. The real challenge is to come to terms

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[5] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xviiii

[6] This passage from Heart of Darkness is quoted by Edward Said in his introduction to Culture and Imperialism, page xviii.

with the rigid notions of identity that have been revived by postcolonial nation-states after decolonization as a response to the very rigid notions of identity that imperialist states championed to reinforce their legitimacy over conquered lands. For Said, "old authority cannot simply be replaced by new authority, [...] new alignments made across borders , types and nations, and essences are rapidly coming into view, and it is those new alignments that now provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notion of identity that has been the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism." (xxv)

The issue of static identities is rooted in old conceptions about tradition as the ultimate source of authority on what distinguishes "us" from "them" and incidentally what makes "us" superior.

> Throughout the exchange between Europe and their 'others' that began systematically half a millennium ago, the one idea that has scarcely varied is that there is an "us" and a "them", each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident [...] Whoever originated this kind of 'identity' thought, by the nineteenth century it had become the hallmark of imperialist cultures as well as those cultures trying to resist the encroachments of Europe. We are still the inheritors of that style by which one is defined by the nation, which in turn derives its authority from a supposedly unbroken tradition. [7]

This narrow view of tradition and identity is in contradiction with the very reality of the colonized as well as colonizing countries, both during and after the end of colonization. Indeed, the legacy of imperialism is necessarily heterogeneous, hybrid and as described by Edward Said, polyphonic. The alternative discourse that Edward Said offers and wishes education and art to offer must play the role of "a corrective, [a] patient alternative, [a] frankly exploratory possibility." (xxvii) This is a strikingly apt description of the work of Wilson Harris. The alternative liberatory discourses must not revolve around a defensive separatism. Edward Said points in the opposite direction, that is, of a self-revising integrative hybrid narrative:

> What does need to be remembered is that narratives of emancipation and enlightenment in their strongest form were also narratives of integration not separation, the stories of people who had been excluded from the main group but who were now fighting for a place in it. And if the old and habitual ideas of the main group were not flexible or generous enough to admit new groups then these ideas need changing, a far better thing to do than reject the emerging groups. [8]

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[7] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxv
[8] Edward Said*, Culture and Imperialism*, xxvii

Wilson Harris's Alternative Narrative of Integration

In his critique of imperialism and its ideological discourse, Edward Said has identified various means through which the West has ensured the consolidation of its interests in the colonies. They can be summed up as revolving around a certain view of tradition as monolithic and "unbroken", extending back to times immemorial and warranting the authenticity of a pure cultural lineage. From this solid root are derived rigid notions of identity that establish the Western "us" as superior to the colonized "them". Such notions are used to legitimize the latter's continued subjugation through benevolent discourses that efface both the richness and diversity of their culture. Given this schematic summary, it can be argued that a certain partial vision of tradition is the very foundation of the oppressive discourse of the imperialist West.

It is striking to read the reverberation of this thought in the words of Wilson Harris who links identity crises in the Caribbean to totalitarian and exclusionary visions of tradition:

> This issue of knowing ourselves differently implies creative /re-creative penetration of blow directed at models of tradition whose partiality engenders an accumulation of crisis. That such accumulation is visible everywhere makes clear, I would think, the rituals of sameness, of repetitive slaughter ingrained in violence within the symbols of world politics.[9]

It is to challenge such narrow notions of tradition and identity that Wilson Harris argues in favour of the necessity of integrating as many voices as possible in his postcolonial narratives. Once again, Edward Said's advocacy for an integrative discourse meets the cross-cultural vision of Wilson Harris.

By constructing a dynamic text alive with its irreducible paradoxes, Wilson Harris maintains a perpetual critical impulse. This critical impulse is the very foundation of his postcolonial counter-discourse which consists in the perpetual questioning of static notions about identity, tradition and cultural purity. As Harris explains in "The Fabric of the Imagination":"[c]oncepts of invariant identity function in the modern world as a block imperative at the heart of cultural politics. The oppressor makes this his or her banner. The oppressed follow suit. Such is the tautology of power."(175)

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[9] Wilson Harris, "The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination", 16

At the level of his fictional narratives, this effort to nuance misconceptions about identity as an invariant notion translates into narratives which are open to otherness. His narratives therefore avoid the construction of totalizing identities. They welcome difference and otherness without trying to explain them, preserving the right to misfit. It may seem at first sight that this approach is contradictory with the overall objective of achieving self-knowledge characteristic of postcolonial writing. But given the heterogeneity of British Guyana, any hope of fathoming the depth of its diversity is doomed, or worse totalitarian.

Joyce Sparer Adler's essay "Wilson Harris and the Twentieth Century Man" describes the historical and environmental factors that explain why British Guyana cannot provide a firm ethico-epistemological ground on which to found a unified identity:

> Guyana is a land of many separations-of race from race, of old from new, of rural areas from town, of coast from interior, of country from continent, of privilege from unprivileged, and often from one aspect of the individual personality to the other. A united independence movement after the Second World War lasted long enough to arouse in many a yearning for unity and the creative things that could come of it. Then after its electoral victory in 1953, it split. The violent disturbances of 1962, 1963 and 1964 mainly between those whose ancestors were brought from Africa and those whose parents and grand-parents came as indentured labour from India, made divisions wider and the feelings more set and bitter.(38)

In such a context of unfathomable diversity, the answer to questions about identity will and must retain a measure of irreducible "strangeness" within oneself whose macrocosmic equivalent is the Other we fear and avoid. Wilson Harris quotes Antonio Machado who affirms the existence of the reality of the other we constantly try to efface:

> The other does not exist: this rational faith, the incurable belief of human reason. Identity= reality, as if in the end everything must necessarily and absolutely be one and the same. But the other refuses to disappear; it subsists; it persists; it is the hard bone on which reason breaks its teeth.[10]

For Harris therefore, wholeness designates an impossible state of inner unity (at the level of the self) and outer unity (at the socio-cultural level). The "Other" is that which persists both outside and inside us making any inner and outer wholeness unfathomable, on the cosmic as well as numinous levels. It must therefore be acknowledged, accepted and welcomed. The aesthetic project of Wilson Harris, which is supported with an extensive and consistent

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[10] Wilson Harris, "The Fabric of the Imagination", 177

theoretical work, revolves around subverting the legacy of colonialism by creating through his fiction a space of self-revision that welcomes and respects "otherness"-that irreducible mystery in every individual, every situation.

In order to accomplish this, Wilson Harris writes self-revising narratives in which the past, as a so-called sacrosanct category--closed and unassailable--will be revised at will. Versions of the past keep proliferating in a complex way as an attempt to reopen the one single sealed version of it that is presented as the Truth. According to Wilson Harris those totalizing accounts of the past are signs that our ancestors, instead of facing the contradictions of their cultures as crucial and necessary moments of self-questioning, "turned away from the reality of the abyss as a true moment, a true goad to the psyche of innovative imagination, they shrank away from new readings of reality, from the complex life of the abyss that counselled far-flung changes of heart and mind." ("The Fabric", 181) This revisionary effort is essentially revolutionary and subversive in that it offers the readers multiple chances of re-reading a narrative which has been cemented into absolutist and imperialist ideology. The condition of possibility of this revision is an understanding of the past as a construct, not as a set of facts that can never be questioned.

Biased Traditional Conceptions of The Past

"I believe a philosophy of history may well lie buried in the arts of the imagination"- Wilson Harris

"Wilson Harris's world is, at times, hermetic in its reliance on private emblems and personal leaps of association, but it is also collectively liberating, it is fragmented but open, moving both through and beyond the labyrinth of history. Harris admits that we are the product of our memories, and that these are subject to the distortions of individual perception and public exercise of power. He confronts us, however with the subjective imagination-the power to invent memory."- Paul Sharrad

"My concern is with epic stratagem available to Caribbean man."- Wilson Harris

Letting go of Presuppositions about the Past

When the past is repeated, recast and freely tampered with in fictional works, the reading process is disrupted. The text calls for a re-reading. The reader cannot assume a passive position. He must question the text and his own assumptions about narrative sequence, chronology, time and the meaning of linearity. This "breaks the mould of habit, breaks a mould of reading that bypasses the enormity and the subtlety of re-visionary potential within imageries in texts of being" ("The Fabric", 180). Reading the novels of Wilson Harris requires an interpretative effort, a re-reading that puts forth aspects of the past that have been purposefully or involuntarily excluded. It is a reading made up of a succession of creative literary choices and decisions. For to "inherit" is to select, specifically when it comes to literary works. When literary works, like those of Wilson Harris, propose to shape a larger historical reality (as opposed to a narrower political and nationalistic vision) it is obvious that the way the past is approached in their fictions will stand outside of the commonly recognized conceptual frameworks. In Wilson Harris's novels specifically, the link between the past and the present is not retrieved through a passive "remembering". It is singular in conception and

always highly individual. In order to better grasp the meaning of the repetition of the past in Harris's novels and its philosophical function, it is crucial to understand the way Wilson Harris conceives of and manipulates the past as a literary category in his novels.

In this chapter, I will attempt to highlight the epistemological "traps," or presuppositions, that lie in the way of anyone dealing with the past. The presuppositions about the past that are addressed in Wilson Harris's work include conventional ideas about narrative sequence, historical continuity and the role of the imagination in reconstructing the past. All of those notions are deeply questioned. I will use the Derridian idea of the "archon" which requires us to be vigilant regarding any appeal attached to the notion of Origin. Wilson Harris equally deconstructs the desire for an Origin in his novel *Palace of the Peacock* by associating it with the sexual desire inspired by Mariella, a highly eroticized feminine figure. I also chose to base this chapter mainly on Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of Freud's thought in his work *Archive Fever* because this work contains crucial insights about the fictionality of any heritage. In addition, Derrida's notion of "hauntology" proves very useful as a critical tool. It sums up and integrates many characteristics of Wilson Harris's thought, namely his insistence on a critical negotiation of one's heritage as well as on the invalidation of the linearity of tradition and of its partial moulds.

The idea that the past needs to be "invented" will appear natural and self-evident to an audience familiar with Freud's psychoanalysis or with Derrida's criticism of Freudian theories. But the ideas that both thinkers developed and defended were revolutionary and did not seem natural when Freud first invented psychoanalysis. At the time, it was accepted that the past is a set of facts that are stored somewhere in our memory and that can be dug out and revealed. Freud himself held firmly to this conviction. It was widely believed that the miniature version of the past existed as a "virtual archive" in our brains and that it can be documented through traces left by the event itself--artefacts, documents, etc.--that testify to the "authenticity" of the past event. The correlative of this idea is that the past has, or at least had, an "objective" material existence and that it is possible to agree on a unique version of what happened in that past. Another correlative is that past events belong to the realm of the dead, i.e. everything static, and unchangeable. Its influence on the present cannot be altered. Moreover, in as much as the present is predetermined by the past, it will be caged and imprisoned. The belief was that past traumas in particular can determine both our present and

our future. It was believed that we will be bound to repeat our own failures if we cannot retrieve the original trauma in our memories. Such was the epistemological trap that Freud fell into as he spent the greater part of his career longing for this original trauma, which will clear our dark secrets and liberate us from our fears and determinisms.

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida deconstructed all the above mentioned archival illusions and cleared the space for radically new notions about the past, the future and art. Indeed, he restored its true value to imagination as a shaping force of the past and therefore of the future. His insights paved the way for a better understanding of how art (fiction writing in particular) was the privileged space for identity-formation, political struggle and activism. Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of obsolete, metaphysical certainties about the past, the archive as well as historical objectivity helped purge the intellectual landscape of the so called sacro-sanctity of historical narratives .He showed that all the mechanisms of the fetishization of a so-called material truth are intellectually erroneous. This has made it easier to read such revisionary fiction as Wilson Harris's. I see the theory of Jacques Derrida as an interesting and challenging supplement to the theory of Wilson Harris and to his performative fiction.

The critical distance that such notions as the "archon" and "hauntology" provides us with is reached in *Palace of the Peacock* for instance during the course of the journey upriver. The growing awareness of the relativity of one's certainties about the past and the passage of time is staged in the novel thanks to the stream of consciousness of the Dreamer whose monologues inform us about his inner questionings. The mind of the Dreamer becomes the vessel of speculations about the past as a historical category. By examining the notion of "hauntology," the Derridian version of Wilson Harris's "infinite rehearsal," I will try to complement and enrich my own, as well as my reader's, understanding of how art can become the entryway of newness into the world.

Archival Illusions

A statement by Max Lerner summarizes the correspondence between Wilson Harris's fictional writing and Derrida's philosophical treatment of spectrality: "a heritage is at any moment a selection of symbols out of the past". Indeed, both Jacques Derrida and Wilson Harris share this view the past as not merely as a collection of images, symbols and signifiers one inherits passively but as as involving an active process of selecting, a sifting through of the load of symbols, meanings that one inherits. In the first pages of *Palace of the Peacock*,

the Dreamer, protagonist and narrator, says: "I had felt the wind rocking me with the oldest uncertainty and desire in the world, the desire to govern or be governed, rule or be ruled forever." (14) This ancient tug-of-war between self-rule and external rule does not merely apply to territorial conquest. It can be extended to our perpetual desire to rule over our own specters, in other words our heritage. This ancient internal struggle is not necessarily resolved on the either/or mode. Both Derrida and Harris seem to argue that it is possible to simultaneously rule and be ruled. In fact, they both insist that it is by selecting our own heritage (and therefore ruling over our specters then allowing ourselves to be ruled by them) that we can one day hope to achieve an equilibrium between emancipation and imprisonment.

The archon of memory

Interpretations of the work of Wilson Harris in Jungian terms abound.[11] Nonetheless, I chose to argue in this section that it is with Freud that Wilson Harris bears the most fundamental similarities. Freud argues that a dialogue with specters from the past is possible and even necessary to cure symptoms that affect the present of his patients and to liberate their imaginations, thereby changing their future. If it were possible to summarize the objective of the aesthetic project of Wilson Harris in simple terms, it would come strikingly close—in the direction taken and the means used—to that which Freud undertook when he invented and developed the talking cure. I chose to highlight this similarity not to give precedence to Freud over Harris or to argue that the latter owes anything to the former, nor even to underscore cross-cultural influences in the work of Wilson Harris, as this would be stating the obvious. It is in fact in Jacques Derrida's critique of what he calls the Freudian impression (on psychoanalysis) that a crucial insight about the revisionary nature of the fiction of Wilson Harris can be found.

