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Creolization and the Collective Unconscious: Locating the Originality of Art in Wilson Harris' *Jonestown*, *The Mask of the Beggar* and *The Ghost of Memory*.

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When Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, editors of the *Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (1996), adopted the phrase “creolizing the canon” to describe their decision to include often overlooked areas of Caribbean literature in their *Reader*—such as the early twentieth-century pre-boom years (1900-1929), women, Indo-Caribbean writers, and dub poets—they were drawing on a notion of creolization that suggests the incorporation of something different, or other, into the norm, as well as the production of something new and identifiably creolized. From this nuanced conception of the term, it is clear that within the lexicon of Caribbean critics, creolization has grown beyond its immediate associations with linguistic or racial mixing (creole, hybrid, or *métissage*), and encapsulates both the situation and promise of the postcolonial Caribbean. In his exposition of the better-known term, “hybridity”, Robert Young argues that the concept, derived from biological and botanical usage, gained currency in the nineteenth century alongside a renewed interest in “the organic paradigm of identity” and was closely linked to the consolidation of the world into a “single integrated economic and colonial system” (4).<sup>1</sup> If hybridity evokes, as Young claims, a problematic set of racial discourses that betray the belief “that the different races were different species” (9), creolization theory avoids such theoretical trappings by gesturing towards another legacy of colonialism: relocation. In his important study of creolization in Jamaica, Kamau Brathwaite traces the provenance of the term “creole” to the synthesis of two Spanish words, “*criar* (to create, to imagine, to establish, to found, to settle) and *colono* (a colonist, a founder, a settler), into *criollo*: a committed settler, one identified with the area of settlement, one native to the settlement though not ancestrally indigenous to it” (xiv-xv). In other words, the terms creole and, consequently, creolization, are etymologically linked to notions of settling, colonization, and the New World experience, not, as in the case of hybridity, inter-racial mixing.

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<sup>1</sup> By Young’s account, in Latin hybridity “meant the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar, and hence, as the OED puts it, ‘of human parents of different races, half-breed’” (6).

The importance of the concept “creolization” lies in its ability to account for the new cultural, linguistic, and racial formations that result from the experience of colonization in the New World without necessarily evoking the attitudes that Young traces in the term hybridity. Instead, creolization is identified as an effect of the transportation and relocation of peoples in the Americas and the Caribbean during the colonial era. Yet, more recently, Caribbean writers such as Édouard Glissant and Wilson Harris have further complicated critical uses of the term, emphasising, in particular, its potentiality for the generation of genuinely original forms. Drawing from the philosophical projects of both authors, this essay argues for a refinement of the term creolization that incorporates the notion of its singularity while, at the same time, developing a framework for conceptualising the shifting structural relations necessary for the production of singular forms.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is this focus on originality, I argue, that gives the process of creolization great significance for literary production, and informs my readings of Harris’ novels, *Jonestown* (1996), *The Mask of the Beggar* (2003), and *The Ghost of Memory* (2006), which explore the creative potential of creolization as a dialogue between consciousness and, what Jung and Harris term, the collective unconsciousness. Identifying *Jonestown* as a novel that provides the foundation for many of the ideas developed in Harris’ most recent novels—*The Mask of the Beggar* and *The Ghost of Memory*—this essay brings into focus Harris’ use of Jungian-inspired concepts, such as archetypes and the collective unconscious, in a development of creolization theory as an imaginative response to historical trauma and the generation of originality in art.

The specific application of creolization that this essay promotes stems from Glissant’s claim that “creolization opens on a radically new dimension of reality [. . . it] does not produce direct synthesis, but ‘résultantes’, results: *something else, another way*” (“Creolization” 270). In this statement, Glissant makes a crucial distinction between creolization and notions of synthesis or crossbreeding that evoke Young’s analysis of hybridity. This becomes more explicit in Glissant’s *Introduction à une poétique du divers* in which he clearly delineates creolization from the term *métissage* or crossbreeding by arguing that the results of creolization are “unforeseeable whereas one could calculate the effects of crossbreeding. One can calculate the effects of the crossbreeding of plants by cuttings or of animals by crossings [...]. But creolization is

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<sup>2</sup> Singularity, as it is employed throughout this essay, signifies a synthesis that, to cite Harris, “yields proportions of originality, proportions of the ‘genuinely new’” (*Selected Essays* 49). It is this association of singularity and originality or the ‘genuinely new’ that brings Harris’ poetics into line with the philosophic writings of Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou, who, similarly, seek to uncover the conditions under which genuinely original forms come into existence. This particular definition of singularity, therefore, is distinct from that employed by Peter Hallward in *Absolutely Postcolonial* (2001). For Hallward singularity designates that which might be better termed in a strict philosophical sense as single-substance.

crossbreeding with the added value of its unpredictability” (19, my translation). Glissant is not contesting the creole forms that Brathwaite, for example, identifies in his study of Jamaican culture; indeed Glissant goes on to discuss the unexpected cultural and linguistic expressions that resulted from the experience of colonization and slavery in the Caribbean. Rather, Glissant is clearly departing from the models of hybridity that critics such as Young have identified, and in doing so moves toward a more nuanced theory of creolization. Given Glissant’s insistence on the originality or singularity of the creolized form, one can surmise the theoretical elaboration of the creolization process accordingly: although creolization denotes the coming into contact of already existent objects, identities or expressions, the result of creolization is not a sum of its parts, but is entirely original to that context: a new, singular, unpredictable form.

