

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of Wilson Harris' first four novels, with particular attention being given to the religious concerns of these novels. These concerns reveal themselves in theme, imagery and language. Primary attention is given to the religious themes and symbols in the novels, themes and symbols that cut across time and cultures.

Although the major emphasis of the thesis is to document the religious aspects of these novels, attention is also given to the concrete situations in which the religious themes and symbols operate. An attempt is made to show that a religious concern does not necessarily entail an other-worldly preoccupation. In fact, it is suggested that unless a person is aware of the spiritual dimensions of his life, he is not fully aware of his world.

Harris' first novel, Palace of the Peacock, recounts the traditional spiritual and mythical journey, made, however, in a distinctively Guyanese setting. It is the germ of Harris' work, many of the concerns of subsequent novels appearing first in Palace of the Peacock. These include the evocation of a "vision of consciousness" about which Harris has written in his critical writings.

The Far Journey of Oudin, the second novel, is discussed as embodying paradoxes typical of spiritual tra-

ditions. Particular emphasis is given to the paradoxes as they appear in the Christian New Testament.

The third novel considered, The Whole Armour, begins a preoccupation with responsible behaviour. Through the use of a vision aware of life's spiritual dimension, Harris indicates the depth of a person's responsibility in his world. This concern carries over into The Secret Ladder, his fourth novel, where the complexity of responsible action for one aware of the religious dimension of life is seen.