

*Donne Undone: The Journey of
Psychic Re-integration in Wilson Harris's
"Palace of the Peacock"*

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The stars became peacocks' eyes, and the great tree of flesh and blood swirled into another stream that sparkled with divine feathers where the neck and the hands and the feet had been nailed.

This was the palace of the universe and the windows of the soul looked out and in.

WILSON HARRIS, *Palace of the Peacock* (112)

IN *Palace of the Peacock*, Wilson Harris transports us into the bosom of "a near and yet far" past (19). The "far" past is both historical and mythical. On the historical level, *Palace* belongs to the very early days of the Dutch settlement (1616) and is, as well, pertinent to the later uninterrupted British colonization (1831-1966) of what used to be called British Guiana. From this perspective, the book reenacts one of those ritualistic journeys administered by either Dutch or British ranchers who, in search of fugitive slaves for their plantations, relied on the help of the aboriginal Amerindian inhabitants who are represented in the novel by the figure of the Arawak woman. On the mythical level, *Palace* apes one of those numerous voyages in search of a quasi-chimerical city of gold — an El Dorado — whose lure and elusiveness cost Sir Walter Raleigh his head in the early seventeenth century. By sleight of hand, Harris blurs the dividing lines between the historical and the mythical strata so as to wrench us free from the gravity of history and prepare us for a psychic therapeutic journey of remembering through the device of myth.

The "near" past evoked by the novel is not so different from the historical past, or even from the context of modern Guyana: *Palace of the Peacock* is, as Kenneth Ramchand insists, "a book about

now" (119). Indeed, the racial heterogeneity of the crew attests to the multi-ethnic make-up of Guyanese society — a multiplicity instantiated and exacerbated by the post-emancipation (from 1838 onwards) mass immigration which catered to the needs of a plantation system seriously debilitated by the emancipation of the slaves (Moore 7-15). In the wake of the twentieth century, Guyana has become the "land of six peoples": East Indians, Africans, Chinese, Portuguese, Europeans, and Amerindians (Gopal 16). Within the largely biracial Caribbean, the social multi-ethnicity of Guyana is both a distinguishing feature and a pulverizing challenge. How to weave these widely heterogeneous groups into a livable cross-cultural community? That is the question tackled by Harris in *Palace of the Peacock*.

Published in 1960, *Palace* is haunted by the dream of an inter-communal *modus vivendi* — a dream all the more urgent in the context of intensifying ethnic antagonism. Aside from a handful of incidents early in the twentieth century, ethnic animosity in Guyana has generally been in abeyance, but from 1953 onwards, it took a radical turn that would eventually explode in civil war (Premdas 95-111). Yet, the 1953 elections seemed to proffer the Guyanese that rare moment of reconciliation that hardly occurs in poly-ethnic states, when both dominant ethnic groups — Indians and Africans — voted predominantly for the PPP (People's Progressive Party) led by Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham. The Guyanese seemed to welcome the "Golden Age of Racial Harmony" (Premdas 43). Unfortunately, this rare moment of reconciliation did not last, and the country was soon bogged down in the morass of mass politics and intense ethnic strife. Within six months of the elections, the British, wary of the overtly Marxist-Leninist Jagan, suspended the constitution and dispatched troops to Guyana. When the constitution was restored in 1957, the PPP was already split along racial lines, with Jagan leading a predominantly East Indian PPP and Burnham leading a cluster of black Africans called the PNC (People's National Congress). Although the PPP won the 1957 and 1961 elections with a sweeping majority, its efforts at nation-building were perennially bedeviled and debilitated by a "spiral of ethnic politics" (Premdas 45-56). Indeed, Guyana has become a classic example of an "anti-model," that is, "of what

not to do lest disaster in manifold economic, political, and psychological dimensions be courted" (Premdas 190-96).

