



Angles

New Perspectives on the Anglophone World

6 | 2018

Experimental Art

“Many Rivers to Cross:” Orphic Confluences of Fred D’Aguiar’s *Children of Paradise* and Wilson Harris’ *Palace of the Peacock*

Léo Courbot



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/angles/1089>

DOI: 10.4000/angles.1089

ISSN: 2274-2042

Publisher

Société des Anglicistes de l’Enseignement Supérieur

Electronic reference

Léo Courbot, « “Many Rivers to Cross:” Orphic Confluences of Fred D’Aguiar’s *Children of Paradise* and Wilson Harris’ *Palace of the Peacock* », *Angles* [Online], 6 | 2018, Online since 01 April 2018, connection on 28 July 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/angles/1089> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/angles.1089>

This text was automatically generated on 28 July 2020.



Angles. New Perspectives on the Anglophone World is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

"Many Rivers to Cross:" Orphic Confluences of Fred D'Aguiar's *Children of Paradise* and Wilson Harris' *Palace of the Peacock*

Léo Courbot

- 1 In his famous essay "The Withdrawal of Metaphor," Jacques Derrida explains that no discourse can avoid using metaphors, because the metaphorical always returns as it recedes, "like a wave on the shoreline" (1978: 66). As a consequence, and as Derrida repeats in *Monolingualism of the Other*, no one ever fully masters a language, no matter how fluently one speaks, because the literal, or escape from the metaphorical, is never fully achievable (1996: 44). Language is under the influence of metaphor, it is affluent with metaphor, and metaphor itself consists in the confluence of a syntagm with an unusual paradigm. The word *fluency* (and its linguistic derivations) is itself imbued with metaphorical signification as soon as it is used to describe linguistic abilities, since its primary meaning, as etymology shows, designates what is fluvial, flows and watery fluxes. Revealingly, *fluency* and, by extension, its derivatives, can simultaneously designate a confluence between a watery pattern and a linguistic phenomenon: the flowing together of two rivers and the weaving together of a metaphor may each instance confluence, while each being related to the other also through the word *confluence*. But if the flowing together of two rivers springing from different *topoi*, themselves potentially populated with different cultural groups, is translatable into metaphorical confluence, it is likely that topographical confluence will lead to topological manifestations of the cross-cultural: fluid *topos* and fluent *tropos*, tropics and tropes can intertwine into what I tentatively call, elsewhere, a *tropicality*.¹
- 2 Despite the numerous possibilities that fluency-related metaphors may offer for the study of the cross-cultural, thinkers and artists focusing on this question tend to do so through the lenses of unpredictable determinism, rhizomatic sea routes, or hybridity, rather than through a language derived from fluvial topography. One may think of

Antonio Benitez-Rojo's fractal model of the repeating island to discuss Caribbean culture, or of Édouard Glissant's notions of *échos-monde* and *chaos-monde*. As for oceanic principles, Edward Brathwaite's notion of tidal dialectics aims at a metaphorical understanding of (Caribbean) island populations, while Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic designates African-diaspora populations living on both sides of what once was the Middle Passage, confirming Derek Walcott's idea that "the sea is history" (Walcott 1986: 364-6). Lastly, Patrick Chamoiseau's notion of creoleness and Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity focus more exclusively on language as a cultural vehicle. Chroniclers of the cross-cultural thus rarely openly deal with the fluvial in relation to fluency and confluence, which may seem strange,² considering that many cities around the world owe their cosmopolitanism, at least in part, to their having been founded on riverbanks and seashores, navigable waterways via which, among other things, foreigners could come.

- 3 In the Caribbean, two exceptions come to mind: Wilson Harris and Fred D'Aguiar, both of anglophone, Guyanese upbringing. Guyana, meaning "land of many waters" in the language of the Caribs (D'Aguiar 2003), owes its name to the dense fluvial network of its interior, a gigantic tropical rainforest. It is not too surprising for these writers to belong to the small number of cross-cultural intellectuals whose attention is drawn by fluency. Despite or thanks to the generational gap that separates them — Harris' career started in the late 1950s, while D'Aguiar's took off in the mid 1980s — the two authors are friends, and D'Aguiar does not hide the influence Harris has had over him. Although he renounced writing a doctoral thesis on the works of Wilson Harris when he started being a successful poet, Fred D'Aguiar, in articles such as "Prosimetrum" (2009a) or "Wilson Harris, the Writer as Surveyor" (Misrahi-Barak & Joseph-Vilain 2012), reflects on how Wilson Harris' poetics of time and space was derived from his exploration of the Guyanese interior, and of soundings of its rivers, in novels such as *Palace of the Peacock* and *The Four Banks of the River of Space*. It is also important to mention that Fred D'Aguiar has dedicated a series and a collection of poems to Wilson Harris: "Frail Deposits" (D'Aguiar 1993: 35-8) and *Continental Shelf* (2009), and acknowledged Harris' work as a major source of inspiration for his latest novel, *Children of Paradise*, the plot of which gives crucial importance, like Harris' *Palace of the Peacock*, to a Guyanese river, while dealing with the 1978 Jonestown massacre (D'Aguiar 2014: 363), a theme that Harris himself explored, in 1996, in a novel entitled, precisely, *Jonestown*.³
- 4 In other words, on top of these writers' friendship, the influence of Harris over D'Aguiar also leads one to reflect upon confluence as intertextuality, especially since Harris' interest in Guyanese rivers finds its counterpart in three out of the seven novels by D'Aguiar: *Children of Paradise* (2014), *Bloodlines* (2000) and, to a lesser extent, *Feeding the Ghosts* (1998), the plots of which give crucial importance to rivers and waterways, and where the main characters, in a genealogical confluence of sorts, are all orphans with more or less supernatural qualities indicative of another intertextual link with the Orphic and the myth of Orpheus — sailing on the rivers of the underworld to bring Euridyce back to life — as a potential point of confluence for these three novels. By Orphic, I mean all the features that are constitutive of and related to the myth of Orpheus, such as (magical) music or art, enchanted or enchanting nature, the underworld, resurrection, and ghostliness. It is through a sounding of such Orphic features in the fluxes of Harris' *Palace of the Peacock* and D'Aguiar's *Children of Paradise*

that this article is to explore the network of cross-cultural, intertextual, and metaphorical confluences that operate on, in, and between their works.⁴

