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**AN ANATOMY OF THIRD WORLD  
LITERATURE: NORTHROP FRYE'S THEORY OF  
MODES IN A POST-COLONIAL CONTEXT**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English at Massey University.

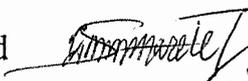
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## *ABSTRACT*

Viney Kirpaul (1988; pp144, 145) points out that there is no 'relevant critical framework' within which to analyse the Third World novel, and so the common practice is to consider it a version of the nineteenth-century Western novel. Within a framework based on the first essay of Frye's Anatomy of Criticism, this thesis argues that four different modes of Third World fiction must be distinguished, and that within each mode some forms are episodic (if they develop only a small number of archetypes) and others encyclopaedic (because of their range of archetypes and techniques).

Chapter One deals with the theory and scope of the study. The subsequent chapters analyse twenty episodic and four encyclopaedic works in four different modes, chosen from Africa, India and the Caribbean. A comprehensive glossary explaining the critical terms used in the thesis adds more texts as examples, including some from the South Pacific region.

At the centre of the study are such well-known Third World authors as Ngugi, Raja Rao, Lamming, Bhattacharya, Achebe, Naipaul, and Ayi Kwei Armah, while the glossary adds the works of others, including Narayan, Soyinka, Derek Walcott, Albert Wendt and Witi Ihimaera.

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I hope that our joint effort, which offers a new and, I hope, worthwhile approach to the study of Third World literature, will benefit all scholars in this field.

Above all, I thank God, without Whom the work would not have been done.

*G N M' Marete*

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## CHAPTER ONE: *INTRODUCTION - SCOPE AND THEORY*

This introductory chapter sets out to provide a rationale for the title of the thesis, to show the links that bind Third World literature together, to explain briefly the contexts in which Third World<sup>1</sup> authors write, to state the theoretical model used in this comparative study, and finally to give a thumbnail overview of what subsequent chapters will cover in this study of seven representative authors: Bhabani Bhattacharya, Raja Rao, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, George Lamming, and V S Naipaul. The seven come from three regions - India, Africa, and the Caribbean. Time and space did not permit consideration of other regions (eg Latin America), though some are alluded to in the Glossary. The three regions treated are sufficiently diverse for the conclusions reached to be regarded as true of Third World writing in general.

The title of the thesis highlights my heavy reliance on Northrop Frye - especially his theory of modes, to which the first essay of the Anatomy of Criticism is devoted. When viewed in the light of Frye's comprehensive poetics,<sup>2</sup> Third World literature does not appear as an evolving cycle like its European counterpart. It is a synchronic cycle in which all the modes of writing - the parabolic (or proto-mimetic), high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic (or lower mimetic) - are simultaneously present. In European literature, these modes succeed each other historically as the emphasis on myth, the supernatural and the idealistic - still evident in the romance, which is the form favoured by the parabolic mode - is progressively displaced as the demand for realism increases. This kind of literary cycle is called in this thesis 'diachronic' as opposed to the Third World cycle, where all four literary modes appear simultaneously - though, as we shall see, certain regions tend to favour certain modes, as a result of a process which I call modal conditioning.

Many ideas of New Criticism are incompatible with the assumptions behind this thesis. I cannot fully sympathize with attempts like Frank Lentricchia's (Chicago, 1980) to absolve New Criticism of the charge levelled by many critics - Frye included - that it neglected almost entirely the social function of art, in pursuit of aesthetics. But Wellek and Warren's challenge to theoreticians to produce a comparative literary theory that could tie world literature together into one body of expression is considered here a noble aim, despite their allegiance to New Criticism, especially because it was based

on the recognition that literature is one, as art and humanity are one.<sup>3</sup> Frye, intentionally or inadvertently, did exactly what Wellek and Warren wished (Frye, 1957): he produced a comprehensive poetics which accounts for world literature as one - or would do if it were modified to accommodate the hypothesis of the synchronic Third World cyclic outlined in this thesis.

Since the laws of art, the techniques of fiction, the conventions and modes operating in both the diachronic and synchronic cycles of literature are the same, these two cycles become variants of a supercycle of world literature. In spite of racial variations, the human family is one. A casual glance at three of the texts included in this study demonstrates the possibility of tying them into a neat trio in a manner that is not merely random. Bhattacharya's A Goddess Named Gold depicts the new era of independence as a dawn; in Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat independence is presented as a new shoot of a germinating grain of wheat; and in Lamming's Of Age and Innocence, it is portrayed in human terms as a new generation sprouting out of the vanquished one to reject colonialism in favour of nationalism.

In this independence trio, a basic organising archetype is that of rebirth, seen in Bhattacharya in the cyclical movement of the sun. In Ngugi, the image is vegetational, while Lamming prefers to anchor his rebirth archetype in the movement of human life into a new generation.<sup>4</sup> There is of course more than the rebirth archetype involved in these three works. They address a canonical theme, by which is meant a theme in a literary epoch that rises to such prominence that it becomes cross-cultural and dominates other themes. The Third World canonical theme which these authors deal with in the trio of novels just surveyed is that of colonial and post-colonial experience, which is so prominent that it overshadows non-canonical themes almost to the point of making them seem irrelevant. But in this thesis - especially in the Glossary - non-canonical themes (which have hitherto been kept out of the mainstream of cross-cultural critical exchanges) are considered too.

In less abstract terms, there are numerous links binding Third World Literature which are not always apparent to a casual view. As a result of the African diaspora, the connections between Caribbean and African Literature are much easier to see than those between African and Asian literature. It might be recalled, however, that Ngugi won the Asian Lotus prize for literature in 1973, awarded at Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan

during a meeting of African and Asian writers. This in itself suggests a link. Moreover he had been preceded in the award of the prize by several African authors: Alex La Guma (South Africa), Sembene Ousmane (West Africa), and Agostino Neto, the nationalist poet from Angola (Central Africa). Ngugi (an East African) was in fact a co-recipient of the prize with Algeria's Kateb-Yacine from North Africa. All this points to a lively Afro-Asian literary exchange at the scholarly level.

But the links go beyond this. Asian authors are read in Africa not only at university level (in Kenya, for example,) but in high schools as well. At the same time, West Indian authors of non-African descent like V S Naipaul feature in Africa almost as prominently as those of African origin. If Afro-Caribbean links are not confined to writers of African origin, and prizes from Asia find their way into Africa as often as they do, there must be significant literary phenomena common to these regions<sup>5</sup> that cut across racial and regional diversity.

Frye's comprehensive theory is considered suitable for this comparative literary study not only because it can put Indian, African, Caribbean (and indeed South Pacific non-European) writing into a single literary cycle but also because it is general enough to permit in-depth criticism of many kinds. Literary conventions require, for instance, that a successful high mimetic hero be a character larger in personality than the ordinary person in order to be a leader but not so large that he might seem an unrealistic hero of myth. They also require that he be not too surrounded by the supernatural. This general formula for the portrayal of a high mimetic hero leaves plenty of room for cultural variations in the depiction of any such hero, be he Indian, African, or South Pacific. This means that Romesh Dutt's Krishna, for example (but not Valmiki's original)<sup>6</sup> is an Indian epic hero like Kunene's Shaka (in Emperor Shaka The Great); both of them are high mimetic heroes, though they are culturally distinct in many ways.

It is the ability of the comprehensive theory to allow so much scope for particular variations on general themes, that makes it so suitable for the purpose of this thesis. Other theories of literature that have emerged since Frye's poetics have highlighted certain aspects of literary phenomena. But at the same time they have been unable to account for other matters. Jonathan Culler's concession that structuralism is inadequate for the study of characterisation illustrates the point:

Character is the major aspect of the novel to which structuralism has paid least attention and has been least successful in treating. (Culler, 1975; p.330)

Character must remain central to any meaningful discussion of literary forms - and for this reason comprehensive poetics does not ignore it.

It is not character in the strict novelistic sense that is meant here. To restrict the meaning thus would mean that all folk drama, poetry, stories, and legends created before the arrival in the Third World of Western literary techniques are not literature because they lack novelistic characterization. The notion of ranking literary forms, with the novel at the top, is inconsistent with comprehensive poetics. The characters of folk tales, legends, and myths are not considered inferior in kind to those depicted in novels: they are considered of another kind. Since much oral material emerges in modern Third World writing, recognition of the authenticity of oral forms of literature safeguards Third World Writing from possible suppositions that it is weak in conventions. In fact the plot archetypes of romance, tragedy, comedy and irony are not the monopoly of any particular culture; all cultures use these pregeneric conventions to make their community myths. But in the West centuries of displacement have had the effect of alienating readers from the characters and conventions of romance and - to a lesser extent - from tragedy.

It will be assumed that this discussion of characterisation sufficiently justifies the use of the comprehensive theory for introductory purposes and that what may not be clear here can be clarified in the main body of the thesis. But I do not mean to suggest that comprehensive poetics is at loggerheads with other theories of criticism. The comprehensive theory explains the laws of the production of literature, both oral and written, and leaves critics free to react to it from various viewpoints, having first recognised what forms and conventions they are called upon to discuss.

Its central hypothesis is simple enough: literature in the diachronic cycle tends to change in mode from what Fry calls the romance to the ironic, via the high and low mimetic, always utilising the underlying universal plot archetypes of comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony which first appear in myth. These archetypal plots are subjected to the demands of plausibility that result successively in high mimetic

realism, low mimetic realism, and ironic realism. To safeguard the romance, which is often castigated for its lack of verisimilitude, the concept of spectacular realism is useful.

In the synchronic cycle this process of displacement does not take place over a thousand years as in the European cycle, since the authors are exposed to all literary conventions at the outset, and their cultures are complex composites of Western and indigenous cultural elements - Western enough to support the ironic writing that has non-heroism as its main concern, and sufficiently traditional to uphold not only the high mimetic heroism of epic and conventional Aristotelian tragedy, but even the parabolic<sup>7</sup> (or proto-mimetic) ethos of the romance.

The evangelical fervour<sup>8</sup> that Trilling recognizes in Frye (Trilling, 1970) is not meant to hinder Marxist, Psychoanalytic, Structuralist, or even Myth critics in their tasks. It is intended to assist the critical exercise - whatever its nature - to proceed from a literary basis rather than a psychological, linguistic, or an anthropological one. A Third World example is suitable here as an illustration of what we mean.

Distinguished Third World philosophers exist - Paulo Freire, Frantz Fanon, and Mahatma Gandhi to mention a few. Their ideas illuminate certain matters within the Third World canonical theme of colonial and post-colonial experience. But to base criticism entirely on the ideas of any of them, although we find them useful in this thesis, is to make philosophy the basis of literary criticism. Any meaningful discussion of a literary form must be illuminated first and foremost by a literary theory. Two fallacies arise from a failure to ground every literary discussion firmly on a literary theory.

Making linguistic, political, philosophical, anthropological, or psychological matters the foundation of literary criticism is bound to end up in what is known, in comprehensive criticism, as the centrifugal fallacy, which has as its fundamental error the assumption that the judgement of literature can be sufficiently supported by its neighbouring disciplines. Similarly, the evaluation of any literature, present or past, by principles derived from the critic's own values (which are bound to bear the prejudices and anxieties of his or her own time or those of his culture) cannot avoid the pitfall of the centripetal fallacy, which centres criticism on either the reader's unsystematic reactions or on the author's biographical facts. Thus centrifugal criticism pulls

literature out of its own framework and hooks it on to another discipline, while its centripetal counterpart courts the risk of making literature too subjective to be studied on its own. What the author produces is a literary form which, along with others of its kind, and ultimately the entire body of world literature, makes an autonomous phenomenon capable of being studied without taking it out of its peculiar context. Both centrifugal and centripetal fallacies have one feature in common: an over-emphasis on content that ignores literary form.

This thesis does not ignore content, however; it seeks to establish a critical balance between Third World literature's forms and themes. Thus the principle of consolidation is very closely adhered to - ie on a basis of comprehensive criticism, various schools of criticism are brought to bear, in order to consolidate the analysis of the works in question. Three biographical sketches - Bhattacharya's, Ngugi's and Lamming's - will now be used to illustrate the forces that have shaped the Third World writer and the regional scene (the Indian, African, and Caribbean) in which he writes.

When Bhattacharya was born in November 1906 in Bihar, India had been part of the British Empire for about a century, with its capital at nearby Calcutta. Bhattacharya's personal experience of the tragedy of famished victims swarming the streets of Calcutta a few years before Independence anchored his fiction immovably on the canonical theme of colonial and post-colonial experience. He considered his previous writing - short stories published in various journals and not subsequently collected - a high and soft-cushioned armchair from which he had to descend to write about the masses:

So far I had been writing from my cosy perch in the ivory-tower.  
Now I was tormented by the need to be down-to-earth.  
(Srivastava, 1982; p.220)

Henceforth Bhattacharya was incessantly canonical, which makes it easy to compare him to authors like Ngugi and Lamming.

In the national cycle of Indian writing, Bhattacharya is a late-comer who seems to have decided to finish formal studies first, thereby failing to qualify for chronological grouping with writers of his own age like R K Narayan, Raja Rao, and Mulk Raj Anand, who started writing soon after World War I. This biographical factor, in

conventional criticism, makes him an isolated figure who does not fit neatly into the literary history of India. In comprehensive poetics, chronology and tradition cannot be used to isolate a writer. Bhattacharya began writing in the company of a younger generation that got its momentum from Indian nationalist activities, as this statement shows:

Indo-Anglian prose writing awaited an impetus from outside literature in the shape of the nationalist movement that gained potency after World War II. (Williams, 1976; p.4)

Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in colonial times at Limuru in Kenya in 1938. The declaration of a British Protectorate had brought Kenya into the British Empire in 1895. In an incident reminiscent of Bhattacharya's encounter with the famine victims in the streets of Calcutta, Ngugi recalls that in colonial Kenya when he was ten or eleven he stood transfixed by the sad faces and plaintive melody of women being evacuated from their rich homelands in Limuru, singing as they went:

And there will be great joy  
When our land comes back to us  
For Kenya is the country of black people  
  
And you our children  
Tighten belts around your waist  
So you will one day drive away from this land  
the race of white people  
For truly, Kenya is a black man's country. (wa Thiong'o, 1972; p.48)

The author neither understood this song nor comprehended the forces at work in Kenya during the armed struggle against colonial occupation (1952-1954). But these events subsequently formed the backbone of the canonical writing of the mature Ngugi.

Placing Ngugi within the context of the Kenyan or the East African literary scene is becoming a problematic subject in the literary history of Africa. He himself has recently returned to this matter with new vigour in Decolonising the Mind, where he claims that Kenyan prose writing began with the vernacular works of the pre-Emergency period. What he says here is consistent with his earlier declining of the position of 'beginner' of East African writing - or even of Kenyan writing for that matter:

There was a time when people used to say that East Africa was a 'literary desert' and most of us used to believe it. But in fact even then it was not really true. For instance Swahili has had a very rich literature dating about 2 or 3 centuries back ... (Sander and Munro, 1984; p.46)<sup>9</sup>

In the same vein the German literary historian Janheins Jahn argues in favour of an early beginning of East African writing, using a Swahili heroic poem Utendi wa Tabuka - a 1728 manuscript - as his evidence.

More recently Werner Glinga (1986) has sought to persuade critics that the way for prose writing in East Africa was paved by the following proto-literary prose: Kenyatta's journalism in Mwiguithania (1928-1930), his work of social anthropology, Facing Mount Kenya (1938), P Mackeries's autobiography, An African Speaks for His People (1934) and Muga Gicharu's autobiographical account of history and politics in colonial Kenya, Land of Sunshine (1958). Jacqueline Bardolph (1984) adds to this Mbiyu Koinange's political writing, The People of Kenya Speak for Themselves (1955).

If it is remembered that as early as 1954 Okot p'Bitek, who later became an innovative poet of continental stature, had already written Lak Tar, a novel in Luo, 'literary desert' must have meant simply an absence of fiction in English. This begins with Ngugi's The River Between (1961).<sup>10</sup> Ngugi's first two novels, observes Bardolph, placed Kenya, and East Africa it might be added, on the literary map of prose fiction in Africa. It must be remembered, however, that for our purposes the oral literature that preceded the written forms is equally important because Ngugi's writing uses Gikuyu oral literary forms as material for building up his fictional world. Other African writers in this study - Achebe and Armah, particularly the former - also make extensive use of African oral forms.

The eighteenth century is the date Bruce King (1979) gives as the commonly accepted beginning of Caribbean writing. Paralleling the nationalist movements, as in Africa and India, Caribbean writing drew its canonical theme from the problems of colonialism and independence. Such novelists as Edgar Mittelholzer, Wilson Harris, Roger Mais, V S Naipaul, and Vic Reid emerged during this productive period and so did Lamming.

Born in Barbados in 1927, Lamming, like Ngugi and Bhattacharya, grew up in a period of political awakening in the Caribbean islands. When nearly ten, notes S P Paquet (1982), he witnessed both the Bridgetown riots (staged in the capital after the expulsion from Barbados by colonial authorities of a Trinidadian union organiser) and the dramatic rise of trade unionism. The Bridgetown affair for Lamming paralleled Bhattacharya's Calcutta trauma and Ngugi's hearing the Limuru women's song. It left a definite mark on his fiction.

Deeply political, Lamming applied in the 1950s for membership of the Communist Party in London, where most of his work was done. But the application was not responded to because of Lamming's reputation for individualism and outspokenness. It must be pointed out at the outset that Lamming's ideological positions are hard to detect in his works in spite of his Marxist leanings. And another point to mention about Lamming is that although he wrote most of his works abroad, he kept in close touch with events back home through periodic visits. V S Naipaul, whom I have chosen along with Lamming to represent the Caribbean, also visited the region and recorded his impressions in The Middle Passage.

And now an overview of what the chapters that follow contain. Seven authors - Bhattacharya, Raja Rao, Ngugi, Achebe, Armah, Naipaul and Lamming - are used to demonstrate the possibility of studying Third World literature in a systematic manner that reveals the forms, conventions, and techniques being used in Third World literature. The synchronic manifestation of the parabolic mode with the high mimetic, which follows it in the diachronic cycle, is discussed in the light of the unifying canonical theme of colonialism and post-colonialism in all its political, cultural, and economic variations. The simultaneity of both of these modes with the low mimetic and ironic writing is studied in the same manner.

A single chapter could be written showing how each of these modes has developed what - following Frye - I call an encyclopaedic form, again using the canonical theme. But distributing the discussion of encyclopaedic forms strategically within the whole range of the thesis seems a better way of highlighting the laws at work in the production of Third World literature. In the main body of the thesis, the chapters form

pairs: two and three, four and five, six and seven, eight and nine. The first in each pair exemplifies the basic or - to use Frye's term - episodic forms of a mode, while the second demonstrates the encyclopaedic form the mode produces.

The literary terms used in comprehensive criticism have not all been discussed here. Only those relevant to these introductory remarks have been mentioned. For this reason a glossary of the terminology of comprehensive criticism has been provided.

## NOTES

- 1 The term 'Third World' was coined in France in 1956. I have taken Prescott Nicholas's definition: 'those peoples of the world who have their heritage in Africa, Asia, or Latin America and who have been exploited and oppressed by the Western world .... since the 15th century.' (Nicholas, 1972; p.157)
- 2 Whenever Frye discusses theory his aim is to arrive at a comprehensive form of criticism that explains the occurrence of all literary forms in a systematic manner. It is his extensive use of the term 'comprehensive' that suggests the naming of his poetics as comprehensive poetics and Fryean criticism as comprehensive criticism. Henceforth the definitions of such technical terms should be sought in the Glossary.
- 3 Wellek and Warren, 1949; p.42. They continue to argue that it is the problem of 'nationality' and of the distinct contributions of the individual nations which blurs the conception of world literature as a single corpus.
- 4 The term 'archetype' is generally associated nowadays with Carl Jung. Jung, being a psychologist, was interested mainly in a psychological rebirth of an individual who decides to alter his value system. But the rebirth archetype applies much more widely than this.
- 5 That the links between these regions continue to receive acknowledgement could be further supported by the birth of the Wasafiri journal only eight years ago (1984), one of its commitments being to get African, Caribbean, and Asian literatures known to the West.
- 6 Romesh Dutt's editing of the Ramayana and Mahabharata with Greek classical works as models changes Krishna from a romance hero into a high mimetic one. This observation concurs with his own editorial notes that reveal his omission of episodes which he considers legendary.
- 7 The term 'parabolic' is drawn from Gikandi (1987; chapter 1). Frye uses the word 'romance' rather indiscriminantly, and it seems wise therefore to select a

different term to define the first of the literary modes.

- 8 Lionel Trilling sees Frye's influence in criticism as equal to I A Richards' but predicts that the latter's must last longer. Such predictions seem to arise from trying to group Frye with some known school of criticism. But he belongs to no particular school. As will become apparent in this work, Frye is neither a Myth critic nor an Archetypal one. He is as much a Mimetic critic as he is any of these.
- 9 In this interview Ngugi continues (ibid), 'by 1962 or 1964 Shaaban Robert had already established himself as a great poet in Swahili, a great contemporary poet.'
- 10 Bernth Lindfors (1981) and Cook and Okenimkpe (1983) all agree that The River Between was first presented to the public at a Makerere arts competition in 1961. For our purposes this is the official date of publication although Heinemann published it in 1965, four years later.

## CHAPTER TWO: *PARABOLIC EPISODIC FORMS*

This chapter, which discusses the simpler forms of the parabolic mode, pairs up with the next, which deals with Armah's Two Thousand Seasons as an example of a parabolic encyclopaedic form. The synchronous nature of the Third World literary cycle allows the presence of a parabolic or proto-mimetic mode in this literature at the same time as the high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic modes. The introductory chapter discussed the difference between the diachronic and synchronic cycles of literature. In the former, all the four modes - parabolic, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic - succeed each other through several literary epochs. Modern Third World literature is synchronic. The conventions and techniques of all the four modes are employed at the same time, often even by a single author. This chapter focusses on the parabolic mode; it argues that Bhattacharya, Ngugi, and Lamming (representative Third World authors) utilise the romantic mythos - at least in part - to examine the canonical theme of colonial and post-colonial experience. The argument is based on Bhattacharya's A Goddess Named Gold, Ngugi's Secret Lives, and Lamming's Season of Adventure and Water with Berries.

### Bhattacharya: 'A Goddess Named Gold'

A Goddess Named Gold is not so much a conventional novel as a romance, appearing alongside other more mimetic works in the Bhattacharya canon. The existence of these other works has led several critics to treat A Goddess as an orthodox novel, and to condemn it for its lack of realism. The ensuing discussion stresses the book's use of a parabolic plot archetype often found in myth and romance,<sup>1</sup> and examines the implications of this. Central to the argument also is an examination of the kind of characterization the parabolic mythos requires and of the way Bhattacharya goes about meeting some of these requirements through allegory. Third but not least in our concerns is a dissection of the novel's particular version of the canonical theme: the political and economic exploitation which colonialism has brought to India.

A Goddess focusses on the taming of a monster - a variant of the dragon-killing which is the archetypal theme of romance. In the old romances an old or ineffectual ruler is unable to defend his people from the menace of a dragon or monster. At an opportune

moment, the hero of romance appears, performs the feat of liberation and is usually rewarded with succession to the kingdom. But a variation in which taming rather than killing the monster is preferred, also exists - in the Mahabharata, for example. The Seth in A Goddess plays the ogre role; 'He is a monster,' his wife tells the Cowhouse Five (p43). Bhattacharya opts for the magnanimity of showing mercy rather than vengeance. The book's principal protagonist is Atmaram, a minstrel. He diverts the Seth from his acquisitiveness with a taveez which is reputed to be capable of producing gold. Entrusting the taveez to his grand-daughter Meera, Atmaram retreats to the Himalayas. His Himalayan retreat, however, is not an act of cowardice that leaves the village exposed to danger. He is a poet-protagonist who must live 'above our petty battles' (p63) - and come to finish the taming when the warm-up is over.

Eager to profit from the miraculous properties of the taveez, the Seth moderates his behaviour and attempts to negotiate with Meera for a monopoly on the gold. In so doing he recovers something of his lost humanity, and is ultimately not unhappy to be disappointed in his twin quests for gold and political office.

The dragon-killing quest of romance often minimizes subtlety and complexity in favour of a spectacular realism that dichotomises the forces of good and evil. But Bhattacharya does not depict the conflicting forces in too dichotomous a manner. The Seth is not entirely evil, was not always a monster, is not a product of one culture. He is a fallen bania or Indian merchant who has opted to play the role of a modern capitalist tycoon without tempering his outlook or attitude with the sympathy a bania would traditionally show towards his debt-laden clients.

In the original Mahabharata myth which, as we shall see, Bhattacharya allegorises, the role the Seth is now playing is given to a demon king - Naraka. Given the author's intentions not to exaggerate here the polarisation of good and evil that normally characterises romance, a due distance is kept from the original myth so that the Seth's actions can appear monstrous but not demonic. There may be a saving grain of goodness in a monster, but demonic powers are the personification of evil. Bhattacharya does not wish to suggest that the Seth personifies evil, although the parabolic mythos in which his story is cast allows one to polarise good and evil 'like black and white pieces in a chess game' (Frye, 1957; p195).

The Seth's monstrous greed must not, however, be underrated: he even mortgages half of his father-in-law's pieces of land (p10), an action that compels his own wife to take a central part in the demonstrations Sonamitti women stage against him. The Seth has become a dasa (devotee or slave) to kama (desire) - his desire is to own eternally, world without end. Property as such is not seen as an intrinsic evil in A Goddess. But unscrupulous acquisition of it is condemned fiercely by the book's moral philosophy.

The romance usually forgoes psychological explanations for the motivations of characters in favour of thematic and didactic clarity. This is not to say that a romantic tragedy is not a viable artistic venture. But more often than not, the writer of the parabolic is too concerned with exposing evil, with getting a moral lesson across, to try to evoke cathartic effects<sup>2</sup> in the reader. That is partly why the dragon-slayer does not become an Aristotelian hero even if he gets wounded in the conflict. Furthermore, the supernatural that usually surrounds the romance protagonist often works against tragic consequences. So in Bhattacharya's portrayal of the Seth, it is not the fall of the Indian bania which is emphasized, but rather his resemblance to the forces of evil at work in the Mahabharata.

It is the supernatural power that the minstrel is supposed to have that propels the movement of the plot in A Goddess, as the villagers constantly reassure themselves of his ability to produce gold miraculously so that they can have a share:

We do not question the Minstrel's great power. We do not doubt that our Meera is going to be a king's daughter ... we ask only for crumbs [of gold] out of her abundance (p181).

India at the time of A Goddess (1954) is still close enough to the parabolic cultural mores (such as belief in miracles) that condition the romance mode to encourage the author in his use of the romantic mythos. There are moments, however, when the author distances himself far enough from his characters to be able to show his sceptical views concerning the supernatural - on p110, for instance, where he depicts the Seth's credulous anticipation of the taveez's alchemical properties: 'Beside the miracle of the invisible man [the minstrel] a touchstone was a child's toy!'

In other works of Bhattacharya's that do not employ the parabolic mythos, no close view of the supernatural is allowed. No sense of the supernatural surrounds the goddess Devi in Music for Mohini, for instance, which is a high mimetic work. A Goddess is quite different. If the Indian rebirth archetype were to be interpreted as part of the supernatural, even the minstrel's birth in A Goddess could be seen as founded on the supernatural. This spectacular realism is not associated with the ordinary person who cannot ascend the Himalayan heights. Going up the Himalayan heights endows the minstrel with power not only to be a visionary but also to perform miracles (p55).

In A Goddess the Himalayas are depicted as the epiphanic point of India where visionaries retire for the inner illumination that only gurus can attain. Third World literature is full of such exalted positions where visionary power is acquired or strengthened. An ironic variant of the motif can be seen in Ngugi's novel Devil on the Cross, where the narrator is placed on a roof-top. Whereas the ironic mythos is most at home in the man-made world, the romance prefers to show the main character in a mysterious rapport with nature. Here a mountain suggests the minstrel's closeness to nature, which helps him to devise a way of liberating the oppressed world of Sonamitti. The Himalayas did not have to be Bhattacharya's choice of mountain. But authors will normally go for the familiar cultural archetype rather than the exotic if they wish to communicate directly.

The tendency towards allegory is very strong in the parabolic, and A Goddess is based on an allegory very familiar to Bhattacharya's audience: the Mahabharata. The allegorical framework, unless kept in mind all the time by readers of A Goddess, is bound to make the work 'turn out to be a mock-heroic tragedy or a tragi-comic extravaganza' (Srivastava, 1982; p150). There is a need to appreciate that in Third World writing allegory is as live a technique as it was in the early stages of the diachronic cycle of literature.<sup>3</sup> Using the Mahabharata's archetypal roles of the tyrant Naraka and the compassionate Vishnu, incarnated as Krishna to right the wrongs perpetrated by the tyrant, Bhattacharya, in the tradition of ancient Indian poets, takes sides against oppression in a parabolic allegory written to celebrate Indian Independence. In this book of wisdom,<sup>4</sup> Bhattacharya points out that India is still as moral as it was in the days of the Mahabharata. Twentieth-century India is still a

moral world, and in spite of all the superficial socio-political changes, the Krishna-Naraka dichotomy still lives there beneath the cosmetic rearrangement of the social order.

Bhattacharya would not agree with Gay Clifford's statement in her otherwise sympathetic study of allegory:

We certainly have no metaphysical or moral absolutes of the kind that readily lent themselves as the basis of earlier allegories

(Clifford, 1974; p128).

The implication of Clifford's statement is that in the West, dragon-killing and other such supernatural motifs lack cultural conditioning because there is no shared sense of the metaphysical, nor is morality stated in black and white as it may still be in many Third World communities.

Without the defeat of the monster Seth, not even his own wife can celebrate Independence with any real happiness. Since incarnations of Vishnu as Krishna no longer happen as in the Mahabharata, society must produce a Krishna figure to fight the financial Naraka who has come into being. This is the role the minstrel is created to play. He is not created purely out of fancy, however. He epitomizes swaraj - Gandhi's doctrine of political Independence or self-rule. Sonamitti Village is thus transformed into a microcosm of India where the drama of national redemption is re-enacted allegorically.

But Bhattacharya does not place the entire burden of redemption from oppression on the central character alone. The Five Elders (see pp154, 166, 168, 179, 203 etc), though introduced quite late in the struggle with the Seth, share the burden of taming the monster. Nor is this the first time that the idea of society's being actively involved in resisting the monster has been mentioned. The Cowhouse Five initiate the attempts to rid society of the monster right at the beginning of the work. Similarly the Five Elders must get into action against the Seth so that he does not dispossess the rest of the people. The two sets of Five is a doubling - typical of allegory and the parabolic - designed to intensify the idea of the dispossession of the Pandava Princes in the Mahabharata, on whom Bhattacharya has based these characters.

Romance and allegory - unlike more mimetic literature - rarely portray characters who sit on the fence refusing to take sides in a quest. Characters are either for or against the cause, which is the reason why the romance quest in A Goddess looks like an unequal match between the Seth and the whole village of Sonamitti. His loss of 'a thousand rupees in just three hours' (p34) is one incident that could encourage this line of interpretation. But that would be to underestimate the Seth's ability to recast the loss in his favour by making it look like a great personal donation: 'He had seen the women in rags, felt unhappy, and out of the kindness given the cloth away' (p34). The irony here, we must remember, is only a counterpoint in a mode that is basically parabolic. In this thesis I shall often need to distinguish between the basic mode the author has employed and the other modes he may use as counterpoints in his work.

We now return to the line-up for the quest, particularly Meera's ambiguous position. Her entering a contract with the Seth for the production of gold - should the taveez begin to work - has the approval of the chief protagonist, her grandfather Atmaram, who with foresight has planned it to be the means of revealing the Seth's greed. The villagers are also meant to learn from the same situation that Independence will not be a miracle taveez but a change of circumstances giving them access to better opportunities in life. From the protagonist's point of view, Meera's eventual alliance with the Seth does not violate the rules of the quest. But for the village, to whom the Seth is a financial monster to be completely avoided, her deal with the Seth is an illegitimate partnership. Not all the villagers are stoic enough, however, to eschew the gold venture. The criticism levelled at Meera by some of the Cowhouse Five and the Five Elders shows that the book is influenced by novelistic morality, in which a dichotomous polarisation of good and evil is rare.

Consistent with the romance's usual polarisation of good and evil other characters insist that Meera is on the wrong side of the quest. But the reader can see that the bond she has agreed to sign for the moment precludes loss of more of the villagers' lands to the 'monster' Seth. The ironic counterpoint of the Five men trying to destroy (though unsuccessfully) the trap the minstrel has set to catch the Seth and get him tamed should not be missed. Nor should Meera's pragmatic altruism by which she is able to discern that "'With all of myself, I will work with the Seth in one field where our motives meet. With all of myself, I will work against him in another field where our motives are in conflict'" (p163). Parabolic literature would not normally take kindly to this

position which refuses to dichotomise good and evil, since it makes a character appear to play as it were for both teams. But Bhattacharya is, in the last resort, a novelist, and to expect a completely pure romance from him is unrealistic. Fortunately, purity of mode is not a mandatory prerequisite for effective art.

Old Father, on the other hand, is a wholly romantic character, whose inner conflicts we never see. He is intended to contrast the villagers whose determination to resist the Seth wavers. The Seth would like to use him as the recipient of a good deed designed to counter-balance his erstwhile cruelty, but Old Father is too committed to the quest to yield, even at the risk of losing all his land. The language in which he rejects the Seth's money to save his land evokes the image of a blood-sucking monster which the village must either kill or tame:

Happily would I take what our brethren give. But not one piece  
of Seth's money, soaked in peasants' blood (p214; emphasis  
mine)

Such language might easily tempt the critic to dismiss Bhattacharya as a writer who has neglected art in favour of propaganda. But in parabolic literature the artist does not pursue the objectivity that, say, the ironic mode requires. He plainly shows the team he wants the reader to join him in supporting. The parabolic hardly ever allows moral ambiguities: hence the need to use language that unequivocally shows the right and wrong side of the quest.

Bhattacharya's moral stance has been examined by Srivastava in his introduction to Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya. Srivastava seeks to determine whether he is an artist or a propagandist, and notes Bhattacharya's view that if showing that he is with the underdog is considered propagandist, he sees 'no need to eschew the word' (Srivastava, 1982; pxviii). K K Sharma examines in even more detail Bhattacharya's role as an artist and he is not one of those critics who feel that Bhattacharya's fictive skills are often inadequate. He concludes that Bhattacharya is a novelist with a highly developed social consciousness who does not subscribe to art for the sake of art (Sharma, 1979; p51).

Bhattacharya in this sense typifies the canonical Third World author. The notion of art being primary and function or utility being secondary has of course been a

commonplace of European criticism for quite some time. A C Bradley carried the tenets of art for art's sake, developed towards the end of the nineteenth century, into the twentieth with the following words:

Poetry may also have an ulterior value as a means to culture, or religion; because it conveys instruction, or softens the passions, or furthers a good cause; because it brings the poet fame or money or a quiet conscience (Bradley, 1971; p737).

This is a position which Bhattacharya - like most Third World authors - would not consider viable.

For the Third World author, art continues to have the function it traditionally had in his community: the service of man. 'Poetry for Poetry's Sake,' which is what Bradley calls his paper, is a creative stance that the Third World author has refused to accept. It is this insistence on keeping art linked functionally to society that explains the use of allegory, not only in Bhattacharya's art but also in that of Ngugi, Lamming and other Third World authors.

Clifford's observation (1974; p47) that 'the idea that there are as many ways of reading a work of literature as there are readers is anathema to allegory' applies to Bhattacharya's A Goddess. The use of allegory to limit meanings appeals to Bhattacharya, whose concern here is to create a work of art which will enlighten society on the monstrous activities of exploiters on the modern Indian scene.

The author of an allegorical romance has to make a choice between annoying some readers and communicating with his target audience. Restricting the meaning of his work might wear the patience of some readers, who might consequently judge the work severely. For such critics, Frye has a word of caution:

... the commenting critic is often prejudiced against allegory without knowing the real reason, which is that continuous allegory prescribes the direction of his commentary, and also restricts his freedom.

He then warns:

Such a critic is apt to treat allegory as though it were naive allegory, or the translation of ideas into images (Frye, 1957; p90).

Bhattacharya's work has certainly taxed the patience of several critics, one of whom we need to briefly consider. M K Naik complains that A Goddess is a 'crudely presented parable' whose demands 'have hamstrung Bhattacharya's talent for realism' (Naik, 1982; p215). Perhaps the monster-taming theme fails to make much sense to him, and the only way to be sure to dismiss it strongly enough is to use conventional prejudice against the parable as a literary form to make derogatory remarks about Bhattacharya's work. Attempting to strengthen an invalid critical position, Naik also refers us to Bhattacharya's talent for mimetic realism.

There is good reason to follow up closely Naik's remarks, for they give us an example of the centripetal fallacy. One way a critic manifests the centripetal fallacy is by using the canons established to assess one mode to judge literature in other modes. Naik applies the conventionally privileged position of mimetic literature to Bhattacharya's premimetic works, and so arrives at an untenable conclusion about what is in fact a successful romance allegorisation of the Mahabharata story. It must be born in mind that mimetic realism is not simply hamstrung but for the most part dispensed with here, in favour of spectacular realism. But Naik is right to call the work a parable, if by parable he means a narrative with an underlying meaning.

A critic more sympathetic to the fabular mode is H M Williams, who finds space in his survey of nearly two centuries of Indo-Anglian writing (1800-1970) for a positive word about Bhattacharya's allegorical work as 'an imaginative fable in the form of a novel depicting, as in Bhattacharya's other novels, the evils of profiteering and poverty' (Williams, 1976; p53). A Goddess is not so much a novel as a romance which employs spectacular realism that the novel - traditionally a low mimetic, or ironic form - does not normally allow. Williams' appreciation of the fabular element in Bhattacharya demonstrates a kind of accommodating catholicity that seeks to explore the art employed in a work rather than to find out how well it may compare with other modes.

The integrity of the innocent world which the romance author postulates he must also defend from the assault of experience, which is the reason why, as we have seen, the parabolic more than any other mode abounds in moral allegory. Making comments on the progress of the allegorical quest is essential in the narrative of a moral allegory. Varied characters are placed at various points of the work to help the reader monitor the progress made in the taming or the killing of the monster. In A Goddess, one such character is Sohanlal. A casual examination of Sohanlal might wrongly suggest that he is against the quest since he is militant against the idea that a miracle will happen to save Sonamitti from financial difficulties. Yet he is the only character working for the quest who understands that India needs not a miracle of gold but a concerted confrontation with the Seths to render them powerless:

It is the fight with the Seths that will save India, not a miracle,  
not armfuls of gold (p197).

Carefully placed about the middle of the text, this observation serves to indicate the direction the resolution of the story will take when the fantastic is dissolved in favour of a realistic ending.

At the same time that Sohanlal performs the function of charting the direction the quest is going to take, he is also courting Meera, almost in the manner of the main character of comedy. But he is really playing the role that the minstrel in a more straightforward romance would be playing: that of the hero who slays the dragon and succeeds to the throne, usually through a marriage to the king's or ruler's daughter. Bhattacharya assigns the role of commentator to the character working towards the marriage that usually takes place somewhere in the course of a romance plot. Thus the plot archetype remains discernible throughout the story in spite of all the tendencies towards mimesis evident in the book.

I am not saying that marriage is a mandatory ending for the parabolic. But it is a feature many romances show. A Goddess answers to the general expectation of what happens in a romance plot. The Meera-Sohanlal relationship is, however, a variant on the usual pattern. Meera and Sohanlal get progressively closer, particularly with Meera's inevitable realisation that Sohanlal must have been right all along in being sceptical of a gold miracle. That the two do not actually marry by the time the work comes to an end is not a violation of the marriage requirement for the romance but an author's choice not to tidy up the ending too neatly.

There are elements of mimesis at the beginning as well as at the end. Although a hint of the spectacular is there at the start, the plot really ceases to be mimetic only with the introduction of the touchstone and the creation of the illusion of a potential gold miracle. The minstrel whom the author creates to mastermind the plot's fantastic events returns to Sonamitti to dissolve the fantasy by throwing the touchstone into the river (pp297-8). From this moment, the fantastic no longer influences the plot, though the allegorical roles remain. The transmutation of coins into gold by the taveez is rejected in favour of amplifying the taveez image into a national symbol of Indian independence. It is not the minstrel's power to turn the coins into gold that the denouement brings into question; his ability to do so is insisted upon to the end. But when he returns to Sonamitti at the end he questions the *wisdom* of such a miraculous act. In his Independence Day speech, he surprises all with the meaning he now attaches to the touchstone:

This day, with its great gift for India's people - a touchstone!  
He paused allowing the hum of astonished comments to stop.  
Freedom was the touchstone .... It was a touchstone for  
everyone (p303).

With the dissolution of the fantastic that has been the chief vehicle for revealing the Seth's greed, he is outwitted, reformed, tamed, and reconciled to the community. He is now a defeated Naraka, an overpowered Kaurava dynasty, both of which he has been representing in his financial tyranny. But he is not slain as in the original myth; instead the monster is simply rendered harmless.

Clifford (1974) has shown the pitfall awaiting the allegorist who makes his central image merely visual without endowing it with the power to turn events or imply an undertow of strong connotation. If used so unsubtly, it becomes merely mnemonic and a vehicle for dry schematization. The image in allegory must be not only legible but strong enough rhetorically to move the reader to see the thesis it is meant to prove. Thus here, after the dissolution of the wonderworld, the touchstone image does not lose the central position designed for it. As a symbol of Indian independence, though thrown into the river, the touchstone will not fall to the bottom merely to become a common stone. River banks cannot limit its meaning: only national borders can.

The parabolic often portrays an accession to power by the slayer or tamer of the monster. Here the minstrel goes on to the District Board, the equivalent of a throne. It is true that he cannot do so without the ballot. But having been nominated as sole candidate for the area's seat by a unanimous agreement of the voters, his accession is a foregone conclusion.

Meenakshi Mukherji has expressed dissatisfaction with the characterization of the minstrel. She feels that 'the wandering minstrel, who even in his absence is supposed to wield so much influence, in fact never quite fills the role cast for him ... the reputation built up for him remains unsubstantiated' (Mukherji, 1971; p107).<sup>5</sup>

One might reply that what is central to parabolic literature of this sort is the quest rather than the depiction of characters. The minstrel would be an unsuccessful character only if the methods he chooses for taming the monster proved inadequate. It is not mandatory for him to be personally there, as long as the reader is convinced that he is masterminding the quest. We do become convinced that the monster has been tamed, that the worst is over, and that the minstrel has therefore fulfilled his role as chief protagonist. The mythos (plot) is satisfactory. So is the *dianoia* (theme) - defence of the underdog. The parabolic mode does not require realistic characterization as well. Bhattacharya's A Goddess can easily be misjudged if the canons of mimetic literature are applied to it.

### Ngugi wa Thiong'o: 'Secret Lives'

Ngugi uses the parabolic mode to depict and redress the hidden agonies of his countrymen and women in some of the stories contained in Secret Lives. Most of these stories are low mimetic in mode, using characters who, in their actions, understanding, and environment, are neither higher nor lower than ourselves. But the stories to be examined here operate in the realm of the supernatural that is often characteristic of romance, and to which many Western readers may feel disinclined to respond sympathetically. Ngugi examines the colonial experience here through spectacular rather than mimetic realism. The pieces we are concerned with are 'Mugumo', 'The Village Priest', and 'The Black Bird'. A fourth story, 'Minutes of Glory', is also discussed although it is a low mimetic one. It serves to illustrate the

essential differences between the African rural romance and the low mimetic modes which focus on urban alienation. It also serves as evidence that different modes appear side-by-side in Ngugi's anthology.

In 'Mugumo' there is abundant evidence that we are in the world of the parabolic. Ngugi's story is not one in which an external enemy must be encountered. The focus is on Mukami's quest for fertility, which involves supernatural and archetypal elements. Ngugi turns his back on the colonising culture, even pretending that it does not exist, so as to demonstrate the sustaining vitality of his own.

Belief in the supernatural is invoked to explain Mukami's attraction to a man whom common opinion holds she has wasted her life on:

Many a one believed and in whispers declared that she was bewitched (p3).

The hidden agonies of a young woman, in love with a polygamous man, and frustrated at her childlessness, are totally lost on the curious onlookers. But in this world of the romance, the occult is too strong a bait for the unfathomable to be left at rest. Bewitching is invoked to rationalise the inexplicable.

Parabolic literature asserts the reality of the invisible world as casually as other modes take for granted the visible world. It does not seem as if the reader is expected to doubt that Mukami on her way to the Mugumo tree

... saw a thousand eyes that glowed intermittently along the stream, while she felt herself being pushed to and fro by many invisible hands (p6).

But the real issue at stake is not whether or not the reader accepts the invisible order Ngugi's spectacular realism is meant to convey; it is whether that world is effectively evoked. The phrase 'a thousand eyes that glowed intermittently along the stream' conjures up in the reader's imagination a chill similar to the one Mukami experiences, so that we can empathize with her belief in the supernatural even though we do not consciously subscribe to it.

The invisible in the scene is powerfully expressed - not so much by portrayal of enigmatic and mysterious forces as by plain but tautly diffused language. 'Plain language' is a description of Ngugi's prose that needs further explanation. The description of the land of ghosts in this scene is representative of Ngugi's writing at its best. What looks here like transparency is brought about by Ngugi's desire to keep poetic techniques, particularly recurrent rhythm, out of his work. In early Achebe, for instance, proverbial poetry provides a background counterpoint to the continuous rhythm of prose. Ngugi's approach is different. He tries to keep the rhetorical dimension of his work almost transparently plain so that meaning is not lost in a maze of complex syntax, euphonic diction, or ornamental epos. In experienced hands, such as Achebe's, ornamental epos can be a very effective way of communicating. But so is Ngugi's seemingly transparent prose, which is really prose at its purest, if it is not allowed to be banal, flat, and monotonous - and Ngugi never allows this to happen.

One other feature in particular attests the parabolic nature of 'Mugumo'; it is a story replete with the kind of archetypes that constitute the main avenues into a community's metaphorical language. Mukami is pained by her apparent inability to be a fruitful link in the generational continuity of her people:

No child to perpetuate the spirits of  
Her man's ancestor's and her father's blood (p4).

Here we are offered an unobstructed view of the cyclic archetype of rebirth through progeny. In a thoroughly traditional situation such as the story depicts, marriage is portrayed in almost purely anthropological terms. Its utility to society is to keep both sides of one's lineage in memory through begetting. There are several different kinds of cyclic archetypes.<sup>6</sup> We are dealing here with one of human growth through youth, maturity, age, and death. For the completion of a full cycle, the dying aged have to be replaced by youth since they cannot return in a literal rebirth like the sun whose course recommences at sunrise. Ngugi, here presents a case to show how painful it is for an African woman who cannot participate in the rebirth of her people by replacing the dead.

The place where this story's resolution is set is dominated by an archetypal metaphor: a mugumo tree (God's tree). In the parabolic, a tree usually signifies the green wood archetype where problems are often resolved - mysteriously - before the characters are

allowed to be re-integrated into society. The plot of the parabolic has a tendency to get assimilated into some green landscape and from this rapport with nature a resolution evolves. Ngugi does exactly this with Mukami:

And the rain went on falling. But she did not hear. She had lain asleep under the protecting arms of God's tree (p7).

The crucial discovery that she is not in fact barren but with child cannot take place anywhere but in this special setting, in the green wood.

But her inner agonies are not resolved without the involvement of another archetype: that of the first parent, or primordial progenitor, contact with whom gives strength to the descendants. In this case it is Mumbi who touches her in a dream (p7) to reassure her.

Ngugi's story has the potential to become an encyclopaedic form which concerns itself with the organisation and exploration of a large set of a community's or a people's archetypes. Though replete with archetypes, however, the fact that it is a short story is a limiting factor. But it does demonstrate that the author is close enough to his community to get a feel for their archetypes, the metaphors in which they think, and thus master the reality around them. This early story, therefore, speaks well for the ethical concerns of Ngugi's art, reflecting the artist's social consciousness, commitment, and responsibility to his society.

Harmony with nature is a recurrent motif of romance. In 'Mugumo' this harmony is attained in the resolution. In 'The Village Priest' the very first sentence not only proclaims the rain-maker's harmony with nature but also pronounces his victory over the priest through his power to make rain:

Joshua, the village priest, watched the gathering black clouds and muttered one word: 'Rain'. (p22)

Once again the central question in this parabolic context is not whether the rain-maker can actually make rain. One can be almost certain that the author would not care whether one believes in this supernatural control of the elements, just as the folk artist would not mind if one believed in talking animals, provided he made one empathize with those of his characters who do so believe. The parabolic is a literary form chiefly

used to portray not life-likeness but life-liveliness. The ultimate aim is, by stimulating the imagination and the emotions, to urge the reader in the direction in which society should move.

Joshua the priest is a lost soul blown about by the forces generated by the clash of cultures. The innocent world the parabolic writer portrays is often shown as suffering encroachment from the forces of experience. 'Innocence' in this context simply signifies the traditional world, which knowledge and experience of another culture - the colonising culture - threaten with clashes and confusion. The complications about to take place in the lives of Makuyu's people are dramatised in the career of the alienated priest, who, already confused, oscillates between the religion of Livingstone the missionary and the mugumo tree religion of his people.

As in 'Mugumo' the mugumo tree here is portrayed as the green wood archetype where inner conflicts can be mysteriously resolved. But the circumstances are no longer normal because the village is already divided between Joshua and his followers, on the one hand, and the rain-maker and the community, on the other. The tensions arising from this polarisation of cultural values are dramatised at the foot of the tree, where a confused Joshua is unable to stay long enough to hear how he can regain harmony with his community:

Now you can only be cleansed by the power of your people.

Joshua did not wait to hear more (p25).

He seeks repose for his troubled mind but cannot be convinced any more that the green grove has answers to the questions that pain his mind. And yet he finds no greater satisfaction in the new culture.

The priest is a miserable man, caught between the rain-maker and the missionary (Livingstone). This is not the same solid Joshua of unwavering religious conviction that we see in The River Between, for we must remember that in that book, a high mimetic form, Ngugi goes for in-depth, mimetic characterisation. In the parabolic mode of 'The Village Priest', however, the drama of a man running between Livingstone and the green grove becomes the focus of a story whose purpose is to show that 'the whiteman's dog comes to the lion's den' (p25) - as the rain-maker would put it. For a moment in this scene, the priest becomes the butt of counterpoint satire as the rain-maker rails against him.

One sentence in the story stands out as though meant to show that the coming of the rain is no miracle but coincidence. The priest is presented at one point as thinking

... that the coming of the rain so soon after the morning sacrifice would be nothing but a victory for the rain-maker at whose request a black ram had been sacrificed (p23).

If the narrator wishes to extricate himself from the charge of subscribing to superstition by making the coming of the rain a coincidence, he does not succeed. In spite of the above interpolation Cook and Okenimkpe (1983) see the story as one of those in Secret Lives that 'subscribe to the existence of the occult' (p145). It seems to me that, except for the passage quoted above, the plot supports the classification of the story as a parabolic narrative, with the rain-maker as a protagonist whose victory vindicates traditional values.

The narrator of the next story we are concerned with - 'The Black Bird' - does not disguise his disbelief in the occult. He is ready to offer Mangara, a victim of belief in the occult, his sympathies without sharing his unqualified credulity. In the previous two stories, Ngugi used spectacular realism to show the revitalising that subscription to the supernatural offers to characters whose minds are credulous enough to surrender to it. In 'Mugumo' it reassures Mukami, while in 'The Village Priest' it protects the community from disintegration. But in 'The Black Bird' we move from the good to the damaging aspects of the supernatural.

How to dissociate himself from the occult while showing the reader that he has sympathies for a friend caught in its trap is one of the narrator's main problems. He gets over this difficulty by showing that both he and the victim of the occult go to the dense wood below their school, said to be haunted (p30), for different reasons:

What drove me there? I suppose I was feeling rather lonely (p30).

Mangara, on the other hand, is attracted to the haunted bush because he wishes to keep in check the Black Bird, the messenger of death whom he believes, as he says on another occasion, has troubled him all along: 'Oh, I have been haunted all my life' (p32).

'The Black Bird' is a story of revenge. A grandfather destroys a medicine-man's potions in an effort to spread the Christian faith. But it is not the faith that spreads. The grandfather's children and their progeny inherit the curse of being pursued by the medicine-man, who turns himself into a Black Bird to gain revenge. Two cultures are in conflict, as in 'The Village Priest' story. The hidden agony of someone pursued by an old man metamorphosed into a bird becomes the backcloth on which the author examines the harmful side of contact with the occult.

Science and superstition are in conflict in the mind of Mangara, the victim of the occult. He is a medical student whose science helps him neither make a career nor resist belief in a fate which has been willed to be his. The evidence he accumulates to support his credulity is almost comical at times except that the reader realises that for him it is a death and life struggle:

My grandfather died and was followed by his children and his wife (p35).

One feels that the victim has used the 'and' conjunctions to join incidents that are not necessarily related. But his mind has unfortunately organised them into what he considers unassailable evidence that his parents, who soon after die in spite of migrating to another district to escape the curse, have fulfilled the ordained will of the Black Bird. His superstition leaves him with no will to live.

His temporary rescue by a girl whom he plans to marry is evidence that the author offers to show that such victims are not irremediably damaged. He observes:

I was a new man in a world inhabited by Wamaitha and myself (p36).

The agonies exorcised by this relationship between Mangara and Wamaitha soon return to recapture the victim because he does not persevere in resisting the occult forces struggling for a place in his life. With open discussion, Wamaitha would most likely have helped Mangara not to slip back into his belief that he is a man singled out for destruction. But Ngugi's characters hardly ever talk about their inner struggles except in the most compelling circumstances, as in A Grain of Wheat.

Mangara's keeping silent in adversity is a practice the narrator does not seem to approve of:

'Did you tell Wamaitha?'

'No! I did not. I told her I was not well. She could see me trembling. She thought I had a cold ....' (p36)

This is the fatal omission that seals the doom of the victim of the occult. His inner disintegration and eventual decision to take his own life are logical consequences for this man, utterly lonely even among those he most closely shares his life with. But there is another, less mimetic kind of logic involved. Belief in fate must drive one into taking one's own life if the forces believed to be out to destroy it do not seem in hurry to do so - hence the suicide.

How far the narrator is from the credulous fantasy that destroys his friend's life is an issue taken up in the story and examined closely. Although the narrator can face the haunted and feared bush in the school compound, he is frightened by Mangara's claims about his encounters with supernatural evil. His rushing frantically to close the door and window (p36) as Mangara relates his fearful experience adequately reveals the narrator's partial credulity; this is not, however, a credulity strong enough to do him the kind of damage Mangara has suffered.

The death of Mangara cannot be called tragic in the strict sense of the word. He is not a man who, confronted by the possibility of living in shame and the alternative of ending his life, chooses death like Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart. His self-destruction is almost a foregone conclusion from the moment he begins building up evidence for the belief in his persecution, and the inexorable will of the Black Bird.

Perhaps a low mimetic story should be considered here for comparison with the three parabolic narratives examined above. 'Minutes of Glory' seems a natural choice not simply because it is similar in theme to the three romances but also because it uses a very different kind of setting, inimical to romance.

The story is set in several towns, and the bars Wanjiru serves in cannot match the rural tranquillity of Ngugi's romance narratives no matter how nicely they are named - 'Paradise' and 'Treetop' for example (p82/7). The loneliness, depression, and

individuality that deepen the spiritual crisis of Mangara in town are more profound here. Competition is another factor offered to explain what intensifies the loneliness. We learn that Wanjiru 'saw in every girl a rival and adopted a sullen attitude' (p83). The communal feeling that comes naturally in a rural romance, so that a girl like Mukami can feel quite attracted to a polygamous marriage, is impossible to evoke in a low mimetic form, which among other things reflects urban individuality, and its consequent loneliness.

Showing tranquil characters in harmony with nature and sometimes with power over nature is the domain of the parabolic. But the low mimetic tends to demonstrate that this blending with nature has been lost forever. It comes naturally to the author of 'Minutes of Glory' to tell us that Wanjiru

was part of a generation which would never again be one with  
the soil, the crops, the wind and the moon (p86).

Her isolation is profound, her inner struggles painfully real, and, worse still, she is part of a people that can never find, in the words of 'Mugumo', solace in sleep 'under the protecting arms of God's tree' (p7). Wanjiru has merely an arboreal-sounding name - Treetop, by which one of the bars she works at in Ilmorg is known - to cling to, but not the reality of the peace that comes from being at one with the soil, the crops, the wind, the moon, and the greenery of the grove, found, say, in Achebe's rural novels.

The beauty of the African landscape that Lawino hymns in p'Bitek's Song of Lawino is the beauty of a rural setting from which the likes of Wanjiru have been uprooted. The consequences are profound. One notices, for example, that death, one of the mysteries that awe rural folk, is just a joke in town. The girl who dies after an abortion becomes 'the subject of jokes: she had gone metric - without pains she said' (p87) - and going metric becomes the popular euphemism for committing suicide. Whereas characterisation in the parabolic is not usually geared towards the creation of 'real' people, tending to make them instead expand into psychological archetypes, a focus on individual inner struggles in the low mimetic produces convincing characters. Part of the realism in the characterisation of Wanjiru centres around her struggling not to 'go metric' in the distressing circumstances created by urban alienation.

Wanjiru's story offers one of those rare incidents when Ngugi's characters cease living 'secret lives', in the hope of unburdening themselves to each other. But communication at this personal level soon breaks down because the truck driver, though ready to relate his sad experiences and to receive the sympathies they call for, is reluctant to return the favour to Wanjiru. Thus, whether in the romance or in the low mimetic, Ngugi's characters continue to live 'secret lives'.

The conclusion to be drawn about Ngugi's fictive craft in the four stories examined here is that he is as much at home in the parabolic as in the low mimetic. If both the parabolic and the low mimetic in Ngugi's hands produce good stories, it is not mimetic realism that makes a story interesting and worthwhile but whether the reader can switch from mode to mode without falling into the centripetal fallacy of using the canons of one mode to judge another. Wayne Booth has observed:

... the interest in realism is not a 'theory', or even a combination of theories that can be proved right or wrong: it is an expression of what men of a given time have cared for most, and as such it cannot be attacked or defended with rational argument (Booth, 1966; p63).

In fact the 'rational argument' we need is one calling for critical tolerance of all modes, especially the parabolic ones which are still widely used in Third World writing.

#### Lamming: 'Season of Adventure' and 'Water with Berries'

The Ceremony of Souls, which will be discussed here as part of the evidence for Lamming's use of the parabolic mode, features in two books. In Season of Adventure it provides a means of returning the alienated San Cristobal elites to their cultural roots. Water with Berries uses it as a means of reconciling the ex-colonial and ex-coloniser. The book has an allegorical framework, which strengthens the sense of the parabolic. Lamming's theme is the alienation introduced by colonialism and perpetuated by post-colonialism in the metropolitan cultures, local and international.

The backward glance that the artist Chiki considers mandatory for any intellectual seeking cultural rehabilitation cannot happen in refined halls where the feet of the elite can move perfectly to the rhythm of the drum while their minds are on such modern hobbies as land and horses. The parabolic mode, as we have seen in Ngugi, thrives not in the urban but in the rural setting. It is almost axiomatic that the parabolic, even if it is only a counterpoint, as in Season of Adventure, should be removed from an urban setting with which it seems oddly at variance. For a work set in the city, as Lamming's is, the problem of a rural backdrop for a parabolic episode is solved by the creation of a rural equivalent in the environs of the city. That is why the tonelle, the dialogue between the living and the dead in which departing souls of those who died recently are ritually cleansed of wrong before they permanently join their ancestors, is appropriately located in Forest Reserve just outside the city.

Even in a work as removed from the parabolic mode as Season of Adventure is for the most part, the romance becomes an invaluable counterpoint to the dominant ironic mode for investigating the complex cultural milieu of the Caribbean, where rural and urban values are sometimes in such close proximity as can hardly be found in the West. In Lamming, rural cultural values are found in the city environs but are accessible only to the peasant and the worker who - unlike the elite - have not suffered cultural disorientation.

Fortunately, the gulf between the intelligentsia and the people who still carry their cultural heritage is not unbridgeable. A condition is laid down, however. The San Cristobal elite must cut the strings binding them to foreign tastes and values that conflict with their cultural heritage. A scrupulously honest exercise in self-scrutiny is required for the task of cultural re-orientation. The author interpolates a personal confession in the text to illustrate the sort of self-searching that will make rehabilitation possible:

... I don't think I should be far off the mark in describing myself as a peasant by birth, a colonial by education, and a traitor by instinct (p330).

'Instinct' is the right word here because quite a lot of the betrayal stems from a widespread lack of the kind of self-knowledge that the author has reached in his own moral search. For those yet to make a similar discovery the backward glance into the tonelle (a parabolic episode) is offered as a mandatory exercise; it cures alienation and re-roots those who undertake it in the soil of their cultural heritage.

The irony of Fola, a San Cristobal national, visiting the tonelle as a tourist in the company of a British expatriate teacher, cannot be over-emphasized. It underscores the distance a middle class Western education and upbringing have placed between the girl and her cultural heritage. Fola discovers, as all the elite of San Cristobal should, that despite years of social refinement, the achievement of middle class cultural finesse, the cultivation of foreign tastes in lifestyle and choice of friends, she has retained deep in her psyche an instinctive response to her cultural heritage as powerful as that which tosses the peasant women round the bamboo pole of the tonelle. The point clearly emerges that neither Fola nor San Cristobal can shed a cultural heritage like scales or unwanted garments to be deposited in museums for inspection by alien eyes. Fola's wetting herself at the Ceremony is a measure of how painful the encounter with the tonelle must be for her, and, indeed, for anyone else who wishes to try a backward glance. The dialogue with the recently departed souls, which Lamming creates with detailed spectacular realism, is therapeutic for the living as well as the dead, since those with an alienated mind like Fola's receive a good measure of ceremonial cleansing.

