

THE COLONIZED OUTSIDER

My p^ople, I have been somewhere.
If I turn here, the rain beats me
If I turn there the sun burns me
The firewood of this world
Is only for those who can take heart
That is why not all can gather it.
The world is not good for anybody
But you are so happy with your fate,
Alas ! the travellers are back
All covered with debt.

(Kofi Awoonor: "Song of sorrow")

THE COLONIZED OUTSIDER

As we have already examined colonialism through the exploitation of human resources of the colonized nation produces a racial culture supported by a hierarchical system which attaches importance to the distinctions of colour, caste, religion, creed and even language. A distinct mythology, ideology and philosophy built around the superiority of the colonizer and (to borrow Q. Menonni's phrase) "the dependency complex" of the colonized is fostered to serve the needs of the colonizer. This deliberate distortion of historical reality coupled with an attack on the social, economic and psychological planes makes the colonized an outsider within his own country. The colonized maintains Fanon, is alienated not only from his colour and the traditional community but, most importantly, through the dynamics of colonialism/racism he is alienated from his very being as a black person, as "The Black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the Whiteman."¹

The colonizing community by controlling the political process does not allow the colonized any representation. On the contrary, it takes over the representation of the colonized in its own hands. This denial of political power to the

1. Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Marks
(New York : Grove Press, 1967), P.33.

colonized results in his alienation, which though basically political in nature, percolates to the social and psychological levels also.

Having been given a peripheral view of the colonizer's culture through the colonial education, the colonized evaluates his own culture only superficially. Moreover, the tools with which he evaluates too are supplied by the colonizer. He, consequently rejects his own culture and language in favour of those of the colonizer's. To which, as we know, he has only a marginal access. The two worlds of the colonizer and the colonized are brought together by the colonial education to look at each other alright, but they are not so close that the two can have a free interaction. The situation is aggravated because of his status in his own community which looks towards him as a potential leader. But having no political power the colonized member of the elite develops alienation.

His Western education teaches him to look at himself through the eyes of his rulers. The more he attempts to emulate and assimilate, the more he rejects himself. Even when he rebels against the racial and cultural stereotypes of his masters, he is self estranged. Thus, this 'alienation' goes from the political to the social life. And if the society in which he lives is industrialized where privatization and individualism are the governing principles, the colonized's alienation, not finding any recourse to a supporting family, tends to be existential in nature. This is what happens with

the black protagonists of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison:

"The shape of human suffering defined by Dostoevsky, Proust, Gide, Malraux, Mann, Sartre and others mirrors the actual condition of the Negro : his alienation from the larger community, his isolation within abstract walls, his loss of freedom, and his legacy of despair."²

Though the alienation to which the black American characters fall prey is existential in nature, the reasons of their alienation, unlike their European counterparts are sociological. The black American outsider does not discover his alienation through a deliberate act of meditation as is the case with the European outsider. He discovers it through oppression prescribed by his physical traits, particularly the colour of his skin. But once he becomes an "outsider", he does not behave differently.

The outsider's case against society is that he does not accept the life being lived by his fellowbeings because he stands for Truth. He rejects the respectability, the philosophy, the religion and even the value system of his fellowbeings as he knows that they are living an "ordinary dull life at low pressure" while "he is interested in high speed and great pressures"³. He is therefore misunderstood by his fellowmen sometimes.

The outsider feels that the humanbeings are the prisoners of customs and traditions set by society. He therefore longs for freedom. The first act in the direction of freedom is the act of defining himself - of answering 'who am I ?' That is

2. Esther M. Jackson, "The American Negro and the image of the Absurd" Phylon, 23, 4 (Winter 1962), P.359-71.

3. Colin Wilson, The Outsider

(London : Victor Gollancz, 1958), P.197.

why, perhaps names are so important to him. Malcolm Little, after going through this experience in a U. S. prison, christened himself Malcolm X, "X' a slash mark negating Western history itself"⁴ He went to Mecca and baptized himself as El Hajj Malik Shabazz. Name, therefore, in his case was not just a symbol of identity. It was identity itself.