Critical responses to creolization have, to some extent, recognised this aspect: creolization as a process of adaptation to the New World environment and plantation society, Brathwaite argues, has produced a new creole culture (xiii-xvi). However, whereas Brathwaite has established creolization as a transformation of culture, language, and identity in response to historical and geographic contexts, if creolization is to stand as a coherent theory of cross-cultural contact *and* fulfil Glissant’s demand that we acknowledge the unpredictable results of such a transaction, a clear framework of the shifting structural relations required to effect entirely original forms is necessary. Glissant highlights the urgency of such a project but fails, in this respect, to fully explore the theoretical implications of his assertions, focusing instead in *Poetics of Relation* (1990) on the ever diversifying field of relations between subject-positions that characterise the movement of creolization. Although Glissantian concepts such as opacity and *échos-monde* gesture towards a relational synthesis that engenders a singular, creolized form, Glissant does not provide a coherent theoretical account for the particular mode of relation that brings newness into the world. And so it is to another theorist that I turn to find a paradigm of creolizing relations: Derek Attridge’s *The Singularity of Literature* (2004). Although this is a departure from the writings of Harris and Glissant, as well as creolization theory more generally, Attridge’s study details the generation of original, singular forms, and, in doing so, sheds light on the processes of relation and cross-cultural exchange that both writers celebrate.

Attridge’s project in *The Singularity of Literature* is to establish a framework for understanding literary production as a translation of previous texts that, nevertheless, results in an original work of literature. What is significant for creolization theory is that Attridge distinguishes between a relation that produces a sum of its parts, and one that exceeds current expectations to generate what Glissant designates as a “new and original dimension” (*Poetics* 34). Describing the shifts in structural relations that effect artistic production, Attridge writes:

[t]he creative writer registers, whether consciously or unconsciously, both the possibilities offered by the accepted forms and materials of the time, and their impossibilities, the exclusions and prohibitions that have sustained but also limited them. Out of the former emerge reworkings of existing modes, out of the latter emerges the otherness which makes these reworkings new works of literature (20-1).

Originality, or what Attridge terms singularity, in this case, does not mean that the object bears no relation to existing forms; nor is it the case that reworking existing models produces only a sum of its parts.<sup>3</sup> Rather, something happens when existing forms are brought into relation with “otherness”, at which point the new work becomes singular as it exceeds the possibilities offered by current models.<sup>4</sup> This, I suggest, is fundamental to any understanding of the concept of creolization.

The terminology that Attridge employs in his study may certainly evoke postcolonial debates and, in particular, notions of colonial otherness; however, Attridge’s reference to “the other” has a wider significance. The other in this model is understood as that which exceeds the known discourse of a particular society; it is the unknown, or unconscious that, when accessed, fuels the creation of new works of literature:

[t]he otherness that is brought into being by an act of inventive writing therefore [...] is not just a matter of perceptible difference. It implies a wholly new existent that cannot be apprehended by the old modes of understanding, and could not have been predicted by means of them; its singularity, even if it is produced by nothing more than a slight recasting of the familiar and thus of the general, is irreducible (29).

What Attridge conceives of here is a complex and subtle shift in structural relations that generate the unpredictable, singular results that Glissant recognises as a hallmark of creolization. Although he does not use the

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<sup>3</sup> Attridge’s application of the term “singularity” stands in direct contrast to that of Peter Hallward in *Absolutely Postcolonial*, as Attridge notes (155). Crucially, while Hallward uses singularity to criticise Glissant’s theories of creolization and relation, arguing that his philosophical project leads to a radical despecification and deterritorialisation of postcolonial identities (66-79), Attridge’s definition of singularity retains the importance of specific and contextualised identities. As such, singularity “is generated not by a core of irreducible materiality or vein of sheer contingency”, as Hallward’s argument might suggest, “but by a configuration of general properties that, in constituting the entity (as it exists in a particular time and place), go beyond the possibilities pre-programmed by a culture’s norms” (Attridge 63).

<sup>4</sup> This particular relation between known and unknown as that which brings into being genuine originality shares much with the writings of Deleuze. In Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* what he terms the ‘third synthesis of time’ (111- 13) accounts for an engagement with the past that, nevertheless, effects a singular expression. Importantly, for Deleuze, singularity is effected through the actualisation or ‘differentiation’ (258) of the virtual aspect of the past. This Deleuzian ontology, in which reality is both virtual and actual, resounds with Glissant’s field of relation, Harris’ conceptualisation of the world as a dialogue between consciousness and the unconscious, and Attridge’s account of the known and other. In all cases, singularity emerges when that which was properly other or virtual becomes synthesised into the known or actual, transforming (creolizing) the status-quo of the actual in the process.

term itself, Attridge has cast the creative writer as part of the process of creolization, working with “the possibilities offered by the accepted forms and materials of the time, and their impossibilities” (20-1). His argument follows that the singularity of literature is an effect of the writer’s ability to re-evaluate and refigure the discourse of a culture while at the same time seeking out “gaps in the material, strains and tensions [in the cultural field] that suggest the pressure of the other, of the hitherto unthinkable, of that which is necessarily excluded” (36). It is this access to the other, the excluded, that allows the resulting work of literature to “go beyond the possibilities pre-programmed by a culture’s norms” (63): singularity is a product of the relation between the known and the absolutely other that exceeds it.