The drum symbolizes the gap between the two worlds; it does not carry the same message in a Vice-President's ball as it does at the tonelle in the green grove setting of the Forest Reserve. In the refined social halls, the drum fares no better than cultural items displayed for tourist entertainment; it begins to lose its status as an archetypal symbol of African music and ceremonial activities retained in the cultural vestiges of the Caribbean exiles. But in the Reserve, an archetypal green wood, the drum's symbolic meaning merges well with other motifs to give it power and authenticity.

The calypso as popular music intrigues Lamming as much as the drum does. He finds it an appropriate vehicle for stating the relationship that exists between the elite and the common people. At a personal level, this calypso seems to address the situation of a lover unable to distinguish whether it is love or hatred he or she has for the partner:

Sometimes I love you  
 Sometimes I hate you  
 But when I hate you  
 It's 'cause I love you. (p193)

But at the political level, the calypso embodies the love-hate relations that exist between the middle class and the ruling elite on the one hand and the masses on the other.

The San Cristobal cultural balance sheet will remain radically unsound if indigenous elements are all dismissed as inadequate for the country's new international and independent status. The author depicts a complacent elite, suffering from Anglomania, determined to polish the image of the nation abroad by suppressing the common man's culture at home. But to disown the drum music of the masses and the tonelle is to give away the nation's cultural independence. For Lamming, therefore, the tonelle and the drum carry, symbolically, the values of the cultural heritage which must be understood if the nation is to come to terms with the past and place the common people where they belong in the social and political agenda. Contact with the abandoned self through the tonelle is a traumatic experience for the San Cristobal elite, but the only way to understand the abandoned masses. For Fola, a study in the spiritual odyssey that the San Cristobal middle class must make, the trauma is compounded by the absence of one of her parents. The schizophrenic tendencies resulting from this, which Lamming examines in detail, do not point to an obsessional preoccupation with *individual* schizophrenics, although more have appeared in earlier works - Shepherd, for example, in Of Age and Innocence, Dickson in The Emigrants. Rather his study of Fola focuses on a *regional* schizophrenia,<sup>7</sup> a disconcerting condition in the Caribbean that arises from a people's psyche perennially battered by the experience of a slave past and the fear of an uncertain future.

Important as the green grove episode is to the denouement, it would not be correct to say that it is the focus of the book. Lamming uses the tonelle as a parabolic counterpoint in a work predominantly cast in the mythos of irony. He does so in order to show that Caribbean people have developed a stronger sense of their identity since the days of In the Castle of My Skin when the Slimes could cheat a whole village out of a land-buying deal and go unchallenged. And again this is not the pre-independence era depicted in Of Age and Innocence, where the regime assassinates the leading freedom-fighter and gets away with it. In post-colonial times there is a higher level of consciousness in the masses. Powell, who assassinates Vice-President Raymond, is a study in the anger of the underdog gone berserk, no longer willing to be a spectator to his own ruin. One of Lamming's reasons for using the parabolic counterpoint is to

show how a tonelle-based experience might have averted the national disaster which at the climactic moment pits the drum culture of the poor against the armed might of the state.

That the simple drum proves a powerful symbol uniting the masses against the alienated ruling elite is the central irony of the book, suggesting that Season of Adventure employs irony predominantly and the parabolic only as counterpoint. But Lamming has so well meshed the romance with the ironic that with respect to the narrative dimension of the work, it is difficult to tell whether the parabolic or the ironic conventions are basic. If the book is considered in terms of characterisation, however, the picture is one of characters in bondage living at a level below our own, which is the usual distinguishing feature of the ironic mode. The rapport with nature that the tonelle episode shows the characters having is almost cancelled out by the place accorded them in the national scheme of things, so that their oppression becomes more visible than the harmony with nature which the green wood archetype of the Reserve is meant to convey. That this is the case is, perhaps, not too difficult to see if we consider the legendary life of Jack O'Lantern. In provoking circumstances that suggest unpremeditated murder, Jack kills a constable for seizing his drum in an attempt to purge the nation of what is considered backward music and tonelle culture. Our glance into the tonelle has shown that characters like Jack are in harmony with nature, but it is a harmony they dearly pay for because, the political situation being what it is, Jack must hang. This is the kind of fate that the pharmakos or scapegoat character of irony usually suffers. It is not the lot of Jack alone to be a pharmakos in San Cristobal society; the whole tonelle community is involved - and the story is about them and their wretched situation.

Nevertheless, the community is not entirely without some dignity as the life of Jack will again illustrate. His legendary moral victory, that reverberates through the novel and wins the hard judge's concession that the offender be buried with his tenor drum, rings through in his final protest in court:

Your Honour, I don't care who makes the country's laws if they  
let me make the country's music (p20).

Jack is unjustly sent to the gallows, but he leaves behind admirers such as his apostle Gort (who inherits his role) and all those who love rural drum music. When villages empty to join the capital-bound processions on their way to toppling the republic, it is

because Jack's legendary tenor drum is now in the hands of his pupil Great Gort, who, like his mentor, speaks a peasant language that all villagers understand. Legal enactment against the drum is universally flouted but - such is the scale of the uprising - not a shot is fired.

A cursory glance at the relationship between Jack, his tenor drum, and his pupil Great Gort could miss its symbolic meaning. If Season of Adventure was predominantly a romance, nothing short of the resurrection or rebirth of Jack with his tenor drum would take place. But ironic conventions require high credibility, so in Season of Adventure the rebirth or resurrection archetype must be stated in strictly mimetic terms. Instead of presenting, in spectacular realism, the rebirth or resurrection, the ironist must create another character to assume the role of the departing hero and so satisfy the demands of plausibility. This displacement technique in Lamming has done no harm to the rebirth or resurrection archetype: it has only disguised it in the interests of mimetic realism.

Reinforcement of the resurrection archetype suggested when Gort digs up Jack's drum is contained in one of Chiki's paintings, which depicts a mass grave and, prophetically, a resurrection of the San Cristobal Lazarus of the tonelle culture. Chiki's decision to paint this resurrection is no coincidence. It is meant to make the resurrection motif running through the novel more emphatic; the underdog will rise again to take his rightful place within the ruling elite. In this resurrection painting, we observe the way a story that many readers would doubt if it was reproduced in the text word for word, is adapted to the canons of plausibility by being reduced to a picture with symbolic rather than literal status.

Having established the presence of a parabolic element in a predominantly ironic work, we turn now to another of Lamming's works where the romance counterpoint of the painful Ceremony of Souls is used. The therapeutic Ceremony of Souls, offered to the alienated San Cristobal ruling elite in Season of Adventure, is presented in Water with Berries not only to the Caribbean in exile in Britain as a way of rehabilitating his psyche but also to his host the ex-coloniser, depicted as psychologically afflicted by the ills of colonialism to the same extent as the ex-colonial. Lamming's explanation that it is not important to believe in the details of the Haitian Ceremony typifies what the author who uses the parabolic form expects of his reader: 'what is important is its

symbolic drama; the drama of redemption, the drama of returning; the drama of cleansing for a commitment towards the future' (Lamming, 1973; p7). In the same way, Lamming's claim that Prospero's wife, daughter, and brother are still alive is an imaginative parabolic suggestion; the supernatural device of agelessness is the organising principle in Water with Berries, which allegorises the colonial situation in Shakespeare's The Tempest.

The passage in The Tempest from which Lamming takes his title may be a convenient place to start the study of romance in Water with Berries. What appears to interest Lamming in this passage (which is given an allegorical rather than a mimetic gloss) is Caliban's obliging goodness in welcoming Prospero on to his island, only to realise too late that he has been dispossessed:

When thou cam's't first  
 Thou strok'st and made much of me, would give me  
 Water with berries in't, and teach me how  
 To name the bigger light, and how the less  
 That burn by day, and by night; and then I lov'd thee  
 And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle  
 The fresh springs, the brine-pits, barren place and fertile.  
 Cursed be I that did so! All the charms  
 Of Sycroax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you. (Act I Scene ii)

Lamming's suggestion that The Tempest is an allegory of the colonial situation develops earlier Darwinian interpretations of the play.<sup>8</sup> Also Lamming probably had access to Mannoni's ideas in Prospero and Caliban, which has become a Third World classic on the psychology of colonisation. Certainly Mannoni's finding that Prospero reacts to threat with neurotic touchiness<sup>9</sup> informs the psychology of Lamming's novel. But if Prospero's descendants in Water with Berries are neurotically touchy, Caliban's are no healthier, being psychotically inclined; and their goodness is a tragic flaw, harmful to them not only in the past but also in the present relations among themselves in their second exile.

Seeking nurture for their talents but doomed to failure by a past that imprisons both them and the London metropolis of their second exile, three latter-day Calibans (Roger, Derek and Teeton - all Caribbean artists) become the medium through which

the author investigates the dilemmas of post-colonial minds at their worst. Two main narrative points of view are employed in this investigation, with consequences that result in a blend of realism and romance. The stories of Roger and Derek are basically realistic. However, that of Teeton and Mrs Gore-Brittain, which postulates the agelessness of the ex-coloniser, has a parabolic elasticity that allows it to stretch between Prospero's seventeenth-century context and the present.

Psychologically dislocated by the history that took his parents to the West Indies before his present exile claimed him, Roger here is the ruin of a man too deracinated for London to rehabilitate:

It seemed that history had amputated his root from some other human soil [Indian] and deposited him by chance in a region of time which was called an island [in the Caribbean]. He had never really experienced the island as a place, a society of people (p70 - interpolations mine).

The psychological amputation that makes Roger a workaholic is no less visible in his cruelly insensitive father whose rise to the position of judge in San Cristobal enables him to compensate for his failure to become fully human in exile by inflicting pain on his fellow exiles. In the ruin of Roger the musician, there is more than the loss of the best music gift San Cristobal has ever produced. We are invited to see the rhythms of Caribbean life dislocated by history and, at the same time, refusing to coalesce with those of Europe. No matter how appealing the music, an amputated mind will neither enjoy it nor be inspired by it to creation of its own.

Lamming does not see Roger's redemption in his relationship with Nicole, a white American. The morbid fear that their union may produce offspring more Caucasian than Indian, or an impure mixture of both, is a statement about the failure of the West to provide the ex-colonial with a cure for his wounded psyche. This provides the rationale for Nicole's decision to abort on Derek's advice and for Roger's psychotic disorders, which lead to arson.

The answer to Roger's dilemma is the Ceremony of Souls on a London heath. This raises the possibility of his understanding his past in order to return to his country. However, this Ceremony is not as effective as its counterpart in Season of Adventure.

There are no Caribbean ancestors in London for the exiles to commune with. Moreover, the ceremony is depicted much more realistically here; it does not have a presiding Houngan (a kind of priest) to supervise the therapeutic dialogue between the living and the recently dead that sets both free from their haunting pasts. The parabolic atmosphere - merely suggested by the London heath scenes - must be reconstructed from the fuller live Ceremony presented in Season of Adventure where the full ritual panoply is present. By omitting possession, the priesthood, and the dancing, Lamming removes the parabolic undertones so that the scene can be more mimetic. Thus the London Ceremony of Souls is more displaced than the San Cristobal one, and it offers no thorough-going remedy for Roger's predicament. Unable to recover his lost heritage, he resorts to violence against his adopted environment by burning down Nicole's house. The radical thesis of Water with Berries, so unpredictable after Lamming's earlier open-ended novels, is that any hope of recovery from cultural trauma lies not in continuing cultural ties with the former colonial power but in smashing them (Paquet, 1982).

In Derek lies Caliban's 'germ' of goodness which allows him to empathise with Roger, unfortunately with disastrous results. On the allegorical plane it is an affliction which history has exploited to deny Derek and his progenitors their freedom. What Caliban curses himself for in The Tempest (Act I, Scene ii) still afflicts his descendant in exile in Prospero's homeland three centuries later. By 'fraudulent stewardship of other people's lives' (albeit with good intentions) (p240) Derek interferes in the Roger-Nicole affair, advising Nicole to abort and tactlessly confronting Roger with his dread of an impure offspring. His is not sagacious goodness. In Prospero's homeland, this goodness is not only disastrous at the level of personal relations; it ensures that Derek is still exploited by Prospero's descendants. When Derek obtains a role in a play, it is the most modest one possible - a corpse. The colonial past has ordered roles in a hierarchical manner that independence has done little to change. Derek, like the other descendants of Caliban, makes the wrong choices all over again, choosing self-exile abroad where he is forced to accept the role of the dead to make a living.

While the stories of Roger and Derek are basically realistic, romance elements are more evident in Teeton's dealings with Mrs Gore-Brittain (Prospero's wife who also represents Britain), her lost daughter Myra, and Fernando, Prospero's brother - all of whom the reader sees as having lived for about three hundred years according to the

logic of the story. Parabolic logic also requires that the reader accept the splitting of Miranda, Prospero's daughter, into two: Myra, violated during the revolt which killed her father in San Cristobal, and Landa who becomes Teeton's wife in San Cristobal before she deserts him to live with the American ambassador.

Teeton, who subsequently goes to London, where he lives as Mrs Gore-Brittain's tenant, represents the consciousness of San Cristobal that would break free from the hold of neo-colonial cultural patterns. But the break cannot be easy. Ceasing to be Mrs Gore-Brittain's tenant becomes a suffocatingly difficult task, for a warm relationship has developed between him and this woman who represents Britain, the Mother country. So intense are his feelings that the announcement of his plan to go home after seven years as a painter and tenant of the Old Dowager keeps sticking in his throat and must be postponed till a more suitable moment arrives:

Teeton felt the little cramp of air come to his throat again. His departure would strike like an act of desertion. Gradual as an illness you couldn't detect her loneliness had become part of his fears (p39).

Both the ex-colonial and the ex-coloniser are psychologically afflicted by ills that they seek to escape by drawing closer together: the Old Dowager's loneliness becomes part of Teeton's fears. Her beginning to see Teeton as a replica of her dead husband, Prospero, (pp182, 186) underlines the completeness of cultural alienation in the ex-colonial. A second exile has completed Prospero's moulding of Caliban in his own image. But what has Caliban gained? His rebellion and achievement of independence, in the author's estimate, amount to little, since a second exile tames him all over again until, his revolutionary fire extinguished, he ends up no less a pet than Vulcan the Roman god of fire (Paquet, 1983) - and as tame as Mrs Gore-Brittain's dog. For Teeton, as for Roger, the Ceremony of Souls seems to offer hope of redemption. But he feels alienated from its ritual, and anyway his attendance is interrupted when Nicole dies in his room and he is forced to take refuge - alone with Mrs Gore-Brittain and Fernando - on an island off the coast of England. In a true romance, the island would probably be an apocalyptic setting for visions such as Gonzalo's utopian ones in The Tempest. Islands - like mountains, ladders and other exalted or enchantingly secluded places - are ideal settings for the apocalyptic. However, the island of refuge in Water with Berries is a setting of tragic imprisonment for the erstwhile colonizers and colonized alike.

Teeton has to choose between enduring a cultural imprisonment and committing a crime to escape it. His delay in arranging to go back home leaves him only two options, and, aware of the cultural connections that have made the Old Dowager indispensable to him, he opts to murder in order to be free. Smashing ties with the ex-coloniser to repossess freedom is the course of action Lamming's work seems to espouse, but not perhaps through murder. Slewn Cudjoe (1980), discussing Lamming's fiction as reflecting a movement towards the idea of total independence for the Caribbean, laments the author's late arrival at the revolutionary idea of breaking all links of a colonial and neo-colonial kind. Teeton certainly breaks the ties - but in the wrong way, only to move from a cultural prison to a literal one. The violence that all three artists have resorted to as a means of getting free will not lead to liberation. To Roger's arson Derek adds rape on stage as a way of rejecting the dead role he must play, and then Teeton caps the violence by killing the Old Dowager. All this causes the loss of even the little freedom that is the exile's lot in the metropolis.

How much the Old Dowager is unwilling to face the past is revealed by her murder of Fernando for reminding her about her daughter, Myra, whom she has given up for lost. Myra is the embodiment of the evil aspects of colonial history that Mrs Gore-Brittain would rather forget - which is why she refuses the idea that she and Teeton undertake a search for her daughter. Teeton, of course, knows that Myra will readily be found on the heath at the Ceremony, but, anticipating the Old Dowager's neurotic reaction, he decides to tread softly on dangerous ground which has already cost Fernando his life.

The murder of Fernando does not shock since sufficient psychological motivation has been given to explain it. What does surprise us is that Fernando, who has lived for about three hundred years, can actually die. Fernando's life that has lasted about three centuries has more than a strong suggestion of the supernatural in it. The spectacular realism that Lamming has employed has not, however, made Fernando a demigod like many characters of parabolic literature. The only supernatural trait he is allowed (not, however, an inconsiderable item) is the ability to live long. When he has to retreat with the Old Dowager and Teeton to the island, he uses a helicopter, not magic, to get them there.

The Dowager's death, like Fernando's, strangely blends the elements of the parabolic and the tragic. Her three hundred years far exceed the natural life-span, though she is within the order of nature in many other ways. As a landlady she is a natural being and not, like Cinderella's godmother, the archetypal figure of a woman in control of the magic world. She cannot turn pumpkins into carriages and mice into horses but, to make his allegory work, the author claims for her the miracle of agelessness.

Selectively at least, then, the reader must apply the canons of the parabolic to Water with Berries. Angus Fletcher (1964), who prefers his literature mimetic, would dispute my emphasis on allegory and the parabolic. He uses Freudian psychoanalysis to diagnose disorder in the author's psyche. But Stephen Sleman insists that:

there has been a resurgence in allegorical writing in recent years, and in my view the most interesting examples of it are coming out of post-colonial cultures (Sleman, 1988; p157).

And he continues:

Post-colonial allegorical texts would thus offer support to the critical purpose of rehabilitating allegory as a viable mode of writing for creative fiction (ibid.; p165).

Sleman's article is not the only weapon available for the defence of allegory, including parabolic allegory, as a legitimate technique in art. Carl Jung could also be adduced to check Freudian centrifugalism, which tends to treat literature as specimens through which may be studied the diseases that plague an author's mind. Critics such as Jung champion the autonomy of literature from undue encroachment by clinical psychology, and permit us to regard the parabolic and its associated form, allegory, as legitimate literary modes - modes which, as I have indicated, Third World writers continue to utilise.

## NOTES

- 1 It has to be taken into account that folk literature is, strictly speaking, part of modern Third World writing. Even literature such as classical Indian writing could be studied as part of Third World writing. These Indian traditional epics cannot be ignored in a major study of modern Indian literature since their influence extends far beyond their classical setting. The Mahabharata is especially relevant to A Goddess.
- 2 The human elements on which catharsis is based come out better in the more orthodoxly mimetic modes - the high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic - although the last two of these are more concerned with pathos than catharsis, since they deal with characters in pathetic rather than strictly Aristotelian tragic circumstances.
- 3 In European literature allegory produced its masterpieces in the period of the romance, i.e. the middle ages. Gay Clifford discusses this, and gives a favourable and detailed treatment of allegory (Clifford, 1974).
- 4 Clifford (1974; p44) observes that allegory was originally written as a book of wisdom, but not any more - as a result of increased pressure to use it subversively. To me, however, Bhattacharya's work is not felt to be subversive: 'a book of wisdom' describes it well.
- 5 I understand that Mukherji was under the strong influence of New Criticism, whose views she has repudiated since publishing her book. Her remark, however, still illustrates New Criticism's centripetal fallacy which involves judging works of literature not just by mimetic but by ironic standards. Each mode must be judged by the standards its classics have established.
- 6 Cyclic archetypes include the daily cycle of the sun across the sky, the seasonal cycle, and the human generational cycle in which children replace the dying aged. The water cycle is much more involved.
- 7 Psychoanalytic critics may insist on a connection between the working of

Lamming's mind and the recurrent appearance of schizophrenics on his canvasses. But evidence from other Caribbean writers shows similar concerns with the mental health of the West Indian exile. In V S Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas, published a year after Lamming's Season of Adventure, Biswas, the main character in the Indian community, is a perennial neurotic (due to pressures of life in exile) who at one point is interned in a mental home.

- 8 Trevor Griffiths traces the interpretation of Shakespeare's play as follows: 'With critical and theatrical interest directed elsewhere, little attention was paid in the eighteenth century to the colonial elements in Shakespeare's The Tempest .... Although Caliban had been referred to as an ape as early as 1770, the widespread impact of Darwinian ideas in the 1860s caused him to be seen as Shakespeare's imaginative precreation of Darwin's "missing link" as well as an under-developed native and a member of a rebellious proletariat' (Griffiths, 1983; p163).

The Prospero - Caliban relationship is important here because it is in the background of nearly everything that Lamming writes, as his Pleasures of Exile (1960) indicates.

- 9 Although Prospero and Caliban - first published in New York in 1956 - did not appear in English until 1964, it may have influenced The Pleasures of Exile (1960), as well as Water with Berries (1971), where the neurotic psychology of colonisation is explored. Mannoni (p105) explains that Shakespeare's Prospero has a neurotic orientation that manifests itself when his authority is challenged. Lamming's work seems to be partly a study in this orientation.

### CHAPTER THREE: *THE PARABOLIC ENCYCLOPAEDIC FORM*

Encyclopaedic art is motivated by the need to produce an in-depth portrayal of a community's archetypes. It often involves covering in detail a wide range of archetypes which in episodic forms are only casually stated. Through these it shows a community's perception of its past, how it defines its identity in the present, and what it considers achievable in the future. In my discussion of Armah's Two Thousand Seasons as an example of a Third World parabolic encyclopaedic narrative, an attempt is made to relate it to the literature discussed in the previous chapter, which analysed episodic forms of the parabolic by Bhattacharya, Ngugi, and Lamming. This chapter is mainly concerned with the identification and discussion of the archetypes and archetypal roles that Armah has employed to produce an encyclopaedic work on the theme of colonialism and post-colonialism. These include the ideal past archetype, the archetypal roles of mother, monster and trickster, and the green-wood and rebirth archetypes. Due attention is also paid to the fact that the work is parabolic in spite of its toning down to the minimum the element of the supernatural normally present in that form.

#### Armah: 'Two Thousand Seasons'

Since the days of early Negritudist writing, few works have been as devoted to the African past as Two Thousand Seasons, which is chiefly concerned with social rebirth. But before an analysis of the archetypes in this work is attempted, the book's form must be briefly discussed. Derek Wright's careful search for parameters by which to classify Armah's book will be our starting point in identifying its form. He observes that

Two Thousand Seasons does not purport to be a 'novel' in any sense of the word and to approach Armah's daring experimentation with the techniques of indigenous African narrative forms ... is to mistake both the formal design and the spirit of his book. (Wright, 1989; p222)

Armah's narrator relates his story in the manner of a traditional story-teller indignantly compiling a record of heroic resistance by a pan-African fraternity against two versions of foreign invasion: Arab and European. The absence of complex

psychological data in the characters is a feature of all parabolic literature - the folk tale, the legend and the romance<sup>1</sup> and the written counterparts of these. Armah's work shares this characteristic reduction of the good-evil dichotomy to Manichean oppositions of black and white.<sup>2</sup> This is precisely where critical controversy over the book has centred. Readers such as Wright, though generally convinced that Armah's work is a daring experiment, refuse to accept the pan-African fraternity as wholly good and everything contrary to it as entirely evil.

Yet if the romance is effectively a different form of fiction from the novel, such features as its Manichean polarities have to be respected and tolerated. The polarisation of good and evil can be objected to in the parabolic only if it is excessive. There are certainly excesses in this book. For example, there are numerous instances of deviant sexual behaviour among the invaders as opposed to a mere case or two among the local people. But until criticism of this work goes further than obsession with its weaknesses, what it is basically about risks being ignored. The spirit in which Soyinka, after giving examples of its excesses, analyses the work points towards a more constructive critical approach:

... we encounter all aliens as inhuman exploiters only; there is no redeeming grace, no event is permitted to establish the exception  
...

In spite of this, Two Thousand Seasons is not a racist tract; the central theme is far too positive and dedicated and its ferocious onslaught on alien contamination soon falls into place as a preparatory exercise for the liberation of the mind.

(Soyinka, 1978; pp 111-2)

Two Thousand Seasons is a significant work, not only within Armah's corpus but in African literature as a whole. It is in fact the only African parabolic encyclopaedic form written so far.

The encyclopaedic form often purports to reveal in depth the earliest beginnings of a community so as to protect the mind from the unsettling idea of a purposeless past of unknown origins. Few of even the most scientifically-minded people will long entertain the idea of unknown beginnings for mankind. Unless scientists can lay their hands on the bone of an ape from which mankind is supposed to have originated, their minds will not be at rest.

Archeology links the scientifically-minded with a past from which they can understand the present and formulate goals for the future. But often history alone does not satisfy this need; prehistory, no matter how inaccurate, must be brought into play to meet the human desire for a secure primordial past. Armah's narrator is a literary archeologist endowed with narrative tools to excavate, unearth, and exhibit for the eye of his reader an 'Eden-like ideal' (Gikandi, 1987; p21), a heritage of social reciprocity, wholeness, hospitality, and creative vitality:

Our way is reciprocity. The way is wholeness. Our way knows no oppression. The way destroys oppression. Our way is hospitable to guests. The way repels destroyers .... Our way creates. The way destroys only destruction (p62).

These values, however, have been largely abandoned, either wilfully (as in the case of Brafo's father's misconduct) or through historical accidents. Armah's narrator orchestrates with relentless but not monotonous repetition the vicissitudes that must befall a people who have forsaken the communal values that gave them a sense of direction in their movement through history before the complications of the present.

It must be remembered that most parabolic literature is quest-literature, concerned with upholding notions of the ideal life, and largely hortative in the sense that it encourages the emulation of life as it should be rather than depicting it as it really is. The metaphor of 'the way' here is an archetypal one, common in quest-literature as an easy carrier of the ideals that the society expects to be aspired to so that future goals may be attained. Tutuola's The Palm Wine Drinkard is another parabolic work in which 'the way' and its values are taken for granted. The hero in The Palm Wine Drinkard is punished for drinking excessively rather than working. In his journey underground, he suffers want and has to learn to work before he can be restored to society, purged of his faults. Two Thousand Seasons has a similar theme and scheme, but, being an encyclopaedic work, involves not just one person and his monomyth but an entire continental fraternity for whom communal rebirth is sought.

The purgative process cannot take place in an underground journey in Two Thousand Seasons since, unlike Tutuola, the narrator depicts almost exclusively the natural rather than the supernatural order. But no matter how much an author may wish to prune the

supernatural from parabolic narration, he cannot, in most cases, entirely succeed, because the mode thrives on it: hence Anoa's prophecy in Two Thousand Years that becomes the propellant for the plot. There must be almost unmitigated suffering - 'two thousand seasons: a thousand dry, a thousand moist' (p25)- before the society can be returned to the forsaken 'way' which held the community together in the ideal archetypal existence of primordial times.

Unlike many African novelists, Armah postulates no primordial progenitor archetype.<sup>3</sup> He focusses on a more diffuse Edenesque memory as the force which can repair the minds of the psychologically disorientated. But he requires a repository of communal values standing between this ideal existence and the purgative epoch of two thousand seasons, one thousand dry, one thousand moist, which will in turn be followed by a final rain-drenched fruitfulness. This repository is provided by Anoa.

Anoa warrants careful scrutiny. She is no ordinary woman. Consistent with the parabolic's concern to place good characters in exalted and evil ones in lower positions, she is endowed with communal authority to become a mother archetype through which the future of the community is prophesied. In the dry-moist era the male figure will be dominant. But Anoa is presented as an archetypal woman closer to the era of Edenesque reciprocity than to the age of confusion that succeeds it. A guide and a prophetess, she speaks to people about the need to adhere to the values of 'the way', until, at a historic turning point, she does some supernatural peering into the future and sees the thousand years<sup>4</sup> of disaster facing the fraternity of 'the way' before the restoration of utopia.

Another of Armah's works helps to clarify Anoa's role. The wife of the man in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born is seen from an ironic point of view. She belongs initially with the chichidodo characters in that work such as Koomson, whose dignity is destroyed in the escape scene by his departure through a toilet he had earlier refused to use. The parabolic and the ironic are in effect opposites in the scheme of modes, and the man's wife and Anoa similarly represent the opposite poles of Armah's characterization - the former assuming a chichidodo dung-eating indignity, the latter all the accolades conferable on a female figure in literature. The man's wife exemplifies many characteristics of the femme fatale whereas Anoa embodies the hope of a return to the wholesome life of an ideal past.

One might see Armah as pessimistic about the restoring of the African consciousness on the evidence of, say, The Beautiful Ones alone, where his art plumbs depths of misery few African works have portrayed. However, the stubborn determination to hold on to a hope unsubstantiated by anything else but the author's assurance of a utopia-like ideal in Two Thousand Seasons suggests that the gloom in The Beautiful Ones belongs more to the narrative form in which it is cast than to Armah himself. Since the days of the confident prophetic visions of early Negritudist writers, such optimistic pronouncements about Africa's future have been heard from only a few voices, like Ngugi's.

Just as Armah refuses to engage in an archival piling up of detail about an ideal past, so he also avoids speculating on the precise nature of the future restoration, though one detects a hint of socialist millennialism. Postulation of a vague utopian archetype is, perhaps, all that the community needs for reassurance that its energy is not being wasted for lack of clear goals. That there is a utopian goal to achieve, no matter how vague, is probably more than adequate in the narrative scheme of the work, since - especially in parabolic literature - art and politics generally operate in distinct territories. Rather than engage in a detailed definition of the envisaged restoration, Armah concentrates on identifying those obstacles which have stood in the path to restoration and must remain there until there is an unreserved commitment to the ideals of 'the way' as they were practised in the beginning.

Armah's community moves symbolically through time towards an archetypal rebirth promised by the prophecy. But there are occasions when movement is literal as well as symbolic. Armah gives us the journey archetype replete with many possibilities. Quest-literature often employs this archetype to demonstrate the ideals of 'the way' at work. Armah is quick to exploit it in order to infuse migratory activities with the set purpose of reaching a particular locale or point in history where social rebirth can occur. The escape from the Islamic desert-monster and the arrival in the green land named after Anoa,<sup>5</sup> a land perfect for the ideals of 'the way' (p89) and for the temporary recovery of communal fraternity, is meant to demonstrate two ideas: that the goal of harmonious communal existence is attainable, and that the migrations which to an outsider might appear to be mere meaningless movement are in reality motivated by the loftiest desires a philosophy of life can produce.

The quest for a green world to provide answers to the difficulties besetting the ideals of 'the way' is central to Ammah's encyclopaedic work. In the hurrying pace of Noliwe and Ningome, the pathfinders who are sure they are just about to locate a haven of rest after the many disheartening dangers of the journey, the author seeks momentum for the narrative, leading to a climactic find of an archetypal green world. The new enthusiasm that propels these pathfinders possesses the reader as well. And what better time of the day to discover the green world of the quest than dawn, that inexhaustible archetype for denoting a quest successfully completed? (pp87-88). Here, the narrator is seeking 'cyclic confirmation' for his rebirth theme with the dawn which suggests that, for the moment, the period of hopelessness and painful wandering is over. This kind of confirmation in narration involves invoking such great natural cycles as the solar system, the seasons and so on to confirm in the mind of the reader the validity of the postulated argument - in this case the proposition that a special day will dawn upon the battered consciousness of those involved in the quest, bringing psychological rehabilitation, material satisfaction, and an end to the wanderings. This arrival, though it is in fact only the first stage in a journey towards the final restoration, comes after a journey that has tested the feet and tried the spirit. Crucial for success has been the capacity to endure the hazards of the journey that buffet the body as much as the spirit even when the green world is almost fully in view:

Some of us were already saying under their tired breath that we had risen from the impossible only to head for the killing, when Noliwe and Ningome, rushing up a final crest, halted and called out to the despairing others (p88).

Here is a narrator celebrating the fruit of human toil that has been rewarded with the sighting of a green world of great promise. Linking archetype with archetype, the narrative now proceeds at two speeds: that of the quick-paced pathfinders whose fortitude is held up for emulation by those on the verge of despair, and that of the heavy-legged others, far from agile, who though slow are no less determined to reach the destination.

Psychologically complex characterization is not the province of the parabolic. Thus, we know nothing of the psychological make-up of Noliwe and Ningome, the idealistic characters of relentless determination, nor of the nomadic life of a people on whom

history has not smiled for long ages. Employing spectacular realism, the narrator seizes upon one character-trait - determination - to explain what has ensured the survival of a community against all the odds of history and fate. Noliwe and Ningome are not 'real' African characters in the sense that, say, Achebe's Okonkwo or Ngugi's Gikonyo are. They are psychological archetypes through whom service to community, even at the expense of one's own life, is upheld as the loftiest ideal to pursue since it ensures group survival. Before they die of exhaustion they lead the whole community to a mountain-top, the final crest overlooking an unbelievably green world, from where the possibility of new beginnings is affirmed. That dawn is best appreciated from a high vantage point is the implicit assertion of the narrative. This is meant to lead to the conclusion that the metaphorical dawn and the high crest have merged to form a double-edged archetype through which the community will henceforth re-define itself. The epiphanic point, the point at which a vision inaugurates radical change in one's world view, is the mountain; here the crest reinvigorates as well as inspires.

The hill-crest experience is not restricted to the path-finders. The narrator, with a collective sensibility, invites the reader to see an entire community standing on the hill-crest to sip the apocalyptic delights of the new beginnings which the green world below them promises. If this is what the migratory operation has been all about (to locate a green world where the culture of 'the way' can take root again and prosper) why then should the viewing of the land be made a privilege accessible only to the path-finders? Only in a few passages is Armah's collective view of society as vividly expressed as in the hill-crest experience.

Nevertheless, whereas all may view the land, not all are born griots with the ability to compose, with lyrical effusion, a song to praise its beauty. Indeed, even the narrator confesses his inability to weave sufficient praise for the beauty before him:

With what shall the utterer's tongue stricken with goodness,  
riven with the quiet force of beauty, with which mention shall  
the tongue of the utterers begin a song of praise whose perfect  
singers have yet to come? (p88)

It is the narrator's background which explains his limitations:

... who would have known, coming from so near the desert, who  
would have known there was in this world such a variation, such  
a universe of green alone? (pp88-89)

Literature often turns to the animal world for images to express states and qualities, such as valour (the lion), treachery (the fox), or peace (the lamb or dove). Thus in Armah's Two Thousand Seasons, the land's breath-taking beauty is considered incomplete without the depiction of an animal to round out this picture of natural fulness. Man understands his world through images, and the artist supplies precisely those images through which it can understand itself. The choice of the duiker, a gentle antelope, to embody the innocence of Anoa is utterly appropriate. This image (which is not West African) also helps create an elasticity of plot that enables the book to transcend the limits of time and space. This in turn generates allegorical significance, allowing the narrator to show that he has been speaking about the entire history of Africa rather than confining himself to Anoa. The duiker, 'best of animals, attacking none, knowing ways to keep attackers distant' (p88), becomes a metaphor for the innocence of those who have suffered from attacks by predators and destroyers as a result of a 'fatal, heedless generosity' (p91).

Unfortunately the human duikers of Armah's world lack the caution of the real duiker which enables it to keep predators at bay. Proper redress and race-retrieval must involve the discovery that the painful experiences of history have resulted partly from possessing the duiker's innocence without its astuteness or its long-range detection of danger. The destruction of Anoa, the newly-found haven of rest, is a re-enactment of African history.

From the prologue onwards the condemnation of invasion is stated unequivocally and delivered aggressively. No compromise is considered possible between hunter and hunted once this relationship is established. The initial flirtation with the desert-monster (Islam) allows its sterility to creep into the well-watered landscape where the community re-establishes itself. Its almost imperceptible destruction of the cultural milieu that nurtures the community is understood only too late. The flight from the desert is accomplished, but the desert dwellers' crippling influence on human relations in Armah's community is not obviated. A different form of social organisation, alien to the African mind, has been introduced among the people by the desert predator. Investing all power in a single man - the king - in the manner of the desert people engenders endless misfortunes for the people. And disintegration of communal ownership of the means of production constitutes a further departure from the ideals of 'the way'. And who spearheads the changes but the king's own son?

Bentum had his followers seize the land. For the first time among us one man tried to turn land into something cut apart and owned. It was asked what next the greedy would think to own - the air? (p100).

A reader brought up in the age of title deeds in Africa might see much humour in the failure of Armah's community to understand private ownership of anything more than one's dwelling place, animal wealth and the crop on the farm. The idea of owning just the crops but not the land itself might occasion laughter. But to Armah, private ownership of land is where the new tragedy begins. It is the idea of private ownership without communal sanction that makes it possible to accept the practice of owning and selling one another to the destroyers from the ocean who initiate the coastal slave market and send destructive tidal waves up the quiet rivers of Anoa.

The archetypal rebirth that was just within reach is negated by the new waves of destruction. Greed grips the green-world with corrosive effects. In such tragic episodes - whatever the literary form - the trickster/traitor often has a role to play. One expects to find this archetypal role filled by a fairly harmless figure like the Hare of East African folk tales or Ananse its West African counterpart. But here a human traitor assumes the role. King Koranche is not allowed to play the ineffectual king which parabolic monster-killing quests often postulate. Armah's narrator, speaking with the authority of a community that remains faithful to the ideals of 'the way', indignantly assigns to the king the role of traitor who collaborates with the sea-monster of European colonialism.

To look for motives for such betrayal in the parabolic is, however, to seek what it never promised. A work like A Grain of Wheat may explain the psychological motivation for Mugo's treachery, but that is an example of ironic writing. In the parabolic complex motivation is simplified in favour of highlighting errors and offences. Also mimetic modes might focus on mitigating circumstances whereas the parabolic marshalls its narrative strategies towards stating offences against the quest in the clearest possible terms. And no sitting on the fence is allowed, as Two Thousand Seasons well demonstrates. Characters are either for the quest, 'the way', or against it.

Armah rejects the stereotyped interpretation of history that sees the African as having unquestioningly accepted the role of being a commodity for sale. But he does not stop there. He postulates organised resistance to the mercantile world dealing in human flesh - witness the successful rebellion that frees all of those aboard a slave ship. This does not, however, impress a reader like Wright (London, 1989) who suspects Armah of inaccurately re-writing history. One does not need to see Armah as re-inventing the entire history of the time. An isolated case of a successful mutiny among slaves who have hardly left the African shores is not inconceivable although recorded history may not have taken notice of it.<sup>6</sup> Armah's retrieval of a plausible heroic episode reflects his belief that historical truth could well have been suppressed so as to make the African seem acquiescent and thus a participant in his own dehumanization.

Polemical writing such as Armah's book will always provoke controversy. The presentation of Arab-Islamic colonialism as the desert monster and European colonialism as the sea monster, both opposed to continental rebirth, is obviously contentious. Even more so are the episodes which show the African actively rejecting his dehumanisation; they make the work of the Wilberforces less glorious. The narrator's challenge to us to question the Eurocentric presentation of a passive African waiting for the benevolence of Western philanthropists should excite the liberal-minded. If that happens, the presentation of the faithful, those who remain loyal to the ideals of 'the way', and their operation against enslavement from the groves led by the indomitable Isanusi, will not be offensive.

The discovery of Isanusi is an intriguing episode:

It was on this search that unsuspecting, we found Isanusi in the grove and knew him finally not for a madman but for a fundi whose art went beyond any skill of the body, whose mastery reached the consciousness itself of our people; he whose greatest desire, whose vocation it was to keep the knowledge of our way, the way, from destruction ... (p139).

Isanusi seems like a madman at first because the changes that have taken place under King Koranche are superficially so attractive that dissent appears like lunacy. And yet, as the narrator points out, the king is not the criterion by which events should be judged, having himself abandoned the knowledge of 'the way' long ago and

established himself as a middleman between the agents of colonialism and the people. The values of 'the way', not the King's imitation of European ways, are the absolutes the narrator points to for judging the history unfolding before us.

Poano, the slave-traders' coastal outpost, becomes the symbol of destruction, and the succouring groves the bastions of resistance. In between is the king's court, for he is the middleman between the destroyers of 'the way' and its defenders. With the exception of a few, the community follows the King and collaborates with the imperialists. Among these the 'parasitic elders', 'ostentatious cripples', and 'askaris' who do their 'zombi' work are catalysts in the degeneration from the ideals of 'the way'. Influential courtiers such as Otumfor prefer to flatter rather than resist with speakers of the truth like Isanusi. The Poano episodes repeat much of what has already happened in the desert before the migration, when the Arabs returned to find 'a brood of men ready to be tools for their purpose'. The observation is made at this point that 'the capture of the mind and the body both is a slavery far more lasting, far more secure than the conquest of bodies alone' (p52). The Negritudist position that Armah adopts to portray this capture of mind and body is far more radical than that of Negritudists such as Camara Laye who accept Islam as having been so long in Africa as to be accepted as part of the African cultural milieu.

To Armah, Islam and Christianity are, respectively, the tools of the predator and the destroyer that help them ensure lasting alienation of the African consciousness for the purpose of material gains. The education of the king's son at Poano, his departure to Europe and his return with an old, deaf and blind wife reflect his total intellectual alienation which is also symbolised by his change of name from Bentum to Bradford George. The best of blacks, the king's son, gets the worst of whites for a wife; it seems as though the best in one culture equals the worst in the other. But, of course, this is not the narrator's point of view. 'The dance of love' (chapter five) is partly meant to demonstrate the presumptuous tenets of the culture claiming superiority. If whiteness is everything, why do the king and his son still chase the beautiful Abena in a desperate manner that involves breaking the age-old rules of the dance of love? It is not out of pride that Abena rejects the marriage offer and quips "'So this white ghost was to have been my rival wife'" (p188). The narrator has her say this to show that the best in the 'inferior' culture does not equal the worst in the 'superior' culture. The dance, a ritual, archetypal form of entertainment, reveals the graces of Abena as a

paradigm with which to reject the inferior role predicated for his people. After Anoa, Noliwe, and Ningome, she takes over the role of confirming the movement towards social rebirth.

On the other hand, the type of Christianity depicted in the book amounts merely to apemanship, on the part of those like Bentum who are the butt of the counterpoint satire which supplements Armah's plain invective against the destroyers of 'the way'. Take, for example, the priest's self-parody placed near the end so that the reader cannot finish the text without a reminder that apemanship should be seen as the essence of this religion which claims to be able to guide people to a wholesome life now and in the hereafter:

Our coming here is a high favour unto you, o heathen people.  
We bring you whiteness, which is godliness itself .... Come and be saved. Come to the church, come into whiteness, come into purity. Throw your names to oblivion. Take white names, and denounce those who would fight against the whiteness of our new road (pp311-12).

There is clearly a vast difference between the fertile metaphor of 'the way' and the dead one of the 'new road'. Those on the 'new road' have missed the way; it cannot lead to the authentic African consciousness championed by the veteran Isanusi, a figure reminiscent of the Teacher in The Beautiful Ones who is a custodian of those values from which society has deviated.

Koranche's apemanship and unwavering belief in the myth of European compassion dwarf his son's mere change of name and return from abroad with an alien wife. He cannot see that the Europeans with whom he is in league possess much less altruism than they claim. It is not that this lack of altruism is too masked to be detected. The problem is that, once having betrayed 'the way', Koranche becomes too blind to see even the most naked truth. In a high mimetic work - that is, a work about a distinguished traditional leader - the hero would see through the ambivalences of colonial claims, as Okonkwo does in Things Fall Apart, even though he might be unable to adjust to the changes. But Armah's work is not of that kind. The idealism the king should have shown to spur him on to heroic resistance is attributed instead to the collective endeavour led by Isanusi. Armah has no qualms about depicting

Koranche as an imbecile so as to prove his unfitness for the leadership he purports to give in African matters. To those who might argue that an African monarch should have been portrayed in better colours, he has a ready answer: monarchy is not an authentically African form of leadership. Many of the problems besetting the continent stem from abandoning collective leadership through consultation in favour of alien styles, monarchy in particular. In Armah's world, there is no escaping the oft-repeated demonstration that failure to consult results in a mediaeval Arab or European power structure. What was initially impressed upon the African was the supremacy of the throne. The subsequent advocacy of parliamentary democracy was in effect simply a return to what Africa historically practised in its leadership by elders, though without written codes of law.

It is important to re-emphasise that parabolic literature rarely sets out to convince us that it tells a true story; dramatisation of the conflict (or agon) is the central concern, and realistic sociological and psychological data will tend to obscure rather than enhance the fundamental issues. The plainer the conflict, the more naked the moral. Having acknowledged the parabolic nature of this work, therefore, the reader should not be disconcerted by the fact that only Isanusi and Koranche are allowed any measure of psychological authenticity. And even they - despite the attempt to make them something more than stylised figures with merely symbolic status - remain, essentially, symbols of the values extolled by the respective sides of the conflict: Koranche the epitome of treacherous apemanship, and Isanusi the embodiment of the values of 'the way'. Eustace Palmer sees Two Thousand Seasons as being sadly deficient in characterization, though in the same breath, albeit rather hesitantly, he ascribes the weaknesses to the mode rather than to Armah:

This and other weaknesses are probably due to the work's narrative form, a combination of oral chronicle and parable - a parable of history and the sufferings of the entire African peoples. We hear the voice of a narrator ... rather than see the activities of powerfully realised characters in vividly presented scenes. (Palmer, 1979; p234)

Stylized characterization is not a weakness in the parabolic. Armah's narrator does not pretend to employ the techniques of a novel; his purpose is to chronicle the conflict in the form of an encyclopaedic African tale. Armah manages to pretend that the

orthodox novel, by which we generally seem to judge all forms of prose fiction, does not even exist. Why then judge him here by the canons of a form he has rejected in his narration? Why even raise the issue of characterization when he has made it clear that the oral tale is his model?

The answer to these questions lies in one basic fallacy: the fallacy of centripetalism, which causes us to look at literature as though it evolves in a survival-of-the-fittest fashion with the novel becoming the undisputed heir to all past excellence and reigning supreme over all forms of man's verbal creations. Armah uses the oral African tale as his classic model. He would, therefore, expect to be appraised by the standards that apply to a parabolic African tale such as the griots would tell. There is something inappropriate about this laborious classification, though. Armah's narrator would be surprised that his tale could be dragged into the quagmire of critical debate. His best judges are those listeners who laugh with him when, for example, he bitingly observes about Bentum that 'a name to make dogs bark in derision was given to him: Bradford George' (p142). His listeners at the fireplace or wherever the tale might be told are entertained and also instructed against copying foreign ways that are bound to leave the victim alienated, without roots in the culture of his people. In the narrator's view, the hortative value of his injunctions far outweighs the moot point about the credibility of dogs barking at strange names in the neighbourhood. Would Achebe disagree with him? Not unless he swallowed his words about the African novelist as teacher.<sup>7</sup> Achebe finds the mimetic prose form of the novel more suitable to his needs, but he would not call Armah to task for his peculiar parabolic realism, because their purpose is the same: the rehabilitation of Africa.

The style of the book - like its form - evokes the world of the griot. The narrator has eschewed standard English prose in favour of a vernacular prose epos. Brafo's righteous anger at his father's incestuous affair is a familiar episode which can be used to illustrate one of the techniques of griotic narration. Consider the way the episode is introduced:

Of those that journeyed most stopped close by, their new homes soon mere extensions of our own. A few went further in the heat of some small anger or some unusual fear. Such, to pause here, was the hunter Brafo (pp7-8).

A distinguishing characteristic of prose epos rhythm is its unfailing attempt at an approximation of oral address. The use of the adjective 'small' to qualify 'anger' and the suspension of the main narrative to tell about Brafo are two devices which make the texture of the language approximate the circumstances of African story-telling by the fireside or wherever else the griot may have been required to perform.

The use of seasons to indicate the passing of the years, and the rejection of commonplace terms like 'sunrise' and 'sunset' when registering times of the day, are meant to give a distinctively African flavour to the consciousness of the narrator, who represents the collective sensibility of his people, and, in particular, their cyclic contemplation of time. Consider, for example, how Armah describes the death of some leaders at the hands of a hostile group encountered on the way:

On the side of the sun's coming one group of our pathfinders  
had been killed; on the side of the sun's falling two ... (p78).

'Coming' and 'falling' are used in place of sunrise and sunset to portray the narrator's perception of the solar cycle. In keeping with the narrator's view of sunset as essentially a tragic 'fall', the number of deaths that occur that side is greater. Implicit in this usage is the wish for a day that never darkens.

Thus the verbal texture of Two Thousand Seasons and its narrative rhythm, which approximates to the vernacular rather than to English, try to reveal an African world view with its own uniqueness and identity. The African consciousness that Achebe manages to convey with proverbial rhetoric in his rural novels is portrayed differently in Armah's work, where the entire narrative is marked by a consistent departure from novelistic techniques of story-telling to align itself with the tales and legends of African oral tradition. Both writers succeed but in different ways. This is how Derek Wright views Armah's unique narration in Two Thousand Seasons:

It seems ... that a strange and arresting new literary form has been evolved out of his refashioning of the devices of an African tradition which has, in fact, an ancient pedigree: the tradition of the griot, the story-teller or oral historian who speaks with the voice of the whole community and whose legends, folktales and proverbs are stored in communal memory. (Wright, 1989; pp222-3)

Armah's is a narrator who uses all the available resources of the traditional artist to confer upon himself authority to reveal the past, present, and future. Encyclopaedic narration, making the revelation of a community's history its chief concern, depends for its success on the authority conferred upon its narrator. He is not just telling a two-dimensional tale of fact and action as history is bound to do; his task is to present history creatively and so reassure the people that their efforts to survive as a community have been worthwhile.

Simply warming to the conflict, says Armah, falls short of the level of commitment the tasks of liberation require. Temptation will be difficult to resist as the lure to act like oppressors once power is seized strongly grips those who are merely lukewarm about resistance. Red-hot enthusiasm is what is required in the conflict, and it precludes the possibility of compromising for less than the quest is meant to achieve. The long episode of Kamuzu is narrated to demonstrate the opportunism of middle-of-the-way characters in the quest. The middle position does not remain tenable for long, particularly because people like Kamuzu only cynically help their fellow Africans invade the Governor's place, hoping indeed that they will not succeed (since that would destroy the privileges Kamuzu enjoys there). Kamuzu does not share the egalitarian principles governing the guerrilla warfare that liberates the land:

In his opinion, the stone place was the new seat of power over our people in the new arrangements brought by the whites, and whoever held it would be the person in ultimate control (p268).

Even worse:

To him these were the beginnings of alliances between one great man of power and other men of power, secret pacts designed in the end to drive us out of the stone place and to keep Kamuzu supreme there, a black copy of the head white destroyer (p270).

Because of these attitudes victory is lost as soon as it is won; the fight must begin all over again, this time against African despots, enemies of rebirth, who know nothing about the egalitarian sharing of power through consultation. Their progressive outlook notwithstanding, they will not brook consultative democracy. Kamuzu is a prototype of a group of post-colonial African politicians who see statecraft as a power game in which they must ensure that no one else has a card to play. Armah could be taken to

task for endowing his narrator with anachronistic thinking that enables him to look across the centuries that stand between him and contemporary Africa.<sup>8</sup> But the narrator, who is aware of being parabolic, is wise and experienced enough as a griot to look at his times and accurately predict from there a future which became our present.

At the centre of the Kamuzu episode lies an attack on the idea of acquiring power more for leisure than for service. The African egalitarian view of power which Isanusi represents entails a heavy responsibility that - paradoxically - few are qualified to undertake. The impersonal wielding of power at the expense of communal interests is depicted as alien to African thinking. Hence the description of the former Governor's castle as the 'stone place' - where stone expresses the unfeeling control of human beings that the castle has been exercising. There are those, too dehumanised by new life-styles, new ambitions and new world views, who cannot but oppress, should they chance upon power like Kamuzu. Their eyes are trained more on privilege than responsibility, more on enjoying than serving. Armah's work argues a case for preventing such individuals from acquiring power. Their way cannot lead to rebirth.

Sandwiched between the Kamuzus and the Koranches, those hot for the quest look as though they might lose on both fronts. The Koranches, whose position suggests more confusion than a Machiavellian pursuit of power, are visibly not as dangerous as the Kamuzus. But they are as powerful, and the task ahead for the proponents of 'the way' is a formidable one. The archetypal lush greenery that symbolised new beginnings for all has been ruined by alien values. Only a ring of true greenery remains around the fifth grove where the liberators must rededicate themselves to the ideals of 'the way' and start a defensive war so that the grove is not taken by either Koranche or Kamuzu. Isanusi's simple bands have before them almost insurmountable barriers.

Carefully developed in Two Thousand Seasons, however, is the thought that victory is not to the many or to the mighty; it is to the determined few who show an unflagging commitment to a cause. Isanusi's bands set many captives free - but only a handful join them, the rest choosing to return to their homelands. Thus the ranks are forsaken by countless people who could have swelled their numbers. Nevertheless, while they lose numbers, they gain the confidence to free many more. Not least in what has built this confidence is their success in blowing up Kamuzu's castle. It is true that the rulers of surrounding areas enter into a contract with European powers for its reconstruction.

That history will indeed repeat itself is a useful cliché here. Another Kamuzu will be born to occupy the new castle. In the political economy of the story, this is meant to happen again and again until, at length, the vicious circle prophesied by Anoa is broken after two thousand seasons. African consciousness will then finally be rid of alien contamination and a truly human society will be reborn, on a continental scale.

The victory against Koranche with which Two Thousand Seasons ends is, therefore, not the promised rebirth. Armah is a skilful encyclopaedist who presents the rebirth archetype not as an achieved reality but as a motif to mobilise his people to be instruments of their own rebirth. If this does not happen in their time, there is still no reason for despondency, which is an enemy to the will much more deadly than visible enemies. Hence the caution against despair at the realisation that the circle is still unbroken:

Whose will is it to make utterances of despair simply because our physical eyes have not lived at the very end of destruction's two thousand seasons? Who is the seer of such hazy vision he pines in regret that his ears of flesh will not be the very ears ... that hear the music of that definite creation? (p320)

Of the cardinal elements that normally appear in the parabolic, only one is carefully toned down in Armah's work: the supernatural. The 'definite creation' spoken of here is not to be predicated upon agencies other than man. Armah's confidence in human beings' ability to create the order that best suits their aspirations remains unshaken throughout. His work celebrates the labour of the African who needs no ancestor or spirit or any kind of divine aid to mould the world of his dreams. The point of view from which Africa is seen is no doubt Negritudist. But Armah's work departs from Negritudist conventions insofar as it does not abound in the supernatural presence of ancestors,<sup>9</sup> spirits, or allusions to an idealised recent past which contact with the West has destroyed. Abandonment of the ideals of 'the way' facilitates Arab and European destruction of African values. The 'definite creation' envisaged is simply the recovery of the ideals of reciprocity without which Africa cannot effect her own redemption.

After the Tigritudist proclamations of Soyinka that were generally thought to sum up the position of anglophone writers, Armah's venturing into Negritudist themes - perhaps the only anglophone author who has ever done so - demonstrated his artistic

independence. The view persists that Soyinka, with his Tigritude, forced a premature close on the debates which the Negritudist movement had initiated. In fact, Armah's work shows that Negritudist themes remain fertile. But there are those who like to see Two Thousand Seasons in a different context - as a reaction against Yambo Oulougum's violent and crocodile-infested Africa in Bound to Violence, where the African enslaves his own kind with undissipated energy even before his human wares find a market outside the continent. This too is a tenable view of the work.

Whichever of these views is adopted, however, the essence of Armah's work remains the same. It is a book with a vision of a communal rebirth for the entire continent of Africa. The basic thesis is that the adoption of a traditional and egalitarian ethic can bring about the renewal of cultural, economic, and political institutions. The visionaries dedicated to this renewal must elicit dedication to a communal ethos. Few works have articulated the need for the renewal of the African consciousness in the encyclopaedic manner Armah uses. This is perhaps why Soyinka, his anti-Negritudist position notwithstanding, found in the work a message too positive to be discarded.

## NOTES

- 1 Wole Ogundele's article (1989) discusses Elechi Amadi's romances, with which Armah's work is classified. Attention needs to be drawn to the fact that Ihuoma in The Concubine is said to have been at some point the wife of a water divinity. Though it does not go so far toward the supernatural, Two Thousand Seasons is in the same parabolic category.
- 2 Frazer notes the Manichean approach that he considers a weakness in Armah's work but which Frye's poetics would regard as a characteristic of the romance. The episode in question is the Middle Passage one, where slaves free themselves: '... divisiveness of moral vision forces the characters into two irreconcilable camps, according to a simple formula: black = good; white = bad ... the resulting narrative texture has much in common with a cops-and-robbers episode or a saga of cowboys and Indians.' (Frazer, 1980; pp76-7)
- 3 On progenitor archetypes in African fiction see Gikandi, 1984.
- 4 Frazer's analysis of Two Thousand Seasons (Frazer, 1980; pp63-81) sees its time scheme as a fluid historical period covering a thousand years. Elsewhere in my discussion, I argue that Armah's narrator is able to survey such a long period by analysing the past and predicting a painful future for Africa on the grounds of Anoa's prophecy. Although parabolic conventions could allow the narrator to live through the period covered by his narrative, that does not seem to be the intention in this case.
- 5 The source of Armah's story according to Frazer (1980) is the migration of the Akan people, a historical event on which Ama Atta Aidoo based her play Anoa. The land is not, however, named after the play. Anoa is a visionary maid in the Akan migration legend.
- 6 The entry for 'Slavery' in Collier's Encyclopedia Vol.21 (New York, 1988) presents the Haitian revolution as the only successful slave revolution in history. Armah's narrator challenges his reader to adopt a questioning attitude with regard to records of this kind that ignore legendary communal history. A slave

rebellion which did not result in a republic would have little chance of being noticed and going on record. After all, the West was not ready to recognize the republic of Haiti until the progressive Lincoln led the way.

- 7 Achebe's celebrated statement on the role of the African writer as teacher was delivered in a lecture at the University of Leeds in 1965. It was published in Morning Yet on Creation Day (1975). Its republication in his new collection of essays, Hopes and Impediments (1988), shows that he has not equivocated on the matter.
- 8 Werner Glinga (1986; p226) has identified a form of anachronism in Ngugi's The River Between where actual history is ignored and two distinct historical periods are lumped together. He does not complain about the anachronism either diminishing the reader's enjoyment of the book or constituting a structural weakness. Like other critics, he lets the writer enjoy anachronism as part of the poetic licence that allows him to create freely.
- 9 Birago Diop's 'Souffles' is a well known Negritudist poem which is parabolic in the way it populates its environment with invisible presences in an idealised African situation.

## CHAPTER FOUR: *HIGH MIMETIC EPISODIC FORMS*

The high mimetic is the literature of heroic but unidealised leadership in a traditional context. Chapters One and Two have shown that characters in the parabolic mode are either idealised archetypes which help a community to define itself, or largely flawless figures endowed with more than natural power and a mysterious rapport with the supernatural. In the high mimetic, the hero is wholly human, no matter how great his achievements. Often, he has a tragic flaw.

As in previous chapters, the focus will be on the canonical theme of Third World contact with the West. The works to be discussed are Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini, Ngugi's The River Between and Lamming's Of Age and Innocence. The high mimetic in Lamming is only a counterpoint in a work whose main mode is the ironic. A dearth of high mimetic writing is one of the features of Caribbean literature.

### Bhattacharya: 'Music for Mohini'

Authority and dignity, the hallmarks of the high mimetic hero, characterise Jayadev, the hero of Music for Mohini. An early episode establishes the loftiness of his role. In his quest for a wife, materialistic practices are renounced. His wealthy family from the Big House is not interested in securing a dowry. Their high-mindedness is contrasted with the comical attempts of the heroine's father to secure a son-in-law through newspaper advertisements. Mohini, the heroine, exclaims with dismay and indignation: 'To be hawked in print as though you were toothpaste!' (p35). Fortunately, when Mohini is finally introduced to Jayadev, the occasion is in accord with tradition; Mohini's grandmother, Old Mother, arranges the meeting.

Music for Mohini does not present Indian culture as the antithesis of new Western ways; instead, a synthesis is discovered between 'horoscope' and 'microscope' - Bhattacharya's metonymy (p52) for Indian and Western culture respectively. The Professor, Mohini's father, embraces progress. He provides a sceptical and often comical view of both 'horoscope' and 'microscope'. His amusement at traditional Indian values, which he regards as museum relics, is counterbalanced by the presence of Old Mother. As M E Derrott observes (1966), she provides a ring of epic India.

She affirms the survival of the authentic Indian past in the modern metropolis. Her language has none of the Calcutta street rawness of the Professor's world. Her veneration of Sanskrit is not mere reverence for an ancient tongue; it is a preference for a language rich in metaphor:

You will brighten another house, child... The house is the lamp, man, is like oil, the woman is the wick, Mohini, and happiness is the living flame (p39).

The Professor allows negotiations for the hand of his daughter to be carried out in a traditional way that is at odds with his enlightened thinking. Similarly, Jayadev, the progressive leader of the region of Behula, allows his conservative, aristocratic mother to arrange a marriage steeped in superstition in which luck-signs and the horoscope assume great significance.

But, while the novel affirms a pride in India's epic past, it insists that Jayadev's position does not depend simply upon the authority of the Big House. His studies have been pursued to a high level to win him acclaim as 'the jewel of the University' (p122). He has modern academic status as well as traditional status.

The need for cultural reform is explored through Jayadev and Mohini in the traditional setting of rural India. Some of Behula's ancient customs have become meaningless austerities. Though Jayadev has been allowed a Western education, his mother epitomises the conservative mores of Behula and India's rural aristocracy. This novel addresses the task of how to effect changes that will strengthen and enhance a culture, when many changes seem frivolous, having the effect of diminishing or cheapening a way of life. Change involves the difficult process of cutting out and grafting in, though India is reluctant to do either.

One image of traditional attitudes and values is the palanquin. This ancient mode of transport assumes a contrast between human bearers and aristocratic passengers. It is a palanquin that lifts Mohini from the city to the palace, elevating her in status and worth to a position where she can effect change and reform for the benefit of others.

One area that Mohini finds in need of reform is the zaminder garden with its strict rules. As living links with epic India, the zaminders are custodians of a rich past.