To the existential outsider naming acquires a special significance. He, therefore, prefers not to have any name. Kafka's protagonist is named only Mr. K. Ellison prefers not to name his hero in Invisible Man as :

"Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead."⁵

Invisible Man, in the true tradition of the existential hero, is strictly confined within the limits of his own experience. His consciousness, shaped by the racial colonial experience, is dynamic and ever expanding. This is revealed through the speeches that he makes in the novel. The speech at the Poker party initiates the high school student into the Whiteman's world. The altruistic colonizer teaches him proper use of eloquence. He is told to know his place at all times by the Master of ceremony when he blunders into speaking "equality" instead of "responsibility" (P.33). Here he accepts the value system

4. Julius Lester, "The outsider in European and Afro - American Literature", Okike, No.10 (1976), P.83-94.

5. Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man, (New York : Signet Books, 1952), P.11.

of the majority community and is shown to have immense faith in the efficacy of education as a means of upward social mobility and also a redemption from the caste of his skin. He is so much overjoyed with the scholarship to the state college for Negroes that he ignored his grandfather's warning : "Keep this Nigger Boy running." (p.35).

But his real education starts only after leaving the black college and moving towards North. With the end of a pleasant pattern of the college routine, he now has to face the world all alone, without any viable community and necessary props. The end of his "formal education signals the beginning of his inner life."⁶ The questions that now bother him tend to be of some tangible order : "where would I go, what could I do? How could I ever return home?"(p.104).

Homelessness now becomes an obsession with him. Brotherhood, he thinks, will provide him a home. So, social protest and communal experience engage him for sometime now. In this oration outside the Harlem tenement, he proclaims : "I feel that here, after a long and desperate and uncommonly blind journey, I have come home...." (p.300). He works with the Brotherhood wholeheartedly; but is soon disillusioned with the methods of the communists. It reaches a climax when he discovers that Clifton's death meant nothing to the white bosses of the Brotherhood. Invisible Man's rhetoric is compared by a party boss to Mark

6. Lucio P. Ruotolo, Six Existential Heroes.

(Cambridge, Mass : Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), p.85.

Anthony's funeral oration on the murder of Brutus. In this Invisible Man tries to move his audience "to a sense of personal responsibility both for murder and for maintaining the hopes that Todd Clifton"⁷ had aroused among them. The strain of the speech is on individual autonomy, on the recognition of the fact that the murdered Brother was an individual with a name and not a sacrificial lamb.

His meeting with Hambro, the Party theoretician makes him understand his place in the set up. He now realizes the absurdity of any political action because he, by now, has seen the glimmerings of the inner spark. Harlem race riots further advance his views about meaninglessness of all action, social, political or otherwise. This brings an end to his search for a home: " I ran through the night, ran within myself. Ran." (P.462).

Invisible Man's journey from his Southern Town, to a Negro college, to a segregated community in the North, to the Northern world of industry, to Harlem - is his journey in search of a home. By rejecting all community, white or black, colonizer's or colonized's, he opts for "the revolt of consciousness"⁸ plunging himself into invisibility.

7. Lucio P. Ruotolo, p. 91.

8. Esther M. Jackson, p.359-370.

His invisibility, a kind of "negative identity" in Eriksonian terms, defines his total alienation from the human society. The hole in which he plunges himself is full of light: "yes, full of light. I doubt if there is a brighter spot in all New York than this hole of mine." (p.10) But this light, symbolic of the inner vision of the outsider, cannot be seen by the people who live outside the hole. This is outsider's special privilege.

Vet, a black physician who had fought for America in the war and was declared insane as soon as he returned home, is another outsider in Invisible Man. He now is being kept under watch for his madness. Invisible Man meets him at the Golden Day when the former goes there to fetch some wine for Mr. Norton, the white trustee of the Negro college. It is this Vet who shocks Norton with his outsider (both sociological and metaphysical) logic and vision. He tells Mr. Norton about the bey who brought him to the Golden Day :

" you see", he said turning to Mr. Norton, "he has eyes and ears and a good distended African nose. But he fails to understand the simple facts of life. Understand. Understand? It's worse than that. He registers with his senses but short-circuits his brain. Nothing has meaning...Already he is...a walking zombie! Already he's learned to repress not only his emotions but his humanity. He's invisible, a walking personification of the Negative, the most perfect achievement of your dreams, Sir! The mechanical man!" (p.86).

The above passage clearly reveals his views. Because they are the views of a social outsider who has seen through the American lie of racial equality. They are considered dangerous. The views are finally shared by Invisible Man, but only when he has undergone the outsider experience. Vet's parting advice to Invisible Man, therefore, is: "...learn to look beneath the surface...Come out of the fog, youngman... Play the game, but don't believe in it - that much you owe yourself..." He further asserts, "Play the game, but raise the ante, my boy. Learn how it operates, learn, how you operate..." (p.137). This nonattachment of the outsider's point of view, is the secret he shares with Invisible Man.