For a Jungian intellectual like Harris, the way out of these politically perpetuated ethnic enclaves lies in the archetype, in alchemy: his countrymen are in a dire need of an alchemical psychic re-integration, an archetypal re-possession of their interior. Harris employs the past to make the reader (especially, the Guyanese one) recognize through it, by way of an Aristotelian *anagnorisis*, the present, concrete situation. Wilson makes the reader travel flexibly and elastically, just like Mariella's bullet at the very outset of the novel, into a "near and yet far" past (19). These dialectics of proximity and distance, of contraction and expansion, are priceless buoys that keep Harris afloat within the fiefdoms of ethnic sectionalism. They are also part of the alchemical artillery he offers us lest we fall into the pitfalls of the past rather than leap over them. The most abhorrent scenario for Harris is that the colonized may throw off the colonizer only to take his place — a scenario that seems to have occurred in a Guyanese ethnically bipolar state, ruled by a monolithic and communally-bound party to the detriment of other minority groups such as the indigenous Amerindians, who had not yet, in the period in which the novel is set, asked for secession from the state in order to join Venezuela.

The ethnically-minded Guyanese evidently suffer from the Freudian "compulsion-repetition" syndrome: instead of remembering the past, they *act it out*, that is, they repeat it; instead of undressing the emperor, they wear his clothes. Ricoeur prescribes a "*mémoire-souvenir*" treatment empowered by a set of critical accoutrements that would preclude one from falling into the compulsion-repetition paradigm pertaining to those who suffer from a "*déficit de critique*," that is, those who are critically bankrupt (Ricoeur 83-97). This same model is at work in *Palace of the Peacock*, where material history — recorded memory — is deployed only to be destroyed. Indeed, the historical journey into the hinterland is archly used like the play within the play in *Hamlet*, whereby Hamlet captures the conscience of the king; it is used as a leitmotif to underscore an undercurrent, a transformational journey within the psyche. Hence, the physical journey can be seen — and this is a view I share with Michael Gilkes — as the framework against

which an inward journey is “rehearsed.” It is a journey wherein the action is brought to bear primarily on the interior world of the self and from thence on the outer inter-subjective world of community. Donne and, by extension, the entire crew undergo just such a journey.

This essay will show how Donne is transformed and *undone* by his journey. I do not intend to cover all the material Harris makes use of in what I will call “The Undoing-Donne Mission,” a pun on “The Mission of Mariella” (Harris, *Palace* 35). I will content myself with exploring three of the undoing tools deployed by Harris. The first tool is the technical use of the Donne figure of the double. Doubled, Donne is already undone. The second tool is the use of the motif of the journey in search of a fugitive folk, or of a lost El Dorado, as a *mimesis* or a frame against which takes place a deeper journey into the interior self. Harris relates how Donne travels into the “interior,” leaving it for us to situate that “interior.” A consideration of this economic use of language operating on two levels will introduce us to the third tool Harris uses extensively in undoing Donne — language. I will divide my paper into two parts, dedicating the first to the first tool and the second to the second tool. The third tool will constitute the common ground I tread on discursively in the first as well as in the second part.

I. The Donne Figure of the Double

The demand for an identity and the injunction to break that identity, both feel, in the same way, abusive.

MICHEL FOUCAULT, “Pour Une Morale de l’Inconfort” (784)

The Foucauldian dilemma is a postcolonial predicament. Writing in a postcolonial or colonial context has usually been motivated by a desire to construct or preserve an otherwise diminishing cultural, linguistic, or national identity as well as by a desire to undo the egocentricity of the colonizer. The reconstruction and preservation of such an identity should steer clear from erecting an essence or a quintessence, a purified, integral, and fundamental self or identity. In other words, the need to construct an identity should be dialectically coupled with or paralleled by a self-conscious injunction to deconstruct any essentialist tendency, for, as Harris argues in his *Selected Essays*, it is very easy for a society “to overturn an

oppressor, but it is equally easy for those who overturned the oppressor to become the oppressor in return" (85). This is, strikingly enough, the case with the ethnically overpowered Guyanese who got rid of external domination in 1966 only to dominate at home. Subsequently, Guyana has fallen prey, since 1953 onwards, to the vicious spiral of micro-politics or ethnically-minded party politics while still an embryonic state — a "micro-state," as it were.