I. *Palace of the Peacock*

- 5 Wilson Harris' fiction presents such Orphic characteristics critics generally tend to deal with it in terms of magic(al) realism (Bowers 60; Zamora & Faris 167, 258, 371), a literary genre in which magic elements are presented as an integral part of reality, a narrative trend the diverse theories of which are generally elaborated from Franz Roh's discussion, in 1925, of post-expressionist painting (Zamora & Faris 15-31), and/or from Alejo Carpentier's description of the baroque, marvellous reality the author attributes to Latin American landscapes in the essays "On the Marvelous Real in America" (1949) and "The Baroque and the Marvelous Real" (1975) (Zamora & Faris 75-88, 89-108). As Harris himself oxymoronically suggests, if magical realism is an "innovative tradition that has become fashionable," it was "scarcely articulated or considered in 1960" (Harris 2010) when he published *Palace of the Peacock*, his first and most famous novel. Harris strongly insists, in an interview with Fred D'Aguiar, on the more crucial importance of "myth" over magic in his novels and in general, as "a term we have undervalued" (D'Aguiar 2003). In a later essay, D'Aguiar also brings to the fore the "myth-making imperative" of Harris' work (Misrahi-Barak & Joseph-Vilain 29-44). In this respect, Jeanne Delbaere-Garant wrote an essay, "with a view to making the concept a little less confused and certainly more teachable" (Zamora & Faris 249), proposing to split what is called "magic(al) realism" into more specific categories, such as "mythic realism," which she associates with Harris (255, 258), and where "magic' images are borrowed from the physical environment itself, instead of being projected from the characters' psyches" (253). Hence, rather than reading through the lens of magic(al) realism, one might gain from studying Harris in mythological terms and in relation to the "physical environment," or landscape, particularly given that Harris experienced the epiphany that led him to become a writer as a land surveyor, as D'Aguiar explains:

Traditional biographical data about Harris tell us he was born in New Amsterdam in 1921, trained in Georgetown as a surveyor, and from the late 1930s took part in, then led, expeditions into the interior of Guyana, to survey rivers and the areas around them. Armed with theodolite, pen, and notepad, the rational surveyor encountered a dense rainforest interior which belied the measurements and readings of his rational instruments and sequentially trained mind. What he discovered on these trips forced him to search for a method to match his encounters with sudden rainfall juxtaposed with blinding sunshine, river depths of such marked difference in such close proximity that he doubted his instruments, local Amerindian tribes who historicised the place in purely mythical terms, and, ultimately, a landscape imbued with qualities of a powerful character and God or gods, able to mould perception and resist categorisation.

Harris's language altered as a result. Landscape became instructive not simply in terms outlined by the Romantics, whose great legacy remains that landscape is a thing we can benefit from by knowing about, a cathedral of sorts for spiritual renewal. But for Harris that landscape enacts perception, governs it, steers it into new mental terrain. This transformative aspect of landscape was bound to alter Harris's language, since the way he talked about place had to be part and parcel of his discoveries about the power of Guyana's rainforest interior. When allied with time, this sensory reception of a place turned out to be a literary practice, a theory

about fiction, an account of the intuitive imagination, and therefore a new type of fiction. (D'Aguiar 2009a)

- 6 This passage gains from being cited at length because, on top of showing D'Aguiar's admiration for Harris, it concisely provides important information about Harris' relation to such things as Guyanese nature, romanticism, Carib mythology, and scientific survey, that are all part and parcel of the author's works. While the description of Harris' puzzlement in the Guyanese interior is evocative of what Carpentier perceived as the natural, marvellous reality of the American continent, it is also related, by D'Aguiar, to the Romantics' mystification of nature as a "cathedral of sorts," such as can be found in Wordsworth, to whom we shall return. Such links perceived between *lo real maravilloso*, romanticism and indigenous South-American mythology in relation to Harris' astonishment in front of the many rivers and lush vegetation of the Guyanese interior point to a "cross-culturality" the expression of which Harris defines as a "task [he] could not evade" (D'Aguiar 2003) in his writings.
- 7 One way for Wilson Harris to achieve such a task is to rely on the Carib myth of the bone flute or spirit-bone. More specifically, when he was sounding rivers of the Guyanese interior, Harris perceived a rhythm, a "word-less music" in the landscape and in its waterfalls which, according to his 1988 preface to *Palace of the Peacock*, he could transcribe thanks to the bone-flute as a trope he deems "pertinent to the entire body of fiction [he has] written" (Harris 2010: 8). D'Aguiar explains the myth as follows:

The bone of the enemy is hollowed by the Carib into a flute and tunes played on that flute in order to learn the strategies of the enemy. This war ritual involves consuming a morsel of flesh of the enemy as a similar act of habitation, of becoming the enemy in order to better understand him/her. If a conflict might seek such resolution, by crossing over to the other side, might it not be applicable to an outlook mired in partiality and badly in need of additional viewpoints? This is Wilson Harris' big claim and one on which he staked his approach to fiction writing [...]. (Misrahi-Barak & Joseph Villain 36)
- 8 Hence, the music of Guyanese rivers has a rhythm that Harris can perceive and transcribe through the indigenous bone flute, the playing of which constitutes a threshold through which one may access the Other's knowledge. Such access to Otherness allows for a cross-cultural syncretism that differentiates the bone-flute from the romantics' Eolian harp, while both instruments are in tune with nature. One must not forget, however, that the Other, from whom knowledge is acquired, is dead, and his/her flesh is consumed. This, on top of being reminiscent of the 1920s Brazilian art movement of *Antropofagia* that "took cannibalism as a metaphor for the process of cultural assimilation" to respond to euro-centrism and Western imperialism (Bastos 102), is evocative of the power of partial resurrection that the bone flute is endowed with: in other words, marvellous nature, music, and resurrection are all related through the bone flute, just as if it were played by Orpheus, who moves nature and the underworld with his lyre, to bring his defunct lover back to life. This allows for the designation of Harris' prose as Orphic, as can be seen in novels such as *Palace of the Peacock*.
- 9 *Palace of the Peacock* takes place in the Guyanese interior. Its main character, Donne, a planter and the homonym of the famous Renaissance poet, embarks on a journey upriver to retrieve his native workers who have fled his plantation because he has mistreated them. When he and his crew, "made up of diverse races and mixtures" and historical characters (Benitez-Rojo 188), reach the village where they believe the

workers to be, the villagers take flight on canoes as soon as they see them, because Donne and his crew, we learn, are actually supposed to have died during a similar expedition in the past.⁵ The crewmen embark on a seven-day journey to their second death, which Donne and surviving crew members experience while ascending a ladder of rocks, beside a gigantic waterfall, to the *Palace of the Peacock* — a place Antonio Benitez-Rojo reads, like Gareth Griffiths, as El Dorado (Benitez-Rojo 189; Griffiths in Lewis: 83). The characters finally gain spiritual rebirth there, confirming to readers that the journey was a “psychic” expedition as well (Benitez-Rojo 190), an Orphic rite of passage. — The ascension of the waterfall to a palace where “the light’s rays decompose” (188) is comparable to the “Orphic doctrine” which, Douglas J. Stewart explains, “included a belief in the ‘pillar of light,’ a metaphorical description of the progressive stages of enlightenment through which the faithful initiate could pass — and that this was symbolized in the ritual by climbing a ladder” (Stewart 258).¹