In his books *Specters of Marx* and *Archive-Fever*, Jacques Derrida highlights the connections between the thought of Freud and the metaphysical tradition. Jacques Derrida argues compellingly that the latter has invested in some form of absolutist, essentialist

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[11] Wilson Harris has professed an interest in the work of Carl Gustav Jung. Many connections exist between the works of both thinkers, most crucial among them the ways of conceiving a path to inner unity. Jung calls this process *hieros gamos,* i.e., the sacred marriage which unites male and female and leads to the formation of a fully integrated self. ????Many instances of self-knowledge in the novels of Wilson Harris are exemplary illustrations of the influence of such a conception of unity.

discourse and that he was clinging to the hope that his theoretical legacy be based on a few concepts and definitions that would be immune to doubt. Freud's desire for reality to be read and interpreted according to his own static – if complex- terms corresponds to a desire for his own definition of truth to triumph.   I will use Derrida's analysis of this metaphysical orientation in Freud's theory to argue that Wilson Harris did not fall in the same epistemological "trap". I will attempt to show how Wilson Harris has developed a method of reworking the past and the present based on a perpetual, "infinite rehearsal". This method is that which fortified Wilson Harris' fiction against any form of dogmatism .In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida proposed to submit Freud's thought to this kind of revisionary work that he argues Freud has failed to achieve. By highlighting the echoes between Wilson Harris' method and Derrida's notion of "hauntology" I will try to prove that Wilson Harris has achieved the very kind of philosophical self-questioning that Jacques Derrida argues Freud failed to achieve.

In *Archive-Fever*, Derrida starts by describing the conceptual revolution Freud started in the history of ideas by inventing psychoanalysis. It is crucial to consider what incredible conceptual leap this was. It is indeed important to go back to Freud as his work marks the beginning in contemporary thought of the growing importance of imagination as an interpretative tool of the past as well as a shaping force of the future. It is even more important in the context of this work to examine the conceptual traps in which Freud fell when shaping the basis of psychoanalysis, the science which interprets "specters". Indeed, Derrida   reminds us that our century-long familiarity with the Freudian idiom has obliterated the astonishing fact that Freud was a scientist who believed in ghosts. Freud went even so far as to base a whole science on his dialogue with specters. Moreover, Derrida argues[12], Freud is the one who first and most radically questioned the relevance of objective truth in scientific investigation and replaced it with the voice of specters of our past. For the first time, neither the validity of the conclusions reached by a scientist nor the efficiency of his curing methods depended on the truth-value of the concepts he uses. The talking cure is a therapy based not on retrieving an objective cause to the symptoms but on trying to construct a narrative out of spectral fragments: old memories, dead fragments from the past, mute psychological phenomena.

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[12] See *Archive Fever*

Now, substituting a "spectral truth" for an "objective truth" without troubling the healing process during psychotherapy is radically revolutionary in that it exposes the fictionality of the archive[13] and the irrelevance of questions about the truth-value (as opposed to the "logic" and structure of) the patient's narrative. The spectral voices that Freud proposed to decipher were symptoms of a repressed trauma that Derrida compares to a kind of "virtual" archive. Virtual because obliterated by some defense mechanism, and made to disappear within the recesses of the unconscious. These repressed specters are only a trace that is an absence and a presence at the same time. To make them "present"(such was the secret ambition of Freud, argues Derrida) they had to be brought from the Unconscious to the Consciousness on the hands of the archon, here the analyst. To circumvent their lack of materiality, Freud substituted a prosthetic device that stands in for the repressed trauma. He actually considered that trauma as something to be *made*. In other words, traces of the trauma were expected to be "constructed" as opposed to "revealed" by the Unconscious. "That the present in general is not primal but, rather, reconstituted, that it is not the absolute, wholly living form which constitutes experience, that there is no purity of the living present—such is the theme, formidable for metaphysics, which Freud, in a conceptual scheme unequal to the thing itself, would have us pursue" (W*riting and Difference*, 212). This new science was indeed "a formidable [challenge] for metaphysics" and it broke with traditional materialism and a vision of objectivity soon to become utterly obsolete.

However and quite paradoxically, the task of deciphering spectral voices is not devoid of epistemic violence. For Derrida highlights the fact that in psychoanalysis no symptom or hypothesis ever become valid "archives" if they do not bear the Freudian signature. Thus, the

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[13] The parallel between the "material archive" (as is usually pictured in our collective imaginary) and the "virtual archive" (the set of symptoms in Freud's patients) hinges on
the idea, defended by Derrida, that both are reconstitutions a posteriori operated by the archon (the son of the magistrate who presides over the arkheion and interprets the archive) and the psychoanalyst. For Derrida the archon and the psychoanalyst fulfill similar functions. Both the archon and the analyst perform the hermeneutic deciphering of the archive. The virtual as well as the material archive are therefore constructs, such is the central argument of Derrida in *Archive-Fever*. The "trace", or original event to whose reality the archive is supposed to testify is always already lost and is forever irretrievable. That is how Derrida manages to draw a parallel between the virtual archive that Freud longs to resuscitate but will never retrieve and the material archive which is a trace of an event which will remain forever inaccessible.

validity of the diagnosis is conditional on Freud's signature. A diagnosis becomes acceptable/true only if it fits the criteria set by Freud. Freud repeats the patriarchal logic and produces an institution where he is the only archon. There is an inherent contradiction in his belief in the essential spectrality (and necessary elusiveness) of the archive and in the necessity of systematizing interpretation, institutionalizing and regulating it through a number of transcendental principles. It is precisely in this contradiction that Derrida locates one of the manifestations of archival violence that he proposes to exorcize through what he calls "hauntology".

Derrida provides another precious intellectual tool for the analysis of epistemic violence. Naturally it proved useful in my postcolonial reading of the *Palace of the Peacock* The psychoanalytical semanticization of specters[14] consists in "putting into order" the voices from the past (or virtual archives). The principal task which the putting in order is based on is naming – a fundamentally violent act and a form of institutionalized dogmatism. The categories invented by Freud to name and categorize the spectral voices (e.g. the subject, the unconscious, symptom, trauma, memory etc.) function like an exergue. Derrida explains the power and function of the latter: "An exergue serves to stock in anticipation and to pre archive a lexicon which, from there on, ought *to lay down the law and give the order" (Archive Fever,* 12, emphasis mine). Like an exergue, the categories invented by Freud play an "institutive and conservative function". Indeed, Freud uses them to make visible or cast into oblivion pieces of data depending on whether or not they fit into a neat interpretative package according to a logic championed by psychoanalysis as an "institution". Underlying that logic is found Freud's secret hope for a final closure, his secret longing to eliminate the irreducible or what Derrida calls Freud's "archive-fever". This desire to retrieve the "Origin(al)" trauma is a remnant from metaphysical thinking and ironically, it keeps haunting Freud. Under its spectral influence, he repeated the patriarchal logic and appointed himself as archon and undisputed Father-figure of psychoanalysis. Thus, Freud managed to liberate thought from the constraints of Truth the better to impose his own version of what constitutes truth-value on it. He invented a science in which meaning was and could only be a construct but it quickly evolved into a

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[14] Formula mentioned in the definition of mourning, in my introduction page 1.

science in which a self-appointed archon (himself) sanctions certain interpretations and penalizes others.

In *Palace of the Peacock* we find a fictional example of the kind of fascination and power the vision of a patriarchal figure can have when left unquestioned. Wilson Harris describes' the Dreamer's "childish obsession" for the vision of Donne[15]. The vision of Donne seems to the Dreamer to possess a luster, a completness, a force that his own vision lacks. The Dreamer expresses a deep anxiety at the thought that his eyes are not reliable sources of truth. The Dreamer is utterly distressed by this. He misinterprets the partiality of his vision as a failure, not as part of the necessarily partial perspective on reality that one must accept and live with. He sees it as a sign of incompleteness and of inferiority. The Dreamer is not aware at the beginning of the novel that the validity of the vision of Donne is based on the Dreamer's belief in his own blindness. This is quite reminiscent of the shadow that Freud, the "archon" of psychoanalysis casts on alternative visions. The Dreamer longs to possess the access to truth that Donne has. However, the monologue of the Dreamer at the beginning of the novel contains the seeds of a growing awareness of the foolishness of this obsession with Donne's perspective as the only legitimate one:

> It's an old dream[...] It started when we were at school, I imagine. Then you went away suddenly. It stopped then. I had a curious sense of hard-won freedom when you had gone.Then to my astonishment, long after it came again. But this time with a new striking menace that flung you from your horse. You fell and died instantly, and *yet you were the one who saw and I was the one who was blind.* (*PoP,* 22, emphasis mine)

Donne, even dead, sees better than the Dreamer. As Derrida points out, Freud's authority over psychoanalysis continued long after his death. His "impression" or "signature," as Derrida calls it, left its indelible trace. Without it, interpretations of the past are invalid and there is no cure, that is, no escape from the prison of one's traumas, of one's powerlessness and ignorance. This passage can also be read as a reference to the position of any postcolonial thinker whose intellectual credibility ironically dependended on the West, considered as the locus of knowledge and the sanctioning authority.

The Dreamer continues:

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[15] In Palace of the Peacock, the Dreamer and Donne are portrayed both as twin brothers and as the opposite faces of one single character - the main protagonist.

> You were the one who saw, and I was the one who was blind [...] My left eye has an incurable infection [...] My right eye which is actually sound –goes blind in my dream, [...] *Nothing kills your sight...* and *your vision becomes [...] the only remaining window on the world for me*. (22, emphasis mine)

This plea contains a mixture of envy, distress, obsession and mostly a feeling of powerlessness. The Dreamer feels powerless not in the face Donne, but in the face of the obsession that he nurtures for the so-called superiority of his vision. It is the metaphorical prison of his own beliefs that the narrator wants to escape.

As opposed to the physical power Donne exercises on Mariella, whom he abuses physically, the authority of Donne over the Dreamer is limited to the intellectual sphere. Donne exercises his influence specifically on the imagination of his brother. Indeed, as the Dreamer declares "you have governed my imagination from childhood" (PoP, 20) Notably, the Dreamer kills Donne, his "gaoler and ruler" in his mind, through his imagination, in a dreaming parallel reality, Mariella ambushes him and shoots him in the material world. If we pose that Mariella stands for the colonized mother-land, then we can deduce that Wilson Harris represents the quest for freedom in *Palace of the Peacock* not only as a territorial but also an intellectual pursuit. This is crucial because his project is about the recovery of the colonized territories of language and the imagination.

Killing Donne is not enough. The narrator has to get rid of the notion that he represents: the power of the landlord. Donne is the self-proclaimed "last landlord" [16] .We can draw a parallel between the figure of Freud, who appointed himself as the "archon", the sole figure of authority in psychoanalysis. and Donne. The latter rules over land, the former over the virtual territory of memories. Donne longs to rule over land which is "the ultimate. the everlasting" (*PoP*, 23). This ultimate and everlasting value is questioned by the Dreamer who expresses a boldly skeptic yet ambivalent opinion about territories:

> The map of the Savannahs was a dream. The names Brazil and Guyana were colonial conventions I had known from childhood. I clung to them now as to a curious necessary stone and footing. They were an actual stage, a presence, however mythical they seemed to the universal and spiritual eye [..] 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. (*PoP*,24)

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[16] " I'm the last landlord...I am everything. Midwife, yes, doctor, yes, gaoler, judge, hangman, every blasted thing to the laboring people." (PoP,22)

It is not only the figure of authority that Donne represents that holds a power over Donne. The idea of the land itself- a dream, a myth, a convention and yet for the characters of *Palace*, the ultimate and most palpable of realities- holds infinite power over the imaginations of the characters. It conditions their relationships, their choices and each of their decisions. The idea of the materiality of territory, of its frontiers, of the power that possessing land grants is highlighted by Wilson Harris as inherent to the mental heritage of the character. Alongside this representation, Wilson Harris offers a deep and ceaseless questioning of the materiality of these notions.

There is a parallel direction in Jacques Derrida's thought. Indeed, Derrida develops throughout his career a critical position that is fundamentally opposed to teleological, eschatological positions steeped in metaphysical presuppositions. The first step towards a more critical relationship with one's past and one's heritage is the desacralization of the archive-as-fetish. The archive here stands not just for the material document but also, since *Archive-Fever*, for a variety of more ethereal entities (such as "trauma", memories of past events and the voice of our own specters, *aka of* tradition) under whose influence we act. The meaning of the term "archive" has thus been stretched quite extensively. It is surprising though, that despite the revolutionary dimension imparted to it by Derrida, in the collective imaginary, it still stands for concepts, ideas, and artefacts whose testimonial truth-value we never question. The creative handling of these "archives" is seen as a lack of scientific objectivity or a sacrilegious attitude towards the so-called objective remnants of the past to be dismissed as unscientific amateurism. This critical stance regarding the archive as defined by Derrida is worth considering in the context of postcolonial nationalist reflections about the identity-forming capacities of art and its function as a valuable component in nationalist political struggles.

In this context, historiography is relevant and worth examining because it is emblematic of a stultified, counter-productive relationship to the past and to the archive. Looking closely at it might help us see the potential dangers of fetishizing the archive. It is important to maintain a critical awareness about our vision of the archive, specifically in such fields as historiography. It is all the more crucial as a failure to do so can mean a complicity with colonial and neo-colonial oppressive projects in which the archive has remained the most valuable othering tool because it remained unquestioned for the longest time. Dealing properly with one's heritage is

conditioned by a more ethical perspective on the status of the archive, even though questioning the validity of the archives in historiography (and with it, the necessity or reality of "hard facts") can mean the death of a discipline which based its credibility on exclusive (because documented) claims to historical truth. Historians seem to be grappling with their impossibility to mourn the arch-ghost of a material authentic archive. Some critics argue that historiography might be one of the last bastions of the fetichization of the archive.[17] While most human sciences have taken a decisive leap outside of metaphysics (and into hauntology, Derrida would add) and preserved as an instrument concepts whose ontological truth-value they criticized, historiography remained the emblematic field of divided affiliations between what Spivak calls the position of the "excavator" (who puts her trust in the archives) and that of the "concatenator" (who puts her trust in fictional productions). Historians typically thought of themselves as "objective scientists" rather than as creative interpreters. It is precisely to these conservative-minded scholars that Lacapra addresses his accusation of "enthusiastic and uncritical archivism" in his book *History and Criticism*. For them, he says, the archive is the object of an "indiscriminate mystique...which is bound up with hegemonic pretensions… [in which] the archive as a *fetish* [still] is a literal substitute for the 'reality' of the past which is 'always already' lost for the historian." (*History and Criticism* 92, n17) The inability of Donne to distinguish between the always already lost thing-in-itself, that is the long gone past and his memory of it, nearly leads to his death. He is led by a "fake sense of home" which at the end of the novel is discovered to be the real meaning of hell. It is this fake intimacy and illusions about the past and its archive (maps) that nearly kill him.

> It flashed on him looking down the steep spirit of the cliff that *this dreaming return to a ruling function of nothingness and to a false sense of home was the meaning of hell*. He stared upward to heaven slowly as to a new beginning from which the false hell and function crumbled and fell. (PoP, 101)

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[17] such is at least is the claim of Hayden White quoted by Gayatri Spivak in "Can the Subltern Speak": "That language is the instrument of mediation between the consciousness and the world that consciousness inhabits ..will not be news to the literary theorists, but it has not yet reached the historians buried in the archives hoping , by what they call a 'sifting of the facts' or the 'manipultion of the data,' to find the form of the reality that will serve as the object of representation in the account that they will write 'when all the facts are known' and they have finally 'got the story straight'" (203)

The notions of "home", of territory, of ultimate destination and truth are all connected by a belief in the materiality of the notion of Origin. Throughout *Palace*, Wilson Harris labours to unravel the power they hold over his characters. The appeal they have on his characters always proves fatal (or nearly fatal like in the passage quoted above) and the characters only survive when they succeed in resisting the fascination the notions of home, territory, property and the past as a palpable reality exercise upon their minds.

