

ABSTRACT

Wilson Harris' critical essays can be seen as constituting the statement of an Aesthetic; he is concerned to focus on locating literature within a wider scheme: The Arts. His view of history, shaped to some extent by his personal history, largely influences his notion of the function of Art in a developing Caribbean Society. It also shapes his reaction to the form which this art ought to assume.

His special focus is on Myth, which he sees inevitably related to History. This focus on myth constitutes the exploration of subjective imagination in order to come to terms with the residue of history and the untameable forces contained in his world. Myth criticism, though not unique to Harris, is given a peculiar emphasis by him, in terms of how he defends its origins and functions.

Harris' aesthetic position assumes a flexibility and a freedom from dogma which other literary theories such as Marxism and Structuralism seem to lack. His theory of literature remains a fluid one. His ideas expand outwards, accommodating and adjusting - attempting to fulfill *all*, and not *one* aspect of history. Harris feels that partiality to any one aspect of history leads one to succumb to the production of a literature of lament and protestation -

rather than one of celebration.

Further, celebration of one's historical heritage must in itself be free of partiality. All the natives who constitute the West Indian tradition must be celebrated. Such fulfilment leads beyond a negation and rigidity of history and enables one to give voice to a 'depth of inarticulate feeling and unrealised wells of emotion' inherent in the West Indian psyche.