Mohini opens the garden which has hitherto been a forbidden place. Its fruit, which in the past has rotted away, can be gathered. Mohini's joyous playing in the garden with the small boys of Behula is a highlight of the novel.

Unlike most Cinderellas, Mohini was not destitute. Originally a modern middle-class woman, she belongs within high mimetic realism. She is, however, a comic, rather than a tragic heroine. Much humour springs from her violation of absurd or irrational customs. She makes excursions into the forbidden. She is capable of breaking a thousand years of decorum by climbing a tree. But there is no diminution of her high dignity and authority. She affirms, in each episode, her own courage and intelligence.

An important issue in Music for Mohini is how to bring the Big House closer to the people. Life in Calcutta may suggest that the past has nothing to offer to the present, but the Big House has an epic grandeur which can contribute richly to society. The character Roplekha explains the need for change that embraces the best of West and East:

It's as though we made a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect culture with culture, Mohini, our old Eastern view of life with the new semi-Western outlook. The village absorbs a little of the West-polluted' city. Both change unaware. They are less angry with each other. Our new India must rest on this foundation (pp93-94).

Mohini proves the adaptability of the Big House and its usefulness to the modern age by offering adult classes under the banyan tree. There, many problems of synthesis are solved with comic but not parodic humour. The mistress whose Calcutta upbringing allows her to dispense with many formalities is an intriguing personality in a village where little has changed for centuries.

So, around the conservative code of the village, Mohini built something of the city - in spirit.... But it was cultural give-and-take (pp151-152).

Mohini was spiritually starved in the city, where festivals had been secularised into public holidays. She had received only snatches of Hindu religion and legends from Old Mother (p152). While Mohini is modernising Behula, its influence is Indianising

her. Her integration into the life and culture of Behula is demonstrated in a festival that is charged with meaning, unlike those held in the city. It is the brother-annointing ceremony, in which Mohini receives lotuses from twenty-five little boys in appreciation of the bond of love between brother and sister in Hindu custom. Som P Sharma comments:

The reader can see that Mohini, beginning as a blood-sister has become the great sister, she has become the goddess Nilasaraswati, the goddess of blue lotuses. She has become Saraswati with the capacity to offer Eros, dynamic relatedness. (Sharma, 1982; p129)

This is something of an overstatement. Mohini never ceases to be human. A parabolic account would have made her a goddess, but here the lotuses do no more than suggest a divine analogy. Still, there can be no doubt that she acquires deeper levels of Hindu consciousness through returning to the raw air of rural India. There is an implicit contrast between the honour she achieves here and the imagined acclaim she renounced when she put aside her ambition to become a film star.

The story is concerned with change that will raise the value of people's lives so that they will not be pawns either of gods or of men. The gods are not challenged in this work, but man's conception of them is. There is an effort to differentiate between false gods and true gods, between orthodox belief that is wise and that which is dangerous. Jayadev's attitude is surely that of Bhattacharya when he says,

We are fighting ignorance and superstition ... the false clayfoot gods. They've had their day and now they must quit ... or else the true gods will elude us (p165).

Jayadev sees fit to authorise the cleaning of a sacred and taboo pond. A Calcutta-trained surgeon organises the clean-up in an episode that becomes a comical violation of a religious orthodoxy that is no longer tenable. The pool had simply become a health hazard. Harindra the surgeon pays tribute to Jayadev's leadership:

What luck for the people that he works against his own tradition and class interest. He is worth more than a thousand of us, much more (p157).

The high mimetic is enhanced by the authority of religion. A serious challenge to divine authority would undermine political authority as well. Jayadev does not question the doctrine of 'karma' - the belief that a man's deeds determine his future state; what is rejected is a misuse of the doctrine of 'karma'. An enlightened view of 'karma' accepts the scientific knowledge of how disease is spread and allows this knowledge to over-ride an ancient taboo.

The novel's climax focuses upon another threat to health. When Mohini is initially unable to produce an heir, she feels compelled to undergo a ritual blood-letting in a sacred place known as Vermillion Hill. This is a potentially fatal procedure. She knows better than to accede to the blood libation, but is powerless to prevent it. But Jayadev comes to her rescue. The luck signs that attended her marriage have, ironically, no power to protect her, but superstition can be transcended by love and human determination. The novel rejects notions of fatalistic determinism. In other examples, a woman whose horoscope dooms her to spinsterhood finds a husband, and Jayadev whose horoscope predicts an early death refuses to allow his confidence or his good health to be undermined.

The Vermillion Hill episode illustrates the fact that cultural synthesis in Music for Mohini belongs within the comic and not the tragic mythos. It is the rule rather than the exception for stories in the comic mythos to reach a potentially tragic crisis, before the action is reversed in favour of a happy ending involving adjustment and integration.

The high mimetic does not idealise its heroes. Jayadev is a credible leader who displays true leadership in knowing when to act and when to refrain. He authorises reasonable reform. When tragedy looms in the blood libation episode, he swings the course of events towards comedy by taking Mohini home. His dignity and good judgement prevail throughout the novel. He chooses Vedic, a discipline and study concerned with knowledge and inner sight, rejecting the vulgar 'horoscope' philosophy. Vedic provides a viable foundation for the desired synthesis with Western 'microscope' culture.

The effecting of this synthesis is, of course, Jayadev's main achievement. One critic, M K Naik (1982; p214), feels that his character is presented as a happy combination of the best of Indian and Western thought, but that he remains a shadowy figure. Frye,

however, observes that in comedy ‘the hero himself is seldom a very interesting person’ (Frye, 1957; p44), and in Music for Mohini Jayadev’s role is usually to permit, rather than to act.

In this novel, Bhattacharya walks a tightrope as he reconciles contrary viewpoints. His diplomacy is a valuable asset in his search for cultural synthesis. His language is conciliatory; ‘conservative’ and ‘semi-Western’ describe the village and city respectively. In the first third of the book, Old Mother’s language has a metaphorical richness, but she also watches modern films, and thus shows herself able to appreciate the richness of the old together with the technological advances of the new. The Mother of the Big House, on the other hand, comes across as a more limited character, lacking Old Mother’s resonance and imagination.

Another significant contrast in language exists between Mohini and her brother. It would have been difficult to appreciate Mohini’s cultural alienation through her convent education had she become as articulate in traditional speech as her brother, who had been thoroughly schooled by his grandmother in the values of her coherent universe (pp25,27).

Music is a central metaphor in Bhattacharya’s work. Jayadev restores Mohini’s will and ability to sing. As Meena Shirwadiker remarks (1979; p57), Mohini is thus able ‘to create music out of discordant notes.’ In drawing this high mimetic novel to a conclusion, Bhattacharya employs the archetype of the coming of dawn to coincide with Mohini’s regained radiance (p188). The family is in harmony and their society will make a new beginning.

### Ngugi wa Thiong’o: ‘The River Between’

Proud, beautiful animals and birds often provide the organising metaphors for the depiction of heroic leadership in the high mimetic mode. In Ngugi’s The River Between, a novel about high mimetic leadership at a critical time of Africa’s contact with Europe, the Gikuyu ridges which Ngugi uses for his setting are from the start portrayed as lions. The lions symbolize a proud culture. The educational, political, and religious issues arising out of the clash between this culture and the West constitute the thematic focus of the novel.

Heroic leadership in Africa takes two forms: the courtly, and the egalitarian, depicted respectively in Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great and Ngugi's The River Between. In the courtly high mimetic, such as Kunene's, there is an established aristocracy from which leadership is inherited. On the other hand, in the egalitarian high mimetic, of which Things Fall Apart is another example, leadership is not guaranteed by succession even if the contender for leadership comes from a family with a long line of able progenitors.

Chege is the acknowledged leader at the start of The River Between, but he is not certain that his son (Waiyaki) will be able to emulate his example in the difficult times ahead. Ultimately, of course, decisions do not lie in the voice of a single man, but Chege is concerned that his son be later able to influence the elders in solving the problems arising from the contact of two cultures, and especially the problem of Siriana, the mission school set up by the colonizers.

When I told them about Siriana they would not listen .... I warned all the people. But they laughed at me. Maybe I was hasty .... I am old, my time is gone. Remember that you are the last in this line. (pp23-24)

Chege, among other things, feels that his timing in trying to get the elders to do something about Siriana was wrong. He has had to tread carefully between the paws and jaws of the lionised ridges, aware that the situation is too tense for carelessness. The beautiful ridges are not idealised. On occasions they have fought each other - and they could fight again about Siriana. The philosophy that binds them together in spite of their differences is expressed in this proverb: 'the oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers' (p3) - that is, fight as much as you feel will settle your quarrels in these ridges but present a united front to strangers. Chege's keeping silent looks like total defeat. But in truth, wisdom restrains him from kindling and fuelling divisive debates that will only serve to give the stranger the opportunity to conquer a divided people. Hence he does not attack even Kabonyi whom he mistakes for a traitor.<sup>1</sup>

Chege takes Waiyaki to the sacred grove, an epiphanic point on the slopes of Kerinyaga (Mount Kenya). Here he instructs him in many things, including the secret prophecy about the saviour from the hills, who will learn the ways of the invading 'butterflies' and thus contrive to oust them. Waiyaki had earlier presumed that taking the cattle to graze far from home and being able to return in darkness meant that he was very well acquainted with the land:

'Who showed you the way?'  
 'I know all the ways in the ridges', he said proudly to impress  
 the father he secretly feared (p10).

But in the sacred grove Waiyaki discovers that learning has to start all over again. Herbal medical knowledge, cultural history, and traditional religious truths all open up in a way Waiyaki would never have thought possible. The trek south of Kameno to reach Kerinyaga becomes a voyage into the past, to a heritage that the people of the ridges need to preserve. Chege, the old guardian of this heritage, confidently informs his son that the ways of the ridges are as good as any other, and must not be discarded in favour of blind acceptance of alien alternatives.

A sense of social responsibility characterizes many of Ngugi's characters. Devil on the Cross depicts a narrator overwhelmed by the difficult duty of telling the story of Wariinga's tribulations, which are really those of the Kenyan peasant class. Here, Waiyaki faces the task of going forth to confront the ridges with the truth about guarding their heritage. It is a daunting task.

Apart from introducing the cultural clash the novel investigates, the early Kinuthia-Kamau fight is meant to highlight Waiyaki's leadership abilities. Though much younger, he commands obedience by simply mentioning the name of the offending party. Moreover, he does not exploit his authority in order to tyrannize:

The feeling of pride and triumph he had suddenly felt at seeing  
 Kamau obey him had as suddenly subsided to one of regret at  
 having done that to him (p7).

These are conciliatory feelings not likely to antagonise those he is meant to lead. We need to notice too that his main interest is that the boys stop fighting; he does not take sides in the cultural debate that has sparked off the conflict.

Authority in the egalitarian high mimetic is acquired through a sizeable fund of heroic deeds which must begin to accumulate early in life. Waiyaki has some already. Unlike Waiyaki, the leader in the courtly high mimetic has a considerable amount of institutionalised power to fall back on when his authority is questioned. In this sense he sets off ahead of his egalitarian counterpart, who cannot in most cases use his father's, uncle's, grandfather's, or a relative's authority to any effectual degree. Waiyaki must develop the leadership qualities which fortunately he has, in order for his peers and powerful elders to respect his authority. Chege, unlike Unoka in Things Fall Apart, has influence and authority, but not to bequeath to his children: these are his alone to enjoy. Cattle they can inherit; authority they must battle for.

So how exactly is Waiyaki to gain authority? In West Africa, where the local *mores* were not destroyed by the initial cultural clash as were those in East Africa,<sup>2</sup> Achebe is able to show exactly how a leader emerges. The ozo titles can be bought. But only a great man like Okwonko can buy more than one or two. They belong to society and must be acquired on merit, to be used in the service of the community. East Africa must have had such traditions too, but they have to be reconstructed - the Ituika, for example:

According to Kenyatta in his book Facing Mount Kenya, the Ituika was celebrated by feasting, dancing, and singing over a six-months period. Central to all these varieties of dramatic expression were songs, dance and occasional mime! (Ngugi, 1987; p37)

Held every twenty-five years, the theme of this event was the passing of power from one generation to the next. But such occasions are sadly absent from The River Between, and Waiyaki must look for other ways to establish his authority. He chooses to pursue a Western education at Siriana.

The portrayal of Waiyaki, then, is more complex than that of Okonkwo. But they are both products of African egalitarian culture, which is seen as worth preserving, though it is not idealized. The literary conventions employed in the portrayal of these two heroic leaders are the same. High mimetic conventions value independence and determination in a leader. Heroic leaders should not be easily swayed by the opinions

of other men. Waiyaki's determination and independence of mind are hallmarks of leadership that will help him make decisions easily and confidently. These emerge, for example, when he makes up his mind to study at Siriana without consulting his peers. Before this, the relationship with his father takes a dramatic turn. Chege is no longer the towering feared father but a confidant:

When the time came, Waiyaki vanished from the hills without the knowledge of any but his father. He went to Siriana, where one term later, and almost by miracle, he was joined by Kamau and Kinuthia, his fellow herdboys (p25).

Waiyaki is in control of the situation, always ahead of his fellow herdboys, and not driven by chance and miracles without a will of his own. He knows his way between the paws and jaws of the ridges, and his secret purpose is not to be divulged even to his closest friends. The narrator always sets him apart as unique, not necessarily as a son of Chege, but in his own right.

Habitual heroic action is an indispensable requirement for the high mimetic hero. That is how he distinguishes himself socially. The open country has provided Waiyaki with plenty of opportunity for heroism but the traditional arena of warfare has not been open to him. These are not the times for epic martial action like Shaka's or Okonkwo's. Ngugi is dealing with a period in which the cultural contact with the West has entrenched itself profoundly and the responsibility for defence has passed to the colonizers. Waiyaki would no doubt have made a mark on the battlefield just like Okonkwo,<sup>3</sup> but circumstances have turned him from an actor to a listener in a Siriana mission classroom. He may do well academically at Siriana but he has lost touch with the Ituika drama: he feels like a spectator, and that in fact is what he has become. His is the first generation to respond to the West without wanting to mimic them. He wants to remain at heart a man of the ridges, a true son of the soil. He must not betray his people by joining forces with the strangers. This creates a dilemma. Much trial and error is involved in learning how to remain loyal to the ways of your people, without losing the opportunity to acquire ingredients of the new culture that could be of use to the ridges. Can the old song be sung with a new tune?

For Waiyaki, there is an added problem: his age. Chege remains uninfluenced by the contact with the West because his ways are too set to change. Waiyaki, on the other hand, is highly impressionable. He must learn the white man's ways according to the

requirements of the prophecy, but if he lets himself be too impressed by them he will put at risk the cultural heritage of his people. This interest in psychology confirms that this is a high mimetic rather than a parabolic narrative, since the latter almost invariably presents characters according to a Manichean scheme and not as fully realised individuals. Ngugi's art here is different from the spectacular realism employed in the parabolic short stories of Secret Lives.

Inhibition creeps into Waiyaki's posture and behaviour at Siriana, despite his strong personality and love for his culture. His ability to participate spontaneously in his people's cultural activities has been sapped enough by his spectator role there and by Livingstone's education for him to find it difficult to lose himself, for example, in the frenzy of circumcision dances. Ngugi emphasises the creeping alienation which causes this strong leader to retreat from the crowd after the dance, 'wrestling with a hollowness inside his stomach', and, worse, feeling that

He had laid himself naked, exposed himself for all eyes to see  
(p50).

Waiyaki's alienation is not as deep as that of Oduche in Achebe's Arrow of God, who, when sent to the mission school to be his father's 'eye' and an interpreter of the changing world, ends up profaning the sacred python, but it is related to it. Thus C B Robson's observations (1979) that the learning and wisdom which pupils hope to acquire at Siriana have as much potential to destroy the old ways as to preserve them can be confirmed from a high mimetic work other than The River Between.

The African egalitarian high mimetic has a keen interest in every member of the community. Ngugi is a writer deeply concerned with the common man's view of life and he has no qualms about portraying the success of an ordinary person where a leader has failed. When Waiyaki, undergoing initiation during a break from Siriana, escapes into 'the darkened fringe of the trees' (p50), he comes face to face with Muthoni, the most radical exponent of cultural synthesis between Makuyu ridge, (which favours the new ways) and traditional Kamenno. Muthoni's radicalism is not presented as the final answer to the questions which the cultural dilemma poses, but the book endorses Muthoni's spirited excursions into both worlds - old and new - more than it does Waiyaki's growing hesitation. Muthoni's death - in a Western hospital after the miscarriage of an African initiation rite - is a low mimetic tragedy - the

catastrophic end of an ordinary person. It acts as a counterpoint to a high mimetic hero's search for direction in a changing world. In her own way she has sought a wholesome life combining the best that both worlds can give. This too is Waiyaki's concern. Perhaps her death is meant to alert the reader to the inevitability of Waiyaki's tragic end.

Irreconcilable differences will often harden society into clear-cut divisions. The relationship between Siriana and the ridges is at first reasonably cordial. The proud ridges, sure of the durability of their ways, receive Siriana with remarkable indifference. Overall, the impression given in the work is that of lion-like ridges, each asleep, with one eye looking calmly at the encroachment of the white man. This is partly why Chege's calls for action have gone unheeded; no significant threat is perceived. But when Siriana decides to enforce adherence to Christianity by threatening 'renegades' with expulsion, society splits into two camps, some opposing and others supporting the new ways. Violent confrontation is suddenly a possibility. A leader must emerge to guide the people in their hour of need.

This situation gives the narrator an opportunity to test Waiyaki in a challenging situation and see how he fares. A leader is needed who can get the people to acquire the white man's skill, and liberate the ridges according to the secret prophecy. Waiyaki, himself a victim of expulsion because of his association with Chege's hardline traditionalism, answers the challenge with a campaign for independent schools:

He travelled from ridge to ridge, all over the country of the sleeping lions. He found a willing people. Yes, the ridges were beginning to awake (p79).

Waiyaki is not waking the sleeping continent of Rider Haggard. This is mobilisation of a people still sure enough of their ways to follow someone else's. Much has been destroyed while the ridges remained oblivious. But it is better to be proud of one's own culture, albeit damaged, than to accept an alien one. This is the spirit in which the book is written. Chege is quite unlike the toothless old Gagool of King Solomon's Mines, who has a memory only for the location of the gold. Africa guarded a civilization as well as gold - a heritage that was sufficiently strong to keep Africans psychologically healthy.

The narrator has a penchant for detecting and reporting the slightest achievement of his hero. Cynosure, the archetypal theme of the high mimetic mode, requires that a wondering gaze remain fixed on its great hero. Waiyaki's expulsion from Siriana frees him to act as the hero of the Ituika would. He becomes a man of the ridges again, travelling between their paws and jaws to call them to share his vision of benefiting from both worlds, without becoming mere commas in a Siriana sentence. The reader is invited to travel with the admiring men and women of the ridges to marvel at Waiyaki's achievements, now that he is the leader he was always meant to be:

Others came to see the famous Marioshoni school. But others came to see the Teacher .... So his fame grew from ridge up to ridge and spread like fire in dry bush (p105).

And there is a cultural aspect to his achievement:

Everyone saw him as the reincarnation of that former dignity and purity - now lost (p105)

A cultural renaissance soon arises from the school, which in effect replaces lost traditional arenas like the Ituika. Under its influence the Kiama, the traditional civil-judicial authority of the area, is revived. Retrieval of the lion-like dignity of the community begins. Waiyaki is no ordinary teacher but a more modern Okonkwo, whose style of leadership is not confrontation but co-operation.

This emphasis on co-operation paves the way for Waiyika's downfall, however. He feels the need to assimilate the Christian community to which Nyambura (Joshua's daughter) belongs. Ngugi's concern with this issue has created the impression that he is a religious writer, which he flatly denies:

I am not even a Christian .... I don't want to be misunderstood ... for some will ask, 'How can you, a non-believer, dare to talk about the role of the Church in Africa today?' (wa Thiong'o, 1972; p31)

Ngugi focusses on the African Church because it is an important part of the cultural milieu he deals with. Its contribution to the cultural erosion that takes place in the novel is carefully examined and criticized. The essay quoted above examines the role of the Church in some depth. Ngugi's deep interest in and concern for all people does

not allow him to caricature characters like Joshua, whose church, as Cook and Okenimkpe (1953) observe, is inflexibly mechanical. Waiyaki's own opinions about the Church are not too different from Ngugi's or the narrator's, but his situation is complicated by the fact that he falls in love with Nyambura, who becomes in effect the means of his undoing.

This mistake is compounded by his rash decision to resign from the Kiama. It is a mark of the high esteem in which Waiyaki is held that he was ever allowed a seat on the Kiama, since unmarried men were traditionally excluded from it. His decision to resign his seat and his priggish insistence on reconciliation through marriage to Nyambura constitute the two great errors of judgement which bring about his downfall.

Before he falls he revisits the sacred grove on the slopes of Kerinyaga. Here at the epiphanic point of the land<sup>4</sup> Waiyaki begins to regain the sense of direction that he has lost:

He had a vision of many possibilities and opportunities there ....  
 Maybe one day he would join forces with the men from  
 Muranga, Kiambu and Nyeri and with one voice tell the white  
 man 'Go!' And all at once Waiyaki realised what the ridges  
 wanted .... The Kiama was right. People wanted action now  
 (p164).

But it is too late for Waiyaki; when he refuses to disown Nyambura, the Kiama puts them both on trial and sentences them to death.

Waiyaki is a hero who falls mainly as a result of errors of judgement rather than the machinations of a traitor. Kaboyi may look like a traitor; Chege for one claims that he has betrayed the tribe (p24).<sup>5</sup> This raises the question of how the secret prophecy is to be understood. Prophecy is an archetypal construct, almost universally attested, which a community develops in order to cope with an uncertain future in a bewildering world. The narrator wants the reader to accept Waiyaki as the leader the prophecy foreshadows. Ngugi's position is more ambivalent. He tosses the prophecy in the air and lets men bid for its fulfilment: after all, he is not writing a religious tract. Kabonyi is the only other character who is privy to the prophecy, and he goes about fulfilling it by forming a temporary alliance with Joshua and so indirectly with Siriana,

which Chege mistakes for betrayal of the ridges. Too old to sit in a Siriana classroom, Kabonyi, himself a warrior of the Ituika past, seeks acquaintance with the ways of the white man through their religion. Clearly he is motivated not by treachery but by a genuine interest in the prophecy and concern for his people.

It is natural that a situation of the kind depicted here should raise questions of betrayal. But if there is a traitor in the book, it is not Kabonyi but Kamau, who nurses against Waiyaki an old grudge going back to childhood, and a new one - the loss of Nyambura to him:

His eyes and soul burnt with malice. He'll suffer for this. And his accumulated fury rose against Waiyaki. Kamau knew that he hated Waiyaki (p123).

Kamau has the support of a fanatical father, who uses the civil-judicial machinery against Waiyaki. The elders in the Kiama mistake motives of revenge for legitimate cultural militancy. Overnight, the awakened ridges are mobilised into a defence of their newly retrieved dignity, which they are told their leader has violated. As a result of the cultural dearth preceding the renaissance, feelings can be easily whipped up to fever-pitch. It is no longer safe for Waiyaki to walk between the paws and jaws of the ridges. A great leader has made the wrong moves at a delicate time; catastrophe is inevitable.<sup>6</sup>

The tragic plot then employs the sun to give archetypal confirmation of the disaster awaiting the high mimetic hero: 'And suddenly the people who stood on the hills or up the slope saw big yellow flames emanated by the setting sun' (p166). But Ngugi adds a note of hope: Honia River, the river of cure, flows on. Africa will be cured. Ngugi's optimism in the face of disaster is what has spurred him on in his turbulent career as a writer. He never fully shares either the disillusionment of his characters or the pessimism that the outcome of his stories often suggests. Here hope for the ridges is spelt out quite explicitly in the middle of the book, where it does not interfere with the cathartic effect of Waiyaki's fall. Waiyaki 'had awakened the sleeping lions. They would now roar, roar to victory' (p107).

There is irony here, in that victory is finally won against him. But irony is not the main narrative strategy. To the end Waiyaki remains a heroic leader caught in the whirl of a complex tragic dilemma, not an ironic character like Mugo in A Grain of

Wheat in whom there is a sustained and consistent discrepancy between the way he appears to society and the way he really is. Irony here is only a counterpoint, whereas in A Grain of Wheat it is the main mythos of composition.

The milieu that supported the writing of The River Between in which the old exists side by side with the new has not disappeared. This is what makes it possible for the corpus of a single author to manifest simultaneously the old conventions of high mimetic heroism, which are used in stories like this one, and the newer sparagmic or ironic ones which portray the disillusionment that has grown out of post-colonial events. Soyinka's Bale of Ilujinle in The Lion and the Jewel is a more modern Waiyaki, whose dignity is likewise embodied in the lion metaphor. In that play too, the new does not win. The old is adapted to the new times: the old song to a new tune.

### Lamming: 'Of Age and Innocence'

De Lisser's Jane's Career (1914) was the first novel to explore the consciousness of the black Caribbean. It was a low mimetic work in which the author was not able to plumb the depths of social dislocation that the Caribbean exile has known.<sup>7</sup>

Lamming's Of Age and Innocence, on the other hand, is an ironic work better equipped to investigate human misery and show exactly what the West Indian has gone through. This novel, however, proceeds on the premise that children have access to the truth, and this raises them above the undignified adult way of defining themselves in terms of furniture imagery. The children are able to share in the heroic dignity of the national legend called the Tribe Boys story, and are thus turned into warriors, characters with the potential to be high mimetic heroes.<sup>8</sup> I shall investigate first the vicious circle which develops when people see themselves as degraded to the level of furniture. I shall then discuss the legend which provides the high mimetic counterpoint to this degradation.

Shepherd is a returned factory worker whose abandonment by a woman in England damages him psychologically, and helps him to see the full extent of his exile. He reminds the reader of the mad Higgins in The Emigrants, last seen trying to come back home to the Caribbean as a stowaway (pp227-28). Rather than float helplessly on the waves of time as a victim of history and circumstance Shepherd, once he returns to the

Caribbean, decides to act. He has not been able to get rid of the exile's sense of himself as an item of furniture, though; he has only decided that henceforth he will be sat on only when he, not anyone else, feels like it. In his own words:

I accept I am a chair, for all practical purposes of human regard,  
I am a chair, but I shall behave on occasions as though I were  
not a chair. For example, I will only let you sit on me when I  
feel like it (p204).

Shepherd's politics are designed to shape a new self-concept, defined by new criteria that give him a voice in a world where he had none before. He is far ahead of many of his people, millions of whom (p203) have not discovered that this is possible. But the issue of his mental stability is left ambivalent throughout the text as a way of making an emphatic statement about the psychological dislocation of exiles, including their leaders.

San Cristobal history went wrong with the defeat of the Island Warriors derogatorily called Tribe Boys at a mountain where they preferred suicide to surrender. Inured by the colonial past to see this act as unheroic, people have accepted denigrating terms like 'tribes' and 'boys' so that to question even the name given to this mountain (Mount Misery - p99) is alien to their thinking. A proper sense of history requires their taking control of language to name their world properly - not in terms of furniture. These are people who have lost control of much, including names. Similarly, in Miguel Street, V S Naipaul's carpenter has no names for the things he makes, and the story told about him is appropriately called 'The Thing Without A Name'.<sup>9</sup> Shepherd has reclaimed part of his language and gone a long way from Caliban's impotent cursing, towards acting to change the course of history and reclaim dignity for his people. Thus Shepherd can be related to a scheme which Lamming discusses extensively in The Pleasures of Exile: the Prospero-Caliban relationship in Shakespeare's The Tempest. Lamming (1984; p13) interprets Shakespeare's play as an allegory,

prophetic of a political future which is our present. Moreover,  
the circumstances of my life both as a colonial and exiled  
descendant of Caliban in the twentieth century, is an example of  
that prophecy.

In *Shepherd*, a colonial and an exile, Lamming depicts the growth of the Caribbean man in the twentieth century from an acquiescent Caliban, oblivious of his past, into a political activist seeking to regain the identity he lost at colonization.

In the past, according to the text, success in controlling the people has depended on emphasising the differences between Indian, Negro, and Chinese, particularly by pointing out their diverse origins. Ethnicity has been turned into a tool for making ethnic foes so that woes common to all remain obscure and neglected. In spite of this *Shepherd* manages to change the name of the Indian Freedom Party (founded by Singh) to the People's Communal Movement (p107) so that it can serve the needs of all San Cristobal. His methods involve correcting perceptions of the past by focusing on exile as a common problem which should unite rather than divide, and also on freedom as a right for all and not as a privilege for the few. The person who allows himself to be used as a chair (p204) has neither freedom nor humanity. Prospero would not allow himself to be so put upon. Paulo Freire (1972) calls this sort of dehumanisation being reduced to the level of 'things'. *Shepherd* tries to make his people realise that they have been treated as things in a vicious circle of wretchedness in exile. *Shepherd's* own case is more complicated since it has involved a double exile. But if the second exile breaks him, it also teaches him that he does not have to remain broken.

*Shepherd's* chair conversation with Penelope (pp202-205) is obviously crucial to the book's main theme. It also gives important insight into *Shepherd's* character. Penelope closely resembles the woman who abandoned him in England, and the fact that he can talk to her so intimately shows that he is not affected by bitterness and pent up feelings of revenge. Earlier he has risked his life to rescue Penelope from drowning (pp192-4). This action contrasts with his brandishing of a pistol in the plane coming back from England, but in a way this episode too emphasises *Shepherd's* ingenuousness. Back home, his energies are directed at what he calls 'changing the whole curriculum of privilege in San Cristobal' (p204) but without engaging in the brutalities that have characterised the island's history. Broken in the second exile but refusing to disintegrate, *Shepherd's* experience abroad ultimately brings what Freire (1972; p48) would call

Knowledge of the alienating culture [that] leads to a transforming action resulting in a culture which is being freed from alienation.

The suppressed culture thus begins to reassert itself, and this is how, for example, the legend of the Tribe Boys begins to have special relevance, although its full meaning eludes most of the present generation.

A theoretical statement such as Freire's (above) assumes that knowledge and action can be equated. But the more investigative world of literature gives us a deeper insight into the mind, the will, and the emotion that the alienating culture has produced and shows how these impede the movement towards freedom. If Shepherd's problem is that his mind cannot reach its full potential, Mark Kennedy's is that his will has been crippled by inability to participate fully in either of the cultures. He is a misfit, an intellectual wanderer with no place to call a home. He is always caught in a vicious ironic circle, torn between the world of Marcia, the alien girlfriend he is unable to relate to, and the world of his San Cristobal homeland that he cannot properly participate in. He knows his problem - indeed he can spell it out with astonishing clarity - yet cannot become what he wishes to be. His desires and his ability to act have been dislocated by a double exile. This is how he defines this problem to himself in the diary he keeps:

I begin as it were, from the circumference of my meaning, moving cautiously and with loyal feeling, towards a centre which very soon I discover I cannot reach. Then speech deserts me. I abandon what I had felt to be an obligation, and the result is silence. Yet my silence contains a need to begin again. But the difficulties accumulate. For hardly have I resigned myself to the solitude of one secret before a new enthusiasm entices me (p110).

This quotation also illustrates one of the main features of the ironic mode: the quest that is never completed. The reason, for instance, that V S Naipaul's characters have such a gloomy view of the Caribbean is that he seldom allows them to break out of the vicious circle of failure. They live and die like Lamming's Mark Kennedy. But in Lamming, there is usually a movement towards breaking the circle, and this signals a major difference in the outlook of the two authors.

Mark, then, is a man to whom the freedom movement has appealed, but who we know will not persist to the end because he is not a man of action like Shepherd and his colleagues. The goals he sets himself, he knows he will never reach. He represents the intellectual who has returned from a double exile and cannot find his roots in San Cristobal. In Ngugi's words he 'is an existential hero' who will not be involved in a willed action or in 'normal' emotions of pity, love, regret or hatred. (wa Thiong'o, 1972; p137) Mark's existentialism, however, is not a chosen vocation, for his diaries reveal the taut anxieties of a man struggling to come to terms with the forces that have made him. Nationalism asks too much of a man whom circumstances have trained to be an observer rather than an agent, one who has given up goals concerning partnership, communal living, and corporate responsibility. He brings Marcia to San Cristobal only to dump her there, and her eventual madness is a tragic event that underscores the destructiveness of his non-committal way of life. His diary epitaph for Marcia takes us into even gloomier depths of his being, that he himself has never fully known. The realisation that he 'has consumed the resources of her love while she lived' and that he feels neither guilt nor regret at her death (p310), will avail nothing in a man who is not even alive enough to curse like Caliban.

Ngugi sees Mark as a man whose 'lack of involvement springs from a spiritual inertia', from a crippled will (wa Thiong'o, 1972; p136). The world Lamming portrays has characters who lack the kind of impetus seen, for example, in the parabolic street chorus of Roger Mais in Brother Man. We may not like all that the chorus does in that world, but at least it is alive enough to act. Mark could not live through that chorus because he is bereft of feeling, crippled in the will, and bankrupt of action. The eloquence of Mark in Sabina Square (pp172-175) remains unmatched among the freedom speeches and thoughts of the characters in Of Age and Innocence, but it should not be mistaken for the heroism that matches deeds with oratory. Irony stresses the discrepancy between the two. Mark's rhetoric is not meant to caricature him. Lamming depicts him too sympathetically for the portrait to be considered satirical. The rhetoric is meant to highlight the sad combination of a living tongue and a dead will. This is the wooden dignity that Lamming wishes to stress before he suggests a way out of the vicious circle through the high mimetic heroism of the three boys in the story.

Thus the returned intellectual offers little practical support to the movement calling for the freedom of San Cristobal. The intellectuals who have stayed in the Caribbean and have not known the psychological amputation of a double exile are, however, more useful. Sandra Paquet (1982) overstates when she observes that Lamming's sympathies are not usually with the intellectual. Chiki and Fola in Season of Adventure, for example, reject the elite to which they belong in order to make common cause with the masses. In Lamming, therefore, the elite can find their role in changing the establishment for the benefit of all, but usually, it is at a cost that few are willing to pay.

If Shepherd's problem is that of the mind and Mark's is that of the will, Singh's is emotional. He has been a mistreated worker on the Baden-Semper's estate, and consequently thinks of freedom more in terms of having a showdown with authority than of regaining lost humanity. Whereas Shepherd's ambition is to change the curriculum of privilege in San Cristobal (p204), Singh's politics are the politics of exclusion: no one in the European community should be consulted on any matter, especially after independence. Singh is not depicted as a blind radical who cannot see sense. He recognises the need to have Shepherd and Lee (a Chinese) as leaders of the party he founded and to change its name from the Indian Freedom Party to the People's Communal Movement so as to unite the people that history has divided. But unlike Lee, he cannot accept that leadership should be shared with those who have hitherto oppressed the people. The narrator makes it clear that Lee is right; it would not be wise to exclude the old masters from power, once the allocation of privilege has been established on the grounds of equality rather than race. As S R Cudjoe has pointed out, the new regime will operate 'on Caliban's terms', so 'all' can be 'invited to participate' (Cudjoe, 1980; p190). This arrangement Singh rejects.

Singh is a man too emotionally disturbed by memory of the past to understand the present. He is no longer caught in the web of ethnicity, but has acquired a racist attitude, instilled in him by painful encounters, that he has not been able to overcome. With regard to his former masters, at least, Singh's emotions are too damaged for repair. His pent-up rage can be seen in the way he crusades against co-operation. Rather than consult after independence, it is better, he says, to

blunder and die, and let another blunder like us and die, blunder,  
 blunder until we blunder into hell, the whole lot of us, or into a  
 different kind of life in San Cristobal. I feel this in every nerve  
 of me, every nerve, and I drop dead the day that feeling stop  
 (p246).

Here, repetition serves two functions. First, it emphasises the corroded part of Singh's emotional make-up. Second, in the larger scheme of the novel it mirrors the circular irony of a character caught in the dry wooden dignity of Lamming's central metaphor. The blundering and dying becomes the achievement that Singh wishes to bequeath to future generations. And they will indeed be caught up in a vicious circle like his, unless a better vision for society is born either in him or someone else.

Prejudice cannot produce trust: it merely begets more prejudice. Singh's bias against the European community begins to be contagious. For once Shepherd yields to his influence against his better judgement (p252), in excluding Bill Butterfield from the Party. It may be argued that Bill has to be excluded in order to save the fragile union of Shepherd, Lee and Singh from collapse. The author shows, however, that this exclusion seriously endangers the freedom movement because it leads directly to the refusal to send a representative to the Governor's place and deepens the mistrust that already exists. The union gains a fragile solidarity only to lose an important opportunity.

Of course, the average person does not see the weaknesses in the leadership that the author keeps pointing to. At Sabina Square the tide of nationalism has already demanded independence in no uncertain terms with the following song:

Over land and over sea  
 Freedom shall prevail  
 Man was made for liberty  
 And freedom shall prevail (p171).

Freedom banners are flying. All San Cristobal has rallied around the union of Shepherd, Singh and Lee. But the masters react with Prospero's neurotic orientation which Mannoni (1964) discusses in depth. Violence is used. Shepherd is assassinated, and the other leaders are put on trial.

Prospero could not succeed without enough of Caliban's children on his side to help him maintain the status quo. Diverse motives lure many to act against the freedom movement, and even to plot and carry out the assassination of Shepherd. Betrayal becomes one of the book's main themes.

What we get in the Paravecinos, however, is not a study of betrayal in the strict sense of the word. The Hon. Reginald Paravecino embodies the perverted ideals of the local creole elite whose notions of freedom and human community are no different from those of their masters. He enters politics because he has money and is idle (p159), and immediately shows his capacity to turn serious responsibilities into pastime activities. He is a lost soul who has missed the opportunity to learn how to be human. Distorted values render him incapable of understanding social change except in terms of alliances with the masters. Described by Crabbe as 'the stooge of every Governor who has worked on the island during the past ten years, crawling his way like an undetected leper to some future list of royal honours' (p168), Paravecino is really a victim of the twisted curriculum of privilege that Shepherd was keen to unravel.

Paravecino may be seen as the perfect chair in the world Shepherd has taught his people to reject. Many nails have gone into his making and, what is worse, he seems ready for many more. The author does not mock him; instead he depicts him as someone caught in the vicious circle of dehumanisation. What makes his case worse than that of others similarly trapped - Singh for instance - is that he has made no attempt whatsoever to escape. If Shepherd's programme does not affect the privileges of the elite, he will be a perpetuator of the old game under a new name. Whereas Singh can see his Indian parochialism as retrogressive, Paravecino cannot understand how his highly privileged situation is dehumanising him and others who should settle for less so that his exploited compatriots can have more.

There is, however, an even coarser example of the elite's opposition to the independence movement than the Paravecinos. Now we come to the true traitor of the book: Baboo. In him the interests of the elite and those of parochial ethnicity mingle in a curious way to produce the traitor proper. What has always been stressed in the police force (for which he works) is mere execution of duty without the least identification with San Cristobal. Its members are not San Cristobal patriots, but

castaway Indians, Africans, and Chinese. Thus Baboo enters the conspiracy against Shepherd so that Singh, an Indian like himself (p384), may rule. Strategies of divisive ethnicity, long used to perpetuate the colonial rule of San Cristobal, begin to destroy what the freedom movement has achieved even before independence arrives. Baboo's disservice to the cause is perhaps felt most by the man he had hoped to benefit. Ngugi observes that he murders Shepherd so that Singh may rule but that this produces a psychological paralysis in Singh. Baboo therefore 'finds his leader immobilised by anger: he has done the very thing that Singh would have died to stop'. (wa Thiong'o, 1972; p142)

A glance at the thinking of Commissioner Crabbe - Baboo's superior - reveals the moral bankruptcy and rationalisation that have thwarted all attempts to retrieve any humanity and self-respect among San Cristobal's people:

Shepherd had to die if the future of San Cristobal was to be rescued from chaos. The troops had to come if San Cristobal were to be saved from their savage and passionate hunger for blood (p347).

The rage unleashed by this reaction threatens to turn the freedom movement into a revolution, which, of course, is perceived by Crabbe as anarchy and savage hunger for blood (p347). If the Crabbe and his ilk are the chair makers, they are also the destroyers of chairs that refuse to be sat on. In Peter Flagstead, Lamming offers a study in the processes that produces people like Crabbe. His change since arrival five years before is not lost even to himself, for, as he puts it: 'Places like San Cristobal lure you into a position which makes you a wholly different person' (p223). He still has doubts, a diminishing integrity, and a reluctant attitude to the exercise of power, all of which have perished in Crabbe. The doubts are evident in 'seem' and 'if' in the following confession: 'You seem justified in holding on, and if holding on means protecting yourself, then you protect yourself. And you use power to do it. It's perfectly natural' (p223). He does not yet frequent Rugby Lane, like Crabbe, in search of secretaries, and he has not yet acquired Crabbe's ruthless efficiency, though Sandra Paquet (1983) lumps them together.

And so the vicious circle that has created the ruled creates the ruler also. Breaking this circle would set them both free. But irrational fear grips the rulers, who unfortunately

surrender to it and marshal the institutions of power against the very movement meant to reverse the past that initially created the circle. Plotters and traitors, then, have their day.

What has the movement achieved in the way of reversing the past? Is the wooden dignity in which San Cristobal is trapped there to stay? An ironic work with no interest in smashing the pattern that makes the past repeat itself would have closed the narrative with Shepherd's death. Book Three (pp325-412) would not have been written. It carries the positive vision that the situation will be changed.

Rockey, the fisherman who testifies at the court hearing into the murder of Shepherd, is not simply a confused witness who does not understand about Contempt of Court. His digressions, which appear initially irrelevant, make much sense when he is seen as a man who has developed his critical thinking and eloquence under the influence of the freedom movement, and is now ready to challenge the names given to the landscapes of San Cristobal. He is not yet ready to redefine Mount Misery in heroic terms, but he knows that Paradise Point, where he works, has been misnamed to keep fishermen happy in one of the most dangerous areas on San Cristobal's shores: 'Now Paradise Point ain't really no Paradise at all, an' those who tuck on that name to the place was only forming the fool' (pp339-40). This is where Shepherd was murdered, but before Rockey says anything about that, he wants it understood that he knows the true nature of Paradise Point, and has acquired at the same time a pride in his rugged labours:

No fish none of you can name that I didn't down with harpoon  
or hook or haul flyin' in with these said same hands you see  
here. An' I defy any son of man livin' or dead who know  
Paradise Point to contradict me (p339).

Legal register - 'these said same hands' - mixes with the rugged rhythms of Caribbean patois<sup>10</sup> to celebrate the newly acquired freedom of speech, which the witness does not know will soon be swiftly denied by military force. But as long as he has it, he, not the Court, is in charge of Paradise Point, and thus of the truth about San Cristobal. He wants it known that the crowd chusing the Sabina Square freedom song through the window (p342) have human feelings to be considered and respected when decisions are being made. He is not being contemptuous of the Court; 'He wants to humble it with his passion for the sea' (p337) - and for his country.

A new confidence has enabled people to say what they may previously have thought but never dared to mention. Some things are beginning to change in San Cristobal. But by and large this remains a generation without the steely determination and deep understanding that will usher in a new era.

There is plenty of evidence that Rockey is the exception that proves this rule. The madhouse fire is one example. The accidental fire is blamed on Lee and Singh, and a trial is arranged to give their victimisation a semblance of justice. Many have begun to suspect that the law is not always used to keep order and to protect the citizen but is used occasionally to victimise. But the full 'conscientization' (Freire, 1972) needed before the people can transform their dehumanised situation has not yet taken place. So no organised protest against this injustice is forthcoming. There is still a strong acquiescent tendency, an attitude that keeps the dehumanising circle unbroken. People cannot see that what has held them down is man-made and therefore reversible. Thus with the conviction of Lee and Singh, their wives are left 'uncomprehending mourners' (Paquet, 1983). The text itself is as eloquent as Paquet in describing the crumbling of the unity that Shepherd, Lee and Singh nurtured in San Cristobal as parochial ethnicity is restored. Indians now move about, their faces 'strained with secrecy and spite', Africans become 'indolent, unwilling and destructive', and Chinese go 'everywhere with severe and stoic reservation' that disguises the fact that they have become a 'tribe of willing exiles' (pp385-86).

But Lamming's narrator is melioristic as well as ironic, concerned not only with showing that the points of epiphany are closed but also that they can be opened. His narrator refuses to be part of the vicious circle of exile that he is describing. He is aware that life can give more than the characters in the story are getting.

In this novel there are two stories in one: that of Shepherd, Lee and Singh, whose activities influence most of the other characters, and that of the boys whose secret society stands apart as a high mimetic counterpoint to the main action. In the boys' story, Lamming rejects the acquiescent attitudes that have prevented the previous generation from disentangling the circumstances that keep them nailed together like furniture. The boys' story is effectively a subplot developed into an elaborate commentary on the inadequacies of the world view that the adults have learnt to accept

unquestioningly. Caught in a bewildering world riddled with prejudice, ethnic differences, and painful tensions, the boys try to forge a unity of their own that excludes their parents, in the interests of San Cristobal. Bob (African), Lee (Chinese) and Singh (Indian) especially have to work consciously against the opinions of the adult world which they encounter in their homes, in order to rise higher than the previous generation has done. Both in action and in dignity, the three boys are already doing better than their adult counterparts.

They had come together as a little Society which worked in secret, and the unity which the speakers were urging San Cristobal to achieve was for them a fact. It seemed that they had, in some way surpassed their elders, so that they behaved, during these expeditions, as though they were no longer dependent on the decisions which others were making for them (p115).

In this Society, all activity is considered not as make-believe play but real life performance. Strict adherence to high ideals is demanded, and they draw these ideals from the legend of the Tribe Boys, the San Cristobal warriors who, rather than surrender and risk being forced to give the secrets of the land to the enemy, chose suicide. The boys look for this kind of unanimity and gallantry in the generation preceding theirs and find it lacking. They want to be warriors, people with high mimetic dignity, ready to die rather than surrender. Their challenge lies in finding practical ways of marrying the ideal to the real.

Links with that heroic era which the boys admire must be forged from scratch: all they have is an idea of what they do *not* want to be like. Thief personifies the kinds of attitude that they reject. Thief, the boys tell us, 'stay holy till he lose his wife' (p93) to the owner of the Spanish mission where he is apprenticed as a preacher, whereupon he turns against his own society, like the ants that were used to drive the Tribe Boys out of their hideout. The boys have no illusions about Thief. They sympathise with his ruin but shrink from it in case it is contagious. In the sink-or-swim world that Lamming has created, true transformers of society must get a sense of direction early before they find out, like Thief, that they are too ruined to fit into the heroic role. The way to a better future is not charted like lanes on the highway. The children have to confront life's visionary, predatory, reactionary and existential options and work out answers for themselves. This is what their Society is about.

Membership of the Society initially becomes as big an issue as it is in the world of the adult Party. There is suspicion that the Society is elitist because of the positions of Lee and Singh. Its success depends on how well these boys can assist others to contribute to the ideal of a new San Cristobal without obliging them to praise their fathers' contributions to the freedom movement. If the Society becomes a mere replica of the Party, it will be unable to get San Cristobal beyond its present position. Higher social norms and ethics are required to transcend the achievement of the Party and bring San Cristobal back to something like its former Edenic glory (pp95-96) - before the arrival of the Bandit Kings. The question of Rawley's admission into the Society raises far more serious problems than Bob's initial feeling that he cannot fully belong on account of his humble social origins. Rawley is Crabbe's son, and tense emotions nurtured in Singh's home threaten to bar him from the Society. One of Singh's father's ambitions is to assassinate Crabbe (p134). It is an obsessive desire that he articulates every night. Singh's problems show what emotional barriers the boys have to overcome before their unity in the Society is achieved. Thus, whereas the adult's Party rejects Bill Butterfield because the senior Singh forces Shepherd into 'refusing contact with Butterfield, summoning prejudice like a dagger to save what existed between him and Singh' (p252), the boys admit Rawley with the gift of a lighter from Singh. Rawley rejects his father's tyranny and Singh refuses to inherit his father's vengeful attitudes. To die, if necessary, for the ideal of freedom, like the Tribe Boys, is the positive motivation that the boys have discovered, which the previous generation was unable to tap from the same legendary source.

In relation to the legend, the boys are not in the position of the colonial intellectual, researching the pre-colonial culture in 'the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era' (Fanon, 1966; p170). Mark, the existentialist, resigned to a fate he could actually change, is such an intellectual, incapable of anything more than passively identifying with the legends of his people. He can relate them on a political platform with rousing rhetoric (pp172-173) but he lacks the courageous deeds and gallantry that will make this rediscovered culture a living reality. It is in this that the boys far surpass him.<sup>11</sup> Besides spelling out the Tribe Boy's ideal in the rugged Patois of the common man, heard at its best in the Court scene from Rockey the

fisherman, they can translate it into life. Unlike the adults around them, the boys have rejected their status as chairs in favour of warriorhood. But they face numerous problems in realising their ambition.

Lamming embodies in Ma Shepherd some of the difficulties the boys will have to surmount. Her role as midwife is both literal and symbolic. She is the cultural midwife of the nation and the custodian of a retrogressive consciousness that must be discarded. Her midwife role gives her power over the young which she uses to cultivate undue respect, even for authority that needs challenging and changing. Though portrayed, almost as the archetypal mother, her potential to be the *femme fatale* of the freedom movement is apparent. Well-intentioned but out of touch with the changing times, she cannot understand the agitation for freedom except in terms of rebellion, as her testimony during the inquiry into her son's death illustrates:

My son, I say, was ambitious, even as a chil' an' tis the reason he take up himself as he do, some years gone by an' sail all the way up to England ... Whatever happen there I cannot in a manner of certainty speak, but he had a bad experience which teach him to rebel ... (p332).

Ma Shepherd does not destroy the Movement, only because Shepherd manages to reject her influence as a spiritual midwife. But others, like Thief (in spite of his inner disintegration) and Rockey (despite his brilliant court performance), continue to oscillate between the reactionary world of Ma Shepherd and the visionary world of Shepherd. Like Shepherd, the boys have to contend with Ma Shepherd's spiritual midwifery before they can break away from the reactionary and attain the truly visionary.

The independence of the boys' observations and decisions is depicted with more than casual interest. 'An' I talk to you like a duty tell me the four must be part o' any prayer my lips make concerning San Cristobal' (p71), says Ma Shepherd, enjoining the three boys to admit Rawley Crabbe into their group. Although they respect her opinion at this point, it is their independent recognition that the Tribe Boys legend has to apply in a slightly different way in the current racial circumstances of San Cristobal that eventually wins Rawley his admission. Their eyes are opened to Ma Shepherd's real position regarding change when she perjures herself in giving evidence against

Singh and Lee who are charged with starting the asylum fire in which Rawley dies. In fact the fire was started by an inmate. Whether or not Ma Shepherd lies intentionally is a question which the boys do not investigate. While Thief and Rockey continue to wait on every word from her mouth, as if it bears the infallibility of an oracle, the boys conclude that their own experience, and that alone, must guide their endeavours to build a new San Cristobal in the manner of the venerated warriors of former times. This marks the end of any influence the Society contemplates from the outside adult world. Henceforth, to the boys, the matriarchal stands for the reactionary, and the patriarchal for the visionary. The ancient island warriors now dominate their minds as visionary patriarchs, and Ma Shepherd becomes the embodiment of matriarchal conservatism. At the same time they pick up Rockey's sense of the significance of names. They can see what has been well named and what has not. Mount Misery, the epiphanic point of San Cristobal is so named to inculcate attitudes of defeat, and Paradise Point and Paradise Wood are so called to lull the mind of the defeated exile into everlasting submission. The boys become warriors in the true sense of the word, not coated with the varnish that keeps chairs smooth but fired by the imagination that made the Tribe Boys go to the cliffs to die rather than surrender. San Cristobal is no paradise, but they are going to die to make it so. They are not going to be reformers of the old world but transformers of the old into the new. Their language is not the oiled rhetoric of intellectuals like Mark. It is the rugged yet dignified patois of fishermen like Rockey.

To suggest the enormity of Shepherd's murder, Lamming resorted to the pathetic fallacy, using darkness to suggest desolation. At the end of the novel darkness falls again. Ironic writing uses the night very frequently to mirror and confirm the theme of chaos and failed heroism. But the boys' hope of achieving true heroism is suggested by their refusal to be cowed by this final darkness. The night curfew that drives the other generations into their homes has no effect on them. These legislators of tomorrow break the old law - it 'could now not enter their feeling' (p412) - and hold an all-night vigil at Saragasso cemetery to honour the dead, especially Rawley, the brave little martyr of the Society for whom the boys - Singh in particular (p405) - risk ostracism. In their imagination, Mount Misery, the local epiphanic point, blows open and the surrounding hills catch its spreading light. It is like a new dawn - 'the hills revolted and grew fire where pepper trees were planted' (p411).

Ironic circularity, then, has finally been shattered. The brave warrior archetype that effects the shattering is here given a collective significance consistent with Lamming's rejection of singular heroism in favour of communal participation in leadership. Mervyn Morris is too hesitant when he says that innocence 'seems in the end to see more accurately than age' (1968; p78). The boys unmistakably catch a vision.

## NOTES

- 1 Kabonyi's association with Siriana, which Chege mistakes for betrayal of the ridges, is a temporary one intended to give him time to learn about the white man. The Black Messiah, the title originally given to the book, is perhaps responsible for the interpretation of Kabonyi as a traitor. Elsewhere in this discussion, it is shown that he is not a traitor. On the book's change of name see Lindfors, 1981.
- 2 The Ituika was banned as early as 1925. Whatever remnants of it survived were outlawed around the time of the Emergency.
- 3 Waiyaki's scar, sustained in battle with a wild animal, sets him apart from other youths at Siriana. He is a defender of the ridges. Although his approach to problems is generally geared towards avoiding armed confrontation, he does not belong to the new generation that rejects the spear and the shield (p107), the symbols of national defence. At the end, just before his downfall, he becomes politically militant (p164).
- 4 Although it would have come quite naturally for Ngugi to portray Kerinyaga as an epiphanic point he was probably encouraged to do so by Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya, whose title is obviously epiphanic. Werner Glinga (1986) sees Facing Mount Kenya (1938) as one of the proto-literary works that gave rise to modern Kenyan literature. Ngugi sees Kenyatta's book differently. In 'African culture: The Mistake That Kenyatta Made' Ngugi attacks Kenyatta's book for looking at the past 'through a distorted mirror of an ideal African culture now lost but which should be revived' (Lindfors, 1981; p26). He is against nostalgic hankering after the past.
- 5 'Others cried, "Let Kabonyi come forward". And Kabonyi stood up with dignity. Their unfinished battle was now on' (p169). The author is not being ironic. Kabonyi has both dignity and a following. He is a respectable elder in spite of his mistaken ideas. In an interview with Reinhard Sander and Ian Munro - Killam, 1984; p5 - Ngugi states that Kabonyi has more positive

- 6 Edgar Wright observes that the plot follows an Aristotelian pattern (1973; pp103-5). Catastrophe, however, is not narrowly Aristotelian but a universal narrative feature which all story telling communities possess (Frye, 1957). Ngugi's hero meets Aristotelian requirements but the nature of the catastrophe is Kikuyu. The River Between shows that he knew enough oral literature to construct a tragic denouement before he came across Aristotle - see the Gikuyu and Mumbi story for instance.
- 7 Cf. Figueroa (1973), who complains that Jane's Career is a 'novel ... rather old fashioned in structure, and ... unadventurously so, even when it was published in 1914' (p98).
- 8 Ian Munro (1979; pp126-27) shows that Lamming himself has had to reject views that the West Indies are 'islands cramped with disease no economy can cure', as disillusioned interpretations which he can share neither with his characters nor with certain fellow writers. In The Pleasures of Exile (pp118-150) Lamming offers the Haitian revolution as an example that redeems the West Indian past in heroic terms.
- 9 V S Naipaul seems to have portrayed all the characters in this short story collection - Miguel Street - ironically. Most are on quests that achieve nothing. This is in keeping with the view expressed in The Middle Passage (pp11-39) that in the Caribbean no history was made.
- 10 R B Le Page (1969) examines the difficulty of finding ingredients common to two or more West Indian dialects. Lamming is such a master of these varieties that no strain is felt in the composite patois that he uses in his works. Mervyn Morris (1968; pp73-85) examines Lamming's transition from poet to novelist, and his broadcasts for the BBC Caribbean Service. He demonstrates Lamming's rhetorical brilliance.
- 11 Frank Birbalsingh (1988; p187) quotes Lamming as saying that in the subplot,

'the Indian boy, the African boy, the Chinese boy are, in fact, living out the future that the adult world is talking about'.

## CHAPTER FIVE: *THE HIGH MIMETIC ENCYCLOPAEDIC FORM*

Although high mimetic literature can be found throughout the Third World, it is particularly prevalent in West Africa, where it appears mostly in the drama. Practical constraints have always made it difficult for playwrights to produce encyclopaedic forms; plays are too short to be encyclopaedic. But in the corpus of Achebe there are two high mimetic novels - Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God. The latter is discussed here.

### Chinua Achebe: 'Arrow of God'

Achebe's evocation of tragic cynosure in Arrow of God centres on a clash of cultures and the resultant collapse of a dignified traditional order, as the Igbo - indeed the entire African pre-colonial epoch - is brought to a close. Arrow of God and Things Fall Apart are quite different in conception. In Arrow of God Achebe presents a configuration of archetypes which reveals a people's traditional dignity in its totality. There are possibly more archetypes in Achebe's work than the half dozen that form the core of this discussion. Things Fall Apart is a much thinner novel. It focusses relentlessly on the warrior hero, Okonkwo, whereas Arrow of God surveys a whole community, and of the two protagonists, Okonkwo's counterpart, Nwaka, is ultimately less important than the priest, Ezeulu.

The warrior archetype in Achebe's world contains many possibilities. The brave warrior may grow into an elder of compelling eminence or he may become a rebel-hero and staunch critic of his community. Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart falls into the former category; Nwaka in Arrow of God falls into the latter. He is not as conformist as Okonkwo, but rather a kind of trouble-shooter whose criticism of society is a great asset when used constructively, but whose errors of judgement can result in calamitous consequences. This kind of character is bound to evoke mixed feelings of admiration and censure. His role in society may not be as central as that of Okonkwo but the author's fundamental premise is that a community that decides to dispense with his services is on the way to being ruined by stale orthodoxy.

Nwaka is a 'great man and a great orator' (p40), a titled warrior whose ambition is to ensure that Ezeulu does not use his priestly influence to found a dynasty. He has no personal grudges against the Chief Priest; rather he feels a social obligation to keep the priest safe from being corrupted by the immense power with which his office is endowed. He wants to ensure that Ezeulu's words are not taken as ordained truth but simply as the opinion of one elder in an egalitarian environment.<sup>1</sup> Why, for example, should there be no war to reclaim land believed to have been alienated just because an elder-priest says so? This is what Nwaka cannot understand:

My father did not tell me that before Umuaro went to war it took leave from the priest of Ulu ... The man who carries a deity is not a king. He is there to perform his god's ritual and to carry sacrifice to him. But I have been watching this Ezeulu for many years. He is a man of ambition; he wants to be king, priest, diviner, all. His father, they said, was like that too. But Umuaro showed him that Igbo people knew no kings. The time has come to tell his son also (pp27-28).

Achebe goes to the foundation of egalitarianism in a way that he does not in Things Fall Apart. Both Okonkwo and Nwaka come into conflict with the gods, but Nwaka does so on a point of principle, whereas Okonkwo's challenge to the Earth Goddess is the consequence simply of rashness and rage.

It is tempting to say of the many African communities that remained egalitarian that the possibilities of founding kingdoms and dynasties never occurred to them. Achebe's narrator, whose eye traverses the land in the course of his narration, emphasizes the checks and balances that kept egalitarianism the only political option in these communities. His premise is that the civil authority of elders is not a confining order which the community cannot surmount; it is a *preferred* social arrangement which has survived as a result of being defended by the brave warriors who have always looked at investing power in a single man, be he chief or king, as a threat to common liberties.

Achebe's work may profitably be seen against the background of Richard Henderson's argument that Igbo society is essentially anarchic, since there is a 'King in Every Man' (Henderson, 1971). Arrow of God demonstrates how these 'kings' are contained

within a communal structure.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the book answers many questions raised by other egalitarian high mimetic works of African origin, including Things Fall Apart. It tells us why Mugo wa Kibiro, Chege and all the patriarchal figures mentioned in The River Between never managed to found kingdoms in spite of their immense influence in the community. The impression that Things Fall Apart and The River Between create is that power does not tempt individual elders to try to rise above their peers so as to have the sole say on matters. This is simplistic; the elders would not be truly human if such an ambition did not occur to them. In Arrow of God Achebe allows an encyclopaedic narrator to peer anagogically into every aspect of the community in order to examine more deeply the checks and balances that have kept alive the egalitarian ideals of African society.

That it is Africa that Achebe is addressing and not simply Igbo society is suggested by the parallels with The River Between (an East African work) and by Fanon's observation that the

intellectual who has gone far beyond the domains of Western culture and who has got it into his head to proclaim the existence of another culture never does so in the name of Angola or Dahomey. The culture which is affirmed is African culture. (Fanon, 1966; p171.)

The ideals of equality that Nwaka champions have been the subject of much debate in the community from time immemorial. Practical wisdom has ensured that a political dynasty is not founded. The title of king has been made impossible to acquire, for anyone interested in this title has been required to pay all debts of those he desires to rule (p209). But even with this sanction it cannot be taken for granted that no one will aspire to be king. There might be one who, for example, might think that the criterion of solvency does not have to be met before one declares himself king or chief. Is this what Ezeulu may be up to?