10 In *Palace of the Peacock*, Dreamer, the I-narrator and Donne’s brother, has the frequent impression of seeing through Donne’s eyes as much as through his own, as if he had blown into a bone flute carved out of his dead brother’s skeleton: “And we looked through the window of the room together as though through his dead seeing material eye, rather than through my living closed spiritual eye” (Harris 2010: 20). Hence, in the novel, a cross-cultural, creolized and meta-fictional crew goes on a journey upriver for seven days, a duration reminiscent of the Biblical myth of Genesis. This quest leads to (metaphorical) resurrection or regeneration rather than to Donne’s retrieval of his workers. The story is told by Dreamer, who has gained, in the novel’s opening scene, bone-flute-like access to his (br)other’s senses. Marvellous reality, river navigation, bone flute, and resurrection or regeneration through a rite of passage involving the ascension of a ladder-like waterfall all are features of the plot that contribute to the Orphism of Harris’ prose.⁶ These features from *Palace of the Peacock* are also elements that D’Aguiar alludes to in his latest novel, *Children of Paradise*.

11 Before turning to D’Aguiar’s novel, it is worthwhile returning to a potential link between Harris’ prose and romantic poetry. Intertextual echoes can be perceived between *Palace of the Peacock* and poems by Coleridge and Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads*, namely, “The Foster-Mother’s Tale” and “Tintern Abbey,” poems related, at some point, to sailing and to rivers. In “Tintern Abbey,” a poetic persona — the poet here, as confirmed by Wordsworth’s address to his sister in the second half of the poem — relates his thoughts on his *revisiting* the banks of the river Wye, in England. Wordsworth can hear a waterfall in the distance, just as he did when he was wildly roaming the area as a younger man, and he compares his memory of the place to the way he perceives it on this second visit. When Wordsworth was younger, “The sounding cataract / Haunted [him] like a passion” (Wordsworth & Coleridge 158). However, as an older man “with an eye made quiet by the power / Of Harmony, and the deep power of joy, [he sees] into the life of things” (157). Wordsworth privileges the latest mode of perception over his bewilderment as a younger man: the “sounding cataract” is an apt play on words, since it designates the tumult of a waterfall as much as a sight impairment — which, paradoxically, usually develops in old age. One may translate these lines as Wordsworth’s way of explaining that, during his youth, his overwhelming, passionate response to landscape altered his vision, whereas on his second visit, to use the words of his friend Coleridge, he is an older and “a wiser man” (78) who, having calmed down and tampered his passion, has a “quiet eye” that allows him to “see into the life of things” and, possibly, their rejuvenating power. Now, just as

Wordsworth revisits Tintern Abbey, Donne, in Harris' novel, returns to the Palace of the Peacock, and both Palace and Abbey are located near a waterfall. Nature, be it the Guyanese interior or the British countryside, seems to be privileged over, respectively, a local village the crew passes by to reach the waterfall in the Palace of the Peacock, and a religious temple in "Tintern Abbey." Lastly, in *Palace of the Peacock*, Harris privileges a mode of vision over another, just as Wordsworth does in "Tintern Abbey," between a "dead seeing material eye" and a "living closed spiritual eye," as shown in the above-cited passage (Harris 2010: 20). As Fred D'Aguiar explains in relation to a quote from Harris' *The Four Banks of the River of Space*, the

privileged bird's-eye view, which sees the invisible natural currents of the ebb and flow of tides relates to the closed (dreaming) and seeing eye of the narrator in Harris's first novel *Palace of the Peacock* (1960). The continental map shrinks to a view of earth as if from outer space as that imaginative eye soars (Misrahi-Barak & Joseph-Vilain 157)

- 12 The privileging of a "living closed spiritual eye" over a "dead seeing material eye" would then amount to supporting an unconscious and imaginative, or dream-like response to one's sensory reception of landscape, more than a conscious, more objective and down-to-earth vision, in the same way as Wordsworth would favour emotion "recollected in a state of tranquility" (Wordsworth & Coleridge 307) rather than a fit of passion. The "state of tranquility" may be equated with REM sleep, with the dreams that Harris evokes through the trope of the "closed spiritual eye" that looks inward. Through this intertextual bond between Wordsworth and Harris, one may perceive Harris' indebtedness to romanticism, and witness time and space being compressed, the Wye forming a confluence with the Cuyuni river, as well as the Palace and the Abbey being syncretized into a scene one could picture through a quiet, dreaming eye.⁷Tintern Abbey is relatively absent from the poem as a religious temple, inviting readers to identify nature as if it were a church, in the same way as Coleridge's "The Foster-Mother's Tale" invites readers to compare trees to the pillars of a cathedral.⁸ On the stump of one of these trees, an orphan child is said to have been found and, when he grew up, readers learn, he "went on ship-board / With those bold voyagers, who made *discovery / Of golden Lands*" (81, emphasis mine), in the same way as Donne, in *Palace of the Peacock*, decides to sail to the Guyanese interior, ultimately to find the Palace of the Peacock and/or the gold city of *El Dorado* (Benitez-Rojo 189; Lewis 83). Harris might then have chosen to call his main character "Donne" because, on top of his historical homonym's being contemporaneous to the time of great Western expeditions to the "new world," the fictionalised character's pastoral quest for El Dorado as an American utopia, an Acadia of sorts, corresponds to the Classical thrust of Renaissance artistry to which the actual Donne belonged: Harris even relates El Dorado and Donne through a portmanteau word, "EldoraDonne" (Harris 2010: 11) in the novel's preface.⁹ However, this classical contiguity is evoked only to be cast aside, since reaching El Dorado leads the fictional Donne through a spiritual process of resurrection that appears both to fictionalise Harris' own epiphanic experience in Guyana's rainforest and to shift from a classical quest to a more romantic approach. In this sense, the trajectories of Wordsworth's romantic verse and Harris' prose form yet another transcontinental confluence where nature, with its forests and waterfalls, forms a fountain of youth, "a cathedral of sorts for spiritual renewal" (D'Aguiar 2009a) and artistic reinvention.

