

CONCEPTS OF A CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGINATION: WILSON HARRIS'S CRITICAL VISION AS A WAY OF READING NARRATIVES OF MEMORY

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The aim of this discussion is to examine whether Wilson Harris's critical approach provides a valuable conceptual framework by which to negotiate issues raised in imaginative literature, in particular narratives that are concerned with occluded voices or fragmentary presences. These tropes are, for better or worse, familiar ones in Caribbean literature and I would like to argue, appear in a similar manner in American prose fiction. In order to illustrate the viability of Harris's theory of a cross-cultural imagination, I will attempt to offer a comparative discussion of two narratives from the Caribbean and two from the United States that clearly use these tropes to address various themes that are readily associated with hegemonic violence: Derek Walcott's *Omeros* with David Dabydeen's *Turner* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* with Octavia Butler's *Kindred*. The manner of my discussion will be to highlight features of postcolonial theory in order to demonstrate how Harris's perspective offers more insightful possibilities for approaching texts that attempt to represent collective trauma.

I should begin with a few observations about the texts I have selected for this discussion before I proceed to outlining peculiarly 'Harrisian' terms integral to his critical approach. Walcott and Dabydeen, both renowned literary artists of the Caribbean who have produced work in several genres, are nonetheless readily recognized for their poetry. Each have written epic poems with *Omeros* and *Turner*, both as re-imaginings of canonical works from other cultures: *Omeros* of Homer's mythical story around Helen, Achilles and Hector; *Turner* of J. M. W. Turner's nineteenth century sublime paintings. Morrison and Butler, significant American novelists whose works have become integral to the development of an African American literary canon, have helped to define a new genre of prose fiction – the neo-slave narrative – with *Beloved* and *Kindred*. It is a happy coincidence (perhaps, an unhappy one depending on one's view) that the Caribbean contribution is represented by male poets and the American portion by female novelists if the focus were to be on a gendered reading of these texts. However, I choose to explore the potential for symmetry across narrative form and cultural context to draw out imaginative connections by way of Harris's critical perspective.

Harris's critical vocabulary resonates with words such as 'imagination,' 'partiality,' 'waves of conquest' and 'redemptive' that reflect the overall pattern of his analytical treatment. Bearing in mind that Harris tends to avoid the suggestion that his ideas form a definitive theoretical frame, it is nonetheless possible to detect that he wrestles fundamentally with an approach to the workings of the imagination. One of the principal areas of Harris's discussion is the manner in which the regenerative, exploratory and communal elements of a cross-cultural imagination engage with what Harris terms "conquistadorial legacies" ("Theatre of the Arts" 4) on the grounds of history/memory and identity. Harris is very clear about the necessary role that the imagination fulfils in speaking to the dispossessions fostered by a pervasive conscription to a particular historical line: "[h]istory's addiction to authoritarian narrative' produces 'curious footnotes' to and absences within its narrative which are decidedly problematic for those communities that proceed from these unusual spaces" ("Judgement and Dream" 19). The capacity to observe associations and connections that re-vision the surface text in a manner that becomes alert to previously hidden texts and to demonstrate the partiality of these texts to each other is useful in moving beyond the 'impasses' created by an apparent void of 'historylessness.' It is these hidden texts – these footnotes – that are core features of the selected narratives.

In different, yet startlingly similar, ways each of these narratives attempt to address legacies of violence as they are played out through easily overlooked or marginalized characters. *Omeros* with its attention to the lives of the folk community of a St. Lucian fishing village; *Turner* as the story growing from the partially submerged head of a drowned African thrown overboard from a slave ship; *Kindred*'s effort at recovering a family's past and *Beloved*'s revisiting of a newspaper article about a slave woman's act of infanticide are linked by the interplay across history, memory and plantation slavery.

As an entry into Harris's discussion, I will look at those terms idiosyncratic to his conceptualization of a cross-cultural imagination – 'native universality' and 'live fossil.' These concepts provide the definitive framework for my approach to these texts as, fundamentally, narratives of memory. These texts present an imaginative penetration into apocryphal spaces within accounts of the past and they do so with an emphasis on the power of memory as a recreative, redemptive force. This demand for a regenerative approach in the face of the many voids – created whether by force or through obscurity – is part of the heritage of colonialism, a significant tenet of Caribbean culture, and slavery, which is at the foundation of American society. These writers, of necessity, explore the manner in which history, identity and community are apprehended through the various expressions of dislocation created by these traumatic legacies.

Harris, in developing his critical approach to literature, credits his experience as a writer of fiction with providing him with a practical basis for working out his concepts and as such, when describing his work, he refers to the manner in which fiction anticipates a *cross-cultural* resource. He argues in "Some Intimations of the Stranger" that :

fiction possesses a re-visionary capacity itself as if the text possesses an intentionality of its own to uncover connections that lie in other and deeper layers of what appears to be lost, areas that can be recovered to assist us in *reading* reality in a new way – a new way that is also unfathomably alive to ancient perspectives and resources within the cross-cultural body or bodies of many civilizations whose past, whose tracteries, whose elements, whose curious voices and so on and so forth we are susceptible to through and beyond our finite predicament. (28)

Harris makes it clear that his definition of 'cross-cultural' is about observing and forging redemptive associations and connections among divorced sensibilities and across various cultural/creative expressions. I believe that the concept of 'redemptive associations' is crucial to apprehending Harris's cross-cultural vision. Harris begins with observing that imagistic associations within the text are particularly significant because of the resulting 'transubstantiation' of meaning created by these associations. The capacity to create a dynamic of meaning within an organic network of primary images comes out of 'profound visionary and re-visionary strategies,' an example of which is demonstrated, according to Desmond Hamlet, in *Palace of the Peacock* where Harris produces a "progressively complex series of metaphorically concentric repetitions" (202-203) in his re-combination of imageries associated with 'wheels' and 'spider' to provide a 'radical and disruptive' vision. This 'radical' vision is redemptive precisely because in visualizing associations, it 'disrupts' conventional compartmentalization of meaning and expression and forges connections that incorporates and partakes of difference instead of demonising it. Consequently, when Harris speaks, in "Judgement and Dream," of the way in which: "[e]ach text illumines in various ways its partiality so that it may become a strand in a tapestry of unsuspected connections and linkages within a cross-cultural tradition" (20) he is observing the possibility for redemptive associations among cultural texts.

The interplay of cultural texts becomes significant in acknowledging the features of obscured or 'eclipsed' sources as Harris outlines in his discussion of pre-Columbian influence. For example, in "Profiles of Myth and the New World," Harris perceives in the visual iconography of pre-Columbian cultures elements that with differentiation anticipate "Phoenician features, Asian features, Semitic, . . .etc." (205). Nonetheless, because of an adherence to the reification of difference, the pre-Columbian context and the filial links among cultures that it suggests are made null and void. Such voids or 'absent presences' are intrinsic to the "exploitative creeds" of communities embroiled in maintaining a "narrow scale of self-preservation . . . within the diverse species that they manipulate or exploit" (208). Therefore, in order to circumvent the imposition of hierarchical difference, Harris proposes an awareness of cross-cultural ties.