Key to understanding the significance of Attridge’s argument here lies in his reworking of Foucault’s account of the archive in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. As Foucault writes:

[t]he description of the archive deploys its possibilities (and the mastery of its possibilities) on the basis of the very discourses that have just ceased to be ours; its threshold of existence is established by the break that separates us from what we can no longer say, and from what falls outside our discursive practice [. . .]. It causes the other and the outside to burst forth (cited in Rajchman 91).

The archive, then, is to be understood as the equivalent of Attridge’s “known”, and is characterised by Foucault as a set of governing rules, rather than a repository of texts, that allow the subject to discern whether or not what is said “make[s] sense” relative to “a whole set of relations that are peculiar to [one’s particular] discursive level” (Foucault 97). In turn, this relative process of “making sense” finds a correlation in Attridge’s later account of the way in which the creative writer identifies the possibilities and impossibilities of contemporary discourse. What Attridge’s writer is registering in this case is both the archive and the unknowable otherness that exceeds it. Crucially, by this account, neither the archive nor the other is absolute, but relational, determined by the ever-changing threshold between the known and “what falls outside our discursive practice”. This is why singularity is always only ever singular to a specific context: original statements are original to a particular cultural archive because it is new in terms of the discourses already available to that culture. In the same way, the other is always other-to (bursts forth from) a known archive constituted in a specific context, at a specific time, and with its own specific history. Moreover, it is this moment in which the otherness that was previously “outside our discursive practices” becomes incorporated into the known archive that Attridge identifies as the necessary shift in structural relations that brings singularity into being. In other words, what guarantees the production of singular forms (original statements that “go beyond the possibilities pre-programmed by a culture’s norms” [Attridge 63]), is the relation between the discursive potential of the archive and the other. As a result, it follows that singularity is only ever recognised as a momentary phenomenon: a

bursting forth of the other that brings newness into the world as it simultaneously becomes part of the archive of the known and, therefore, no longer other.

Attridge presents the other as that which exceeds current possibilities and, like Foucault, he characterises this otherness as mutable, relational and essential to the production of singularity. Furthermore, it is because this conceptualisation of the other provides a framework for the emergence of original, singular forms that Attridge can characterise this process as a key function in the production of literature. Where the other or outside is not brought into relation, the subsequent text will merely be a reworking of already existent texts, a sum of its parts. On the other hand, where the other is part of the project a new, singular formation results. It is this process that fulfils Glissant's claim that what marks creolization is not intermixing *per se*, but the generation of originality. Creolization must effect newness, therefore what defines both creolization and original works of literature is their singularity. Importantly, this model is based not on the opposition of self and other-as-person, but the known boundaries of a culture's discourse and the unknown. This is an elaboration of Glissant's philosophy, for in *Poetics of Relation* the interrelations that are presented are between various identities and articulations (what he refers to as *échos-monde* [93-5]), or between the self and the opacity of the other-person. However, although Glissant stops short of elaborating his theory of creolization's unpredictability, the specific polarization of known and unknown that Attridge identifies as essential to the production of singularity does emerge in the writings of Wilson Harris, in particular, through the revisionary, imaginative capacity he celebrates, and the ceaseless relation between the conscious and the unconscious that underlies his fiction.

Harris' presentation of the three stages of alchemy is an important introduction to the particular relation of known and other that guarantees singularity. He describes the process in the following terms: "nigredo or blackness—sometimes called *massa confusa* or unknown territory"; then "*albedo* or whiteness" which signifies "inner perspective or illumination"; and "third *cauda pavonis* or the colours of the peacock, which may be equated with all the variable possibilities or colours of fulfilment we can never totally realize" (*Selected Essays* 169). Encompassing all colours and their possible variations, the colours of the peacock can be read as an opacity, a configuration that is never realized or static.<sup>5</sup> Further, for Harris, alchemy provides a metaphor for creolization in that it points to a continual "dialogue with otherness" that "has its 'immeasurable point' in acceptance of the mystery of grace ceaselessly *within* yet ceaselessly *without* human and natural endeavours" (*Womb* 72). By referencing grace as the "immeasurable point" of the alchemical cycle, Harris identifies a concept that is absolutely other, unknowable, but which may be associated

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<sup>5</sup> This reference to peacock colours clearly points toward Harris' first novel *Palace of the Peacock* (1960).

with the peculiar creativity of creolization. Alchemy, then, points towards the relation of otherness and realised forms that is essential to the process of creolization, while the never-fully-realized peacock colours signify the opacity of relational subject position, what Glissant would term *échos-monde*. Furthermore, this discussion of alchemy highlights the influence of Jung, whose theorization of the alchemical process Harris acknowledges, and it is by way of a more detailed appreciation of Harris' appropriation of Jungian theory that further light may be shed on the dialogue with otherness and the unconscious that Harris understands as essential to the revisionary cycle he finds in alchemy and the human imagination.