II. *Children of Paradise*

- 13 The romantic idea of nature as "a cathedral of sorts" (D'Aguiar 2009a) is also close at hand in Fred D'Aguiar's latest novel, *Children of Paradise*, since it tells the true, tragic story of the Jonestown massacre, the ultimate consequence of Jim Jones' decision to relocate his religious commune from urban United States into the Guyanese interior, a move that is reminiscent of the church that replaces the forest in "The Foster Mother's Tale" (Wordsworth & Coleridge 79). However, in the novel, the relocated commune pollutes the river adjacent to its site with waste and chemicals from its pigsty¹⁰ that prevent the indigenous-Indian population from a downstream village to fish and bathe there: "The indigenous tribes who depend on the river cannot ignore the commune's pollution. Fish are dying; the water irritates the eyes and causes rashes on the skin of the children who bathe in it at the wrong time; it stains clothes yellow and orange; and at different times of the day, the water stinks like a pigsty" (D'Aguiar 2014: 272). Such a down-to-earth, eco-critical dimension, represented by the man-made confluence of a natural river and an abject stream of toxic waste, subverts the idyllic, pastoral setting of the action and any potential progression to a sense of romantic harmony with a wilderness that, however, D'Aguiar describes in the same terms as he describes Harris' expeditions to the Guyanese rainforest in the aforementioned passage from "Prosimetrum" where D'Aguiar states that

What [Harris] discovered on these trips forced him to search for a method to match his encounters with *sudden rainfall juxtaposed with blinding sunshine*, river depths of such marked difference in such close proximity that he doubted his instruments, local Amerindian tribes who *historicised the place in purely mythical terms* [...] (D'Aguiar 2009a, my emphasis)

- 14 This statement concerning Harris is paraphrased, in *Children of Paradise*, as follows:

If the commune located *beyond the reach of history* sought to *give history the slip* and start from scratch, there could be *no better setting than a realm where myth rules* the order of night and day. In a place where trees big and plentiful create their own rain cloud and downpour and *it is possible to walk in a stride through a wall of rain into a bright room of sunlight* (D'Aguiar 2014: 119, my emphasis)

- 15 In addition to this re-presentation of the marvellous reality of the Guyanese interior, the presence of an indigenous village on the riverbank in *Children of Paradise* is reminiscent of the Arawak village Donne and his crew sail by in Harris' first novel. D'Aguiar actually often refers to *Palace of the Peacock* in *Children of Paradise*, and more often than not in Orphic ways, as suggested by the myth-inspiring setting of both the novel and Harris' expeditions, and confirmed by other features of D'Aguiar's prose that we shall now study.
- 16 *Children of Paradise* strikingly rewrites some scenes and re-activates tropes and themes from Harris' prose: it uses the same forest as that of Harris' surveys and the location of *Palace of the Peacock*; it deals with the 1978 Jonestown massacre as in Harris' *Jonestown* (1996) — also mentioned in a long meditative poem D'Aguiar published in 1998 entitled *Bill of Rights* —; and it mentions the bone flute. The bone flute or spirit-bone is interesting in an Orphic perspective since, just as the myth of Orpheus, it conjures up the themes of music and magical resurrection and, thus, creates a cross-cultural confluence between South-American and European mythologies.¹¹ Fred D'Aguiar first uses the bone-flute image in a series of poems entitled "Frail Deposits," to tell Wilson Harris that "The flute [he's] trying to blow a tune on / belongs to [Harris]" (*British*

Subjects 36), thus positing Harris' work as an influence. In *Children of Paradise*, the bone-flute seems to re-appear when Pastor Jim Jones offers a flute to the novel's main character, a young girl named Trina, after she has performed her false death and resurrection under the orders of Jones who, thanks to the trick, strengthens his authority over the commune members who believe he has achieved a miracle (D'Aguiar 2014: 21, 68-72).¹² In this sense, Jones stands as an Orpheus of sorts, bringing Trina, a young Euridyce, back to life. Harris had also mythologized Jim Jones in *Jonestown* by representing him as a Jonah who was "disgorged by the whale to launch a miniature atomic bomb in the rainforest desert of Jonestown" (Harris 1996: 23). Jonah's being swallowed and thrown up by a whale itself is another resurrection metaphor and, in Harris' *Jonestown*, the whale's being white (87) also evokes intertextually Melville's *Moby Dick*. More importantly, when Harris compares Jim Jones to Jonah through the nickname "Jonah Jones of the Whale" (166, 167), he suggests that, as a pastor preaching suicide, Jones, like Jonah, betrays his disciples and their God.

- 17 Yet, it is actually Trina, with her flute, who appears to be the most Orphic of characters in D'Aguiar's novel. She improvises music with her flute in a romantic way, as if it were an Eolian harp, an instrument played by the wind: "Trina makes up a tune that comes from listening to the wind in the trees and then the rain made by the trees and the arrival of sunshine through that rain" (D'Aguiar 2014: 97). The (religious) music she plays, along with the commune's school band, has an impact on nature: "The music teacher calls out the hymn for the class to begin, and the instruments chime in synchrony. The entire forest of wildlife draws nearer and grows quite still. Some of the birds join in with their own musical improvisations. Trina takes the lead with a flute solo" (108). Interestingly enough, nature's responsiveness to music is also a feature that is added by Wordsworth to Virgil's original version of the myth of Orpheus in the English poet's 1788 attempt at translating the Roman poet's *Georgics* (Wordsworth 1788: 646, l. 49a-49c). In other words, the power of Trina's flute could be informed by a romantic treatment of Orphism. Moreover, Trina's instrument, being a flute out of which she draws music inspired by the wind, could function as a Carib Eolian Harp and/or as a romantic bone-flute of sorts (it was offered to her after her mock-resurrection), thus constituting a tropicality, that is, a metaphorical and cross-cultural confluence which, apart from being endowed with Orphic power, is to play an important role in the unfolding of *Children of Paradise*. It serves in one of Trina's attempts at having the commune's children follow her and escape by taking a riverboat at the commune's pier, one of many incentives to try to flee from the hell the commune has become, as Jones schedules suicide drills for the camp's members, who are soon to be made to kill themselves by drinking Kool-Aid mixed with cyanide, as their historical counterparts (D'Aguiar 2014: 357-62; Naipaul 132-5). Escaping from the commune on a river thanks to music is also evocative of the myth of Orpheus, all the more so when one realises that Trina's attempts at escape fail, one time because of her *turning back*.
- 18 Before getting to the failed escapes proper, attention must be paid to the boat that allows for such attempts, because it is reminiscent of the boat used by the cross-cultural crew of *Palace of the Peacock*, because this boat, in *Children of Paradise*, epitomises the cross-cultural. For instance, Trina and her mother, Joyce, are often asked to run — money-laundering — errands for Jones and the commune by sailing up-and downriver, to and from the capital, Georgetown, on Captain Aubrey's boat. That a character called Joyce sailing on a river to a capital is evocative of an intertextual and cross-tropical allusion to her homonym, the Irish modernist, and his "Ulysses on the

Liffey," as D'Aguiar puts it (D'Aguiar 1991: 235), making a Guyanese river virtually flow with the Liffey for a second in the reader's mind. The conversations that Joyce has with Aubrey on board the ship often deal with such mixed genealogies. When Aubrey inquires about Joyce's ethnicity, "She says she has yet to meet someone who is not tainted with some mixture or other. Her father came from Spain to Florida on business and met her mother, a Micosukee, in an illegal casino at West Palm beach" (D'Aguiar 2014: 56). Later in the discussion, the captain

wonders if she feels an affinity to nature. He says everyone knows that the tribes in this forest have lived there for thousands of years without interfering with the place, while the Europeans with their enslaved Africans and indentured Indians from South Asia ruined the place in just four hundred years. Right on cue, a barge floats by with a red flag warning them that logs would follow [...] (56)