In apprehending cross-culturality, Harris makes use of the term 'native universality.' I first came across the term in a collection of essays called The Radical Imagination in reference to the rehearsal of the Odysseus figure within various cultural contexts. The paradox of 'native universality' is sustainable in Harris's vision of a cross-cultural tradition because it accommodates a 'problematic nativity' in relation to a "diversity-within-intimate-yet-ungraspable-universality" ("Judgement and Dream" 30-31). A 'problematic nativity' suggests that a definition of nativity that is grounded in exclusivity may indeed be problematic in the face of the re-birth of an iconic figure within what he calls, in "The Absent Presence: The Caribbean, Central and South America," "the flesh - of many cultures" (92). The concept of 'diversity-within-universality,' conversely appreciates the manner in which each rehearsal re-defines its cross-cultural influence into its own environment. Rehearsal cannot be equated with repetition and Odysseus therefore does not arrive "as a single man. . . . His plural return after the long and continuing wars of civilization is a burden to be shared by many actors and agents within a problematic ancient/modern theatre of the imagination" (92). Therefore, 'native universality' is simply the capacity of cultural texts to develop individual imagistic markers that can be revised in other/diverse cultural spaces in a manner that suggests a heterogenic basis to an understanding of universality. Harris proposes that a creative penetration of a "straitjacketed assumption of region or race or locality within a secular and political dogma" (92) is part of the necessary as well as unceasing behaviour of the dynamics of a cross-cultural imagination. From this perspective, Dabydeen's treatment of Turner's sublime imagery and Walcott's ability to transplant the Homeric characters onto his St. Lucian landscape can be read as an engagement with cultural icons and narratives, not as expressions fixed to a particular era or place, but as works of the imagination that find their correspondence wherever/whenever an agent of creativity seeks to participate in a dialogue with other communities.

The concept of breaching temporal as well as cultural divisions is entertained in Harris's reference to a 'live fossil tradition.' The paradoxical relationship between 'live' and 'fossil' within the context of a tradition would appear to emphasize the contradictory nature of these terms. However, Harris's definition of tradition is that by its nature, it is *revisionary*. The conventional view of tradition as a repetition of patterns in order to establish a fixed structure for cultural expression is an anathema to creativity. In order for a tradition to survive, it must be adaptive in continually bringing its past influences forward into a contemporary context. Consequently, a 'live fossil tradition' appreciates and encourages those elements which are buried within the body of the text – which, in effect, are always present – to 're-vision' themselves before the growing awareness of the creative

agent.¹ With an alert perception to connections with the past – ‘fossil’ awareness – there is the possibility of recovering resources lost within the voids and/or margins that are also created by history.

Gareth Griffiths states that “Harris uses the term ‘fossilization’ in a special and positive sense, to refer to the hidden codes which any ‘concretized’ objective (the perception of the real, material conditions of an event, for example) must suppress and hide” (63). Harris offers a creative redress to the kind of ‘fossilization’ at work in what Harris calls, in “Judgement and Dream,” “history’s addiction to authoritarian narrative” (19) in the form of an ‘intuitive imagination’: as he argues in “Originality and Tradition,” “It is only when the intuitive imagination throws up these connections, when the text seems to have a life of its own, that ways beyond the impasses of history may be sensed” (124). The term ‘intuitive/intuition’ is consistent throughout Harris’s approach to the imagination. The use of ‘intuitive’ emphasizes the insurgent nature of the imagination as well as suggests the possibility of perceiving beyond a given visionary frame. Intuition especially indicates the ability to recover from obscurity or occlusion significant motivations or clues that bear on an event’s evolution. Intuitive vision or intuition, therefore, is able to apprehend connections that re-position an event beyond its isolated frame into a network of significant associations or observations that redefine the event. In this way, the imaginative redress offered by Morrison and Butler to the difficult legacy of plantation slavery in the Americas through the metaphor of a living ghost in *Beloved* and a body held captive by backward time travel in *Kindred* aptly invoke an alertness to the past as a ‘live fossil’. The notion of a ghost resurrected in carnal form with an appetite for buried memories, I believe, finds a peculiar resonance in a body caught in limbo within both a violent past and uneasy present in the sense that neither body should exist where and when it does yet they are held in place (and time) by spectral connections. In both narratives, the main characters are required to sense the importance of this impossible embodiment – to discover the ties to their past outside of the considerations of material reality – to intuitively grasp the source of these unbidden pressures on time produced by an occluded past.

Harris’s view concerning intuitive responses to connections, can also be observed in the various interrelated concepts that he uses in his essays about the imagination. Alongside ‘intuitive imagination,’ Harris mentions an ‘intuitive archetypal imagination,’ a ‘folk imagination’ and a ‘limbo imagination.’ I view these concepts as interconnected features of his larger conceptualization of a cross-cultural imagination. With regard to my discussion of these narratives, I will focus on his notion of the ‘limbo imagination’ because of its capacity to creatively address the restriction and erasure coming out of and represented by the Middle Passage. Even though the limbo imagination is specifically discussed, in “History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas,” in relation to the “epic stratagems available to Caribbean man in the dilemmas of history which surround him” (24), characteristically, Harris demonstrates how the ‘limbo perspective’ in the imagination represents the “inner universality of Caribbean man” (26) – a notion that he finds embodied in the waves of migration that have populated ‘the shores of the Americas.’ The relevance of the limbo imagination can therefore be found in what he terms the “stamp of the spider

¹Harris refers to the reader as well as the author as creative agent. This reference comes in his discussion, in “The Absent Presence,” of Umberto Eco’s idea of the ‘intention of the text’. In Harris’s words: “I think that is what Umberto Eco means by the ‘intention of the text,’ the original ‘intention of the text’ as it re-visions itself within mutual agencies of live fossil tradition, the author as agent, the reader as agent of complex creativity” (87-88).

metamorphosis" (26) rehearsed in the shaping of every community coming out of sea-change. Harris is able to layer in this conceptualisation the image of the limbo dance, the implication of suspended time *and* the transformative nature of the spider that is a significant part of the folk imagination in the Americas (and by folk, I am referring to the community that constructs itself outside of concretised conventions). Furthermore, he invokes the resonance in limbo of the term 'limb' in order gesture to the resilience of communal roots in the face of material devastation and profound trauma. He does so by pointing to the contortion of limbs – body parts – as reminiscent of the captive body in the slave hold struggling for space and during that awful duress having to assume the appearance of a spider, i.e. spread-eagled and low to the ground. The consequence of that journey over water while the body is suspended in space and (without the benefit of familiar temporal markers) trapped in time is a sea-change – a transformation that could only be produced by survival. The limbo imagination's invocation of the limb/limbo metaphor finds it rehearsal in these narratives as each of them rely on central tropes of time-travel and dismembered bodies to illustrate this search for community beyond the traumas of the past.