Hauntology

Derrida's critical stance in *Archive-Fever* regarding traditional conceptions of the archive, historical objectivity, and scientific truth prepares us to understand what he calls "hauntology," his own version of spectral dialogues. Through this revisionary critical effort, Jacques Derrida proposes to change the nature of our relation to our past and most specifically our relation to our *"other" from the past*. To cold, so-called objective material forays into the archive as a "stand-in" for the thing itself, he substitutes dialogue with spectral voices. He calls this the "archive-effect"[18]—a relationship based on shared secrets as opposed to authoritatively extracted hard facts. This casts a different light on such notions as historical continuity. Historical causality is exposed as an artifice. No determinism cements relations of legacy and heritage. There is nothing necessary or inescapable in heritage. It is a one-sidedly perceived affinity, projected from the present onto the past and against which the specters are as defenseless as the newborn. This epistemic violence is inherent in our relation to our heritage. We need only be aware of it and not let illusions of objectivity abstract the fact that heritage is based on what Derrida calls "communal dissymmetry" [19]

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[18] This is the definition of the phrase archive effect found in *Archive-Fever*: "the apostrophe is addressed to a dead person, to the historian's object become spectral subject" (29)

[19] In *Archive-Fever*, Derrida gives an illustration of what he means by archive-effect by evoking Yerushalmi's monologue addressed to Freud, in which he speaks to Freud as a father, fellow Jew and intimate friend. This friendship is imposed by Yerushalmi on the ghost of Freud, says Derrida. But this way of addressing the ghost of Freud, though apparently unscientific, is the only valid way of addressing the other from the past. In this passage Derrida explains the notion of communal dissymmetry : " By definition, because he is dead and thus incapable of responding, Freud can only acquiesce. He cannot refuse this community at once proposed and imposed. He can only say "yes" to this covenant into which he must" (30)

Through his examination of the Freudian impression on our own spectral voices come from the past, Derrida shows how hauntology, the necessarily interpretative effort through which we hear, ontologize and then select our own heritage transforms both the past and the future. It questions the givenness of the past as an impervious category locked up once and for all. The Hamletian leitmotiv "Time is out of joint" is used by Derrida as an attempt to highlight the necessity and usefulness of temporal anachrony as a remedy against a predictable future, cleansed from otherness. Temporal disjuncture is necessary and the present will have to contain and put into dialogue temporalities that are non-identical with it, to be a space where specters from the past are liberated from the confines of dogmatism and kept alive. This is done by reactivating the possibility of interpretation, of choice[20], of fiction-making. The goal behind hauntology is not merely the selection of the content of our heritage, but "transformative work" which is conditioned and best defined as a radicalization of spectrality- - the elimination of every metaphysical presupposition about the reality of an Origin behind the specters.

According to Derrida, *proper* mourning liberates language and prepares it for revision. It also preserves what Derrida calls the "secret", the irreducible, undecipherable part of the discourse of the specters. Liberating language is intimately linked with preserving an opacity in language that is irreducible to interpretation:

> Let us consider first of all, the radical and necessary heterogeneity of an inheritance [...] Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the injunction to reaffirm by choosing. "One must" means one must filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles that inhabit the same injunction. And inhabit it in a contradictory fashion around a secret. If the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it. We would be affected by it as by a cause-natural or genetic. One always inherits from a secret-which says "read me, will you ever be able to do so?" (*Specters of Marx*, 18)

In the works of Wilson Harris there is a necessity to restore strangeness and otherness in totalizing discourses about the Other and the colonial past. Wilson Harris even asserts:

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[20] Derrida claims in specters of Marx that the voices of the specters are imposed on us (the injunction of the voice of the spirit of Hamlet's Father demands obedience) but that does not in any way close the future in a totalizing way because specters are many and heterogenous. There is more than one specter and we can select our own: "The experience, the apprehension of the ghost is tuned into frequency: number (more than one), insistence, rhythm (waves, cycles, and periods)." (*SMX*, 133)

"Unless one feels a strangeness in oneself, the familiar investment in a linear function becomes the fatality of a culture." ("The Composition of Reality", 24) The postcolonial response to the blindness and denial of the narratives of the empire achieves "creative /re-creative penetrations of blow directed at models of tradition whose partiality engenders an accumulation of crisis" (*The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, 16) in order to reach "genuine diversity-in-universality". Derrida shares Wilson Harris's interest in this imperative:

> "What one must constantly come back to, here as elsewhere, concerning this text as well as any other ... is an irreducible heterogeneity, an internal untranslatability in some way. It does not necessarily signify theoretical weakness or inconsistency. The lack of a system is not a fault here. On the contrary, heterogeneity opens things up, it lets itself be opened up by the very effraction of that which unfurls, comes and remains to come - singularly from the other..." (*Specters of Marx*, 40)

The Past as a Reified Object of Desire

As demonstrated above, Wilson Harris's perspective on the past as a conceptual category echoes the ideas of Freud about the fictionality of the past and the central role of creative memory in its reconstruction. In *TWS*, Wilson Harris argues that the evolution of the way the past is conceived of will bear on the language of the novel itself: "The exploration of the 'dead' past, the exploration of a bridge across the divided conception of humanity, is still in its infancy, and the thawing effect this may have […]on the structure and language of the novel[…] waits to be perceived and understood." (*TWS*, 24)

In *Palace of the Peacock*, Wilson Harris deconstructs the distorted vision of the past as a reified object of desire, as Derrida deconstructs the fetishism of Freud in *Archive Fever*. Wilson Harris includes in *Palace* a reflection about the nature of the crew's desire to relive their past. Indeed, the journey towards the Mission has cost the crew their life in the past, but it remains appealing despite its danger. Its irresistible appeal is assimilated into the erotic magnetism of Mariella: "Mariella dwelt above the falls in the forest [...] One's mind was a chaos of sensation, even pleasure, faced by imminent mortal danger."(24) The crew shares with Donne the need to "fulfill one self-same early desire and need in all of us" (*Palace* 27) This "fever" for the past (longing and desire) is assimilated by Wilson Harris to sexual instinct. The longing of Donne for a primal past is questioned over and over again throughout the novel: "Though he was the last to admit it, he was glad for a chance to return to that first

muse and journey when Mariella had existed like a shaft of fantastical shapely dust in the sun, a fleshy shadow in his consciousness. This had vanished." (*PoP*, 27) Donne longs for the first journey. He fetishizes the first encounter with Mariella.

The fetishism of Donne is constantly balanced with the irreverence of the Dreamer for the past: "In this light it was as if the light of all past days and nights on earth had vanished. It was the first breaking dawn of the light of our soul." (PoP, 33) The repetition of the journey of the crew is presented here as the first ever in the history known by the souls of the crew. Narrative sequence, the chronology of past and present are invalidated in the new spectral dimension that Wilson Harris opened in *Palace of the Peacock*:

> The murdered horseman of the savannahs, the skeleton footfall on the river bank and in the bush, the moonhead and crucifixion in the waterfall and in the river were over as though a cruel ambush of soul had partly lifted its veil and face to show that death was the shadow of a dream. In this remarkable filtered light *it was not men of vain flesh and blood I saw toiling laboriously and meaninglessly, but active ghosts whose labour was indeed a fitting shadow over their shoulders as living men would don raiment and cast it off in turn to fulfill the simplest necessity of being*. (33)

Both Derrida's   hauntology and the "philosophy of history" developed by Wilson Harris hinge on the choice to replace final notions (death) with spectrality which is a sort of undefined in-betweeness. Interestingly both hinge on finding an alternative (and a solution to) fetishist attachments to the past. As seen in the passages above, as well as in the whole novel, Wilson Harris develops an imaginative organic universe that works against the conceptual legacy of the colonial experience that nurtures and sustains the dependence of any historical narrative on the illusion that the past exists as an independent external reality.

The comparison that I have sustained between Wilson Harris and Jacques Derrida is not an attempt to exhaust the work of Wilson Harris by proving the extent of this correspondence. In fact, my approach is not exactly comparative. I have argued above that the main point of agreement between both Derrida and Harris is that they both advocate for the necessity of subverting totalizing narratives imposed on us as historical truth. Both, however, labour in such personal ways to construct alternative discourses to the linear narratives,that comparing both projects will necessarily result in limiting both. For this reason I will simply try in the rest of this chapter to focus on what a creative imaginative handling of history and tradition means for Wilson Harris.   One of the most important features of the past, as

conceived of by Harris, is its simultaneity with the present. The following passage taken from an interview of Wilson Harris with Vera Kutzinski explains how this simultaneity will participate in dismantling linearity:

> [T]here is density of association which is profound and necessary at times in dislodging purely linear function in order to bring distant or removed characterizations of history abreast of presences of the moment. Such simultaneity of the past and the present deepens the legacies that act upon us out of the past; it creates (that simultaneity) a different narrative pressure. One is aware of the pressure of a ceaseless quest for understanding in which the energies of the past become an omen of a living continuity native to ourselves. ("The Composition of Reality", 24)

What Wilson Harris calls for in this passage is a creative engagement with the past that liberates it from old linear narratives that exhaust it and imprison it. His expression "density of association" is at the core of his idiosyncratic method of putting into productive dialogue the past (sometime very remote) and the present. This associative method differs from conventional modernism in that it does not seek to transform traditions for the sole purpose of reforming the present. Wilson Harris' aim is to reconfigure the past itself . Indeed, Wilson Harris does not perceived by Wilson Harris as an unassailable category immune to the interventions of the present. He believes the past can be changed from the present and that the influence between the past and the present is mutual.

Revisionary Strategies in *Palace of the Peacock.*

1) Introduction

> *The stress on new configuration arises essentially from a concept that is integral to the* Quartet *and to the* Palace of the Peacock*, namely, 'a fiction that seeks to consume its own biases' This is a strange statement but its meaning and significance become clear, I think, in certain contexts of imagery.[…] The consuming of bias in the fiction operates, therefore, through frames that are apparently identical but in essence undergo a visionary, inner-space translation. Here resides the strange drama of* Palace*." (Wilson Harris PoP, 11)*

In his article "The Art of Memory and the Liberation of History," Paul Sharrad argues that Wilson Harris, among other postcolonial writers, is engaged with the historical past in a complex and highly proactive way: "[...] Harris work[s] at a double task: on the one hand, imaginative liberation from the tyranny of a history which denies [the ex-colonized] a past (and thus a presence), and on the other, immersion in history to recover/ recreate a past." (92) The effort of Wilson Harris is thus is two-fold. It consists in releasing the past from the grip of old linear totalizing modes of thought while producing a fictional dynamic and irreverent compensatory narrative that restores visibility to that which has been left out. Writing a novel, i.e. a narrative that seeks to disrupt notions of linearity and yet which itself is dependent on a certain adherence to chronology is and effort that requires an ability to welcome paradox. . "[Wilson Harris] grapple[s] with the paradox of shaping narrative to affirm an evolving identity while resisting the totalizing hold of a single linear flow of time (especially as represented and controlled by hegemonic power)." (92) The trick to this balance is in the revisionary quality of the work of Wilson Harris which reappropriates the notion of chronology.

After examining the deconstructive aspect of his work, through a questioning, in the first half of this work, of the linearity of history and the tenets of the traditional novel that Wilson Harris tries to subvert, I will focus on describing the characteristics and components of what Wilson Harris calls "a profound art of compensation." As is stated in the epigraph to this introduction, an art of compensation, according to Wilson Harris, must tend towards a constant

consumption of bias, i.e., towards a ceaseless questioning of the biases of tradition and ingrained systems of thought.

This vigilant and subversive attention to bias must be profoundly creative. Paul Sharrad expresses the same view:

> The novelist has to create a fictional memory of suppressed legend, silent folklore, forgotten images. This process no longer relies on documentary epic, official records or social realism, but on subjective, tentative deconstruction of dominating presence to show the shadows of reconstruction from absence. ("The Art of Memory", 97)

Indeed, it is crucial to remember that one of the most important stratagems of imperial domination is the erasure from the historical record of all that threatens its stability. This voluntary and systemized erasure condemned whole generations of West Indians to a feeling of pastless-ness and uprooted-ness. Official records and literary resources do not contain the answer to questions about identity that the ex-colonized individuals might have. Collective memories of a past pre-dating the colonial experience need to be reconstructed and if necessary invented. Such is the view that Wilson Harris performs through his novels.

In this process of reconstruction and invention, repetition plays a vital role because it enables to reconfigure our memories of the past, which are the past itself since the past has no essence. Paul Sharrad who argues that memory is the seat of change attaches a revolutionary power to the ability to go back in time and revisit the past in our imagination. For him, "without the ability to freeze time or to go back over events, we cannot liberate ourselves from historical determinism or its realist expressions." ("The Art of Memory", 106) It is a creative, fragmented, artistic, hybrid form of revisionary memory that runs counter the patterns of linear historiography-"[it] leaps about in order to assemble different perspectives into a composite mental construct that partakes of the creative energy of the flux of life/ritual and cultural process." (102) As Wilson Harris argues in "The Limbo Gateway," the imaginative memory, which Wilson Harris develops, acts against the logic of indictment which "conscript[s] the West Indies into a mere adjunct of Imperialism and overlook[s] subtle and far-reaching renascence. In a sense therefore the new historian [...] has ironically extended and reinforced old colonial prejudice." (380)[21] His subjective imagination consists instead in "an original re-construction or re-creation of variables of myth and legend in the wake of stages of conquest." (380)

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[21] Taken from "The Limbo Gateway" in the *The Postocolonial Reader*

To release the semantic and symbolic territories appropriated for the longest time in British Guyana by the colonizer's vision, Wilson Harris invokes the specters of old forgotten myths and archetypes. In his highly creative way, he continuously questions the dominant, rigid conceptions of meaning, myth and truth to achieve "a subtle, complex breakthrough in the language of the imagination" (182, "The Fabric"). This revisionary effort slowly erodes old categories of understanding. Once it starts to operate breaches in familiar models and modes of thought, writing starts "point[ing] to another direction" that of the "chrysalis of the World." (181)

For Wilson Harris, it is not language that is the tool of imperial conquest but the imagination. It is the seat of all the prejudice that "gnaw[s] at the heart of cultures."[22] It is therefore not language he is interested in reforming but the "fabric of the imagination": "A current may be invoked in the fabric of the imagination that runs much deeper than the language of the so-called imperialist exploiter by which so-called subject peoples have been conditioned. It runs much deeper than this syndrome and trauma." ("The Fabric" 176) Wilson Harris compares his imaginative vision to a language: "[t]his vision of consciousness is the peculiar reality of language because the concept of language is one which continuously transforms inner and outer categories of experience." (*TWS*, 32) This deep imaginative vision is therefore transformative. It enables the reinterpretation of the past and the present, living and non-living components of one's environment as well as cultural heritage leading to a more complex understanding of the hybrid Caribbean reality. I propose to study the way Wilson Harris subtly subverts the familiar discursive frameworks that stifle our imagination. Once dismantled, those old frameworks will leave room for a "native tradition of depth"- a new, complex, self-revising representation of reality more in tune with the "depth of inarticulate feeling and unrealized wells of emotion belonging to the whole of West Indies."(*TWS*, 30)

In the following section, I will focus on the revisionary aspect of this new language of the imagination. I have chosen to examine repetition as the narrative mode which enables this revision. My analysis consists of two parts. The first part of this section is a study of all the manifestations, meanings and effects of imaginative repetition in *Palace of the Peacock*. The

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[22] Here is the quote in which this striking expression is found, in the article of Wilson Harris called "The Fabric of the Imagination" : "distance from a penetrative and complex vision settles in the universal unconscious and gnaws at the heart of cultures, to breed nihilism and mass-media escapism in the arts of the world." (176)

second part focuses on the peculiar structure of the self-revising images that populate this novel and which constitute another aspect and one more revisionary strategy in the art of Wilson Harris.