It seems that both the PPP and PNC have striven to construct an identity which defines themselves as the exclusive representative of, respectively, the Indians or the Guyanese of African descent. Having constructed such an identity, they have had to struggle to preserve it. Thus they have yet to meet the Foucauldian injunction of "breaking up" (784), of relinquishing and surrendering that identity when dealing with a minority group such as the Portuguese or the Amerindians. It is only through such a quasi-sacrificial gesture that an ethnocentric party can acquire cross-sectional legitimacy. Thus, the demand for an identity and the injunction to break that identity — this double-edged weapon — is the only buoy that keeps one afloat in the hurly-burly of composite societies such as Guyana. However, the racially and culturally-bound Guyanese who respond only to the demand for an identity, and who prefer to shelter themselves in its rewarding comfort, thereby demonstrate that they lack what I like to call "imaginative competence." Fanatical and biased discourses, whether circulated by the colonizer or the colonized, attest to a failure of the *insight* and of the "Imagination." In "Literacy and the Imagination," Harris redefines literacy not in terms of reading and writing, but in terms of understanding, and especially in terms of "Imagining" (77). According to Harris, we have lost the capacity to imagine, and have grown fond of superficiality and fallacious clarity; we have been trained to see things in blocks, in frames, in moulds, and not in motion. It is this tendency toward fixedness, toward self-preservation and survival, that shackles and trammels us most, aborting our embryonic imagination.

It is this Foucauldian, and also Harris's, paradigm of fluidity — of constructing and deconstructing one's identity by means of an imaginative competence — that needs to be adopted and implemented. The course of action charted by this paradigm implies,

not a final performance, but rather an “infinite rehearsal” of moving grounds, amorphous horizons, fluid identities. Briefly put, it is a course of action in which we — not exempting our history and tradition — undergo perennially deep and fundamental revisions. History books are fond of symmetry, polarization, and material facts. The artist should overturn fixtures into “numinous inexactitudes” (Harris, *Essays* 205), intact and pure identities into adversarial dualities, and historical calamities into mythical realities. In *Palace*, Harris orchestrates most of these transformations by undoing the colonial identity, culture, and history of Donne. In this part of my essay, I will restrict myself to exploring the means by which Donne’s identity has been made, unmade, and remade, without implying that it can ever be completed. Donne’s identity is opened up so that it can be endlessly revisited, infinitely rehearsed.

The opening passage sets the mood, the rhythm, and the reality of the novel. It is the reality of the dream; it is the reality of unreality. *Palace of the Peacock* is a fiction about a dreamer who dreams about himself dreaming. In the first book, we can hardly fail to notice that Harris is implicitly drawing us into a *mise en abîme*, into concentric circles and horizons of dreams, dreams that delve into the past, unearth the pastness of the present, and envision the pastness of the future. Dreams are the seeds sown into the womb of history to outline its future. *Palace* is a vision “shot” (19, 26) near and yet far into the theatres of memory, the landscape of the imagination, and the playground of the unconscious to recuperate an otherwise agonizing present and a future that refuses to be born. This dream-book is filtered, curiously enough, through an I-narrator whose “left eye has an incurable infection” while his “right eye — which is actually sound — goes blind in [his] dream” (22). When the narrator avows that Donne’s vision “becomes the only remaining window on the world for [him]” (22), we realize that the eye with the “incurable infection” is actually the dreaming eye. Its infection is then its dream-syndrome. The other, “right eye,” which “goes blind” in his dreams, can be interpreted as Donne’s physical eye, which is now the “only remaining window” for him onto the world. It is no coincidence that the eye that opens onto the material world is the “right” eye. It is the eye that channels the world of facticity which Donne inhabits, as opposed to the left,

dreamy, utopian eye that broadcasts the visionary, imaginary wonderland in which the I-narrator dwells.

