

Abstract

The primary purpose of this dissertation is a critical appraisal of a substantial body of Harris's novels. In pursuit of the thesis that the reality which Harris unfolds is magical, the Introductory chapter traces his approach to the novel form from its genesis in the novel of persuasion, through that of consolidation, into the novel of fulfilment.

The approach utilized is interpretive analysis. It includes an extensive examination of each of the seven novels discussed, and invites a synthesizing of different critical outlooks. Aware of the significance of the historical viewpoint, we also employ the new critical perspective emphasizing the verbal nuances of language. The psychological approach joins hands with the formalist; together they stress technique as internal and discernible signs of a novelist's artistry. The influence of Caribbean society and Guyanese geographic landscape, as they inspire Harris's use of the human font of archetypes, mythologies, and religions, is also discussed.

Traditional critical approaches do not, however, lead into the core of Harris's concerns. Therefore, I have also been guided by the evolving dynamism in form, as each novel introduces the reader to the next; by the startling imagery and convoluted language through which inspired vision makes psychic impressions; and by the crumbling consciousness of elusive characters who frequently resort to introspection. All these concerns are of central importance to evaluation. Furthermore,

to get at meaning, pivotal incidents must often be explored from the perspective of different characters.

Because of the ever deepening complexity and difficulty of the novels, they are discussed in the order of publication. Always, the deepest thing a Harris character experiences is the mysterious. Such a vision of consciousness adds magic to the real world, creating a variable relationship between it and man's being. The accompanying fundamental emotion marks the birth of true science--knowledge. But the kind of magic and amazement with which emotion imbues reality depends solely on the level and nature of individual consciousness.