2) Revisionary Repetition

> *I said I saw the Beggar in a new way. I mean the man who was not shot and who fell into the painting. By 'new way' I mean he cannot be captured or seized. That's part of what I mean. He has to be reinvented every century, every generation. His essence is beyond us. That's what the painting is saying. One may see, rarely perhaps, an imprint that compels us to create, to reinterpret. That imprint is available to all. Wilson Harris—The Ghost of Memory, 71*

> *I rewrite things all the time. My impression is that the poetry I've been writing since Rights of Passages is some kind of continuum and the continuum can be reshuffled. I can select certain themes out of the threads and that is what Middle Passages did. It's like the oral tradition: it can be changed, but it has the same basic source. It's like a river and you can dip into it and take different glasses of water. Edward Brathwaite—Qtd in Rigby 710*

> *A question of repetition: a specter is always a revenant. One cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back. Jacques Derrida—Specters of Marx 11*

As the first quote above suggests, Wilson Harris's definition of cultural identity is dynamic – it is a constant negotiation of the link between past and present. This chapter will attempt to examine the literary strategy which Wilson Harris uses to negotiate the relation between the past and the present. Like the beggar in the painting who needs to be "reinvented every century, every generation," the past needs to be revisited. Once the hope of finding its "essence" abandoned, it becomes possible, and even necessary to create it and to continuously revise it. By recasting the past in his highly individual way, Wilson Harris breaks the pact with chronology and produces a new understanding that transforms past, present and future ("I said I saw the Beggar in a new way"). With a view to accomplishing this, I argue that Wilson Harris uses repetition as a literary device with deconstructive potential in order to effect changes in modes of thinking and to breach oppressive discourses.

More with a view to finding an intellectual kinship than a conceptual indebtedness, I will try to examine the extent to which Gilles Deleuze's take on the transformative potential of repetition echoes that of Wilson Harris. The main argument of Gilles Deleuze in his seminal book *Difference and Repetition* is that repetition is the producer of difference. In a nutshell,

Deleuze juxtaposes "difference" and "repetition" in order to challenge the commonly held belief that repetition is the reproduction of the self-same.

In order to do this, Gilles Deleuze starts by questioning the primacy of identity over difference. The latter, he argues, is not an exception to the rule, of which it is the negation. It is actually a unique, independent reality. He abolishes the notion of "sameness". For him, nothing ever duplicates itself when it is repeated. Repetition is always the condition under which novelty is introduced in the world. Gilles Deleuze's theories about difference, repetition and time that I introduce in this section can function as a theoretical framework for a reading of Wilson Harris' own idiosyncratic use of repetition in his work. With the help of the analytical work of the scholar Lorna Burns, in her book *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze*, I was able to highlight the many correspondences between Wilson Harris' revisionary fiction and Gilles Deleuze's revolutionary philosophical work. But most importantly, I was able to place Wilson Harris' aesthetic work into the larger framework of a universal endeavor to oppose grave personal disintegration effected on our psyches by dogmatic codes and creeds.

2.1 Deleuze's Theory of Time, Difference and Repetition[23]

Contemporary thought situates itself in a space beyond the linear and the circular conceptualizations of duration, a space where they coexist. More recent theories (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Deleuze, Derrida etc.) complicated and nuanced the idea of repetition as a reproduction of the same. These theorists, among others spoke of different idiosyncratic forms of repetition, each of which serving a different function, each being a subject to its own doubling and none of which reaching a conclusive truth. Sarah Gendron summarizes the crucial nuance that contemporary reflections on repetition unveiled: "No longer privileging a past by honoring the return of the self-same, or the return to an origin or a beginning, repetition looked forward to the future and to the *production of difference*." (My emphasis).

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze redefines the link between identity and repetition. According to him, repetition is not the return of the self-same but of the different. "That identity not be first, [...]that it revolve around the Different: such would be the nature of a Copernican revolution which opens up the possibility of difference having its own concept." (DR 41). To put it simply, for Deleuze, even copies are different from their so-called originals. What Deleuze criticizes is the constant tendency to understand difference in reference to self identical objects which relegates difference to the status of epiphenomenon of the same as have done thinkers from Plato to Heidegger. Deleuze then criticizes the Platonic method of defining difference as the opposite of a principal model, subordinating difference to the "reign of the identical". His anti-Platonic approach to difference puts forth a notion of "unmediated difference" (*DR,* 29) or simulacra, in which each instance of difference becomes its own model. In the absence of an ontological unity dictated by a model, it becomes necessary to actually think and not simply to recognize things, ideas, concepts based on remembrances of

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[23] In her book *The Unthinkable: a History and Evolution of Repetition in Western Thought*, Sarah Gendron gives a brief history of the notion of repetition. The history of repetition is closely linked to that of the notion of "origin", "beginning". From an unproblematic notion it became a convulsive, unstable one that was questioned and then turned into an aesthetic device and a deconstructive tool in literature. She argues that the transformation of the status of repetition into a complex device can effect change in modes of thinking if used to meddle with literary convention. As amply explained by the author, repetition is present everywhere not just as an intellectual tool but also as the iterative principle that natural cycles obey to and that has populated literature and thought from the Middle Ages. Repetition is inescapable and omnipresent from the molecular level to the most abstract forms of thought. However ubiquitous, only contemporary understandings of repetition have used it as a device to unsettle and undermine traditional conceptions of "origins, 'endings" and "authenticity" argues Sarah Gendron. According to her, only recent theorizations of repetition have led to conceive of repetition as a "producer of difference"..

intrinsic features that are actually based on "externally imposed directives"[24]. These constitute what Deleuze names "images of thought" as opposed to real ideas that are not submitted to the metaphysics of identity.

Once this notion of ever-changing difference abolishes static unitary formulations, becoming is the only mode of being. This idea has originally been formulated by Nietzsche. Since only that which differs returns, "difference inhabits repetition" (*DR* 76) For Deleuze, difference is not the negation of sameness and should not be held in the periphery of sameness as a satellite is held by gravitational force to a planet. This logic makes *"[i]dentity the sufficient condition for difference to exist and be thought. It is only in relation to the identical, as a function of the identical, that contradiction is the greatest difference." (DR, 263)*

For him, "a world of disparateness" is buried beneath "the platitude of the negative" (*DR,* 267). According to Deleuze, "history progresses not by negation and the negation of negation but by deciding problems and affirming difference. It is no less bloody and cruel as a result. Only the shadows of history lived by negation." (*DR,* 268). This anti-Hegelian stance gives us an interesting perspective on the logic of negation which enables only linear progress.

Deleuze, then, labours to undermine any thought based on models or presuppositions that move towards a static horizon on a static ground. For Deleuze, difference cannot be contained by laws. Repetition is also not subordinated to laws and is therefore the producer of difference and newness since it is by definition transgressive (for only that which is different returns). Deleuze says: "In every respect, repetition is a transgression. Its puts law into question; it denounces its nominal or general character in favour of a more profound and more artistic reality" (*DR* 3). Deleuze's anti-dogmatic stance is revolutionary in that it provides us with a framework of thinking difference differently.Thought is subordinated to "externally imposed directives" that operate "all the more effectively in silence" (*DR* 167). Objects of thought (whether material or virtual) are "recognized" rather than "thought" and the features that are supposedly inherent in them and allow us to recognize them are harmful to "real" thinking. They "crush thought under an image which is that of the same and the similar in representation, but profoundly betrays what it means to think and alienates the two powers of

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[24] http://www.iep.utm.edu/deleuze/

difference and repetition, of philosophical commencement and recommencement." (*DR* 167) What Deleuze attacks here is the vision of difference as "the negation of". The implication is that paradox, contradiction and particular non generalizable instances are effaced because they cannot be accounted for.

In *DR*, Gilles Deleuze explains this mechanism as follows:

> Difference is unjustly assimilated to a negative non-being. Whence another illusory choice: either being is full positivity, pure affirmation, but undifferenciated being, without difference; or being includes differences, it is Difference and there is non-being, a being of the negative . All these antinomies are connected and depend upon the same illusion. *We may say both that being is full positivity and pure affirmation , and that there is (non)-being which is the being of the problematic, the being of problems and questions, not the being of the negative.* In truth, the origin of the antinomies is as follows: once the nature of the problematic and the multiplicity which defines the Idea is misrecognised, once the Idea is reduced to the Same or even to the identity of a concept, the negative takes wing. Instead of the positive process of the determination of the Idea, what emerges is a process of opposition of contrary predicates or limitation of primary predicates. *To restore the differential in the Idea, and difference to the affirmation which flows from it, is to break this unholy bond which subordinates difference to the negative.* (*DR*, 268-9, emphasis mine)

Once emancipated from negativity, difference becomes difficult to categorize, pin down and manage. The different is secondary only according to a representationalist framework which provides a model supposed to duplicate itself over time. Difference is manageable only because it is secondary and identified as peripheral. Deleuze argues that difference should not be subjected to the laws of identity because over time, it is the different that recurs and not the similar. Deleuze defines repetition as a mode of re-enactment that produces difference not identity over time: "[r]epetition is never a historical fact, but rather the historical condition under which something new is effectively produced." (2004b, p113, quoted in *Writing back to the Colonial Event*).

2.2. Revisionary Fiction of Wilson Harris

In order to better understand Deleuze's view of how repetition produces difference, and how his theories of time facilitate the task of reworking the link between the past, present and future and specifically "the particular relationship between the postcolonial present and colonial past enacted in writing back," I shall start by examining his three syntheses of time.

The first synthesis of time "accounts for the continuation of the same and the general." (*CCWD*, 78) The first synthesis creates an expectation of the occurrence of an event/instance "A" followed by the event/instance "B": 'this synthesis contracts the successive independent instants into one another, thereby constituting the lived, or living, present. It is in this present that time is deployed [se déploie].' (DR, 70) "[T]he effect of this contraction is to create a sense of expectancy in this case, the recurring experience of A followed by B is contracted in the present into the projected expectancy that AB will recur in the future. It is this sense of expectancy that underlies postcolonial authors' problematic relationship with the canon and historical legacies"(CCWD,78).

The colonial attitude itself, argues Lorna Burns, is an instance of a repetition- echoed in all canonical works- of a certain set of associations, of themes, of ways of representing the colonized subject and of attitudes towards him or her. [25] The reading practices inscribed in the minds of the readers by this canonical expectancy are the target of the "writing back" that "works by confronting expectancy, and what we might term a contrapuntal rereading/rewriting, in line with Deleuze's first synthesis, directs its attention to the contraction of the specific past into a generalized framework for determining the future." (CCWD, 79) Lorna Burns argues that the way Caribbean writers produce newness is by questioning the continuum between the past and the future, created by the first synthesis of time. The second synthesis of time is simply "the pure element of the past, understood as the past in general, as an a priori past" (*Guide*, 81). It is a form of "transcendental memory," as it contains everything that has ever happened, whether we have a material trace of its happening or not. It is what permits repetition in the sense that it is what grounds empirical association by "[constituting] the pure past in general, a horizon of having-been-ness, in which what was apprehended finds the conditions of its reproducibility."(Guide, 108) The third synthesis of time is that which allows the pure past to actualize into a radically new future. It is the Deleuzian equivalent of Edward Saïd's contrapuntal reading. By performing a contrapuntal reading...

> [we actualize] the virtual (here the virtual 'side' of the canonical text), the repetition on which the third synthesis is based is not, as in the first, grounded on recurring instances of the contracted past, but on the repetition of the virtual past's becoming-

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[25] Lorna Burns uses the word Canon as meaning "a set of reading practices" , found in Ashcroft et al. 2002, p186

actual, of different/citation[26] as the production of the new (what Deleuze designates the eternal return of difference-in-itself)." It is therefore the "becoming-new" that is repeated in repeating the past. Indeed, the revisionary reading and writing back as it is practiced by Wilson Harris ends up actualizing differently the virtual past and/or revealing an obliterated aspect of it by shedding a creative light on what we think we know. This form of revisionary literature is a "postcoloniality [that] denotes a synthesis of the past that does not repeat predetermined attitudes, but creates something new: an original future not determined at the outset by pre-existing socio-historic subject positions or cultural hierarchies but nevertheless specific to these legacies. (CCWD, 70)

This revisiting of the virtual past has the potential of creating the radically new without rupturing links with the past. It is therefore quite different from the notion of ambivalence that Homi Bhabha argues challenges the "colonizer's self-assured worldview" by appropriating traditions, conventions and even canonical texts. What Wilson Harris and Gilles Deleuze argue for is not a repetition in the form of mimicry. The latter as described by Homi Bhabha does not constitute an instance of pure newness, but simply a distorted mirror held up to the colonizer. What Gilles Deleuze describes and Wilson Harris performs through his writing is a repetition that enables the creation of a new vision and sense of self.