Creolization, insofar as it produces a new state through relation, is akin to the alchemical process in which the movement towards unity-in-diversity (peacock colours) is driven by the dialogue between the material object and the unquantifiable element of grace. It is this pairing of consciousness and the unconscious, in particular, that takes centre stage in the novels of Harris as he considers the generation, or alchemization even, of new imaginative forms. Yet, whereas these singular results of the imagination, according to the framework of creolization I have set out, represent a break from the known cultural archive, it does not follow that creolization is in itself a process of fragmentation. Rather, Harris' discussion of alchemy and the unconscious signal his concern to understand the "dialogue with otherness" as movement towards unity or wholeness. This much is evident in Jung's writings, as Mackey explains: "Jung, to whose writings on alchemy Harris has repeatedly alluded and referred, writes of 'the indescribable and indeterminable nature of this wholeness', explaining that 'wholeness consists partly of the conscious man and partly of the unconscious man. But we cannot define the latter or indicate his boundaries'" (176). The unrealisable nature of wholeness or totality is made necessary by the relative nature of the other or unconscious: just as the archive and the otherness that exceeds it form an unrealisable totality of known discourse and unknown other—which we cannot define or indicate the boundaries of, but which is determined by its relation to the ever-changing limits of the known—so the unconscious is both by definition unknowable and constituted via its relation to consciousness. This qualification is crucial to the theoretical project that both Harris and Glissant pursue, as for both writers totality or wholeness signifies a degree of creolization that exists when all cultures recognise themselves as partial and composite, but references to such concepts should not be read as an admission of some final state of completion. Glissant makes this clear in his discussion of totality in *Poetics of Relation*, acknowledging that while the risk inherent in his term is that it is "in danger of immobility" (171), of reaching a stage at which point further creolizations are redundant, relation, Glissant's privileged term, denotes an unceasing, incomplete and "open totality" (171). Again, the logic of Foucault's archive points the way to this conclusion: because the archive is always the archive of the known to a specific context, the other which



exceeds it will always burst forth anew in relation to the changing threshold of the known. In other words, there is no point at which the relation between archive and other ceases as all that was other becomes incorporated into the known. As a result, the potential for singularity is never exhausted, and it is in this sense that Harris' unfinished genesis of the imagination is understood and begins to reveal its significance for creolization theory.<sup>6</sup>

For both Harris and Glissant, totality is not the transcendence of differences between beings, but a scale of creolization at which point it is no longer possible to individuate fixed and essentialised identities. Instead, only their relationality, the ever-changing pattern or peacock colours that together all beings form, may be appreciated. Harris' most significant contribution to relation theory lies in his amplification of the role of the imagination and the unconscious in the functioning of creolization. Like Attridge's singular art work, for Harris the human imagination produces wholly new configurations, new ways of thinking, only when brought into relation with the other: "the ceaseless dialogue it inserts between hardened conventions and eclipsed or half-eclipsed otherness, within an intuitive self that moves endlessly into flexible patterns, arcs or bridges of community" (Harris, *Womb* xviii). In other words, whereas Glissant's theoretical expositions outline a theory of relation and creolization that extends throughout the totality without hierarchy, Harris exceeds this, accounting for the shifting structural relations that generate singularity by exposing the potential for the continual genesis of the imagination and original creolizations within a "ceaseless dialogue" with opaque, unknowable otherness.

The novels of Wilson Harris offer a further example of the way in which this relation with otherness informs creolization and the production of original imaginative forms. Moreover, Attridge's dividing line between the limits of cultural discourse and that which exceeds it is suggestive of what Uwe Schäfer has identified in both the writings of Glissant and Harris: Jung's notion of the collective unconscious (65-7). In the hands of Harris, it is the collective unconscious that designates the unrealised otherness from which new imaginative forms are stimulated, and the remainder of this essay will trace the development of this aspect of Harris' novels. The particular relation between Harris and Jung is significant for it gives a clear precedent to Harris' characterisation of the relation between the unconscious and consciousness, the unknown or other and the known archive that, I have argued, is essential for the articulation of a coherent theory of creolization as the generation of singular forms, but which is unaccounted for in the writings of Glissant. Although Harris' engagement with Jung is suggested by his discussions of alchemy, archetypes and the

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<sup>6</sup> The unfinished genesis of the imagination refers to the revisionary, imaginative capacity Harris celebrates, and the ceaseless creative relation between consciousness and the unconscious, known and absolutely other, that underlies his fiction (see *Selected Essays* 248-60).