Harris deploys the I-narrator as an adversarial, twin brother to Donne in order to undo the latter's one-sidedness and material essence. Donne, whose name conjures up John Donne, the metaphysical poet, is enmeshed and lost in a world that nourished his ego and orphaned his soul. He is thus portrayed as a merciless *Buckra*, a British white fortune seeker (Moore 13), playing with the "big-ness of his little-ness" (to use an expression from e. e. cummings), hungering for an elusive El Dorado and hammering people and land in pursuit of his rapist mission. Even his name evokes a world of facticity in which "what is done is *Donne* and cannot be undone," to misquote Shakespeare (*Macbeth* 3.2.12).

The I-narrator, the dreamer, is the other side of Donne, the other dimension that negates as much as complements Donne, the doer. Thus, he is called upon to carry out the deconstructive mission of Donne as the latter departs for "The Mission of Mariella" (Harris, *Palace* 35). The I-narrator is the twin brother, the alter ego, and foil whom Donne ignores, forgets, or merely silences. When the I-narrator reminds Donne that he is his dream brother, Donne replies, "I had almost forgotten I had a brother like you. . . . It had passed from my mind — this dreaming responsibility you remember" (23). This is evidence that the I-narrator, the dreaming eye, is Donne's inmost, spiritual, and revisionary self, whose voice he hears no more, since he is taken in and possessed by the material world, by what he can possess: "Rule the land," he tells his dreamy, spiritual and restorative self, "While you still have a ghost of a chance. And you rule the world" (23).

At this stage, Donne is still too obsessed by the physicality of things, by the desire to invade space and enslave the subaltern or the native, to care to conquer the space that bonds him to the community within which he lives. We will shortly address the circumstances that would lead to his ultimate transformation; let us now simply announce it by going back to the very opening of the novel where

A horseman appeared on the road coming at a breakneck stride. A shot rang out suddenly, near and yet far as if the wind had been stretched and torn and had started coiling and running in an

instant. . . . The shot had pulled me up and stifled my own heart in heaven. (19)

In his own interpretation of this passage, Harris explains each expression in such detail that one gets the impression he calculates everything before he articulates it. Yet Harris avows that intuition and the unconscious tradition interact to such an extent that the author loses his voice and becomes the mouthpiece of a transcendental anima. I will come back to this when I will speak about the dissolution of the I-narrator. For now, let us see how Harris interprets this passage which he might have written intuitively and unintentionally, as he does most often when he is at his best. Short as it is, this passage contains some of what Harris calls "intuitive clues," which are, broadly speaking, clues about the labour of intuition and which imply that "the *visible* text . . . runs in concert with an *invisible* text that secrets a corridor into the future" (*Essays* 249). From this perspective, every word becomes important inasmuch as it can be infused with an intuitive or mythical meaning beyond its surface meaning, which by and large necessitates a hermeneutics of depth. The compound adjective "breakneck" which figures in the very first line of the novel becomes, according to Harris, a corridor into the future. It is interpreted as "the first kind of fissure in the authoritarian fixture, the conquistadorial horseman — we begin to *slice into* it" (*Essays* 84; emphasis added). "Breakneck" suggests not only a noose and a hanged Donne, but also a break into the interior of this very Donne. Indeed, the line that follows shortly after implies that the I-narrator had already found a way into the main character Donne: "The shot had pulled me up and stifled my own heart in heaven." This statement announces the following passage, where the doubleness of the I-narrator and Donne is clearly stated:

Apart from this fleeting wishful resemblance it suddenly seemed to me I had never known Donne in the past — his face was a dead blank. I saw him now for the first faceless time as the captain and unnatural soul of heaven's dream; *he was myself standing outside of me while I stood inside of him.* (26; emphasis added)

In light of this passage, we can connect the phrases, "shot had pulled me up" and "I stood inside of him," to conclude that the I-narrator "becomes the horseman, the dead man lying on the

ground . . . and thus the dreamer becomes a fiction — the psyche of conquest yields, however monolithic its establishment in the history of books" (*Essays* 85). Indeed, more often than not we get the impression that the I-narrator has not yet awakened from his dreams, and that whenever he does awaken, he slips into day-dreaming. It is actually more reasonable to argue that not only Donne is being undone in this novel, but all the characters — not exempting the I-narrator — who seem to have lost contact with the material world and forgotten how to walk in a life dedicated to dreaming and sleeping.