- 19 Here, Aubrey historicises his eco-criticism by relating deforestation, represented by a multitude of floating logs, to the history of colonisation and the African slave trade, at the end of which indentured servants from the Asian subcontinent were brought to the Caribbean to replace and/or work alongside freed slaves. The captain conjures up a picture of the cosmopolitanism resulting from this process, as in today's Guyanese population, made up of people of European, African, Asian, and indigenous descent, and of all possible genealogical blends deriving from these groups. Conversely, in *Palace of the Peacock*, the boat's crew is made up of Renaissance poet John Donne, of Schomburgk, a man of German-Arawak lineage whose name is reminiscent of the Schomburgk¹³ brothers who explored the Guyanese interior (Benitez-Rojo 188), of an Arawak woman, and of the Portuguese DaSilva twins. As Benitez-Rojo argues, "There is also mention of the subsequent arrival of the Africans, and of the Asian Indians and of the Portuguese, as consequences of the plantation economy" (188). Benitez-Rojo proceeds by saying that "the men who make up the boat's crew, whose blood is profusely mixed, represent, along with the aged Arawak woman (The Great Arawak Mother), Guyanese society as it now exists" (188-9). Harris confirmed this statement in an interview with D'Aguiar, as the names of the crewmen, in his novel, are given to "plumb an illustration of the cross-cultural figuration the entire party implicitly maintain[s]" (D'Aguiar 2003). Hence, the riverboats of both *Children of Paradise* and *Palace of the Peacock* constitute metaphorical vessels of cross-cultural confluence. The intertextuality of such confluence in *Children of Paradise* is openly emphasised when Joyce and Trina, who start planning their escape, try to find a code name for Aubrey. Trina conjures all the famous historical and literary captains: "Hook. Ahab. Kirk. Drake. Blackbeard. Raleigh. Morgan. Cook. Silver. Bligh. Columbus. Cabral. Vasco da Gama" (D'Aguiar 2014: 252).
- 20 The cross-cultural qualities of the ship can also be read as Orphic in passages when Aubrey's first mate makes implicit and ironic commentaries upon what is happening on board by whistling famous *songs* from both sides of the Atlantic. For instance, when the boat leaves the commune, the first mate whistles Peter, Paul and Mary's "Leaving on a Jet Plane." When they drop Joyce at the Pier, he comes up with the soul of Otis Redding's "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay." Finally, when the commune guards become stand-offish with Aubrey following orders from Jones who has learned that Joyce has befriended someone outside the commune, his first mate covers the Beatles' "Let it Be" (215-217). When Jones actually manages to get the Guyanese authorities to prevent Aubrey from sailing to the commune, Aubrey buys a false license, repaints his boat, and renames it with a musically evocative name: "Many Waters," which "immediately gets nicknamed *Muddy Waters*, not after the American bluesman but due to the nation's

seawater" (267). Even the narrator has to clarify the name because of the musician it may bring to mind, and s/he does so by relating the boat to Guyanese features: Guyana means "Many Waters" in the Carib idiom, and muddy waters border the country's shores. The sense of an Orphic relationship between music and land nevertheless persists, all the more so since the phrase "Many Waters" is also evocative of Jamaican singer Jimmy Cliff's "Many Rivers to Cross," to which D'Aguiar alludes linked to Guyana's many waters in *Bill of Rights*, his poem on Jonestown: "Many rivers to cross but I quibble / Over names: the Courentyne, Essequibo, / Potaro, Mazaruni, Demerara ..." (D'Aguiar 1998: 57).

- 21 Before things fully go wrong at the commune, during one of their trips up and down the river, Aubrey and Joyce who, as readers implicitly understand, progressively fall in love as the novel unfolds, climb their way up a waterfall: "She watches him, his legs, his back, his arms and shoulders, to keep from craning at the height of the *cataract*. At the top of the ledge, he holds out his hand and helps her up beside him, and they step through the falling water and end up behind it and simultaneously move into a *cave* — just air and mist [...]" (D'Aguiar 2014, 156, emphasis mine). For D'Aguiar to specify that the atmosphere of the cave, because of the waterfall, amounts to "just air and mist," to a "river somehow lifted into space" (279), is more ingenious than ingenuous, since "air and mist" are the main components, in *Palace of the Peacock*, of the waterfall Donne climbs after "the river, which is horizontal, alters to a vertical waterfall — the same river but plunging free of the strictures of its banks and depths and rising as *voluminous mist*," in D'Aguiar's words (D'Aguiar 2012: 37, my emphasis). As Donne ascends the marvellous waterfall, he can see a carpenter working in a "room" that is "as old as a *cave* and as new as a study" (Harris 2010: 103, italics mine). In other words, the misty *cave* that Joyce and Aubrey reach after climbing the waterfall conveys an additional sense of the intertextuality that operates between *Children of Paradise* and Harris' novel, and of the crucial importance both novels attribute to nature as a place requiring consideration. Another loaded signifier in the above-mentioned passage from D'Aguiar's novel is, of course, "cataract," which designates the waterfall as Joyce tries to *look away* from it so as not to be frightened by the height at which she has climbed. In fact, as argued above, the polysemous quality of the word "cataract" helped helps? Wordsworth, in "Tintern Abbey," to contrast the dissipated gaze characterising his wanderings as a young man in the vicinity of a waterfall with the calm, river-like "quiet eye" that designates the mode of perception by means of which he, as an older, initiated man, allows nature to sink in (Wordsworth & Coleridge 157-8). In this sense, Joyce's decision to divert her eyes from the waterfall may amount to choosing a better mode of sensory perception within a natural framework. If so, her decision to fix her gaze on Aubrey's muscular body, being suggestive of the proximity of erotic phantasy, may correspond to her diving inward into desire and imagination, to a figurative plunge sparked by the actual, phenomenal spring she cannot look at anymore. Such a correlation of a Wordsworth-like interplay with nature and an inward-looking, "dreaming eye," appears to fuse, as in *Palace of the Peacock*, a romantic conception of sensory perception with Harris' Orphic response to the marvellous Guyanese interior (Stewart 258).
- 22 In spite of its being located in such a marvellous rainforest, the commune becomes so hellish that Joyce and Trina progressively come to plan their escape. Their scheme always involves Aubrey's ship which, before being renamed "Many Waters," is called the *Coffee*, after "an eighteenth-century enslaved African who ran away from his

plantation and led a slave rebellion. He lived in the interior and evaded capture," Aubrey explains to Joyce, who reacts by saying: "Sounds like my kind of guy" (D'Aguiar 2014: 54). Knowing the ship's name refers to marooning, and hearing Joyce's equivocal statement on board, alluding both to her having been deserted by her husband (57) and to the "escapist" pleasure she feels sailing with Aubrey, "Coffee" could be read as a proleptic sign of Joyce, Aubrey and Trina's plotting for evasion later in the novel. Onomastically, "Trina" is also paronomastically close to "tryin'a," slang for "trying to," which is evocative of the main character's three failed attempts at escape (305-7, 329, 344-5).