collective unconscious, the relationship between the two is not exactly one of direct influence: as Harris argues, “Jung never influenced me, but I had a dialogue with him. I came to him rather late and I had been involved in these things myself, but I was alone to a large extent. I had no one to turn to, and when I came to Jung and read what he had to say about the collective unconscious, it sustained and supported me” (Riach and Williams 62). Harris’ identification of the collective unconscious as an important element in his work helps refine his application of a further concept: the Void. Viewing these as relative terms, however, is to adopt a slightly different approach to that offered, for example, by Paget Henry in *Caliban’s Reason* (2000), which represents the most comprehensive account of Harris’ ontology. Henry characterises the Void as a reaction of the consciousness, a voiding of the ego that effects “a deintentionalized state” (98) in which the ego is unable to exist. Combining both the Heideggerian authentic existence and Jaspers’ account of the subject’s response to an extreme situation, Henry argues that, in Harris’ philosophy, “[a]uthenticity requires the recognition of voidings and the decision to live out of them and the vulnerabilities they create” (101). However, Henry’s focus offers little sense of the profound creativity that Harris finds in the Void, and which creolization as a dialogue between unknown and unknown effects.

Rather than seeing it as a reactive response by consciousness, as an action, I want to suggest that the Void is best understood as a noun, hence the capitalisation. In the same way that the creative writer is faced with a relation with otherness in the production of singularity, the Void represents this always present, unknowable state that lies outside cultural discourse and is available to consciousness as a source of originality. This particular reading of the Void may be identified in Harris’ novel, *Jonestown*, his fictional account of the mass suicide of over nine hundred members of the People’s Temple cult in Guyana on the eighteenth of November 1978. This novel offers an example of the paradoxical creativity and regenerative potential of the Void, and, further, brings into focus two aspects of Jungian philosophy central to Harris’ writings and the model of creolization that they promote: the collective unconscious and the archetype.

*Jonestown* is presented as the first hand account of Francisco Bone, the sole survivor of the tragedy and the fictional author of the text. Explaining the impulse behind the writing of this “long fragmented archetypal narrative” (197) Bone claims:

Jonestown had left me stunned but I needed to revisit the scene and the entire environment [. . .] in which it had occurred to learn of the foundations of doomed colonies, cities, villages, settlements, ancient and modern, by retracing my steps, by accepting my wounds and lameness and the speed of light with which one travels back into the past from bleak futures (170).

Both Harris and Bone approach the Jonestown tragedy not as a unique historical event, but as a sign of the tyranny of absolute authority that has

echoes in colonial oppression, World War Two, and contemporary conflicts in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Ethiopia; and a utopianism that recalls El Dorado, Atlantis, or Ancient Rome. In this way, the tragedy is cast as an archetype for violence and absolutism, in the broad usage of the term adopted by Northrop Frye, and the impulse to revisit the historical moment is a desire to understand the function of that archetype to gain a sense of the relationality, or “epic net”, that links together these experiences (*Jonestown* 186).<sup>7</sup>

To a certain extent, there is common ground between Frye’s concept of the archetype and that of Jung: both suggest that the defining characteristic of the archetype is its commonality to all humanity. However, while Frye argues that the universality of literary archetypes is an effect of education and global media (99)—a view that Frantz Fanon also takes when he refers to the role of the collective unconscious in shaping black consciousness as other—for Jung the recognition of archetypes is not an effect of conscious training.<sup>8</sup> Rather, they are unconscious, common images that are always already latent in the psyche. As Jung writes,

there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconsciousness does not develop individually, but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents (43).

Jung’s contention that not only is the archetype a component of a universal, innate collective structure, but that it “can only become conscious secondarily” is of fundamental importance to Harris’ poetics. Although Jung provides examples of frequent archetypes, such as the Mother, or the Trickster, these distinct forms are recognisable only because of their commonness to everyday life. At first, they, like all archetypes, are present in the psyche as “forms without content” and only assume a specific shape once activated in response to a situation (48). Archetypes, then, are not strictly speaking definite representations or forms, for, as Jung argues, the term “applies only indirectly to the ‘représentations collectives’, since it designates only those psychic contents which have not yet been submitted to conscious elaboration” (5). Thus, the collective unconscious and the archetypes that constitute it

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<sup>7</sup> In his important study of recurring literary archetypes, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye argues that archetypes are recognisable symbols that “unify and integrate our literary experience” (99).

<sup>8</sup> Fanon argues that “[t]he collective unconscious is not dependent on cerebral heredity; it is the result of what I shall call the unreflected imposition of a culture” (189). Wole Soyinka has also commented on Jung’s use of the collective unconscious and archetypes, which he compares to African mythical thinking. For Soyinka, the problem lies in Jung’s distinction between the primitive and civilized mentality: “Jung differentiates the nature of the archetype in the ‘primitive’ mind from that of the ‘civilized’ mind even as he pays lip service to the universality of a collective unconscious, and to the archetype as the inhabitant of that hinterland” (35).

always lie outside of recognisable cultural discourse. Furthermore, the process by which the archetype is incorporated into consciousness denotes a transformation that agrees with the model of creolization theory I have outlined: as Jung argues, “[t]he archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (5). In other words, as the archetype moves from unconsciousness into consciousness, otherness into the known, its content is altered in relation to the specific context in which it is realised: essentially the function of creolization.