2.3 Textual Analysis

In his essay "Note on the Genesis of the *Guyana Quartet*" which opens the Faber and Faber 1988 edition of *Palace of the Peacock*, Wilson Harris states that writing the *Guyana Quartet* was an attempt to "prove" or "validate" "the truths that may occupy certain 20th century works of fiction [he] had in mind into parallel with profound myth that lies apparently eclipsed in largely forgotten so-called savage culture" (*PoP,* 7) Wilson Harris is interested in

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[26] 'We call the determination of the virtual content of an Idea differen*t*iation; we call the actualisation of that virtuality into species and distinguished parts differen*c*iation' (207/267/258). (Cited in *Guide*, 128)

Also : "Deleuze insists on this relation of actualization to the object. At the beginning of this book we saw one definition of the object: **an object is an assemblage of a quality, an extensity and a duration**. This definition is a partial definition. **It considers the object only from the point of view of its actuality. As we have just seen, by itself, the Idea is also insufficient to define the object: the Idea only considers the object from the point of view of its virtuality. […]Therefore, as Deleuze says above, the real definition of the object is contained in the 'complex notion of differen*t/c*iation'. One half of the object is virtual. The other half is actual, and the 'integrity' of these two moments is captured by this odd word: different/ciation.** Actualization is the process in which the virtual Idea or the 'object in the Idea (*l'objet en Idée*)'[160] meets up with the actual object. **Differentiation differenciates an object thus determining its quality, extensity and duration.**" (Guide, p142)

writing fiction that distances itself radically from the Canon. Such works are potential sources of a radically new future because they actualize the parts of the "so-called savage cultures" that have been "eclipsed" like in the Deleuzian third synthesis of time. This kind of fiction revisits the past to unearth eclipsed myths that are "live fossils". As with this oxymoron, this kind of fiction associates past and present, life and death. This writing is intuitive by definition and relies on a body of shared signs, symbols, and myths that the author himself never stops to unearth as he re-reads his own writing. The buried myths of Guyanese culture emerge in his own fiction validating it through such a correspondence: "the fiction validates itself through buried or hidden curiously live fossils of another age." (7)

These myths, like the fictions of Wilson Harris, house a composite of paradoxical realities that fight "complacency" (7) This is consistent with the view, expressed in the epigraph to this chapter in which the Beggar, who was shot before he fell into the painting, cannot be seized and needs to be reinvented because "his essence is beyond us." There is no artistic so-called realistic representation that does not kill its subject. Revisiting the past in fiction produces the new, the different in the Deleuzian sense because it welcomes and hosts paradoxes. It forces the reader to recognize difference within the familiar. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze defines the former as the being of problems and questions.

In the microcosm of his compensatory fiction, Wilson Harris rights the wrongs done to the macrocosm (the material world) and to the world of abstractions. For him art cannot be "pure" nor is it engaged in a sophisticated divorce from "fictile morsel or construct." (*PoP*, 8) Talking about Donne, the oppressive figure in the novel, Harris describes the abuse he has visited upon the folk and Mariella, his slave/partner, in cosmic terms, as if the small world he dominates can be exponentially multiplied to stand for the whole cosmos: "the folk constelled in the stars he had exploited and the woman Mariella of the moon and the sun, the rapids and the forests he had abused." (8)

The repetition of the past serves to enable this compensatory endeavor by making possible a complex deprogramming through art of a set of pre-determined attitudes that constrain the imagination. Art enables change, provokes it, and repetition becomes the catalyst of such change: "Nothing had changed in Carroll's paradise save for the 'second death' that reopens or revisits every blind deed in the past and begins a ceaseless penetration of objects as surrogates of original volume, original sound, original capacity or comprehension of limits,

genuine change within and without." (9) This quote is found in the Note on the Genesis of the *Guyana Quartet* that opens *Palace*. In this note, Wilson Harris offers his insights on Carroll's music, among other metaphors , and explains that for him it is not pure music but a vehicle of a "vision of substance", an instrument of self-knowledge . The Carib-bone flute which Carroll plays encapsulates the essence of the transformative power of Harris' fiction. It is made of the bone of an enemy in times of war and so it "consumes anthropomorphic objects" (8) the better to enable self- knowledge. It becomes the home of self and other, of mutual haunting between the present self and the specters of the enemy. It houses an otherwise impossible dialogue and enables a repeated encounter every time one of the characters dies again.

Recommencement confronts biased expectations ingrained in the mental reality of the reader by force of habit. The imaginative mission, the purpose as well as the direction that underlie the choice of repetition as a creative, poetic and narrative strategy in *Palace of the Peacock* are all summed up in the following statement by Wilson Harris: "the second death, change yet changelessness, implies a fiction that seeks to consume its own biases through many resurrections of paradoxical imagination." (9) The expression "consumption of bias" is one which often comes back in the essays of Wilson Harris. It refers to the act of subverting and correcting totalizing thoughts or rigid definitions which have been cemented and which in turn limit thought and affect attitudes, choices, and perceptions. That kind of bias is inherited from the past, but Wilson Harris does not blame the past for the strictures of the present. On the contrary, he claims that responsibility lies with us readers and that we reinforce bias by not questioning the past, and by clinging to structures of thought which are only made credible by the force of habit. It is this longing and deep fondness for the familiar he fights with the full power of his creative talent in *Palace of the Peacock* whose reading can become a moment-to-moment's struggle to find a familiar ground where to set foot safely.

Moreover, the paradox of "change yet changelessness" seams together difference and repetition. Indeed, repetition, which is typically defined as the return of the self-same, now becomes the condition of possibility of change, i.e. the vessel of newness, as Deleuze argues it should. An image will keep returning and will "haunt the fiction." (*PoP*, 10) Its meanings will change at every occurrence making it a vessel each time to a new set of ideas. It becomes polysemic and vehicles sometimes contradictory and paradoxical ideas and realities. This forces readers to read phenomena not as self-explanatory realities but in terms of the web of

signifiers it is connected to. Wilson Harris sums up the modus operandi of repetition in *Palace of the Peacock:* "the consuming of bias in the fiction operates, therefore, through frames that are apparently identical but in essence undergo a visionary, inner space translation." (10)

A very good example of this "inner translation" in the novel is the repetition of the waking up of the Dreamer, the narrator and twin of Donne, the oppressive leader. The following is an instance of his repeated waking up: "I dreamt I awoke with one dead seeing eye and one living closed eye." (19) Then, a few pages later: "I half-awoke for the second or third time to the sound of insistent thumping and sobbing in the hall outside my door. I awoke and dressed quickly." (21) Then, comes an additional, strange and unexpected confirmation of his waking up: "I awoke in full and in earnest with the sun's blinding light and muse in my eye." (21) Only to be followed up by a further declaration: "I awoke now fully and completely." (44) The Dreamer awakes repeatedly. He wakes up in his dream, then half wakes up twice or three times. Then he wakes up "in full", then "completely." He wakes up in stages. Repetition has therefore the advantage of making possible a progress, an evolution on the level of the characters' consciousness. It is a repetition with a difference in the outcome. The waking up here is repeated and seems to lead, each time, to a clearer state of wakefulness: "I stopped for an instant overwhelmed by a renewed force of consciousness of the hot spirit and moving spell in the tropical undergrowth." (28)

The higher state of consciousness in the novel is enabled by the landscape of the forest. The mystery of the forest stands for the unknown inner regions of the Guyanese identity. Exploring, observing and coming in contact with the forest enables a connection with the unknown territories of the self: "My living eye was stunned by inversions of the brilliancy and gloom of the forest in a deception and hollow and socket." (28) It is the position of the Dreamer in this landscape which informs us about his relation to tradition and his relation to his own identity: "The carpet on which I stood had an uncertain place within splintered and timeless roots whose fibre was stone in the tremulous ground." Here the protagonist is grounded in stone, which can be read as a rootedness in solid tradition and identity. His mission and goal are to find a way towards newness, change and renewal of the old frames of reference.   And it is the negotiation of this difficult relation to the landscape that tells us about the evolution of the protagonists with regard to the unknown in themselves and in their history: "I lowered my head a little, blind almost, and began forcing a new path into the trees

away from the river's opening and side." (29)   In this, repetition proves necessary in that it weaves a specific kind of familiarity with the unique, the original, the new, which differs from habit in that it does not repeat structures , models, patterns but questions and quests with their answers which are different each time.

This kind of reactive evolution in thought processes is not enabled by repetition alone. It requires mindful, vigilant awareness. It is for this reason that one of the most important characters, who stands out during the journey and remains as constant as the other characters are inconstant, is called Vigilance. He embodies the notion of presence, alert watchfulness and is always in a state of meditative observation of the other characters and of the signifiers of the natural world. It seems that the role of Vigilance is to detect and bring to crisis the epistemological traps that the crew falls prey to (Wilson Harris calls those traps "cruel ambush[es] of the soul" (39)) The Dreamer declares indeed: "It was Vigilance who made us see how treacherous [the rapids] still were." (32) Later, "we swept onward, every eye now peeled and crucified with Vigilance." (32) Vigilance becomes the key to understanding, the decoder of the symbolic rearrangement of the past that repetition enables. "All understanding flowed into Wishrop's dreaming eternity, all essence and desire and direction, wished for and longed for since the beginning of time, or else focused itself in the eye of Vigilance's spirit." (33)

If repetition as Deleuze argues is the condition of the possibility of transformation, change and novelty, the vigilant mind is the seat of this change. This view of the human mind as the producer of meaning is different from the positivist subject-object distinction which views the world as an objective reality waiting to be perceived and understood. It detaches itself also from the constructivist post-modern perspective according to which meaning is simply a construct which is projected onto the world. [27] It seems to be rather the result of a

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[27] Participatory epistemology is mentioned in the work of Richard Tarnas –among others. "In the passion of the Western Mind," the epigraph by Robert Bellah evokes cultural reintegration using the same terms as Wilson Harris: "We may be seeing the beginnings of the reintegration of our culture, a new possibility of the unity of consciousness. If so, it will not be on the basis of any new orthodoxy, either religious or scientific. Such a new integration will be based on the rejection of all univocal understandings of reality, of all identifications of one conception of reality with reality itself. It will recognize the multiplicity of the human spirit, and the necessity to translate constantly between different scientific and imaginative vocabularies. It will recognize the human proclivity to fall comfortably into some single literal interpretation

participatory, dialectical interaction between the human mind and the world, whereby the world comes into existence and changes when perceived and articulated by the human mind. The repetition of the death of the crew seems to be the translation of the idea that somehow the wisdom acquired in the previous life will make it possible to perceived the world differently and consequently to interact differently with it and finally to change it. The previous life is described by the Dreamer as a "sleeping life" (27) in which he was equally incapacitated by his own passivity as by the destructive company of Donne who "annihilate[s] everyone and devours himself in turn." (27)

The extremes of the past ignite in the Dreamer the desire for an end to violence and oppression. The return of the crew is a "vision and end he had dimly guessed at as a child." (27) His vision is a wish that we can and may read as a choice, an active intervention in the fate of the crew. The wish seems to provoke a reaction and a change. The cruelty of Donne, enabled and facilitated by the blindness of the Dreamer, escalates in the novel into a wild, devouring lust for land and power until Mariella, who represents the highest ideals of beauty, life and motherhood, is thrust into moral turpitude when she is forced by Donne to resort to the baseness and vulgarity of murderous violence. In reaction to the defiance and cruelty of Donne, the "nucleus of that bodily crew of laboring men, rise from the "grave of [their] blindness." They return   from a state of moral, spiritual and physical death fulfilling the vision of the Dreamer.Their renascence and journey from passive complacency into responsible active vigilance can be read as the attempt to transform the root of violence–reinforced by a belief into old systems and hierarchies—into a source of life, "[a] wild visionary prospect." (28)

The following description of the natural landscape that serves as the physical setting for the "wild inverse stream of beginning to live again" (27) can be read as the symbolic depiction of the transformative potential—already found in nature—that the writer wants to tap into: "The sun glowed upon a mass of vegetation that swarmed in crevices of rocky nature

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of the world and therefore the necessity to be continuously open to rebirth in a new heaven and a new earth. It will recognize that in both scientific and religious culture all we have finally are symbols, but that there is an enormous difference between the dead letter and the living word*." Robert Bellah, *Beyond Belief You are missing the page number ...*

until the stone yielded and turned a green spongy carpet out of which emerged enormous trunks and trees from the hidden dark earth beneath and beyond the sun." (28)

At the beginning of the second journey, Cameroun expresses the desire to build his "kingdom on earth." This desire accompanied him in previous journeys and continues to dog him in this return: "he had acquired the extraordinary defensive blindness, ribald as hell and witchcraft, of dying again and again to the world and still bobbing up once more lusting for an ultimate satisfaction and a cynical truth. (40) Cameroun embodies the desire to overcome pre-existing socio-historic subject positions through repetition. His repetitive death attempts to challenge what Deleuze calls the first synthesis of time based on the expectation that cause (A) will always be followed by effect (B) and which is the only true death. Instead, his coming back as an active ghost represents his desire to actualize the parts in the texts of reality and historical narrative which were frustrated and suppressed or which could not manifest themselves as a reality. It is also a return, a repetition, motivated by the desire to understand, to find the truth, a "cynical truth" (40) both distrustful and critical.

The Dreamer seeks a similar brand of coming to terms with his own past, made of "resistance and incredulity": "For manhood's sake and estate I saw there must arise the devil of resistance and incredulity toward a grotesque muse which abandoned and killed and saved all at the same time with the power of indestructible understanding and life." (43) He wants to do away with indestructible frameworks of thought that Deleuze calls images of thought. By controlling expectations the grotesque muse of Wilson Harris seems to obey the same logic of prejudice that underlies the image of thought. It kills thought as prejudice does condemning the mind to regurgitate pre-concieved ideas instead of producing original thought. Both are sources of "blindness and error" (43) and both are the illusions that inhabit the mind and distort understandings of reality and the world: "It grew increasingly hard to believe that this blindness and error were all my material fantasy rather than the flaw of a universal creation." (43) The Dreamer comes to the realization that faulty frameworks are in his mind, not inherent in the world.

This reflection on what constitutes truth and presence springs from and leads to a deeper and more complex understanding of the meaning of repetition. The protagonist's thought process reaches a first conclusion: "I was mad to believe I had seen an undying action and presence in the heartfelt malice of all mystery and seduction." (44) He realizes that there

is no such thing as undying presence and actions bearing the weight of eternity. There are no actions or truths engraved in stone in the chronology of the facts that shaped the world as it is now. This leads him to wonder how and why it never struck him that he was simply projecting his wish onto nature or forcing "nature's end and wish" to fit his desire:

> How could I surrender myself to be drawn two ways at once? Indeed what a phenomenon it was to have pulled me, even in the slightest degree, away from nature's end and wish, and towards *the eternal desire and spirit* that charged the selfsame wish of death with shades of meditation, precept upon precept in the light of my consciousness which was in itself but another glimmering shadow hedging the vision and the glory and the light. (Emphasis mine, 44)

Here the Dreamer wonders about the reasons and extent to which he let himself be deluded not only "by the external desire and spirit," a desire for presence, for certainties, but also by his own consciousness which "hedge[s] the vision and the glory and the light." (44) The newly acquired understanding is another step towards the state of wakefulness ["I awoke completely and fully" (44)]. It creates in him a "curious sense of inner refreshment." (44)

Interestingly, the step following this newly won understanding is the ability he gains to transcend the particularity of his situation. Realizing his own "enormous frailty" (43), he reaches a higher level of abstraction: the journey upriver takes place inside every person's mind. Everyone has his inner ship and crew that he mans to "paddl[e] and swea[t] and strai[n] toward the stone and heaven in his heart." (22) His frailty is shared by all human beings: "the eccentric emotional lives of the crew every man mans and lives in his inmost ship and theatre and mind were a deep testimony of a childlike bizarre faith true to life." (44)

The newly acquired wisdom undermines all his old illusions; they collapse like a house of cards. The effect of this de-transcendentalizing has incredible effects on his imagination: "It was as if something had snapped again, a prison door, a chain and a rush and flight of appearances jostled each other-past, present and future in one constantly vanishing and reappearing cloud and mist." (44) His illusions about chronology, chronological categories, and their so-called imperviousness and definitiveness collapse along with his old illusions of presence. Also, and as a result, notions of commencement and recommencement, which presuppose the existence of an origins and a beginning, become meaningless: "every new year is a fool's new paradise." (46) Chronological conventions are dismissed as illusions, right from the start of the novel.