My decision to look at Wilson Harris's perspective alongside that offered by postcolonial theory is encouraged in part by the regularity with which his ideas are positioned within postcolonial discussion and also by the applicability of this theory to the selected texts. The postcolonial lens fundamentally focuses on the issues coming out of hegemonic practices engendered by imperialism, colonialism, relationships of power dependent on demonising difference. In this respect, the term 'postcolonial' is linked to the "difficulties of engaging with such notions as representation, identity, agency, discourse and history" (Mongia 3). The definition of postcolonial theory that I have opted to use for the sake of this discussion is that outlined by Bart Moore-Gilbert in *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (1). Moore-Gilbert's discussion of postcolonial theory focuses on its analysis of cultural practices in terms of systems of representation. This distinction is necessary because postcolonial theory covers the analysis of factors involved in the shaping of economic and political relationships and therefore covers fields of study as wide ranging as anthropology, economics and political science. Therefore, I do not desire to suggest that the observations I am to make concerning postcolonial theory cover the entire gambit of its applications. The focus of my discussion is on postcolonial theory in its analysis of forms of literary representation and specifically in terms of the concepts presented by the theorists that are frequently referenced in that field.

Postcolonial theory pulls together similar concerns with the impact of historical influence and 'legacies of conquest,' however the frame within which these concerns are treated is that provided by the influence of colonial discourse instead of the imagination. Postcolonial theory therefore appears to pivot on a critical awareness of colonial discourse that has become problematic in determining the degree to which 'colonial' is significant in a 'postcolonial' approach. One of the familiar criticisms of postcolonial theory is the significance of 'post' in the definition of the term, with the most evident issue being that this prefix suggests colonialism is a finite experience that has come to a conclusion that can be resolutely fixed in the past. One of the concerns that this suggestion raises is that the term 'post-colonialism' implies that the historical artefact of colonialism is not a necessary consideration in formulating an analysis of contemporary realities or more to the point, that the emphasis on temporal distance works to undermine: "colonialism's economic, political, and cultural deformative-traces in the present" (Shohat 326). The emphasis on 'post' as 'past' is therefore complicit in 'glossing over' the fact that hegemonic practices can take forms other than overt colonial rule (Shohat 326). Postcolonial theory, in effect, addresses the fact that even though the material reality of European empire-building colonialism is a

matter of historical record that the ideology that allowed it to function has not been removed with the passage of time. This approach therefore, necessarily focuses on investigating the strategies involved in colonialist practices. However, the pattern of discussion in postcolonial theory suggests that the positioning of colonialism at its analytical praxis, ironically, presents the same limitations as the perspective that attempts to dismiss the significance of colonialism in so far as there is a tendency to ineffectively address hegemonic practices that take forms other than overt colonial rule.

There is also another concern associated with the use of 'post' that to my mind requires significant consideration and that is the understanding of 'post' as 'beyond.' Ella Shohat observes that the term 'post-colonial' is capable of forming: "a critical locus for moving beyond anti-colonial nationalist modernizing narratives that inscribe Europe as an object of critique, toward a discursive analysis and historiography addressing decentered multiplicities of power relations" (328). It is this concern that remains elusive to the conceptual framework created by postcolonial theory. Shohat goes on to point out that: "[t]he operation of simultaneously privileging and distancing the colonial narrative, moving beyond it, structures the 'in-between' framework of the 'post-colonial'" which inevitably makes it difficult to maintain the kind of 'stable' binary power relations associated with colonialism and its attendant forms" (328). In other words: "[w]hile one can posit the duality between colonizer/colonized and even neo-colonizer/neo-colonized, it does not make much sense to speak of post-colonizers and post-colonized" (328). The conclusion of Shohat's argument raises an interesting point in the way that it resonates of a Harrisian notion of the demand for a cross-cultural awareness. She states that each conceptual frame: "illuminates only *partial* aspects of systemic codes of domination, of overlapping collective identities, and of contemporary global relations" (332) for which she suggests that a 'flexible yet critical usage' across various conceptual frameworks can be alert to contradictions and differences as well as links and structural analogies in an effort to locate "openings for agency and resistance" (332; emphasis mine). There is a demand, therefore, for post-colonial theory to offer a viable framework or (frameworks) by which to navigate the contemporary situation of a global community living on the knife-edge of diversity, caught up in the waking dreams of conquest.

It is my argument that Harris's discussion of a cross-cultural imagination not only acknowledges the temporal ambivalence that Shohat observes but also that his approach presents an openness to associations among diversity that moves away from the fixation on one quality at the expense of its other(s). Harris's notion of a cross-cultural capacity allows for the translatable legacies of conquest to be read within the context of the individual imagination and as such, emphasizes the partiality of the creative agent's response to the particular circumstances of fracture and/or structures of representation. The significance of Harris's insight is especially highlighted through his relationship to post-colonial discussion in general and emphasized through a comparative analysis of similar concepts presented by Homi Bhabha specifically. Harris's critical work, to some degree, shares terminology with Bhabha's contributions to postcolonial theory. Moore-Gilbert observes "points of connection between the two figures" (180), citing other critical studies which suggest a similar comparison.² There are several areas for which Harris and Bhabha appear to share a similar conceptual frame but for the sake of this discussion, I will restrict myself to two of them: hybridization and identity. Harris speaks of regenerative hybridization and partiality in constructs of identity while Bhabha looks at similar ideas about hybridization and the

²Please see Moore-Gilbert's comparative discussion of Harris and Bhabha (180-184).

destabilization of 'fixed' identity within the dominant discourse. Even though Bhabha and Harris seem to share a similar focus, I believe that Bhabha's concepts are so heavily embroiled in the effort to address colonialist strategies that they reflect a particular inflexibility in their application to texts of the imagination which Harris's approach of a cross-cultural capacity can overcome.