23 After having chosen to work at the pigsty, the part of the commune that is closest to the river, and after having let the pigs loose as a sign to let Aubrey, who stopped at the jetty, know that they want to escape (275-6), Joyce and Trina indeed try and fail thrice to run away from the commune. While their first escape is thwarted by the commune's pet gorilla — in actual history, a "chimpanzee (or some other kind of primate)" rescued from mistreatment in a Californian circus and brought to Guyana (Naipaul 65) — the second one is ruined by Trina, who makes the last minute decision to turn back to get the other children from the commune and the gorilla, as she says she dreamed it as the only way to make it. Trina then "breaks from her mother's embrace, runs to starboard, and leaps into the water and disappears" (D'Aguiar 2014: 329) until she is saved from drowning by the first mate, who hands her to Aubrey, who finally "pulls Trina out of the river" (330). That Trina sacrifices her second chance by diving into the water to fetch the other children is reminiscent of Christian self-sacrifice as much as of Orpheus' plunge into the underworld,¹⁴ while her being brought back from below the surface by Aubrey and his first mate makes an Orphic pair out of the crewmen. On the other hand, Trina's decision which preferred her dream vision to reason might once again correspond to an evocation of the privilege given to imagination over reason in D'Aguiar's works (D'Aguiar 1995: 26; 1998: 41) and in Harris' *Palace of the Peacock*. Trina's third and final attempt at escape also fails, although it corresponds to the way she had almost prophetically dreamed it, because the captain arrives too late to rescue the children. The mission resembles pandemonium at the end of the novel, when Jones harasses his followers over the commune loudspeakers, pretending their haven is under attack, and forcing them through multiple suicide drills. As a consequence, Trina takes advantage of the atmosphere and organises a parade of which the leader and dressed-up king is the commune gorilla, while she dictates the pace at which the parade should progress by playing her flute, like a "Pied Piper" (345).¹⁵ Hence, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin in the folktale, another intertextual reference in D'Aguiar's novel, Trina's music *almost* has the power of leading the children away from the hell the commune has become, in the same way as Orpheus' musical skills *almost* allow him to bring Euridyce back from the underworld. Such (Orphic,) tragic irony, and the horror of the suicide scene, are, however, partly alleviated by an imaginative ending where the children (on their way to Paradise?) sail on captain Aubrey's boat until they all "shape-shift and escape," as in an Ovidian metamorphosis, to a place where light is summoned to splinter (D'Aguiar 2014: 362), as in the "rainbow's spectrum," the "place where the colors' identities are generated as the light's rays decompose," in other words, the *Palace of the Peacock* (Benitez-Rojo 188).

24 Thus, the romantic and Orphic ways in which Wilson Harris responded, in life and in fiction, to the marvellous reality of the Guyanese landscape, find their counterpart in Fred D'Aguiar's latest novel, drawing a network of cross-cultural, intertextual, and

metaphorical confluences between *Palace of the Peacock* and *Children of Paradise*, as a reflection of the confluences one might perceive in Guyana's many rivers. For in these novels, it is along rivers and near, or even in waterfalls that intertextual confluences between the myth of Orpheus, Wordsworth, Harris and D'Aguiar have been found, suggesting that romanticism and magic(al) realism might consist in analogous translations of a common, Orphic perception of the environment. For instance, waterfalls in *Palace of the Peacock* and *Children of Paradise* are reminiscent of the cataract one finds above Tintern Abbey, at least insofar as they are related to binary modes of perception — dream state and waking life — analogous to those defined by Wordsworth through the tropes of the "quiet eye" and "sounding cataract" (Wordsworth & Coleridge 157-8). These "eyes," as tropes for various artistic ways of seeing, point to metaphorical confluence in turn, the most striking example of which, in the above-studied novels, appears to be the myth of the Carib bone-flute as an instrument that is made to function like the Eolian harp of European romantics, and played with Orphic effects, maybe somewhere below El Dorado and above Tintern Abbey, a cross-cultural trope that is evocative of the transatlantic and cross-cultural confluences that may operate between Ovid, Wordsworth, Harris and D'Aguiar who, as artists, may themselves be viewed as Orphic figures of sorts. The Orphic subtext seems to condition, to some extent, D'Aguiar's vision of his work, when he claims, in an interview, that his writings are "out of [his] hands" (Frias 2002: 423) as soon as they are published. In other words, D'Aguiar appears to mean that once his works are made available for the public, he relents his power over his texts and what they may become in the hands of critics and readers in general, in the same way as Orpheus loosens his grip on his lover's ghost. In this sense, one may suggest that his ideas appear to form a final, ideological confluence with Maurice Blanchot's reading of the myth of Orpheus as an allegory of the artist's yielding his or her work, freeing it from his or her grasp (Blanchot 175), and into our world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Anchor Books, 1959.
- Bastos, Flavia M. C. "'Tupy or Not Tupy?'" Examining Hybridity in Contemporary Brazilian Art." *Studies in Art Education* 47.2 (2006): 102-117.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio, and James E. Maraniss. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. (1992). 2nd ed. Durham, N.C: Duke UP, 1996.
- Bernabé, Jean, Raphaël Confiant, and Patrick Chamoiseau. *Éloge de La Créolité/In Praise of Creoleness*. Trans. M. B. Taleb-Khyar. Bilingue. Paris: Gallimard, 1993.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. (1994). London; New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Blanchot, Maurice. "Orpheus' Gaze." *The Space of Literature*. Trans. Ann Smock. London: U. of Nebraska P., 1982. 171-177.