Through the character of Vet, Ellison not only presents the sociological side of the 'outsider' character, he also analysis the lunatic hatred that America can offer to a black man. This "irrationality" is more real than the existential idea of an irrational society and "meaninglessness" which Kazin calls an "intellectual conceit: it is not something that one lives, as the nameless and somehow generic 'hero' of Invisible Man must live the absurdity of a life that is constant contradiction to his words".⁹

The 'absurdity' of both these characters is explored through

9. Alfred Kazin, Bright Book of Life: American Novelists and Storytellers from Hemingway to Mailer

(Boston : Little, Brown & Co.,1971), p.245.

a complex use of eloquence as an artistic method. Vet's popular pastime seems to be to drink and deliver speeches to the blacks who frequent Golden Day. He has a facility with words which very few white characters in the novel seem to possess. Similarly, Invisible Man is an eloquent speaker. As a matter of fact he spends half his life acquiring this art: "I'd learn the platform tricks of the leading speakers... I would speak softly, in my most polished tones..." (p.140). The irony of the colonial situation is that he, being colonized, has no use of it. Eloquence and polite conversation, the qualities that liberal education has taught him only help his alienation from his natural community. They only serve "as a snare to the ambushed minority man."¹⁰

Richard Wright's own invisible native son is Thomas Bigger. It is the denial of his manhood by the white majority community as well as the failure of the black community to provide him with significant identity symbols that turn him into an existential "monster", as Baldwin calls him. The reasons for Bigger's alienation are both sociological and metaphysical. Living in the last years of Great Depression, Bigger has to take up the job of a chauffeur to a white philanthropist, Mr. Dalton, to save his family from starvation.

10. Alfred Kazin, p. 248.

But, he hates the whites whom he recognises as oppressors only.

Wright here, explains the relationship of the white and black Americans through the metaphor of blindness. Bigger is blind to the positive qualities of his black community. "He had", explains Wright in his essay, "How Bigger was Born", become estranged from the religion and the folk culture of his race."¹¹ He thought of his mother, brother Buddy and sister Vera always as good - for-nothing fellows; at best as what the white Americans called as good niggers in whom "the all powerful white oppressor had systematically programmed all the negative qualities of "softness, shrinking from life, escapism, other worldliness, abjectness and surrender."¹² Bigger is blind to see the positive qualities of black culture.

In Bigger's opinion, his brother Buddy is blind because he cannot see the reality of the Negro American, as he always tries to fit himself in the traditional role of the Negro. Bigger cannot accept the blindness offered by the Negro church in the form of religion, which is a source of inspiration for his mother. Similarly, Bessie's blind addiction to alcohol does not attract him at all. These, he knows, are at best escapisms

11. 'Introduction' to Native Son (1940; rpt. Penguin Books, 1977), p.15.

12. George E. Kent, "Richard Wright; Blackness and the Adventure of Western culture" (ed.) Houston A. Baker, Twentieth Century Interpretations of Native son. (Englewood; Prentice Hall, 1968), p.92

fed into the black culture by the white oppressor in order to perpetuate the American caste system.

Mrs. Dalton's physical blindness is symbolic of the blindness of the white liberal philanthropic community. Though Daltons donate liberally to the upliftment of the negroes, they ironically fail to understand the basic problem of the negro's degradation. They support the caste system by segregating the negro and also by charging higher rents from the negroes. Similarly, Mary, Jan and Max, all the communists are blind to the humanity of the negroes. Max's analysis of Bigger's crime, therefore, is deterministic and reductionist.

Bigger's journey to attain an identity, though of seventytwo hours, is his journey from boyhood to manhood. It is also his journey from his sociological, reductionist black nationalism to existential alienation. His fear which in the beginning is the fear of a negro boy coming to terms with the castist American social reality, finally turns into a metaphysical dread, a fear of self knowledge. It is by killing that he defines himself. For him murder becomes an act of creation, an expression of Nietzschean will to power : "But I ain't worried none about them women I killed. For a little while I was free. I was doing something. I was wrong but I was feeling alright", (p.392) he tells Max.

Bigger is a product of an increasingly impersonal, industrialised mass society. His sense of isolation and alienation is intensified by the fact that he is a Negro living in the caste ridden segregated American society of 1930s. He, therefore, maintains Richard Wright, is a "product of a dislocated society."