One of the first observations I would like to make about the positioning of Harris's body of work in relation to postcolonial discussion is the significance of the term 'colonial' in approaching Harris's concerns in comparison to those of postcolonial theory. Helen Tiffin, in "Heartland, Heart of Darkness, and Post-Colonial Counter Discourse," indicates the primary relevance of colonial discourse in precipitating the development of "contemporary critical debate" (128):

Thus literary studies become part of colonialist mechanisms of socio-political control, and hence contemporary criticism as well as contemporary imaginative writing are necessarily involved in recuperation and restitution. It is thus not surprising that much post-colonial writing is not only creative but also critical and theoretical; and that distinctions between the three are rendered invalid by colonial and post-colonial conditions of literary production and consumption. Wilson Harris's novels, for example, address contemporary critical debate and have inspired post-colonial literary theories at the same time as they elaborate their imaginative worlds. (128)

Colonialist mechanisms are at the center of a postcolonial response – the necessary involvement in 'recuperation and restitution' is therefore, invariably directed at colonialist discourse. It is instructive to notice that in this citation, Tiffin perhaps inadvertently acknowledges some distance between Harris and the nexus of contemporary critical debate and post-colonial literary theories when she positions him as an inspirational figure to and not so much as a practitioner of critical theory. It is also noteworthy that she makes mention of Harris's commitment to his imaginative project. Harris tends to address issues within 'contemporary critical debate' without relying on the same conceptual frames. For example, in "Oedipus and the Middle Passage," Harris points out that the numinous moment or distinctive encounter with a new land, a new people, is forfeited within an illiteracy of the imagination. The true arousal of a native universal imagination – the true arousal of a diversity of cultures in counterpoint with one another within a tapestry of mutual self-knowledge, is lost and the cornerstone is laid instead for a fortress ideology or polarisation of races in which the defeated are relegated to various ghettos and hideous humiliations. This has been the fate of the Aborigines in Australia as it has been the fate of the original peoples of the Americas. It is something that exists in all sorts of complicated ways throughout the modern world – a major defect in our civilisation. (11)

Harris is always able to place his observations about society in relation to the imagination. Gareth Griffiths describes Harris's apparently unusual position within postcolonial discussion as a 'curious detachment' that can be attributed to the 'eccentricity' of Harris's work. The nature of Harris's focus, as Griffiths points out, paradoxically places him as seminal to postcolonial debate while being considered 'esoteric' as well as uncommitted to the construction of a viable postcolonial identity (61). Specifically, Harris's 'lack of commitment' to postcolonial concerns can be identified as his unwillingness to work within the same conceptual frames, in other words, to focus on the impact of colonialism and other forms of hegemony in terms of material constructs.

The value of materialist grounds in determining a postcolonial identity is an area that

has drawn criticism to Harris's approach. His label of 'esoteric' is sure to stem from his attention to metaphysical frames. According to Glyne Griffith's analysis of the relationship between metaphysics and materialism in Harris's work, he argues that Harris presents a "metaphysical notion of selfhood [that] allows, or indeed requires materialist history and social conflict to be 'read' as a symptom of the lack of self-knowledge rather than as the historical and social means to the production of selfhood" (67). Griffith, in effect, takes Harris to task for what he perceives as the privileging of the metaphysical over the material to the point that material concerns are rendered irrelevant. Griffith points to factors such as the "dialectal play of cultural energies and the will to power" (67) as 'marginal' to Harris's metaphysical project. It is this focus on metaphysical concerns that repeatedly comes under fire from Griffith and, to his credit, he clearly articulates his objections to what he perceives as the overarching 'failure' of Harris's agenda. In his effort to undermine the validity of imperialist ideology, Harris's decision to eschew conventional realism and to promote universality through a focus on the metaphysical has, in effect, contributed to his inadvertent conscription to the very ideology in need of deconstruction. The interaction of the material and the immaterial in determining identity is at the crux of Glyne Griffith's criticism of Harris's work and it is worthwhile to note how he figures the role of materiality in relation to the intangibility of selfhood. Griffith's argument leans toward the need for selfhood to be understood as a product of social and historical means (as a material construct) to the point that material representations of identity, such as class or race, are the primary considerations in apprehending identity. Conversely, Harris's focus on the immaterial – on psychic development and the imagination – is considered tantamount to escapism and an invariable posture of defeat before the "discursive power of Eurocentric, imperialist discourse" (74).

Griffith's position, though more aggressive, seems to indicate the general climate of critical debate in terms of its expectations of cultural, imaginative texts overall and literary texts in particular that present issues associated with 'Third World' (and its presence in 'the West'): a construction of identity that addresses materialist deprivations. Nana Wilson-Tague tends to agree that Wilson Harris's 'immateriality of freedom', albeit well-intentioned, is misdirected and therefore ill-equipped to provide this kind of redress:

Harris's psychoanalytical model for refiguring and transforming history in the Caribbean is an original and carefully worked out philosophy that demands a great deal of confidence in the visionary and spiritual capabilities of the Caribbean person. The imperatives that inspire it are valid, and Harris is convincing when he argues that the Caribbean historical convention should free itself from fixed time and the biases of imperial history by altering the boundaries of reality and naturalism to explore the psychic as a domain of possibility. Yet the metamorphosis within the unconscious may sometimes appear decontextualized, removed from the flux of historical interaction.
(124)

This observation then begs the question: to what extent does Harris's work provide critical relevance to literary texts in general? Following that, at what point does Harris's approach reach 'beyond' the kind of analysis of colonialist strategies presented, for example, by Bhabha? Bhabha's project is, fundamentally, concerned with the way in which colonial discourse constructs the identity of the colonizer and the colonized subject *in relation to each other*. Bhabha's discussion emphasizes a relationship of dependence between oppositional forces as the groundwork for creating selfhood. Consequently, his concept of hybridization, as well as his arguments concerning the inherent instability of fixed identity and conflictual tension within dominant discourse are illustrative of this fundamental

position. Therefore, I think it reasonable to briefly look at the application of these concepts in Bhabha's approach alongside Harris's treatment of them in relation to these narratives in order to illustrate the ways that Harris's perspective is able to avoid the restrictive discourse evident in Bhabha's discussion.