In *Jonestown*, Harris’ references to archetypes are fundamentally of the Jungian type. Bone’s description of himself as belonging to “peoples of the Void,” (7) incorporates the singular otherness of the collective unconsciousness (Void) of which he is a part, while his need to revisit past events from the future “in order to bridge chasms in historical memory” (5) is a sign of the potential to relate recurring archetypes to one another. However, the novel suggests that archetypes have become so thoroughly assimilated into consciousness and appear in such specified forms as seemingly unique historical events that they are no longer recognised as archetypes of the collective unconsciousness. This is why it is Bone’s task to expose Jonah Jones (the fictionalised Jim Jones, leader of the People’s Temple) as an archetype of violence and absolutism, not as the instigator of a one-off event, exclusive to a specific time and place. As Bone writes in his letter to W.H. in the novel’s opening: “Keys to the Void of civilization are realized not by escapism from dire inheritances [. . .] but by immersion in the terrifying legacies of the past and the wholly unexpected insights into shared fates and freedoms such legacies may offer” (8). The Void is not accessed through the evacuation (voiding) of consciousness, but rather revisiting historical suffering is a form of relation with the unknown that seeks to address those traumas not only for the individual self, but also for the collective. It is in this sense that Bone claims “one is a multitude” (5). Yet, while the Void may be allied with Jung’s collective unconscious in *Jonestown*, its creative potential is not fully articulated, although it is assumed by the novel’s suggestion that access to it is part of the process of recovery for Bone: a partial omission that is addressed in Harris’ most recent novels *The Ghost of Memory* and *The Mask of the Beggar*.

A novel that Harris claims to be his last, *The Ghost of Memory* is, in many ways, a continuation of themes explored in *The Mask of the Beggar*, which directly preceded it: both novels are concerned with the source of art and originality, and explore this through a dialogue with living paintings. *The Mask of the Beggar*, as Harris’ preface informs the reader, assumes its title from the disguise Odysseus adopts on his return to Ithaca in Homer’s *Odyssey*. But it is also based on a number of converging childhood experiences: when Harris was eight his stepfather disappeared in the Guyanese interior, at which time, Harris recalls, “I saw a beggar on a street corner, with holes in his face. I came home and couldn’t eat—I

never forgot that man” (Jaggi paragraph 10). These events coincided with Harris’ introduction to the *Odyssey*, and, as a result, the missing father, Georgetown beggar and Odysseus became imaginatively related in Harris’ memory: “across half-a-century and more [. . .]. The fabric of his face [the Georgetown beggar’s] upon a floating tide of sorrow is stitched into Homer’s beggar within a tapestry of gestating vision” (Maes-Jelinek 46). The Homeric beggar is thus suggested as an archetype that is revived in the context of Harris’ childhood and the novel itself. Yet, as Jung has suggested, this archetype is not a stable form, but rather relational or context-specific, and, accordingly, in *The Mask of the Beggar* the disguise, Harris explains, “is changed, however, into a holed or fissured face in which Chinese, Indian, African and European immigrants may be invoked” (vii). In this way the archetypal beggar is available to all of Guyana’s peoples.

The function of archetypes in *The Mask of the Beggar* assumes a specific role, and relates to the novel’s discourse on originality in art. Set in the year 2000, the novel witnesses a conversation between a mother, who has died in 1952, and her son, the novel’s protagonist and the artist who has painted her in the present. In the course of their dialogue, the protagonist addresses his mother to reveal the following sequence of thoughts:

“[t]hink of yourself,” he said at last, “arriving as a piece of sculpture in this planetary or solar system. Do you really appreciate how novel you are? It’s an original occasion [. . .]. *You are an innovation*. I may call you *Mother* but you are a new work of art. Where do you come from to attain such newness? You hint, let us say, at a timeless space beyond yourself, *beyond me* who has made you” (76-7).

This questioning of the source of originality reveals a process of translation in which previous forms combine and are revised in the production of original works of art: as the mother claims, her son “hears the real and subtle ‘voices’ of sculptures and paintings [. . .] and translates them into words” (8). In the former extract, while the mother corresponds to the protagonist’s dead mother, it is not her life or appearance that are being translated into a work of art by her son. Rather, originality is drawn from a singular “beyond”, and it is the mother archetype that is being revised anew in relation to the both the artist’s and mother’s memories.

The novel’s enquiry into originality and art is grounded in a dialogue not only between “painter and painted, writer and written” (39) but also between works of art that “cross a chasm, of which we need to learn, that lies outside of frames of culture” (11). Thus the relation that is envisioned is between the self and otherness, or Void, that “lies outside frames of culture”, or, in other words, “the creative and re-creative, unfinished play of the unconscious in the mystery of consciousness” (124). This is the clearest affirmation of the Void not as the evacuation of consciousness, but as the ungraspable presence of the unconscious. The conversation between artist and artwork, then, reveals itself as a partial model of the singularizing relation between consciousness and the collective

unconscious that expresses itself in the continual renewal, or creolization, of archetypes. Harris revisits this process once more in his latest novel, *The Ghost of Memory*, in order to return to the regenerative potential of the unconscious, and in doing so, departs from the Jungian model of the collective unconscious and fully realises his notion of the “celestial unconscious” (*Ghost* 100).