Nwaka is not simply 'the wealthy, volatile and demagogic titled elder', in the pay of the priest of Idemili that Emmanuel Obiechina suspects him to be (Obiechina, 1979; p171).<sup>3</sup> He is a man of principle who has found in the priest of Idemili an ally against Ezeulu, and what he challenges - at least initially - is not the priest's relationship with

the deity but his apparent bid for political power. Nwaka is Promethean in type but not entirely so in courage. He begins as a challenger, not of the gods, but of men, and he needs the security of one deity to challenge a man who acknowledges another. There are indications, however, that, with sufficient pressure on his character, he is capable of developing into an uncompromising champion of egalitarian ideals whether or not he has a supporting deity. Though his character is in some ways limited, and though his aim is to reform an old order rather than to form a new one, he is an authentic rebel-hero, braver than all the rest who equal him in title. There is not the slightest tinge of irony in this early description of him:

Nwaka walked forward and back as he spoke; the eagle feather in his red cap and bronze band on his ankle marked him out as one of the lords of the land - a man favoured by Eru, the god of riches (p16).

This passage demands attention for several reasons. It emphasises the egalitarian climate that prevails to provide checks and balances against the lords who may wish to rise above their fellow leaders to establish a political dynasty. One of these checks is the requirement that all matters of communal interest be debated openly in a forum of elders where even the untitled may have a say. Thus, although Nwaka is a distinguished orator, the 'Owner of Words' (p40), discourse is in actual fact communally owned (proverbs are not copyrighted) and placed at the service of society through public deliberation on all matters of mutual interest. Orators like Nwaka may have a natural advantage in their ability to marry word and gesture to make old proverbial sayings resound with new meaning in the arena of public debate but communalism invests as much in critical listening as in oratory. Those not favoured by nature with agile tongues may still be considered sensible listeners whose opinions matter. Quick tongues and sound ears are both assets in making discourse serve communal ends constructively.

More important for my present purpose, the passage also shows the manner in which the author attempts to adorn the warrior archetype. He appeals to nature for an image of proud beauty as an eminent metaphor to build up admiration for Nwaka and the other elders. The eagle, a bird of proud beauty, portrays vividly not only the rugged elegance of the warriors of the land but also their bravery. Nwaka's eagle's feather

swaying in the arena in unison to his oratory is no mere head-gear; it is symbolic of all the qualities of the eagle which Nwaka embodies as a representative elder worthy of the reader's admiration.

Nwaka is admirable so long as he remains within the political arena, but he overreaches when he meddles in religious matters. A warrior may be admired when he tackles a people's enemy but many are likely to feel, as Nwaka's people do, that challenging the gods amounts to hubris. He tries to set Idemili up as a counter to Ulu, and even destroys an image of Ulu. For this he is not overtly punished. Ulu appears to wink at his challenge. In fact we never get to know what Ulu thinks of him because the mythic core of the text rarely permits gods to appear in person to air opinions. The reader is forced simply to accept the author's report that Ulu does not execute vengeance:

But Nwaka survived his rashness. His head did not ache, nor his belly; and he did not groan in the middle of the night (p39).

The reader is as puzzled as the villagers at Ulu's silence, especially in the light of what Ezeulu his priest has to face in the end. Still, even if Nwaka has his limitations, he is never viewed ironically. The predominant view of him, despite his weaknesses, is of a flawed giant indispensable to society.

Similarly, on the other side of the ledger, Achebe presents an admirable but not faultless priest. Though Ezeulu's positive contribution to society is never in doubt, and the text does extricate him from the charge of ambition, his arrogance is patent. The two men are both guilty of hubris in their respective spheres - the religious and the socio-political. The one fights with sword and shield; the other uses the power of his office.

Ezeulu's philosophical turn of mind is introduced early. He does not believe in confronting the white man in a suicidal manner like Okonkwo or Obika. He adopts the style of an astute investigator and one of the ways in which he hopes to benefit his people is by sending his son to school:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it, you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share (pp45-46).

But the administration's vision and that of Ezeulu are incompatible; the colonialist agenda has no place for the cultural heritage and communal deliberations of the Igbo. Perhaps the situation could be salvaged if the administration was less high-handed - if, for example, its representatives would travel to Igboland, now that the new road is complete, and also if they would negotiate rather than demand. But the kind of caution used in advising Ezeulu to take one of his sons to school (p175) is abandoned when it comes to the attempt to appoint him Paramount Chief. Underlying this attempt is the assumption that everyone is interested in sharing power with the new administration. Ezeulu's declining of the appointment is therefore considered an affront to authority. How can one reject such 'promotion'?

Internal Umuaro conflicts notwithstanding, the imprisonment of their chief priest becomes a disgrace beyond all expectation. The archetypal representation of dignity is symbolically dishonoured. Ezeulu is no ordinary prisoner, of course. He will not for instance cooperate during interrogations if the interrogators breach decorum (p174). And then strength of character and coincidences conspire to make Ezeulu's reputation soar just when the administration appears bound to win. To start with, the absurdity of imprisoning a man for rejecting privilege begins to weigh heavily on the administration's conscience. Then visitors, who at first only trickle in to see the 'prisoner', increase, showing that his incarceration is quite different in kind to the road-digging which his countrymen are forced to undergo. Hard labour and whips make the new generation surrender their cultural values and, instead, desire only monetary compensation. But neither prison nor privilege will make Ezeulu break with the old ways or surrender the pursuit of truth that made him earlier witness against Umuaro in the guns episode. By virtue of his heroic defence of the indigenous social system, Ezeulu reaches and surpasses the achievement of Nwaka, the champion of egalitarian ideals in Umuaro. That power lures and corrupts most, but not the likes of Ezeulu, seems to be the author's point. The terms the administration has offered him regarding acceptance of the post are not negotiable, only obeyable, and Ezeulu refuses to obey. The view Government Hill advances that they are the men on the spot who know the African (p56) but who are constantly overruled by the headquarters encounters many exceptions, one of whom is the passively resistant Ezeulu. His rejection of their terms dismisses their claim to a monopoly of vision concerning what is best for Africa. Ezeulu, then, is the hero of the epic<sup>4</sup> whom the four walls of a prison cannot contain. His eventual triumphant departure from prison shatters the

irony of his momentary confinement and returns the narrative to the dignified world of high if unidealised achievement. Consider, for example, the cynosure in his appearance the morning he is released, which reflects his victory over Government Hill:

Ezeulu wore his shimmering, yellow loincloth and a thick, coarse, white toga over it; this outer cloth was passed under the right armpit and its two ends thrown across the shoulder .... On his right hand he held his alo - a long, iron walking-staff with a sharp, spear-like lower end which every titled man carried on important occasions. On his head was a red ozo cap girdled with a leather band from which an eagle feather pointed slightly backwards (p181).

Throughout the text, the narrator depends on the metaphor of the ruggedly elegant eagle to convey the dignity of the people he depicts.

Accountability is a major issue in a mode as concerned with the use of power and the exercise of authority as the high mimetic is. In the traditional context the elders are accountable to each other as the Nwaka-Ezeulu relationship illustrates. The administration's attempt to set up a new form of authority in Umuaro does not succeed; even in Okperi, where they manage to appoint a chief, the success is qualified. The fact that they are accountable to a central authority far away gives them the power and opportunity to be corrupt. And the chief's vast scheme of personal aggrandisement in collusion with others in the civil service leads to corruption and excessive love of titles old and new. There is an implied contrast between the new power structure and the old. With Ezeulu's victory Achebe achieves his aim of teaching the young that the past with all its imperfections was often successful in areas where the new approach fails. The issues of corruption and personal aggrandisement at the expense of the public which the Chief Ikedi episode introduces become major themes in works such as No Longer at Ease, a study on the corrupting influence of the new social order.

Ezeulu's rejection of the offer of chieftaincy absolves him of the charges of ambition which Jabbi calls the 'secular megalomania' his critics imagine he has (Jabbi, 1980; p144). But the text continually alludes to the occasional haughtiness that mars his

otherwise impressive record as a man of truth and title. His pride suffers injury much too easily, and sometimes erupts into plain insolence which hurts others without necessarily making it impossible for them to live with him as Okonkwo's temper might have done. Nwoye in Things Fall Apart has to flee his father's temper to become a Christian, but when Oduche in this novel shifts loyalties his father simply observes that he has a goat's skull (p220) and does not disown him.

Were it not that the priest has some hubris, things could be pieced together again, and those who feel no particular attraction to the articles of the new faith might continue in their old ways. At Government Hill, we see Ezeulu not only appreciating his relationship with his friend Wintabota (Winterbottom), but also agonising over his wounded pride when the author says that:

It was he who later advised him to send one of his sons to learn the wisdom of his race. All this would suggest that the white man had goodwill towards Ezeulu. But what was the value of goodwill which brought him this shame and indignity? (p175)

Ezeulu is a man who cannot bear an affront to his pride, and vengeance for the indignities he has suffered will probably be exacted. Thus revenge becomes one of the main themes in the text, though, as I shall show, it is worked out in a complex way. Ezeulu's personality begins to disintegrate during his detention, and although he leaves Government Hill as an eagle-feathered warrior who has won a major victory, the idea of revenge is already shaping in his mind.

After his return from Government Hill, Ezeulu's pride and vow for vengeance are initially mollified by the realisation that even the most independent of titled elders such as Ogbuefi Ofoka back him in his plans to confront the dangers which the white man's presence precipitates. Does Ulu's announcement to Ezeulu that he will not yield in the conflict between him and Idemili revive Ezeulu's desire for vengeance? This is unclear. What can be said for certain is that he reinterprets his future function as that of 'an arrow in the bow of his god' (p192). He refuses to eat the two yams which have accumulated during his time in prison. As a result the harvest is set back two months. A famine ensues, and the old order collapses.

Both Nwaka and Ezeulu are tragic figures - eminent and virtuous men who suffer defeat as a result of pride, in the manner of Shakespeare's tragic heroes. But there is also a hint in the novel of a tragedy more in the Greek manner - disaster brought about by unavoidable circumstances.

In the ill-fated market debates between Nwaka and Ezeulu, the focus is less on their respective weaknesses than on the role of rhetoric in an egalitarian society. While the free exercise of rhetoric may serve to keep democracy alive, it can also lead to errors of judgement. The priest's counsel for caution against war with Okperi is in keeping with the meliorative and philosophical reflection that his calling requires of him, and one detects persuasive eloquence nearly as good as Nwaka's in passages such as the story of the wrestler that is used to dissuade Umuaro from war:

He wrestled from village to village until he had thrown every man in the world. Then he decided he must go and wrestle in the land of the spirits, and become a champion there as well. He went and beat every spirit that came forward. ... Rather than heed the call to go home he gave a challenge to the spirits to bring out their best and strongest wrestler. So they sent him his personal god, a little wiry spirit who seized him with one hand and smashed him on stony earth (pp26-27).

But in the end the meeting rejects the priest's sound advice, not because Nwaka has more sense but because his rhetoric is more effective. The author here invites the reader to see eloquence destroying sound judgement (p17) and making public debate a risky undertaking in society. But he does not endorse either autocracy or aristocracy as a viable alternative to egalitarian consultation. Every man has a right to give his views during deliberations on communal issues, even if this leads to unfortunate decisions. Walsh has pointed out that this aspect of Achebe's novels reflects the world of Pericles' Athens (Walsh, 1973, p30), though he seems to misinterpret acquisition of title here as admission into an aristocracy.

The real cause of the Umuaro-Okperi war is not that the warriors cannot refrain from battle. If it were so, Achebe would not have built up the admirable dignity of the warriors so carefully. The titles that the Igbo elders spend a life-time trying to acquire provide a sense of fulfilment which ensures that territorial expansion does not

normally lure with promises that could turn war into an occupation. The community resists empire-building by guarding strenuously against 'a war of blame'. In the world Achebe has created, which is fairly representative of many African communities, war is not normally undertaken lightly, but with just reasons, though accidents may sometimes lead to war. Human nature may, of course, be a factor too; the Umuaro-Okperi battle is fought partly because of a veiled accusation of sterility made against one of the Okperi men by one of the peace emissaries. Exactly what the emissary actually means is one of the many ambiguities in the text which Achebe chooses to leave unresolved. The complexity of human nature and of history is insisted upon, and the reader does not feel that Achebe is manipulating his material to present a simplistic cynosure. With his characteristic insight into human nature and society, he does not idealise African unity and then pit it against the encroaching culture of the Winterbottoms. He admits the existence of internal conflicts in African communities.

Achebe uses the mother archetype to explain the nature of the Umuaro-Okperi relationship and the extent to which the administration misunderstands it. Many daughters of Okperi marry in Umuaro. The Umuaro sons have a strong attachment to Okperi as their mothers' former homeland. They tend to feel that Okperi is more of a motherland than Umuaro, as that is where many of their maternal relations live. In the speech of one of the oldest men in the gathering we see the positive values of the mother archetype transferred on to Okperi in recognition of the emotional springs that bind Umuaro to Okperi:

'From the way Akukalia spoke I saw he was in great anger. It is right that he should feel like that. But we are not sending him to his motherland to fight. We are sending you, Akukalia, to place the choice of war before them. Do I speak for Umuaro?' They gave him power to carry on (p17).

This is not the story that Government Hill tells; they fail to understand the relationship between the two communities and regard one as the other's enemy.

To understand the reasons for the Umuaro-Okperi conflict one needs to appreciate the motherland-farmland contrast in the text. As the motherland, Okperi is inviolable since many Umuaro people see it as the home of their maternal uncles, aunts, grandmothers and grandfathers. They are too emotionally involved with its welfare to

think of an armed conflict with it. The text implies that men are encouraged to marry outside the six-village Umuaro confederation so that in the event of vicissitudes like Okonkwo's (in Things Fall Apart) they will have a place of refuge in exile. Unfortunately, the power of oratory is used in the debate to divest Okperi of the positive values of African motherhood and make it violable. This is done by manipulation of language that involves substituting for the emotionally arresting archetype of motherland the impersonal 'farmland'. A disputed piece of land in Okperi is labelled 'farmland'. Umuaro can now invade a part of their motherland through the farmland. Achebe in the end does not tell us who the disputed portion of land belongs to, though Winterbottom awards it to Okperi. His main interest here is not ownership and litigation; rather he is concerned with the relationship between farmland and motherland as conceptual entities modulating behaviour. Thanks to this redefinition Umuaro does the unthinkable: it fights against a portion of the motherland!

In Things Fall Apart, the mother archetype is not as deeply developed as it is in the encyclopaedic Arrow of God. Okonkwo flees to what is properly considered his motherland (giving rise to the injunction that 'mother is supreme'), but the values of motherhood are transferred to little else but land. In Arrow of God, power itself is considered injurious if it is not moderated with the tenderness and understanding with which the admirable mother brings up her children. The priest exercises a fair amount of power by overseeing the religious life of the community. But this must be tempered with a motherly perception of the needs of the people whose spiritual well-being he is appointed to undertake. His official regalia is designed to impress this fact indelibly upon his mind:

Around his head was a leather band from which an eagle's feather pointed backwards. On his right hand he carried Nne Ofọ, the mother of all staffs of authority in Umuaro, and on his left he held a long iron staff which kept up a quivering rattle whenever he stuck its pointed end into the earth (p70).

The African woman does not scale the heights of social achievement like titled men, but her *qualities* govern the exercise of authority as 'the mother of all staffs' indicates. Authority must be used not with the metallic insensitivity of iron but with the tenderness of motherhood. In a masculine world women may not be permitted to

But this is not to say that Achebe ignores specific aspects of the mother's archetypal role. The three weddings in the text which at first appear to simply document matrimonial tradition are in fact studies in the social dimension of motherhood, though none of the young brides is elevated to Nwanyi Okperi's position. There is more than a passing interest in marriage and motherhood in Achebe's text. The marriages of Ezeulu's children - Obika and Akueke - are portrayed basically as contrasts. The central issue in both is the traditional African man's view of marriage and how it affects his ability to help the woman adjust to the archetypal role of mothering a new generation. An unbalanced viewpoint leads to male chauvinism and pathological belligerence that makes the woman suffer as a victim of aggression. This is the standpoint Akueke's husband takes. It results inevitably in perpetual conflict and domestic violence. On the other hand, Obika, though he is presented initially as an aggressive young man, becomes a custodian of sound matrimonial tradition. Around his wedding time 'Obika began to admire this new image of himself as an upholder of custom ...' (p115). This responsible attitude is considered necessary for perpetuation of the community.

Thus while Obika's aggressive conduct makes him confront the medicineman and even the white man himself, it is never directed at his wife. He is in fact, a self-appointed disciplinarian of those in the extended family circle who administer corporal punishment upon their wives and it is in this capacity that he beats up Akueke's husband. It is, however, recognised that Akueke's extreme position is rare. Occasional misunderstandings between husband and wife are inevitable, and a young bride should generally persevere rather than exaggerate the significance of this conflict and resort to a 'return-to-my-parents' exhibitionism. This is how Akueke (father of Udenkwo) sums up the matter:

As for my daughter I do not want her to go on thinking that whenever her husband says yah! to her she must tie her little baby on her back, take the older one by the hand and return to me. My mother did not behave like that. Udenkwo learnt it from her mother, my wife, and she is going to pass it on to her children, for when mother-cow is cropping giant grass her calves watch her mouth (p173).

The consideration shown to Obika's wife, the mistreatment Akueke receives and Udenkwo's exhibitionism constitute three approaches to marriage. Without elevating any of the brides to an archetypal status, the author stresses the importance for society as a whole of a proper approach to motherhood.

The epiphanic archetype is presented ironically in Arrow of God. The dignified, coherent and predominantly high mimetic narration used in the realisation of Umuaro is abandoned when the action moves to an old point of visionary illumination now in the possession of the colonial power and renamed Government Hill - a characteristic example of colonial 'discovering' and 'naming'. Earlier, extrinsic irony was also apparent in Captain Winterbottom's version of the conflict between Umuaro and Okperi. He saw them as two distinct enemy nations that he must be instrumental in uniting. The distance from Umuaro to Okperi was, he reckoned,

about six miles not more. But to the native that's a foreign country. Unlike some of the more advanced tribes in Northern Nigeria, and to some extent Western Nigeria, the Ibos never developed any kind of central authority. That's what our headquarters people fail to appreciate (p37).

The irony here is manifold. For one thing, the attitude of Umuaro towards Okperi, which the civilizing mission sees as one of incessant antagonism, is in fact one of respect for a venerated motherland. Furthermore, the absence of central authority in the form of a chief or king is interpreted to mean that 'governing' and 'government' are totally foreign concepts to communities like the Igbo who do not have any centralised control. Conversely, the only way Winterbottom can understand Ezeulu is to think of him as a priest-king, which is exactly what the egalitarian majority fear that the chief priest might become by consolidating sacred and secular power. But Winterbottom's views seem moderate when compared with the extreme opinions of the mission. The Lieutenant-Governor speaks of people who lack 'Natural Rulers' (p55). To him a hierarchical society is 'natural', with the cultured at the top and the rest at the bottom. Belonging to the cultured gives the mission the right to bestow upon the rest, among other things, a system of government - hence the naming of an Igbo epiphanic point 'Government Hill'.

The hill that was once, presumably, the focal point of the motherland (Okperi) now becomes the seat of an alien government and the site of the prison in which the epitome of Igbo culture (Ezeulu) is incarcerated. This ironic depiction of the epiphanic archetype means that the indigenous people to some extent become objects of irony. But since this irony does not emanate from assumptions made by these people themselves, their dignity (established by the eagle image discussed earlier) is not seriously undermined; in other words, the irony is localized, not pervasive. One of the main indignities Umuaro young men have to suffer is their having to become road-diggers supervised with a whip in the land that earlier offered the sort of refuge and peace that Okonkwo enjoyed in his motherland. The land where maternal grandmothers and grandfathers, uncles and aunts, cousins and second cousins could be visited, and where succour in any eventuality could be obtained, now looms with whips and prisons, authorised by Government Hill.

Moses Unachukwu, himself a Christian, appreciates and clarifies for the reader the enormity of going to prison in a land more properly known to Umuaro as a motherland. He encourages the road-diggers to avoid this humiliation:

You all know how friendly we are with Okperi. Do you think any Umuaro man who goes to prison there will come back alive? ... do you forget that this is the moon of planting? Do you want to grow this year's crops in a land where your fathers owe a cow? I speak as your elder brother (p84).

The bridewealth - traditionally paid in the form of cows - that pours into Okperi could be replaced by a supply of offenders to the penal institution. It could be argued that Unachukwu's exhortation is not disinterested since he is an employee of Government Hill. But Upaka has no such vested interest, and he is similarly cautious, arguing that the white man should be viewed as hot soup and taken slowly from the edges of the bowl (p85). Note that the dignified speech in the market or arena, customary among the elders in Umuaro, is no longer available to the new generation. There is a panicky roadside consultation that lacks the supreme confidence of the Okonkwos and the Nwakas of the previous generations. The honorific eagle feathers are absent here. Instead the men carry whips and spades. They are emasculated, and those who decide to confront the new authority in the manner of Okonkwo momentarily appear insane. Obika's submission to the whip and the spade marks the end of the resistance that his generation has shown.

Henceforth, the new generation has conceded epiphanic vision to Government Hill, which means a loss of deep rootedness in their cultural ways. Future issues will not centre on culture but on monetary considerations; hence the unanimous decision to ask Government Hill why the road diggers are not paid (p86). Desirable as the monetary economy may be, the author does not present this decision as epiphanically illuminated. The younger generation fails to provide a protagonist equal to the task of meeting the white man's challenge, whether in the courageous but suicidal fashion of Okonkwo and Obika, or through inspired negotiation, in the manner of Ezeulu. It is the text itself that reclaims and preserves the dignity of traditional Africa.

Surprisingly, perhaps, Arrow of God has no character to fill the archetypal role of traitor which seems to be invited by the situation. There is no counterpart to Kamau in Ngugi's The River Between, who betrays Waiyaki to the judicial-political authority or the Kiama. Ezeulu's recognition that the white man's presence is permanent and his willingness to do business with him certainly looks suspicious. He goes on to witness against Umuaro in the matter of the war with Okperi, and henceforth, even among his best friends, the question of his being a traitor is raised more than once. Akuebue sees him as a lizard who threw confusion into his mother's funeral rite (p125) and then observes that 'Umuaro will always say that you betrayed them before the white man. And they will say that you are betraying them again today by sending your son to join in desecrating the land' (p131). Thus is the archetypal role of traitor raised and discussed throughout the text. But in fact Ezeulu is no traitor. By sending his son, Oduche, to school, he attempts to begin a philosophical dialogue with the West. But, as Achebe has observed with regard to Cheikh Kane's Ambiguous Adventure, you cannot simply experience the West without becoming somewhat like them (Achebe, 1988; p35). Experiencing and becoming turn out to be inseparable when it comes to mission education. Oduche's desecration of the sacred python is a logical outcome of the conflicting cultural forces he attempts to come to terms with.

The movement of history denies Achebe's characters in Arrow of God the middle ground from where cultural synthesis is possible. To stand in this middle position and attempt to reconcile the opposed forces is to risk being branded a traitor. Neither by sending his son to school, nor by going to Government Hill does Ezeulu engage in treachery, although the charge persists. Since Ezeulu does not go there of his own

volition but under arrest, the question of treachery arises in a different form: how did Winterbottom's messengers come to locate the residence of the chief priest? In fact Winterbottom's steward, John Nwodika (who is, in his own way, as wise as Ezeulu in trying to negotiate a middle way that recognises the need to deal with the West) takes the messengers not to Ezeulu's home but to Umuaro, leaving them to intimidate passersby to show them the chief priest's residence. The difficulties they encounter - one suspicious local tells them that the only Ezeulu he knows is a man of Umuofia, 'a whole day's journey in the direction of the sunrise' (p152) - exonerate Nwodika from any charge of treachery.

In the end the men's location of Ezeulu's home is achieved through the agency of a little boy, who is intimidated into showing the messengers the compound of the man Winterbottom wants. The Okperi battle having been used to confiscate and destroy the older generation's guns, and to emasculate the younger generation, the crisis that could have occurred at the arrest of the chief priest is not forthcoming. It is important to grasp this point because one of the issues for which Ezeulu later takes Umuaro to task is their letting the high priest be humiliated. While fingers are pointed at Ezeulu, he in return suspects that he has been betrayed not only concerning his arrest but also his imprisonment. At this crucial moment of history, betrayal becomes a social obsession.

Although Nwodika will not himself be a party to the priest's arrest, he hopes that a dignified meeting will some day take place between Government Hill and the leaders of Umuaro so that his clan can benefit from the enterprising spirit of the emergent monetary economy and share power in the new political set up. The author is aware that at given historical moments, treachery can easily be overstated. He refuses to be a party to his characters' hunt for a traitor, focussing on tricks of the kind Nwodika plays on the messengers rather than an outright betrayal.

It must not be forgotten that the traitor and the trickster are near-relations. The spectrum of the trickster's activities begins with harmless deception like that of the man who tells the messengers to go to Umuofia, and at the other extreme crystallises into outright betrayal. Achebe is more content to have characters like Nwodika run trick-laden errands between the Winterbottoms and the Ezeulus than to make a single person the scapegoat of colonial history. Thus Ezeulu does not end up at Government

Hill because he has been betrayed, but because of historical inevitability. Winterbottom is hunting for reputable men to place in the civil service and nothing can hide them.

Similarly, Ezeulu himself should not be regarded as a traitor. Akuebue is wrong to attribute the prevalent confusion to his moves, which are for the most part dictated by the historical situation. Ogbeufi Ofoka's more disinterested judgement rejects the idea of Ezeulu as the proverbial lizard who confuses mourners at his mother's funeral. He does not even share Nwaka's suspicion that the chief priest is treacherously in league with the white man. His admission that Ezeulu has been right over the guns and Government Hill (p188) exonerates the chief priest from charges of treachery and charts the proper way in which history is to be understood. In his view the confusion that has momentarily reduced the metaphorical eagles to the level of the proverbial dog that tried to answer two calls at the same time and broke its jaws in the process, comes from the ambivalent situation confronting the Umuaro confederation. How to deal with the white man in friendly terms without compromising as much as his agenda requires is the cultural dilemma that Ofoka acknowledges. The situation calls for diplomacy as well as firmness, concessions and reservations, openness and secrecy, all of which involve complex manoeuvres, which, as Ofoka admits, only the priest can manage.

Ofoka's appearance in the text as a counterpoint to Akuebue's traitor-based position exemplifies the encyclopaedic gallery of characters in Arrow of God. The binary relationships between characters so evident in Things Fall Apart become multiple inter-relations in Arrow of God. We get multiple viewpoints on the major events. History is more complexly ramified than it is in Things Fall Apart. Robert Wren concurs with this when he observes that throughout the novel 'Achebe's view of the movement of history is dynamic'; he sees it as 'an interplay of forces domestic and remote' (Wren, 1980; p95).

Encyclopaedism and the acknowledgement of history seem inseparable. Achebe presents the dynamism that brings about the transition to foreign rule as a knot that circumstances have tied, and not as the work of Ezeulu or any other individual. Too concerned with the balance of power on the domestic scene, Nwaka fails to realise that refusing to deal with the Winterbottoms will not make them depart. His insistence on

locating the traitor to be held responsible for the predicament of his people is a search for the scapegoat to carry guilt for the arrival of the West. The author does not sympathise with the scapegoat proposition in the egalitarian setting of Arrow of God. In a courtly high mimetic like Kunene's Emperer Shaka the Great, the traitor emerges much more readily. The surprising thing is that a woman plays the traitor's role to remove Shaka from power. In the world Achebe has created, the hunt for someone like Mkhabayi does not succeed. Though the historical circumstances are not too different, the court has more vested interests and more camouflage for treachery than the Igbo egalitarian system, where the priest is just one of the titled leaders.

Charles Nnolim (1979) has suggested a historical source for the main plot of Arrow of God, but in fact, as Wren (1980) observes, the book's imaginative power is neglected by such an approach. Nowhere is Achebe's imagination more evident than in his evocation of the lunisolar basis of Igbo society. The Umuchu priest's story discussed by Nnolim can be summed up very briefly: this priest is imprisoned by the District Commissioner, fails to eat two yams, and, once released, refuses to compensate by eating these two in a single month. The imaginative impetus that realises Arrow of God's archetypal cyclic rhythms of the moon and how they control social life pervades the book. It is, of course, familiar from Things Fall Apart. Imaginatively, Things Fall Apart is therefore a more important influence on the writing of Arrow of God than the Umuchu priest's story.

Achebe's book begins by emphasizing the lunar cycle as the controlling and regulatory system that governs planting and harvesting. It controls fertility in the sense that the preparations of farms, harvesting and festivals, all of which are centred on the moon's appearances and disappearances in the lunar year, cannot proceed without its being sighted. It modulates the ecological calendar. The author knows that before the year ends, the archetypes of his community, the fertility one in particular, will collide with the archetypes of another culture. Hence at its third appearance, the moon is emaciated. The priest experiences foreboding as soon as he sees it:

The moon he saw that day was as thin as an orphan fed grudgingly by a cruel foster-mother. He peered more closely to make sure he was not deceived by a feather cloud (p1).

The negative version of the mother archetype merges with an emaciated moon to introduce the events that will make Umuaro writhe with the pain of hunger like underfed orphans. The priest is not aware that he will be partly instrumental in creating an artificial famine before the lunar calendar of Umuaro is replaced by the Western one. But the narrator does not want to miss the opportunity to prefigure the cultural clash ahead.

This premonition is not superstitious prognostication. The author later tells us that Umuaro knows about the tragic encounter between the white man and the neighbouring people of Ahame. Furthermore, the breaking of guns which earned Winterbottom the name of Breaker of Guns happened five years before the story begins. In other words, people are projecting real fears on to the emaciated moon. These fears are neither baseless nor simply confined to the perceptive Ezeulu. His junior wife speaks of the moon as sitting awkwardly (p2), and a debate begins about the ominous nature of the lunar posture.

It is important to recognize the real basis of these early fears, because in some quarters Ezeulu is wrongly identified as a medicine-man or witch-doctor. At Government Hill, opinion is divided concerning his social and religious functions. Winterbottom, genuinely impressed by Ezeulu's independent and determined pursuit of what is right, 'proclaimed him a man of truth from all the witnesses of Okperi and Umuaro' (p175) in the guns episode. Clarke, on the other hand, sees Ezeulu as a cheap 'witch-doctor making a fool of the British Administration in public!' (p175). This would suggest that his moon sightings are mantic pre-occupations. In an otherwise informative and perceptive article, Bu-Buakei Jabbi (1980) persists in seeing Ezeulu as uniting the mantic and the priestly. In fact, Ezeulu distrusts medicinemen, and passes this distrust on to his son, Obika. Achebe thus authenticates the priest's understanding of society and stresses the occupational hazard that medicinal practice can be in a traditional context, especially when it degenerates into charlatanism (p146) involving prognostication and magic. The mantic role is not denied as a feature of the African traditional community. But there is a clear separation of the mantic and the priestly, and one of the conflicts in the text which Achebe does not find it necessary to develop deeply arises out of Ezeulu's half-brother's wish to involve him in medicinal interests.

The priest is clearly content with the amount of power his office provides. There is no need for him to dabble in witchcraft - or in politics. In the confederation of villages over which he presides, only one, Umunneora, challenges the lunicentric cosmology that gives him his authority. The Ezidemili-Nwaka affront is something he has learnt not only to ignore but to live with, counting on the solidity of his following in the rest of the confederation. He receives Ezidemili's claims to serve an older deity with dignity. What seems to have happened is that the community, having realised that the power of Ezidemili's god was not sufficiently cosmological in scope to offer all-pervasive protection, designed the new Ulu system and appointed a priest to link them with the powers above and the earth below. But having done this with evident success, they seem to have been unable to get rid of the older deity who had failed to offer them enough protection from their enemies. Since things went well after this, Ezeulu's office enjoyed immense following and support, and he felt no need to subdue Umunneora.

Linking the confederation with the powers above and thus presiding over the ecological system through the lunar cycle places Ezeulu at the centre of Igbo culture. Ezeulu's imprisonment therefore throws the whole system out of kilter. In particular, the ceremonial eating of the yams, which marks the passage of seasons and regulates planting and harvesting, is delayed. Had one of the road-diggers - or even all of them - been imprisoned at Okperi for the entire planting season, as the text suggests might happen (p84), the repercussions would have been minimal compared to what happens when the man detained is the one in whose office the community's archetypes converge to give meaning to existence. Achebe has not written about the absurd, ironic world to be found in, say, Soyinka's Madmen and Specialists. Everything in Arrow of God is symbolically endowed with meaning, and to upset one symbol is to break continuity. The cultural symbols of the society Achebe has depicted converge on the priesthood, which embodies the values of the community in a peculiar way.

What makes the two yams the lethal weapons they become is their symbolic control of the lunar cycle which in turn regulates seasonal activities. The delay in eating them postpones the New Yam Festival, the celebration of ecological fertility. The result is an agonising artificial famine that plunges the villages into the world of the unusually emaciated moon with which events began. The seasons have nurtured the foodcrops but the collision of cultures has temporarily caused an artificial infertility.

The confederation refuses to accept the need to starve at harvest time with a plentiful crop locked up in the soil, and Ezeulu has to return to the sacred grove for answers. In an encyclopaedic form with as strong a religious dimension as Arrow of God, the green-wood archetype is not developed along secular lines, except in the form of the palm frond which the peace emissaries carry to Okperi. A single frond is plucked and presented ceremoniously as a symbol of the peace of the lush Igbo landscape.

As Armah's Two Thousand Seasons shows, when the tranquillity of the traditional community is shattered by the white man's arrival, the traditionalists retreat to the peace of nature in the groves. But Achebe is here concerned more with a sacred form of the green-wood archetype. Having shown how the lush vegetation is used symbolically to denote peace, he now turns to its significance in the traditional religious sphere. Here too it is symbolic of peace, not with men or nature this time, but with the gods. But the clash of cultures follows Ezeulu to the sacred grove as the noise of the apparatus he uses in his priestly function collides with that of the school bell. The lunar measurement of time is at variance with Western bells and calendars. As a result he comes out of the grove with no reassurance for the people. Instead he confirms that the accumulated yams cannot be eaten at once and the harvest festival must wait for two months.

Is the refusal to eat the yams ultimately Ezeulu's decision or Ulu's? This question has engaged many critics and the answer to it remains uncertain.<sup>5</sup> The wishes of the gods and the intentions of men mingle ambiguously. What is clear, however, is that from the first Ezeulu has experienced frustration at the realization that his authority is limited to naming days in an established socio-religious system which he cannot change. He can carry out ritual but not ordain it. He cannot suspend or even cancel any of his people's activities or festivities. Such changes can only be imagined, not executed.

His mind never content with shallow satisfactions crept again to the brinks of knowing. What kind of power was it if it would never be used? Better to say it was not there... (p4).

It needs to be noticed that the problem here is not the need to consolidate or increase power by venturing into fields beyond the priesthood. Sufficient power exists, but it cannot be used!<sup>6</sup>

For a moment it looks as though Ezeulu will triumph over his people by exercising the power to rearrange the lunar year and convene festivals outside the conventional periods, thus satisfying his pride, which has always been hurt by the realisation of his limitations. But the text insists that no man, no matter how great, can win judgement over his clan.

The outcome is a re-enactment of the circumstances that saw other deities fall and Ulu rise. The search for immunity against attacks by other communities led to the creation of a deity to provide that immunity. Another deity is needed to preserve the confederation from vulnerability should they decide to undertake the harvest. And so, led by the younger generation, the Igbo embrace Christianity. The narrator laments, however, the quick, violent change that forces every titled man and elder to hand over power to the youth for 'thereafter any yam harvested in his fields was harvested in the name of the son' (p230). Too humiliated to take the immunising yam to the church themselves, most elders send their young ones to do it, not as an expression of sincere loyalty to the new faith but as a pragmatic move to counter total annihilation. The most diehard traditionalists have been willing, towards the end of the novel, to compromise with inevitable change - even Nwaka allows his son to go to school (p215). The harvest seems to save the body but destroy the soul, the egalitarian warriorhood, the altruistic spirit of a generation that now unwillingly concedes power to the young and to Government Hill. Chance and plan have conspired to annul the traditional power centres and the foundations of communal consciousness.

This destruction of the old ways is epitomised by Ezeulu, whose mental derangement reflects the tensions in the community, especially the sufferings of the elders, who have been culturally dislocated by history. Nwanyi Okperi's experience confirms the tragic resolution. The madness of the archetypal mother foreshadows the mental anguish to be suffered in an extreme form by her son.

It seems that the main reason for Achebe's revision of Arrow of God was to take an opportunity to encourage the 'ardent admirers' of Ezeulu and perhaps to caution diplomatically against possible misreadings by those whom he calls in the prefatory remarks to the revised edition 'ardent detractors'. The revision demands that the work be reconsidered on the grounds that there is more in it than was recognised in the decade after it was first published:

We should be ready at the very least to salute those who stand fast, the spiritual descendants of that magnificent man, Ezeulu, in the hope that they will forgive us. For had he been spared Ezeulu might have come to see his fate as perfectly consistent with his high historic destiny as victim, consecrating by his agony - thus raised to the stature of a ritual passage - the defection of his people. And he would gladly have forgiven them. (Achebe, 1974; Preface)

Arrow of God has often been compared unfavourably with Things Fall Apart. But the diffuse structure for which it has been criticised is merely a consequence of its encyclopaedic scope and therefore a characteristic to be admired. Magnificently conceived and executed, the novel has a remarkably compact structural unity, thanks largely to the archetypal lunar cycle which governs it. The lunisolar harmony which is evident at the start is ultimately shattered; the solarised crop and Ezeulu's lunacy reflect a conflict between sun and moon and an inherent discrepancy between African and Western ways of looking at the cosmos. Government Hill precipitates the events that get the seasons out of kilter. The adoption of the Western calendar does not come naturally to most, but the annihilation of the traditional lunar year makes it inevitable. This unwilling mass defection to the Western way of reckoning the year resolves the calendar conflict but not the cultural clash. There is no easy solution to such tragic situations, as Obi recognizes in No Longer at Ease. Ezeulu and his descendants are to a large extent the victims of history.

## NOTES

- 1 William Walsh says that the society 'admits both the aristocratic and the democratic principles' (Walsh, 1973; p30). This chapter argues that Achebe seeks to portray Promethean daring preventing the establishment of an aristocratic regime. Only in a courtly high mimetic like Mazisa Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great is there a distinct privileged nobility.
- 2 In the seventh essay of Morning Yet on Creation Day Achebe discusses this misunderstanding of individual uniqueness as anarchy. He draws attention to the Igbo 'chi' which states individuality (in a communal context) in uncompromising terms. African traditional egalitarianism is in any case uncompromising on individual liberties.
- 3 The full context of Obiechina's comment reads as follows: 'When the story opens, the authority of the Chief Priest is under active attack from the Priest of Idemili who uses his kinsman, the wealthy, volatile and demagogic titled elder Nwaka of Umunneora. Idemili is one of the old gods relegated to subordinated status by the coming of Ulu. Its priest had never altogether forgotten this setback and had been in latent opposition to the priest of Ulu from time immemorial.'
- 4 Palmer (1979; p84), recognizes the novel's 'grand epic proportions'. Killam (1983; p38) somewhat reluctantly admits that Arrow of God is the work where 'Achebe realises his artistic intention in full'. Moore (1980; p36) observes that it 'stands pre-eminent among Achebe's novels by virtue of its complexity, richness of texture and moral depth'.
- 5 The complexities that readers like Moore (1980) appreciate in Arrow of God are partly founded on the difficulties of unravelling the paradox of who (Ezeulu or Ulu) plagues the community with famine. Soyinka (1978) attempts to resolve this complexity without much success since he ends up annihilating the grounds on which the 'untenable paradox' (p90) is based rather than explicating.
- 6 David Carroll (1980) sees Ezeulu as someone 'conscious of his vulnerable

position and this is why he is scrutinising so closely the nature of his power at the beginning of the novel' (p92). But Ezeulu's problem is clearly not related to political ambition but to hubris manifested as insolence.

## CHAPTER SIX: *LOW MIMETIC EPISODIC FORMS*

Low mimetic literature does not focus on the epic hero's eminent deeds. Cynosure is replaced by attention to the cultural and material products of man's civilization and the problems they pose. The settings tend to be urban rather than rural, and there is considerable emphasis on technology. The works by Bhattacharya discussed here are not concerned with high mimetic leadership as Music for Mohini is. Similarly, Ngugi moves from the lionised ridges depicted in The River Between to problems of land ownership, labour, loneliness and other matters arising from the individuation of the community in Weep Not, Child, Secret Lives, and Petals of Blood. Lamming in The Emigrants, does not portray admirable little warriors like those in the Tribe Boys' legend in Of Age and Innocence; the novel shows adults struggling to relate to the metropolis in the context of colonial exile. Thus in all the low mimetic works discussed in this chapter, individuals begin to relate to culture ambivalently because values are no longer standardised by a communal ethos. Once the community breaks down there can be no epic hero to epitomize that ethos, though several of the works discussed contain dignified relics of the old ways. The main focus, however, is on a collection of isolated individuals.

### Bhabani Bhattacharya: 'Steel Hawk and Other Stories', 'So Many Hungers!', 'Shadow from Ladakh' and 'A Dream in Hawaii'

This discussion uses examples from four of Bhattacharya's works - Steel Hawk and Other Stories, So Many Hungers!, Shadow from Ladakh and A Dream in Hawaii - to show that the adverse effects of man's material civilization are his prime concern. These works do not deal with the 'deeds' of a latter day Prometheus, but focus instead on the uses to which the legacy of Prometheus - fire - is put in contemporary Indian society, and - in A Dream in Hawaii - further afield.

Trains and helicopters are the organising metaphors of the title story in Steel Hawk and Other Stories. They are contrasted with the traditional ox-cart in a village setting. The crucial word is 'steel'. The modern amalgam of iron and aluminium fashioned with Promethean fire surpasses the traditional tempering of metal, which at its best only produces a wheel. Man feels reasonably secure with the traditional wheel, but the new

artifacts, though they offer spectacular results in communication, also instill a sense of fear. Bishan, the oxman narrator, is more used to the whirl of wheels than the villagers. There is therefore a sense of relish in his story, but also some sympathy for those on whom modern machinery has a disruptive effect:

They heard the rumble like twenty thunders and the fire-engine came hotfoot, a monster, with coach after coach of metal and wood, all ashine with paint and glass. For full five breaths Grandma was dead still (p138).

The nice tailoring of the syntax to suggest Grandma's emotional destabilization is a good example of Bhattacharya's subtle and effective language.

The image of the monster belongs to the parabolic mode, where the questing hero meets ogres, dragons and giants. In the low mimetic, a mode devoted to credible, everyday experiences, the monster is metaphorical rather than literal. To a village used to seeing just the ox-cart wheel, the train crawls out of the bush like a metallic monster. The smoke which it belches out instills fear in the villagers - as would the fire breathed by a dragon - but to this parabolic element is added the low mimetic issue of environmental pollution; the train may facilitate transport, but it leaves man's environment less safe.

And yet the villagers are ultimately fascinated rather than frightened by the train. Karma (good deeds) begins to be measured in terms of train-sightings: Grandma observes, 'To see this I must have earned merit by a hundred and one good deeds' (p139).<sup>1</sup> At a secular level, the story also illustrates the start of modern tourism in rural India. And, of course, the village is now linked to the local metropolis. A train ride taken initially for the sheer pleasure of the experience, will later draw the villagers to the city. The journey to the city is a major feature in other Indian low mimetic works - Mulk Raj Anand's Coolie, for example, where the main character starts from Kangara Hills, ending up in harsh Bombay, having suffered in all the smaller cities along the way.

The narrator of this story does not have the expanded consciousness of the later ones - Bhashkar in Shadow from Ladakh, for instance - who see the industrialisation of India as a necessity, a mandatory change that must be actively sought. He seems simply

concerned with admiring the technological progress from the ox-cart wheel to the helicopter - 'a hawk with no legs but wheels'. The village's adjustment to the new helicopter culture is investigated partly through Grandma. Her change from fear to enjoyment is discernible when she becomes able to laugh at the helicopter as merely a grasshopper. The author can be felt behind the narrator and Grandma as a shaping influence. While - in the case of the train, at least - he still points out the problems of pollution that belie the glamour of Promethean fire, he also shows that rural India is adjusting to the material wonders that the disappearing provincialism has excited. Late in the story the end of this isolation is indicated:

For the cartman of Sonamitti village had yielded to the impulse  
of the age and was riding the Steel Hawk with his Grandma,  
zooming mightily (p143).

This story successfully indicates the main theme of the collection: adjustment to a new technological culture. It is a slight piece, however; in his perceptive evaluation Balarama Gupta (1982) dismisses it in one short paragraph.<sup>2</sup>

So Many Hungers! is a more passionate work about a man-made famine that threatens to decimate Bengal. It offers an insightful account of the emergent elite of a post-colonial state - though India's freedom has not been achieved when the novel ends. Sir Abalabandu, a prince of the black market (p181), and a man 'entirely free of social conscience' (p183) is a new type of character on the Indian scene. The class he represents is quite irredeemable. They are incorrigible devotees of a new materialistic ethic that measures human values and success simply in terms of possession. They present themselves as people of charity and are polished and inflated by the media. Were they as charitable as they profess, Cheap Rice Limited would not cheat the Bengali peasantry out of grain in circumstances that cause a man-made famine. Bhattacharya dismisses them quickly from the centre of his canvas. Charity at this time of crisis is measured in terms of solidarity with the suffering peasantry and the rising tide of nationalism. Those like Samarendra who are corrected by life's adversities and cease to be 'piston rings of the massive social engine' (p211) belong among the individuals redeemed from the class that collaborates with imperialism against the common cause.

Whereas Samarendra represents part of the bourgeoisie that can be won to the cause of nationalism, Rahoul, his son, is - initially - a study in the failure of national consciousness among the emergent intellectual elite, who tend to compromise with colonial ways. In a dire famine accompanied by the call for India's independence, mere intellectual sympathy becomes a temptation when what is really called for is direct involvement. Rahoul's class, however, has real privileges to lose, and participation requires sacrifice. It is easier to hide behind researches which are in fact rationalised withdrawals than to help organise a relief centre for the emaciated masses. Rahoul's initial retreat into research, hoping to help get the formula for the gun needed to end World War II, falls into this category. His own students, such as Prokash, seem better placed to enlist with the masses since they have fewer privileges to cushion them. Thus Prokash wonders why it matters 'if a few hundred thousand have to be in prison within a prison' (p44).

Many ironic works are set inside prison enclosures, to demonstrate that life offers little or no opportunity for heroism. The low mimetic So Many Hungers!, however, focusses not so much on the inner prison within walls as on the outer prison of poverty-stricken Calcutta. In these circumstances, a real prison sentence is heroic. Devata, the Gandhian figure in the book, is probably more heroic in prison than when he has his freedom; his influence cannot be contained within the four walls of a cell. All that Kajoli needs to extricate herself from the circumstances that impel her towards prostitution is to see her grandfather's photo as a hero fasting in prison unto death for India's freedom. Thus Devata inspires from prison as effectively as when he presents the ideal of freedom directly to the village, using the concrete symbol of the flag to rally support for liberation. Rahoul too is at his best in the lorry going to jail.

Reduction of humanity to statistics begins as migrations to the city compel planners to keep a close watch on the city's population. In the traditionally closed community, such as Baruni village, censuses were almost taboo. The narrator is at pains to recover the humanity of the innocent dead and dying. It is not statistics approaching Calcutta from the countryside, but men and women of flesh and blood. As long as Rahoul and Monju keep reading the figures of the dead in newspapers they - Monju in particular - cannot conceptualise human suffering in concrete terms and become actively sympathetic with the famine victims. Only when they witness a death in their house is the idea of dying transformed from 'one more dead' (a statistic) to a reality; 'the

destitute woman was revealed in her human context' (p175). It is this double death, which denies an unborn child entry into the world and forces its mother out of it, that throws Monju into the cause. Rahoul too in due course abandons his research in order to organize a relief clinic and give political speeches on campus.

Bhattacharya's interests in So Many Hungers! are not confined to enlisting interest in the struggle. The endurance of the values of epic India which inform practically everything he writes can be seen particularly in Old Mother and Kajoli, who are meant to prove that a residue of values will survive devastation by the modern city, even under circumstances of famine, to offer the foundation on which social programmes should be constructed. Old Mother is rightly praised by K K Sharma (1979; p47) as 'an embodiment of compassion, unselfishness, strength and hope'. Cheap Rice Limited may acquire village grain by dubious methods and hoard it in the city, but Old Mother's values, which cause her to part with her cow to save a mother and child in Barun and to die in old sacking in Calcutta so that Kajoli may have her sari, show the values of epic India unshaken by the confusing city life. Her magnanimity enlivens a tragic story that K.R.S Iyengar (1973; p414) calls 'an impeachment of man's inhumanity to man'.

In Shadow from Ladakh, Bhattacharya is partly concerned with examining the limitations of epic Indian values as they relate to the question of industrialisation. The harmony achieved at the end between Gandhigram, the embodiment of those values, and Steeltown, the paragon of modernity, constitutes a reconciliation of the traditional and the progressive, the ideal and the practical, the spinning wheel and the turbine, the East and the West.

Initially, Bhashkar, the proponent of modernity, wants to look at Gandhigram not as a vital force in Indian life but as a museum of antiquated ideas, and he is partly justified, because at first Satyajit, the hero of Gandhigram, is opposed to technological change. In his conservatism, he tries to avoid Steeltown's contaminating effects by insisting that his daughter, Sumita, marry a Gandhigram resident. As a result his version of Gandhian ideals is subjected to questioning and, as P P Sharma (1982; p49) observes, 'to even a little bit of scoffing'.

Satyajit goes to Delhi to save India from the threatened Chinese invasion with a satyagraha peace march, modelled on Gandhi's marches. But, unlike Gandhi, Satyajit has violated his brahmacharya (of vow celibacy within marriage), and he arrives as a fallen redeemer. He hopes to muster national support:

It was no unfamiliar call for India. Gandhi had summoned its people more than once to meet brute force with soul force in a struggle against the mightiest of empires (p208).

But he cannot. Part of his problem is his failure to realise that history does not always flow along the high tide of Gandhian eras. Satyajit harbours a delusional ambition purportedly common among Gandhian apostles (p177), which Bhattacharya targets for criticism.

The low mimetic form champions the liberty of the individual. In Shadow from Ladakh, Gandhigram severely limits the opportunities offered by technological advancement. Once again, Satyajit's ideology is questioned, this time as it applies on the domestic scene. His daughter is not a happy product of her father's ascetic ideas:

Tall and fair and shapely but quite unadorned - her father's wish was law for Sumita. Even if she had to be unwomanly. (p49)

Among those she meets, she passes as a recluse from human civilization who experiences the changes in her body without comprehending them, since even the discussion of such matters in her family is taboo. She lacks the singlemindedness of Jhanak, who revolts against the confining communal ideals to experience the excitements Steeltown offers.

Nevertheless, Bhattacharya is too serious about Ghandism to reject Satyajit's ideals altogether. Certainly the solution to the problem is not Jhanak's near-anarchical revolt. A more progressive Satyajit would better meet the need for compromise in the cultural equation the author presents. Thus, whereas his tight domestic code and unrealistic public policies are questioned, his fast unto death (towards the end) to save Gandhigram is portrayed more favourably, and Bhashkar's industrial revolution loses the support it has enjoyed through most of the narrative.

At this point, Steeltown emerges as a conglomerate of cogs and hands employed incessantly for materialistic purposes without regard to the higher values of life. Early on this problem is hinted at when it is observed that in Steeltown life has become 'a culture, an art and a ritual' (p37), and that its apostle, Bhashkar, is uncompromisingly championing 'the dynamism of technological progress even with all its inevitable chaos' (p155). As a low mimetic narrative, with a vast admiration for Promethean fire and its steel products, Shadow from Ladakh generally suggests that Bhashkar, the Pittsburgh-trained industrial engineer, has a higher level of social awareness than Satyajit, his ex-Cambridge counterpart in Gandhigram. But Bhashkar's desire to annex Gandhigram is not treated so sympathetically, and he ends up 'disillusioned, seeking something beyond' (p222). Gandhigram is the outward projection of the Indianness he has suppressed in his being by making steel his culture, art, and ritual. Here Bhattacharya ceases to laud Promethean fire and its products to show that his society needs many of the values of epic India which Gandhigram represents. One character - Bires - is strategically employed to declare that what is needed is a composite of Gandhigram and Steeltown:

'Both .... This hour India's national life has to be one of conscious amalgam .... There's Bhashkar deep within you Satyajit! And there's you somewhere in Bhashkar, of that also I am sure' (p344).

The Satyajit in Bhashkar falls in love with Sumita. This ending is neat and to the point, but it seems somewhat oversimplified. Thirteen years after the publication of Shadow from Ladakh, by Bhattacharya's own admission (Srivastava, 1982; p25), the Indian cultural predicament was still unresolved in his own consciousness.

In A Dream in Hawaii Bhattacharya further examines Indian values, this time in terms of 'spiritual exports' (p90) to a needy super-technological American society. Will spiritual values and technology really coalesce? Hawaii, a place where the East and West meet, seems to offer itself as a natural setting for the exploration of this question.

The author believes in the efficacy of Vedanta in countering the instability of values unleashed upon society by the super-technological inventions of modern science. Even if it does not appear to be a fool-proof solution to the problems of materialism, Vedanta proves handy in Hawaii. Yogananda's Vedantic lectures in a society afflicted

with innumerable ills become a kind of psychotherapy. Their lasting curative effects are seen most clearly in the way they terminate Jennifer's nocturnal escapades with Mexican shoe-shine boys at Sunset Beach. Her redemption is possible because she rightly diagnoses a spiritual void within herself (p135). The therapeutic impact of Vedantic thought on Jennifer is underscored by Yogananda's awareness of what his mission has accomplished. These are his farewell words to her:

You are strong in spirit, Jennifer, stronger than you think. You will find the true answer to your life (p219).

A strong distinction is made between the redeemable and those beyond redemption. Discernment of spiritual chaos within is a prerequisite to redemption. One of the irredeemable is Henry, the UCLA surgeon who, according to his wife Freda, is 'allergic to spiritual things' (p96). Theirs is a family that remains true to the ethic of hedonism; Henry 'has only one purpose in life: to use his tools' (p96). Married more to technology than to each other, their actual matrimony is subjected to a technological ambition, the dream of success with surgical tools, and, worse, psychedelic experiments, as when Freda has a sexual 'ambrosia' with a phony guru. The dubious status of technological advancement comes through dramatically in Henry's view of the human body as no more than an ensemble of tissue and blood, a specimen for the surgeon's knife or the microscope hunting for germs and bacteria. Insofar as Henry and Freda conceive of spiritual exercise or sadhana, they do so in sexual terms, his wife ultimately wanting not ambrosia but a debased version of padmasana.

Sex is not, however, always seen as a perversion of spiritual values, arising out of an obsession with technology. When Devjani finds the mother she adores in bed with their family doctor (p79), it has nothing to do with experiments in sexual originality. It has to do with the traditional low mimetic and ironic theme of the frustrated housewife - in this case one whose husband, a Calcutta nuclear scientist, is ever too busy to be sensitive to her needs. (Again we sense an excess of technology.) Freda's case, on the other hand, depicts the surfeit of sex as a symptom of the sick society that Bhagwat Goyal discusses in his essay (1982) on the sensuous and the sublime in A Dream.

The permissiveness that has a power to capture and detain its victims has no hold on Devjani. However, this paragon of Hindu chastity is both shocked and fascinated by the scantiness of Hawaiian dress (p92). Her fascination poses a threat to her values

which must be fought with resolute determination. This raises the point that, though Indian youth is not allowed access to Kamasutra, the novel does not idealize them. It depicts, for example, a deviant Indian street youth who initiates Jennifer into the life of adventure that she later explores with Mexican boys once back in Hawaii. But Devjani remains pure - pure enough to convert the corrupt Walt Gregson, who has earlier plotted with Sylvia Koo to get Yogananda sexually defiled, and thus destroy the purity which Walt himself lacks. He encounters Devjani, and, unable to corrupt her innocence by means of his usual trick of drawing her navel for hours on end, he abandons his art in order to learn her values. The rejection of permissiveness is portrayed through the conversion of Walt, its chief architect and proponent.<sup>3</sup> Repelled by the Swami's morality but attracted by Devjani's old-fashioned innocence, Walt represents the doubt-afflicted hedonists who hold within them the possibility of redemption despite their crusading against the traditional moral order. He illustrates Goyal's point that, though super-technology tempts the characters in A Dream to act as super-people, they essentially remain human.<sup>4</sup>

In A Dream there is clearly admiration for the products of Promethean fire - Henry's surgical tools in this context - but emphasis is also placed on their dehumanising effects and their devastation of social values. Bhattacharya's purpose is to celebrate technological inventions without losing sight of values. How to adapt Indian spiritual therapies to overseas needs remains problematic, however. The cultural impasse between technological America and spiritual India must be resolved if Vedantic cures are to affect the orientation of the American lifestyle. Institutionalising various yogic disciplines on campus in the proposed World Centre for Yogic Disciplines threatens merely to create a supermarket of religion (p66). Dr Vincent's technocratic rhetoric is typical of low mimetic characters who want to commercialize everything, but Yogananda's inflexible ascetism also seems excessive. Some accommodation between the two is needed without too much compromise on the part of either. It is Jennifer who poses the problem most openly:

Do you approve the idea of marketing spiritual experience? Or even spiritual techniques? (pp112-3)

The Yogananda - Vincent polarisation is merely the Satyajit-Bhashkar conflict in Shadow from Ladakh transplanted on to American soil. This parallel is a disturbing one for Bhattacharya because he fears that India will probably reach America's technological level some day, which will further complicate the issue.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o: 'Weep Not Child', 'Secret Lives' and 'Petals of Blood'

In Weep Not, Child Ngugi's main concerns are to depict the dispossession and communal disintegration that arise from individuation.<sup>5</sup> In Ngugi's high mimetic, as I have shown in my study of The River Between, although the cultural predicament at times baffles the main character the communal setting gives meaning to the struggle he goes through with his people, and a sense of what life is about remains clear. Weep Not, Child, along with Petals of Blood and most stories in Secret Lives, would be called low mimetic since they do not deal with a distinguished communal hero in a traditional setting. Individuation is the author's prime interest, and, as usual in the low mimetic, this process is associated (especially in Petals of Blood) with an urban milieu, in which the characters feel trapped, lost and lonely.

Individuation is the process by which the communal ethos that holds people together through a set of shared values snaps so that its members become individuated in their values and isolated socially. 'Minutes of Glory' in Secret Lives is a story meant to illustrate that its chief character Wanjiru,

was part of a generation which would never again be one with  
the soil, the crops, the wind and the moon (p86).

Uprooted from the rural setting where Ngugi depicts man as generally at peace with himself and nature, occasional scuffles notwithstanding, Wanjiru's isolation and loneliness in the city is profound. Loneliness is a theme that arises naturally from individuation and Ngugi takes it up again in Weep Not, Child and Petals of Blood.

Weep Not, Child is divided into two parts. The title of Part One ('waning light') draws attention to the book's tragic atmosphere. It should be remembered that in The River Between, the tragedy of Waiyaki's encounter with Western values is underscored by the fact that his catastrophe strikes at sunset. The sun is thought of as falling, and this process inevitably suggests tragedy. Similarly, after the waning light of Part One in Weep Not, Child, the plot moves into a second part which is called 'darkness falls' (p73). The whole novel partakes of the coming darkness, as it portrays the effects of urbanisation, dispossession and the disintegration of communal values.

The ceremonies and festivals that earlier bound the people together no longer exist. As we have seen, Waiyaki and Muthoni partake of these in The River Between, and even when the former has sometimes to express his interest in certain Western values, he continues to have a communal reference point which his Siriana experience does not destroy. On the contrary, Njoroge, who is undergoing individuation in Weep Not, Child, is a lone figure, who identifies simply with his father, mother or brothers as occasion demands. Furthermore, his professed messianic role lacks the credible basis that Waiyaki's enjoys in the form of communal support at his independent Marioshoni school. The difference is not simply that Waiyaki is a teacher whereas Njoroge is a learner. Even when Njoroge comes of age and can take personal responsibility for his actions, he narrowly escapes suicide as a result of the despair that individuation has implanted in him and the other characters of Weep Not, Child. This general despair has no counterpart in the other novel.

In Weep Not, Child families have lost their ridges, their homes, their ancestral heritage (material and cultural) and have become squatters, literally and symbolically. Initially, neither the revelation of how the family became landless, nor their subsequent position as squatters triggers in Njoroge the anger that demands social justice. The sense of purpose that characterises The River Between is largely absent here, although Njoroge's age could be a mitigating factor - in fact, were it not that he is depicted as an immature juvenile, his attitude would call for an ironic reading of the text. One critic - C B Robson (1979) - maintains that the use of a juvenile sensibility as a central consciousness is the main weakness in the text. The arrest of nationalists - Kenyatta, for example - causes in this central character only frustration at being denied the opportunity to see the man who for one reason or another has become a public figure:

Njoroge was a little annoyed when he heard about Jomo's arrest.  
He had become famous all over Kenya (p72).

Njoroge is not at this point an effective medium for conveying the historic forces tearing apart his family and eventually causing the Emergency. Moore's reading of the text (1980) concurs with my view of Njoroge as initially lost in a dream-world, deluding himself with a future messianic role when what is needed is to save his family from perishing here and now. The novel refrains from saying exactly what Njoroge

should be doing; it merely depicts his naivete in believing that he is destined to be the saviour of the family and village. This delusion detaches him from contemporary reality, chaining him to a distant tomorrow. This escapism of the elite is typical of low mimetic Third World writing.

Waiyaki, on the other hand, as we have seen, acquires a sense of political destiny early. One of the reasons for the lag in political consciousness in Weep Not, Child is that the individuating colonial institutions are more accommodating than they used to be. One can stay at Siriana much longer than in Waiyaki's day, enjoying 'an abode of peace in a turbulent country' (p125). This immunity from the harsh realities of the Emergency is not, however, guaranteed forever; in Njoroge's dramatic expulsion from Siriana's ivory tower we witness the Emergency catching up with a youngster hitherto insulated from reality by mere dreams of power, wealth, education, religion and love (p152).