Moore-Gilbert summarizes Bhabha's view of hybridity (the product of hybridisation) as a means to conceptualise the relationship between cultures as an exchange which is not: "intrinsically antagonistic, but instead supplies (in both senses) a 'lack' *without* subsuming either of the cultures concerned into a new synthesis" (Moore-Gilbert 126). Hybridisation produces an 'in-between' space: "across which an unstable traffic of continuously (re)negotiated psychic identifications and political (re)positionings is in evidence" (Moore-Gilbert 130). Therefore identity is constructed among 'dynamic and shifting structures.' In *Beloved*, the efforts of the ghost-child (Beloved) to lay claim to Sethe, her mother, is partly represented through a section of broken narrative consisting of apparently disjointed phrases and images. Within the context of the narrative, some of the images from *Beloved*'s fragmented section are, in effect, 'taken from' the memories of other characters while others are indicative of an experience of collective memory. *Beloved*'s experience presents "an unstable traffic of continuously (re)negotiated psychic identifications" (Moore-Gilbert 130) that emphasize her 'in-between' state, which is represented through her position 'in-between' the worlds of the living and the dead. Therefore, *Beloved*'s 'shifting and splitting' personality can be seen as representative of the inherent pressures coming out of the "unconscious, affective area 'in-between' the dominant and subordinate cultures" (Moore-Gilbert 117). Even though *Beloved*'s living ghost experience carries certain resonances of Bhabha's discussion, there is another aspect to *Beloved*'s unstable positioning that is presented through Harris's view of 'regenerative hybridisation.' Regenerative hybridization emphasizes nascent resources within and throughout communities that, according to Harris, make themselves felt in intuitive ways to realise the 'buried' roots of community particularly in the face of ontological/psychic deprivations. This form of hybridization takes the form of re-creating bodies from fragmentary memories i.e. the pulling together in physical expressions (apparently) disparate remnants of past narratives into a unified form. Hence, Harris's perspective not only suggests that *Beloved*'s presence is a necessary rupture in the amnesiac state concerning slavery but it highlights the possibility of collective re-remembering. This form of intuitive rupture in order to 'embody' collective re-remembering is also invoked in the unusual ability of *Kindred*'s protagonist, Dana Franklin, to spontaneously travel backward in time to what she discovers, in piecemeal fashion, is an ancestral homestead peopled by individuals that before she could only recognize as names in a family Bible. *Turner* and *Omeros* also make use of peculiar temporal events to highlight how the significance of the connections to the past have to be sensed. For *Omeros*, it takes the form of a sunstroke induced dream that leads Achille, one of the main characters of the epic, to locate himself in an ancestral past of which previously he had only been numinously aware. *Turner*'s central use of a disembodied head floating in the ocean suspends the moment of death to allow the head to traverse epochs and, as a result, recognize itself in other floating bodies throughout time.

Bhabha's discussion not only indicates a level of instability in the negotiation of the subject-identity caught between dominant and subordinate cultures but also in the structure of the colonizer's sense of self as an agent of dominance. Bhabha begins with observing the desire, within colonial discourse, for fixity in representations of the identity of subject peoples. This fixity is invariably an illusion and shown to be as much by the contradictory stereotypes assigned to the colonized subject. More importantly, the need for stereotypes reveals the colonizer's dependence on "this potentially confrontational Other" (Moore-Gilbert

131) for identity-constitution. This demonstration of psychic ambivalence suggests a debilitation in colonial authority – in Bhabha’s view: “[t]he gaze of colonial authority is *always troubled* by the fact that colonial identity is always partly dependent for its constitution on a colonized Other who is potentially hostile” (Moore-Gilbert 135; emphasis mine). In *Omeros*, the relationship between Plunkett and Helen reminds one of Bhabha’s observation of the ambivalence registered in the gaze of colonial authority. In material terms, the definition of these characters’ identities is drawn along the lines of dominant/subordinate: Plunkett, as a retired colonel, an expatriate and white represents the position of the colonizing force; Helen, as a domestic worker, a native inhabitant and black represents the position of the colonized subject. The extreme polarities along which the colonialist discourse of European empire-building usually presented is further emphasized by the white property-owning/employer male versus the black impoverished/employee female dynamic of the Plunkett/Helen relationship. Plunkett and Helen, as oppositional forces, cover the material frames created according to race, class, gender and culture/nationality. Plunkett’s interaction with Helen suggests that his ‘gaze’ is ‘troubled’ by contradictory images of his house servant. He views Helen as both servile and imperious within the same gaze: “she seemed to drift like a waif, not like the arrogant servant that ruled their house” (29). His gaze is also ‘troubled’ through his fascination with Helen’s beauty. Helplessly paralysed by his lust, to the point that the balance of power in their relationship is inverted, and seeking to rationalise as well as inoculate himself against these feelings, Plunkett seeks to ‘give’ Helen a history. His pathos concerning Helen’s ‘lack’ leads him into an obsession with researching the island’s history as an outlet for his obsession with Helen. Bhabha’s perspective suggests that Plunkett’s discomfort around Helen, especially with her blatant disregard of the master/servant relationship, could be as a result of an innate recognition of his dependence in defining his sense of self in opposition to Helen. Helen’s arrogance, in effect, creates “the unsettling quality of the return/refusal of the dominant gaze.”³

Harris’s approach suggests another way in which to read Plunkett’s desire for Helen and her history in terms of its thematic development of identity-construction. Harris’ concept of the partiality of identity articulates a continual re-visualization of the construction of identity. In other words, because identity comes into being through the interaction of partial selves - interdependent and informing each other – it is necessary to be open to the ways in which selfhood is produced according to a dynamic process. Plunkett’s ‘fixation’ with Helen is produced by an intuitive response to what Harris terms, in “Profiles of Myth,” ‘Guilt’: the “burden of Memory alerts us to the Guilt of our own actions in the past – ancestral action, the action of our antecedents; alerts us to lapses from life-enhancing diversity into stereotypical purities” (208). His personal guilt over his impure thoughts toward Helen is a shadow of the psychic Guilt with which he must come to terms. In *Omeros*, Plunkett expresses a feeling of shame toward the stereotypical positioning as a British exile in St. Lucia and it is the implications of this role that continually places Plunkett on unstable ground (25-26). His obsessive pursuit of Homeric parallels through historical research speaks to his desire to fix an image of Helen. In both instances, Plunkett is caught in his attempt to fulfil a construct of identity that ignores partiality – Helen to be framed as victim, himself to be framed as an authoritarian. It is through his investigation into the past that he achieves a breakthrough, an alert to ‘ancestral action.’ Plunkett comes across a ‘version’ of himself and through the process of following the ‘webbed connections,’ brings about a re-assessment of his vision of himself, of Helen, of the island that eventually brings healing for his wound (309). The significance of this partiality of identity is also crucial to

Turner and Kindred, although deployed in different ways.

With Turner, the memories that the disembodied head encounters allow it to fashion different bodies from which it re-lives the experiences of those who have journeyed across the ocean. The head is able to recall its former life as an enslaved child aboard a slave ship but also that of a stillborn child who, in the poem, is given the same name as the captain of the slave ship – Turner. In this way, the submerged African becomes other than himself while claiming simultaneously Turner’s perspective as his own. Dabydeen’s decision to have the stillborn child share the same name as the slave captain, who is himself a re-imagining of the nineteenth century painter, and then have that child be the embodiment of the drowned African’s past and terrifying future, indicates his willingness to construct identities that partake of each other. Kindred also makes use of partial identities through the main character’s encounter with her ancestral past. Through her several trips back in time, Dana comes into repeated contact with Alice Greenwood and Rufus Weylin, her great-great grandmother and great-great grandfather. Her backward temporal journeys are evoked not by her link to Alice, a young slave woman who also happens to physically resemble Dana but by a powerful connection to the white slave owner, Rufus. Butler ostensibly positions Dana’s kindred identification in this apparent opposition of black and white/woman and man/enslaved and enslaver in order to not only confront but illustrate how one can be possessed by the heterogeneous basis of identity.