The resulting intermingling between present, past and future affects the very way belief is conceived of. For Hume, belief is rooted in sense experience. It is based on the repetition of a sequence. Causal reasoning is not rational but defined by the repeated occurrence of two events or phenomena in sequence. A conviction of the causal nature of their connection is reinforced in our brains by repetition.[28] This is what Deleuze calls the first synthesis of time. The memory of a past experience supports this belief which consists in the expectation of its repetition. But what if present, past and future are not three separate entities happening in sequence? Can the events of the past still shape the beliefs of the present which in turn will dictate our expectations about the future? Such is the question asked by the Dreamer: "Could a memory spring from nowhere into one's belly and experience?" (48) Questioning those categories comes with its share of confusion: "I know that if I was dreaming I could pinch myself and wake.But an undigested morsel of recollection erased all present waking sensation and evoked a future time, petrifying and painful, confused and unjust." (48)

The ghostly journey, which plays with all our chronological expectations and ideas about temporality, can be viewed as a thought experiment whose aim is to discover how notions such as the soul, eternity and causality would fare under those modified circumstances:

> I shook my head violently, trying harder than ever to picture the deathless innocence and primitive expectation that had launched out inverse craft. Had we made a new problematical start- a pure imaginary game, I told myself in despair- only to strip ourselves of all logical sequence and development and time? And so to fasten vividly our material life as if it were a passing fragment and fantasy while the curious nebulosity of ourselves stood stubborn and permanent? And as if every solid force and reason and distraction were the cruel stream that mirrored our everlastingness? (48)

At this stage, the reader has abandoned all old expectations and notions of realism, chronology, narrative structure. Emotions and the setting have more potency than time as a

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[28] "Thus it appears, that the belief or assent, which always attends the memory and senses, is nothing but the vivacity of those perceptions they present; and that this alone distinguishes them from the imagination. To believe is in this case to feel an immediate impression of the senses, or a repetition of that impression in the memory. It is merely the force and liveliness of the perception, which constitutes the first act of the judgment, and lays the foundation of that reasoning, which we build upon it, when we trace the relation of cause and effect." (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, online version: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4705/4705-h/4705-h.htm)

factor influencing events in the novel. Donne for instance, suddenly starts aging not as a result of the passage of time, but because of a light coming from the forest and also because of the rage, ambition and horror that inhabits him.

> I saw that Donne was ageing in the most remarkable misty way. It was something in the light under the trees I said to myself shaking my head. […] thirty or forty seasons and years had wrenched from him this violent belt of youth to shape a noose in the air. A shaft from the forest and the heaven of leaves aged him into looking the devil himself […] he stooped in unconscious subjection I knew to the treachery and oppression in the atmosphere and his eyes were sunken and impatient in rage, burning with the intensity of horror and ambition. (49)

Chronology has lost its centrality not only in the narrative but also as a factor in every equation. Meanings are not derived from a sequence of causality that seeks to subdue minds to the dictatorship of a so-called logic or rationality which draws its legitimacy from past experiences. Meanings are either "petrified and congealed" (49), rooted in stone, or uncertain, mysterious and fleeting. The tendency and desire to control meanings, to fix and congeal them, to be master of the territory of ideas, to be the one who discards and created ideas to serve one's personal interest is very similar to the lust for physical territory. At the metaphorical level, the land Donne is after can stand for the intellectual territory of ideas and meaning. Complex and uncertain meanings can be likened to the unruly folk whom Donne has dominated and who have a tendency to vanish: "Nearly everybody just vamooshed, vanished. They're as thoughtless an irresponsible as hell." (51) Donne expressed the desire to change his relationship with them: "Perhaps there's a ghost of a chance that I can find a different relationship with the folk, who knows? " (51), he says to his dreaming twin. But this requires a letting-go which scares him, because he needs to be in control: "of course I cannot afford to lean too far backwards (or is it forwards) can I?" (51)

Defining meanings and giving names are acts of hegemonic domination in the colonial context because they exert power not by force but through state institutions which shape opinions and have the power to influence the thought of the colonized with the objective of maintaining a certain status quo. Donne seems to be concerned by the risks that the status quo that best serves his interest will be disrupted: "these Indians start to kick up the world of a rumpus now it could be embarrassing and I may have to face costly litigation in the courts fown there." (51) The cost of losing the land is no more material than the loss of the power of interpellation. The power Donne exerts over the folk is manifested indeed through words such

as "sir" or "master" which place him in a superior position in terms of power relations: "They call me sir and curse me when I'm not looking." (51) What sets the crew and Donne apart from the folk is that they still are the masters of interpellation, it is they who dominate the folk through the way they address them and are addressed by them. [29] "'We're all outside of the folk,' I said musingly. 'Nobody belongs yet…' 'Is it a mystery of language and address?' Donne asked quickly and mockingly."(52)

When chronology is disrupted, the power of interpellation, which Donne possesses, is disrupted as well. The habit of fear that Donne as well as the folk took for an inescapable reality is the result of the expectation that past experiences will continue to take place as they always have, reinforcing each in his respective role and position. This rigid hierarchization is rooted equally in language as it is in an understanding of time sequence, which is closed to newness and cemented, limited by old frames of reference and associations. Simply put, Donne was able to rule the folk because the structures in the language and in the imaginations of the folk continued to support and facilitate the reproduction of the same past domination, exploitation and enslavement.

Wilson Harris uses the Dreamer to introduce a new language devoid of fear as well as a new conception of chronology that combine to enable self-knowledge on new terms, in a postcolonial context. The Dreamer's difficult attempt at defining these new categories is proof of their complexity and originality:

> 'Language, address?' I found it hard to comprehend what he meant. 'There is one dreaming language I know of…' I rebuked him…'which is the same for every man… no it's not language. It's… It's… I searched for words with a sudden terrible rage at the difficulty I experience… 'it's an inapprehension of substance.' I blurted out, 'an actual fear… fear of life, fear of the substance of the folk, a cannibal fear in oneself. Put it how you lie.' I cried, 'it's fear of acknowledging the true substance of life. Yes, fear I tell you, the fear that breeds bitterness in your mouth, the haunting sense of fear that poinsons us and hangs us and murders us. And somebody' I declare 'must demonstrate the unity of being and show…' I had grown violent and emphatic… 'that fear is nothing but a dream and an appearance…even death…' I stopped abruptly. (52)

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[29] Gayatri Spivak uses the word interpellation which she borrows from Althusser. In a footnote to her essay "Nationalism and the Imagination" we find this reference to his work: "In Althusser's formulation, interpellation refers to the mechanism by which ideology creates the subject by "hailing" the individual. For Althusser, ideology 'represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.' " (Althusser, 1971: 162).

For the Dreamer, it is fear which reinforces divisions in oneself and from the folk. This fear stands in the way of "acknowledging the true substance of life" and "the unity of being". The new dreaming language restores this unity through repetition. Indeed, repeated death is a victory over fear which reinforces separations. This death is what frees the crew from hatred and from the desire for transcendence.

> [Whishrop] was an inspired vessel in who they poured not only the longing for deathless obedience and constancy […] but the cutting desperate secret ambition he swore he had once nourished- the love that become its colder opposite-the desire they too felt, in their vicarious daydream to kill whatever they had learnt to hate. This dark wish was the deepest fantasy they knew mankind to entertain. (56)

Significantly, Wishrop is a murderer who acted on the dark wish of revenge. He reveals his secret to the crew, but the crew chose to be in denial about his true nature. They refuse to see him for what he really is: "[t]hey could not conceive of him as a real murderer. They preferred to accept his story as myth." (56) They identify in him their longing for transcendence and their hatred of the new and the unknown and this explains their positive feelings towards him. He inspires and comforts them in their intolerance for difference and their desire for eternal ("deathless") constancy. Wishrop also kills the Arawak woman who had nursed him to life after his triple murder and his suicide: "The living Wishrop awoke overwhelmed by a final spasm of murderous fury and he shot the poor Arawak woman, his muse and benefactress." (57) Yet the crew loved him and everything he stands for, despite his murderous fury: "they fed upon his brief confessions and ravings as the way of a vicarious fury and freedom and wishful action." (58) His being represents the desire for revenge, the need to enact a symmetrical justice (eye for eye) to annihilate hatred through a reversal of the situation. However, he only manages to feed resentment and to augment injustice by continuing the bloodshed. The crew seem to fail to see the dialectical nature of revenge which can never be neatly symmetrical.

In chapter 7, the crew change their minds and decide to break the unholy bond which subordinates them to resentment and revenge. The journey "beyond Mariella" is a decision to go beyond the simple binarism of the desire to repeat the past solely in order to reverse it and to turn the tables on their opponents: "The crew came round like one man to the musing necessity in the journey beyond Mariella." (61)

In accordance with the disregard for chronology and logic that governed the whole book, the decision was made at a disconcerting moment that the reader is at pains to situate in time. It was made simultaneously a long time after the journey was finished but also before it even begun: "a long timeless journey was finished without appearing to have begun and now show of malice, enmity and overt desire to overcome oppression and evil mattered any longer." (61)

The paradoxical temporality of the journey beyond Mariella allows the existence of newness in the heart of the familiar: "we stood on the frontier of the known world and on the selfsame threshold of the unknown." (75) Every new day of the seven days allotted to the river voyage is a new world in itself. The new world (or day) unfolds as it were in the heart of the old and familiar world and day. No relationship of chronology or sequence linked the two days and worlds. The narrative of the crew unfolds a little like nesting dolls. The same journey contain many layers of understanding which are linked but not by chronology.

Soon after the beginning of the journey, Schomburgh, who had played the role of the interpreter between the crew members and the Arawak woman, dies. The frustration the crew felt for having lost their interprereter was soon followed by a new realization. The access to newness was enabled by the explosion of time sequence but also by a more complex relationship to truth unhindered by "facile faith" and "simple translation":

> 'Is how much further we got to go?' [Dasilva] spoke to himself, forgetting his destination and turning helplessly to the old Arawak woman. There was no interpreter now Schomburgh had gone. A wrench had uprooted the instrument of communication he had always trusted in himself. And yet he knew it was a mortal relief to face the truth which lay further and deeper than he dreamed. This deathblow of enlightment robbed him of a facile faith and of a simple translation and memory almost. (76)

Being deprived of an interpreter was a "relief". A deeper, more complex understanding of reality is conditioned by the loss of intermediaries, whether they be personified (the Arawak woman) or abstract (framework which stand between the text and the reader)

All the conventions that are usually used as intermediaries between the texts of reality and the human mind are undermined and dismantled , one by one. Donne addresses the crew after the death of Schombough and Carool and declares that :"[the crew] had started on the way to overcoming a sacred convention of evil proprietorship and gain." (76) According to this statement, the objective of the whole journey is to fight not just greed but ingrained attitudes that the folk and their oppressors equally participate in reinforcing. One of the

elements that perpetuate those attitudes is the superstitious belief among oppressors and oppressed alike that they had been fooled, bewitched, tricked into yielding to that "old pagan desire and ambition" (78) This view is expressed by Camron when Jennings who had been asked by Donne to man the ship for the rest of the expedition declares he will not let anybody trick him into participating in such adventures anymore (77) Cameron confronts Jennings with the affirmation that it is always one's choice to be bewitched and fooled: " 'Who want to fool you,' Cameron cried again. He listened closely to his own voice. It was the voice of dread, dread at the thought that nothing existed to fool and terrorize anybody unless one chose to imagine one was bewitched and a fool all one's life." (78)

Whether the beliefs entertained and nurtured by the crew are negative (fear, self-victimization) or positive (ambition, idealization of the female figure) they will stand in the way of freedom and revolution. The tumultuous journey up-river is the narrative of the destabilizing loss of these illusions: "Cameron stood, heavy and bundled like rock, animal-wise, conscious of a rootless superstition and shifting mastery he had once worshipped in himself and now felt crumbling and lost[…] It was a grave of idols and the resurrection of incalculable devouring principle." (79)

The second day is still the beginning and yet also the end of the crew , "they had hardly entered the falls when they knew their lives were finished in the raging torrent and struggle." (79) Through this second death, social convention is mocked and challenged. "The water banished thought and the pride of mockery and convention as it banished every eccentric spar and creed and wishful certainty they had always adored in every past adventure and world." (79) Ancient idols representing old certainties are destroyed in the torrent in a simultaneously death-inflicting, life-giving blow. Their second death marks the beginning of a "self-governing reality" (80) : a monstrous reality both terrifying and strange. The crew shatter and reflect each other unceasingly , like a composite mirror : "[t]he unceasing reflection of themselves in each other made them see themselves everywhere save where they had thought they had always stood." (80) This essential displacement is redemptive in that it confounds their expectations. Yet, this "partial rehabilitation of themselves" through "this horrifying exchange of soul and this identification of themselves with each other," (80) is at cross purposes with the effort the crew made to "strain themselves to gain that elastic frontier where a spirit might rise from the dead and rule the material past world." (80) Indeed, this mutual

recognition of and "basking in each other's degradation and misery" (80) reinforces their deep-seated desire of remaining in the old comfortable category of victim. They perpetrate a catastrophic state of affairs which "embalms" their chance at a new beginning in the "old lineaments of meaningless desire." (80) It turns a tale of emancipation into a tale of self-defeatism.

Once more, it is Vigilance who will save the second journey from irresponsible surrender to the burden of "ancient familiar house and structure." (84) The eye of Vigilance discerned a "spider skeleton crawling to the sky," this vision or hallucination symbolizes a reversal of usual systems, and the emancipation from the most fundamental physical but also chronological laws. A moving skeleton symbolizing death-in-life and life-in-death defies gravity and "crawls" to the sky, allowing symbolically the ascent despite death (or thanks to it) to a higher plane of consciousness. This "hallucination that was more radical and disruptive of all material conviction than anything he had ever dreamt to see."(82)

The disruptive nature of Vigilance's "precarious and dizzy vertical hold" on the events of the journey is offset by the slumbering of the crew. (85) As a result of his disruptive presence, cliff, sun, rock and river all set after him to trap him as if he were a precious game. He is indeed a threat to the sleep and silence of the "herd": "he was the most alive and truly aware of everything. He saw differently and felt differently to the way the herd slept in the innocent stream of death." (85) Unlike Vigilance, the crew were unable to stand the pain of true letting go required for understanding. This inability to let go is what kept them prisoners of the past:

> Rather it seemed to them only too clear that the past would always catch up with them-when they least expected it- like a legion of devils. There was no simple bargain and treaty possible save unconditional surrender to what they knew not. Call it spirit, call it life, call it the end of all they had once treasured and embrace in blindness and ignorance and obstinacy they knew." (84)

Vigilance, whose mind is free of "all blind lust and obfuscation," is the only one who warrants the success of the alchemical enterprise. (85) The alchemical purpose and direction of the voyage is understood at a non-verbal intuitive level by the various crew members. Yet strong resistance is opposed to new radical ideas about a dreaming species of freedom.