The first part of the novel focuses on foreign religion as an individuating instrument. When Njoroge rejects prayer as a solution to problems (p137), he goes instead to Mwhiki's feet to beg her love (p149). This love too takes a non-African form: isolation and loneliness cause the characters to consider eloping. Simon Gikandi (1984) is right to argue that Njoroge finally comes of age as a nationalist and tries to reconstruct a personal view of the shattered communal experience - he in fact becomes an active agent of a new kind of community that recognizes the extended family and, beyond that, the nation. But earlier in the book escape is the preferred response. Not till the end does the mature nationalist emerge; for the moment, Njoroge is an intending eloper who calls his country a 'hole' out of which he must climb. Individualism causes Njoroge to deny Kenya in the same breath that begs Mwhiki's love and suggests an escape to Uganda:

Kenya is no place for us. Is it not childish to remain in a hole  
when you can take yourself out? (p151).

The Njoroge-Mwhiki relationship in Weep Not, Child is in fact a reworking of the Waiyaki-Nyambura one from The River Between. But the conflict is more fierce this time, since the independence war is underway. Njoroge and Mwhiki are on opposing sides, which makes their relationship more complicated. The problem is exacerbated by Mwhiki's father's death in circumstances that seem to implicate Njoroge's family. However, Njoroge and Mwhiki continue to love each other, and they decide not to go to Uganda. This decision constitutes the first hint of Njoroge's incipient nationalism.

While readers like Palmer (1972) observe that Njoroge exhibits persistent reluctance to grow emotionally and psychologically, they do not point out the reason for this, namely that the cultural conditioning which nurtured Waiyaki and his ilk has given way to entrenched individuation. Even Mwhiki, who shows better progress towards assuming responsibility, does so more from instinct than as the result of cultural conditioning. Still her determination to stay and look after her mother neatly counterpoints Njoroge's escapism.

Njoroge's attempted suicide shows a life beaten into helpless submission by the calamities of the times. Ime Ikkedeh (1968; p7) argues that such a despondent person cannot erupt suddenly into full maturity. Though the last sentence in the text depicts him running ahead of his mothers and opening the door for them - a symbol, surely, of incipient service to the community - Ikkedeh observes that he will at best become a Mugo, 'or is it Kihika?' (Ikkedeh, 1968; p7) Njoroge's suicidal bent, however, is not part of his temperament, but a passing mood imposed upon him by painful isolation, which, given a different setting, gives way to a responsible determination to rebuild the community.

The political forces that shaped pre-independent Kenya come more clearly through Ngotho than through his son Njoroge. Ngugi depicts without sentimentality the injustice done to those who returned from World War I expecting imperial rewards, only to find themselves dispossessed and turned into squatters. Ngotho lacks the forcefulness of Chege in The River Between, who resists alienating forces with greater certainty, partly because he is more distanced from the centre of events. Because of his lesser stature, the tragic denouement of the book is not exactly cathartic. Ngotho emerges more as a pathetic victim of history than his high mimetic counterparts, who were surer of the meaning of warriorhood. Nevertheless Ngotho too, in a more limited sense, chooses a heroic path by refusing to accept dispossession, material or cultural. He maintains his faith in the ancient oracle that promised the departure of the 'butterflies', knowing that one day the land will become theirs again.

Tending the land is Ngotho's way of reverencing the dead who owned it before the dispossession, and also of preserving it for the unborn:

Ngotho felt responsible for whatever happened to this land. He owed it to the dead, the living and the unborn of his line to keep guard over this Shamba (p35).

The individuation process, of course, in the end will cause the land to be reckoned in terms of title deeds that will make neighbours potential trespassers - as in Petals of Blood. But for now Ngotho's bond with the land goes beyond his ownership of it. He works for Howlands not merely to support his family, but to protect a heritage.

But, of course, this new European-style relationship with the land severely limits the scope of Ngotho's activities. Western methods impinge further on him when he joins a strike designed to obtain better conditions for the workers. The bosses' access to power gives them a huge advantage. The strike fails and Ngotho is sacked by Howlands. The suppression of legitimate means to redress problems forces nationalists into Mau Mau, the land and freedom movement. But Ngotho eschews such an extreme step, choosing instead to work for Jacobo, the plantation owner and representative of the new Kenyan business elite, whose materialistic ethic makes them antagonistic to the national struggle. The achievements of this class are reckoned not in the way they help communities deal with social disintegration and dispossession but in terms of their accumulation of capital and cheap labour. This emergent monetary economy individuates people even more effectively than Joshua's religion did in the more traditional context of The River Between, and Ngotho is pushed even further from traditional communal values.

What enables him to rise above a situation which many have accepted as unchangeable and to redeem his 'lost manhood' (p91) is his decision 'to offer his old tooth that had failed to bite deep into anything' (p134). This exemplifies the difference between heroism in the high mimetic and the low mimetic. As a high mimetic character, Okonkwo (in Things Fall Apart) has bitten deep into many things before his fatal confrontation with the white man's messenger. The cultural setting has already offered him many opportunities to show himself as a man who can stand the vicissitudes that would destroy others of less fortitude. In the low mimetic setting, Ngotho's choices have been severely narrowed by the post-war circumstances that dispossessed his society to make room to settle British ex-servicemen. There is irony in the fact that these ex-servicemen (with whom Ngotho and others have served in the war) return to

accolades, rewards and power while their Kenyan counterparts were forced to forfeit their rights and privileges to become servants. This is what renders returned local soldiers politically impotent until 'they perceive the reality of their oppression' not as a maze from which there is no exit but as a confining situation 'which they can transform' (Freire, 1972; pp125-6).

When Ngotho's moment to transform his world arrives, however, he finds that he cannot dent the colonial world, for his action is an isolated case of resistance, occasioned by domestic rather than national suffering.

One of the weakest parts of the novel is its unduly telescoped study of the growth of nationalism in the characters. It is surprising that Ngugi, who handled relationships and character growth so well in The River Between, should show the final change in Njoroge so obliquely and descend to the trite episode of Ngotho's deathbed conversion. He chooses to shield his son Boro (a Mau Mau), who is sought by the authorities. He is tortured, and it is possible that he is delirious as he conducts his final interview with Boro, but what he says generally makes sense. He begins by counselling Boro to remain at home and eschew further insurrection:

It's nothing. Ha, ha ha! You too have come back - to laugh at me? Would you laugh at your father? ... I didn't want you to go away -

I had to fight.

Oh, there - Now - Don't you ever go away again (p140).

But on the very next page he tells Boro to mind his nation (Ruriri):

All right. Fight well. Turn your eyes to Murungu and Ruriri.

Peace to you all - Ha! What? Njoroge look ... look-to-your-moth- (p141).

Only now does Ngotho's mind and speech disintegrate beyond coherence.

Ngugi has been criticised for traumatising Njoroge into nationalistic convictions, but in fact Njoroge's nationalism develops naturally out of his fall from Siriana and the hard life he leads after that. Why should Ngotho's national consciousness not emerge in the same manner from his experience as a conscript in the war, his subsequent

dispossession, job losses, and so on? There is no satisfactory answer to this question. As it is, Ngotho is one of those characters in the low mimetic who has a retrospective, rather than a prospective, significance. He is at one with the spirit of the land and the oracles, and he provides a stable centre for his family. (His protection of Boro seems more like the action of a father than that of a nationalist.) His death by torture marks the tragic exit of an old-style Kenyan, one scarcely touched by the nationalistic impulses around him.

Ngotho's imperviousness to nationalism seems scarcely credible. Ngugi was later to develop his grasp of colonial psychology - it seems, with the help of Fanon. Even in Weep Not, Child, however, complex characterisation is evident in the way Boro is presented. Boro is certainly not always motivated by the right ideals. In A Grain of Wheat we get the even more complex lieutenant Koinando, who joins the freedom fighters to evade possible legal action for his rape. In Boro Ngugi studies the forces that shaped the thinking of the generation that followed Ngotho's. This generation decided that oracles would not do and repossession would have to be brought to pass by force of arms. As he listens to Ngotho's story of how, according to the oracle, the land will be restored to the dispossessed, Boro reveals the anger that sometimes makes him act more from vengeance than from principle:

As he listened to this story, all these things came into his mind with a growing anger. How could these people have let the white man occupy the land without acting? And what was this superstitious belief in prophecy?

In a whisper that sounded like a shout, he said, 'To hell with the prophecy' (p30).

The closed community of the high mimetic - eg in The River Between - accepts religion as a way of life, so that the conflict is not whether religion should be there or not but whether the new form (Christianity) should be allowed. In the low mimetic, where the individual has more autonomy, religious belief becomes less important. The link between religion and the recovery of land is not obvious to Boro. Not all are as extreme as Boro, however; Karari Njama's semi-autobiographical account of guerrilla campaigns (Njama and Barnett, 1966) shows that religion was a central part of forest life. Prayer meetings were held almost daily. Boro's outburst against religion is a

mark of his more advanced individualism. This in turn implies a breakdown in the communal ethos which was present in the earlier book, The River Between. Here land was perceived as a gift from Murungu to the community through Gikuyu and Mumbi.

World War II is in one sense one of the individuating forces in Weep Not, Child. Soldiers like Boro, who have fought in Egypt, Palestine, and Burma, return less traditional in outlook than their fathers, whose expeditions in World War I were confined mainly to the African continent. Other factors, such as conscription, the loss of relatives in war (Boro's brother for instance) the return home to unemployment, the barriers against entering politics (p64), make the returned soldier angrier than his predecessor, who could at least become a squatter - not a homeless 'prisoner' in his own country. This explains why Boro's feelings, at best, are inspired by the ideal of repossessing both land and freedom, and, at worst, are motivated by revenge. The meaning of freedom in Weep Not, Child as Palmer has observed, is inextricably linked with regaining land (Palmer, 1977; p1). This, however, is not always the aim that influences Boro's actions. One wonders whether Boro is not too ambiguous a character to represent the Mau Mau. For a movement so misunderstood, a less ambiguous character such as Kihika (in A Grain of Wheat) would probably have made the book more successful. For all such weaknesses, this work effectively fictionalises an important period of Kenya's history.

In Petals of Blood Ngugi is again concerned to show the disintegration of a communal consciousness and the rise of individualism. The representative rural community of Ilmorog is the focal point of the book, but the narrative shifts across the Kenyan landscape as occasion suits and introduces characters from the rest of the country to develop the theme. I shall concentrate on the way in which Ilmorog is dispossessed of its traditional identity, as urbanisation and individualism take over.

Munira's withdrawal from society is occasioned partly by his inability to get into the mainstream of the emergent materialistic ethic which his father represents. His retreat into a semi-arid rural community that lags behind productive regions - including his father's plantation in Limuru - is not undertaken for altruistic reasons, however:

What did it matter to me that the able bodied had fled Ilmorog in search of the golden fleece in cities of metallic promises and no hope? What had it to do with me? I was not and I had never wanted to be my brother's keeper (p49).

The young depart to sell their labour in the emergent modern economy, leaving the elderly and the disinclined abandoned in rural loneliness. The rural community no longer has the kind of support networks which enable its members to face the vagaries of nature and the vicissitudes of life together. So those who end up in these rural regions no longer see themselves as their brothers' keepers. A sense of alienation that hinders identification with the community has set in. Munira may disapprove of his father's activities, but he cannot altogether escape a family tendency towards materialism and a consequent disregard for cultural issues. We sense here a similarity to the naturalistic bias of the nineteenth-century European novel.

In Munira Ngugi does not show us what Ilmorog has become but only what it is in danger of becoming. When Karega replaces Munira as the central consciousness, Ngugi's characteristic meliorism reasserts itself. Karega's enthusiastic leadership builds a new kind of community, albeit on the basis of trade unionism. This saves the narrative from the satirical mode to which Ngugi will later resort in novels like Devil on the Cross.

The former pupil-teacher relationship between Munira and Karega - together with the fact that they both attended Siriana school - traps some readers into seeing too much similarity between them. However, these two characters represent two different sets of values. Munira demonstrates the crippling effects of a badly digested religion. He leaves his father's sect and enters another, about which, however, he has reservations which will be resolved only if Karega joins too. Sensing that Karega is held back by his infatuation with Wanja (whom, in fact, Karega no longer sees), Munira burns down Wanja's house. The police demand a statement from him, whereupon, posing as an artist, he sets out to chronicle the recent struggles of Ilmorog - to the dismay of the police inspector, who insists that what is needed is not 'a novel' about Ilmorog but a simple statement about arson (p191).

To chronicle the history of Ilmorog properly, Munira would need to be a dedicated member of the community. But, in fact, he uses his chronicle as an excuse to indulge his family's acquisitive streak once more:

So within six months he came to feel as if Ilmorog was his personal possession: he was a feudal head of a big house or a big mbari lord surveying his estate, but without the lord's pain

of working out losses and gains, the goats and the young goats born ... he felt as if the whole of Ilmorog had put on a vast flora-patterned cloth to greet its lord and master (p21).

If pushed hard enough, however, Munira is not entirely unwilling to engage in some reform. His participation in the strike, the walk and the Ilmorog harvests points to this. Not an initiator of reform or a very willing participant, he can be carried on the waves of the action that others initiate. The redeeming aspect of his character is that - his inner contradictions and his instinct for withdrawal notwithstanding - he does not sit on the fence when there is a real reformer to stir him into action.

Heroism in Petals of Blood consists in resisting the break-up of the communal spirit and rebuilding a form of solidarity after the community disintegrates. The heroic resistance is not depicted as the monopoly of a single person: Karega, Abdulla, Nyakinyua and other characters in the text all have a share.

Karega's strength of character consists in his being able to immerse himself in the communal life of Ilmorog before it breaks up, and to look for alternatives to the old egalitarianism in the aftermath of dispossession. His approach attempts a synthesis of values and material culture. As a low mimetic character, Karega does not espouse a return to idyllic innocence:

... we must not preserve our past as a museum: rather, we must study it critically, without illusions, and see what lessons we can draw from it in today's battlefield of the future and present ... I don't want to continue worshipping in temples of a past without tarmac roads, without electric cookers, a world dominated by slavery to nature (p323).

This is a typical low mimetic response to Negritudist romanticising of the past, but it overstates the case. The book takes care to depict the founder of the Ilmorog civilization (Ndemi) as a character who rejects 'slavery to nature' by fashioning tools with fire:

Ndemi: he fashioned a tool with which he cut some of the trees and cleared the undergrowth ... he was also learned in the ways of herbs and medicines made from the roots and bark of trees.

The fame of his experiments with different types of plants spread and no herdsman would pass Ilmorog without calling on him ... (pp120-21).

Ndemi's fame rests on his refusal to be a slave to nature. His contemporaries interpreted this as rebellion against the cosmic order - it was seen as daring to 'wrestle with gods' (p120) although he did not destroy sacred places. Karega is in danger of slighting Ndemi's Promethean daring, which by the standards of its time was compellingly heroic. Karega has visited too many cities and tends to underrate the traditional aspects of Ilmorog society. Still there are incidents that redeem him from his unduly zealous support of technology - his snoring through juke-box music, for instance (p103).

Furthermore, the reader has the assurance of Nyakinyua (a venerable character who represents Ndemi's version of heroism) that Karega will always return to Ilmorog (p291). Her archetypal status gives the observation special weight. It confirms Karega's ultimate commitment to the communal experience that she and her dead husband, a Njamba Nene (great warrior) with immediate links with Ndemi's venerable deeds, believe in. It is true that Karega is absent when the fatal dispossession takes place. But it is Munira who is ultimately to blame for this absence of Karega's. Moreover, Karega has done his best to save Ilmorog by organizing the earlier 'epic journey' to Nairobi to plead with the village's creditors against foreclosure on the mortgages which the famine has made insupportable.

The possibilities of the journey archetype are exploited to the full by Ngugi. Placed about half-way through the text (pp120-187) the journey becomes the yardstick by which the meaning of past and future events is measured. One of the major things the journey achieves is to confirm the stature of Abdulla, a Mau Mau fighter who has taken refuge in Ilmorog. Children relate easily to him, and the adults are enthralled by his stoic decision to walk across the plains rather than ride on the donkey cart. He epitomizes the spirit and the communal ethos of the struggle for independence. Hearing from him about the heroes of the struggle such as Kimathi (p143), we begin to understand it better.

Thus the journey is not simply a movement towards the city and loneliness; it is also a spiritual awakening. It is in the course of this journey that we learn about Ilmorog's past - including the deeds of Ndemi. The author even examines metaphysical aspects of the community, when Ndemi's exit into the outer cosmos is described:

Ilmorog continued to prosper even after Ndemi, father of many sons and daughters and grandchildren, had departed to the secret land of the kindly spirits (p121).

The author is not interested in depicting Ndemi's reception in the land of the kindly spirits because he is bound to a low mimetic realism which may acknowledge the existence of a metaphysical world, but does not usually depict it. Were he interested in parabolic techniques he would follow Ndemi's exit further into the outer cosmos.

When Wanja threatens Kimeria with a knife in Blue Hills (p155) in the course of the journey, she pre-enacts the revenge she will execute during the arson. Kimeria is a traitor-figure. He seduces Wanja, causes her to drop out of school, and is thus instrumental in her becoming a prostitute, and eventually the femme fatale who follows Karega to Ilmorog hill and prevents him from experiencing the epiphanic vision which he had hoped to find there (p228).

The anticipation of Wanja's revenge points to the fact that the journey takes the reader not only backwards into Ndemi's Africa but forwards into the future, and inwards into character. Here it highlights the disintegration taking place in an individual who in a sense is a victim of the emergent social order.

Failure to see the journey as an important gloss that reveals character has resulted in Gikandi's misinterpretation of the lawyer, whom he dismisses as a ready-made stereotype (Gikandi, 1987). The book journeys into the lawyer's character as it follows the famine delegation's physical trek round the city. The lawyer has witnessed lynching in the American deep South (as he mentions during the journey), and this experience shifted his ambition from a clerical vocation to a legal one. He still sees capitalism in clerical terms - as a god with priests. The materialistic ethic is, to him, worship at the shrine of a false god to whom many have become devout priests. He represents the people's interests and he plays his political role ethically, like the genuine cleric he had intended to become.

Nderi, the Member of Parliament for Ilmorog, is the antithesis of the lawyer. Having never understood capitalism as a potentially dehumanising system, he is hardly aware that he has ceased to be a champion of the poor and is behaving in ways he would never have anticipated:

He suddenly dropped out of circulation in small places. Now he could only be found in special clubs for members only, or in newspapers - photographed while attending this or that cock-tail party (p174).

One of the chief consequences of individuation, the archetypal theme of the low mimetic, is breakdown in communication. Nderi has become so individuated that the communal roots that helped him understand the villagers have disappeared. He misunderstands the delegation completely. Instead of recognizing that the famine is a genuine emergency, he suspects that he is the victim of intrigue - someone, he thinks, has taken advantage of a little drought to ruin him politically. The politician has become too urbanised to understand the simplicity and faith which the rural folk have in their representatives and institutions.

Although the journey does not allow Karega, its brain-child, any prominence, it is central to an understanding of his character and the values he stands for. As the journey progresses flashbacks offer insights into his character, and we see not only a young idealist fighting dispossession but also his attitudes to the unresolved cultural issues first mentioned in The River Between. The problems have moved from the ridges to the classroom as the young cultural activists, who include Karega, begin to question the slow process of Africanisation of personnel (p171) and the curriculum.<sup>6</sup> One of the most interesting fallacies in the text is the reasoning with which Chui, the headmaster of Siriana, builds a cocoon of self-protection rather than look at African culture sympathetically, as he used to do when a student there:

... whoever heard of African, Chinese, or Greek mathematics and science? What mattered were good teachers and sound content: history was history: literature was literature ... (p172).

The movement from the first assertion to the second in this passage reveals fallacious teleology that equates science with the more culture-specific subjects, history and

literature. Afraid that history might be re-written or re-taught from an African point of view, Chui wants to protect his Euro-centric universe by claiming that history works according to impersonal laws and formulas like mathematics and science.

Karega believes that history and literature can be made to reflect a particular point of view which Chui, who is only happy replicating his colonial masters, refuses to admit publicly. At stake is the question of whether education should simply be a means to a career or an instrument to assist one's retention of cultural identity. If the issue of culture is important, Chui's type of education will be an impediment.

Chui's Eurocentricism is attributable to his education in South African and American institutions of learning. Earlier he was more radical; as a pupil he led a Siriana school strike. But as headmaster of Siriana, he imitates former headmasters, like Fraudsham from the colonial era. In private, however, Chui is more favourably disposed to local culture; the journeying party finds him singing traditional songs at home.

After the journey events in Ilmorog happen too suddenly to be understood by most. The author who enters the story in the 'we' passages searches his memory in vain trying to locate any form of preparedness for the events that destroy the communal ethos so dramatically and completely. Hopes that their MP will arrive and atone for the journeying party's bad reception in the city turn out to be false. The discovery that even the end of the drought will not restore things to normal is a painful one:

May ill thoughts and frightening memories go with the drought!  
 ... So let it be, we said in the opening months of the new year:  
 we did not know then that within a year, the journey ... would  
 send its emissaries from the past, to transform Ilmorog and  
 change our lives utterly, Ilmorog and us utterly changed (p242).

The repetition at the end of this passage indicates the traumatic nature of the transmutation of Ilmorog from a rural community to a miniature replica of the city. Unleashed in the process are forces that older folk find it impossible to cope with. Nyakinyua's dispossession and tragic death epitomize the calamity.

One factor contributing to her untimely death is the exhaustion she undergoes trying to organise individualistic thinkers who can no longer see the value of communal action. The new police post at Ilmorog (p242) has brought a new definition of crime, that

makes collective bargaining illegal. Kimeria, Chui, and Mzigo are the principal agents of negative individuation and dispossession. The business standards which they emulate are set by American Rockefellers and Japanese Mitsubishi. For Kenyan Rockefellers to emerge, Nyakinyuas must die dispossessed, Wanjas must be forced into prostitution and the Abdullas of the freedom struggle must die unrewarded. Ngugi rejects the new social norms that turn a man who was a transporter of the bodies of dead freedom fighters, the betrayer of a Mau Mau soldier, and a double violator of African womanhood into a venerated public figure just because he is now a wealthy man. This is Kimeria, whom Cook and Okenimkpe (1983) consider one of the most repulsive of Ngugi's characters. His values compare poorly with those of rural folk who believe in achieving a good name in a communal context - people like Ruoro, Muturi, Njuguna, and Nyakinyua.

Veneration of Euro-American capitalism is a major individuating force and a factor responsible for the erosion of communal values. In the three directors of Theng'eta Breweries and Enterprises, Ngugi presents an illuminating study of the local elite as accomplices of international capitalism. In their commercialisation of theng'eta, a traditional domestic brew, and the monopolisation of the licence to brew it, Ngugi demonstrates how Euro-American concerns dispossess rural folk, with local directors as their accomplices. Furthermore, this local bourgeoisie becomes a buffer in the blocking of wage negotiations. According to Sander and Smith (1986), this is a recurrent feature in the development of capitalism on the African continent.<sup>7</sup>

The attack on the brewers does not necessarily constitute an attack on the brewery. Like most low mimetic writers, Ngugi is not opposed to technology per se, though he is suspicious of the uses to which technology can be put. Thus the Trans-Africa road is seen as a necessary means of communication, but it can produce negative effects: 'every corner of the continent was now within easy reach of international capitalist robbery and exploitation' (p262). It is not the emergent communication system itself, but its use that Ngugi questions.

The press is also implicated in Ngugi's attack on Capitalism. Petals of Blood suggests that the media are not as free as they should be while they call what Ngugi sees as a trinity of evil (the three directors) 'well known nationalist fighters for political,

educational, and above all economic freedom for Africans' (p194). The suggestion is that a press serving acquisitive interests cannot afford always to inform the public correctly on sensitive matters, if it wishes to remain in the good books of its patrons.

Petals of Blood begins as a kind of who-dun-it, but develops into an epic account of the negatively individuating forces at work in Kenyan society. The surprising denouement is that the criminal (Munira) is a religious existentialist trying desperately to avoid involvement in both the communal and the commercial world, only to find out that the world rarely permits non-involvement. By rejecting Munira's autobiography as an explanation of the changes in Ilmorog, the author avails himself of the opportunity to tell the full story.

### Lamming: 'The Emigrants'

This discussion explores the connection between exile and self-knowledge in The Emigrants, Lamming's second novel. At the end of In the Castle of My Skin, Lamming presents two possibilities for escaping the colonial plight in the West Indies. One is to emigrate in search of greener pastures.<sup>8</sup> The other is to remain in one's own island to fight for the rights of the oppressed through political action. The Emigrants is a low mimetic work devoted to the exploration of the first alternative, though the emigrants travel further than was envisaged in the earlier novel. The level of social awareness among the characters in The Emigrants is also higher than that of boy G and the other children in In the Castle of My Skin, and as a result the narrative perspective is not fully ironic.

The Emigrants is based on actual migrations which took place in the mid-1950s. It depicts a flight from a deprived environment that suffers an identity crisis. Appropriately, therefore, the voyagers' aims are vague to begin with:

They were all in search of the same things which in a way they couldn't define. A better break. Broadly speaking, it was a little more than a desire to survive with greater assurance of safety (p87).

But whereas the adolescents in In the Castle of My Skin remain politically naive until Trumper returns at the end, this shipload of emigrants has some political awareness. There is, for example, the Jamaican who expounds on the Caribbean people's experience using the image of vomit; he sees them as vomit from other countries (p67), all mixed together. Sandra Paquet observes that this image of vomit 'seems a fair comment on the diminished sense of self and community' that the West Indians bring with them to England (Paquet, 1982; p33). And yet despite its repulsiveness, the knowledge of having been mixed up like vomit is to be preferred to the condition described in In the Castle of My Skin, where the adolescents have no sense at all of their deprivation. The characters in The Emigrants initially feel like vomit and soon feel worse than vomit, but out of this eventually comes - at least for the more adaptable among them - a liberating awareness of the effects of colonialism.

This awareness is certainly not apparent at the start. The Jamaican and his colleagues harbour the illusion of a better future in the Mother Country. Exile must be experienced even by the most politically conscious West Indian to complete the partial self-knowledge that can be gleaned from books. Paulo Freire (1972) presents the oppressed as a person with two selves: his own and another acquired through internalising the image of the oppressor. The Emigrants shows how the latter represses the former; emigration to England appeals more than any attempt to build up the kind of authentic local community which Trumper's return promises at the end of In the Castle of My Skin.

Higgins's fortunes vividly suggest the plight of colonials trapped in mid-ocean between the West Indian islands they have fled and an England that will deny them the future they had hoped for. In one sense the theme is typical of low mimetic writing, which often depicts migration from the country to the city, and the subsequent frustration caused by lack of jobs and loneliness. But for a West Indian the journey from home to a cosmopolitan centre involves crossing seas, which makes the predicament more profound. In mid-ocean Higgins hears the news that the catering school he is going to - in Liverpool - has closed down. He is now as purposeless as his fellow travellers:

He was now part of their bewilderment and there was nothing they could do but receive him with a correct salutation (p91).

This sense of bewilderment prepares us for the rebuttals and disasters that await the emigrants as they finally realise that their anticipation of a better future in England is but an exile's dream.

There can hardly be a worse disaster than to go mad. And this is what exile does to Higgins, whose misfortunes are compounded with arrest only a fortnight after his arrival (p220), on the mistaken suspicion of peddling drugs. From his madness comes the beginning of self-knowledge. As Ngugi observes (1972; p127) exile is often conceived in Caribbean fiction 'as a purgatorial experience which the West Indian must undergo in order to know himself'. Last seen on a ship trying to get home as a stowaway (pp227-28), Higgins is the predecessor of Shepherd in Of Age and Innocence, who returns home mad, but eventually changes his island's political future.

The irony of fleeing home and discovering it anew is expressed in Higgins, who even in insanity is aware that his real home is in the Caribbean. But the novel is not basically ironic. Higgins's experience is a tragic commentary on the failure of the 'better break'. Lamming does not look on these characters with the same ambivalence that colours his account of his own juvenile naivete in In the Castle of My Skin, where the artist, in his younger days, celebrates his birthdays happily despite the symbolic recurrent flood that threatens to overrun the neglected colonial village. In any case Higgins is not the central character, and the irony of his circumstances at the end of the book does not apply to other characters.

Paquet (1982) has appropriately titled one of the chapters of her study of Lamming 'Caliban in Albion'. Prospero went out in search of fortune and this precipitated the complications which result in Caliban's coming to Albion. But the full consequences of Prospero's adventures remain a mystery to many in Albion, including Mr Pearson. The question with which he confronts Collis shows that this aspect of history has not been fully comprehended in the circles in which he moves: 'Why do so many of your people come here?' Had Caliban asked Prospero this question early enough, history might have taken a different turn. As it is, Caliban's children also got curious about Prospero's homeland. So why should they not also go in search of a 'better break'? According to the logic of the novel, however, only Prospero can get a better break:

... all the qualities o' th' isle,

The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile.

(The Tempest Act I, Scene 2)

That the descendants of Caliban are not going to get anything equivalent to this is a point which The Emigrants conveys with compelling evidence.

Collis is a writer,<sup>9</sup> the precursor of the artists in Water with Berries. Through him Lamming looks at the struggle to preserve one's sanity, which involves such desperate ploys as fleeing into the privacy of the toilet to get temporary relief from unnerving encounters. The danger of becoming another mad Higgins is certainly a reality for Collis. Human relationships as well the strange landscape stretch his nerves to breaking point. The main issue is not that Collis is a sensitive, withdrawn person. If Higgins's tougher temperament can disintegrate, everyone else's is vulnerable. Collis's retreat to the toilet, therefore, is not simply a bizarre detail meant to provoke satirical humour; it highlights the plight of the second exile, which is in many ways worse than the first, since the community that cushioned the individual against shocks back home in the Caribbean is not there to take some of the pressure.

In England Collis is generally expected to conform to the European literary tradition. Mrs Readhead thinks well of his work, but Rawlins does not:

'Well he isn't extraordinary ... It just happens he can use words'  
(p201).

This dismissal of his artistic talent as a mere ability to use words reveals the prejudice of those who cannot transcend narrow Euro-centric definitions of literature. In a world where the Readheads are fewer than the Rawlinses, Collis's talent cannot emerge since he must prove his 'extraordinariness' before he can write. Worse still is the forgone conclusion that what he might produce is merely jumbled words.

Collis the writer whom we meet at the end of the novel is not the promising young man who inspired the Yugoslav with a published poem just before the ship's departure from the Caribbean (p100/101). London experiences have made his imagination colour-blind. The fact that he comes to see the faces of both Dickson, his black colleague from the West Indies, and the Yugoslav as grey poignantly reflects the ruin of his creative powers. Exile has not nurtured Collis; it has butchered him. But it would be quite erroneous to suppose that he has abandoned his art entirely. He simply lacks a

context in which it can thrive. This point is made by his simple statement when another shipload of emigrants arrives: 'I have no people' (p270). Note that in Collis's case there is not even a hint of self-discovery; there is no trace here of the idealistic final upswing which characterizes the high mimetic.

Collis's colour-blindness and his disowning of the new emigrants suggest the artist's temptation to disclaim the responsibility to record his people's experience and to adopt instead what passes in the West for a universal style. The mistake Collis makes is to succumb to the pressure that considers writing about his own experience as parochial banality. In fact, the exile can only approach authentic universal values through his own experience and that of his people.

To write about universal values as an exile is like making oneself an ambassador without a country. The ideal ambassador is one who represents his own country without being insensitive to the issues of the country where he is accredited, and should he become too immersed in universal issues to push his own country's interests, he betrays his role. When Collis utters the four words, 'I have no people', he becomes an ambassador without a country. Collis does not, from now on, know for whom he speaks. He is, then, an exile more dehumanised than the average person whom Freire (1972) describes as having a double self: his own and his oppressor's. Collis reveals a peculiar loss of both identities. The reader can see (through the attitudes of the middle class Rawlinses) that the universal culture he desires will make him more isolated than he would be if he retained his indigenous point of view. He will be the kind of person Lamming in The Pleasures of Exile describes as posing to white friends as if 'all his life in England has been a memorable participation in civilized pleasures' (Lamming, 1984; p218).

That it is tragic to lose so much identity just for a pose is a point The Emigrants makes powerfully by the use of contrast. While Collis settles for a pose, Higgins attains self-knowledge and an identity. His occasional madness notwithstanding, he will live a more authentic life than Collis, who in his sanity chooses to delude himself that he is accepted. Collis never does emerge from his private, impenetrable and sordid world, and so he does not regain his creative power or his sense of identity.

Lamming in The Emigrants explores the flight from colour in more than one context. Miss Bis, a mulatto, shows lack of self-knowledge in her failure to accept her pigmentation. Her attraction to the light-skinned Fred causes her to break off her engagement to a young Trinidadian solicitor, who happens to be several shades darker than herself (p72). Her flight to England arises from a deep-seated yearning to seek a replacement for Fred, who has jilted her, though she rationalises the journey as a hunt for a secretarial job:

She was on a wild goose chase which she tried to end and overcome by defining it as a mission. A search for a job. She would be a secretary, and England which needed more secretaries than its population could provide was going to be her salvation (p74).

Neither London nor a change of appearance nor even a change of name to Una Solomon gives Miss Bis the tabula rasa she wants. When she and Fred meet again and fail to recognize each other, we see clearly the futility of her quest. Collis likewise fails to recognise her, though he has the excuse that he sees only a photograph. It is possible that had he seen the real person, he would have been able to remember her.

He had thought of Miss Bis, but the face seemed too long and thin, and the body was too narrow. He had never seen Miss Bis since their arrival, and it was hardly conceivable that such a change would be possible (p247).

The outer change parallels the inner erosion of Miss Bis's values marked by her descent into crime and promiscuity.

She tries to revert to her old identity by murdering Queenie, who suggested her change of name. But it is after the murder that Fred fails to recognise her as the girl he jilted in Trinidad and whom now he wants to save. He offers to marry her anyway, but this cannot save her, because Fred is not really thinking of her; he is merely using her as an object with which to do penance (p248). Miss Bis's exile - like Collis's - has produced no meaningful self-discovery. She becomes a study in the physical and spiritual degeneration of those who decide to define themselves according to parameters alien to their community.

Dickson, for his part, becomes a victim of the psychedelic curiosity of the women who take him into their company simply because they are curious to see him naked. He remembers how 'they devoured his body with their eyes. It disintegrated and dissolved in their stare, gradually regaining its life through the reflection in the mirror' (p256). This reduces him to what Paquet (1982; p36) calls the 'spook-like existence of a fugitive in pursuit of invisibility'. He becomes a nocturnal creature like Miss Bis; he cannot henceforth conceive of life except in terms of 'sleeping in a dungeon by day, and slipping out at night for a breath of air' (p257).<sup>10</sup>

But the novel does not insist that everyone is reduced to such extremes. The train journey from the port to the interior generates considerable excitement among the characters. After the tiresome sea voyage, the train journey makes a welcome change, even though misunderstandings arising from the clash of cultures are clearly imminent. The bitter awakening to the reality of loneliness as the communal bonds are shattered at the end of the train journey introduces the recurrent low mimetic theme of arrival into loneliness, which moves even strong men like Tornado to tears. But Tornado's problem has more to do with memories of his earlier bewilderment in the Mother Country during World War II than with the actual plight he is about to undergo. The ultimate hope that everything will not be destroyed by this exile is in fact embodied in the Tornado-Lilian relationship that begins on the ship. The Governor comments:

You got a nice girl there ... That sort o' woman you must never leave behind you. Never, never (p50).

Loneliness will not seriously affect the Tornados, who are able to form a small subgroup before the communal ethos is destroyed by cosmopolitan economic and social reality. His fate will certainly not be Dickson's; Tornado in fact sets up a stable home.

There are others like the Governor who become undoubtedly successful, but at considerable cost, since they embody a cosmopolitan acquisitiveness that lacks the communal sensitivity discernible on the ship. The Governor displays the negative effects of individuation; he is indifferent to the plight of others, and consequently rather threatening. Phillip, the student, sees the Governor in this light:

In his dark blue suit with the narrow black bow-tie rushing like a cat's whiskers across the rigorous collar, he looked to Phillip

like a mountain, terrifying and impervious in its assurance  
(p232).

His antipathy for communal values becomes clear when he protests against West Indian brotherhood at the Mozamba club he has managed to purchase. But the reader must realize that the way the Governor isolates himself from others must lead him in the end to the same endemic loneliness that affects the other West Indians in London.

## NOTES

- 1 Riemenschneider (1983) argues that Bhattacharya's works often show man reaping rewards or penalties arising from his observance of dharmic or moral law. This story is a case in point.
  
- 2 By comparing Bhattacharya to R K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao in the manner that has become fashionable in Indian criticism, Gupta comes to the conventional conclusion that this author is a poor short story writer: 'Out of the fifteen stories herein nearly half are inconsiderable and most of the rest are just passable ... alas, as the proverb goes, one swallow does not make a summer' (p166). This 'one swallow' does not turn out to be the title story.
  
- 3 In an interview with Srivastava, Bhattacharya complains that critics have not been perceptive enough about Walt, who is not a minor character, though he is not given a large space on the canvas: 'May I take this opportunity to ask my critics to be more perceptive about Walt Gregson. Walt is not a minor character' (Srivastava, 1982; p226).
  
- 4 Srivastava, 1982. Here is Goyal's comment in full: 'In the midst of an ambience saturated with a supercilious craze for everything "super" ranging from super-sex and super-technology to super-sadhana of superstars ... it is creditable indeed that Bhattacharya's characters remain rooted to the earth, avoiding the quixotic urge to become superman and superwoman' (p183).
  
- 5 Two characters in the story 'A Mercedes Funeral' in Secret Lives could be used here to provide an initial example of what I call negative individuation. Wahinya sees African history from an African perspective, whereas the negatively individuated city man who tells about the Mercedes funeral lacks any authentic way of understanding the story he tells or the history of his people: 'But for me now, educated at Siriana, this was not history. I pitied [Wahinya] really. I wanted to tell him about the true and correct history: the Celts, the

Anglo-Saxons ... William the Conqueror, Drake ... Napoleon and all these real heroes of history' (p123).

- 6 The views Ngugi earlier expressed in Homecoming (London, 1972) find their way into Petals of Blood (1977). Central to the argument on the curriculum is his belief, stated in Homecoming, that African studies should be structured 'with Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or satellite of other countries and cultures' (p150). At that time (1972) the debate was on the abolition of the English Department at Nairobi University and the creation of two separate ones: Literature, and Linguistics and African Languages.
- 7 See p133, for instance, where they record their views on how labour gets 'muffled' in Africa. C B Robson (1979) argues that Ngugi outsteps the bounds of fiction into polemics in Petals of Blood. Govind Sharma, on the other hand, condemns all Third World emergent bourgeois as: 'hiredlings of the international capitalism which is operating in Kenya as in the rest of Africa and the Third World in the form of multinational corporations' (Killam, 1984; p293).
- 8 Sandra Paquet (1982; p30) observes that the emigration theme starts in In the Castle of My Skin, though it is not of primary importance there.
- 9 It makes no sense to assume like Paquet (1982) that the first person narrator in The Emigrants is also this character called Collis, whose 'better break' is conceived in terms of an artistic career in London. See p52, for example, where both Collis and the first person narrator appear in the same sentence: 'The clarity of their talk had shaken Collis into a kind of frenzied thinking; until tonight I didn't worry myself with reasons ....'
- 10 Images of darkness and nocturnal habits are apt where the theme of sparagmos is the writer's chief concern, as it is in ironic literature. Like Dickson, Miss Bis is depicted in this sparagmic manner, although the book as a whole is not really ironic in form.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: *THE LOW MIMETIC ENCYCLOPAEDIC FORM*

Rao depicts in The Serpent and the Rope a hero who is intellectually gifted, emotionally sensitive, thoroughly informed in national and international affairs, engaged in a spiritual quest, but all the same one of us, in that he needs to be led through life. It is of course, this down-to-earth quality of the hero that puts the work into the category of low mimetic literature.

Rao does not use the linear plot construction that modern Western fiction usually employs. In an attempt to capture an authentic Indian flavour, he presents a dramatised meditation whose form is conceived in terms of a disciplined yogic 'formlessness' or sadhana. This has received accolades as a remarkably innovative attempt to Indianise the novel by forcing it to conform to Hindu narrative techniques, particularly the Puranic tradition. Thus the encyclopaedic array of archetypes with which we are concerned here appear more as meditative constructs than do those of Rao's earlier novel, Kanthapura, where karma (action) rather than jnana (knowledge) is the organising principle and the means to swaraj (political emancipation). In The Serpent and the Rope the intellectual Brahmin meditates on his knowledge, giving the reader a glimpse into the archetypal constructs of his culture. So we get a totally different view of India from that of the 'karmic' Kanthapura.

### Rao: 'The Serpent and the Rope'

Regeneration is a common theme in Indian fiction. R K Narayan's masterpiece, The Guide, which preceded Rao's novel, is an ironic work concerned with the regeneration of an ex-convict (Raju) who, beginning as an imposter in the priesthood, applies his mind to meditation and dharmic attention to moral duty, and attains illumination. By contrast, Rao's hero-narrator (Rama) is a Brahmin with deep roots in his cultural heritage traceable all the way back to Vedic India through 'the excellent Yagnyavalkya, my legendary and Upanishadic ancestor' (p7), as Rama calls him.

Rama presents himself as a 'holy vagabond' travelling extensively in Europe and India

in search of illumination. But this description overstates his initial dedication to spiritual affairs. There is no indication that his immediate family or any in the Yagnyavalkya legendary lineage has recently attained the insight into the knowledge of the Absolute that makes the Yagnyavalkyas venerable gurus, and, as we shall see, Rama is not immune to worldly delights.

Sceptical readers like Paul Sharrad have even suggested that Rama's story should not be trusted, and that the book only makes sense if seen as an ironic document (Sharrad, 1987). But occasional contradictions and inconsistencies cannot invalidate the authenticity of the vision which Rama finally achieves. And - pace Sharrad - there is not the ironic distance between author and character that exists between Narayan and Raju in The Guide, or between Rao and Padmanabha Iyer in Comrade Kirillov. Rama is a genuine quester, not an imposter. In fact Rao's book is semi-autobiographical. It carries the author-character closeness which is characteristic of confessional literature - Augustine's Confessions, for example, which seems to have engendered the confessional form in the West.

The Serpent and The Rope is a low mimetic form that raises Rama and India one rung above ironic or lower mimetic literature.<sup>1</sup> Rama's confusion is not imbued with the view that life is almost entirely unheroic. His goal - a desire for enlightenment so as to be able to differentiate between maya (illusion) and reality - is clear; the means to that goal are not.

What makes Rama at his best an appealing character is the admission that Brahminhood does not guarantee automatic illumination enabling one to penetrate through the labyrinths of maya, symbolised by the serpent, into the Ultimate Reality, represented by the rope. Truth and untruth are so inextricably entwined that the questing soul cannot easily grasp the meaning of existence:

Life is a Pilgrimage I know, but a Pilgrimage to where and of what? (p28)

Rama is a very human character. Neither an epic sage nor an ironic butt, he clearly qualifies as a low mimetic hero. He acknowledges his low mimetic status - that is, his lack of the qualities of the great Yagnavalkya - with pathos unmingled with self-pity:

The rest of the story is easily told. In a classical novel, it might have ended in palace and palanquin and howdah, or in the high Himalayas, but I am not telling a story here, I am writing the sad and uneven chronicle of a life, my life, with no art or decoration, but with the 'objectivity', the discipline of 'historical sciences', for by taste and tradition I am only an historian (p233).

The passage is an important one. We notice the way it focuses on pathos as the key to low mimetic art. Catharsis and high comedy are the stuff of high mimetic literature. Rama dismisses the possibility of placing himself among the visionary great souls, the mahatmas like Yagnyavalkya, with all their trappings: the palace, the palanquin and howdah. These trappings feature in Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini, and the contrast between the two works indicates the gap between the high and low mimetic. As Maini says, the 'dignity of tragedy is foreign to Ramaswamy's nature' (Maini, 1980; p11). He recognizes that he does not possess the qualities that make high mimetic leaders, sacred or secular, and has to settle for something less than catharsis. His option is pathos, the characteristic tone of tragic low mimetic forms.

The main action in the story is a journey that has both physical and psychological dimensions. The physical journey assumes transcontinental proportions as Ramaswamy travels back and forth between India and Europe. He goes to Europe to do research on the Albigensian or Cathar heresy, and returns to India, first, for his father's funeral, and, secondly, for his sister's wedding. He encounters no great obstacle in the course of his physical journeying, and, of course, he encounters an encyclopaedic gallery of characters drawn from his homeland, France, England, Spain and Russia.

His psychological journeying does not progress so smoothly. Spiritually Rama has not made much advancement upon his first return to India, for instance. There are occasions when his questing borders on the desperate. The scarcity of those with the necessary illumination to speak with authority on metaphysical reality is disconcerting. Though Lord Shiva's throne is established right above the maya (here perceived as ignorance), such is man's inability to perceive the truth which leads to mukti (salvation) that the possibility of losing the way in the journey nags Rama incessantly:

Everyone, for thousands of years, every one of the billion men and women since the Paleolithic ages feels that something is being missed. One in ten million perhaps knows what it is, and like the Buddha goes out seeking that from which there is no returning. Yet what is the answer? (p28)

Rama's mind tries here in vain to come to terms with cosmic space and time as a way of calculating the probability of his reaching enlightenment. The Paleolithic ages echo in his mind, along with the millions of seekers who can achieve nothing until a Buddha is born to declare how to forge a link with the Absolute as propounded by Vedic thought. The above reference to billions of men and women since the Paleolithic ages shows that the narrator does not meditate exclusively on Eastern man. In fact, the East-West encounter is an important aspect of the text's epical inclusiveness.

Growing up as an orphan might well have embittered Rama enough to make him seek compensation from society. But as he passes from one foster mother to another, he learns to sorrow without taking out his frustrations on those who symbolise authority. In particular, he accepts Little Mother in archetypal terms as a repository of the traditional values of Hindu motherhood. His consideration for others reveals a healthy psychological adjustment that accepts a world in which even those much younger than himself may supercede him in questing:

... I recited with Little Mother, and when the camphor was lit Sridhara was so absorbed and quiet that I knew this last child of my family could gather the holiness of generations. Maybe one day he would answer my questions; for I had serious questions of my own and I could not name them (p28).

Rama's ontological categories lack the repertoire to name questions of cosmic significance. His young step-brother might become a modern Yagnyavalkya to show him and others the way. Rama is an intellectual with experience of the world but he is frank enough to admit his inability to attain the venerated exaltation to guruhood. Nor does he question the right of others to attain it. His narrative tone throughout the text is not condescending. In search of the truth, he will learn at the feet of any he considers a guru. The Westerner might ask, why then does he not learn at Georges's

feet?

Georges, whom Rama encounters in Aix-en-Provence, represents Christianity. Rao is clearly critical of Georges and of Christendom, but, to make it clear that this criticism is not simply an anti-European bias, he balances it with the Brahminical arrogance of the proverbial Astakakra, who is sufficiently self-assured to exclaim:

‘Wonderful, wonderful am I’; he with eight deformations (p81).

This hubris, which Rama is constantly aware might contaminate him, puts Georges’s presumptuousness in perspective. Georges mixes evangelical fervour with imperial concerns. Rama describes Georges’s secret ambition thus:

He would convert the whole of India to the Roman Church,  
make of India an august gift to the Pope. He can see no  
salvation otherwise (pp64-65).

‘Salvation’ or rebirth is thus seen by Georges in a temporal perspective. Rao’s hero cannot partake of such temporality and still get answers to his questions. On the other hand, he is too aware of the Brahminical arrogance of the likes of Astakakra to touch their feet in recognition of their guruhood.

The author’s interest is in getting characters on both sides to revere truth and communicate it without either the trappings of Brahminical superiority or some of the presumptuousness of Western Christianity. Bringing Georges to friendly neutrality, and Rama to tolerate Western understanding of rebirth and pilgrimage is one of the major concerns of Rao’s treatment of the East-West encounter in The Serpent and the Rope. Rama does learn to live with Georges and to respect Western articles of faith. At Cambridge,

... with the Bible beside the bed and the cross above me I felt  
what I always know I am, a pilgrim (p168).

This does not mean, however, that Rama has become a Christian pilgrim; he is still the Hindu quester with the pestering questions that must remain until he finds his guru.

To Narasimhaiah, the ‘killing’ of the metaphysical man sinks him into the abyss of nihilism and the ‘dismal cave of functional and economic determinism’ (Narasimhaiah,

n.d.; p65). Rama is certainly afraid of this. To avoid landing in the cave of nihilistic materialism, he wants to penetrate the illusory to apprehend the real - hence the ritualistic affirmation of landmarks of his culture that he knows to be associated with rebirth.

It gradually dawns on him that sojourns in centres where metaphysical truth is expounded upon or which tradition has hallowed as holy ground offers only comforting illusions that veil inner wretchedness. The inner layers of the psyche must be probed, he realises, but even then there are what he calls 'psychic knots' (p217) that seem too tight for him to undo. At such moments the purificatory nature of water seems to partially meet his need. Water symbolism attends the rebirth archetype in both the East and the West. But for the Hindu only water from the Ganges will serve. In foreign lands Rama has to imagine the familiar Ganges landscape to be in his inner self like one uttering mantras (holy incantations). The very manner in which he reports this has the rhythm of ritual performance:

And as you go on dipping and rising in your inner Ganges  
murmuring ... you undo your knots (pp217-18).

The sacred waters of the land may help seekers to experience or confirm regeneration in themselves. The repetitive nature of ritual has the effect of driving deeper the apprehended truths until they become part of the genuine seeker's behaviour. Narasimhaiah (n.d.; p100) observes that the Indian readers who get most out of The Serpent and the Rope will be those with a 'cultural predilection which finds the Kasi and the Ganga not on the map but within one's own being'.

It is obviously difficult to deal effectively with metaphysical issues in low mimetic terms. Throughout the text Rama himself often tells us about those metaphysical realities through the mouths of others. Thus, for example, to make the spectacular realism of incarnation credible in the low mimetic form, Rao places its affirmation a certain distance from the main protagonist, and only later does he allow Rama to discuss it with friends.

Some time before my mother died, it seems she had a strange vision. She saw three of my past lives, and in each of them I

was a son, and of course I was always her eldest born, tall, slim, deep-voiced, deferential and beautiful. In one I was a prince (p10 - emphasis mine).

The word 'seems' added to the fact that the visions are his mother's, not his own, distances the vision in a manner which befits the low mimetic mode.

Put very simply, Rama's quest is for a vision like his mother's. The novel is, in fact, enclosed between two visions: the mother's, and the son's which comes at the end (p408). To attain the state of illumination in which such a vision becomes possible, Rama must follow the example of his namesake in Hindu myth, whose dharma required him to exile Sita so as to purge his kingdom of the stigma of supposed infidelity. It seems a most cruel thing to do to the innocent Sita of the Ramayana but, as Rama's Professor points out, the Indian temperament at its best, being more moral than romantic, fights not for abducted Helens but for metaphysical truth. The Rama-Sita relationship places morality higher than family considerations and underlines individuality in the search for redemption.

Similarly Rao's hero must dissociate himself from the various women in his life. At this point it must be insisted that Rama does not engage in a metaphysic without morality, as some critics have charged - no more than did Augustine, the originator of the confession. Several problems have to be faced in The Serpent and the Rope. One of the most difficult problems posed by the novel is that its meditative structure dispenses with chronology, causing some readers to confuse the regenerate and the unregenerate Rama. There are those who interpret him as an Indian Don Juan on a transcontinental seductive mission. But it is clear that some of the passages that they cite in support of this reading cannot by any stretch of the imagination relate to sexual intimacy - which brings us to the Lakshmis.

Rama certainly has an affair with Lakshmi Sham Sunder during his first return to India, but he subsequently resists the advances of Lakshmi Iyengar in London - though some critics have not recognized this fact. The phrase 'tucked me in' is often thought to imply seduction. Rama in his London hospital room speaks of Lakshmi Iyengar 'tucking' him in (p356), but if this has anything to do with seduction, then he seduces

every nurse who comes in the ward, for later he tells us,

In the hospital the nurses all seemed reassured, as if the Queen would visit us, would visit every one of us. When they tucked us into our beds, or, when looking at thermometers ... they were sure the Queen would visit us ... she would drive away our maladies pronouncing our sacral name (p362).

And what is to be made of his resisting what he calls 'the ostrich-virtue of moral India' and his eventual decision to show 'Lakshmi the door' (p355)?

In Hindu mythology Lakshmi is Vishnu's wife, one of the Hindu trinity. It is presumably this that Rama has in mind when he calls Savithri a Lakshmi. So Savithri, even though imperfect, must be the true symbol of the mythical Lakshmi's virtues, which means that the other two are foils against which her symbolic virtue is depicted. In fact, Savithri is introduced to symbolise nearly everything virtuous in the Hindu conception of the feminine principle, and in the quest for rebirth, she, like the original sun deity she is named after, stimulates Rama's metaphysical growth by being the quiet learner who smiles assent. Though she smokes - it is suggested that she later abandons the habit - and listens to Negro jazz, she is basically a paragon of traditional virtue, as is evidenced by the fact that she eventually marries a man whom she does not love rather than rebel against tradition.

The Rama-Savithri relationship is governed by the ritual marriage they enact, which makes them members of the same family and so prevents them from getting serious enough to contemplate a real marriage. The ritual marriage enhances the quest for inner rebirth, making it impossible for Rama's spirit or nature's generative principle (prusha) to possess Savithri's prakriti, the yang or the womb (pp314, 375).

For Rama, meeting Savithri is like meeting the budumukaye or pumpkin-born princess in the grandmother's tale:

One cannot possess the world, one can become it. I could not possess Savithri - I became I. Hence the famous saying of Yagnyavalkya to his wife 'The husband does not love the wife for the wife's sake, the husband loves the wife for the sake of

the Self in her' (pp172-73).

The archetypal union of Yagnyavalkya and Maitreyi is used here - as in Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini - to measure the success of the Rama-Savithri marriage. The self Rama loves in Savithri is the metaphysical India which he recognises and which she helps him to move towards epitomizing.

The failure of Rama's earlier marriage to Madeleine is not an inexplicable mystery as one critic suggests. At the centre of this transcultural relationship is a study in the meeting of East and West and the inevitable incongruities between them. There are overlaps but no possibility of total merger, explications but no instant recognitions, similarities but no identical matrices. Initially, it seems that sufficient ground exists for matrimonial harmony. After all, Rama reasons, don't he and Madeleine share the sorrow of common orphanhood and the loneliness so common in the metropolitan centres of the world? Furthermore don't they have similar temperaments that reach out to understand the world beyond their immediate environments? And 'how like Madeleine was Little Mother' (p22).

When Rama has been mothered enough by his wife Madeleine to go about Europe more confidently, when the sorrow of orphanhood and mutual pity is over, when temperamental similarity becomes familiar and unexciting, and bodily passions have been largely spent, Rama remembers that he needed someone to complement him spiritually and culturally and not simply at the social level. The cultural differences which they ignore at the beginning now become a full-scale clash. In vain does Rama carry a garment from India hoping that he can transform Madeleine, as though all it takes to adjust the European female to Indian values is to dress her up in a sari: '... I felt at last I was going to make Madeleine mine' (p55). Madeleine as a social individual is Rama's. But culturally, she is an agnostic. She even despises Catholics as fanatics, though she makes the vital concession that Georges's Catholicism 'makes him understand India more than I do' (p64).

The Yagnyavalkya-Maitreyi harmony is difficult to achieve even when two Indians marry. In Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini the main character learns the folly of his assumption that his wife can be Maitreyi with a profound philosophical insight to

match his own. Harmony is reached only when Jayadev realises that their companionship has to rest on his accepting that his wife can complement him as an active initiator of reform rather than as a thinker. In The Serpent and the Rope the main problem is that Madeleine is an intellectual who feels that she does not need help to find the answers that will harmonise their marriage. With characteristic Western thoroughness and uncompromising independence, Madeleine plunges into a study of Buddhism not only as means to personal redemption but also as a solution to their marital problems.

Madeleine's quest is misguided, however. Hinduism, which would have closed the cultural gap more easily, does not appeal to her. Steeped in French tradition, she prefers the Indo-Chinese Buddhism of France's former colonies. The way to India is not direct, but through French colonial history. In fact, she would rather go as a pilgrim to Tibet (former Indo-China) than to India (p308). Madeleine emerges as a product of colonial history torn between the liberal tradition that makes her identify with the cause of Indian independence (p58) and the conservative attitudes that treasure imperial legacies.

Her dedication to India is therefore superficial. Whipping up support for a major cause, such as Indian independence, is one thing; persevering with the problems of India after independence is another. The aftermath of a cause is sometimes a more painful reality than the actual conflict. The metaphysical India abstracted from the emotionally charged crisis of colonial politics is something that the marriage must come to terms with to survive. Buddhism has some use in this situation, in that there are elements of it that resemble Hinduism. But will these be correctly applied? One such misuse of cultural elements that the text draws attention to is brahmacharya - celibacy within marriage. Despite Madeleine's initial agnosticism, she becomes fascinated by the ascetic Carthars and the way they eschew touch. The discovery of Buddhist sublimation and its brahmacharya equivalent in Hinduism leads her to adopt a policy of celibacy in her marriage to Rama. But Rama has not chosen nivritti marga (life of renunciation) but pavriti marga (public active life), so Madeleine's choice of brahmacharya cannot save the marriage. Rama observes that 'the bridge was anyhow there, but could not be crossed' (p17).

In The Serpent and the Rope, the bridge is an epiphanic symbol of the attempt to reconcile the East and West - and not in the matrimonial context alone. Both Rama and Madeleine have the vision of transcending cultural incongruities to reach the archetypal Yagnyavalkya-Maitreyi harmony. This bridge-building to link East and West is conceived in both literal and symbolic terms. Madeleine inherits her love for bridges from her father (an engineer, p243) and Rama loves the rope bridges in the Himalayas. At first the problem, therefore, is not lack of vocabulary with which to communicate the desired transcultural ideal of Rama's becoming a European Brahmin and Madeleine a French Buddhist; it is what cultural elements to incorporate in the synthesis.

Despite the emphasis on brahmacharya, Rao's India celebrates archetypal fertility, and this is given as one of the reasons why the more ascetic Buddhism finds a better home in Tibet than India. Madeleine too, before she takes up the Buddhist quest, is fascinated by the Poseidon-Demeter fertility myth (pp40, 41). For all her feelings that the name 'Urishna Ulysses Ramaswamy' is an absurd one for their son (p39), she is closer to Rama when reciting Greek fertility rituals than when she turns ascetic. The use of the Poseidon-Demeter fertility myth demonstrates the scope of Rao's grammar of archetypes. Only archetypes that reveal character and illuminate thematic concerns, whether Eastern or Western, find their way into the text. At the root of Madeleine's being, fertility excites her maternal instincts in much the same way as it did the Greeks', making her feel pagan but happy. Thus her attachment to the Greeks should not be understood in the narrow political terms of the ancient democracy she admires. Motherhood too is involved. She is not a person who simply escapes nostalgically into antiquities. Her devotion to causes is, initially, matched by her interest in motherhood. Thus one of the major problems the marriage faces is the imposition of ascetic sublimation that causes its artificial sterility. For Rama the Yagnyavalkya-Maitreyi harmony does not symbolise mandatory sublimation. The Hindu who wants a son to light his funeral pyre is as authentic as the ascetic; Rama, after all, goes back to India to light his father's. The transcultural bridge must be able to give the two a fruitful marriage.

There is a sense in which Madeleine is a victim of Rama's outwardly calm personality that conceals a psyche divided against itself. In his unregenerate state Rama is a

many-sided character 'with the Brahmin and the I as separate points of reference' (p136). A stereotyped interpretation of his character persists among those he meets. They only see the Brahmin, not the man behind the Brahmin. Madeleine is aware that there is more than the Brahmin, but she cannot see the insecure questing man behind:

... further down, where the mind lost itself, in the deeper roots of life, she waited like an Indian servant at the door for me to come out (p94).

In her stereotyped interpretation of Brahminhood, she cannot understand a Brahmin with a divided self. To her, Brahminhood and sainthood are synonymous, and she assumes that a Brahmin will always want to practise brahmacharya. But this alone does not tell us why the Yagnyavalkya-Maitreyi harmony is not reached.

Oriental thought has no Beatrice. Dante may allow his protagonist to be received by Beatrice at the threshold of paradise where she assumes the role of the guru. But in the more traditional East, Yagnyavalkya is the guru and Maitreyi is the faithful companion who simply accepts her husband's guruhood. For all its poetry in praise of the woman, The Serpent and the Rope is an Eastern book in its conception of the woman's place. It is easy to miss this point and be taken in by the panegyric exuberance extolling the woman - Eastern and Western. But the mythical core of the text and the legendary archetypes tell another story. All the consorts of the gods and the legendary figures, down to the folktale motifs, exemplify the fact that the woman finds her place when she accepts male leadership. Though the story of Radha, wife of Krishna (pp385-87), expresses the idea of the world as cosmic illusion in Advaita lore, the more obvious meaning it must have carried traditionally is that oriental woman learns from man. Rao's earlier praise of Beatrice (p384) is put into a proper perspective by the ensuing Radha story. Narayan misses the point of this perspective when she simply refers to it as 'one of the most interesting' passages in the book (Narayan, 1988; p55).

Madeleine makes the mistake of becoming the Beatrice of the marriage. Then the man behind the calm Brahmin emerges to champion Radha's discipleship as opposed to Beatrice's guruhood. This is why he is attracted to Savithri, who is modelled on the Radha archetype, although Rama only plays at being her guru.