Both Bhabha and Harris offer a way of reading these narratives, within particular frames, that attempt to confront the complexities of realising a sense of selfhood within the context of and consequences of imperialism, especially with the growing awareness of the genuine diversity that this kind of project involves: It “is a field in which everything is contested, everything is contestable, from one’s reading of a text to one’s personal, cultural, racial, national standpoint, perspective and history” (Punter 10). Bhabha’s discussion, even for its focus on the ideological and affective/unconscious spheres in contrast to “the ‘public sphere’ of material relations” (Moore-Gilbert 130), continually attempts to contextualize its observations within material frames. Bhabha’s efforts to analyse the inherent instability and ambivalence of colonial discourse are indirectly in service to a form of political agency and resistance which is directed at changing the kinds of labels used to create the representation of an identity. In other words, Bhabha’s discussion is concerned with ‘renaming’ political identities, cultural interactions, social conflicts in a way that removes the status of victimhood or loss by removing its label. Therefore, in considering the ‘belatedness’ attributed to considering ‘the black man’ as a human being within Western discourse, Bhabha chooses to seek recuperation and restitution by ‘reinscribing’ it in positive terms: inasmuch as it opens up a new temporality or ‘time-lag’ through which formerly colonized subjects can now rearticulate themselves in terms other than those to which they had historically been assigned. . . . [M]oreover, the formerly colonized can subvert and transform the centre’s narratives of self-description, by revealing what has been left out or repressed in their constitution as ‘monumental’ symbols. (Moore-Gilbert 124)

The significance of this framing is emphasized in Glyne Griffith’s argument concerning the construction of West Indian selfhood and in what he considers as the absence of these kinds of considerations in Harris’s work. Griffith’s concern is with the “strategic positionings of realism’s classifications” and in effect, Harris’s de-emphasis of these classifications does not allow for the deconstruction of “the ideological foundation on which these classifications are built” (58). In fact, it is the very nature of these classifications that Harris interrogates through his apparent de-emphasis of their strategic role in the construction of reality. What Griffith sees as Harris’s “scrupulous avoidance of realism’s structures” (60) in favour of

immaterial concerns, is his exploration of the relationship between material factors and those elements that exist alongside them to contribute to a 'composition of reality.' Harris puts it this way in "The Composition of Reality":

But suddenly you [are] aware of a force, of a passion, of an energy that may be more mysterious than you think. It may have to do not only with the economic injustices but with an *involuntary* association with a composition of reality triggered into play through economic and political factors. We tend to box what happens into purely political and economic functions. The profound residue of psychical distress, schizophrenic mental illness, and their ominous bearing on the starved and crippled (therefore catastrophic, eruptive) body of the imagination, are overlooked again and again. We find it easier to box catastrophic upheaval within the body politic into social tragedy or social fatality. (23)

Both Harris and Bhabha present a similar desire to explore the impact of those factors involved in self-construction that are not readily entertained in the 'public sphere' of material relations – the distinction that occurs between their work develops out of Harris's view of materiality as partial. Harris's discussion emphasizes not only the need for connections but the manner in which every narrative line, every image, text carries within it hidden or latent links to other lines, imageries, texts that run the risk of being obscured with the adherence to one particular or overriding perspective. Consequently, material frames are seen as in themselves partial and as a result, the analysis of a character (for example) according to representations of race becomes problematic because the physical/material determinations of race are intertwined with other features or characteristics that work to unsettle conventional categorisation. Consequently, Harris is able to speak of a "variable and fluid identity" (qtd. in Griffith, 61) that suggests "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" (61). Hence, Griffith's criticism of Harris's work as: "devaluing distinctiveness and therefore rendering invisible the discrete distinctions which mark Indianness or Blackness as social, historical and cultural constructs" (68).

On the other hand, Bhabha's observation of links between the psychic and political domain nonetheless develops an image of the colonizer/colonized identity that is fixed according to its material determinations in a manner that suggests that these factors are the ruling consideration (determinations that are invariably geared to positioning the 'colonized subject' as the site of imperialist power). Therefore, in spite of the varying levels of resistance and shifting multiplicity of subject-positions available to the colonized subject, they remain the Other in the other/self authorization process for the colonizer (Moore-Gilbert 132). To my mind, this point is poignantly illustrated by the fact that most of the strategies developed in apprehending postcolonial identity focuses on the way the West [coloniser] sees the once-colonized [colonized subject] or the way in which the once-colonized [colonized subject] sees itself through the eyes of and/or in relation to the West [coloniser]. In either case, postcolonial identity is not so much constructed in terms of its empowering possibilities or visionary potential available to the 'once-colonized' as it is a structure that manages to maintain the 'West' at its center.⁴

⁴One of the criticisms levelled at Bhabha is that his work displays a tendency to "reverse ethnocentrism" (Moore-Gilbert 128) where he sets up ontological distinctions between the West (as emblematic of fixity and authoritarian qualities) and the postcolonial identity (as democratic and mobile) which work to reinforce the very binary oppositions that

In Harris's discussion, an act of the imagination is not reducible to a withdrawal into a world of fantasy or a metaphysical retreat that remains confined to an individual's gestures or beyond a communal sensibility (which would seem to be the implication of Wilson-Tagoe's concern about the visionary and spiritual capabilities of the Caribbean person in particular). The imagination is a re-creative resource that continues to acknowledge and subsist upon connections in spite of and irrespective of those actions to the contrary, such as those actions involved in constructing *human* discourse. Due to its observations of connections and links, the kind of division between materiality and immateriality that Griffith observes for example in Harris's approach is not only at odds with the corpus of sensibility that Harris has created concerning the imagination, it is also short-sighted. Griffith's criticism that Harris privileges immateriality over materiality because he refuses to contend with a Eurocentric version of history that posits the West Indian as Other is true in so far as Harris does not entertain this view of history – his vision of the history of colonialism and conquest comes through a more complicated lens. The struggle in the materialist world cannot be separated (though the connection can be repressed) from the intangible demands of the psyche, memory and the imagination, according to Harris in "Letter from Francisco Bone to W. H.":

It may seem inevitable or convenient to submit to one frame or name but, in so doing, cultures begin to imprison themselves, involuntarily perhaps, in conquistadorial formula that kills alternatives, kills memory. Not only were Africans who came through the Middle Passage deprived of their names by slave-masters but in the twentieth century Arawaks and Macusis and Warraus and others have begun to adopt English or Portuguese or French or Spanish names and to suppress their native place names or animal names. . . . There may be no harm in such adoption provided an inner/outer masquerade or Carnival lives in the imagination and is susceptible to many worlds, to parallel universes of sensibility, in Memory theatre. And what is Memory theatre but an acceptance of amnesiac fate that diminutive survivors begin to unravel . . . ? (51-52)