DaSilva says on the third day of the second journey:

> Ah dream Ah get another chance to live me life over from the very start. Live me life over from the very start, you hear? […] The impossible start to happen. Al lose me

own image and time like if I forget is where me sex really start…' 'Fool, stop it,' Cameron hissed. 'Don't pick at me,' DaSilva said. 'The impossible start happen I tell you. Water start dream, rock and stone start dream, tree trunk and tree root dreaming, bird and beast dreaming…' 'You is a menagerie and a jungle of a fool,' Cameron black tongue laughed and twisted. (87)

In this dialogue, DaSilva attempts to express his (beginning of) adherence and understanding of the true purpose of the journey, i.e. a dreaming, redemptive repetition of his previous life. But his fellow Cameron promptly contradicts him and mocks him. Such confrontations are frequent in the book. The crew members seem to be divided with regards to the possibility of redemption and its nature. Battered by a mixture of metaphysical hope, sheer hopelessness and the impossibility of going back, they continue to entertain "half-hopeful, half-treacherous thoughts that oscillat[e] over their predicament as the sky dreams indifferently over the earth." (88) The crew members seem to dread death only as much as they dread a return to life. Yet, they fight , pushed by a death-wished doubled with survival instinct: "the shock of memory and of duty to fight to rescue himself drove him again to address himself to the thought of another frightful revolution and escape he had to engineer however soulless and devastating the thought of a living return to the world was." (95)

The warring views of the crew members, the violence with which they silence, interrupt and frustrate each other's laborious attempts at verbalizing the desire for a different outcome, a new way out of their struggle sometimes escalates into physical aggression. Thus Jennings punches Cameron violently (79) whom DaSilva stabs and kills him later on in the novel. (90) The way the crew annihilates and neutralizes its own evolution towards a freer state of consciousness is symbolized by the dangerous precariousness of Vigilance's position at the end of "The Second Death": "The Arawak woman pointed and Vigilance , straining his mind from the volcanic precipice where he clung, looked and saw the blue ring of the Pentecostal fire in God's eye as it wheeled around him above the dreaming memory and prison of life until it melted where neither wound not witch stood." (91) Freedom from the constraints of superstition (witch) and the prison of material life is put at great danger by the crew members themselves. Vigilance manages to survive despite his unspeakable wounds, for "he felt bruised and wounded beyond words." (92) He escapes the fatal danger of the "conventional crew" whose memory continued to possess him every time he yielded to fear. (92)

The danger Vigilance constantly fights is the temptation of the crew members to escape the unknown and to return to a state of functional but empty normality. Jennings thought is a clear description of this temptation: "it was better to just stay where he was and crumble inwardly he said like a man who had come back to his shell of nothingness and functional beginning agin." (95) Every time a crew member expresses an opposite desire, i.e., the desire to find a new way out of their fate, they would mock him and call him a fool. Here Jennings addresses the crew about a possible way out: " 'If we find the door where the wild tapir pass we can land and live.' 'What tapir?' mocked Silva. 'I tell you I remember no tapir. You recall any?' He turned in a foolish mocking way to his twin brother." (95) The opposition that the crew members showed towards each other and the way they mutually hindered their own evolution towards spiritual fulfillment leads to the self-destruction of the crew. This cruelty and violence paradoxically conditions their passage to a different plane of understanding. DaSilva understands this as he looks upon his twin returning from the grave with no news of a living return (96):

> Now he knew for the first time the fetishes he and his companions had embrace. They were bound together in wishful substance and in the very enormity of a dreaming enmity and opposition and self-destruction. Remove all this or weaken its appearance and its cruelty and they were finished. So Donne had died in the death of Wishrop ; Jennins primitive abstraction and slackening will was a reflection of the death of Cameron, Schomburgh had died with Caroll. And Dasilva saw with dread his own sogging fool's life on the threshold of the ultimate stab of discredit like one who had adventured and lived on scraps of vulgar intention and detection and rumour that passed for the arrest of spiritual myth and the rediscovery of a new life in the folk." (96)

Their opposition leading to their death is the consequence and corollary of their essential unity. Their awakening and their escape from the treachery of spiritual myth is bound to happen to them collectively, as a unit. The witness and enabler of the awakening of the crew is Vigilance for whom the crew act as "superstitious limbs". Their exhaustion and death at the hand of each other enables in turn Vigilance to watch the "blind dream of creation crumble as it was re-enacted." (96)

In book 4, on the fifth day of creation, a radical change in perceptions and understanding takes place. To begin with, Donne comes to the realization that his power is upheld by nothingness and that the river is empty: "An abstraction grew around him-nothing else- the ruling abstraction of himself which he saw reflected nowhere. He was a ruler of men

and a ruler of nothing. The sun rose into the blinding wall and river before him filling the stream and the water with melting gold. He dipped his hand in but nothing was there." (99)

The repetition of the climb of the walls surrounding the stream also brought its share of insights. "It flashed on him looking down the steep spirit of the cliff that this dreaming function of nothingness and to a false sense of home was the meaning of hell." (101) The ascent is not devoid of dangers. Donne is most vulnerable because he longs to know his beginnings: "However far from him, however distant and removed, he longed to see, he longed to see the atom, the very nail of moment in the universe. It would mean more to him than an idol of idols, even if seeing it there was frustration in that the distance between himself and It strengthened rather than weakened." (101) The desire to see the ever-receding Origin is one of his last illusions that he clings to and it almost kills him were it not for a thought that saves him.

He fastens his mind on the thought that he is nothing but a "workman in the heart and on the face of construction." (101) That everything is a construct and that he is an agent that participates in this construct. His implicit acknowledgment of the mythical nature of this notion nails the coffin of his illusions.

Book 4 is the last stage of his awakening. Throughout it, Donne will struggle to reach a higher state of spiritual abstraction. This is symbolized in his effortful attempts to break the distance between himself and the carpenter, the Jesus figure in the novel then a female figure with a child. His evolution culminates in a state of blindness that enables a deeper understanding of the void withing himself: "It was his blindness that made him see his own nothingness and imagination constructed beyond his reach." (108) The sixth day of the journey culminated with the come-coming of the crew, welcomed by the compassionate folk- a reunion "beyond all earthly hope and recognition…" (110)

The seventh day marks the completion of creation. The perfection of everything that exists lies in its incompleteness: "The sun rolled in the grass waving in the wind and grew on the solitary tree. It was a vast impression and canvas of nature wherein everything looked perfect and yet at the time unfinished and unsubstantial." (111) Such is the genesis of our imagination as Harris conceives it: forever unfinished, always incomplete.

2.4 The Limbo Imagination and Self-revising Images:

a. The Limbo Imagination

Blending the resources of nature and culture, of past and present, Wilson Harris recombines the various myths and archives of his multiples resources on various modes to reconstruct the gaps in the past of Guyana. He uses hybrid images to bridge separate realities in order to disrupt chronological linearity. He draws deeply imaginative and far-reaching inter-textual associations by bringing into play a collective literary memory to pollinate his own imageries with those of other cultures and imaginative landscapes. He does this by reshuffling the multicultural references to create multiple dynamic metaphors. The following sub-section embodies my attempt to capture the complexity of this imaginative endeavour without overly simplifying it.

According to some critics, Wilson Harris's idiosyncratic strategies are indebted to the mnemonic technology described by Frances Yates's book *The Art of Memory*. According to Paul Sharrad, understanding it gives us clues on how to read Wilson Harris's "private code of fixed allegorical significances which shift disconcertingly according to punning interpretations of each iconic word-image." (99)

The technique consists in forming emblematic images that evoke through their association a whole set of unpredictable meanings. It is easy to imagine why this technique might have appealed highly to Wilson Harris. The associations that underlie the iconic images have nothing to do with a rational simplistic link. It is not a one-to-one absolute correspondence. It is an imaginative, unpredictable, surprising association that taps into the various dimensions and layers of our spirit. It appeals to the unconscious as well as conscious mind and it brings together elements from our personal and collective memories. The power of

signification of the icon-image will not derive from the rules of language or the conventions of traditional communication, or from logic. This power is wholly constructed from fragments of codes that we will have acquired along the way as speaking and social individuals but also as living, breathing creatures that have developed intuitive links with our environment; with being and non-being alike.

One of the modes according to which myths undergo a metamorphosis and images are hybridized is best exemplified through the metaphor of the limbo dance. In his essay "The Limbo Gateway," Wilson Harris achieves an admirable intellectual feat. As a matter of fact, he picks one component of the West Indian culture, namely the limbo dance and reveals the unpredictable depth of its mythical suggestiveness. He teases out a whole range of myths that he resurrects into new metaphors teaching us through showing and telling how the profound art of compensation that he calls the "limbo imagination" works.

The limbo dance is a dance performed traditionally during Caribbean carnivals. It is a mixed offspring of African and West Indian imaginations and was born on the slave ships traversing the Middle Passage. On those ships, slaves had very little space to move in and were forced to adopt crampy, spider-like positions. The limbo dance is an artistic representation of the way the slaves had to negotiate their movements in a narrow space. In this dance, the dancer has to pass under a bar which is gradually lowered until very little space is left for the dancer to move. At the end of the dance, the dancer recovers his upright position and leaps up in joyful liberation.

Wilson Harris argues that this dance is equally part of the West Indian and African imagination. For Wilson Harris, no culture can claim ownership of this dance. There is no "tribal sovereignty" in this case, as he puts it. When it comes to this particular cultural

element, as well as to notions of identity in general- for the Africans who have crossed the waters to get to Caribbean shores- the myth of cultural purity and belonging has been "traumatically eclipsed with the Middle Passage." Since the slave boats, every framework used to characterize the West Indian self and to parse the components of its past has become partial, insufficient.

The limbo dance is emblematic of this essential hybridity. The dance was soon incorporated in the "architecture" of the hybrid, West Indian culture: "Limbo was rather a renascence of a new concept of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of cultures." ("The Limbo Gateway", PAGE)

Exploring the multiple linguistic dimensions of the word "limbo", Wilson Harris extracts for us the various potential cross-cultural meanings of this dance by merging far-reaching references to create vibrant word-images. The latter are coupled -yet never in a final way- to create by force of association a new dimension of meaning producing "some mysterious evolution of structures of ancient myth." ("The Composition of Reality" 17) By doing this, he also simultaneously performs his own intellectual limbo dance, releasing the memory and imagination of the West Indians from crampiness.

The recovery of the upright position at the end of the dance corresponds to the recovery of the dancer's capacity to stand upright after the limbo state of spider-like horizontality. The recovery of this "phantom limb" has cross-cultural reverberations as well. It is "the re-assembly of the dismembered man or god—possesses archetypal resonances that embrace Egyptian Osiris, the resurrected Christ and the many-armed goddess of India, Kali who throws a psychical bridge with her arms from destruction to creation." (380)

The word limbo is also a reference to the Christian notion of being suspended between heaven and hell, an in-between-ness that is the fate of the unbaptized. The parallel between this state and that of slaves aboard the slave ship is put forth by Mark McWatt in his essay "Some observations on the Notion of History, Time and the Imagination in the Thought of Wilson Harris." The dance represents the journey across the ocean and therefore:

> an intermediate state between heaven and hell, a place of suspended animation between two definite worlds or realities, a waiting room of sadness and suffering; all of these apply to the journey on the slave ships, hence the tense, writhing, uncertain stage of the dance (passing under the bar) and the exuberant, celebratory upright dancing signifying survival and release. (30)
>
> Wilson Harris also points to the correspondence between the fables about the spider

god Anancy (known as spider fables) and the limbo dance which is a spider dance. [31]The limbo dance, a shape-shifting, transformative dance becomes the metaphor and expression of the kind of imagination that Wilson Harris has both inherited and created. Indeed, the limbo dance is "a manifestation of a history of bodily contortions from the hold of the slave ships." It is therefore a set of movements that the slaves did not choose because it was dictated by the need to survive and yet it contains a creative element because it became a dance. [32] The limbo or spider stamp is a shared subconscious variable, i.e. a psychological as well as a physical

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[30] Quote taken from the essay of Mark McWatt : "Some Observations on The Notions Of History, Time And The Imagination In The Thought Of Wilson Harris" found online at :
http://www.shibboleths.net/1/2/McWatt,Mark.pdf

[31] He quotes from the poetry of Edward Brathwaite a description of what Wilson Harris calls the "limbo-anancy syndrome."
drum stick knock
and the darkness is over me
knees spread wide
and the water is hiding me
limbo
limbo like me

[32] Fiona Darroch *in Memory and Myth*: *Postcolonial Religion in Contemporary Guyanese Fiction* and Poetry, 117

heritage that conditions a certain vision of the world .In Wilson Harris' words ist is a "certain kind of gateway" (379). If we refer back to the Derridian conception of heritage, we will find striking parallels between his definition of heritage and the limbo dance as the symbol of the double nature of heritage. It is violently imposed on one, it is not a choice, and the legatee must appropriate a past that chose him or her. But it is also a free affirmation, it is a creative "yes" said to the past and is therefore necessarily transformative and hybrid.

Many references, myths, realities and signifiers combine in the limbo dance which is aptly picked by Wilson Harris to represent the inner workings of the cross-cultural imaginative memory. The limbo dance becomes the model if not for a new creative historiography, at least for a "space of inter-relationship," where limbo imagination replaces linear bias. "I believe the limbo imagination of the folk involved a crucial inner re-creative response to the violations of slavery and indenture and conquest." (382)

As is shown by this concept-metaphor that is also at the same time an independent lingo , memory is a space where many myths meet, and are transformed, enriched and opened up at the contact of one another. Wilson Harris has been asked by Vera Kutzinski whether he aimed to accomplish a sort of neo-Hegelian synthesis by such bringing together of myths that are sometimes opposed:

> As I understand it, there is no formula for such a link. It needs to be discovered differently in every century. It isn't, in my view, a question of Hegelian thesis and antithesis but of true oppositions that miraculously, or paradoxically, nourish and sustain each other by deepening each other's premises of mind into profound self-confessional fabric. Such deepening resists the reinforcement of partial institution into dogma, into an absolute.

This quote is also a comment on the general direction of the work of Wilson Harris, both fictional and theoretical. The purpose of his intellectual endeavours is the creation of a "limbo" space. The kind of space that enables creative bursting of oppressive categories of identity that we inherit from our past.