He is a dispossessed and disinherited man."¹³ The fabulous American city in which he lives is a city of extremes; a city that accommodates both the fabulously rich Americans like Daltons and also the extremely poor like the Thomases. Bigger has an access to both the life styles. He is lured by the Dalton life style, but is bored by his own. It is this double consciousness that offers him the outsider vision. His life in a schizoid universe with conflicting and seemingly unreconcilable modes of reality, lends him a vision which enables him to understand the blindness of both the white and the black characters. And understanding of the human condition is all that an existential outsider cares for.

Wright's The Outsider, though influenced by Camus and Dostoevsky, has its "own private socio - existentialist mythology", which is based on the myth that the American Negro "is better able to judge American Values; and American culture" as he "stands outside American life."¹⁴ The myth, as we can see, is questionable. Moreover, it also negates Wright's own stand in Native Son, in which Thomas Bigger becomes an outsider not so much because of ~~some~~ psychological urges, as because of the sociological, and

13. Native Son, p.23.

14. Edward Margolies, The Art of Richard Wright
(Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1969) p.136.

economic pressures.

The Outsider, fails as a work of art because here "ideas dominate plot, character, even prose style." The characters too are "allegorical figures".¹⁵ Cross Damon, the hero, is a monster who fails to convince us as a human being. His total and complete denial of his family when they are brought to the office of Ely Houston, the District Attorney, though in keeping with the existential framework, adds to Damon's dimension of monstrosity; but deprives him of verisimilitude. His total freedom from all kinds of human contact, denial of everything human makes him a perfect metaphysical outsider, but leaves us unconvinced about his human status.

Wright's structuring of Cross's Odyssey for freedom into five books : Dread, Dream, Descent and Decision, is too schematic to be real.

Cross perhaps, is the intellectualised and enlarged edition of Bigger. He, like Bigger, defines himself through violence. Bigger wants to return to the world with the knowledge he has acquired as an outsider. But as things stand, he cannot go back. The white world of the oppressor

15. Edward Margolies, The Art of Richard Wright, p.137.

has shut its doors completely on him. Damon Cross on the other hand alienates himself so much that he does not want to go back to the world. He is a monster who knows no laws at all and hence is a danger to all human society.

Defining the "absurdist vision," Harris maintains that it is a "belief that we are trapped in a meaningless universe and that neither God, nor man, theology, nor philosophy, can make sense of the human condition."¹⁶ James Baldwin's Rufus Scott in Another Country is one such character who has absurdist vision of the world. He is a lost, alienated creature trapped in racist America. His relationship with Leona, the white girl is not a relationship of love, it is a relationship of sex (as discussed in chapter Two). He commits suicide, because he finds no meaning in life at all. "He was so tired, he had fallen so low, that he scarcely had the energy to be angry; nothing of his belonged to him anymore-"¹⁷ He had no friends (Vivaldo was the only friend he had in the whole world) He feels lonely in a crowd: "Entirely alone, and dying of it, he was part of an unprecedented multitude."(p.3). He wants to hide himself

16. Charles B. Harris : Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd (New Haven, College & Univ. Press, 1971), p.17.

17. James Baldwin, Another Country (London, Corgi Books, 1973, first published by Michael Joseph Ltd. 1963), p.2.

from the world because he has nothing to share with it.

Almost all the characters in Another Country live in an existential world. This is a world in which there are no lasting relationships, no lasting values and nothing that can hold itself together. Things are falling apart because the world they inhabit is a neurotic world. "Here Baldwin describes New York like an oppressive weight upon its inhabitants through the images of disease and violence"¹⁸. New York to its inhabitants, both black and white, is an existential reality. There is no sense of community among its inhabitants. The citizens of the fictitious world of Another Country are separated from each other and want to share their lives but as things stand, they simply cannot do so. There is no sharing.

Baldwin demonstrates a sense of complete sharing in If Beale Street Could Talk. But then there are no white characters in this novel. Baldwin seems to be suggesting here that there cannot be a worthwhile sense of community between the blacks and the whites, because ^{of} their racial memories percolating through centuries of oppression of the colonized. Fonny here too would have been another Rufus if there were no Tish. He is

18. C.B. Cox and A.R. Jones, "After the Tranquillized Fifties : Notes on Sylvia Plath and James Baldwin", Critical Quarterly , 6, 2 (Summer 1964), p.107-122

saved from alienation and hence from the consequent disaster that Rufus Scott meets by the joint efforts of the two black families.