With the metaphor of the 'Memory theatre' Harris suggests that the interrelationship of history, the imagination and identity construction is not a dynamic that can solely be explained through an analysis of the material consequences of conquest/imperialism. Even though (re) naming can be seen as a form of discursive power, it can also be seen as a re-creative act that points to multiple, diverse and perpetual rehearsals of identity. The imagination possesses simultaneously an individual and communal capacity that comes to bear on the approach to a personal/collective/national identity. Consequently, Harris is able to speak of the intuitive archetypal imagination, the individual imagination at the heart of the folk, the limbo imagination of the folk within a cross-cultural imagination. It is, in effect, the re-creative capacity and the tolerance for simultaneity and connections provided by the imagination that provides an alternative resource to coming to grips with the apparent "inevitability and stasis of the colonial convention" (Wilson-Tagoe 112) and to create "new metaphors of self-apprehension" (Wilson-Tagoe 112) so that it is possible for: "[o]ne's understanding of culture and race [to be] liberated from narrow political expediency

he desires to unpin (128-129). Moore-Gilbert emphasizes this point with his argument that Bhabha's re-conceptualization of agency eventually leads to a form of resistance that is dependent on the dominant discourse in a way that encourages its continuing authority (137-138).

and from association with narrow geographical confines [to become] profoundly enriched by omens of much wider humanity" (McWatt 135).

Harris's critical discussion, in "Interior of the Novel: Amerindian/European/African Relations," presents the view of the author as an agent (or clown) of an inherited landscape whose work is invariably "subsistence of memory" (18) which is involved with creating a 'presence' within an 'absence.' There are various critical resources that refer to the intertwining relationship between history and memory presented in these narratives such as Stef Craps' essay on spectrality and the treatment of the Middle Passage in "Learning to Live with Ghosts: Postcolonial Haunting and Mid-Mourning in David Dabydeen's *Turner* and Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts*"; there is Paul Breslin's discussion entitled "Epic Amnesia: Healing and Memory in *Omeros*"; Jill Matus's exploration of Morrison's concept of 'rememory' in "*Beloved*: the Possessions of History" and Lisa Yaszek's focus on *Kindred* as a 'memory machine' that re-presents African American women's histories in her essay "'A Grim Fantasy': Remaking American History in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*." Griffith's (mis)reading of Harris's involvement with what the latter terms, in "Letter from Francisco Bone to W.H.," the "Void of civilization" (51) as a tacit agreement with the Eurocentric presentation of the "constituted historical absence of the West Indian and 'Third World' individual" (Griffith 75) presents the possibility of reading these narratives as either for or against imperialist discourse. In spite of the value of deconstructing the mechanisms by which imperialist imperatives are maintained, there is not much room left for the achievement of recuperation and restitution. There is still a sense of having the complexities of identity construction reduced to fruitless binary oppositions and strict categorisations. The irony of the position that Griffith presents is that it shares in the concepts discussed by Harris – there is the recognition of bringing out presence in the face of a construed absence and conversely pointing out the absence in the representation of a full presence. Griffith concludes that deconstructive dismantling provides the possibility for "a more equitable reassemblage" (129) even as the any new assemblage remains *under threat* from the continuous *process of dismantling*. However, much like the tendency exhibited by Bhabha's work, the terminology moves away from constructing a regenerative or creative context in which to develop a valuable ontological recuperation which is one of the aims that Griffith argues Harris leaves unfulfilled. Nonetheless, it is Harris's work that proffers a hopeful construction of identity that manages to remain accountable to historical/contemporary realities:

The education of freedom . . . begins with a confession of the need to lose the base of concretion men seek to impose when they talk of one's 'native' land (or another's) as if it were fixed and anchored in place. In this age and time, one's native land (and the other's) is always *crumbling*: crumbling within a capacity of vision which rediscovers the process to be not foul and destructive but actually the constructive secret of all creation wherever one happens to be. (qtd. in Mackey, 179)

Nathaniel Mackey, in his discussion of cross-culturality, indicates Harris's ability to import the fragmentation of the Caribbean condition into the "larger-than-local problematic" (179) that invariably translates to a global condition, consistent with his (Harris's) commitment to a cross-cultural imagination. The suggestion of a renascent/recreative community that forges associations across broken ties or divisions provides a fertile site through which to discuss these narratives, ostensibly because of the emphasis on heterogeneity in the definition of the Afro-descendant diaspora but also because it provides an alternative view of the construction of community coming out of the themes of displacement and dislocation associated with the consequences of the Middle Passage and plantation slavery, which are presented in these narratives. The cross-cultural capacity to forge 'interdependent and far-

flung communities' can be and has been read as a suggestion of universality, a claim that is met with undeniable suspicion (Mackey 179). Harris's universalising tendency springs, according to Griffith, from his characteristic elision of differences in an effort to avoid the kinds of categorisations based on opposition that are the staple of imperialist discourse.

Cross-culturalism emphasizes a shared resource of creativity or rather, the view that creative expression provides a basis of translation across communities through which cultural imagery exhibits its inherited as well as interactive resources. In other words, cross-culturalism offers the acceptance of a 'true-diversity-within-intimate-yet-ungraspable-universality' that incorporates a dialogue between the past and present. The concern with acknowledging difference seems primarily to involve the significance of racial categorisation – Griffith, for example, points to the necessary ethnic particularity that marks Indianness or Blackness as social/historical constructs – and the crucial absence thereof with Harris's approach. Griffith, once again, makes a valid observation concerning Harris's tendency to problematize distinctions among racial categories and their relationship to apprehending identity-construction. This tendency, however, is due to Harris's interrogation of these categories rather than a denial of oppositional practices. In looking at the concept of 'creoleness,' Harris notes that creoleness is a peculiar term in its ambivalence, in the sense that it encourages a belief in the idea of possessing pure-blood while emphasizing its fixation with its indication of mixed descent. The 'mask of the Creole' therefore becomes a shared feature in the sense that it is carried by descendants of Europeans, Africans, East Indians, etc. in the New World which leads to the question of the application of this concept to what Harris terms 'New World tribes' such as *African Americans*, *Irish Americans*, etc. that can lay claim to mixed descent.