This conception of the female role may seem retrogressive, but Rao does not seem worried about presenting oriental wisdom sympathetically, even if some of his readers might disapprove of it. In any case, Rao's orientalism is not so retrogressive as to deny the woman access to everything of prestige in his androcentric world. Once again the explication begins with myth and expands to encompass the human world. Shiva's sacred bull, we are told, dare not forward human petitions directly. This becomes the prerogative of Shiva's consort. Similarly, when a king is crowned, the king does not become the sole lord of the kingdom; the kingdom, Rao believes, comes to the woman. The crowning of the Queen of England is one of the main episodes in the text and it is designed to show, among other things, that the woman has real access to power. But to Rao, power and truth are not equals. He places truth, particularly redemptive truth, higher than the ability to acquire and use power.

Rao's cosmos is built on an oriental chain-of-being which begins with the harmonious realm of deities, descends to the monarchy and on down to the family. If the 'rules' are observed, the harmony at the highest cosmic realms should be able to filter down to the individual and the marriage institution, where social organisation begins. And since the rules are not closely observed in Rama's marriage, discord is inevitable.

The Vedantic parable of the bull (pp341-43) is narrated primarily to vindicate the oriental position that man is wiser than woman - not necessarily more intelligent, for it is not suggested that Madeleine is mentally inferior. But its moral - that it is better to shoe the feet than to cover the streets with leather - also reinforces Rama's practical common sense as against her more fanatical approach to religion. For what is the use of walking barefoot, as she plans to do, to indicate her renunciation of the world, only to hurt herself and then spend time recuperating rather than enhancing the metaphysical quest? Madeleine might be caught in the re-incarnation cycle almost endlessly by wasting time through avoidable accidents. Were The Serpent and the Rope an ironic work, Madeleine would be depicted as absurdly lacking in common sense.<sup>2</sup> But although she styles herself as the foolish woman of the marshes - Marchesa - she does see the sense in wearing shoes, and Rama buys her some. She is more foolish when she vows, almost with fatal consequences, to follow the rules of abstinence imposed by her own gods rather than take lemon water like Gandhi during a fasting session.<sup>3</sup>

The closest the text comes to presenting Madeleine ironically is when, as a result of her fast, her religious conversion catches public attention and Rama begins to receive credit for this. Since we know that she has rejected his guruhood, this situation is quasi-ironic, but the narrator succeeds in presenting it as only a misunderstanding. Madeleine receives compliments for being able to take decisions on her own, but the text also shows that things would have been easier had she been a Radha, Maitreyi or Savithri, the Indian symbols of matrimonial harmony in, respectively, the mythical, legendary, and low mimetic worlds.

In a world where matrimony has to be ritualised with an anointing to partake of the harmony not only of Yagnyavalkya and Maitreyi but godhead itself (p214) the Rama-Madeleine marriage becomes too discordant to cross the epiphanic bridge and achieve success in Rama's homeland.

The communication breakdown has nothing to do with the problems of urban living - the usual source of trouble in low mimetic literature. Rama negotiates metropolitan and cosmopolitan centres with ease. We are told that Bombay is a city with big problems but what they are and how they might be sorted out is not even given passing attention. So the text has been criticised for its lack of a social basis. One suspects that this has to do with the fact that in low mimetic writing - Western and Eastern, Bombay in Coolie being an appropriate Indian example - the city is generally depicted as a place where human beings meet as strangers and either do not speak or speak past each other. Little of this occurs in Rao's Bombay, London or Paris. But it should not be forgotten that domestic tragedy - the breakdown of communication in a marriage - is also a rich resource for low mimetic fiction. To be able to base a whole encyclopaedic structure on a domestic theme through which the West and East come alive is no mean accomplishment. Rao hurries his hero out of Bombay to focus on the severe domestic silence that Madeleine prescribes on the basis of her understanding of Buddhism - a silence which cannot be ended without abrogating 'the vow of moderate silence' (p319). In the end, communication breaks down to the point of merely writing notes to each other - *at* each other maybe - and from then on, we see non-talking strangers, not in the city but in a country home.

And this silence remains in force, to be broken only when the principals contemplate the central issue thus:

What is it separated us Rama?

India.

India. But I am a Buddhist. (p336)

The archetypes of two different civilizations have been in collision. Rao does not present the gulf between East and West as an ordained separation, as a high mimetic or parabolic writer might have done. Had Madeleine developed a better understanding of archetypal India, the epiphanic bridge could have been crossed. Or, as has been suggested, had Madeleine stuck to her Western ways and respected Rama's orientalism, the marriage would have lasted. The marriage is not ruined by incompatibilité de tempéraments, the ground on which divorce is obtained. This is a simplification of more complex matters for the sake of legal requirements.

The India that separates Rama and Madeleine is depicted so vividly that it acquires the status of an extra character and this is achieved partly through the anagogical portrayal of the mother-motherland archetype. It is not accidental that the only unnamed major character in the novel is Little Mother. The values that critics have observed as lacking in Savithri are not omitted from the text. Little Mother and Savithri are complementary characters. Little Mother is left unnamed to suggest her symbolic function. But she is not the archetypal mother proper, the mother of mothers of romance or high mimetic narratives who steadfastly imbues a new generation with values which tradition has hallowed. Her power struggle with her daughters reveals her inability to comprehend all the new forces shaping modern India. She also forgets that Congress has abolished caste distinctions (p285). Ideal motherhood will have to be a combination of Savithri's progressiveness and Little Mother's conservatism. Nevertheless, no other character exemplifies the values of motherhood that Indians have so persistently transferred on to their land: the reader notices the tenderness with which she nurses Sridhara, the sympathy of her nightly vigils by Rama's sick bed (pp43, 277), the dignity and serenity of her deportment (p49), the richness of her silence, broken by a voice 'infinite in accent and tone' (p36), and her dedication to truth as evidenced by her pilgrimages. Her incomplete perception of the movement of history regardless, she epitomises the India which Rama celebrates in this panegyric:

I was paying homage not to my country - not the land of great mountains and big rivers, for these too I love; not to the country of Asoka or Akbar, however great and universal these may be - but to some nameless magnanimity, a mystery that has eyes, a sense of existence, beautiful, beautiful Mother, my land ... (p195).

When India's tenderness, sympathy, dignity and serenity have been laurelled, she still remains a mystery into which one must be initiated. This is the central point of the book, and it is the basic problem between Madeleine and Rama: the mystery of archetypal Mother India.

Provincial Indian leadership is depicted as not having comprehended the mystery of archetypal India enough to stop leaning too heavily on alien culture. The main problem with Surajipar Palace is that Congressmen speak too much about building a magnificent India without laying a sound foundation. Short memory makes contact with another culture which goes back only a century out the ancient and the classical traditions. The Congressmen are portrayed as too crude and the aristocracy too vulgar for a magnificent India to be realised. No particular philosophy is laid down as the basis for a new India but the implication is that traditional systems of thought will supply the answer if thinkers sit down and ask the right questions.

Mother India and foster-mother England are not entirely antithetical (pp202, 345). The narrator has always disliked British rule, but shows an almost hilarious enthusiasm for some of its features - the crowning of the Queen, for example. This juxtaposition of archetypes informs the whole narrative. The attitudes of the characters are revealed by the way they relate to them. Rama seems sure of what India was and which direction it should be taking in the post-colonial era. He has succumbed neither to the euphoria engendered by independence nor to the illusion that fosterage is the answer to modern cultural dilemmas. Others like Saroja's father, however, remain torn between foster-motherland and motherland proper, and cannot decide to which they owe their identity. Usually they show more interest in the former than in the latter.

To become India's lost son one does not have to live outside the country. The India of

the Coomaraswamys, who live overseas but continue to acknowledge the archetypes of Mother India, receives unequivocal authorial sanction. There are, on the other hand, those who live within but whose cultural experience is too disjointed to be authentic. Cosmopolitanism is not presented as the solution to the question of identity posed in The Serpent and the Rope. In Rama's conversion of foreign landmarks into Indian equivalents, compromise rather than total surrender of identity is sought. Rama's India can be somewhat compromised in the interests of cultural tolerance but the book does not espouse universalism or the search for a globally acceptable culture: Rama wants to be a European Brahmin, not a European. So he sees the Pyrenees-Rhone region as a variant of his native Himalaya-Ganges. It is this process that helps the expatriate Coomaraswamys survive the cultural shock and retain their own identity abroad. The predicament of being away from the Indian landscape is palliated by the transformation of everything around the exile into Mother India's equivalents:

'... the Mediterranean is an Indian sea, a Brahminic ocean; somewhere the Rhone must know the mysteries of Mother Ganga' (p247).

The Pyrenees are recognised as 'noble', particularly for offering shelter in wartime, but they are not allowed epiphanic status, because Lord Shiva does not live there - a prerogative reserved for the Himalayas:

One day, and that was when I was twenty-two, I sat in a hotel - it was in the Pyrenees - and I sobbed, for I knew I would never see my mother again (p7).

The Pyrenees are the Himalayan equivalents in the narrative. Yet, for all their strength, they do not offer the emotional support that the Himalayas provide because they are not part of Indian archetypal experience. It is possible to relate to them only intellectually; Rama's emotional attachment is to the Himalayas of Vedic, classical and folk literature, which he has known since his formative years. Ultimately European look-alikes are no substitute for the real thing.

The cyclic structure of the narrative keeps returning to the issue of the mother-figure. Its culmination is Rama's final 'rediscovery' of Mother India. But motherhood also crops up in other guises - as in this early passage:

Palaces remind me of old and venerable women, who never die. They look after others so much - I mean, orphans of the family always have great-aunts, who go on changing from orphan to orphan - that they remain ever young. One such was Aunt Lakshamma. She was married to a minister once, and he died when when she was seven or eight. And since then my uncles and their daughters, my mother's cousins and their grandchildren, have always had Lakshamma to look after them, for an orphan in a real household is never an orphan ... when we were told that Aunt Lakshamma, elder to my grandfather by many years, had actually died, I did not believe it (pp9-10).

The abiding interest in the changeless maternal figure does not stop at the extended family level. Hindu society is patrilineal, but in the deep springs of the psyche, M E Derrett points out (1966; p74), motherhood is revered. This reverential attitude the narrator, as a representative of his people, carries into the depiction of his country's landscape.

His reverence, nevertheless, does not idealise the landscape. We are taken to where 'Mother Ganga surges out to purify mankind' (p34) and where the train crawls 'towards the thrice holy Himalayas' (p37), but there is a constant reminder that we are not in the superhuman world of legend where man and beast are friends. The low mimetic's celebration of artifacts made with Promethean fire - the train in this case - prevents the landscape from being turned into a rural idyll. Even the landscape is sometimes viewed askance; the loftiness of the mountain inspires awe, but, at the foothills, man-eaters abound. In this scene, at least, the awesome co-exists with the dangerous.

Much of the energy that possesses Rama in his narration emanates from his relationship with the mother-figure. Away from home it is impossible to come by a Lakshamma, and, cut off also from Little Mother, Rama's quest becomes more urgent. Absence from the supportive social-cultural Hindu environment makes India mean more to him than it would have done had he never been away. The impetus of his yogic meditation is partly energised by the substitution of Mother India for the real

mother he misses. He foregoes no opportunity to point out that, though other landscapes can serve as useful extensions of India, they cannot take the place of his homeland.

The Serpent and the Rope may have its faults, such as its preoccupation with philosophy. But it traces the process of 'rediscovering' Mother India with unerring precision. Rama's returns to India have the significance of linking him ever more closely with his cultural roots. While he does not have to reject his acquaintance with Western cosmopolitanism, he recognizes that to become acquainted is not to become.

Most noticeable in the text is the way Rama relates to life better when he is in India than when he is away. The issue of death, which haunts him, does not carry the threatening cosmic significance that it does when he is in Europe. Loss of his mother and son has given his conception of death a sharper edge than those around him realise. Away from home, death seems to imply extinction, mainly because the cathedral tower where the Western manes are said to reside (p16) is a feature the Hindu mind cannot fully relate to. The features of the Pyrenees-Rhone landscape which help the non-agnostics like Georges to come to terms with metaphysical issues are to the Indian useful, but ultimately no substitute for the home landscape. When Rama thinks again of his son in the Himalayas and exclaims, 'Pierre was never dead, I could feel him in my loins' (p44), it is not a sentimental preoccupation.

But even for Indians, the text does not present unanimity of metaphysical perception, as Rao's presentation of the dwelling-place archetype (temporal and ethereal) illustrates. When Rao comes to depict 'eternal' Benares, the dwelling-place of the manes, he does not disguise the greed of its Brahmins, who have compromised their spiritual function with profit-making. Funeral performances are reckoned in terms of the rupee, and those who, unlike the narrator, are unable to pay, will not have their dead farewelled. In an otherwise quiet-toned work, the anger against the corruption in the temporal Benares, that preys on Brahmin and non-Brahmin alike, cannot be missed:

Nor must any poor Brahmin of Benares be allowed to take his own child to the Ganges' banks - for there he would pay

nothing, not even the hire of four shoulders, being just a child, his own arms would do ... he has no money to buy firewood from all those clamouring scoundrels on the pathways to the ghats ... so he takes the child ... and muttering some mantra goes into the water, and lets the little one float down (p235).

The passage is a satirical counterpoint to the low mimetic narrative stance employed in the rest of the book. It is like the irony used to investigate Kirillov's progress in Comrade Kirillov after his conversion to socialism.

Rao depicts the quest for a paradise on earth as a human failing: '... man believed himself to be whole and so invented the Paradise where the acorn grows ...' (p390). Madeleine's Provencal garden-keeping is an example of this pursuit of a romantic rapport with nature which the low mimetic narrator dismisses, preferring to focus on domestic tension. Likewise the novel's resolution is not green wood based; Rama finds his guru not in the Bengali landscape which his people idealise, but in the more modest environs of Travancore.

The downgrading of Benares is, of course, partly a consequence of low mimetic narrative conventions, which do not normally permit actual depiction of the supernatural. Rama merely states that the manes live in Benares. Little Mother maintains that little children can see the city's ethereality (p13), but her credulity is not authenticated, as this would pull the narrative into the world of romance, which often obliterates the barrier between the earthly and the ethereal. This realism has saved Rao's work from the kind of negative criticism which has been directed at Narayan's The English Teacher, whose basically ironic character is counterpointed by a romantic streak which professes to penetrate ethereality. When Narayan's narrator brings on to the stage, so to speak, his reunion with his dead wife, even credulous readers like Narasimhaiah reject the experience.

Narasimhaiah prefers Rao's reported visions. Even in Madeleine's spiritual exercises the spirits cannot be seen:

'I did not see them much, for I just did not care, but could feel them behind doorways, or between the sink and the fireplace ...

And sometimes when Madeleine talked to them in her room, I just wanted to howl, to weep (p328-29).

This approach is typical of the low mimetic. When the narrator claims to 'feel' spirits, we are aware that it could have been the wind. And Madeleine's talking to them could also be talking to the wind, since the spirits do not answer. The vital sense (sight) is not called upon to ratify the experience.

In a rare moment of satire, Rama makes fun of Madeleine's ethereal pretensions:

One heard strange musical sounds - more like drum-beats than melodious wind-instruments - and they seemed to play not all the notes but just three or four, do, re, fa, si, or just do, re, si, as if we had grown subtler, etheric (p327).

This once again recalls Comrade Kirillov, but Madeleine is not otherwise presented satirically.

On such occasions Rao's objectivity wavers. It wavers again in a different direction in certain claims made for India and her gurus in the course of the book - 'for me India is the Guru of the world,' (p336) is one example. Maini observes of this idealisation that

the image of India is in danger of becoming as much of a stereotype as the one which presents this country in the abused iconography of elephants, snake-charmers, mendicants and fakirs (Maini, 1980; p1).

This problem arises in The Serpent and the Rope in those passages that examine issues of power and truth. Rao's rulers, even the Indian ones (pp336-37), are acknowledged only when they renounce the world like the Buddha or distinguish themselves as wisdom-seekers. His India is presented archetypally as mothering well only when she mothers sages, and those leaders who fail to meet this criterion do not deserve a place in the annals of history. The only way in which India can make history, according to Rao, is when the sage helps found an empire - Madhava (p7), for example. To him history which does not have the express backing of a sage is not authentic.

But history is not fraught with mahatmas - the great souled ones, like Gandhi. That

pre-Gandhi and post-Gandhi India is authentic but not unique seems unacceptable to Rao. No people, however, can sail forever on the Gandhian waves. There are quiet moments when no history appears to be in the making though a closer scrutiny will find achievement, even if it does not compel as much recognition as the Gandhi era. And unique and influential as the Gandhis of India may be, they would probably be surprised to read Rao's statement that India is the guru of the world, since India, admirable as it is, is not infallible. The Western leaders that Rao uses as a foil to India's wisdom hardly constitute a representative sample. Napoleon starts well, but when he makes himself emperor (p384) he becomes an enemy of the people. Then he is followed by Hitler (pp384-85), who is both ogre and superman. Both judgements are probably correct, but one wonders how this could mean that the West produced no warriors of truth and must therefore surrender spiritual sovereignty to India.

It is ironic that Rama should caution his Professor - Robin Bessignac - against being too hard on Europe, and then proceed to demolish Western wisdom on the evidence of two supermen, so that the Indian sage can inherit the earth. We do not hear anything about Thomas More, Lincoln, or Socrates - although all three died for truth like Gandhi. The depiction of the warrior archetype lacks the objectivity with which the other archetypes are portrayed. It is perhaps significant that Rao reduces history (both Eastern and Western) to poetry; this makes it easier for him to ignore objective standards of judgement. To argue thus is not to engage in the centripetal fallacy of judging a text from one's cultural point of view. The Serpent and the Rope successfully employs the conventions of low mimetic narration except when Rao asks the reader to accept India's guruhood of the whole world. The only redeeming sentence on this whole issue is the narrator's observation that before becoming a superman Napoleon was a great warrior of truth in that he initiated an enduring liberalism that was to influence the world long afterwards: 'India is free today not because of Jeremy Bentham but because of Napoleon' (p103).

A number of archetypal symbols are employed in The Serpent and the Rope. These include references to the lunar cycle. Sometimes these references simply evoke beauty, the beauty of Madeleine's hair, for example, 'made of moonbeam and river silver' (p88). The moon is also invoked in Rama's account of the Rama-Savithri relationship (p130), and of the Buddha's plant (p322).

To dwell on the poetic beauty of the moon to the exclusion of the dire effects it can produce, however, is to miss the lunar confirmation of the domestic tragedy in the text. In the crucial episode when Rama and Madeleine separate, the moon is setting, a phase in the lunar cycle which, as we have seen, corresponds to the tragic in the human world. In low mimetic literature like The Serpent and the Rope the main characters do not necessarily plunge to disaster, as they might in a high mimetic work. Nevertheless, the sense of tragedy is real, though it evokes in the reader something less than the pity and fear created by the fall of an epic leader. The Rama-Madeleine separation stirs pathos - and a sentimental reader, in fact, may weep. However, we do not feel that India is falling apart, since the domestic tragedy Rao depicts in The Serpent and the Rope does not involve a power centre. This tearful sensation is strengthened by an eerie atmosphere deriving from the setting moon, for 'the night was musical with the noises of owls, with crickets, and the distant sea' (p341).

Similarly, whatever else the sun may stand for in Rao's text, he effectively uses it to confirm the sense of domestic tragedy his novel presents. The sun is handled with more subtlety than the moon. Instead of using a setting sun, Rao has a storm blow up the entire lighting system in the city, so that when Rama is brought the following day to effect divorce formalities, the city is still in darkness. The absence of light here is double-edged. It frightens Rama, who is still unregenerate and therefore uncomfortable about his infidelity with Lakshmi - although Madeleine knows nothing about it. And, cosmically, the darkness represents Rama's eclipsed marital prospects; this is what Rama refers to when he says, 'To think that everything must end in darkness' (p400). Artistically, the storm device succeeds because it avoids repetition. Had it been a setting sun one might have thought of it as intensifying the pathos of the Rama-Madeleine separation. But the storm is more appropriate because it addresses Rama's guilt and (obliquely) his spiritual quest as well.

The cycle of birth and death keeps haunting Rama's mind, and this metaphysical concern is confirmed by the symbolism of sowing and reaping. This imagery suggests that generation after generation is trapped in a cyclic movement, and for the questing Hindu seeking nirvana or the final emancipation from maya, matter and the cycle of rebirth and death into a re-union with the Supreme Spirit (Brahman), this cycle can be

disconcerting. We notice how human fertility, presented in terms of a wedding (Saroja's), is poised against the inevitability of death in this dirge:

A thousand eyes hath man (Purusha)  
A thousand eyes a thousand feet  
On every side pervading earth  
He fills a space ten-fingers wide.  
This Purusha is all that hath been  
And all that is to be, the Law of Immortality. (p274)

Here the pyre ashes of thousands that hardly fill 'a space ten-fingers wide' express the futility of life in very bleak terms. Sung at a wedding celebration, the dirge casually reminds man of the cyclic recurrence of birth and death.

The gloom into which these thoughts could throw the Hindu quester is dispelled in the appropriate phase of the solar cycle - dawn - which is used to depict the fact that man may attain mukti (salvation):

In Benares one knows death is as illusory as the mist in the  
morning (p13)

Death is only a mist in that city which embodies the ethereal home of the Hindu pilgrim. In fact, of course, Rama does not find enlightenment in Benares itself. He is too aware of the corruption of the temporal Benares to trust its efficacy in helping him to reach the ethereal Benares that he seeks. His final vision locates his guru instead in Travancore, an uncorrupted centre where the metaphysical quester may find guidance. The gap between the temporal and the ethereal Benares combined with the fact that the book ends with a promise of enlightenment rather than with the enlightenment itself ensures that the culmination of Rama's quest is presented in a manner appropriate to the low mimetic mode. The view that the book is also encyclopaedic is supported - surprisingly (since he is not generally sympathetic to Rao) - by Sharrad, who observes that it has 'an intellectual energy comparable to Joyce's' (Sharrad, 1987; p146).

## NOTES

- 1 D S Maini agrees that The Serpent and the Rope is narrated with 'authorial irony almost wholly absent' (1980; p7). In fact, however, Maini's analysis shows as much scepticism as Paul Sharrad's.
- 2 Narasimhaiah (1979) views her ironically. Sharrad (1987) goes to the other extreme, claiming that she is portrayed as a witch. The text shows that she is willing to contain her ego but lacks the wisdom to deal with its obstinacy.
- 3 It needs to be repeated here that the low mimetic form, even when transcendental in vision, celebrates the artifacts of man's invention and praises their use. Industrial civilization so enthrals low mimetic narrators like Rama that, rather than ignore Indian trains, he sees them as chanting mantras (p42). In this respect Rama is like Bhashkar in Bhattacharya's low mimetic Shadow from Ladakh, though his religious inclinations do not allow him to focus his attention on industrialising India as Bhashkar does in Steeltown.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: *IRONIC EPISODIC FORMS*

The ironic coincides with the other modes in Third World writing. In ironic literature heroism is diminished as a result either of social circumstances or of individual behaviour. Disorder, unproductivity, treachery, confinement, baseness (moral and intellectual) consequently loom large in the text. Little is achieved, and what is achieved is ephemeral.

Sparagmos, the archetypal theme of ironic art, deals with the lower limits of human achievement, which, in the extreme case, may mean a total absence of story, so that the narrative scheme simply juxtaposes words and images, and the audience is required to make order out of scanty action and disorder. In the works examined here none reveals such a total absence of story, although Lamming's Natives of My Person comes close to it. Some works lack sustained narration but do not diminish the hero. These do not qualify as sparagmic. Thus a work like The Serpent and the Rope does not diminish the dignity of Indian life; the narrative sequence is disordered so as to reflect the formlessness of Indian meditation in which plot, the main narrative dimension, is of little significance. The other reason for placing it among the low mimetic works discussed in the previous chapter is that its Brahmin hero and others in the text are not victims or pharmakoi, the archetypal characters of ironic literature.

Pharmakoi come in two kinds. There are the innocent ones on whom society off-loads its guilt. Their predicament invites an ironic treatment. But there are also guilty pharmakoi whose behaviour invites satire. The works discussed in this chapter contain both kinds.

### Bhabani Bhattacharya: 'He Who Rides a Tiger'

The famine is an important cause of sparagmos in He Who Rides a Tiger because it destabilises the social order and inaugurates the chaos that forces characters to leave rural towns like Jhana in search of succour in the cities. The problems created by the famine are exacerbated by the caste system, which gives Bhattacharya a ready-made pharmakos or scapegoat on whom society blames its evils, thereby occasioning revenge against itself.

Consider the magistrate's verdict on Kalo for the petty theft of a few bananas. The questions that are asked about his theft show the magistrate's assumption that those of low caste are of little social value:

Why did you have to live?

It was a plain question, with no metaphysical implication. The magistrate loved the good things of life and was afraid to die.

But the life of a coolie - that was a different matter (p31).

The sentence passed on Kalo, therefore, is not justice so much as a ritual inflicting of punishment upon the figure always likely to be blamed for social ills. The magistrate is unable to penetrate the coolie class to see the plight of an honest man whose values have been slightly dented by the famine. But this man's humanity is still intact, and in the unfolding court scene the scapegoat is ironically more humane than the judge:

Dispenser of justice .... I am a worm, sir, and it is nothing if I live or die. But I have a daughter. She has no mother. She has only me, sir. My daughter, Chandra Lekha, has to live (p31-32).

The rest of the novel is about the sparagmic process that makes a man who had hitherto accepted his karma as coolie rebel against the society that has made him a pharmakos. The climax of his ironic quest for revenge is when his oppressors, including the magistrate, come to bow at the feet of Kalo, now transformed into Mangal Adhikari, the 'Brahmin' priest. One of the regrettable things about Kalo's transformation is that he could have participated, perhaps significantly, in the independence struggle that needs every available Indian. Instead he is forced to devote his resourcefulness and energy to a battle against his own people.

The judge imposes a harsh prison sentence on Kalo. Something perishes - not in prison, but in the courtroom:

But a part of him stayed there, never to be regained. Something was gone and Kalo, blacksmith of Jhana town, could never be whole again (p32).

In contrast with Kajoli (in So Many Hungers), whose liberation ideals are revived by the hunger strikes staged by the jailed architects of the struggle, Kalo fails to broaden his vision to include such redeeming national concerns. Once out of prison his diminished values cause him to become a pimp, and he remains one until he meets the only person he lives for - Chandra Lekha - in a brothel, and, in their shame, the two attempt to create a better life together. Not a good life, however; Kalo now proceeds to exploit what he learned in prison so as to victimize society instead of being victimized by it, and it is at this point that the irony of the book becomes palpable.

Prison in a low mimetic like So Many Hungers!, where heroism is not of the diminished ironic type, can contribute positively to society since the inmates have values that the prison walls cannot contain. In the ironic scheme of He Who Rides a Tiger, prison becomes a place where the inmate merely learns how to get even with society - a place where innocence is exchanged for revenge.

In prison Kalo meets Biten, a Brahmin who has been sentenced for leading 'hungry men to food' (p126). Biten opens Kalo's eyes to the corruption of the Brahmins:

Food for the soul is produced and sold like food for the stomach, and though the ways of the two trades are different, you pay for both with hard cash. The temple is a market and the priest a dealer (p42).

The corruption of the system stands exposed before the hitherto believing Kalo, and once out of prison he uses the knowledge of Brahmin secrets which Biten has imparted to him to found a temple.

Kalo's initial delight in this temple is more significant than is obvious at a casual glance. He has proved that social institutions can be presided over by a person from any section of society, which is contrary to the magistrate's view that such authority is the divine right of a given class. In Kalo's mind justice and religion are ironically intermingled:

A man who was setting out to be the god's own priest! But the rebel had been stern and implacable. The rebel was reason and justice, and they had transformed Kalo. The Brahmin masquerade was only a step toward a basic reincarnation (p83).

The danger is that he might change his identity; he is only a step away from reincarnating the system he is fighting: 'Was it, then, that the counterfeit coin needed more glitter than the real?' Attempting to make the 'counterfeit' Brahmin identity more real endangers his old self. The daughter he rescued from the brothel is also in danger of acquiring a Brahmin identity, perhaps a Brahmin husband as well. And yet the reader does not feel that Kalo's is the worst indignity done to religion in the book. Sir Abalabandu - the director of the temple (p125) - is the kind of person Kalo was procuring for in his days as a pimp. Religion is more injured by such a man than by Kalo. Thus, regardless of the danger Kalo's identity is threatened with, the narrator is not in a hurry to get to the denouement, which depicts his regeneration. He needs to prolong his fraudulent activity in order to highlight worse moral corruption in the Abalabandus who have deprived the hungry famine victims of grain in the countryside besides seeking psychedelic pursuits in brothels. The sharpest edges of irony are not reserved for Kalo, who originates the ironic circumstances. He is simply an agent who opens the way to the continued exploration of the diminished heroism that affects not only the court and temple but the entire social system.

The important court metaphor acquires symbolic dimensions in the case of Motichand, who, to procure a divorce (unfairly, and against Hindu custom) sets up a court within himself: 'He himself would be a law-court, as it were, and hold a private session' (p142). And again, more ironically this time,

He sent his wife away to her parents, settling on her a fair allowance after the law-court in him had had another session. So he was free once more to marry again monogamously (p142).

Only the coolie, the social scapegoat, is not allowed to become a law unto himself. The narrator, however, permits him to become lawless for a while, and concludes that, compared to what has been going on in society, the scapegoat can almost be considered innocent. There is no way, for instance, a grave matter like divorce can be commensurate with the theft of three bananas at famine time. Only in his fraudulent Brahminical pose does Kalo come close to the injustices his 'civilized' society inflicts on the weak and the kamar as a class.

Like the court, the prison metaphor is extended beyond the four-walled compound for convicts to include, for example, the room where Purnima (Biten's sister) awaits her forced marriage - after her parents have inflicted heavy physical punishment on her:

In the days that followed, Purnima was a virtual prisoner in her bedroom. She could not move one step unwatched. On the morning of the seventh day her wedding was announced - it was to take place that very night (p166).

The bare wedding celebrations appropriately take the nature of mourning; the sanai player's 'notes sounded like a long-drawn wail' (p166). This anticipates Purnima's eventual suicide as a form of escape from a marriage that is a worse prison than the room in her father's home. Purnima cannot but see her husband, compared to her former lover (Basav), as a grey-headed prison warden, and his children and grandchildren as inmates from whom she must escape.

Biten's protest at his sister's death makes him an ostracised son and therefore an asset in Kalo's scheme of revenge. The problem, however, does not weigh on him as heavily as does his concern for Kalo and Chandra Lekha. The circumstances are so complex that prison life seems preferable to freedom - 'He had been happier in jail' (p170). Kalo too, once out of prison, is a man afraid of his freedom. His liberty is welcome only because he can at last begin working to achieve his cherished goal of bringing Chandra Lekha close to him. But his initial employment - as a corpse carrier and then a pimp - makes him fear his liberty, and occasionally he feels afraid of being responsible for himself. There is more than a suggestion in the sparagmic portrayal of Kalo's character that, were his life not so inextricably bound to that of his daughter, he would fall into the sort of crime that would see him back to prison where someone else would be responsible for his welfare.

Thus in Bhattacharya's work, institutions like prison are looked at ironically; while serving useful social functions, they may simultaneously be havens for people who are afraid of their freedom. Such people, being allergic to personal freedom, cannot understand the wider issues of national liberation, the context in which He Who Rides a Tiger is set.

Kalo's fear of freedom diminishes as his temple project prospers. He assumes a Brahmin name (Mangal Adhikari) to match the one his daughter has already,<sup>1</sup> and becomes increasingly self-confident. The fight against Kalo's Brahmin self is conducted by Biten and Lekha, who opt not to be carried away by the thrill of fraud and the satisfaction accruing from revenge. They become crucial regenerative agents. They start checking Kalo's Brahmin self as it threatens to become real. Kalo realizes that the fraud would be complete if Chandra Lekha were to marry into a Brahmin family. Kalo is alert enough to know that some fondness has developed between his daughter and Biten. But he is not as shrewd in his assessment of the depths of Biten's reforming zeal. Biten cannot consider the match as long as the temple stands and Kalo continues to turn into a perfect replica of a materialistic Brahmin. Biten's feelings are divided between tolerating Kalo's revenge and the need to expose this materialistic ethic, without endangering Kalo's life.

Determined to remain a reformer, Biten begins an assault on Kalo that makes his diminished heroism begin to look retrievable. Biten's aggressiveness when the match is blessed shows that prison has not destroyed his hatred of materialism:

Biten chose his words to give them the hurt of a knife thrust.  
 'Or could it be that there was in the fraud no purpose larger than  
 filling your own belly and your purse? (p191)

Others deal with the mask Kalo puts on for the world, but Biten can see the man behind the Brahmin who is being dehumanised by the prestige and wealth his temple has given him. He sees the need to destroy the mask and bring its wearer back to his original innocence. This, however, is not an easy matter because the narrative is not moving towards denouement but in the direction of further complications.

One such complication is the nameless boy who stumbles in from the hungry crowd, to make Kalo's family look the way it would have been had his wife lived to give birth to his dream son. There is more than Lekha to live for now. The Brahmin name (Obhijit) that has lain on the family rack for years, possibly two decades, can at last be used, which prompts Kalo to cling to his false temple much longer. The temple seems to make all of Kalo's wishes come true. The boy is fancy made concrete; wishful thinking makes him resemble Chandra Lekha (p204), and the imaginary family becomes complete: Lekha finds the brother who was never born, and her father the son of his dream.

Other benefits also accrue. The very next chapter brings compensation for the recognition which Lekha was earlier denied after winning the Ashoka essay-writing award. The family will now appear in the newspapers after all. The words to accompany the poses will be flatteringly apt. There is talk, for instance, of her 'face of compassion for the universe' (p210). The temple, therefore, is an enticing avenue to the power and the glory which the earlier days promised but never gave: 'for Chandra Lekha her new glory was a fairy tale' (p220).

He Who Rides a Tiger, like many ironic works, parodies the romance. The fairy tale and its literary affiliates often depict a Cinderella rising to the summit of power and glory through marriage to a prince. This ascent in He Who Rides a Tiger is depicted ironically. The offer of marriage from one of Motichand's sons parodies Cinderella's rags-to-riches rise. But Lekha recognises the false pomp involved in the proposal. Motichand, who plays the prince-like role sadly lacks the dignity his part requires. He deserves the contempt with which Kalo turns down his proposal (p222).

At the same time it begins to dawn on Lekha that temple duties are a responsibility she is unprepared for, since to her this is where the fates of individuals and the community are reckoned. Take the case of the sincere woman, who, unable to pay the doctor's fees, seeks the succour of the temple. She believes in the efficacy of the prayer that the Mother of the Sevenfold Bliss will utter. Because the temple lacks authenticity, death prevails in spite of prayer. No wonder then that Lekha, true to her nature of taking responsibility seriously, begins suffering from the morbid accusations of conscience that make her feel like a murderer:

I have killed a child. I deserve to be hanged (p224).

This is the saving grace in Lekha's character: she accepts responsibility and possible retribution. And yet the problem is not of her own making. She is caught in a role she is unwilling to play. She lacks the existential callousness that makes her father act his part with remarkable ease. The ironic fact is that her decision to play the Brahmin role properly, by agreeing to marry into the Motichand family she hates, begins, as she had hoped, to reawaken in Kalo the values which the court experience destroyed.

In the end Kalo publicly confesses his fraud, and is reunited with his daughter: 'Kalo, alone with his daughter, passed out of the gateway of the temple' (p245). His confession reinstates his lost dignity. The Brahmins in his audience are outraged, and threaten to tear him to pieces, but find that they are outnumbered by those of lower caste. Thus the final harmony between Kalo and Chandra Lekha is accompanied by an upsurge of class conflict. The implication is that this conflict is positive - a necessary step in the reformation that will bring about a union based more on the equality of men than the traditional divisions society has hitherto hallowed. What this reveals is that social reform is one of the shaping principles of Bhattacharya's consciousness.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o: 'A Grain of Wheat',  
'Devil on the Cross' and 'Matigari'

This discussion uses three of Ngugi's works - A Grain of Wheat, Devil on the Cross and Matigari - to show his change from irony to militant satire, from the depiction of individuals struggling to understand themselves and to be understood to the portrayal of characters who are unrepentantly acquisitive. Devil and Matigari are the satirical works. In them we are denied deep access to the characters' consciousness.

Eileen Julien sums up the basic spectrum of A Grain of Wheat in these terms:

Through its juxtaposition of Kihika and Mugo then, A Grain of Wheat moves from an 'epic' to a 'novelistic' notion of heroism, from bold stirring deeds to a quiet, unsettling awareness of self (Julien, 1983; p43).

'Epic ... heroism' corresponds to the high mimetic dignity found here in Kihika, and elsewhere in characters such as Okonkwo in Achebe's Things Fall Apart. What Julien calls a 'novelistic' notion of heroism is the ironic version, exemplified here by Mugo.

A Grain of Wheat invites the reader to view the lowest limits of human heroism through the compassionate eye of the narrator, who espouses the view that heroism, diminished by sordid deeds, can be recovered through self-knowledge and confession. As Gikonyo's mother tells him: 'Read your own heart and know yourself' (p154). The epic heroism of Kihika is only a counterpoint in A Grain of Wheat. The narrator's

main concern is to acknowledge that in a liberation struggle there can be a treacherous side. The idea that Kihika's type of heroism was the only form to emerge in the liberation struggle must be allowed to fade quietly away as a figment of the popular imagination. Ngugi is interested in seeing that characters of a lesser order are known better and, if possible, forgiven. This is why the irony in A Grain of Wheat is not militant, which means that it does not become satirical.

It is Mugo who betrays Kihika. Consider the way in which he is portrayed. The narrator wants his haunted world understood before he is known for the traitor he is. His orphaned childhood, the struggles with a drinking aunt and the desire to be left alone to better his life hinder him from participating fully in the liberation struggle and eventually they motivate his treacherous action. The narrator labours hard to make Mugo's behaviour credible, and at the same time he views society with irony, for their ignorance of him. The social gauge of heroism is called into question. Mugo's impressive eyes and stature (p56) require only a few incidents of apparent bravery to make the legend of his contribution to the struggle grow from ridge to ridge - until eventually he is renowned on all eight ridges. In the end, Mugo is the product more of legend than of fact, and society does not escape blame for the ironic complications arising from its failure to know its leaders well.

Heroes thrive on legend as much as on fact, and Mugo is happy to ride his wave of popularity. Having to compose a eulogy for Kihika becomes an ordeal for him, however, for he is not made of the stern stuff of the regular traitor. He is, therefore, plagued with doubts that emphasise the disparity between knowing oneself and being known by others, which is what generates the central ironies in the text. Is the Party's request that he lead the celebrations genuine, or a calculated move to expose him for his treachery? He wonders:

Yes could they have really asked him to carve his name in society by singing tributes to the man he had so treacherously betrayed? (p59)<sup>2</sup>

Ngugi does not simplify issues by suggesting that society is entirely credulous. Warui's enquiry about the readiness of Mugo's hut for Uhuru celebrations (p4) has an ironic undertone relating to the readiness of Mugo's heart. And there is a

disillusionment that makes people wonder why the celebrations are an anti-climax. They begin to ask questions. Sparagmos - confusion, disenchantment, diminished achievement - the archetypal theme of irony, pervades A Grain. The anticipated euphoria is never achieved. Suspicions are rampant, but, as Warui must learn, a man's heart is not as easy to know as the condition of his hut.

In a world where men and women are victims of history who need relief from guilt the more urgently as independence draws near, the guilty seek help from the guiltier, and the irony gets more poignant. As Uhuru Day approaches, Gikonyo, who has betrayed the struggle for independence by confessing his oath to the authorities in order to return to his wife, becomes increasingly haunted, and seeks relief by unburdening himself before Mugo 'as though before a loftier spirit' (Roscoe, 1977; p189). The ironic mode may move in either of two directions; it may invest its characters with a trite sort of dignity, or divest them of dignity altogether, and satirize them. In A Grain, the former movement is evident; a series of confessions shatters the irony in the end.

There is little humour in Gikonyo's confession to Mugo, although the ironic has a greater potential for humour than the other modes. The text insists that the reader should comprehend the complexity of the situations that moulded these personalities. They are - like the characters of the European naturalists - victims of their environment.

One of the issues that the narrator draws attention to is that Gikonyo is better off than Mugo, since he has been able to find temporary relief from guilt by compensatory work, whereas for Mugo neither work nor sleep can offer sufficient escape. The novel, it should be remembered, opens with Mugo's nightmare:

He wanted to cover his eyes with his palms; but his hands, his feet, everything refused to obey his will. In despair, Mugo gathered himself for a final heave and woke up (p3).

This is a sleepless world, in which people retire to rest only to wrestle with despair.

But emphasis on Mugo's plight could obscure Gikonyo's painful existence. In the company of Warui and Wambuku, sent to request Mugo to lead the Uhuru celebrations, Gikonyo gives the impression of a man who has put his hut in order for

Uhuru. But, in spite of political and commercial success, Gikonyo is at heart a man torn between guilt at having broken his oath and shock at the infidelity of Mumbi, the wife for whom he broke it. Escape into work as 'a drug against pestering memories' (p26) is only a partial solution.

In the ironic web of A Grain, no one lives in as exposed a situation as Mumbi. Other characters live 'secret lives' in the sense that their secrets are known only to themselves. Furthermore, Mugo, before his confession, may soothe his guilt with solitude, and Gikonyo may find temporary relief in work. But for Mumbi there is no escape from the evidence of her infidelity - Karanja's child - which makes her the most willing of all the characters to confess, and yet, perhaps, the one with least hope of psychological release. Her diminished sense of dignity is, however, sympathetically portrayed, even before she finds a 'confessor'.

One major character who does not travail like the others needs mentioning here:

Karanja. His treacheries are multiple. He is a rank opportunist. To him, concepts like self-knowledge, reading one's heart, and putting one's hut in order for Uhuru, are all thrown into oblivion, since nothing concrete derives from them. His view of the world permits no ideals that might form the basis of psychological rehabilitation. A believer in the inviolability of the colonial empire, he has mapped out a promising career which involves masking himself in a hood and identifying freedom fighters.

Being able to attain rehabilitation is not guaranteed for anyone. The prerequisite is that the individual be able to discern the void within. But for those lacking in introspection, who look at the world with a view only to gain, there is nothing to prompt regenerating truth. There is a difficulty in the appraisal of Karanja, however, in that most of what the reader sees is his outward action. In a work that excels in depicting the moral struggles of characters, one would expect a more sustained inner view of this character. The implication, of course, is that there is no internal conflict to see. Still, one might wish for some account of the process that, in his case, destroys the introspection which torments the other characters - Mugo, Gikonyo, Mumbi, Thompson, Koinandu. All of these have wounds they seek to heal. Thompson observes a truth that all these characters illustrate: that 'a man was born to die continually and start afresh' (p50). This is what it means to know oneself.

Another character who lacks introspection (and therefore the prospect of regeneration) is the MP who cheats the peasants out of Mr Burton's farm. Here the reader confronts the naked corruption of the neo-colonial elite, who exploit the masses almost as much as the colonialists did. In a society that is learning fast the value of money and class, acquisitiveness becomes an important social preoccupation and an intriguing subject for the novelist. Ngugi sees this as a fresh form of betrayal, and henceforth in his work - except in Petals of Blood - owning is subjugated to a militant form of irony whose main aim is to ridicule rather than to explore or explain. This MP, however, is spared such ridicule, either because the novel ends too soon or because Ngugi hoped, at this point in his career, that this kind of betrayal would not persist.

But when he returns to this theme in Devil on the Cross, his irony loses its sympathetic elements and takes the militant form that denies the reader access to characters' consciousness. The novel was originally written in Gikuyu, a language which, like others in the Bantu family, offers through its gender classes massive potential for the pejorative insinuations on which satire thrives. In these languages, very often a shift in the noun in question from one class to another will generate satire; the tone can be established simply by a nominal prefix.

It is obvious that the narrative is concerned with diminution of dignity, a distortion attributed to acquisitiveness. Diminution is achieved through the semantic overtones of different classes of nouns. These overtones are sometimes very plain, even when the naming of an individual does not correspond to the traits suggested by the description. Kihaahu wa Gatheeca, for instance, is described in terms of tall-thin Bantu nouns. Although his name does not suggest this - 'Ki' signifies 'big' - his description does:

Kihaahu was a tall, slim fellow: he had long legs, long arms, long fingers, a long neck, and a long mouth. His mouth was shaped like the beak of the kingstock: long, thin and sharp. His chin, his face his head formed a cone. Everything about him indicated leanness and sharp cunning... Standing on the platform, he looked like a 6-foot praying mantis or mosquito (p108).

The narrator of Devil on the Cross, a self-styled Prophet of Justice, climbs on to a rooftop to tell the tale of Wariinga, an ordinary woman who has stumbled on an extraordinary orgy of competitiveness among the country's elite in a nearby cave.

The rooftop is the ironic mode's humble equivalent to the vantage-points of the more exalted modes. One of the reasons Ngugi abandons the Mount Kenya epiphanic archetype that pervades his other works is that the rooftop setting gives the narrative an arresting immediacy that evokes the urgency of an emergency. The narrator is like a prophet, ash-smearing and denunciatory. He ascends the rooftop to gain a better view of the underhand and clandestine acquisitiveness of the competitors assembled in the cave and to unmask them uncompromisingly.

The cave is antithetical to the rooftop. It is possible, as Cook and Okenimkpe point out (1983), that the cave gathering is a parody of the elders' traditional deliberations. But the blood-sucking imagery suggests cannibalism rather than an elders' meeting.<sup>3</sup> The international celebration of fraud which Wariinga witnesses is likened to a den of cannibals. The gigantic mosquito image, used to concretise Kihaahu's appearance in the passage quoted above, likewise evokes vicious thirst for blood. Clearly this approach is much more aggressive than that of A Grain of Wheat. Ngugi's method is less investigative, his characterisation less subtle. We have abandoned the realm of irony for the realm of satire.

Devil on the Cross is satire proper. It cannot be meaningfully compared to Achebe's A Man of the People, for example, where irony is predominant and satire only incidental. Even the bleaker form of irony in Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born does not reach the savagery with which society is here anatomised. Plato's cave, as used by Armah to depict Ghanaian society caught in a lightless world and detesting any bringer of light, pales beside the boastful extravaganza in Ngugi's cave, where villains crusade with a zeal that staggers onlookers. Armah's characters prefer darkness because they do not know the real value of enlightenment. Ngugi's, on the other hand, are dedicated to a most ruthless brand of exploitation. Only out of deference to their international onlookers will they relent in their exuberant claims to exploitative prowess, because in their Western masters they recognize greater exploiters than themselves.

There is no confession and rehabilitation here, as in A Grain of Wheat. Man in Devil on the Cross is not seen as a victim of personal and social circumstances that might mitigate his case. He is, instead, a bold adventurer into the corrupting milieu of contemporary life. The characters do not regard their activities as detrimental to the social fabric; their only apprehension, it appears, consists in the fear of being caught. But they have minimised such fears by getting the law on to their side. The painful discovery of Wariinga and her companion Muturi, who imagine that they can do service to their country by reporting the corruption they witness in the cave, is that they are deemed to be upsetters of the peace. It is easier to deal with them as criminals and let the real criminals go free, because these honest ones have nothing to offer the law but their honesty. The hand of the law one witnesses here is reminiscent of Armah's legal net in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born which paradoxically catches only small fish. In Ngugi's work, as in Armah's, the problem is not that the big fish never come into the net. It is that there are established ways of getting them out again into the sea of corruption.

Another way of looking at the cave scenario is to see it as a parody of the ceremonial archetype. In a traditional situation the feast is one of the main forms that this archetype can take. But the author insists from the outset that this feast does not obey traditional rules, since one needs an entry card to attend. In a traditional setting, the feast would be open to all (within limits). Some of the cards to this feast have gone missing and ended up in the hands of those whom the party organisers would never have wanted present. But even then, only a few have managed to get in, and a big crowd is left outside. This is exactly what the author wishes to portray: two clans of people; the owning within and the owned without. Society is polarised between the haves and the have-nots, each with their own creeds which go roughly as follows:

Blessed is he who bites and soothes,  
 Because he will never be found out.  
 Blessed is the man who burns down another man's house  
 And in the morning joins him in grief,  
 For he shall be called merciful.  
 Blessed is the man who robs another of five shillings  
 And then gives him back half a shilling for salt,  
 For he shall be called generous.

(pp209-210)

I believe that we, the workers, are of one clan,  
 And hence we should not allow ourselves  
 To be divided by religion, colour or tribe.  
 I believe that in the organisation of the workers  
 Lies our strength,  
 For those who are organised never lose their way,  
 And those who are not organised are scattered by the sound of  
 one bullet.  
 I therefore believe in the unity of the workers  
 Because unity is our strength.

(p210)

The use of biblical allegory pervades Ngugi's work - including its title. This - like the translation of the book into English - seems to have been prompted by Ngugi's desire for a wide audience. The ordinary Kenyan would be familiar with the Bible. This biblical idiom in turn assists a shift from purely mimetic art into the kind of fantasy where characters like the Devil can appear freely. He is the main agent behind the organisation of the feast and he also deters the kind of revolutionary activity which the text recommends for overhauling the system and inaugurating a more just society. The Devil is crucified on the cross by those who dislike exploitation and oppression. But their adversaries uncrucify him, nurse him back to health and minister to him for rewards that come in hard cash or property. They have no desire to see the world order overhauled and a juster society established.

Ngugi's concern in this book is not to write a credible story that will appeal to the refined reader in terms of plausibility and depth of social analysis. The contexts that help define character - the home, the family, the place of work, the nature of social mobility, the conflict of class interests - are dismissed as irrelevant to the question of who owns what. In this world the loftiest ideal is to possess. The characters turn family concerns too into matters of acquisitiveness. Consider Gitutu's testimony in this regard:

As for the matters of the flesh, I am an elder with one wife and five children - three boys and two girls.... But before I leave

such matters I would like to mention that ... I have two mistresses .... (p99)

It does no harm to point out again that in this work, man is not struggling with a conscience that condemns him to the restless search for peace found in, say, A Grain of Wheat. Gitutu's mistresses are a tiny matter-of-fact affair to be mentioned only as a prelude to the grander issues of wheeling and dealing in land, which have made him a local tycoon. Ngugi's main concern is to expose fraud by simplifying characterisation and social context. The coarser Gitutu is made, the more suitable he will be for Ngugi's purposes. A telling detail in the passage quoted is the fact that he calls himself an elder, a respectful term that only serves to show the audience what he and the other competitors are not.

In Matigari, the satire is founded on elements that are quite similar to those in Devil on the Cross. Matigari himself is a fantasy character. The work as a whole is a creative amplification of an oral Kikuyu folk tale about a man who sets out in search of a cure for an illness. In the prefatory note to the English edition, Ngugi reveals some of the reasons for his attraction to the oral narrative.

The story is simple and direct, and it dispenses with fixed time and space. For effect, it depends on the rhythmic restatement of the motif of search; and for suspense on the man's urgency for a cure. As the story progresses, old man Ndiiro, whom we never actually meet, looms large and dominant, a force, a god, a destiny (vii).

Helped on by different people, Ndiiro reaches his destination and finds the necessary cure. In the satire, the corresponding character is Matigari, one of the last of the freedom fighters, who emerges from the forest and sets out through the country (now scarcely recognisable to him) in search of his family and - more obliquely - truth and justice. He does not find his object, and eventually disappears back into the forest.

The journey motif becomes a unifying thread in the satire, which strives to retain the simplicity of the original by avoiding a complex plot. In fact without this journey motif the book would be a fragmentary anatomy, made up of fifty-three different pieces presented in three main parts: 'Wiping Your Tears Away', (pp1-66), 'Seeker of Truth and Justice', (pp67-128), 'The Pure and the Resurrected' (pp129-175).

Matigari displays a childlike ignorance, owing to his long absence from society, and this makes his idealism credible. But such concern for credibility relates only to matters of theme, not to the characterization, where, as in many satires, fantasy mingles freely with reality. Matigari's claim that he existed from the time of the Arabs and Portuguese (p45) is an instance of such fantasy.

Where characters are not be conceived in fantastic terms, they are portrayed parabolically. Ngarura wa Kiriro, Guthera and Muriuki (the most important of the subsidiary characters) are shaped more by the demands of plot and theme than by their own character traits. The reader knows almost nothing about Ngaruro, for example, except that he is a factory worker, and the leader of a strike. The evolution of a leader does not concern Ngugi's narrator in Matigari the way it does in Petals of Blood, where Karega's metamorphosis into a trade unionist is charted with unabated interest.

The satire is directed more at institutions than at characters. Matigari and his fellow-travellers are the barometers that measure the institutions' poor social performance and the resultant inconveniences and suffering. One institution attacked is the village. Muriuki comes from a 'car cemetery' - a pile of irreparable vehicles which provide the children with a habitation as well as a means to live out their fantasies. One of the ambitious children says of their 'homes', 'Yes, they are our houses. Each one of us has his own house. Mine is a Mercedes-Benz' (p16). The implication is that the Benz which the reader has met earlier (p6) - and the acquisitive philosophy which it symbolizes - is responsible for the new kind of village.

Sparagmos favours images of death and burial, ruins, dungeons and caves, and Matigari makes use of these. The children here are depicted as condemned to death as soon as they are born. The dwelling-place archetype is looked at more ironically here than in A Grain of Wheat. There, even the most impecunious possesses at least a hut and a small shamba, whereas here the wreckage speaks of lives that lie in ruins before they have had a chance to be lived out. 'What a world! A world in which the tailor wears rags, the tiller eats wild berries, the builder begs for shelter' (p21) - and, we can add, a world where ruins are homes.

Examination of Ngugi's portrait of another institution, the factory, brings us closer to his views on the social and political forces underlying the decay in this unnamed society. Exactly how and why the factory gets 'converted into a prison' (p74) are questions which the author does not probe, perhaps because probing could win some sympathy for the other side. As Feinberg observes (1967; p226) 'the satirist's real purpose is to comment rather than narrate, criticise rather than recite'. The reader simply sees a factory close down, presumably temporarily, to allow the workers to be incarcerated. By suppressing the background to this event, Ngugi demands that we acknowledge its folly. It would have been much more sensible to solve the labour dispute through negotiation.

In due course the Minister of Truth and Justice arrives to sort out the problems at the factory, and the scene of 'instant justice' which ensues indicates that the judicial system is linked with the question of ownership. The most ironic case is that of the vagrant, who, because he owns nothing in this world, is grateful to the judges for sending him back to jail where he can be looked after (p122).

We are asked to believe that the cells in the country are full. The fear of Marx and Lenin is pathological, and all that one has to do to go to jail is mention these figures in the most casual manner. The crimes of those in the cell with Matigari range from mentioning Marx and Lenin in class to harmless vagrancy. Only a few, like the pickpocket, seem to have real cases to answer. Many are simply pharmakoi - the scapegoats who give society the comfort of feeling that it is vigilant against disorder. Again, of course, social ramifications have been oversimplified to give the narrator the opportunity to vent his righteous anger at an unjust system. The cell is, in terms of criminology, too clean. Not a single assault, murder, fraud or perjury is mentioned in the list of eleven inmates' offences.

Ngugi in Matigari depicts a world in which you go to jail or mental hospital if you ask certain questions. Matigari does seem a little mad when he starts claiming that everything - land, houses and industries - are his. His point, of course, is that he epitomises the revolutionary struggle. Perhaps Ngugi is making the further point that, in such a crazy society, there is, paradoxically, no way of avoiding the label of a madman if one seeks to embody the revolutionary ideals which have informed Ngugi's work since Petals of Blood.

At the end, chaos erupts and Matigari escapes. He does not achieve the revolution, but he manages to recruit from brothels and car cemeteries the kind of revolutionaries the author feels the future needs and lead them back to the forest.

### Lamming: 'In the Castle of My Skin' and 'Natives of My Person'

Lamming's two novels, In the Castle of My Skin and Natives of My Person, are, like all his works, novels about the passage from one type of society to another, that often marks both an end and a beginning. Kenneth Ramchand (1976; p57) says that the former work is 'illuminatingly a novel about the troubled beginnings of a society'. Here I examine the social and psychological reasons for these 'troubled beginnings' as well as the beginnings of an earlier phase of Caribbean society, as recorded in Natives of My Person. The two novels are both ironic rites of passage from one form of social arrangement to another, but they use different versions of the pharmakos. I look at each work in turn.

Ramchand (1976) observes that confusion and ambiguity characterise the depiction of change in In the Castle of My Skin, and that there is a haunted sense of loss. The pharmakoi that Lamming depicts in this work are, paradoxically, guilty without committing offences; they belong to a 'guilty' group of exiles, condemned to this existence by a slave past most of them are oblivious of.

The book depicts the shift from a semi-feudal culture, which juxtaposes plantation-owners and slaves, to a capitalist society in which the indigenous population splits into two groups, one upwardly mobile, the other increasingly dispossessed. The former group is made up of colluding individuals who use their privileged circumstances not to attempt a better understanding of their compatriots, but to reinforce the scapegoat image of the underprivileged as the guilty ones who impede every one else's social success. The disadvantaged become the enemy of those aspiring to rise:

My people are low-down nigger people. My people don't like to see their people get on. The language of the overseer. The language of the civil servant. The myth had eaten through their

consciousness like moths through the pages of ageing documents. Not taking chances with my people, my people. They always let you down (p27).

In the second half of the book Pa has a dream-vision about the slave origins of this society. He sees little difference between the love of 'the ancient silver' that occasioned slavery and the modern pursuit of it that triggers dispossession. The emergent middle class aspires to the Olympian heights of Creighton and the old plantation-owners, while Pa, Ma, Miss Forster, the shoemaker and the rest sink ever deeper into the derelict valley. In this ironic rite of passage from the semi-feudal social arrangement to the new order, there is little to prevent massive dispossession from occurring, since those who might have palliated it have so internalised the acquisitive tendencies of their masters that they return 'stamped like an envelope with what they called the culture of the Mother Country' (p27) and ready to grab. These are the lawyers and doctors who come from overseas training unequipped to dispute the attitudes of the overseers and the locally trained civil servants. Pa's dream-vision is the author's device to make the present betrayal parallel the original one, in which love of the ancient silver made the would-be exiles lose their homes because 'all went the way of the white man's money' (p210).

Ian Munro (1971) complains that Lamming ignores the history of resistance in favour of a passive representation of past archetypes in the figures of Ma and Pa. But Lamming realises that a community denigrated to the role of a phamakos may constantly resist but will rarely achieve much. Lamming is aware, of course, of places like Haiti where the pharmokoi changed history; his Pleasures of Exile has a chapter on Caliban reordering history. But here he is interested in examining the lower limits of human achievement, partly in the past but primarily in this transitional time when the Caribbean situation is so complex that 'today we are in a position of a man who must pay to occupy his own skin' (Salkey, 1973; p15). He is not examining the possibility of warriorhood as he does in Of Age and Innocence. Investigation of the economic and cultural proliferation that impedes warriorhood is his concern. The only warriorhood he sees as possible here is not the traditional type but that of Trumper who goes overseas to learn the nuances of trade-unionism and other modern methods of resistance to exploitation and returns confident, having found a race and a cause.

To discover one's own race, as Trumper does, is to reject the pharmakos role. For the first time, someone comes from overseas unstamped with the culture of the Mother Country, which perpetuates the negative image of the exile. The returned elite are for once going to meet their own match in the person of Trumper, who can see through the social myth that brands his people 'the enemy'. He would not have learnt this in Britain because, as The Emigrants shows, those who go there become double exiles and further victims of a cosmopolitan setting that they are unable fully to adjust to. But in the United States, the pharmakos role of the exile has been largely rejected, which helps Trumper speak with confidence about who he is.

Commenting on the plight of Trumper and his young friends prior to this, Arthur Kemoli (1973) observes that the world in which the boys are raised is so incoherent that there is nothing significant to relate to. He argues that the emptiness of their school career is epitomized by the failure of G (who narrates much of the book) to retrieve the pebble which he carefully hid on a visit to the beach; it is mysteriously washed away. Trumper's observation on his return supports this. He unequivocally states, with insight gained from living outside the colonial cocoon, that 'there ain't much in these schools that will help you not to make a blasted mess o' your life when you get out in the world' (p288).

Designed to perpetuate colonial myths, the education system in In the Castle of My Skin cannot meet Paul Freire's requirement, articulated in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972), that the school be an institution to open the learner's mind to oppression and alienation, both of which are dehumanising factors. Dehumanisation, according to Freire, is a mental condition in which the oppressor and the oppressed are trapped, and in his persuasive logic neither the agent nor the recipient of this type of education has a chance to be human. The oppressor, by consciously or unconsciously making oppression his vocation, dehumanizes himself as surely as he does his subject. Ironically, whoever first breaks this vicious circle - between oppressor and oppressed - educates the other in how to be human. In this case, Trumper returns with many lessons already prepared, not for his people alone but for the oppressors as well.

Reactions to G's inability to grasp the truths that Trumper brings back with him include those of readers like Munro (1971; p59), who sees Lamming's novel as ending 'with no vision of the future and without a commitment to change'. But G, though the

central narrative agent, is not entirely representative of the 'conscientization' of villagers, to borrow Freire's term for awakening to the truth of one's oppressed condition. There are others in the community who have seen through the oppression, though not as vividly as Trumper. The shoemaker, for instance, has reached a mature comprehension of the exile's situation through reading the works of the historian, Priestly and the writings of Marcus Gurvey.

Lamming's is a novel that chooses to communicate more by implication than by overt authorial comment. It is partly on account of this dispassionate objectivity that this book has been hailed - eg. by Bruce King (1979) - as the first Caribbean classic. The reader's imagination is called upon to put Trumper and the shoemaker together as pointers to the possibility of reform. The shoemaker has sufficient enlightenment to be a follower of Trumper in questioning why a 'man must pay to occupy his own skin' (Salkey, 1973; p11). What form this questioning will take is a political issue that the author chooses to ignore - trade-unionism perhaps. The narrator does not want to spoonfeed the reader. Nor does he wish to offer easy solutions; the point is made that labour unrest and demand for more participation in the emergent social order will not be enough to stem the tide of emigration. Emigration is the solution chosen by G; it is studied in the next novel, The Emigrants.