- Bowers, Maggie Ann. *Magic(al) Realism*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. (1899). Ed. Paul B. Armstrong. 4th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2006.
- Courbot, Leo. "Tropicalité: Métaphoricité Littérale et Échange Interculturel." *Revue de l'Université de Moncton* 47.1 (2016): 83-99. *Sémiotique du Texte Francophone Migrant: Traversées etLangages*.
- D'Aguiar, Fred. *Children of Paradise*. First edition. New York: Harper, 2014.
- D'Aguiar, Fred. *Continental Shelf*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2009.
- D'Aguiar, Fred. "Prosimetrum." *The Caribbean Review of Books* (2009a). <http://caribbeanreviewofbooks.com/crb-archive/19-february-2009/prosimetrum/>
- D'Aguiar, Fred. "Wilson Harris by Fred D'Aguiar." *BOMB Magazine* 82 (2003). <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/wilson-harris/>
- D'Aguiar, Fred. *Bloodlines*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2000.
- D'Aguiar, Fred. *Bill of Rights*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1998.
- D'Aguiar, Fred. *Feeding the Ghosts*. London: Vintage, 1998.
- D'Aguiar, Fred. *British Subjects*. Newcastle upon Tyne; Chester Springs, PA: Bloodaxe Books; U.S. Distributor, Dufour Editions, 1993.
- D'Aguiar, Fred. "A Jamaican Airman Foresees His Death." *Black Plays*: 3. Methuen, 1991.
- D'Aguiar, Fred. *Mama Dot*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1985.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre, ou, la Prothèse d'Origine*. Paris: Galilée, 1996.
- Derrida, Jacques. "The Retrait of Metaphor." *Psyche: Invention of the Other*. Vol. 1. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1978. 48-80.
- Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy." *New Literary History* 6.1 (1974): 5-74.
- Frias, Maria. "'Building Bridges Back to the Past': An Interview with Fred D'Aguiar." *Callaloo* 25.2 (2002): 418-25.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1993.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. (1990). Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan P., 1997.
- Gros Louis, Kenneth R. R. "Robert Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice and the Orpheus Traditions of the Middle Ages." *Speculum* 41.4 (1966): 643-55.
- Gros Louis, Kenneth R. R. "The Triumph and Death of Orpheus in the English Renaissance." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 9.1 (1969): 63-80.
- Harris, Wilson. *Jonestown*. (1996). London: Faber Finds, 2011.
- Harris, Wilson. *Palace of the Peacock*. (1962). London: Faber Finds, 2010.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Lewis, Krishna Ray. "The Infinite Rehearsal and Pastoral Revision." *Callaloo* 18.1 (1995): 83-92.
- Misrahi-Barak, Judith, Ed. *Revisiting Slave Narratives: Les Avatars contemporains des récits d'esclaves*. Vol. 1. Montpellier: PULM, 2005.

- Misrahi-Barak, Judith; and Joseph-Vilain, Mélanie, Eds. *Another Life/Une Autre Vie*. PocoPages. Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2012.
- Naipaul, Shiva. *Journey to Nowhere: A New World Tragedy*. New York, N.Y: Penguin, 1982.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Sir Samuel Garth, John Dryden, and et al. N.p., 1812. <http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.html>
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Anthony S Kline. N.p., 2000. <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Ovhome.htm>
- Thieme, John. *Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon*. London ; New York: Continuum, 2001.
- Walcott, Derek. "The Sea Is History." *Collected Poems: 1948-1984*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986. 364–6.
- Wordsworth, William, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads*. (1801). London ; New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Zamora, Lois Parkinson, and Wendy B. Faris, eds. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham, N.C: Duke UP, 1995.

NOTES

1. For an in-depth exploration and definition of the word "tropicality" and what I suggest it may designate, see Courbot (2016). This article is a thoroughly revised and extended version of a presentation I gave at the SAES conference in Lyons on June 4th 2016, the theme of which was "Confluences".
2. This is actually only partly strange, because it is often the Atlantic, an ocean, that many of these thinkers perceive as the main point of confluence, because of its relation to colonisation, and to the triangular trade that took place between the Americas, Africa, and Europe.
3. In an article entitled "How Wilson Harris's Intuitive Approach to Writing Fiction Applies to Writing Novels about Slavery," D'Aguiar openly confirms that Harris' "texts supply [him] with an intuitive approach to history, myth, landscape and to the writing of fiction" (D'Aguiar in Misrahi Barak 2005).
4. Doing this does not translate any intention to posit Ovid, or Western mythology, as the single source, or origin, of the works in question, although it is clear that D'Aguiar is familiar with Ovid and Greek or Roman myths (D'Aguiar 1985: 1; 1993: 60-3; 1998: 73; 2009: 86-7). The word *Orphic* only serves the purpose of the present argument *insofar* as it conflates several features of Harris' and D'Aguiar's works, and may function, at times, as one of their intertexts. The description of both novels as Orphic does not necessarily always entail Harris' and D'Aguiar's indebtedness to European mythology for the writings in question. Rather, it is indicative of the fact that the mythological genealogies underlying every language cannot be circumvented, no matter how desirable it can appear to be (Derrida 1971: 11). One cannot use English, or French for that matter, and avoid using the word Orphic to designate what is Orphic – that is, subterranean, fluvial, musical, supernatural yet in communion with nature, elegiac or resurrectional, and prophetic – according to these languages and their accompanying Greek and Roman mythological backgrounds.
5. The present study will not provide any thorough discussion of the historical traits of *Palace of the Peacock*. However, readers interested in this subject may find Linda Hutcheon's concept of "historiographic metafiction," defined in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), useful as a means of interpreting this aspect of Harris' text.

6. John Thieme perceives this psychic journey upriver and the Donne/Dreamer pair of characters as grounds on which *Palace of the Peacock* can be perceived as a partial revision of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and its Marlowe/Kurtz couple. This, in turn, suggests yet another confluence between Harris' novel and Chinua Achebe's famous responses to Conrad in the novels *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart* (Thieme 27-37).
7. D'Aguiar also compares Harris' novel *The Mask of the Beggar* to Wordsworth's verse, more specifically, "The Prelude," as he argues that climactic moments of that novel — which also is one of Harris' rewritings of *Palace of the Peacock*, according to D'Aguiar — "bear similarity to Wordsworth's 'spots of time'" (D'Aguiar in Misrahi-Barak 2005). More than strengthening our point, this suggests that both D'Aguiar and Harris attentively read Wordsworth, whose poetic vision of nature, as argued here, is comparable to Harris' and D'Aguiar's magic(al) realist treatment of landscape.
8. As far as intertextuality with Coleridge is concerned, a scene from D'Aguiar's second novel, *Dear Future*, might be drawn from the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." In Coleridge's poem, an old sailor atones for having killed an albatross with a cross-bow by recounting his "sinful" gesture to those who will listen (Wordsworth & Coleridge 10-78). In *Dear Future*, when Red Head, an unbaptised child, dies and is subsequently sent to limbo, he shoots down a bird there with his slingshot, and has to pay for the deed by burying the weapon in the earth or, more precisely, in clay, which also conjures up the Old Testament story of the Creation of Man (D'Aguiar 1996: 187).
9. Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis explains that Donne lived at a pivotal moment in British renaissance — the end of the Elizabethan reign and the advent of Enlightenment philosophy — that also corresponded to a (related) shift in the ways literary treatments of the figure of Orpheus were oriented, since the character arguably went from being used as the epitome of the pastoral ideal and a utopian allegory of civilising force (tempering animal instincts with art) to standing for the melancholic persona *par excellence*, singing his sorrow even after his dismemberment, as if the death of Elizabeth spurred melancholy in the poets of her time as much as Eurydice's passing did in Orpheus (Gros Louis 1969: 70).
10. In its 1977 brochure, the commune in fact claimed possessing "130 pigs," a chickery, but did not mention dairy, although twenty-two bovine corpses were found after the massacre (Naipaul 128).
11. Again, Harris claims the bone-flute as relevant to all of his work (Harris 2010: 8). It is in fact present in *Jonestown* too (Harris 1996: 16, 156, 215), sometimes along with a character named Lazarus, a resurrectional figure of sorts (39-41). Moreover, according to the novel's opening, epistolary section, the novel is a "dream book" that was sent to "W. H." for edition by its author, whose pseudonym is Francisco Bone, who claims to be the only survivor of Jonestown.
12. Achieving false miracles really was one of Jim Jones' "specialties," and it played a significant role in establishing his reputation in the United States, before the Commune flew to its "agricultural mission" in Guyana (Naipaul 59-60).
13. The spelling of the historical name is apparently anglicised in Harris' novel.
14. Christ was actually already compared to, and sometimes named, Orpheus by early Christians (Gros Louis 1966: 644-5).
15. In *Bill of Rights*, D'Aguiar's book-length poem on Jonestown, the Carib bone-flute and the Pied Piper are related (1998: 59, 80).