No sooner does the journey begin than the I-narrator fades off into the camera after having been hitherto the man behind the camera. He has become, I think, a hidden video camera with a zoom that gets "near and yet far," recording and scanning along its way. It is as if the rocklike phallic edifice "I" of the narrator has been swallowed by the womb-like, elastic, and reflective "eye." According to Joyce Jonas, the I-eye distinction becomes revelatory in the context of *Palace of the Peacock*, because "'I' assumes total sovereignty, failing in this assumption to become an 'eye,' 'womb of light' as it were, in which the other can be imagined and birthed'" (90). Descending into the eye-level womb of space is a prerequisite to transcending time and place, root and trace, identity and race, and to being birthed endlessly in the here and now. The eye-narrator becomes the omniscient and yet ghostly figure through which/whom we follow momentarily the journey into the interior step by step. What is mystifying and puzzling is that this eye-narrator seems to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time: we see it/him involved with the crew in its struggle with the berserk rapids, yet it/he still narrates. Conjectures about where it/he may be situated can indubitably multiply, but I prefer to stick to the possibility that I announced earlier, which is inspired by Harris's interpretation of the opening passage of the novel: the eye-narrator, by virtue of being the twin-brother of Donne, has now broken into Donne so as to be in a vantage point to recount and account for his ultimate transformation and change. What is more puzzling still is that the eye-narrator equally accounts for the interior changes that all the remaining and resurrected members of the crew have undergone, which means that the eye-narrator,

the spiritual eye, has, as much as Donne, a smack of each of the crew members (who are in turn extensions of the I-narrator and Donne), except that each remains too one-sided and too monolithic to harken to the urgings and twitterings of the portion of otherness within. The mythical journey is the motif and the muse Harris offers as an opportunity for these heterogeneous and deformed halves to plunge into their oceanic and unfathomable depths in search of a golden ring or necklace to complement themselves, only to realize that they had always been "gilded men."

II. The Journey Motif

The past remains locked away unless it can be re-visualized, taken up at another level, rehearsed profoundly at another level to release new implications, a new kind of thrust.

WILSON HARRIS, "Literacy and the Imagination" (87)

The adversarial twinning of a factual, practical Donne and a dreamy, utopian I-narrator can be seen as one of the major techniques deployed by Harris in undoing the foundational premises of Donne's identity. In this part I would like to address another major technical tool Harris utilizes in this "undoing" mission. Donne is being undone via an implicitly explicit undoing of his material history by means of mythical history. Donne's historically-fixed imperial posture is set in motion via the journey motif pertaining to the gold rush and prompted by the spread of the El Dorado myth. Harris employs the myth of El Dorado both as a muse and as an excuse to unmake and interrogate the idealistic, amateurish, and egocentric truths of history books — books that would speak of journeys into the Guyanese hinterland as imperial. Thanks to a two-dimensional narrator who is at once capable of looking through "one dead seeing eye" and "one living closed eye," Harris operates on two levels of history, as Nana Wilson-Tagoe suggests: "There is, for instance, the level of conscious linear history, the 'curious stone' upon which he stands, the unchanging uniform reality of colonial conquest, and there is the level of mythic history, the blind, dreaming recall of the unconscious myth of El Dorado" (110).

"El Dorado" or "The Gilded Man" was originally the ceremony held for the accession of a new Muisca chief, a new ruler, on Lake

Guatavita. Briefly, this ceremony consists of the seclusion of the would-be ruler for a certain period of time in a cave; after emerging from seclusion, the would-be ruler journeys to the great lagoon of Guatavita to make offerings and sacrifices to the demon. He is sent on a raft with a great pile of gold at his feet; when signaled to do so, he throws the gold into the middle of the lake. The Spaniards rushed to look for the gold thrown away during these rites. Although Lake Guatavita underwent several profound draining attempts, not all the gold was secured. El Dorado became a myth and a dream; a city, personage or kingdom, it always lay beyond the next range of mountains, or deep in the unexplored forests. The search for El Dorado, in various parts of South America, was to inspire many journeys into the hinterland. *Palace of the Peacock* appropriates one of these mythically-inspired journeys in search of gold (here a fugitive folk) as a journey of psychic re-integration, of spiritual discovery and enlightenment, and of re-birth and resurrection. From a mythical reality in which a City of Gold is pursued, Harris journeys us into a yet-to-be-born City of Gold — a palace in which ethnic entities as diverse as the peacock's colors are harnessed into a unified whole.