Like all children, G is innocent and naive. He and his peers do not know everything that goes on in their society. The use of a naive narrator is a common feature of ironic fiction. It adds spice to details which might otherwise seem run-of-the-mill - the head teacher's cuckolding, for instance. Lamming's skilful use of juvenile naivete as a means of accentuating the offending realities of the adult world is one of the book's great strengths. It is a narrative technique which he uses to great effect not only here but in his third novel, appropriately named Of Age and Innocence, where racial problems are examined through innocent eyes.

It is not always easy to use irony without succumbing to the intrinsic humour of this mode. Consider another Caribbean case for comparison. One of the problems Naipaul has in his early works, even in a well written novel like A House for Mr Biswas, is that he cannot help laughing at ironic situations. Lamming, on the other hand, suppresses humour in favour of deeper investigation. One suspects that he too laughs, particularly at his adolescent naïveté (as embodied in G), but he does not let this laughter get into the book. The first page in the novel offers potential for comedy:

Rain, rain, rain ... my mother put her head through the window to let the neighbour know that I was nine, and they flattered me with the consolation that my birthday had brought showers of blessing.... It was my ninth celebration of the gift of life, my ninth celebration of the consistent lack of an occasion for celebration (p1).

Taken in isolation, these passages invite a satirical reading based on the gap between 'flattery' and the lack of reason for celebration. But Lamming does not yield to the temptation to lampoon either the ceremonial treatment of the birthday or the celebrants who point to 'blessings' where none exist. Instead he proceeds to comment on the vulnerability of the flooded village, and Mr Forster's unwillingness to surrender his house to the flood. The situation becomes potentially tragic and banishes laughter, as the ironic narrator reveals his sympathy with the community condemned to a pharmakos role.

The threatening flood foreshadows the greater loss (of land) that eventually overtakes the village. The implicit moral is that man often generates events that cause more misery to his kind than the primal forces of nature. The flood dispossesses no one, even though it forces Mr Forster to behave irrationally, trying to save his house simply by refusing to leave it. On the other hand, the imminent man-instituted changes will show less mercy than the flood. The problem, as Ngugi points out in *Homecoming*, is that the privileged minority, in their acquisitiveness, avoid the opportunities that could make them human by maintaining a cultivated aloofness, as though fearing contamination (wa Thiong'o, 1972).

But their dignified posture is only a public mask. The children expose their private corruption early in the piece when they discover the infidelity of the head teacher's wife. Slime - another teacher - is tarnished by association, and it comes as no surprise that he eventually embezzles the proceeds of the 'Penny Bank' which he has set up to help the people purchase their land.

The reader is meant to compare the likes of Bambi and Slime. Rather than live promiscuously, Bambi keeps two common law wives. A visiting German anthropologist is scandalized, and insists that he marry one of them. Bambi dies of a

heart-attack soon afterwards. It must be remembered that Lamming is dealing with the lower limits of humanity, where the choice is not between good and evil but between two evils. The harmony Bambi has managed to maintain between himself and his two wives lends a touch of 'tragic' dignity to his exit. The heroes of the high mimetic die on the battlefield as dignified warriors defending their land. In the ironic mode they die of heart attacks, like Bambi, striving to harmonise the conflicting forces in their lives. Slime and his ilk, on the other hand, may look like heroes - at least to innocents like G - but in fact they do not have a grain of dignity about them; they merely know how to wear the public mask so well that it looks dignified.

The novel is not, however, devoid of dignity. Characters such as Ma and Pa are clearly admirable. Ma may be conservative in her ways and attitudes, but she is certainly not one of Lamming's femmes fatales who resist change. She does not impede reform in the way Ma Shepherd does in *Of Age and Innocence*, by maintaining a hold on the generation to which she is both the natural and cultural midwife. There is nothing Pa wants to do that Ma will prevent.

The novel offers another mother figure, however: Mother Country. Mother Country has evolved the romantic social myth of the mother-child relationship between Big England and Little England, in which the mother has been nurturing the child for three centuries (p37) with the hope that some time in the future the offspring too will sit on the throne:

One day, before time changed for eternity, Little England and Big England, God's anointed on Earth, might hand-in-hand rule this earth (p37).

Lamming's irony is poignant. Little England (Barbados), even after three centuries, is still too young to be trusted with much responsibility. Barbados must wait until the Empire inherits the earth. That is when the offspring will be mature enough to reign.

Renaming Barbados 'Little England' reduces the geographical distance between the two countries so effectively that the Mother Country seems to be right there in the Caribbean Sea. Some of the boys believe this much; they also believe in the shared destiny which the social myth propagates through popular lore. And yet the cultural gulf still yawns with telling silence because, as the shoemaker observes, Africa is not

part of the remembered origins. Her role as motherland has been suppressed out of communal memory and denigrated to oblivion. The shoemaker's discovery of Gurvey helps reconnect him with his real roots.

In In the Castle of My Skin the dignity of the old ways is supplanted without being vindicated as it would be in a high mimetic work, even if the denouement were catastrophic. What should have been called Pa village, or some such name, is misnamed Creighton village because the legitimate patriarch's authority has been abrogated. The archetypal hill where the Creighton home is situated symbolically reinforces this annulment of patriarchal authority, since the hill should, ideally, be occupied by elders who would get together to deliberate on major issues up on those exalted grounds that are likely to inspire high thoughts and visionary direction, besides giving participants the best view of 'their' land. But this epiphanic point of the land is occupied by an outsider, and the tragedy of the denouement is that even when the Creightons leave, the elders will not be the heirs to what should rightfully be theirs. The Hill presumably passes to the Slimes.

Pa's heroism disappoints readers like Munro, since it is not the kind that turns the tide of battle. Pa is a dignified figure whose heroism is apparent simply in the mettle which enables him to transcend the traumatic loss of his wife and to face the ordeal of preparing to live in the alms house without losing his sanity. This is the resilience that Lamming admires as the vital force that has ensured the survival of a community doomed to a pharmakos role by conditions of exile.

Paquet (1982) argues that the passing of the old, semi-feudal society is marked by the collapse of the shoemaker's house. But that is only one side of the coin. The felling of trees and exposing of the Creighton home to the gaze of all symbolises the dismantling of the authority that made possible the perpetuation of the view of the village as the pharmakos. The forces that had previously perfected the art of blaming the victim are thus effectively annulled. But there is no cause here for rejoicing, since Slime, who represents the corrupt new entrepreneurial elite simply steps into the vacuum created by Creighton's departure. True, Trumper's return gives some cause for hope, but, on the other hand, G emigrates, extending the pattern of exile. Like so many ironic works, In the Castle of My Skin is open-ended.

Natives of My Person examines the beginnings of colonialism. The Commandant leads a boat-load of emigrants, anxious to escape the tyranny of their native country (Lime Stone) on a venture to found a new and better society in the Caribbean. On the way there they stop to pick up slaves in Africa. But before the voyage begins they are detained for months off the coast of Lime Stone, where they live in fear of their lives because of the law they have broken by undertaking such a voyage. It is 'a capital offence for trading vessels to trespass on these waters' (p9).

The Commandant seems capable of extricating himself, should they be caught, but he shows little regard for anybody else's safety. Gradually it dawns on his passengers that they have exchanged one tyranny for another. This realisation is reinforced by the narrator's early use of the darkness imagery which is characteristic of the ironic mode: 'the afternoon had brought an early darkness down from the trees' (p9). An early indication is thus given of the oppressive darkness to which the voyagers are condemned and of which the enslaved will be partakers.

Although the Commandant's passengers are *pharmakoi*, the novel argues that their innocence is a moot point since they are willing accomplices, undertaking a voyage which they know is illegal. The author uses a genuine innocent - the ship's boy (Sasha) - to put the somewhat compromised innocence of the other voyagers into perspective. In Lamming, children symbolize innocence, and are used to comment on the actions of the adult world. Apparently rescued from civil disorder in northern Lime Stone, Sasha in fact finds that he has been abducted. The boy's bondage is compassionately portrayed; he is a destitute who, 'innocent and deprived of all human rights ... could never think of his rescue as an act of theft' (p11). But the reader perceives the irony in his predicament; to the Commandant there is almost no boundary between right and wrong, a predisposition that has wide implications for the colonial enterprise being undertaken.

Lamming purposely undercuts the favourite western myth of the explorer. His purpose, as defined by Paquet (1982; p101), is to portray and undercut 'a composite of Hawkins, a composite of Drake, any of these oversized figures of the period'. These figures merge in the Commandant. With evidence from both the psychological orientation of the explorer and the effects of his contact on indigenous communities, Lamming exposes many imperial ideals as hollow and dehumanising. The

Commandant's self-deception about the possibility of building a fresh human community is based on his assumption that the wide assortment of voyagers will be as willing to co-operate with his scheme of changing them as they have been in violating the laws of their homeland. But, in fact, the voyagers are not interested in change; they simply want to escape an oppressive regime. And, of course, they are attracted by the hope of striking gold, which the Commandant has held out to them.

Ironic extracts from diaries expose the futility of this hope - and the deviousness of the man who proffers it. The Commandant's diary shows that the expectations of gold that have lured many out to sea will only meet with frustration:

the fabulous mines are now empty and only a source of false report, offering little else but the fruits of nature and the broken skeletons of ancient Tribes who celebrate their slow but certain extinction (p17).

No other form - comedy, romance, or tragedy - makes such disconcerting use of the sterility motif as irony does. Lamming utilises it here to expose the dishonesties and brutalities of the beginnings of colonialism. The diary mentions one form of sterility (the extinction of whole communities) casually, as though it does not deserve even the remorseful contemplation that a wild life conservationist might give to an endangered species. The Commandant lures his countrymen out to sea with the same impassivity. His own people aboard the Reconnaissance believe fervently in the possibility of gold and glory, which he knows does not exist - and he will not tell them the truth even if they ask. Knowledge that the quest for gold is doomed would undermine the Commandant's real purpose, which he keeps a carefully guarded secret.

The delay in setting off turns out to be the Commandant's method of making his power felt and his authority obeyed: 'but much more fearsome was the union of power and silence which the crew had recognised in Pinteados and the Commandant; a similarity of forces that was truly fearsome' (p20). Pinteados, the pilot and technocrat whose skill makes the venture possible, exercises power over the voyagers with a studied reticence that makes him enigmatic. His arrival completes the social microcosm, so that the Reconnaissance becomes a miniature Lime Stone out at sea as the conflicts the men thought they had left behind assail them with new force. They were now,

in a fury of argument over the rival vices of their regions, alternating between the vileness of their women and the terrible divisions that threatened the Kingdom (p26).

The narrative is presented in three parts, the first of which is called 'Breaking Loose'. The implication is that it is possible to break away from the confining circumstances in Lime Stone and find new freedom out at sea and abroad. But the Commandant's attitude to the crew and the voyagers shows that he replicates the oppressive system that they had thought to escape. And as their differences resurface - now that the tension of waiting has lifted - they recognise the fact that the conflicts are not in the Kingdom but in themselves.

Natives of My Person is a novel about the failure to change and the circumstances that militate against the possibility of changing. In vain does the Commandant exhort his people that changing is achievable. He speaks as if it is possible to achieve Utopian existence in the new settlement, and soon begins to expound the Utopian ethic which we know is doomed to failure:

We have broken loose and will continue free from the ancient restrictions of the Kingdom. This is the essence of the matter. Whatever you were before, the question is now what you must become (p58).

It is as though not even the sky can limit what one can become. Blaming the Kingdom for inherent vices, the Commandant, himself an agent of dereliction and sterility, believes that he has become the apostle of regeneration and restoration. But his exhortation can only be read ironically because the author has already pointed out that those who leave the Kingdom have a common heritage which they cannot escape unless they understand their situation in a different way. Some like Baptise begin to suspect that nothing much has changed when they see the Commandant as despising 'common folk' and doing 'so with a fine courage' (p53). But this penetration of reality does not blossom into full comprehension until towards the end when a mutiny becomes inevitable. What Baptise's observation shows is that the Commandant is not the apostle of social regeneration that he sees himself as being.

Paquet (1982; p101) observes that 'Lamming makes few concessions to the conventional presentation of narrative' in Natives of My Person. The section on breaking loose, for example, gives the impression that we are going to be treated to a

voyage full of incident and episodes. Instead, the journey archetype on which the whole novel is built is deferred so that all sense of movement disappears as dialogue and diary notes take over. The result is that there is really no 'story' to tell - or rather the story is suspended to allow for analysis of motive. Central to Lamming's interest is the psychology of colonial power and its consequences. The economic implications of the end of the gold rush, especially the way man is commercialised to supply labour for the new economic order that replaces the empty mines, also form part of Lamming's analysis.

He is particularly interested in the way the slave-trade is sanctioned by religious authority. On the Reconnaissance there is a character called simply Priest, who argues lamely that 'the traffic must be conducted according to some principle' (p114). The author is concerned to expose this religious Machiavellianism which uses 'principle' to sanctify crime. Earlier the diary of Pierre the carpenter opens up the subject, observing that 'this blackness of hide which resembles skin ... must be nature's way of warning against the absence of any soul within' (p111). Priest does not dehumanise the captured to this extent, but reasons that slavery is justified by the possibility of religious conversion; you capture and own slaves in order to convert them. Priest is the conscience of the journey, and unlike the Commandant, who is no longer sensitive to either innocence or guilt (p76), he lives in a tormented world in which cosmic disturbances reflect the turmoil within. His arguments in support of the trade fail to satisfy his conscience and when it rains, he frets from 'the punishing blasts of the rain outside' (pp117-118). He has adopted the Machiavellian position that the end justifies the means without a way of guaranteeing that the end will be redemptive. His personality disintegrates under the pressure of this contradiction. The effects of the slave-trade are more palpably experienced by others.

The ironic mode does not idealise life, and the mental institution is one of its favourite settings. In Natives of My Person, several of the characters have been inmates of the asylum in the Kingdom. Pinteados claims that this 'plague of madness was deepest in those mariners who had ventured on the coast for black flesh' (p167). Similarly Pierre's diary says that the largest portion of inmates are 'those who did give their talents to the ocean in seeking fresh glory for the Kingdom before this said affliction did overtake their senses' (p108).

The second part of the novel is called 'Middle Passage'. This phrase traditionally applies to the gruelling journey of captured slaves. The novel does pay some attention to the slaves, who ultimately prefer the dignity of tragic death to the indignity of captivity. They have a poetic innocence equal to that of Sasha, the Commandant's errand boy. Like Sasha, they are not accomplices in their capture or abduction. But Lamming does not spend a lot of time examining the obvious side of the story - the side of the captured which has, perhaps, tired the mouths that tell it. The crew, composed of characters like Priest, Surgeon, Powder Maker, and the ordinary voyagers such as Pierre the carpenter, all harbour ideals that Lamming undercuts - in the second part - as he seeks to link the public drama of colonisation with the private lives of the colonisers. Each character attempts to escape the past. This is a book about people fleeing from themselves and seeking to ennoble their flight with civilizing ideals.

Consider an extreme case - that of Surgeon. He has committed his wife to Severn Asylum on account of her infidelity. He has also stolen drugs. His escape from Lime Stone allows him to avoid punishment for the latter crime, but his hope of atoning for the former by pioneering the healing arts in San Cristobal is futile. It is absurd to imagine that one can turn so easily from a tormentor at home to a healer abroad. Surgeon's conscience continues to trouble him, and, of course, when he finally reaches his destination he finds the wife he had tried to forget waiting for him, newly arrived on the ship aptly called the Penalty. 'A harvest of tortures more fearsome than any the disfigured wrecks of Severn had known' begins to torment him (p299) as he contemplates a re-union with his wife.

The plague of madness which the novel has foregrounded likewise overtakes Boatswain. His conscience impels him to reveal his past sexual relationship with the Commandant's mistress: 'the past had taken over his judgement, forcing him into revelations which had brought his downfall' (p294). This revelation in turn causes the Commandant's past to overtake him. He anchors the ship, restoring the stasis which obtained at the beginning, and retires to his cabin, where he indulges in what Avis McDonald (1987; p78) calls 'a long reverie centred on his former mistress' accusations that his expeditions ... had amounted to the murder of thousands of innocent victims'.<sup>4</sup>

The voyagers who are unable to bear their pharmakos role any longer, mutiny and take over the stalled enterprise. This revolt means different things to different characters. For Baptise, it marks the fall of the unjust system that whored his mother and turned

his father into a model revolutionary hero. Revenge is clearly an important element here. A purer motive is embodied by Ivan, the visionary artist, who fights for no other reason than the need to right the wrongs in his society which he has been painting about. Lamming carefully balances Ivan's idealism with Baptise's pragmatism:

Baptise himself could not surpass this fervour for success that had converted Ivan, the visionary, into a man of fruitful action. The painter saw himself in a sacred partnership with Baptise (p310).

This partnership is a long way from the idealistic motives which characterize the heroes of the higher literary modes. Moreover, if Baptise is already beginning to feel surpassed, one wonders whether the union will last.

The main difference between the pharmakoi of In the Castle of My Skin and these in Natives of My Person, is that the former are victims of outside forces, whereas the latter are plagued by their own weaknesses. The ship which had promised freedom out at sea becomes symbolic of bondage, so that the men appear imprisoned within the vessel that held the promise of liberty. The means to real freedom is courage to face the sordid past and accept re-union with the women who hold the possibility of new beginnings, since they have taken the initiative to follow their husbands.

The only man who has remained impartial enough to arrange the disposal of the ship is Pinteados. Having kept completely within his professional commitment, he has no cause to fear the revolution. But since, as a technocrat, he has no allegiance but to his skill, he cannot offer social redemption. The hope for the future must come from the union of the men who have revolted and the waiting women. It is in this respect especially, that the novel addresses itself to modern problems. Natives of My Person speaks not only about the colonial past but also about post-colonial situations - albeit allegorically. Lamming claims that the novel is meant to say something about Caliban's ship of state in Africa and the Caribbean. Colonialism becomes, in this reading, authoritarian neo-colonialism, so that what we see of the relationship between the Commandant and his officers and crew reflects the dominance of the post-colonial elite. Lamming's emphasis on the importance of the waiting women becomes particularly significant in this context. He does not see a meaningful future from which women are excluded.

## NOTES

- 1 An antithetical process depersonalises Biten. His real (Brahmin) name is Bikash Mukherji, but prison involves the reduction of his name to a statistic (B 10, alias Biten). 'I am of the convict caste', he says (p160).
- 2 Ngugi's concern for symmetry is illustrated by the way in which Thompson is crowned a martyr in circumstances almost parallel to Mugo's. Thompson perpetrates a massacre in the detention camp which he supervises. The ensuing scandal causes him to be transferred to a new station, where he is received as a hero. Ngugi, an accomplished ironist in the manner of the later Conrad, shows history pushing false heroes and martyrs on to societies only too ready for them. Mugo's circumstances and portrayal in particular resemble those of Razumov in Conrad's Under Western Eyes.
- 3 There is a cannibal giant in at least one Kikuyu story (Courlander, 1975; pp383-4), although this is not necessarily a specific source for the novel.
- 4 The emphasis here is mine, to draw attention again to the various gradations of innocence the novel postulates. Those the Commandant lures out to sea are victims, the pharmakoi of his machinations, but they are not truly 'innocent'; those who can be so called without reservation are the slaves to whom McDonald refers.

## CHAPTER NINE: *IRONY'S ENCYCLOPAEDIC FORM*

Like Ngugi, Naipaul writes both irony and its more militant form, satire. As he observes in an interview with Israel Shenker (Shenker, 1977, p51), the early works do not display a sense of social responsibility. They are more obviously satirical. But A House for Mr Biswas marks a change to a more serious style which can properly be called ironic, even though satire keeps manifesting itself.

Naipaul the satirist is often evident when the book concerns itself with funeral ritual. In A House for Mr Biswas, death is not a shocking occurrence that sends ripples of sorrow through the community. Consider, for example, the preparation for the funeral of Raghu, Biswas's father:

‘Wait!’ Tara cried, running out from the hut with a fresh garland of marigolds. He hung it around Raghu's neck and said to the photographer in English, ‘All right. Draw your photo now (p34).

The scene itself is grotesque, and Tara's problems in communicating well in English compound the problem. Later a dead American explorer becomes the object of these jokes as his widow prepares the children to start a life of orphanhood.

Well, I have news for you, kiddies.  
Daddy is on his way home.  
Yesterday he passed through Trinidad. In a coffin. (p327)

Much more significant, as we shall see, is the occasional virulence of Naipaul's attacks on Hindu traditions. Intrusions of satire occasionally work against the compassion that Naipaul otherwise has for his characters, and the care with which he analyses them. It is not characteristic of the satirist to balance his ridicule with a deep study of character and incident. The penetrating insight with which the Hanuman community is portrayed, for example, far surpasses the techniques of the satirist. Here is an ironist not content just to scratch the surface but willing to delve deep into the touching human relations that lie beneath the apparently chaotic disorder of the community at Hanuman. What Mr Biswas discovers is something much more subtle than he anticipated:

His fears that Savi would be badly treated were absurd, as was his surprise that Mrs Tulsi should go to such trouble to get Savi to overcome her dislike for fish (p188).

The dichotomised portrayal of character as either good or evil, so prevalent in parabolic literature and in satire, is consistently avoided in A House for Mr Biswas, which throughout maintains the objective stance of the ironist with only a few lapses into satire. Each time it seems to want to move towards polarised characterisation, there is some unexpected qualification to neutralise the black and white effect.

Satire is, almost by definition, incapable of producing an encyclopaedic form, and A House for Mr Biswas is certainly encyclopaedic - so much so that Ngugi can speak of 'African Biswases' (wa Thiong'o, 1972; p94). All this provides further circumstantial evidence for labelling this an ironic, rather a satiric, work.

### A House for Mr Biswas

The Hindu community in which Mr Biswas is placed is depicted as lacking the individualism that revitalises society and enables it to adapt to change. Naipaul's presentation of India in India: A Wounded Civilization is similarly negative. He argues that successive invasions have sapped the country's spirit and prevented it from making any mark on the world. But such a verdict ignores the achievements of Hindu philosophy and of the Gandhian philosophy of liberation. Had India been as conservative as the Caribbean Hindu community in this novel, swaraj (the independence movement) would have achieved nothing. India may be slow in assimilating change. But it is not so threatened by reform as to resist it with the kind of determination that sees Rai, the Hindu reformist, repatriated and Mr Biswas's quest rendered sterile.

What Biswas has in common with Rai is the kind of independence that catches a vision. But in Biswas's case, the vision fails to blossom into a social mission because of the stiff conditions of his exile. Instead it degenerates into a mere quest for a house, which obstacles keep rendering sterile. What sets the novel in motion is the simple fact that a man catches the 'vision' of owning his own house, which to many is too

minute a thing to be called a vision. Some critics have complained that Naipaul's book fails to justify its insistence that the petty Biswas is important. He is so because for the most part he refuses to be the willing victim, the pharmakos, the scapegoat, the archetypal character of ironic fiction on which society loads its guilt.<sup>1</sup> His vision may be limited, but at least he has a vision - unlike Ravidat, for example, who seems destined to live in a hole in the ground (p247).

The indentured condition of the Hindus in the West Indies makes them an obvious scapegoat. They blame fate for their predicament, as Raghu does at the beginning of the novel: 'Fate. There is nothing we can do about it' (p15). The author is keen to point out, however, that not everyone is so acquiescent:

No one paid him attention. Fate had brought him from India to the sugar-estate, aged him quickly and left him to die in a crumbling mud hut in the swamplands; yet he spoke of Fate often and affectionately, as though, merely by surviving, he had been particularly favoured (p15).

In a chapter significantly titled 'Pastoral', this acquiescent rationalisation of Fate is parodied. Hanuman House, where Mr Biswas comes to live after his marriage to Shama, one of Mrs Tulsi's fourteen daughters, requires a standard form of behaviour which condemns everything else as deviant, even when no threat to social harmony is involved. Mr Biswas's gift of a doll's house for his child has to be destroyed because it raises him from the level of the buffoon he is thought to be to a respectable father who thinks about his children more than others in this big house. This is not an image the Hanuman community can endure. This peasant protagonist should not be outstanding in any way. He should be condemned to obscurity as a nonentity. Hanuman behaviour, then, involves stereotyped roles from which no one should deviate. Conformity implies nobility of purpose.

Because Hanuman House offers so little personal freedom or room for flexibility, it is reminiscent of the suffocating prison environment which features frequently in ironic literature. Though ironically portrayed, the Hanuman residents are not held entirely responsible for these dehumanising conditions. They are caught in a maze of colonial history which they have to come to terms with if they are to reclaim their lost identity and humanity. Naipaul insists that this identity will have to be a new one, not the

traditional communal existence. The example of Mr Biswas's mother, who receives support from her extended family after her husband's death without actually moving in with them, proves that co-habitation is not necessary.

In Mrs Tulsi, the matriarch of Hanuman House, the author presents an ironic study of the Hindu Mother archetype. The parallels between Biswas's mother and Mrs Tulsi are telling. Both become widowed and have to get the helping hand of a man. While the former is fortunate to have an unassuming relation in the person of Tara, Biswas's uncle, whose assistance she finds indispensable, the latter falls under the control of the domineering Seth, who epitomizes Hindu conservatism. He becomes what Maureen Warner Lewis calls the chief prosecutor at family tribunals (Hamner, 1979; p95), and in particular he sees himself as both judge and lyncher of Biswas the scapegoat:

This was a nice united family before you came. You better go away before you do any more mischief and *I* have to lay my hand on you (p141).

Seth's sense of power is contagious, with dire consequences for Mrs Tulsi, who, though epitomising Indian motherhood, distorts Hindu tradition by bullying prospective husbands into marriage with her daughters and then bringing them into her house instead of helping her daughters into their husbands'; she founds a Tulsidom of which she becomes the formidable matriarch.

One result of this is that the marriage institution ceases to be a union of minds, and becomes, instead, an area of conflict where a good deal of the dramatic tension in the text is based. Mrs Tulsi impresses upon Shama not the responsibilities of a wife but the need to oppose her husband's idiosyncrasies. Only occasionally does Mr Biswas feel that she is really his wife:

At these times Shama was not the Shama he saw downstairs, the thorough Tulsi, the antagonist the family had assigned him. In many ways, but mainly by her silence, she showed that Mr Biswas, however grotesque, was hers and that she had to make do with what Fate had granted her (pp103-104).

Mr Biswas has the peculiar task of liberating his wife from her belief in the inexorability of circumstances by providing a house in which their conflict can be eliminated or minimised.

In the Hanuman House episodes, A House for Mr Biswas does not portray an overpowering but respectable matriarch of the kind one expects to find in non-ironic modes. Mrs Tulsi (and Seth) may invoke Hindu traditions, but she also offends against them in practice, bringing her daughters' husbands into her house and cutting them off from their own families, to whom they might be expected to appeal for help. Mrs Tulsi herself is not exactly an absurd character, like Makak, say, in Derek Walcott's Dream on Monkey Mountain, but she extends her authority absurdly - far beyond what management of the Tulsi estate requires.

The acquisition and use of power are important themes in the work. One is not quite sure, for example, whether Mrs Tulsi's occasional fainting is genuine, or a psychological mechanism to control her subjects, who have to answer for triggering it and also play the role of nurses attending to a sick dignitary. It all seems to be the case of a community whose psyche has been damaged by the West Indian colonial experience to such an extent that the situation can be redressed only by answering the master's power with an equal and opposite force. Peggy Nightingale (1987; pp52-3) has observed that Mrs Tulsi becomes a replica of the Mother Country in her control of Hanuman House.

Nothing could be more ironical. The Mother Country meant here is, of course, not India but Britain. Few people in the world have transferred the positive qualities of the mother archetype to their motherland as relentlessly as the Indians have done. This observation serves to underline the distorted nature of Mrs Tulsi's behaviour. Her character is ironically conceived and executed.

Maureen Warner Lewis (Hamner, 1979; p95) looks at Hanuman House as a symbol of traditionalism, rigidity, cultural 'infallibility', ritual duty and respect to hierarchy in a communal existence. In effect she makes of it a high mimetic archetype. In Naipaul's work, however, houses are comfortable dwelling-places where human beings seek refuge from the bewilderment of the external world. A more ironical reading than Lewis's would question the traditionalism of Hanuman House. For one thing, Indian traditionalism is patriarchal in matters of authority. Mrs Tulsi's control of her sons-in-law amounts to emasculation. Few decisions are carried out at Hanuman House with any serious consultation even when they involve matters which traditionally would be

considered weighty. An example is the naming of Mr Biswas's child, Savi. He cycles back to Hanuman House in a mood of high anticipation at participating in her naming, only to find that she has already been named unceremoniously, before he even sees her. This episode indicates the emasculating conditions of Hanuman House that belie its apparent traditionalism.<sup>2</sup>

This, then, is how Mr Biswas's quest establishes itself. At the impressionable period when a man catches a vision for the benefit of his society, his outer world narrows into a minute microcosm of human relations as he is enveloped by the Tulsi family. So his vision becomes the tiny one of owning a house to be independent from Tulsidom. Mr Biswas is a rebel with only a small cause - not a national but a personal one. The ironic mode often deals with subjects that might be considered too small to warrant the attention of the writer. As a poor peasant with very circumscribed vision, Biswas does not seem a likely protagonist. But the story gains power from Naipaul's encyclopaedic presentation of the archetypes that show why this society is the way it is. Thus although the story's central nerve is a man of little consequence, the archetypes that are brought into play reveal much more than Biswas's personal condition. The encyclopaedic structure built on these archetypes depicts not just the history of one man, as is commonly supposed, but the entire movement of Trinidadian society.

The house quest must be pursued with relentless determination against the odds in society as well as in nature. Little as it seems, the quest for a house is almost an impossible one since the ironic mode specialises in depicting obstacles that make life painfully difficult. Insurmountable barriers emerge just as the end is almost in view, and there has to be a fresh start all over again. The ironic quest is one that is often never achieved, or turns out to be rather a mole's mound rather than a mountain.

Leaving his wife and child at Hanuman House, Mr Biswas moves to a shopping centre called The Chase, where he takes over an abandoned shop belonging to the Tulsi family. The despair of the shop's previous owner, symbolised by the abandoned, labelless tins, does not hinder the hero's initial success. Profit pours into the counter safe, and he is welcomed and assisted by his new community. But the mood soon changes. Sympathy is quickly replaced by hostility. Profits vanish and litigation begins. The dwelling-place quest falls through and the 'voyager' has to paddle a new canoe in another direction. His only gains are age and the legal fees incurred in litigation.

Mr Biswas still harbours a romantic association with rural Trinidad despite the way it has been tarnished by the slave-master relationship of the sugar plantation economy. Instead of running to the city where the ostracised (Ramchand for example) find profitable refuge, Biswas retreats to another family property in the hinterland, only to find himself subject to Seth's control once again. He is uncomfortable in the role of supervisor and develops a persecution complex which eventually results in a nervous breakdown. The episode rejects the idea that modern Trinidad can be saved by a return to pastoral values. The special rapport with nature that the romance cultivates for its hero ends up shattered by a storm both mental and cosmic. In this chapter, appropriately titled 'Green Vale', the green-wood archetype, a favourite one in the romance mode, is viewed - as it was at the beginning of the book - ironically. The pastoral world is portrayed largely as irrelevant to the challenges of modern living. Nothing is stated explicitly since 'the ironist fables without moralising' (Frye, 1957; p41). It is all done indirectly through evocative language.

Consider for example how the green-wood archetype is caricatured in the description of landscape at the beginning of the 'Green Vale' episode:

[The trees] were tall and straight, and so hung with long, drooping leaves that their trunks were hidden and appeared to be branchless. Half the leaves were dead; the others, at the top, were a dead green. It was as if all the trees had, at the same moment, been blighted in luxuriance, and death was spreading at the same pace from all roots. But death was forever held in check (pp205-206).

Darkness becomes a central organising metaphor for this episode, indeed for the entire text, and it probably receives more attention in this book than anywhere else in Naipaul's corpus.<sup>3</sup> Mr Biswas cannot view the blighted greenery of Green Vale, because a bicycle with the only light he has is confiscated by a policeman, forcing him and his daughter to feel rather than see their way home: 'So they walked the rest of the way to Green Vale through the darkness, and then below the dead leaves to the barracks' (p222).

Mr Biswas succeeds in building a house at Green Vale, but a storm shakes its foundations, and unsettles his mind as well. Ironic writing stretches the nerves of its characters to breaking point, and in a great number of such works there is a major episode depicting the collapse of mental faculties. Even in Lamming's Season of Adventure, which rejects extreme sparagmos, the nature of the quest causes a mental breakdown in one of the major characters. In a passage reminiscent of The Book of Job, with which ironic writing has a special affinity, a messenger returns to Hanuman House with news of the disaster that has overtaken the house at Green Vale and its occupant:

Through the rain and wind and thunder a messenger went that evening to Arwacas and dramatically unfolded his tale of calamity (p293).

Govind, another of Mrs Tulsi's sons-in-law, carries Mr Biswas to safety. This is not simply a sentimental depiction of the care the sick should receive. Govind and Mr Biswas have not talked to each other since they fought at Hanuman House. Reconciliation emerges here as one of the themes of the book. The issues involved in the Govind-Biswas conflict are those of loyalty to the Tulsi system (exemplified in the former) and rebellion against it (in the latter). As the ideal son-in-law in the Tulsi clan, Govind takes his loyalty too seriously to get along with the little high-strung rebel. But Biswas's humorous rebellion is contagious, and from this point on it is responsible for the slow but steady growth of Govind's critical faculty, until, at length, 'from Hanuman House came more reports of disturbance. Govind, the eager, the loyal, was discontented; Shama reported his seditious sayings' (p364).

Mr Biswas now ventures into the city and takes a job as a journalist. He enjoys good relations with Mr Burnett, his employer, but what he learns from him is not how to be constructive and original but how to copy inadequate models unsuitable for a country seeking direction:

He gave Mr Biswas copies of London papers, and Mr Biswas studied their style until he could turn out presentable imitations. It was not long before he developed a feeling for the shape and scandalising quality of every story (p323).

Thus, like Mrs Tulsi, Mr Biswas falls into unconscious imitation of the master's power. Cultural relevance is not even considered; shock and scandal become the only parameters of quality writing. It needs to be noted that achieving perfection in imitation implies a kind of sterility, which, as we have seen, is a common motif in ironic writing.<sup>4</sup> To Mr Biswas's sterile quest for a house is added the sterility of his imagination. Creative facetiousness and fancy dry up as Biswas prepares to shock an audience whom he could have treated to more worthwhile productions. To be on the Sentinel is like living with the Tulsis. A broader vision for the direction of the community is supplanted by the narrow one of shocking entertainment. Eventually the Sentinel does change its policy, but it is too late for Mr Biswas. He finds that he cannot change his style. His later attempts to write poetry are also doomed.

It is worth pointing out that if Mr Biswas had found a job on the Guardian or the Gazette rather than The Sentinel, his imagination would not have gone sterile. In other words, Biswas is not entirely representative of the West Indian artist. Even on the Sentinel itself, when artists do not fall under the direct influence of a mentor, as in the case of Misir for instance, their imagination remains relatively unfettered and fertile. By definition, encyclopaedic forms are not usually the story of a single person. They aim at the evocation of a people's history through a given period. David Ormerod's perceptive reading of Naipaul's work is misguided in its suggestion that the book be read as the story of a single person (Hamner, 1977; p162). Misir's stories are one means by which the scope of the book is broadened - though, on reflection, it is possible to read them as parallels to Mr Biswas's experiences. The one about the man without work for months till Christmas Eve is reminiscent of Biswas's aimless wanderings till he gets reasonable employment. The man's dying the day he gets the job parallels Biswas's death soon after acquiring a house.

Shorthills, the pastoral retreat on the fringe of the city where Mr Biswas rejoins the Tulsi clan, is aptly named. Mountains and hills in Third World literature tend to be elevated places conducive to visionary experience. But here the hills are 'short', stunted, though the characters believe that they constitute an epiphanic vantage-point. The discrepancy between what the characters believe and the author's view gives rise to irony. This irony can be glimpsed in the telling aside, 'it was made to appear', and in other details of the following passage:

The sisters spoke of the hills, the sweet springs and hidden waterfalls with the excitement of people who had known only the hot, open plain, the flat acres of sugarcane.... More particularly, there was talk of rearing sheep, and of an idyllic project of giving one sheep to every child as his very own, the foundation, it was made to appear, of fabulous wealth (p392).

Through contact with nearby Port of Spain, the Hindu community has changed more than it realises, and the vision of an idyllic rural existence embodied in this romantic epiphany is presented ironically. The Shorthills venture, conceived in terms of Hindu pastoral innocence, is in fact the irresponsible adventure of a changed people. Images of disintegration, destruction, dereliction are evoked to explain the unworkability of the Shorthills venture. Human relations begin to reorder themselves in the new environment, not always in the most amiable manner. Tensions build up in the community as its members exploit the landscape in search of quick profit. Some, like Mr Biswas, have an interest in checking dereliction, but they are powerless to prevent it. This helplessness soon gives way to the anarchic joy of participating in the highly competitive exploitation of the landscape in the newly discovered individual manner. Mr Biswas's case exemplifies the new individualism:

... and, recognising with a thrill that it was now every man for himself - the phrase gave him much pleasure - he continued to plunder, enjoying the feeling that in the midst of chaos he was calmly going about his own devilish plans (p407).

Since not everyone possesses the insight of Mr Biswas, the venture continues to be seen romantically by the community at large, but this view is constantly qualified by the author's ironic observations. Each of the projects initiated at Shorthills at first holds the promise of a sweet dream but in the end turns into a nightmare. A proposed furniture factory, for example, comes to nothing when the blacksmith-turned-carpenter cannot make one joint fit the next and the chairs fall apart and are used as firewood.

Any previous progress towards reconciliation is arrested by the strained relationships emerging from the anarchy at Shorthills. Commercialisation deepens mistrust, and suspicions, even of theft, arise and scandalise. Mr Biswas has been reconciled with Mrs Tulsi on his own terms (p332), but a challenge to this reconciliation arises when Govind's wife accuses his family of stealing eighty dollars. The movement at this

point is not towards better understanding but deeper misunderstandings. Matriarchal authority, now lacking the help of Seth, disintegrates, leaving power gaps that facilitate the rise of anarchy. Individuals move between Shorthills and the city, not wanting to identify fully with either. No one wants to leave the fragile communal existence at Shorthills. At the same time, recognition has dawned on all that the city is indispensable as an employer, a market, and a place for entertainment, investment and contact with the outside world.

Living two lifestyles involves contradictions resulting from the clash of values inherent in each, and in particular there is a discrepancy between the claims to innocence and rural simplicity, on the one hand, and a philistine mercantilism which prompts the group to exploit the commercial opportunities that seem to be so easily available. These efforts, however, result in one misjudgement after another. Only one member of the community, W C Tuttle, made wise by longer contact with the outside world, is able to make use of opportunity, but his unscrupulous activities betray his claims to Brahminical integrity, so we cannot admire him entirely.

As a result of the tribulations at Shorthills, Mrs Tulsi goes momentarily insane. The mother in *Third World Writing* is still generally a revered subject, and Naipaul's rough handling of Mrs Tulsi is therefore remarkable. Yet beneath the apparent lack of compassion for motherhood, Naipaul has something important to say. An idyllic landscape is not always conducive to mental health. Much depends on what goes on in the landscape. In the *Green Vale* episode, Mr Biswas overwhelmed himself with supervisory responsibilities that did not suit his sensitive temperament, with disastrous consequences for his mental health and his quest for a dwelling-place. At Shorthills Mrs Tulsi's insanity recapitulates this theme. Both episodes highlight the futility of trying to control anarchic individuals with communal Hindu values. Landscape alone, then, cannot produce mental health.

The Shorthills episode definitively rejects the validity of pure Hindu pastoral. A rapidly changing world has rendered it obsolete. The American presence in Shorthills and in *Port of Spain* accelerates these changes. On the one hand, it offers employment and provides opportunities for modern living. But the Americans do not always respond to the local people with compassionate understanding. For example, they refuse to patronise the make-shift kiosk run by the widows of the Tulsi household, and

thus accentuate the misunderstanding between East and West. Worse, the kiosk is finally flattened by a lorry, and the widows' romantic dream turns into an ironic nightmare. The characters need to be seen as victims of change in this situation, and, indeed, in many others in the novel.

Shorthills is an episode about inflated romantic expectations deflated by actual experience; the dream that the venture promises initially turns out to be a nightmare. As usual the author avoids overdramatising the misadventure. Only one person at Shorthills itself dies, killed ironically by a most trivial and inconsequential cause - 'a mossy orange branch that one rainy morning broke his neck. Sharma died almost at once' (p413). In quick succession, more deaths in the nearby countryside sour the pastoral idyll of Shorthills. Whereas the first death merely upset routine and could be rationalised to allow a quick return to normalcy, death now haunts with the terror of something out to decimate the fragile clan. Death and disease triumph over the desired curative effects of nature.

In this episode, as in much of the rest of the work, darkness prevails. Even the younger generation, whom one might have expected to be associated with dawn, tend to move in darkness. To a large extent this is due to the distance between their school and their homes. The author presents a world in which many activities associated with child-rearing become nocturnal, and thus out of joint with the dawn of a new era that the venture promised. Consider for instance how the children's day begins:

They were put down outside their schools before newsboys delivered papers, before servants were up, before the school gates opened .... While the caretaker breakfasted, in silence, the children became hungry again and ate the lunches which had been prepared for them three hours before ... for by midday the curry was beginning to go red and smell (p409).

Their childhood is no Hindu idyll. For sensitive ones like Anand, early acquaintance with the loneliness of Shorthills cannot be relieved by the Hindu songs that are sung to vindicate this communal experiment. Boredom and curiosity strive for mastery over these young souls and begin to shape their personalities in diverse ways, sometimes positive but more often negative. The hills become a dark ridge of confusion and not

an inspiring epiphanic vantage-point. They give rise neither to vision nor to ambition. There is real danger that the children may become juvenile cynics as a result of this experience.

The succession of generations is all-important in this work, and the author is questioning what the parents are bequeathing to the young. Naipaul is not interested in the passing of Hindu traditions from one generation to the next, but in the degree to which successive generations adapt to the outside world. Focusing separately on the activities of each generation in the Shorthills episode helps the writer explore the lot of the young more deeply than he has been able to before. Much good is intended for them but little is really forthcoming. Intention and reality refuse to merge to produce the envisaged benefits of a rural idyllic existence.

As an image of pastoral innocence, the sheep become central to the episode. Naipaul's ironic approach leads him to highlight the incongruities between the landscape and this symbol of innocence. Part of this discrepancy arises from the delay in the appearance of the sheep. On the one hand, this produces eager anticipation of healthy creatures roaming the hillsides in a decorative fashion, adding beauty to the lush landscape. But in fact the landscape has been despoiled by the time the sheep appear, and the sheep themselves are not specially impressive in number or in quality:

Then suddenly, some sheep appeared. Half a dozen scraggy, bare, bewildered sheep. The children had been promised some sheep, but they had expected fleecy things, and there was no rush to claim these (p404).

Clearly the sheep do nothing to redeem the venture. The children's reluctance to claim ownership reflects their unspoken but painful recognition of the Shorthills misadventure. Deprived of the language with which to express disillusionment, the children use the weapon of silence to register their displeasure. This silence speaks more to the reader than to the adults, whose pre-occupation with the Shorthills scheme renders them impervious to its myriad failures.

The blending of the ruined landscape and the scraggy sheep constitutes a blunt negation of the fertility archetype. Bare ground is unlikely to provide the sustenance required to nurture the emaciated creatures back to productive health; decrease rather than increase is suggested by the prevailing circumstances. This picture of futility is completed by the destruction of the family's house.

The ordeal of fire that Mr Biswas's family goes through, and the loss of their house, sums up the abortive nature of the entire Shorthills undertaking. The fire does more than simply desolate the compound. Mr Biswas's aspirations die at the same time as the house itself. The archetypal trial by fire finds him - momentarily, at least - wanting in heroism. Once more, circumstances triumph over Mr Biswas, and this time he is worse off than ever before. Though not deranged now, his sanity offers no comforting insulation, especially when a change of job requires him to work among destitutes and return late at night 'to Port of Spain, to the tenement which was far worse than any of the houses he had visited during the day' (p529).

A House for Mr Biswas argues that social culture is insufficient to give one roots in one's community. A house of one's own is a necessary prerequisite. The emphasis of Naipaul's book is not on social culture; cultural wholeness is built in the privacy of a personal shelter. The reason others are not as perturbed as Mr Biswas by lack of privacy is that their conformity to a rigid life-style forces adherence to many ideals that Mr Biswas as an insightful artist finds no longer tenable in a changing world.

What seems to rekindle Mr Biswas's search for roots and meaning is the return of Owad (Mrs Tulsi's son) and his talk of the Russian revolution. Owad himself is not an active revolutionary; he is committed to the communist manifesto more in word than in deed. Amidst the talk of the great day of plenty just ahead, his uncontrollable temper flares - with Anand as one of its victims. This shows him to be a man capable neither of leading the great revolution nor of putting the disintegrating Tulsi dynasty back together, as he is expected to do. But his rhetoric rouses Mr Biswas, and he reverts to the visionary dreaming of earlier days, when he refused to accept homelessness. Though he is mistaken when he thinks that all he has to do is wait for the revolution to end his homelessness (p551), he is no longer the willing victim of despair he has been since Shorthills.

In Naipaul's ironic world political manifestos are no more effective than pastoral idylls.<sup>5</sup> Fires destroy the latter, and revolutions come stillborn, failing in this case to deliver the house which Mr Biswas had hoped for. He has to rise up and shed the scales of pastoral illusions and say farewell to promise-laden manifestos if he is to be an instrument of his own redemption. The envisaged house must be a miracle of his

own creation, not a habitation handed to him on a silver platter. He has seen the pastoral venture dispossess him and the manifesto deny him the promised possession. He rejects the temptation to consider his career closed and to transfer his ambition to his children, takes responsibility and, in a bold act of personal redemption, acquires a house of his own that makes his family life both private and meaningful. Children continue to be an important part of his family concerns, but he ceases to live vicariously through them.

In the disintegrating world of Tulsidom Gordon Rohler sees a people gaining 'individuality without direction' (Rohler, 1979; p92). This observation is not true of Mr Biswas. The direction espoused by Naipaul is the universalism which causes Anand (Mr Biswas's son) to leave the West Indian scene altogether, a move that in the cultural context of the West Indies is considered a second exile. In The Middle Passage Naipaul speaks of his early days in London when he was several times awakened by what he calls the nightmare of finding himself back in Trinidad (Naipaul, 1974; p41). This phobic reaction to Caribbean rootlessness is what Anand represents - a denial of clan and relations and a total identification with a world far removed from one's cultural heritage. It is true that Anand's sister, Savi, qualifies this position somewhat by travelling only as far as America, and eventually returning. But more emphasis is placed on Anand.

The book's vision of universality involves rejection of nearly everything Hindu in favour of a new cosmopolitan identity. Naipaul's plea for universality is most persuasive when he tackles the question of modern education. The Tulsi house is divided against itself over this question. When Mrs Tulsi thinks about overseas education for Owad, she is threatened with ostracism, a powerful communal weapon for dealing with 'cultural deviants'. Mrs Tulsi is nearly brought to the level of Mr Biswas as a scapegoat for the community's internal problems. But universalism has become an irreversible process. Owad goes abroad for his education, and the community quietly accepts the inevitability of change. This change has only dented communal values, however; the Hindu community survives for much longer than this - with Mrs Tulsi back in her old role as the matriarch.

Naipaul embraces cosmopolitanism in a militant manner. He is scornful of the kind of synthesis which other authors in his circumstances posit as a solution to cultural clash and alienation. A House for Mr Biswas views the past almost as an inherited cultural

vacuum that nothing can fill except the ways of the West. This is an extreme position. Caste is, admittedly, a shortcoming of Hindu culture that Naipaul is right to criticize. That a high caste should be the only requirement for a prospective groom at Hanuman House is clearly reprehensible, and Naipaul presents examples of irresponsibility and domestic violence as proof that other criteria have to come into play. But surely Hindu values are not so contaminated by the caste system that none of them is preservable. Individuality that preserves nothing out of the past seems an extreme position to recommend. It precludes any possibility of synthesis. Anyone trying to synthesize in this novel becomes the target of irony, and sometimes satire - Mr W C Tuttle, for example, who

regarded himself as one of the last defenders of brahmin culture in Trinidad; at the same time he considered he had yielded gracefully to the finer products of Western civilization: its literature, its music, its art. He behaved at all times with a suitable dignity. He exchanged angry words with no one, contenting himself with silent contempt, a quivering of his longhaired nostrils (p459).

To be simply metropolitan is not enough for Naipaul; thorough-going cosmopolitanism is the only answer.

Cosmopolitanism implies creolization. In rural Trinidad, contact between ethnic groups is only possible in formal situations of professional or occupational significance. Mr Biswas gets into contact with the black community only to engage a builder, and even then mutual suspicion is evident. He enters the black community's environs expecting to be laughed at, even though the builder does not even have a good house himself - hence the protestations that he is not going to build a mansion (p239). Creolization is resisted vehemently to start with. When Mrs Tulsi mentions opening up to the outside world, she rouses stronger feelings than mere reservations about modernity's ability to destroy Hindu identity. But the logic of the book argues a strong case for the necessity of a new composite identity, and it is significant that the final house deal is negotiated in a Chinese restaurant.

Mr Biswas finally gets his house. It falls far short of a fairy tale palace, but its acquisition is still a remarkable achievement for a hero who is not in the category of

high mimetic empire builders. A House for Mr Biswas compels the reader to accept that human heroism is not confined to characters of rank and distinction, and that 'vision' does not have to be 'visionary'.

In effect Mr Biswas's search amounts to the kind of archetypal journey which is often found in the higher literary modes. But his interest is not nostos - a triumphant return which will solve the problems of indentured exile. Instead he explores the adversity of homelessness and the resultant wanderings as a way of cautioning against a romantic preoccupation with ideals that hinder identification with the non-Hindu world. Thus Mr Biswas's final acquisition of a house has wider implications than simply being able to house a family. It has to do with getting rid of the romantic for the realistic, the imagined for the actual, presumptuousness for informed awareness.

The romantic view of life, having been so thoroughly parodied, is not in the end entirely dismissed, however. Having put his characters in contexts that force them to accept that life is not often romantic, the author endows the partially doorless, roughly realised house which Mr Biswas finally inhabits with one romantic embellishment. The idyllic landscape in which Mr Biswas has always wanted to settle is purged out of his mind and in its place a single plant is permitted, to give variety without dominating the scene.

In the extra space Mr Biswas planted a laburnum tree. It grew rapidly. It gave the house a romantic aspect, softened the tall graceless lines, and provided some shelter from the afternoon sun. Its flowers were sweet, and in the still hot evenings their smell filled the house.

## NOTES

- 1 Naipaul maintains that eccentricity lures him to such characters, and in reading Naipaul, for instance The Suffrage of Elvira, one is often aware that eccentricity is exploited for sheer entertainment. This seems at odds with Naipaul's stated aim of relating literature to life. But Elvira is the work of a young writer who has not yet understood the question of the artist's responsibility to society. This confession probably absolves him:

I began to write, I am afraid, for no other reason than because I thought it would be nice to be a writer. I had nothing to say.  
(Hamner, 1979; p51)

A House for Mr Biswas, unlike this early writing, compels attention as a mature work with something to tell the world about the West Indian scene.

- 2 Ironically the name Mr Biswas is excluded from deciding on is never even used. Towards the end of the book Anand unearths it on her birth certificate, much like one doing a study in Hindu antiquities. If Hanuman House parallels the colonial situation as has been suggested by several readers - Gordon Rohler (1977), for instance, as well as Peggy Nightingale - this naming may suggest the way in which the 'discovered' did not participate in the renaming of their own landscape by the original European discoverers. While Mr Biswas may be seen as an everyman, he is, first of all, a colonial.
- 3 Naipaul uses this archetype not only in his fiction but also in his other writings. Peggy Nightingale's study of Naipaul (1987) discusses the central role darkness plays in his perception of the world.
- 4 Ngugi speaks of Mr Biswas and the family as being 'driven into a Trinidadian wilderness - living with a penniless mother in one room of a mud hut' (wa Thiong'o, 1972; p93). The distinguishing feature of the wilderness is sterility, and this archetypal motif pervades the description of the emotional, mental and also physical aspects of life in A House for Mr Biswas.

- 5 It is interesting that the author depicts the ideals of the revolution in terms which recall the failed romantic venture that the characters have just been through.

## CHAPTER TEN: *CONCLUSION*

This conclusion presents findings in two major parts. First, it deals with discoveries concerning Third World writing, and then it discusses their implications for general literary theory and practice. Remarks on general theory are not in all cases confined to Third World contexts; all findings that could not be reported earlier without causing digressions are tidied up in a more general context.

The obvious observation to begin with is that in Third World literature there are eight major forms of fiction - four episodic, four encyclopaedic - and not just the two often recognised.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, evidence shows that they are all synchronously present in Third World literature, though the feat of realising all eight seems beyond the ability of any single writer. This latter point is, of course, also true of the European cycle,<sup>2</sup> but even in the Third World where it is theoretically possible for one author to produce episodic and encyclopaedic forms in all four modes - parabolic, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic - the tendency is to return to the episodic forms, the main reason being that the encyclopaedic form taxes the artist's talent and patience so intensively that only one or two such structures can be accomplished in a lifetime.

The synchronic manifestation of basic and encyclopaedic forms in all four modes in Third World writing has disconcerted many a traditional reader, as Norman Simms' comments show:

Perhaps it is most difficult to understand the Third World writer when he is successful at his task, when he is able to transform the inherited literary strategies of the metropolitan culture into a policy equal to the needs of his own emergent civilization. ... in creating this experience for us, they destabilise our reading of all other literature, our own included. (Simms, 1978; pp50-1)

Comprehensive Poetics offers a solution to this problem.

The parabolic remains in wide use throughout the Third World. Favoured for its ability to show man in a unique rapport with, and sometimes with power over, nature, the mode has been effectively employed in all three regions considered in this study to assert the unconquered vitality of the indigenous mind when rooted firmly in its culture

and its natural environment. The mode's affinity with allegory makes it possible for Bhattacharya in A Goddess Named Gold to present a pointed moral directed at an alien socio-economic arrangement inimical to Indian thought and practice, taking as the starting point the values the Himalayas embody for his community. Bhattacharya refuses to ally himself with the West, and opts to demonstrate that Indian traditional values will endure to make a lasting foundation for India's future. He does not, however, accomplish this feat of persuasion by idealising his people. In his version of the archetypal dragon-killing theme, an Indian bania, a merchant, plays the monster's role.

Ngugi's version of the parabolic is not allegorical. He uses the short story to explore the solace the African green grove<sup>3</sup> of the mugumo tree offers to the unfortunate Mukami. Though the parabolic form usually idealises one side of the conflict, Ngugi, like Bhattacharya, reveals a strong tendency to investigate rather than glorify the past. In 'Mugumo' the pain of being unable to perpetuate a lineage is what drives the central character to the mugumo grove, where she discovers that a baby is on the way. In Mukami Ngugi has presented an exceptional case rather than the traditional rule of empathy with nature. The same mugumo shrine that consoles some offers no tranquillity to others, who have lost rapport with the grove and are thus victims of cultural alienation. They may have found something else, but Ngugi's stance, shared by many African writers, is that they have lost something, and in many cases gained nothing, for the green grove they have forsaken represents a system of values. Traditional African values are epitomized by the green-wood archetype, and a scanty understanding of a new culture cannot adequately replace this.

Lamming uses a parabolic counterpoint in Season of Adventure to explore the same point with regard to the Caribbean. He refuses to share the contempt for the green-wood archetype that many of his characters show. Like many prominent Third World writers, Lamming is perennially concerned with the peasant, through whom he exposes the illusions inherent in trying to cultivate Western tastes and sensibility. The point of view of the emergent elite is felt to be inauthentic in most Third World writing. In Lamming's work the tonelle is a green grove peasant dance, a retention of African culture, with which the indigenous elite is at war. If the shaping principle of everything Lamming writes is the Prospero-Caliban relationship, its antidote, discovered rather late in his career,<sup>4</sup> is the tonelle which functions in a secular

purgatorial manner, involving confession of cultural offences so that the psyche is rehabilitated in a ritual drama of cleansing. In Season of Adventure, Lamming is able to do what many Third World writers either have not tried or have been unsuccessful in doing: he urbanises the parabolic. Generally the parabolic mode is set in a rural landscape. This has its advantages. But Lamming's juxtaposition of the pastoral and the everyday within an urban setting makes for a very effective counterpoint.

In Third World parabolic writing, preoccupation with rural tranquillity and values is not nostalgic hankering for a dead past. There are people, including many of the writers, for whom rural communal values are a vital part of their own experience. But such a standpoint is rare. The usual concern in the other modes is how to have the best of both worlds. Characters who do not see this as a possibility are usually portrayed as having lost touch with reality. Thus synthesis becomes a recurrent theme in Third World literature. Even in some parabolic works one senses a tendency towards synthesis. Taming rather than slaying the monster is recommended in A Goddess Named Gold.

In Armah's encyclopaedic Two Thousand Seasons the green grove lacks any trace of theogonic influence. The Third World parabolic mode in Armah's work is so secularised that at the core of the work there are no ancestors, gods, spirits, or anything to suggest the invisible order that most parabolic works evoke. No superhuman force is envisaged other than that which is in man himself. Men and women undertake to redeem and rehabilitate themselves without participating in the sort of purgatorial drama involving the invisible order which Lamming, for instance, recommends in the tonelle, the Ceremony of Souls. Even in Armah, however, the green grove has yet to become the picnic and adventure scene that it is likely to be in modern Western fiction. In fact Western fiction would usually set such a scene indoors. Its Third World counterpart does not spend time indoors, as Lamming observes:

It is not at all by chance that so much of the action of the West Indian novels takes place outside, in the open air. This is a long way from the muted whisper in the living-room cells or the intellectual stammering which reverberates through the late night coffee caves. (Lamming, 1978; p25)

The parabolic is often especially inventive in terms of narrative technique. Armah is credited by readers like Palmer (1979) with having used the techniques of African oral forms in an original and remarkable manner. Raja Rao likewise produced a parabolic novel based on oral techniques - Kanthapura (1938) - that has become an Indian classic. Thus the mode has not only served the primary function of redressing social issues but has also fulfilled an important aesthetic function. The innovative Third World parabolic tends to avoid English syntax and idiom in favour of poetic vernacular rhythms. 'We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English,' observes Rao (1938; pvii). He goes on,

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. (ibid)

Writing the work in the vernacular and then translating it was Rao's answer to this problem, and it has secured him a place in Indian literature as one of its most innovative writers.

This language question is not confined to the parabolic. Early modern Indian writers, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) for example, faced it too. Tagore opted to write in Bengali and made translation a secondary task. Ngugi has done the same. This seems the best course for the Third World author who feels strongly about serving his local audience as well as an international one. The return to the indigenous language is not simply nostalgia; it is a kind of realism.

Armah in Two Thousand Seasons and Rao in Kanthapura are encyclopaedic, though not with equal success. The latter prefers to report a moment of India's history as witnessed by the narrator. Armah's work, on the other hand, covers a huge time-span, as the title indicates. It is founded not on history, but on a simple African (Akan) legend. Legends are much favoured by encyclopaedic writers. Albert Wendt in Leaves of the Banyan Tree, for example, makes an archetypal deliverer legend the base for a low mimetic encyclopaedic form. Some oral works of literature are, of course, already encyclopaedic in form. The Sundiata epic offers an African example of the oral artist's encyclopaedic ability. Ngugi's latest work, Matigari (1987), indicates that episodic works too are often informed by myth and legend. A good deal of Third World writing, then, continues to draw its inspiration from myth. This tends to corroborate Frye's hypothesis that myth is the seed from which all other literary forms germinate.

As shown in chapters four and five, the high mimetic occurs alongside the parabolic in Third World literature. The novel came into being after the European literary cycle had passed the high mimetic epoch, so there is no parabolic or high mimetic novel in European literature. One of the high mimetic's chief concerns is to accord the highest possible dignity to its central characters, and the mode has been effectively used in India, Africa, and the Caribbean to reclaim the indigenous people's dignity, lost through cultural alienation as a result of contact with the West.

One difficulty in the discussion of this mode has to do with the varied power structures that the novels from different regions reflect. It is, however, possible to gloss over this problem in order to reach significant generalizations concerning the Third World high mimetic. The replacement of traditional rulers and power structures with new ones is a central theme of the mode. The writers' response to this tends to be similar to their attitude to the spectacular green grove of the parabolic. They labour to show the efficacy of traditional ways threatened by contact with the West. This threat is usually conceived in tragic terms. A book like Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini, which presents the situation in comic terms, is rare. Bhattacharya wrote in a period when a lot of the dust raised by the initial East-West encounter had settled. Moreover cultural erosion in India was not as intense as in many areas of the Third World - East Africa for example. Hence Bhattacharya's presentation of the vitality of epic India can be contained within a comic structure.

In Bhattacharya's work as a whole intense tragic conflict is avoided almost entirely, except in one book: So Many Hungers! His personal vision seems to demand integration rather than tragedy, even when logic seems to require the latter. On the whole S K Desai's comment on the resolution in Music for Mohini is true for all denouements in Bhattacharya's works:

The thesis is so thin and the ending so tame that Bhattacharya seems to have lost faith in his own purposiveness and also in his craftsmanship. (Desai, 1985; p127)

Desai's criticism of the thesis is debatable, but his point about tame endings is well taken. Bhattacharya's non-tragic vision is, however, not representative of the Third World artist's conception of the consequences of contact with the West. The high

mimetic is generally tragic - in the grand manner, which produces catharsis rather than mere pathos. Perhaps the best-known character in this mode is Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart. Waiyaki in The River Between is a less celebrated example.