*The Ghost of Memory* explores what Harris refers to as the “almost indefinable cross-culturalities between moments of life and death” (vii), through a narrative that traces the journey of a man, shot in the back as a suspected terrorist, who falls into a painting. While Harris’ readers might speculate on the possibility that his “South American, Venezuelan/ Brazilian” protagonist, killed by armed police in an undisclosed, major Western city (89), references the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes in London in 2005, the text remains ambivalent about its context, marking a clear distinction from the historicity of *Jonestown*. In any case, Harris does clearly stress his protagonist’s archetypal significance, claiming, “[t]his man is not to be taken seriously. He is a dream-animal who dies and lives in the dreams of Mankind at the edges of consciousness and unconsciousness” (vii): an inhabitant of the Void in both Harris’ sense and Alain Badiou’s.<sup>9</sup> Indeed this immediate indebtedness to Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious and its archetypes is clearly acknowledged in the author’s preface, in which Harris argues that the dream-like staging of the relation between life and death in his novel might be conceived of as an investigation into the hidden resources of the unconscious: “we may seek to unearth the buried dream. Such an opening of the unconscious brings cultures from a collective (as C. G. Jung might well have put it) of which we had little or no idea that we knew. There are surprises in store for those of us who venture into a new consciousness of life through the unconscious” (vii). As with *Jonestown*, the archetypal significance of the event or character is emphasised in order to view the act of violence in the relational web of human history, and to seek in the unconscious, or otherness, a singularity to inspire new and surprising imaginative forms.

Establishing a link with *The Mask of the Beggar*, *The Ghost of Memory* interrogates artistic representations as signs of the collective unconscious. After the protagonist is shot, he falls into a painting and emerges in an art gallery, where he is confronted by Christopher Columbus, who is, himself, the embodiment of an archetypal absolutist point of view. Viewing Giacometti’s sculpture, *Standing Woman*, the

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<sup>9</sup> As Hallward writes, for Badiou “[p]eople who inhabit the edge of a situation’s void are people who have nothing which entitles them to belong in the situation” (*Badiou* 9). Harris’ narrator quite literally has no place in the world because he is dead. Furthermore, there is much to suggest a correlation between Badiou’s theorisation of the void and Harrisian creolization theory. To a certain extent, both Harris and Badiou view the void as a component of a situation, and both acknowledge that it plays a role in the production of original formations. In Badiou’s terminology, the void of a situation makes possible an event, and it is only the event that signifies the production of a genuinely original form that could not have been predicted by the status quo (*Badiou* 114).

narrator sees in it figures of South and Central America—an observation to which Columbus replies:

“Myth and nonsense,” he shouted. “Who would believe a primitive relic in the hands of ancient Arawaks—who look like felled, walking trees—is in any way akin to the important work of a twentieth-century sculptor? Do you really believe this—that Giacometti was influenced . . . ?”

[. . .]

“I never said that he was influenced . . . But I felt that there was a resemblance of line. That is all. A curious resemblance that tells us of distances was have travelled in one shape or another to reach where we are. Those distances are there in a twentieth-century sculptor who is sensitive to material form as never absolute [. . .]” (25).

Columbus represents the absolutist point of view that refuses to recognise that commonalities between cultures signify more than the influence of past traditions or artistic forms. For the protagonist, on the other hand, such commonalities do not imply “a broken-ness of self, encompassing two selves half-forgetful one of the other”, but, rather, allow him to envision “a new creativity [that] may bring them into profound dialogue” (57). By rejecting the creativity, the “genesis of the imagination”, that lies in the dialogue between already realised archetypes and the unconscious/ Void, Columbus stands in opposition to the novel’s central precepts: that “[c]onsciousness and the unconscious reshape themselves endlessly into a play or plays, into a myth or myths” (77); and that “‘We’ and ‘one’ were linked in all men and women though few were aware of this subtle linkage” (87). The conversations held between the protagonist and Columbus illustrate the impossibility of a creative dialogue with the individual who refuses to accept the partiality of social and cultural forms. Columbus’ belief in the absolutes of good and evil, the divine right of one true Church and religion, and his complete dismissal of archetypal resemblances between Giacommetti’s work and the ancient Arawak sculptures, mean that he cannot accept the challenge of the cross-cultural painting of which the protagonist is a part, and ultimately he destroys the painting he condemns as heretical.

The discussion staged between the protagonist and Columbus is echoed in the dialogue of two further spectators in the gallery: Andy and George. While the protagonist and Columbus are endowed with archetypal significance, Andy and George are “real life” figures on whom the novel focuses in order to chart their response to the creative challenge of the artwork:

George hesitated. Then he looked up at Andy and replied. “I said I saw the Beggar in a new way. I mean the man who was shot and who fell into the painting. By “new way” I mean he cannot be captured or seized. That’s part of what I mean. He has to be reinvented every century, every generation. His *essence* is beyond us. That’s what the painting is saying. One may see, rarely perhaps, an *imprint* that compels us to create, to reinterpret. That *imprint* is available to all” (71).