At face value the journey in *Palace of the Peacock* is provoked by Donne's need to obtain cheap labour for his coastal estate. It can be set prior to the slave emancipation in 1838, at a time when "the Dutch and British colonialists traded with the Amerindians, enslaved some, and *utilized others for the capture of runaway slaves and the suppression of slave rebellions*" (Premdas 15; emphasis added). The journey described in the novel speaks of a Mariella rebellion, uses the Arawak woman to stand in for the same historical purposes — the capture of runaway slaves — and is therefore a journey that perpetuates the enslaving, brutalizing, and merciless outlook of colonial history. At a much deeper level, the journey into the hinterland in search of a fugitive folk merges into a journey into the interior self in search of perfection and psychic reintegration inspired by alchemy, by innocence, and by love. Such a spiritual journey is instantiated by the fissured psyche of the crew members as much as by the ethnically-mutilated Guyanese composite society, and is therefore animated by the hope and/or dream of sutured and reintegrated psyche within a yet-to-be born cross-cultural, inter-ethnic community.

In "Tradition and the West Indian Novel," Harris outlines the premises of the mythical recreation of lost or unfound El Dorado:

El Dorado, city of Gold, city of God, grotesque, unique coincidence, another window within upon the universe, another drunken boat, another ocean, another river; in terms of the novel the distribution of a frail moment of illuminating adjustments within a long succession and grotesque series of adventures, past and present, capable *now* of discovering themselves and continuing to discover themselves so that in one sense one relives and reverses the "given" condition of the past, freeing oneself from catastrophic idolatry and blindness to one's own historical and philosophical conceptions and misconceptions which may bind one within a statuesque present or false future.

(*Essays* 144)

This mythical journey within the book is functional, to say the least; it is deployed to liberate our minds from the clutches of material history lest we should grow up with what Harris calls in "Apprenticeship to the Furies," "revenge-syndromes" as opposed to "cosmic love" (*Essays* 226-36). Recreating the past through myth is not so much an attempt to change history but rather to take stock of our present relation to it as well as to conceive of the future. It is an attempt to relive the present through the pastness of the future. As Andrew Bundy puts it: "*Palace of the Peacock* introduced a thoroughly new and original literature in English that was being written out of the simultaneous realities of the everyday and mythos-epos, where a diffuse and ungraspable present is rooted not, as is usual, in the past but in paradoxically rehearsed futures" (7).

Now let us rehearse our understanding of this subtle theoretical design through our case study — Donne. A spiritual revival of a high caliber such as the one Donne and the other crew members have undergone is not at all an easy matter. It entails "trials of the imagination" (Harris, "Author's Note" 12), "death by water" (Eliot 30), a deep self-reflexivity and self-evaluation, as well as a "struggle of self-interpretations" (Taylor, "Human Agency" 27). It is a struggle to reconcile two irreconcilable forces such as those legendary adversarial twins, Merlin/Parsifal. It is a hazardous and precarious affair in which "the nearness of being found" could only be measured against "the sense of being lost" (114). Before being found transformed, Donne can be said to have witnessed at least two reve-

latory changes. The first is a spurious, mock change in which his tone loses its ruling and exacting "[r]ule the land . . . rule the world" vibrations and melts into a hypocritical, whining soliloquy. This occurs right after the crew reaches Mariella to find that the folk had known they were being chased and had flown away, leaving the old Arawak woman behind. Donne erupts in a self-judgmental, self-confessional, and equally self-evasive rhetoric, justifying at times and rectifying at others his past and future actions: "I am beginning to lose all my *imagination* save that sometimes I feel involved in the most frightful material slavery. I hate myself sometimes, hate myself for being the most violent taskmaster — I drive myself with no hope of redemption whatsoever and I lash the folk" (50; emphasis added).