Criticism has tended to relate these works to nineteenth-century European novels. Yet, neither in theme nor in characterization do they readily conform to this category. It is their concern with cynosure that gives them a closer affinity with classical Greek drama. William Walsh has observed - with particular reference to Achebe - that to appreciate them properly readers are required

to move from a world of Victorian and feminine anxiety to one which is masculine, coherent, and in a curious way classical.  
(Walsh, 1973; p30)

This world is alien to the Western reader because in the European tradition a concern with cynosure came soon after the Middle Ages; the English high mimetic, for example, is epitomized by Shakespeare. The social order that conditions cynosure has disappeared in the West. In the Third World, where the old and the new co-exist, indigenous cultures accept cynosure as easily as they do other archetypal themes. The readiness with which Greek plays submit to adaptation in West Africa provides empirical evidence that the cultural mores there make the high mimetic character a familiar figure. Sophocles' Oedipus easily becomes Ola Rotimi's King Odewale, who captivates his audience with authentic African rhetoric on his way to ruin. In Wendt's novel Pouliuli, according to John Beston,

One quickly sees elements of Lear and Hamlet in Faleasa, and Wendt himself acknowledges these. (Beston, 1979; p147)

Traditional criticism often traces this sort of influence without sufficiently accounting for its presence. Why should Wendt come under Shakespeare's influence in this work? Admiration of Shakespeare provides only a partial explanation. There is a need to go further and see the two men as presenting, in the high mimetic mode, the archetypal theme of cynosure - in two different media, drama and fiction - unhindered by the centuries that divide them.

Jacobean playwriting has been acknowledged in critical circles for some time as the main Western influence in Soyinka's plays. But why Jacobean? Unlike Wendt's Faleasa, Soyinka's characters do not fundamentally resemble their Jacobean

counterparts, since they are thoroughly African. The resemblance lies in a common concern with cynosure, or admiration of traditional heroic leadership in danger of being totally supplanted without adequate replacement. This is the reason for Soyinka's preoccupation with Jacobean playwriting and stagecraft.

But the encyclopaedic form of the high mimetic is not in the radical of drama, which is forced by constraints of performance to remain episodic. Episodic high mimetic novels, like their counterparts in drama, tend to be brief in conception and execution. In the densely textured and populated world of Arrow of God, on the other hand, the reader has the feeling of having lived through an epic. Kunene's poem, Emperor Shaka, is similarly voluminous. Achebe's Things Fall Apart is more limited in scope. His chief concern here is to reclaim the dignity of the African lost in the encounter with the West. In Arrow of God he assumes a loftier pose, employing anagogical images to portray the tragically disrupted flow of the whole of African history in order to redress the wounded consciousness of his people. Hence his depiction of a complete system of archetypes through which reality is traditionally comprehended in the African mind. Achebe's two works, Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, are likely to be remembered for different things - the former for its quality, the latter for its authority.

In Lamming, we see a local legend successfully transformed into a high mimetic counterpoint to a narrative which is basically ironic. The high mimetic strand authenticates the dignity of a people which conditions of exile constantly conspire to deny. In Of Age and Innocence the Caribbean power structure has been completely altered to leave exiles out. The heroic resistance of the indigenous people is transmuted into legend and then forgotten until the local elite begins the quest for cultural roots discussed by Fanon (1966). This quest makes them aware of the power gap caused by the demolition of traditional power centres. The elite fails to become truly heroic but their children grow into warriors like the high mimetic warriors of old.

In this work Lamming proves again, after his initial success in In the Castle of My Skin, that he is a master of form. He brings both plot and subplot to satisfying - and contrasting - resolutions. In both plots, the theme of leadership remains consistently in sight. And the parameters by which to reclaim Caribbean dignity and consciousness

remain unambiguous throughout. The Third World canonical writer believes strongly in functional aesthetics. It is not enough that the reader should enjoy the book. What the reader thinks about the book's theme becomes as important an issue as enjoyment.

When the author becomes a spokesman for the individual underdog reacting in a personal way to change brought about by contact with the West, we enter the world of the low mimetic. In both the parabolic and the high mimetic the community is paramount, though it is really a question of emphasis: insistence on corporate personality forces the individual to conform though not to lose personal identity entirely. This is the case even where leaders are concerned. Individuation, the process of severing the individual from the community and opposing his or her interests to society's is the archetypal theme of the low mimetic. In Anand's Coolie, the emergent capitalist order destroys the traditional occupations of the already disadvantaged, who then swarm into cities in search of new means of survival. If Anand sounds a prejudiced witness on account of his Marxist leanings, Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers!, which depicts the same problem against a backdrop of famine and agitation for independence, will exemplify the point. The interests of the new rice merchants conflict with those of the masses in the famine. Many are in a position to save the victims, but they do not. Bhattacharya sees it as his responsibility to decry such insensitivity. He aptly illustrates the Third World author's burden to speak for those whose voices are muted by the onslaught of change and circumstances beyond their control.

As a mode that celebrates man's ability to meet the challenges of nature through invention, the low mimetic does not wait for Promethean fire from above. Stolen fire, it seems to say, belongs to other ages; man is capable of inventing. The fire-spitting machine becomes the preoccupation of a Bhattacharya character who spends a dozen years in a Western metropolis (Pittsburg) learning how to meet the challenges of industrialisation facing India. Gandhism in Shadow from Ladakh is shown to be, on its own, inadequate for the task of modernising India. Cottage crafts and peasant gardening must be complemented with modern factories and mechanised farming for India to be able to clothe and feed her own. But Bhattacharya, like other Third World writers, does not advocate indiscriminate technological innovation unregulated by indigenous values. He believes only in technological changes that do not jeopardise these values, as A Dream in Hawaii, which examines the evils of a super technology ungrounded in sound human values, plainly shows.

In Ngugi, the machine, though not rejected, is scrutinised with deeper suspicion. The Mercedes and its likes do not indicate personal status alone; they symbolise exploitation. This is particularly evident in Matigari. But for now the book that concerns us is Petals of Blood, a low mimetic, which probably offers the fullest study of the archetypal theme of individuation in African literature.

Urban settings are the norm in the low mimetic. The city is not presented as a place of entertainment which mesmerises the newly arrived rural folk, as it does in Alan Paton's Kumalo. Rather it embodies the negative effects of individuation. These impose solitude on the individual and hamper dialogue between those who wish to communicate. Values become peculiarly personal in the city and suspicion is high. To arrive there is to get lost - not between the buildings but among the people. In Petals of Blood the famine delegation from Ilmorog soon discovers that communication is not possible beyond its small membership. The delegation's dialogue with the city nearly comes to a dead end until the lawyer and the papers rescue it from collapse. Rescues of this kind are not always readily forthcoming.

Whether in Bombay (Coolie), Nairobi (Petals), or London (Lamming's The Emigrants), the low mimetic Third World character is depicted as a victim of circumstances denied full development of his potential by the constraints of social stratification along national or racial lines. In Lamming, the arriving party soon disintegrates, with disastrous consequences for some. His characters realise that in seeking solace in the metropolis of the colonial Mother Country they have imposed upon themselves a second, and in a way, more excruciating exile. But returning to the home of the first exile is a task beyond the ability of many to accomplish. Inner disintegration becomes unavoidable as Caribbean communal bonds are finally rent in pieces by forces in the culture of the metropolis. Moreover, the pull to the metropolis does not end with the first shipload of emigrants. Lamming is at pains to point out that arrival and destruction is a recurrent movement which does not stop when one party of emigrants goes to ruin. The ship that arrives towards the end of The Emigrants is meant to illustrate the perennial waves of emigrants who come to tread the labyrinthine maze of the metropolis in search of a better break, only to suffer the fate their forebears have suffered. The point that history can order circumstances with a certain inevitability becomes a central pivot on which the novel's message revolves, echoing other Third World works that are studies in the same theme but from a different angle.

Encyclopaedic in range and technique, Rao's The Serpent and the Rope is a low mimetic work in the Upanishadic tradition of India which refuses to conform readily to the usual conventions of the Western confession. Deemed a Mahapurana, the Indian equivalent of a big epic as opposed to a Sthalapurana, a miniature one (Sharma, 1980), the book shows more affinity with traditional Indian epics than with the novel, though a lot of energy has been expended on trying to make it either observe or fall short of novelistic criteria. This work exemplifies Norman Simms' observation that when Third World writers succeed,

they invalidate former generic categories and reduce generalisations as to universal standards and human nature to immature localisms. (Simms, 1986; p51)

The standards Simms refers to are those used in traditional criticism of Western literature, particularly the novel. The uniqueness of each Third World culture has the effect of destabilising the Western reader, and works that most readily resemble the Western modern novel are most likely to attract acclaim.

The reception in India of Rao's low mimetic encyclopaedic work dispelled the suspicion that writing which expressed a truly Indian sensibility did not exist. The amalgamation of history, legend, fables, poetic description, mystical and philosophical contemplations, all interwoven with deliberations on religion and ideology (Sharma, 1980), in an English flowing in Sanskrit rhythms, reveals the Indian mind in its totality. The work may baffle many non-Indian readers, but it speaks to the Indian with much the same authority as the Indian classical epics. The book vindicates the low mimetic mode as capable of fulfilling both functional and aesthetic requirements.

The 'to give form to the shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealised existence' (Frye, 1957; p233) is the specialty of the lower mimetic or ironic mode. A lot of Western writing since the late nineteenth century has been in this mode. The Third World writer, forced by disillusionment with the post-colonial situation in his country, has employed the mode to show that the euphoria caused by pre-independence rhetoric cannot be justified. Bhattacharya does not wait for post-colonial events to fully unmask the euphoria. Against the backdrop of agitation for independence, he depicts in He Who Rides a Tiger a kamar caste family whose need for freedom from

caste bondage is as acute as India's need to be free of colonial domination. Ironically the kamar man has to deceive and impersonate to achieve his liberty. In the world of Tiger the kamar, forced by circumstances to impersonate a Brahmin Priest and found a temple, flouts one order to be free of another. Although Bhattacharya maintains some detachment from his characters, as befits an ironist, his compassion for Kalo, Chandra Lekha and Biten is still very evident.

In this book, individuation and its attendant social evils is not Bhattacharya's concern as it was in the low mimetic So Many Hungers! Instead he tackles a feature of the corporate Indian personality that submerges individuality totally in corporate responsibility, thereby denying personal liberty. In No Longer at Ease, Achebe tackles the same theme without the same degree of irony. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the Third World author is not averse to criticising the mores of his society, past or present, if they require of the individual more than it is reasonable to give. In the post-colonial context, the writer asks why the individual has not been given what was promised in independence manifestos. When necessary he employs the ironic mode to investigate, or indict (if he is satirical) the avoidable circumstances that conspire to continue dehumanising his countrymen and women.

In Ngugi, the ironic first appears in A Grain of Wheat, where the characters are clearly disillusioned as a result of mistakes (their own and others') in the pre-independence era. Irony derives from the fact that those who fight do not reap any benefits, while the undeserving are lauded. Both ironies criss-cross to underpin the continuity of betrayal as the characters realise they have been twice betrayed: during the war of independence and now. In a mode that deals with the complexities of unidealised existence, those who feel betrayed are not painted as pure. Guilt weighs heavily on them too. But the author refuses, as most Third World ironists do, to see the situation as hopeless. Purgatorial confession is presented as the way out of the vicious circle of irony that imprisons characters in the bondage of guilt. Whether a conscious effort is made to avoid the pessimism associated with the ironic elsewhere or whether the writers are temperamentally optimistic is hard to tell. But one suspects that they genuinely believe that the disillusioning circumstances will not always be there. Even in a work like The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, the title itself implies that it is only a question of time before they are born.

Militant irony (pure satire) is used sparingly in Third World writing. But in Ngugi, it has become more and more prevalent as the modes with less confrontational stances seem more and more inadequate to redress the situation. In both Devil on the Cross and Matigari, biting satire involving belligerent caricaturing and loud name-calling has taken over to produce a militant pose that seems to preclude any possibility of dialogue with the offending elite. Ngugi's problem of having to call names despite his desire to paint his people sympathetically faces many a Third World author. After showing compassionate restraint through A Grain of Wheat and Petals of Blood, he seems to have opted out of the investigative methods of the fictive craft, preferring to depict people in both literal and cultural nakedness. In Matigari, a government minister's Mercedes is commandeered by a freedom fighter, leaving the minister's wife and her lover nude and without transport back to the city. The image of the nude bourgeois is disconcerting, but Ngugi has decided to go beyond the more analytic irony of, for instance, Achebe in A Man of the People, who confines himself to dressing those ironised in ill-fitting clothes. Ngugi seems angry with the way things have gone and is making no effort to hide the fact. Resorting to a mode that delights in shaming its characters is not a path he has taken easily. Most well-known Third World writers have used irony but not in this militant form. Whether Ngugi is taking a lead in what the authors will eventually do cannot be said for certain. What seems clear beyond doubt is that he may never go back to the rounded characters with psychological motivation of his earlier works.

Lamming is most comfortable in the ironic mode. But he avoids any suggestion of the satirical, preferring to confine himself to the investigative aspect of irony. This is because he maintains some optimism in a context that easily invites despair. Rather than succumb to the temptation to see the region as an area trapped in a vicious circle from which there is no escape, Lamming either provides an open ending for his works, with two or more alternatives as possible solutions to problems, or shatters the circle in some way. His first novel, In the Castle of My Skin, offers the former; two characters present two possible answers to the problems raised. In Water with Berries, on the other hand, Lamming shatters the vicious circle by making his characters opt to reject cosmopolitanism and return to the Caribbean.

Relentlessly introspective, Lamming explores the depths of the West Indian consciousness and finds layers of painful memories inflicted by history on unwilling exiles. He also shows that to be unwilling does not guarantee freedom. Unless the

past is re-examined and understood, there is no way of coming to terms with it. Though not studied explicitly as encyclopaedic, one or two of Lamming's works, even at a casual glance, exhibit the deep sophistication and extensive observation that characterise encyclopaedic ironic art. In Of Age and Innocence, for example, he considers ill-presented history and how to surmount its limited view of the West Indian past as well as demonstrating a profound concern for the psychological rehabilitation of the West Indian people. But it seemed better to discuss an encyclopaedic work by a different author, to make the point that the poetics used in this analysis can be applied to a variety of Third World authors.

Commenting on Kojo Laing's Search Sweet Country, the Glasgow Herald's reviewer, quoted on the dust jacket, said 'Laing writes Accra as Joyce writes Dublin'. He added that the book 'should not be undertaken lightly, but should be undertaken'. This comment correctly recognizes that both Joyce and Laing are modern novelists of encyclopaedic significance. Paul Theroux edges towards the same kind of verdict on A House for Mr Biswas in this comment (likewise quoted on the cover):

It has the Dickensian largeness and luxuriance without any of the Dickensian sentimentality, apostrophising or preaching.

The absence of sentimentality, apostrophising and preaching are fundamental to ironic art. 'Dickensian largeness' suggests encyclopaedism, but in technique A House for Mr Biswas, like many Third World works, is too devoid of authorial moralising to be compared to the nineteenth-century novel. His characters are not traumatised victims looking up for the author's sympathy. Pain and sorrow are presented with telling restraint. There is no overt canvassing on behalf of the author's opinions. All this is in keeping with the modern reader's demand not to be preached at or coaxed. In these respects A House for Mr Biswas epitomises ironic art. But in one respect Naipaul differs from the typical Third World writer. His plain advocacy of cosmopolitanism is a rare resolution to the problems the canonical theme of colonialism and post-colonialism raises. A synthesis of metropolitan and indigenous values is generally the preferred option - not Naipaul's universalism, which is considered to sacrifice too much culturally and to find a solution at the expense of the Third World. Achebe (1988) complains of the

growing corpus of scornful work which Naipaul has written on Africa, India and South America. (p18)

A House for Mr Biswas is not scornful. But its irony borders closely on satire. Traces of satire can be found in the book, but on the whole he manages to keep his narration ironic. Nearly two decades after A J Gurr (1972) called this the finest novel written in the Third World, the book is still significant, testifying to the lasting authority of the encyclopaedic form even when it espouses controversial views. It has managed, like other Third World encyclopaedic forms, to compel critical attention, and - judging by the Penguin reprints - its demand is on the rise.

In the Third World, then, literary forms range from those used in Europe in the Middle Ages to those currently prevalent, and sometimes they are all found in the corpus of a single author. This has widespread implications, not only for Third World writing but for literature and criticism as a whole.

A good number of Third World writers may never be published on account of the scarcity of publishing houses, but those who have been are not lagging behind their Western counterparts in employing effectively modern methods of the fictive craft. What this must mean is that literary influence moves like fashion rather than economic growth. The fallacy that Third World writers have not caught up with their Western counterparts is based on the Western progress myth which Frye discusses in detail in The Critical Path. The Third World is thoroughly familiar with all eight forms of fiction and the choice of one or another is based entirely on considerations of effective communication. Even in the ironic mode, the most complicated of all, Third World writers show an abiding concern with communication. Their tendency to avoid exotic forms of irony, such as surrealism, is consistent with the aim not to obscure their message with deliberate illogic, mutilated syntax, fragmentation of chronology and extreme psychological states. There are indications that surrealism may influence drama earlier than fiction. A play like Derek Walcott's Dream on Monkey Mountain (though it can easily be mistaken for a romance) is, in fact, a surrealist work. So is Soyinka's Madmen and Specialists. The need to communicate with audiences larger than the esoteric few who can unravel ambiguities of the kind found in surrealism has kept other authors from venturing too far away from the dialogue they have with the community, even when events might appear to justify the extreme form of sparagmos which is surrealism. In the West, extreme sparagmos is conditioned by the complete individuation of the society, and the artist is free to explore radically individualistic

art-forms. In the Third World, canonical writers generally decry individuation, using the low mimetic form to demonstrate its harmful effects. Arthur Ravenscroft remarks that Third World society is not yet individuated as in the West:

... literatures of Africa, the Caribbean and India do on the whole comprehend individuality within community, with community including ordinary people.... There does seem to be a relationship between literary artists and common people that hasn't existed in the West since the early seventeenth century. (Ravenscroft, 1984; pp254, 258-9)

This close relationship between Third World writers and their community is perhaps responsible for the assumption that these writers are not yet modern. But literary fashions travel fast. There is no reason why a writer cannot assimilate all literary influences, old and new, and introduce personal innovations. To deny this is to fall into the centripetal fallacy of assuming that literary growth parallels economic and technological advancement - in effect, to deny that criticism is a discrete discipline and to tie it instead to economics.

What is called for is a move towards systematic comprehension of each text according to purely literary criteria. This involves placing a work where it belongs not only in the author's corpus but in the entire body of literature. There is thus a need for a universal conceptual framework within which systematic comprehension of a single text, the corpus of an author, and the national and international body of literature can be placed. Far from obscuring the individual text, the framework proposed by Frye and elaborated here illuminates it. Criticism becomes a task of determining whether the text is episodic or encyclopaedic and to what mode it belongs. The critic's task is not hindered by this taxonomic approach. The attractiveness of individual texts can be established with greater clarity once they have been placed in a framework; their distinctiveness can be appreciated more readily. The charge that the Frye's approach does not illuminate individual works is not born out by experience. What seems to have caused this accusation is his refusal to be carried away by the great personality behind particular works of art into lavish biographical criticism, and the preoccupation with ranking that goes with it.

The danger in ranking is not confined to personalities. Ranking of literary forms can be equally disastrous to the critical task, particularly when ambiguities of language introduce notions of rank that were not intended. The terms episodic and encyclopaedic could be misleading if not properly understood. The choice to be episodic rather than encyclopaedic does not guarantee the production of an inferior work. It may simply reflect an author's temperament or involve practical considerations of some kind. Great works have come from both forms. A writer who decides to remain episodic has a better chance to be prolific. Encyclopaedic works of art may take as long as ten years to shape, so there is little chance that the author who opts for this form will be prolific. Rao's The Serpent and the Rope took ten years. To him the episodic form is a pastime, and the aim of his art is to reveal the mind of India authoritatively in the puranic or epic fashion. He is currently engaged on his third epic, which this time is a trilogy. On the contrary, R K Narayan, who prefers episodic forms, has produced about a dozen novels, some of which have become classics. It is neither wise nor practicable to try to make either author more significant than the other, although a good number of critics prefer Rao.

Conscious or unconscious privileging of one theme over another also has adverse effects in Criticism. In Third World writing, the canonical theme of colonialism and post-colonialism in all its ramifications - social, political, economic, psychological, etc - has proved almost endlessly fascinating. It has gained such prominence and topicality that for the artist to engage in something else appears like a waste of time, or even illegitimate. However, artists' responses to life cannot be uniform. Life is a vast mine of experience, and whatever the artist has mined, even though not in the canonical metals of silver and gold, is legitimate. This is not to open wide the gates of criticism to let in everything; artistic standards must still be observed, so that such popular literature as is found in Nigeria's Onitcha market does not become a focus for critical attention. Amos Tutuola, however, is an example of a writer who is worth studying although he ignores canonical themes. Achebe's Hopes and Impediments has a fine critique of Tutuola's The Palm-Wine Drinkard, based on the African concept of work and leisure. The leisure-loving drinkard, having violated the work ethic, finds his redemption through a purgatorial underground journey that teaches him the value of labour before he is restored to his community. This non-canonical theme may sound too banal to generate true art, but in the hands of Tutuola the African concept of labour is tackled with a freshness that gives his moral a pointed edge. There are other

Third World writers who are similarly engaged in non-canonical creativity. Side-lining what they have to say is canonically-induced centripetalism that cannot benefit criticism.

The Tutuola case illustrates something else - the interesting history of taste with reference to the romance and the novel. Western readers tend to denigrate their own parabolic literature. The reputation of the novel is based on its clear break with the romance in favour of mimetic realism. Oddly enough, while disliking their own episodic literature, these readers do not mind it if it comes from the Third World, and will, in fact, give it critical publicity. Tutuola's reception in the West has always been positive. Yet in Africa, a novel-based centripetalism inherited from the West until recently blighted his reputation. These different reactions to the romance in the West and the Third World illustrate that the polarisation of the romance and the novel is founded purely on taste and not on any scientific basis. In fact, both modes employ a kind of realism - spectacular and mimetic realism respectively. Spectacular realism is not just the product of an author's fantasy; it reflects the way in which writers at certain times and places actually see the world. Spectacular and mimetic realism are complementary in Third world writing, and the parabolic remains a vital mode in literary production in India, Africa, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific. The opposition, therefore, between the romance and the novel hampers rather than enhances literary appreciation. A far more illuminating way of looking at form is to distinguish between four basic modes, each with its own distinctive brand of mimesis - the parabolic (or proto-mimetic), high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic (lower mimetic). The technical vocabulary may appear to multiply unnecessarily, especially when a distinction is made between episodic and encyclopaedic forms, but a complex critical method is better than no method at all.

A centripetal focus on any mode declared pedigree, by which all other forms are judged, is the literary equivalent of social stratification. It is absurd for literature and criticism to strive for the one while fostering the other. Frye's theory of modes obviates this particular critical abuse, but it introduces the possibility of a different kind of abuse by its insistence on the diachronic sequence of modes. The European literary cycle can therefore easily be reckoned superior to both the Classical and Third World cycles, by virtue of its sustained development. The simultaneous manifestation of all forms in the synchronic Third World cycle, however, is evidence that it is not

simply an appendage to the diachronic one, apprenticed there to come of age. In its mastery of forms and conventions the synchronic cycle is not behind the diachronic one. A prolific history has given the diachronic cycle a head start, but now literary output seems to be abating in the West and picking up in the Third World - witness the disproportionate number of Third World writers who have won the coveted Booker Prize in recent years.

There are some differences of emphasis between the European and Third World cycles, of course. Psychoanalysis, deconstruction, surrealism, the stream-of-consciousness - all these are rare in the Third World, whose literature looks outward to communal aspirations, and tends to ally itself with oral forms, or - in regions like India where there was a written literature before contact with the West - with indigenous written forms. These factors restrict the Western influences adopted - a fact which is often interpreted as an inability to cope with sophistication. Even local readers sometimes ask why the middle class hardly appears in the works of Third World writers, as Lamming observes:

One of the most popular complaints made by West Indians about their novelists is the absence of novels about the West Indian middle class. (Lamming, 1978; p24)

The novel developed in Europe to investigate the new individualism that the rise of middle class had created, so the reluctance to portray the middle class might suggest that many Third World fictions are not true novels. Third World writers are often middle class, with a university education, or something close to it, but this does not hinder them from taking up the responsibility to be their peasant brothers' keepers. The general consensus between the Third World writer and reader is that something ought to be said about these peasant brothers. The perennial concern with the peasant has nothing to do with wanting to depict simple characters. Those we meet are often very complex individuals: Kalo in Bhattacharya's He Who Rides a Tiger, Okonkwo in Achebe's Things Fall Apart, and the characters in In The Castle of My Skin. Lamming indicates that the differences between the two traditions are well known to the Third World writer. The English novel

... from its beginnings to the present exercises in anger has always been middle class in taste and middle class in intention. (Lamming, 1978; p24)

The rise of the European middle class and the social conflict it introduced was a phenomenon that required explication, and the invention of the novel met the challenge. But that did not mean that the novel could work only in those social circumstances. In the diachronic cycle, it adapted to the requirements of the ironic mode. Why should it not adapt likewise to the high mimetic in the Third World, though the diachronic cycle never used it for that purpose?

The novel, then, is not like a citrus tree that can do well in only one type of climate. It is a mimetic form that has proved adaptable to a wide variety of circumstances. It does not have to have a middle class backdrop; nor need it confine itself to a particular species of realism. This flexibility has made the novel a force for social change in the Third World. It has been used in particular to interpret the indigenous culture and to promote the cause of the underdog. Such didactic ends are not fashionable in the West, and much Third World writing has been adversely criticized as a consequence. But the notion that literature should eschew didacticism in favour of complexity and paradox is a Western convention, not a universal truth. Again the novel shows its flexibility in the way it has allowed itself to be adapted to this new purpose.

More could be said about the novel's adaptability, but it may sound as if it has changed of its own accord, and that the artist has been led by the form. In fact, however, the Third World writers deserve credit for the way they have ventured into forbidden territories, ignoring preconceived notions, theories and predictions as to how the novel as an art form should function. They have pushed, pulled and stretched it into the size and shape needed for these new contents. Venturing to the village to produce a high mimetic novel when the Classical and European cycles suggest that only the drama suits this mode has produced startling and effective results. Allotting the central space to the peasant or worker, disregarding all prior ideas about the middle class as indispensable to the form, has been similarly effective. All this underscores not just the potential elasticity of the novel but also the artist's awareness of what can be done with it. In the Third World the novel has found a new lease of life.

A final point. The anti-hero of extreme Western sparagmos does not feature prominently in Third World writing, where life is not yet seen as sordid or anti-heroic. Some disillusionment has set in, conditioning the production of ironic literature, but

the ironic Third World character still lives within a discernible community and has not yet become a completely forlorn creature in a bewildering universe without hope of achievement. His life may be short and his gains disappointingly meagre, as in A House for Mr Biswas, but achievement does not elude him altogether.

## NOTES

- 1 Traditional criticism distinguishes only two modes in Third World fiction - the romance and an equivalent of the eighteenth-century European novel. Using Comprehensive Poetics, we see each of the four modes producing basic and encyclopaedic forms. For a sceptical account of the eighteenth-century novelistic model see Viney Kirpal, 1988.
- 2 In the diachronic cycle, the modes are centuries apart. It is, therefore, not possible for encyclopaedic forms to occur in all modes at once. But even in one mode several encyclopaedic structures by a single author are rare, Millon's two epics representing perhaps the maximum.
- 3 The green grove in Ngugi's mind, as The River Between shows, is in the environs of Mt. Kerinyaga. Thus Kerinyaga often plays the role that the Himalayas do for Indian writers - that of embodying traditional values epiphanically.
- 4 Lamming wrote three novels - In the Castle of My Skin, The Emigrants and Of Age and Innocence - before he discovered this Haitian Ceremony.

## GLOSSARY OF CRITICAL TERMS

This section should be read in conjunction with the Glossary in Frye (1957; pp365-7). Where Frye's definitions are adequate for my purposes I have not reproduced them here, preferring to concentrate on terms which I have introduced and terms of Frye's which needed redefinition in the context of Third World Literature.

*ARCHETYPE*: An archetype is a symbol or image recurrent enough in literature to acquire conventional status. In tragic stories, for example, the role of traitor is archetypal, as it is almost universally attested. The traitors in various literatures are cultural variants of the traitor archetype. The River Ganges, which often features as a purificatory symbol in the works of Rao, remains an Indian river functioning in an archetypal role which can easily be filled by another river in a different community that uses rivers for similar ceremonial purposes.

Archetypes with potentially unlimited communicable power in a cross-cultural context are universal symbols. Archetypes of light and darkness, food and drink, the wedding or marriage, and the journey - to name a few - are such universally communicable archetypes which all communities can understand. The journey in particular is considered one of the most productive symbols in literature, often appearing as an organising archetype - eg in Ngugi's Petals of Blood, where the journey reveals character besides accomplishing its primary function of drawing attention to the famine. The flood archetype is another universal symbol. The cosmic disaster in Lamming's Of Age and Innocence, which destroys the fictional society of San Cristobal but allows for a retrieval of the submerged island and some unidentified characters who repopulate the island as a new phase of history begins, shows an original use of an archetype well attested in many flood stories in world literature.

*CANONICAL THEME*: A theme or subject which acquires special significance in a given literary epoch, rising to such prominence that it becomes cross-cultural, is a canonical theme. The chief Third World canonical theme is colonialism, independence and post-colonialism. Out of this subject arise numerous themes: alienation, betrayal, cultural clash, psychic rehabilitation, cultural synthesis or reconciliation, nationalism, and neo-colonialism.

Authors as far apart in regional terms as Lamming in the West Indies and Albert Wendt in the South Pacific treat this same theme, though a cursory glance might suggest that their works are very different. Betraying kinship and cheating others out of property are central motifs in both Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin and Wendt's Leaves of the Banyan Tree, and there are many other similarities in theme and characterization between the two. Bhattacharya's A Goddess Named Gold slots in easily with these two works. Ngugi's Petals of Blood can be comfortably added to make a quartet of works from four national literary cycles written on the same theme in three different modes: Lamming's in the ironic; Wendt's and Ngugi's in the low mimetic, and Bhattacharya's in the parabolic.

This affinity of works that stem from different regional, racial and cultural milieux would not take place without the presence of a powerful underlying binding force, the canonical theme. Similarly, European Romanticism began in Germany but eventually affected the entire diachronic cycle.

*CENTRIFUGAL FALLACY:* Ignoring matters related specifically to literary form and theory, which is where criticism should begin, and basing the judgment of literature on criteria drawn from other disciplines results in the centrifugal fallacy. Though linguistic, psychological, philosophical, political or sociological approaches may illuminate certain aspects of literature, only a poetics of literature can explain properly both the laws at work in the production of literature and the forms that are produced. In the absence of an effectual poetics since Aristotle's, the study of literary form has been largely neglected. The use of principles derived from other disciplines is recognised as valid in criticism. But literary form is what makes works of literature different from texts of history, psychology or sociology. Frye's comprehensive theory of literature requires that all alliances made with disciplines outside literature be reckoned supplementary rather than fundamental to the critic's main task, so that literature can retain its own authenticity.

*CENTRIPETAL FALLACY:* Undue emphasis on the personal intuitions of the critic constitutes the centripetal fallacy. While centrifugal criticism pulls literature out of its own framework and hooks it on to another discipline which eventually destroys its

autonomy, centripetal criticism makes literature too subjective to be studied from an objective standpoint. The assumption by critics that the Third World writer produces only a nineteenth-century, low mimetic kind of novel is a centripetal fallacy based purely on intuition and not sound theoretical proof. In fact, all four modes of literature can be manifested synchronically in a national literary cycle or in the corpus of a single author. Bhattacharya's output, for example, is as follows: So Many Hungers!, low mimetic; Music for Mohini, high mimetic; He Who Rides A Tiger, ironic; A Goddess Named Gold, parabolic; Shadow from Ladakh, low mimetic; Steel Hawk and Other Stories, counterpointed low mimetic; A Dream in Hawaii, low mimetic. He uses whichever mode meets the demands of his theme.

*COMPREHENSIVE POETICS*: Comprehensive poetics is the term used in this thesis to describe Northrop Frye's theory of literature as formulated in the Anatomy of Criticism and elaborated elsewhere in his works.

*CONFESSION*: Frye (1957, p365) defines Confession as 'autobiography regarded as a form of prose fiction, or prose fiction cast in the form of autobiography'. To the extent that a writer of autobiography attempts to build up a coherent pattern from the varied aggregate of events in his life, he is engaged in a creative activity of a literary nature. Since the interest of the novel is to dissolve all theoretical matters such as may play a leading role in the confession into human relationships, the confession is quite distinct, though the novelist may use it as a counterpoint. These two forms can fuse only in the stream of consciousness, although even there the outlines of the confession remain discernible.

*CONSOLIDATION PRINCIPLE*: With comprehensive poetics as a base, criticism can be reinforced by views and procedures from other critical methods. This eclecticism is called the consolidation principle.

Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin is an ironic confession with a novelistic counterpoint in which the omniscient narrator assists boy A, the autobiographical projection of Lamming, tell the story of the peasants' betrayal by the new Caribbean

middle class. Rao's The Serpent and the Rope shows that the confession can also produce encyclopaedic forms.

*COUNTERPOINT*: The introduction of forms, episodes, scenes, incidents, characters, or rhetorical matter at odds with the main mode of composition constitutes counterpoint. The concept of counterpoint is based on the recognition that pure literary modes are a rarity. As long as the artist weaves in the counterpoints carefully, modes and conventions will blend rather than conflict. In Season of Adventure, Lamming's introduction of the tonelle does not violate ironic realism, the main narrative mode of his work; he counterpoints it with spectacular realism.

*CYCLIC ARCHETYPES*: Frye's 'theory of mythos' is built on the premise that 'the fundamental form of process is cyclical movement', and he distinguishes 'seven categories of images' which 'may also be seen as different forms of rotary or cyclical movement' (Frye, 1957; pp158-60).

The lunisolar cycle is particularly prominent in Third World writing. Ngugi, for example, accompanies the tragic catastrophe of Waiyaki's fall in the last scene in The River Between with the setting sun.

The cycle of the seasons is also important. In Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born the dim hope of rebirth is represented by the bleak blossom of the flower painted on the bus in the last scene. In communities where the four seasons of the year are very distinctly marked spring is the season appropriate for comedy, summer for romance, autumn for tragedy (when vegetational deities die), and sterile winter for irony and satire.

Again, the writer may invoke the water cycle, using dew, showers, and moderate rain as imagery appropriate for comedy, streams and brooks for romance or lyrics such as Song of Lawino, rivers and the sea as images of danger appropriate for tragedy, and the storm for the absurd worlds of irony and satire. The storm may be found in a tragedy that leans towards the macabre and the absurd. The river in Bhattacharya's

low mimetic tragedy So Many Hungers! reinforces the tragedy, since that is where Old Mother goes to commit suicide and so escape the dehumanizing influence of the famine.

*CYNOSURE*: Third World parabolic literature often invites the reader to view with wonder an ideal or marvellous character, sometimes endowed with supernatural traits. The high mimetic prefers cynosure - a respectful gaze at the magnificent - but real - deeds of its hero. Cynosure appears in all high mimetic literature, unless, as in Albert Wendt's Pouliuli, the hero is presented too ironically to evoke profound admiration. Faleasa is clearly a high mimetic hero, but the Sartrean nausea and madness which he contrives to resolve the political conflict in Samoa make him too ironical to evoke deep cynosure. Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart is a more orthodox example. Most Indian cynosure uses material drawn from the culture's traditional epics, but Rabindranath Tagore's Sacrifice is an example of a work which involves cynosure in a contemporary context of cultural reform.

*DIACHRONIC CYCLE*: Frye's theory of modes is diachronic. The romance, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic succeed each other over a period of about a thousand years. The romance takes two forms - one secular, dealing with aristocratic chivalry, and the other religious, offering marvellous legends of saints. Shakespeare epitomizes the high mimetic, in which tragedy is dominant. With the invention of the novel by Defoe, the low mimetic begins and lasts until the Victorian period, although towards the end of the nineteenth century the English novel begins to shift towards the ironic, represented best perhaps by James Joyce, though satire also features prominently in this mode. In French writing, the shift to the ironic also takes place in the nineteenth century but much earlier than in English literature.

Frye's theory allows for occasional reversions. In the diachronic low mimetic, for example, European Romanticism reverts to the romance, the modal grandfather of the low mimetic. Current writing in the diachronic literary cycle is in the ironic-satiric mode. In this phase the evidence surveyed in the Anatomy suggests that literature begins to show an affinity with the pre-literary mode of myth which in the first place gave literature many of the conventions it uses. Franz Roh's introduction of

Magischer Realismus, 'magic realism', in the mid 1920s was an open acknowledgement of this shift towards the mythical. What, however, shows the shift from irony to myth more than anything else is the widespread use of the pharmakos character, usually an innocent sacrificial being who looks much like the human sacrifice of myth. In Koestler's Darkness at Noon, for example, Rubashov plays a pharmakos role, undergoing endless psychological torture before being 'physically liquidated'.

*DIANOIC LITERATURE*: Dianoia is the Greek word for theme. Dianoic literature emphasises theme above all else. It may dispense with characters altogether, as the lyric does. Song of Lawino is an Acholi lyric in which, in the interests of the theme (the clash of cultures), internal characters are dispensed with so that Lawino, the lyrical wife of Ocol, can concentrate on singing the beauty of African traditional culture and petitioning the elders to address the case between her and her husband, the culturally alienated Ocol. Since Ocol could not appear in the song, p'Bitek decided to write an answer from him in what became Song of Ocol.

The prominence of the theme is what makes Bhattacharya's allegory A Goddess Named Gold dianoic. The characters are functions of the theme of social justice, which is allegorised from the traditional Indian epic, the Mahabharata. In Palace of the Peacock Wilson Harris suppresses narrative in the interest of theme. It is futile to object that such works do not reveal character. In dianoic literature, where characters are permitted at all - as in parables, allegories, and folktales - they function merely as creatures of the theme.

*DISPLACEMENT*: The hypothesis of displacement holds that the pre-literary storytelling conventions which a community develops for its myths are progressively adapted in the direction of realism during the romantic, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic periods.

*ENCYCLOPAEDIC FORM*: A comprehensive organisation of archetypes results in an encyclopaedic structure. A survey of the archetypal dimension of a work must be made in order to determine whether a reasonable number of archetypes are sufficiently

developed to give the work encyclopaedic status. Although most encyclopaedic narratives have large canvasses, neither the length of the work nor the number of characters guarantees encyclopaedic status; the work has to be comprehensive in theme. The theme that normally produces the encyclopaedic form is the canonical one.

Rao's Kanthapura is a parabolic encyclopaedic form, which, apart from organising the traditional archetypes of India such as the purificatory Ganges, exemplifies how Indian traditional story-telling techniques may be employed to articulate the canonical theme of clash of cultures. Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great is a Zulu high mimetic epic which aims to depict a comprehensive sweep of African history and how contact with the West affects it. India has not produced a high mimetic encyclopaedic form, presumably because the traditional epics, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, occupy too central a place to permit modern imitations. Technically both epics are parabolic, but in Romesh Dutt's translations - The Ramayana: 1899, The Mahabharata: 1895-1905 - they become high mimetic, since Dutt cuts out all the romance material and models them on The Iliad and The Odyssey of Homer (with metrics based on Milton).

Leaves of the Banyan Tree (1979), Wendt's successful attempt to organise the cultural archetypes of Samoan life so as to reveal how contact with the West has affected Samoan culture through three generations, is a low mimetic encyclopaedic form. Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas is an encyclopaedic confession in the ironic mode. The theme is again canonical. Kojo Laing's Search Sweet Country is also an encyclopaedic novel in the ironic mode. It investigates the meaning of modern African history, featuring among its characters a mother who curses and bares her bottom in public, a main character whose lover is a 'witch', and a professor who is so frustrated by idealism that he makes his point by fist-fighting.

*EPIPHANY*: A moment of vision which, in Third World literature, often provides enlightenment for the indigenous people in their struggle against their colonial oppressors. Typical points of epiphany are mountains, ladders, rooftops, enchanted islands, and lighthouses. The archetypal epiphanic point of India is the Himalayas. The minstrel in Bhattacharya's A Goddess Named Gold retreats to the Himalayas for inner illumination. They are used again by Rao in The Serpent and the Rope. Mount

Kirinyaga (Mt Kenya) in Ngugi's The River Between is a Kenyan cultural variant of the mountain as an archetypal point of illumination. Waiyaki is taken to the hills near the mountain to partake of the experience which Gikuyu and Mumbi had in the Gikuyu primordial dawn.

In the ironic mode, the points of epiphany tend to be parodied. Demonic epiphanic points are sometimes used - including madhouses, catacombs, nightmarish prisons, and caves. Derek Walcott in Dream on Monkey Mountain uses a prison where Makak has an absurd dream about a mountain-top experience of power.

*EPISODIC FORM*: Frye (1957; p55) juxtaposes the terms 'encyclopaedic' and 'episodic', using the latter to signify works in which 'the poet communicates as an individual' and the former to signify works in which 'he communicates as a professional man with a social function'. Later (p365) 'encyclopaedic form' is redefined as 'a genre presenting an anagogic form of symbolism, such as a sacred scripture, or its analogues in other modes'. I have retained the term 'episodic', but I intend it as a basic counterpart to this redefinition of 'encyclopaedic'. It therefore signifies an orthodox work, limited in the scope of its themes and archetypes.

*EPOS*: Frye defines epos as 'the literary genre in which the radical of presentation is the author or minstrel as oral reciter, with a listening audience in front of him'. Epos, whether European or Third World, tends to be episodic whereas conventional fiction exhibits continuity. The reciter confronts his audience directly and evokes an immediate response from them.

Metre and generally predictable patterns of organization are distinguishing marks of epos. Its power to depict dignity and passion makes it especially suitable for epic and tragedy. In the diachronic cycle, epos influenced literature in the composition of communal myths in the mythic mode, in the production of romance and of didactic and epic poetry in the high mimetic epoch. In the low mimetic period it felt the strain of having to compete with prose fiction and was eventually completely dominated by fiction and passed out of literature. In the synchronic Third World cycle, it is still extant. The main character in Bhattacharya's A Goddess Named Gold is a minstrel.

Mazisi Kunene's high mimetic encyclopaedic form Emperor Shaka the Great is composed from the lore of Zulu minstrels who have preserved the deeds of Shaka and other great leaders in communal memory.

Authors who normally keep to the conventions of pure prose sometimes employ repetition for emphasis, or break the continuous rhythm of prose in other ways. Ngugi prefers pure prose but often uses epos for emphasis, as in this passage from Petals of Blood:

Demarcation. Title deeds. Loans. Fencing the land. Barbed wire. One or two grade cows. Kill or sell or cross-breed the others. A Farmer's Marketing Co-operative ... Milk. KCC. Wealth.

Such a union of prose and epos may be termed 'prose epos'.

*HIGH MIMETIC MODE*: The high mimetic is the central mode of the five designated by Frye. The characters of the modes before it (the mythic and parabolic) tend to be divine or semi-divine, and those of the modes after it have ordinary or even less than ordinary powers. The central characters of the high mimetic are usually heroic leaders. They are normally portrayed as superior in power and authority to other men but not to the natural environment. They are not immune from personal and social criticism, and their shortcomings often result in a tragic fall from power.

High mimetic tragic drama occurs in fifth-century Athens and in seventeenth-century Europe, in both cases accompanying 'a period of social history in which an aristocracy is fast losing its effective power but still retains a good deal of ideological prestige' (Frye, 1957). Third World tragic high mimetic narratives are about the fall from power of indigenous leaders due to colonial encroachment or to neo-colonial circumstances. The fall of Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart and that of Ezeulu in Arrow of God are both tied up with the changes that set in as a result of Europe's contact with Africa.

Achebe's successful adaptation of the novel to the canons of the high mimetic narration is a revolutionary handling of a form which came into being as a low mimetic and had become in the diachronic cycle a lower mimetic form by the time of his

writing. Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini is a canonical high mimetic comedy that attempts a cultural synthesis through Mohini, the alienated convent wife of the Behula village zamindar or leader. The palanquin and the Big House are Jayadev's symbols of authority which suggest the highest possible dignity and power that a zamindar may have.

Norman Simms (1986; pp29-38) observes that Albert Wendt employs the techniques and conventions of the 'writers of the metropolis, carefully destabilises the structures of these imported devices and creates a new novel appropriate to the Samoan situation'. Like Achebe's and Bhattacharya's works, Wendt's Pouliuli is a high mimetic novel which is bound to look new in kind to a Western critic, because the diachronic cycle has no high mimetic novels. The adaptation of the novel to high mimetic conventions is a major technical innovation in the Third World since no models existed.

The hard-won dignity of the Haitian revolution offers an attractive focus for a West Indian high mimetic. But, as Robert Hamner remarks in his appreciation of Derek Walcott's works (1981), a successful treatment would have to avoid 'the Jacobean polish on words and images' that does not suit the ex-slave characters being portrayed. The absence of a dignified cultural base like Okonkwo's in Things Fall Apart and Faleasa's in Pouliuli inhibits Walcott and other Caribbean writers from producing a true high mimetic. A Caribbean high mimetic is still possible if authors can find a way around this lack of appropriate cultural conditioning of power and can devise an appropriate diction for their work.

*IRONIC MODE:* In ironic or lower mimetic literature the characters' power of action and freedom of choice are so limited that readers recognize a situation inferior to their normal way of life. The other way for authors to become ironic is to maintain such detached objectivity that there is no sense of commitment to the predicaments of their characters. Third World writing, even when ironic, has avoided excessively impersonal narration of the kind that makes moral issues in a work unclear. The closest Third World Writing has come to this is, perhaps, Narayan's ending to his masterpiece, The Guide, though there is general consensus that Raju is regenerated as a real saint.

Ironic authors are generally Socratic in method, pretending to know nothing, even the fact that they are writing an ironic work. Ngugi's 'Mugumo' is an apprentice piece. It was the first story he wrote for publication, and its lack of sophistication is revealed when he says of Mukami, 'But it was so ironic. She did not want to die.' Having mastered the art of ironic writing in A Grain of Wheat, he leaves it to the reader to find out that the whole work is ironic. Thus it is not the flashback technique alone that makes A Grain a complex work; 'irony is naturally a sophisticated mode, and the chief difference between sophisticated and naive irony is that the naive ironist calls attention to the fact that he is being ironic, whereas sophisticated irony merely states, and lets the reader add the ironic tone himself'. (Frye, 1957; p41)

Because of its objectivity, the ironic mode is suitable for investigation of issues in which the artist's involvement may become too intense for an impartial survey. Lamming writes about the sensitive area of Caribbean history mainly in the ironic mode.

In the diachronic literary cycle, low mimetic realism began to give way to ironic conventions towards the end of the nineteenth century, and became predominantly ironic this century. The synchronic Third World cycle has been producing ironic art throughout the century, simultaneously with work in other modes. Narayan has been writing in the ironic mode since the thirties, and has produced such classics as The Financial Expert and The Guide.

Satire is subsumed by the ironic mode. The difference between the objective ironist and the satirist is that the latter takes a more subjective, militant stand. Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born differs from A Grain of Wheat in that Armah's militancy almost makes his work a satire. It is however, predominantly an ironic novel with a strong counterpoint of satire. Armah's characters are much more developed than they would be in a pure satire.

Another form of the ironic is that in which events remain predominantly real but keep being assaulted by absurdity, illogic, parodic humour, and suggestions of a bizarre kind of myth. This form can easily be confused with romance, as Walcott's two plays Ti-Jean and His Brothers and Dream on Monkey Mountain demonstrate. The former is

indeed a romance. Its parabolic characterization which involves animals taking roles in the drama indicates as much. But a careful survey of Dream on Monkey Mountain shows that it is too sophisticated to be a romance. It belongs with other Third World plays such as Soyinka's Madmen and Specialists, which may or may not have been influenced by European absurdist playwriting. Third World authors can get to ironic writing in their own way without being influenced by European precedents, as the ironic mythopoeia of Wilson Harris plainly shows.

*LOW MIMETIC MODE:* The mode of literature between the high mimetic - the literature of leaders - and the ironic is the low mimetic. It is the mode preferred by the European novel. The central characters in this mode are accorded a power of action which generally corresponds to our own level of experience. Works such as Achebe's No Longer at Ease cannot be classified with his high mimetic ones (Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God) since they are not about leadership in the high mimetic sense. No Longer at Ease is, among other things, a low mimetic study of the corrupting influences in Obi's society, to which he eventually yields. Jane's Career, a Caribbean low mimetic, is, according to Kenneth Ramchand (1976; pp1-10), a kind of 'essay on the relationship between mistress and maid.' Anand's Coolie, a low mimetic tragedy, takes its main character from what was the most underprivileged and exploited class in Indian society at the time when it was written. From these three examples, it is clear that the low mimetic may have as its central character a middle class person like Obi, a peasant girl such as Jane, or a coolie like Munoo. In the diachronic cycle, the low mimetic literature of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe is mainly middle class.

Like the parabolic, the Third World high mimetic narrative is set mainly in rural areas. But the central episodes of the low mimetic take place in urban settings, as in its diachronic counterpart. The crucial episodes in No Longer at Ease happen in Lagos; Jane leaves rural Jamaica for Kingston, where the rest of the story takes place; and Munoo leaves Kangra hills to go through several urban ordeals including one of the worst in Bombay. The comedy with which Jane's Career is brought to a climactic finish is a rarity in the Third World low mimetic. Emphasis is generally on confusion, loneliness, the exploitation of characters and the resultant tragic consequences.

*MODAL CONDITIONING*: More than a similarity between the Greek Dionysos and the Yoruba Oguni is involved in Soyinka's adaptation of Euripides' The Bacchae. The commissioning of Soyinka by the National Theatre of Great Britain to adapt The Bacchae seems to have involved an intuitive recognition of West Africa's amenability to the high mimetic mode, which Western culture has largely lost. Ola Retimi's adaptation of Sophocles' Oedipus the King as The Gods Are Not To Blame preceded Soyinka's adaptation and has become one of the most popular plays in Africa. Efua Sutherland's adaptation of Euripides' Alcestis as Edufa is yet another West African adaptation of a Greek classic.

E S Asgill (1980) comes to the conclusion that 'there are undoubtedly other more interesting reasons for this concern with Greek plays,' than an academic interest in classical learning. Clearly West Africa is more in touch with its heroic past than other parts of the Third World, and therefore favours the high mimetic. It is conditioned to the high mimetic mode - as the novels of Achebe also attest. In East Africa, on the other hand, while heroic figures such as chief Waiyaki might be attractive to dramatists interested in the high mimetic mode, the banning of ceremonies such as Ituika in 1925 has inhibited the development of drama - Ituika involved mime - and discouraged production of the high mimetic. In India, where, as in West Africa, the cultural clash was not severe, high mimetic conditioning has also been quite stable. Tagore produced a high mimetic play, The Sacrifice, Bhattacharya a high mimetic novel, Music for Mohini, and there are subsequent high mimetic works discussed by K R Iyengar (1962) in his chapter on drama. The popular traditional epics, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, seem to have made redundant all attempts to produce new Indian epics, although the cultural milieu has the potential to condition them.

Post-colonial disillusionment has conditioned a lot of ironic writing in the Third World. S B Rao (1989) notes that recently Indian writers began to talk of angst and turned into prophets of doom: 'The Mood [of disillusionment] became a movement ... Eliot, and Pound, Auden and Spender were the new gurus.... Absurd plays appeared in plenty.'

The Caribbean is especially conditioned to the ironic mode. In Naipaul, irony derives naturally from the entire history of exile: 'History is built around achievement; and nothing was created in the West Indies' (Naipaul, 1962; Chapter 1). Lamming's irony

is not so disillusioned. In In the Castle of My Skin, for instance, human dignity and exile are not mutually exclusive.

But, while modal conditioning cannot be denied, the most remarkable feature of Third World writers - Achebe, for example - is the way they can switch modes at will, choosing whichever suits the theme of the moment.

*MYTH*: A narrative in which the central character or characters manifest supernatural power is a myth. Myth and parabolic literature have one important thing in common: the use of spectacular realism. According to Frye's theory, orthodox mimesis - the imitation of life as it actually is - involves a displacement of myth, so that the supernatural and the idealistic are filtered out of the complex reality of life. Whereas myths are generally part of a system of religious belief, literature constitutes an autonomous imaginative reality. Myth is, therefore, essentially pre-literary, and is not considered as a separate mode in this study.

*PARABOLIC MODE*: Myth does not properly constitute literature, since a community's myths are part of a system of religious belief. The parabolic is therefore the first truly literary mode distinguished by Frye. It shares many principles of storytelling with myth. The chief characteristic of both modes is spectacular realism. Little effort is made in either to evoke a mimesis or plausible representation of reality. The folktale is an example of parabolic literature. In its world, animals can talk and conduct human business. But even the choice of animals is arbitrary. Folktales are part of dianoic literature (literature concerned with theme alone), in which the characters become mere functions of plot and theme.

Legends constitute another example of parabolic literature. The conventional power of action given to the central characters of legend is much less than would be normally accorded to the characters of myth, who are completely divine. On the other hand, it is too great for high mimetic realism, which scales the hero's power down to that of a credible leader in a recognizable society. Some parabolic literature has traces of mimetic adaptation to canons of plausibility but not enough to make its characters fully humanised. Spectacular realism rather than mimetic realism continues to be employed in most parabolic forms.

The romance is a common parabolic form. Ali Mazrui's The Trial of Christopher Okigbo offers a recent African example. Amos Tutuola's The Palm Wine Drinkard is an earlier example. The difference between the two works is that Mazrui, being concerned with post-colonial issues, is canonical, while Tutuola is not. Bhattacharya's A Goddess Named Gold is an Indian romance which uses the archetypal motif of dragon killing (or taming). It is set in the canonical context of Independence eve. Bankim Chatterji (1838-1894), considered the first Indian novelist by many critics, wrote romances, of which Anandamath is probably the best known. The stylised and conventionalised character of John Power in Roger Mais' Brother Man indicates that this West Indian work too is parabolic.

*ROMANCE*: Frye uses the words 'romance' and 'romantic' in several senses. I prefer to use 'parabolic' to define both his 'fictional mode in which the chief characters live in a world of marvels ...' and his 'general tendency to present myth and metaphor in an idealized human form, midway between undisplaced myth and "realism"'. This enables me to apply the words 'romance' and 'romantic' chiefly to 'a form of prose fiction ... distinguishable from the novel' by virtue of its concern with 'an idealized world' (Frye, 1957; p367).

Those with a preference for mimetic literature tend to demand of the romance what it never promised, notably in-depth characterisation. Thus Derrett has this to say of Bankim Chatterji's romances: 'His characters seldom satisfy as they are too frequently personifications of behaviour patterns.' Wole Ogundele (1988) complains that Elechi Amadi's The Concubine gets left on the sidelines of literary criticism. S Gikandi, however, treats the work sympathetically, recognizing mythical elements employed in the narrative without becoming derogatory (Gikandi, 1987; pp165-70). The Concubine has suffered inadequate attention for two reasons: it is non-canonical and it is a romance.

The romance's tendency to simplify characterization and situation makes it vulnerable to the charge that it is a naive and primitive form. Witi Ihimaera proves the contrary in Tangi, which needs to be read with one eye in our world and the other on the spectacular world of the dead spirit's journey to the underworld of Hine-nui-te-Po. All

this is metaphysical background for a rationalisation of death according to Maoritanga in a cosmic drama involving an archetypal tragic replay of the primordial separation of Earth and Sky in Maori myth. Charles Larson (1976) praises the complexity of the book: 'The novel defies classification. One thing, however, is certain - it is almost impossible not to become emotionally involved with the story that unfolds. By any standards, it is a good read.'

*SPARAGMOS*: This Greek word technically denotes the tearing apart of the human body. Metaphorically it can be applied to the dereliction, frustrated ambition, sterility, nightmarish existence, hampered heroism, unrelieved suffering, ambiguous morality, and great efforts for mean gains which characterize ironic writing. The archetypal character of sparagmos is the pharmakos, the character who seems to receive from life far more punishment than his mistakes have called for, and who is often just picked on by life because circumstances have trapped him into a situation of existential suffering.

Derek Walcott (1973) announces his theme of sparagmos in the following words:

These dead, these derelicts,  
that alphabet of the emaciated,  
they are the stars of my mythology.

In Dream on Monkey Mountain, the 'dream' is really a 'nightmare,' and the mountain, which in a parabolic or high mimetic work would be a point of epiphanic vision, is here a source of broken vision. Thus life becomes for Makak a sparagmic existence. Robert Foxe (1982; pp16-27) sums him up as follows: 'This was a degraded man, but he had some elemental force in him that is still terrifying; in another society, he would have been a warrior.' This play is the closest Walcott comes to sharing V S Naipaul's extreme and persistently sparagmic view of West Indian life, which precludes the possibility of any sound achievement. Naipaul's The Middle Passage and his India: A Wounded Civilization reveal the sparagmic vision that shapes his writing.

Sparagmos came to African writing in Soyinka's The Interpreters, followed by Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat. But it was Armah's strong dose of it in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born that caused an outcry from Achebe in Morning Yet on

Creation Day. Achebe himself practises a mild form of sparagmic writing in A Man of the People and Anthills of the Savannah. Sparagmos is in Africa to stay, it seems. The latest evidence of this is Ngugi's Devil on the Cross.

Indian sparagmic writing came to the fore in the period identified by S B Rao (1989; pp143-154) as 'the new or experimental literature 1950-1970', a period conditioned by post-colonial disillusionment. However, Narayan, whose writing career goes back to the 1930s, was practising a mild form of sparagmos from the start. It is most evident in The Financial Expert and The Guide.

*SPECTACULAR REALISM*: Narration that is not conditioned by the need to tell credible stories employs the conventions of spectacular realism, as opposed to mimetic realism, which is committed to convincing the reader that the story could actually have happened. Parabolic literature is often suppositional; it sets out to entertain and to instruct rather than to mirror life. Its use of animal folktales, for example, does not require one to believe that the lion was really chief, or elder, or king of the world as the folktale supposes. Nevertheless, this 'different order of reality,' as Achebe calls it (1988, chapter 13), makes points that are true about actual reality. A chief, elder, or king will often behave like the lion of folktale.

The stylised characters of parabolic literature unsettle readers who are inured to nineteenth-century realism. Its tendency to depict an idealised existence, to leave the moral of the story 'unmasked', to include the world of the supernatural, will seem incredible to such readers. The ideal reader ought to be aware that art is not uniform, and the realism of one mode cannot be used to judge another. Even within the parabolic mode there are differences; the spectacular realism of the animal folktale is distinct from the world of the romance.

Often one kind of realism appears in counterpoint to another. Patricia Grace's low mimetic Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps, for example, has a parabolic counterpoint involving the spirit world and the influence of the dead on the living. To many Maori, of course, this is not mere fantasy, but actual reality. In Walcott's Ti-Jean and His Brothers the Devil appears to state the truth about the West Indian exile. Spectacular realism is the main mode of Walcott's narration in the play, which means that his work is parabolic.

*SYNCHRONIC CYCLE*: A synchronic cycle is one in which all eight potential forms of literature - the parabolic, the high mimetic, the low mimetic, the ironic, and all their encyclopaedic forms - are manifested concurrently rather than in diachronic succession. Even in Frye's diachronic European cycle a kind of synchrony results from occasional examples of reversion. In Shakespeare's time, for example, the predominant literary form was the high mimetic, but Shakespeare reverted, towards the end of his career (1608-1611), to the romance. His four romances - Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest - were all written in an outdated mode, but Shakespeare successfully revived a taste for it. Again, in the low mimetic period of the diachronic cycle, the romance reasserted itself in the works of authors such as Wordsworth and Goethe.

The Third World cycle is more spectacularly synchronic. The Third World author does not pay much attention to what is considered fashionable in Europe. If Third World authors find a parabolic treatment suitable, they do not hesitate to employ it. They are aware by intuition, just as Shakespeare and the Romantics were, that the author can influence the reception of a literary form. Furthermore, the elements that condition the parabolic are still intact in many places in the Third World: belief in spirits, and heaven and hell, for instance. Ali Mazrui's The Trial of Christopher Okigbo and Dante's Divine Comedy have in common similar metaphysical assumptions, although the authors belong to different cultures and epochs. Rao's Kanthapura has more affinities with the Indian traditional folktale than with the European novel. The manifestation of this parabolic narration alongside the low mimetic one employed in The Serpent and the Rope provides graphic evidence of the synchronic cycle. It is not peculiar to Rao, of course; it is evident in other authors and in other countries. In the corpus of Derek Walcott, for example, all four modes of narration - the parabolic, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic - are synchronically present, so that each of his works is quite distinct from the others.

The point may be extended to drama as well. Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel and The Trials of Brother Jero have such radically different heroes that even a cursory glance suggests a concurrency of two distinct modes. The former is an African

comedy concerned with the question of how much power the Bale - the traditional ruler of Ilujinle - still has, in spite of conceding some, in a progressive spirit, to the teacher and his workers:

BAROKA: Ah, I forget. This is the price I pay  
 Once every week, for being progressive.  
 Prompted by the school teacher, my servants  
 Were prevailed upon to form something they call  
 The Palace Workers Union.

The play is evidently a high mimetic. The vindication of the power and influence of the Bale comes with his winning Sidi, the village beauty, for a wife against his shallow and culturally alienated challenger, the school teacher. Brother Jero, however, is not a high mimetic character like the Bale. He is an ordinary but hypocritical preacher whom the play ridicules, sometimes satirically. He is at best a low mimetic character. Thus in the corpus of Soyinka high and low mimetic works appear side-by-side. Moreover, Madmen and Specialists is ironic - a play on the archetypal theme of sparagmos.

Tagore's play Chandalika is a parabolic romance in which Prakriti's mother uses her magic to break the rules of caste and get for her daughter Ananda the monk with whom she fell in love after he asked her for a drink of water. The spell on the monk is finally broken, but in the process Prakriti has learnt her worth as a human being. This parabolic play occurs alongside Tagore's lyrics and his low and high mimetic playwriting, which shows that Indian culture too is capable of producing a wide range of modes.

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