Art is revealed as the central ground of the genesis of the imagination, for it is in the creative work that archetypes emerge as continually revised

forms, imprints of the collective unconscious that can never be grasped, but which is the basis for creolization.

George experiences a more profound realisation in the closing pages of the novel as he is left reeling by Columbus' outburst of violence and destruction of the painting. Alone with the shreds of canvas, George looks out into the constellations of the night sky and recognises one as the Wanderer of the painting:

a skeleton of lights. It may have been there a million and more years before Man had appeared on planet Earth. How could it be anything one now knew? One could clothe it with the garments of myth and legend but these were illusions, they were ruins in which one placed the origins of Art.

George was suddenly empowered by the distant spectrum in the sky. He had wandered the Earth for many years. He was a minimal wanderer who could become a major Wanderer following a skeleton of hazy lights he could not identify.

[. . .] Whatever it was, it would help him to bring the tattered and bereft figures lying on the floor back into a painting.

He had been empowered to do so by the celestial unconscious. It is real and unreal, and it inspires us to make of illusion a shape which represents an eternity of riddles, a shape brooding upon ruin and unknown fulfilment and origin (100).

The novel thus closes with this reaching beyond art towards the source of inspiration identified as the celestial unconscious. This suggests a spiritual underpinning to Harris' work that resounds with his usage of grace and alchemy—as Frye argues, constellations and the stars often function as apocalyptic archetypes or images of heaven (145). However, this is in no way a sign of ultimate faith in doctrinal religions, which is Columbus' conviction in the novel. Rather, the celestial or heaven is, the protagonist argues,

a medium [. . .] which we cannot easily dispense with. It has been there from the beginning of times. The world remains trapped in such simplicities [. . .]. I would say therefore that heaven is in Nature, a Nature of complex and difficult balances between all things, all peoples, all creatures, lands and waters balances through which we may *learn*—with an open mind—to break through in small degrees—however miniscule—the involuntary prisons in which we imprison ourselves (91).

In this final moment Harris clearly reveals his affinities with a Spinozist single-substance conception of Nature as the immanent creative force and the structure of created things: God or Nature as “*natura naturans* and *natura naturata*” (Spinoza 57-8). Indeed it is Spinoza's philosophy of immanence that underlies Harris' concept of Nature as a singularizing creative force that mediates between all things. For Harris, importantly, it is because of the immanent characteristic of Nature that all creatures are *also* creative: the unfinished genesis of the imagination is not limited to an unknowable creator but, as the closing sequence of *The Ghost of Memory* testifies, empowers all. What the collective unconscious fails to offer Harris is a universal structure that brings into relation not only all of mankind, but, making the link with Spinoza and, importantly, Glissant, all things within the totality both known and unknown. As the protagonist



argues, “[w]e are related to every creature in the tree of life and death” (34). The celestial and Nature refer to this whole-world relating of partial forms that leads to the break away from the absolute values (prisons) on which reified and separate cultures or religions are founded.

In this latest, and perhaps final, addition to Harris’ oeuvre, the celestial unconscious replaces the Jungian inspired collective unconscious that appears in such novels as *Jonestown* and *The Mask of the Beggar*. However, it continues to serve a similar purpose. George’s sense of the Wanderer as an archetypal imprint inspires him to create: to “bring the tattered and bereft figures lying on the floor back into a painting” (100). It remains the case, then, that the artistic imagination is empowered by the endless relation between consciousness and the celestial unconscious that links all things. Yet this relation, the continual reinscription or creolization of archetypes, is not an evolution towards an eventual realization of the celestial. Rather, it is “an eternity of riddles” (100), a never-finished play of relation between consciousness and the absolute otherness of the collective/celestial unconscious that finds expression in ever changing archetypes.

Creoleness, Harris’ term for creolization, is inherently bound to his sense of the collective/celestial unconscious and the relation between all things. As he argues: “creoleness made me aware of the complex labyrinth of the family of humankind into which I was born” (“Creoleness” 24). This form of creoleness is distinct from that employed by the authors of the *créolité* movement, in particular Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant, for whom it signifies the attainment of a definitively creole identity, and points, instead, towards a field of relation characteristic of Glissant’s poetics, in which identities are understood through “*their relation to everything possible as well – the mutual mutations generated by this interplay of relations*” (*Poetics* 89). Moreover, the essentially unceasing, never complete, state of creoleness that Harris envisions agrees with Glissantian creolization insofar as it signifies a continuing and unceasing process—creolization—as opposed to an achieved state—creoleness. Given this distinction between the noun and verb form, I would argue that creolization more accurately denotes the world of cross-cultural interrelations that Harris envisions. Accordingly, much lies in common between Harris’ creoleness and Glissant’s theory of creolization, both of which offer a model for the original production of new forms and identities through a dialogue with the current and specific realities of a culture and the absolute unknown that lies outside of it. What Harris contributes to this poetics is a greater sense of what this otherness designates: a celestial unconscious that confirms the relational totality Glissant assumes and the production of originality that creolization demands.

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