Here Donne can be seen as a remorseful confessor on the surface and as a hypocrite of illiterate imagination at a much deeper level. "Imagination" is the intuitive clue that anticipates his illiteracy, superficiality, and non-reflexivity. For, shortly after he says this, Donne goes on hammering himself within the folk with hardly any sense of a subsequent obligation and engagement: "After all I've earned the right here as well. I am as native as they, ain't I? A little better educated maybe whatever in hell that means. . . . The only way to survive of course is to wed oneself into the family. *In fact I belong already*" (51; emphasis added). This last statement — "in fact I belong already" — is evidence enough that Donne suffers from an illiteracy of the imagination. For this reason, the claimed change remains a mediocre and spurious one. Donne has not lost his imagination, as he claims, because he has not yet learned to imagine. He is addicted to the false clarity of language — "I belong already" — and lacks that deep hermeneutical model of self-interpretation and self-reflexivity that alone can define belonging not in terms of physicality but in terms of spirituality. Astutely enough, the narrator cuts the ground from under his feet: "we're all outside of the folk," he averred to Donne, "Nobody belongs yet . . ." (52). Donne, however, does not understand what the narrator meant; what is worse, he does not care to listen, which by and large attests to his hitherto closed door policy and failure of conception: "Donne was not listening to my labour and expression and difficulty" (52).

Perhaps Donne needed to be put to a harsher and a viler test before he could learn to see into and through his interior self. At this point, it might be helpful to remind ourselves that the system of introspection Harris charts in *Palace of the Peacock* is not a novel one. Indeed, its origins can be traced to St. Augustine. Introspection of this sort is a tripartite process in which one moves from the exterior to the interior and from the interior to the superior. "Superior" is associated with God in St. Augustine and it is difficult to see a radically different interpretation in Harris other than a transcendental self or a Jungian anima. The presentation of this process of self-reflexivity or introspection in understanding phenomena is important because the second change Donne undergoes is related to understanding certain events that took place during the journey. This second change coincides with the "The Second Death" of the mythically-recreated crew. It is a change so piecemeal and silent, so deep and comprehensive, that it culminates in his transformation. I am not so much interested in recounting the specific events resulting in this second transformational change, as in analyzing Donne's response to them. It is only by studying this response, his interaction between his self and those happenings, that we can understand his eventual evolution. For the rehearsed construction of a new self is by no means a solitary closed process; one rehearses oneself in a Bakhtinian dialogism, in relation to others, in conversing and dialoguing with the other in all its pigmentations and differences. In an article entitled "The Dialogical Self," Charles Taylor describes this dialogical dimension of self-formation as occurring through collective action or conversation. In the case of Donne, this dialogical dimension is crucial to his later development inasmuch as he engaged himself in a collective action — a struggle against the tall rapids. Ultimately, it is this dialogical horizon, acquired during the journey, that wrenches Donne free of his hitherto utter monological loss.

A series of deaths, a mortal struggle with voracious and hungry rapids, as well as a faithful and gutsy crew have all interacted together to undo Donne's former monological and Parsifal-like self. Curiously enough, every death, every loss becomes a sacrifice comparable to the sacrificial piles of gold "The Gilded Man" throws into the great lagoon of Guatavita. Just as the new ruler takes piles

of gold on his raft, Donne takes his crew with him. While the new ruler throws gold into the lake to save his people from the demon, Donne seems to throw his crew into the rapids to secure that gold (here, the runaway slaves). Myth is contrasted with history, so much so that one wonders where the genuine gold is. Anyone unfamiliar with Harris's "intuitive Imagination" and "numinous inexactitudes" may be at a loss when the eye-narrator tells us just after the tragic disappearance of Carroll that "a great stone of hardship had melted and rolled away" (64). Has Carroll died or has he come home and become whole? Is his death a sacrifice or a gain? Where and what is "gold"? These are some of the riddles to be cracked en route.