ABSTRACTS

Seldom does criticism address cross-cultural issues in terms of confluence. In fact, scholars tend to use chaos theory (Glissant, Benitez-Rojo), oceanic tropes (Gilroy, Brathwaite), and linguistic foci (Chamoiseau, Bhabha) to deal with them. This is peculiar, first of all because many cities, on all continents, owe their cosmopolitanism to their having been founded on riverbanks and seashores. Moreover, the word fluency and its derivatives can metaphorically relate watery patterns and linguistic phenomena: metaphor itself can be described as the confluence of a syntagm with an unusual paradigm. As a consequence, if the flowing together of two rivers, springing from different topoi, potentially populated with different cultural groups, can be translated into metaphor, it is likely that topographical confluence lead to tropological manifestations of the cross-cultural: fluid *topos* and fluent *tropos*, tropics and tropes, would intertwine into what I tentatively call tropicality. However, although scholars in cross-cultural fields rarely address the fluvial theme, Caribbean novelists Wilson Harris and Fred D'Aguiar show, in their novels, an exceptional awareness of the poetic potential of looking at creolization through the lens of confluence, which is apt, knowing that both authors are of Guyanese upbringing, Guyana meaning "land of many waters" in the language of one of its indigenous tribes: it is in these fluvial waters that Harris, originally a land-surveyor, found his source of inspiration for novels that would, in the next generation of Guyanese authors, greatly influence Fred D'Aguiar. This suggests that in addition to metaphoricity and topography, intertextuality might be looked upon as a third type of confluence, and it is these three types of confluence that I propose to track in D'Aguiar's latest novel *Children of Paradise* (2014) and Wilson Harris' *Palace of the Peacock* (1962), paying particular attention to how both novels themselves gather into a confluence founded on romantic and Orphic subtexts that, in turn, suggest that romanticism and magic(al) realism might consist in analogous translations of a common, Orphic perception of the environment.

La critique aborde rarement les questions d'interculturalité en termes de confluence. En effet, les chercheurs ont tendance à recourir à la théorie du chaos (Glissant, Benitez-Rojo), aux tropes océaniques (Gilroy, Brathwaite) et aux phénomènes langagiers en tant que tels (Chamoiseau, Bhabha) pour parler de ces sujets. C'est en partie étrange, tout d'abord parce que nombre de villes, sur tous les continents, dérivent leur cosmopolitisme de leur fondation sur les rives de fleuves et les littoraux. Qui plus est, le suffixe *-fluence* et les mots formés à l'aide de celui-ci peuvent lier, de manière métaphorique, phénomènes fluviaux et structures linguistiques: la métaphore elle-même peut être décrite comme confluence d'un syntagme avec un paradigme inhabituel. Par conséquent, si la *confluence* de deux fleuves jaillissant de lieux distincts potentiellement peuplés par des groupes culturels différents peut être transformée en *métaphore*, alors il est probable que la confluence topographique ainsi traduite devienne une manifestation tropologique de l'interculturalité: *topos* fluvial et *tropos* langagier, les tropiques et les tropes, se mêleraient en ce que je propose d'appeler une *tropicalité*. Cependant, malgré le fait que la critique s'appuie rarement sur ces métaphores fluviales, les romanciers Wilson Harris et Fred D'Aguiar font preuve, dans leurs œuvres respectives, d'une exceptionnelle prise de conscience du potentiel poétique découlant d'une observation de la créolisation depuis l'angle de la confluence : il est intéressant, alors, de noter que les deux auteurs en question sont d'origine guyanaise, puisque « Guyane » signifie « territoire inondé » ou « territoire plein d'eau » et servait, dans une langue indigène et avant de définir le territoire en question par son vaste réseau fluvial, à désigner un affluent de l'Orénoque. C'est d'ailleurs dans ces eaux fluviales que Harris, en tant qu'explorateur et avant de devenir écrivain, a puisé son inspiration pour écrire des romans qui, dans la

génération d'écrivains guyanais lui succédant, influenceraient profondément Fred D'Aguiar. Cette influence suggère aussi qu'en plus de la métaphore et de la topographie, l'intertextualité pourrait-être perçue comme une troisième forme de confluence, et ce sont ces trois types de confluence que je propose d'étudier dans le dernier roman de Fred D'Aguiar, intitulé *Children of Paradise* (2014), et dans le premier roman de Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (1962), en prêtant une attention toute particulière à la façon dont ces deux romans eux-mêmes forment une confluence définie par des textures romantique et Orphique communes qui, à leur tour, laissent à penser que le romantisme et le réalisme merveilleux pourraient, en fait, être des traductions analogues d'une même perception Orphique de l'environnement.

INDEX

Mots-clés: confluence, tropicalité, Wordsworth William, Harris Wilson, D'Aguiar Fred, orphisme, romantisme, réalisme magique

Keywords: confluence, tropicality, Wordsworth William, Harris Wilson, D'Aguiar Fred, Orphism, Romanticism, magical realism

AUTHOR

LÉO COURBOT

Léo Courbot has a PhD from the University of Lille 3, France, where he works as a Temporary Teaching Assistant (ATER); he is an associate member of the CECILLE research laboratory. He was admitted to the French Competitive Exam at Ph.D Level (Agrégation) in 2013. He does research on Caribbean literature and intercultural theory, specifically focusing on Anglo-Guyanese author and professor Fred D'Aguiar (recently naturalized as an American citizen, in 2014). His first research monograph, *Fred D'Aguiar and Caribbean Literature: Metaphor, Myth, Memory*, is currently being peer reviewed for publication by Brill/Rodopi. Contact: leocourbot[at]gmail.com