The first bias that this type of imagination consumes is that of linear reading. The images it produces can be re-read infinitely and still retain a measure of opacity for their "wholeness" can never be fathomed. The vibrant hybrid images created by Wilson Harris enable:

> a genuine diversity-in-universality. Such progress [...] breaks the mould of habit, breaks a mould of reading that bypasses the enormity and subtlety of revisionary potential within imageries in texts of being, images that need to be consulted in new lights as they bear backwards and forwards upon their partial substance within a theatre of unfathomable wholeness. ("The Composition of Reality", 26)

These images embody and express the connectedness of past, present, worldly and divine, inner and outer realities. In his preface to the edition of 1988 of *Palace of the Peacock,* Wilson Harris mentions the Carib bone-flute. I quote this passage, for I believe it metaphorically illustrates the way the hybrid imagery in *Palace of the Peacock* works to wed distant realities.

> The Carib flute was hollowed from the bone of an enemy in time of war. Flesh was plucked and consumed and in the process secrets were digested. Specters arose from, or reposed in, the flute [...] in parallel with an obvious violation ran therefore, it seems to me, another subtle force, resembling yet differing from terror in that the flute became the home or curiously mutual fortress of spirit between enemy and other, an organ of self knowledge suffused with enemy bias so close to native greed for victory. (10)

The convertible images used by Wilson Harris in his writing are like the Carib bone-flute in that they incarnate as well as serve what Wilson Harris calls a "metaphysical consumption of bias." (*PoP*, 9) They transform the narrative space   into a creative space of interrelationship where opposites meet and intertwine blurring the boundaries between self and other, past and present, victory and defeat.

The imagery used by Wilson Harris is also a vessel of composite reality. One of those images is that of the " noose" which recurs at least four times in the novel. Its meaning

changes subtly each time as if to confirm that no meaning is ever absolute, that every image is partial, pregnant with a range of other possible meanings. Here is how Wilson Harris explains the various philosophical implications of the way this image has been shaped and reshaped throughout the novel:

> The innermost content of the "noose" undergoes subtle intuitive alterations to create a juncture between the *inferno* and the *paradise* even as it breaks the Dantesque separation between pagan (or pre-Christian) and Christian worlds. All this thickens in the mystery of continuity, for which there is no absolute model, and *the creative necessity for dislodged linear function or bias*." (Interview, 14, emphasis mine)

At the beginning of the book, the Dreamer is awakened by a panick-stricken Mariella beating on his door. She fled Donne who beat her. The Dreamer goes outdoors with her and they walk up to a high gate that swings like "a waving symbol and warning taller than a hanging man whose toes almost touched the ground." (3) This is the first mention of the image of the noose. Later in the book, at the beginning of chapter VI, in the midst of his wondering about the possibility of recollecting future memories, the Dreamer starts on a purely imaginative journey, as his stream of consciousness leads him ahead of the present moment into a future in which he sees Donne ageing: "Thirty or forty seasons and years had wrenched from him this violent belt of youth to shape a *noose* in the air. A shaft from the forest and the heaven of leaves aged him into looking the devil himself." (8, my emphasis) Then a storm starts and quickly fades. "The storm passed as quickly as it had begun. Every man came to life again. Donne was free of the hate he had shown, I thought, and a smile had been restored to him ingenious as youth." (46)

In the 10th chapter, on the fifth day of the journey up-river, they started approaching the waterfall. Around the crew, the walls of the cliffs boxed the waterfall. On the universal walls, steps and balconies had been nailed and as Donne started climbing them as a ladder, he remembered the house he had built in the Savannahs:

As he made the first step the memory of the house he had built in the savannahs returned to him with the closeness and intimacy of a horror and a hell, that horror and that hell he had himself elaborately constructed from which to rule this earth. He ascended higher, trying to shake away his obsession. He slipped and gasped on the misty step and a noose fell around his neck from which he dangled until –after an eternity- he had regained a breathless footing. The shock made him dizzy- the mad thought he had been supported by death and nothingness. It flashed on him looking down the steep spirit of the cliff that this dreaming return to a ruling function of nothingness and to a false sense of home was the meaning of hell. He stared upward to heaven slowly as to a new beginning from which the false hell and function crumbled and fell. (PoP, 101)

If one reads the various occurrences of the "noose" in the novel with the hope of finding a totalizing interpretation , one is bound for disappointment. One must read it as a composite symbol, the cross-road of various worlds that it serves to connect. Here it puts into intimate contact death and life, heaven and hell. Both sets of notions are at once a reference to and a subversion of the pre-Christian, Christian and Dantesque allegories and notions.

Indeed, in *Palace of the Peacock*, death and life, heaven and hell are not final destinations or irreversible states. They are neither fully demarcated nor totally confused. In the first scene, the hanging man functions as a warning, a signal. In the second scene, the noose is made of the passionate ambition of youth and it kills Donne for only a brief moment, after which the storm passes and he comes back to his youthful state. Then, in the final scene, Donne slips and falls in the noose for a longer time. He dies for what feels like an eternity, after which he regains his footing.

The meaning of the noose gradually evolves throughout the novel. At first, it serves as a warning, a sign pointing to the road leading to death. Then, it brings death to Donne first for a brief, then for a longer moment. It signals danger ever more intensely each time it appears in the novel. The death it produces is not final but pedagogical. It teaches the readers where the real danger lies. Danger, it seems lies in Donne's obsession with a "false sense of home," and the prison-house he built in the savannahs to rule. Both are the hell he

constructed himself. Those constructed man-made notions of home and possession feed the lust for territory which imprisons Donne. Those symbolic maps with their fake notions of home are the artificial frames whose partiality Wilson Harris questions throughout the novel.

In many of his essays and interviews, Wilson Harris speaks of this highly creative method of playing with images, symbols, characters, narrative sequence and so on. The constant revising of the frames of those images and narrative sequence radically unsettles linear approaches to the text and conventional interpretation of it. This radical art transforms the very foundations that have conditioned our reading practices. Traditional methods of interpreting the text are made obsolete as well. The overall effect on the reader is that she is forced to forsake old reading habits and most importantly her stubborn desire that the text reaches some sort of closure. A very important part of the meanings contained in the writing of Wilson Harris lies in the way they reprogram the minds of the readers and emancipate them from old intellectual habits. It might seem like Wilson Harris shares the direction taken by modernists such as James Joyce or Ezra Pound whose experimentation with the literary past aims at producing the new using the old and doing away with closure. My argument is that Wilson Harris' writing contains Modernism but also goes beyond it in radically creative ways. As I argued earlier, his writing aims at changing the past itself, as well as the present. In other words, whereas Modernism recycles the past transforming frames of minds, Wilson Harris advocates for an utterly new past. Indeed, he seems to go as far as to say that there is no such thing as the past. This conviction is the product of an uncompromising irreverence towards chronology. The past needs to be considered as an open category which has no essence of its own given the instability of the notion of

chronology that sustains it. The past, heritage and tradition can only be recycled if they are perceived as stable objects of thought whose delimitations on a linear timeline are clear. Wilson Harris aims at maintaining and nurturing a shapelessness, a fluidity that makes it difficult the manipulation of separate items from our heritage with a view to transforming it, the way modernists do. His aim is that the present and the past go into an endless dialogue and that their mutual transformation becomes a given and happens systematically, not as a result of an aesthetic decision as it is in Modernism. His partial imagery does not participate in forming a "new vision" of the world. It aims at replacing the concept of "new vision" of the world with the more compelling process of "infinite rehearsal." The following passage contains instructions for the readers on how to read his novels so as to keep alive and dynamic the process of infinite rehearsal of infinite creativity of systemized revision. I also read these directions as the author's general recommendations on how to read the past and the present.

> When you read a book, you can read forwards and find certain images, and then you have to read backwards, because those images oscillate backwards and connect with what has gone on before. [...] So the reading requires a kind of looking back as well as looking forwards and it is where these images relate to each other and combine and open, conceal and release, that you come closer to some kind of wholeness but the wholeness can never be structured, never be seized. The moment is structured and seized it becomes another partial image. ("The Composition...", 26)

Later on in the same passage, the link between the role of those partial images in reprogramming narratives in general and his larger objective of reforming totalitarian frames of mind becomes clearer: "I find that many people who made the greatest noise about politics and protests are conditioned by a kind of narrative which goes forward all the time, so that their protest really and truly is invalid because the thing they are protesting against has them in its grip. So even though they think themselves emancipated, they are prisoners." In this

passage, the link between political endeavours to resist the dominance of the imperialist discourse and literature unfolds naturally. The reformation of the narrative space becomes the legitimate if not necessary condition to any postcolonial emancipatory project.

This echoes in a striking manner Edward Said's emphasis on the narrative as a transformative tool that serves to consolidate and/or deconstruct the various facets of our current socio-political crises:

> We have on the one hand an isolated cultural sphere, believed to be freely and unconditionally available to weightless theoretical speculation and investigations, and, on the other, a debased political sphere, where the real struggle between interests is supposed to occur [...] it is accepted that the two spheres are separated, whereas the two are not only connected but ultimately the same." (Culture and Imperialism 57)

Thus, by acting on the imagination, Wilson Harris performs a doubly revolutionary achievement. He reforms the cultural sphere by enabling new ways of reading, writing and interpreting cultural text. He also dislodges the linear function of the narratives that condition and constrain the political debate. He creates therefore, in the mind of his readers, a potent vision of creative flux that can only result in the breakdown of tyrannical biases.

c. Self-revising Characters

The same logic governs the symbolism of the characters that populate *Palace of the Peacock*. They are, as the novel's images, mutually transformative: "The whole crew was one spiritual family living and dying together in a common grave out of which they had sprung again from the same soul and womb as it were." (39) A web is formed improbable and complex. Underlying the web of characters we find the various elements that unite them. It links the random phenomena that bring them together to form a composite mosaic of meaning which can be read at several levels (metaphorical, psychological and symbolic). "They were all knotted and bound together in the enormous bruised head of Cameron's ancestry and nature as in the white unshaven head of Schomburgh's age and presence." (39) The ancestry of

Cameron is described thus to the reader: he is "born from a close fantasy and web of slave and concubine and free out of a complex womb, from a phantom of voluptuousness whose memory was bitter and rebellious as death and sweet as life." (39) As to his nature, it is described as based on a "thriftless love of romance, genuine optimism and self-advertisement and self-ignorance." He is also described as possessing a "slowness and caution of foot […] he stood like a melodramatic rock in mother earth." (39) The interconnectedness of the characters promotes the dynamic of inner-transformation that governs the novel. In the preface to the 1988 edition, Wilson Harris expresses this strategic decision in poetic terms: "[…]the consuming of bias is a puzzling notion but when perceived as a reversal or looping of the cannibal bone-flute into 'sound yet sight' , into a noose, into *other threads and interwoven spectres of the landscape of being* it promotes inwardly changing or transformed building blocks of space." (11)

The split/ twin character Donne/ the Dreamer, who is the narrator and main protagonist of the novel, also exemplifies the cross-cultural, hybrid and therefore self-revising nature of the book. The split figure of Donne/ the Dreamer bridges the figure of Elizabethan poet John Donne, that of the oppressive colonizer and that of the shadowy dream-like oppressed subject. This tri-partite hybrid figure becomes the artistic translation of a complex heritage. This mixed character is very well described in the novel *Jonestown* by the character Francisco Bone, in a letter he writes to the editor W.H.: "One becomes, it seems, a vessel of composite epic, imbued with many voices, one is multitude. That multitude is housed paradoxically in the diminutive surviving entity of community and self that one is."(48) The synergy of those composite characters , the complex setting that surrounds them, the self-revising images that

populate their imaginations and the hybrid symbols that spring up at every turn form a space

of diversity-in-universality that consumes the bias of linear function.

Conclusion

According to Wilson Harris, the symptom of the imaginative imprisonment of the West Indian culture is that its narratives lack transformative power. He explains this symptom by the way historians have constructed narratives. Since those narratives played a major role in determining cultural identity, they have been used in such a way as to serve the systems of thought that kept the colonizer in control of the semantic, symbolic territories and that validated certain categories of understanding to the exclusion of others.

This ingrained in the readers' minds determinisms that were then reinforced by so-called realistic fiction which imposed differently the same kind of totalizing logic on the imaginations of –among others- West Indian individuals. The mental constructs that these narratives sustained produced dominant conceptions of meaning that survived only on the condition that uniformity, and similarity of the frames be not questioned or disturbed. To this end, the different, the multiple , the paradoxical were systematically silenced along with what Wilson Harris calls the variable of myth inside the language of the imagination.

For Wilson Harris, it is the very field of the imagination that is the true battlefield of imperialism. The prejudices, the presuppositions, the dominant categories that inhabit this field are the kind of force that "gnaws at the heart of cultures." Therefore his project in this novel as well as in all of his work revolved around liberating imagination from the frames that limit it.

In his fictional work as well as his essays, Wilson Harris questioned and sought to transform many frames. I chose to focus in this work on the creative ways he transformed the linear flow of time from an imperative, a law of the narrative, into an occasion for the new and different to manifest in his novel *Palace of the Peacock*. To this end, I tried to show how he used every instance of repetition to express the different within the similar. I used Deleuze theory to show that the different is not the negation of what preceded it. The different is defined by him as a set of paradoxical realities which co-exist and make up the multiplicity which characterizes being. I have tried to show that each instance of repetition, each death and therefore renascence in *Palace* puts forth the necessity for the different to manifest. It also frustrates

traditional chronology and the set of conventional expectations which prevent complex contradictory feelings, unnamed emotions , inarticulate vision, unfamiliar myths to actualize in the narrative.   By bringing into crisis conventional images, narrative structure and characterization, Wilson Harris enables not just the reinterpretation of the past but also an epistemological transformation which allows the past to actualize differently.

The use of repetition as a literary strategy, but also as a philosophical category and a vehicle of cultural and political expression has a wide range of philosophical implications. It involves a rethinking of the notions of Origin and beginnings that have played a major role in determining cultural identity and reinforcing imperial domination.   It also constitutes an inescapable reflection on the meaning of originality and canonicity for a postcolonial writer. It challenges all the ideas we have always had- as readers of historical and fictional narratives- on the primacy of a so-called principal , original past whose ontological unity we always thought will remain unchanged throughout time. It enables the readers to wonder about the particular nature of the line that separates interpretation of the past and its transformation I have attempted to answer the question of the extent to which Wilson Harris is more than a modernist, i.e. that his effort to restore the space of problems within the past actually transforms the past itself, not just the present or the future. Repetition also closes the gap between the oral tradition – open-ended, unfinished- and fiction writing.

Reading *Palace of the Peacock* trains the reader to seek the constant reshuffling of all the categories she has ever known. It makes it less challenging to inhabit the space of uncertainty where generalized frameworks are smashed fiercely. It prepares readers mentally to welcome the different, the multiple, the paradoxical.   This is the gift of Wilson Harris to the next generation of experimental writers which are eager to but daunted by the task of articulating visions which exceed traditional categories of understanding

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TWS= Tradition, the Writer and Society

"The Fabric" = "The Fabric of the Imagination"

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