The death of Schomburgh is another milestone. Only he can interpret the old Arawak woman — and only she can tell where the fugitive folk have gone. The journey now becomes a journey without a guide, a "journey without maps," as Graham Greene would say. It is a journey into loss unless another language is to be conceived. The loss of linguistic communication takes place at the crossroads with the emergence of another kind of communication — a spiritual one. While ordinary language intensifies differences and binaries, spiritual language blends opposites and animates the inanimate. Indeed, the loss of speech ushers in a world where everything speaks, sings, and listens to the undying bone-flute music of the soul. Now, "Donne started unrolling his plan quickly" (76). "Today we will reach *here*" (77). Nowhere to go: the journey is no longer physical. *Here* is as far as one can go: the journey is spiritual. It is as if in unrolling his plan Donne unfolds himself to be journeyed into, to be discovered and recovered, to be lost and found. What will be the next step? "They were on the threshold of the folk. They must cling to that knowledge since — he [Donne] had never seen it so clear before — it was all they had" (76).

After two losses (Carroll and Schomburgh), Donne and his crew are now on the threshold of the folk, on the threshold of community and alchemical transformation, on the threshold of psychic reintegration and perfection. No other losses are to be endured, no more sacrifices, no more gold is worth the life of any member of the crew. Donne is now decked enough in spiritual wealth to

stop the Jennings/Cameron fight, to perceive the "wound" Cameron caused to the bird when he flung a stone at it. At this moment, the spiritual journey has gone far: Donne starts to rise, to transcend his old Machiavellian self by immersing himself in the community around him, by bearing the brunt of the wound, part of which he himself caused. The spiritual revival is so overwhelming that those who cannot host it will diminish. Cameron is probably a representative of a race so consumed by "revenge syndromes" that they "neither forgave nor forgot" (61). He is the kind of oppressed who would want to overturn the oppressor to take its place. He had already started a fight with Jennings and wounded a bird. When he pelted another bird in a time where a journey into the self and the soul has almost come to completion, he met his death at the hands of DaSilva, who prophetically erupted: "I tell you when you pelt she you pelt me. Is one flesh, me flesh, you flesh, one flesh. She come to save me, to save all of we. You murderer!" (90). DaSilva's quasi-pantheistic thundering is an extension of Donne's earlier disapproval of the wound Cameron caused the bird. From another perspective, DaSilva's statement can be seen as a sign of the dissemination of the journey into the interior, into the "here," to which Donne has been a harbinger.

The novel's closing sentence — "Each of us now held at last in his arms what he had been for ever seeking and what he had eternally possessed" — crowns the spiritual and psychic progress of the crew members and resituates the City of Gold searched for within the golden interior territory of the self. Only when reconciled to and enlightened by such an inner lighthouse can the compulsion to conquer and to dominate "lose the name of action," to borrow an expression from *Hamlet* (3.1.87). Perhaps Harris is suggesting that those members or representatives of ethnically-bound and city-centered political parties should undergo a journey such as the one undertaken by Donne: they should journey into their interior selves so that they can journey into the hinterland of Guyana where the Amerindians, among other minorities, are living from day to day. Harris himself led several geo-morphological expeditions to the interior of Guyana from 1942 to 1959, and is certainly aware of the malaise of modern Guyana. But, Harris's *cri de cœur* — *Palace* — is not only a Guyanese palace but also "a palace

of the universe" in which "the windows of the soul [look] out and in" (112). This is the concrete universal aspect of Harris's novel, as it is the actual "palace" we need in a world hammering its way toward globalization in a spate of egoism. The injunction to embark on the journey to the "palace of the peacock" is also addressed to those states that suffer from the blindness of leadership. Thus, the journey into the palace of the peacock must be disseminated, and the thrust toward a cross-cultural, universal community must be maintained in a world inimical to its deepening and challenging implications; that is, a world impoverished by the illiteracy of the imagination.

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