A dynamic view of creoleness, therefore, highlights its indication of, as Harris puts it (in "Creoleness: the Crossroads of a Civilization?"), "mixed race and a cross-cultural nemesis capable of becoming a *saving nemesis* . . . [as] it implies recuperative powers and vision within a scale of violence that is dismembering societies around the globe" (239). The distinction, consequently, of 'blackness' in the construction of (for example) African American along the varied indications that pigmentation, cultural heritage, tribal links encourage becomes problematic. Therefore, in the creoleness of African American, which elements of this mixed descent will, for example, have to be rejected in order to conform to a privileged definition of 'blackness'? Harris, nonetheless, in his interrogation of these kinds of distinctions does look at the alternative implications of what these categorisations may incorporate, especially in terms of what is hidden or unacknowledged, and the ways in which such complex associations may provide the opportunity for valuable insights:

On the other hand does creoleness complexly, hiddenly, overturn tribal bias; does it involve a spiritual subversion of idols through symbolic portraiture of *blackness*? Does *black* hint at an involuntary association of many cultures? Does *black* reach beyond mere pigmentation along racial and tribal lines into densities and transparencies of tone, a layered wealth of tone – musical, rhythmic, poetic – in which diverse cultures may share? Does *black* puncture prescriptions of blandness masquerading as light?....It is through such deeply intuitive insights drawn from hard work and concentration that one may reflect in new ways upon areas of history that are replete with ironies of involuntary association between cultures. Such ironies highlight an addiction to invariance, closed minds, and divided cultures, even as they disclose, I think, the mystery of cross-cultural wholeness steeped in the freedom of diversity to cross boundaries that restrict our vision of therapeutic and evolving reality. (240)

Harris's approach constantly has as its priority the development of a "vision of therapeutic and evolving reality" (240) that is accountable to the addiction in human structures to division, to hegemonic control. Gareth Griffiths's reference to Harris's work as eccentric is a reasonable description of the way in which his perspective suggests unusual and unexpected avenues of interrogation precisely because it tends to look at those elements that are constantly overlooked or taken for granted (yet which continue to persist as involuntary associations, as in the case of the flexible paradox of creoleness). The significant distinction that I can observe between Harris's perspective and that of contemporary postcolonial theory is while the latter seeks to understand the ways in which loss and deprivations are created as a way to dismantle a power structure that reinforces these losses, the former interrogates the manner in which loss is understood. Consequently, the kind of accountability to material deprivations that defines postcolonial theory remains unfulfilled in Harris's vision because it also challenges the kinds of assumptions that come with securing those categorisations. As Gareth Griffiths argues:

Harris is not simply concerned to expose only the materialist 'determinations' of these forces, not concerned, that is, with a process of de-mystifying in Marxist terms, the hidden material b(i)ases of activities such as racism or class discrimination. For in a sense he sees that a political/philosophical concept such as 'materialism' itself must be seen to possess a set of hidden biases of its own. (62)

The distinction that Harris's vision emphasizes in contrast to that presented by contemporary postcolonial theory is the presence of connections across, as he puts it, those boundaries that "restrict our vision of *therapeutic* and evolving reality" ("Creoleness: the Crossroads of a Civilization?" 240). Even though it is significant to 'expose' materialist determinations, it – in itself – does not provide a form of healing for the wounds that it uncovers, for the "inevitable psychic baggage brought at a pre-conscious level from past to present" (Griffiths 62). The context of postcolonial discussion is inevitably rooted in the past and its evolving impact on contemporary realities, on the different representations of reality that are being unearthed alongside the dominant perspective.⁵ Harris's vision indicates that this rereading of the past is not a gesture of historical revisionism but an 'unearthing' of what has been necessarily buried in order to maintain a particular ruling storyline.

The presence of partial windows into reality provides an opportunity for healing because it acknowledges that a valuable understanding of community must come from the acceptance of diversity within unity. In this context, Harris's perspective focuses attention on the role and responsibilities of the 'once-colonized' in their identity-construction, which is a further distinction with the focus of postcolonial debate that relies heavily on the representation of the colonized/once-colonized subject within frames of Eurocentric/Western

⁵An example of the different readings of reality that are opened up in the interrogation of hegemonic control is that concerning the Middle Passage. As Kamau Brathwaite notes:

It is in the nature of the folk culture of the ex-African slave, still persisting today in the life of the contemporary 'folk' that we can discern that the Middle Passage was not, as is popularly assumed, a traumatic, destructive experience, separating the blacks from Africa, disconnecting their sense of history and tradition, but a pathway or channel between this tradition and what is being evolved, or new soil in the Caribbean. (qtd. in Wilson-Tagoe, 186)

hegemony. As Harris points out, in "An Interview with Wilson Harris," partiality in representations of reality and identity, suggests that: "[b]y degrees we are equipped to read our own actions in the light of the actions of others whom we may fear but *through* whom we begin to see our own contribution to the evils in our world" (198) which not only moves beyond the tidy division of victim/victor but also implies that the process of self-knowledge does not have to be determined by externally developed frames.

These narratives about historical displacement, slavery, ontological trauma within the Afro-descendant diaspora, present fertile ground for the 'thematics of imperialism' but it is their working through of these issues within the area of memory, of psychic space that suggests a movement toward a form of self-healing. Walcott, for example, points in "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory" to a celebration of partially remembered customs as "not decayed but strong" (507) while Morrison articulates the healing potential of the collective act of re-memory. The perspective that postcolonial theory encourages, albeit inadvertently, is an inescapable indebtedness to colonialism, which becomes difficult to negotiate when attempting to discover modes of 'recuperation and restitution.' Simply put, the act of European colonialism, in its effort to represent history as beginning with its efforts of empire-building, occupies a similar position in postcolonial theory. This is not to suggest that this position is irrelevant or unreasonable but it does present certain limitations in realising the significance of the 'post' in postcolonial as 'beyond' colonialism. As Gareth Griffiths points out, with the replacement of 'overt colonial domination' with 'neo-colonial cultural hegemony' as the principal enemy, the postcolonial condition takes on a degree of complexity that can no longer rely on oppositional critiques (62). Harris's perspective provides a context in which to apprehend the impact of 'conquistadorial legacies' as a continuing dynamic that reaches into the past and pitches its parameters into the future through contemporary realities. In a sense, Harris's emphasis on partiality offers a way to suggest a perspective that moves 'beyond' colonialism in its simultaneous reaching into the past (pre-Columbian traditions) and into the future – beyond a perspective frozen by anti-colonialist practices:

The future offers us – let us say – the anatomy of space in which new events, new shapes, begin to appear. Those shapes, those events, may bring hope or they may bring terror or a mixture of the two. Our capacity to cope with terrors and hopes implicit in the future may lie in gestating resources in the past that have been overlooked or neglected but which may now surface to provide orchestrated imageries between the anatomy of the future and the womb of the past. . . . The parameters of renaissance or the re-birth of the Imagination are steeped in the peculiarities of a shared Wound. The Wound becomes a living doorway into the past as much as into the healing Shadow and anatomy of the future. (198)

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