So, we can conclude that the outsider in black American fiction, unlike his European counterpart, discovers his state not only by an act of meditation as it were, but by the very sociological conditions in which he has to live : "Where the black writer is 'born' alienated, the Western writer is likely to discover his alienation in his maturity, by deliberate act of meditation"¹⁹ While the agony of the Western outsider is hidden beneath his skin, in the case of the black American the skin itself becomes the cause of his agony. "What distinguishes the black character's situation is not that he is oppressed, but that a great part of the nature of his oppression is prescribed by a physical characteristic."²⁰ Both the black American and the European outsiders realize the absurdity of the human condition. But the reasons for this absurdity differ significantly. Both the European and black American outsiders understand and crave for human contact. They want to regain their balance by establishing human relationships, creating their own community when the sociological communities in which they are born have failed to

19. Stanley Macebuh, James Baldwin : a Critical Study.

(New York : The Third Press, 1973), p.5.

20. Roger Rosenblatt, Black Fiction

(Cambridge, Mass : Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), p.7.

perform their functions of satisfying the emotional needs of their members by supplying them with identities.

So, whether it is Thomas Bigger, Cross Damon, Invisible Man or Rufus Scott, the black outsider, unlike his European counterparts, is a product of a calcified colonized society. He is gifted with a view that the other characters are incapable of. While Ellison and Wright do not try to restore their outsiders to their communities implying the impossibility of their situations, Baldwin in Another Country makes Rufus commit suicide to emphasise the value of love and compassion, which have been denied to him. All these black outsiders reach the "Existential Vortex" denouncing all values : "There are no values, there is no right and wrong; there is no reality except that which the majority defines as real,"²¹ They suffer because they do not see the way a large majority of characters see. It is through suffering that they acquire "awareness" of the human condition. They, however, work for freedom, as it is but another expression of the will to power. So in this way they are closer to the European outsiders.

The Western society is disjointed because of too much of privatization. As Pawley observes : "We are a society of private citizens, given over to private goals and private pleasures."²²

21. Julius Lester, "The Outsider in European and Afro-American Literature", Okike, No.10 (1976), p.83-94.

22. Martin Pawley, The Private Future : Causes and Consequences of Community Collapse in the West (London : Thames and Hudson, 1973), p.48-49.

In this society "the community has said 'no' to community". It is being held together by a pattern of aspirations marketed like products and services. The traditional function of a community of providing a status, an identity, an image of self worth and security and protection to its members, has been taken over by other agencies. Now it has come to mean only an alternative set of relationships.

Western society, according to Pawley, has voluntarily abandoned social obligation and community life in favour of privatization. He calls the present state as "anti-social society of non-community." It is a "Social form whose nature derives from the mechanisms and structures it employs to maintain the isolation of its citizens."²³

If isolation of its citizens or individualism is the key to Western society, a sense of common identity and characteristics, is what holds an African society together. Whereas the European society has become an abstract and artificial machine, its African counterpart still tries to co-ordinate the energies of its members for the benefit of the community as a whole. Due to industrialisation, urbanisation and technological advancement, the Western society has undergone a change which favours individualism; the tribal character of African society (except South Africa and some other countries where modernisation is fast) discredits individualism and favours collectivism.

23. Martin Pawley, p.36.

As examined in an earlier chapter, while a strong willed individual is a rule in the Western world, the tribal world of Africa proclaims him either a wizard or a mad man. In the traditional African social pattern an individual's contribution to life and welfare of the community is given the highest place, a non-conformist therefore becomes an outcast. As it happens with Okolo, the protagonist of Gabriel Okara's The Voice. The penalty for his individualism is no less than his death. Therefore, "a lone individualist in a work of African fiction is an exceptional figure,"²⁴ asserts David Cook, "while his counterpart in the Western fiction is a representative figure," the loneliness of the protagonist in African fiction, makes him an "exceptional" and an "atypical" figure. The problem of the Western fictional character is that of communication with other human beings in a world which has accepted individualism as the normal way of life.

A typical hero in modern Western fiction is regarded by the novelist as significantly representative by virtue of his alienation. But the 'outsider' in the African fiction is an exception, often tragic. He is an individualist who is trying to assert his point of view in a society which is compact, integrated but at the same time it is under stress due to

24. David Cook, African Literature : a View (London, Longman, 1977), p.5.

colonial intrusion.

The point can be illustrated by discussing the opening scenes of The Outsider (Richard Wright) and A Grain of Wheat (James Ngugi).

Cross Damon in The Outsider is tired. So are the other three men who meet us in the opening scene of the novel. They are out when everybody is asleep because it is still dark and "a shimmering curtain of snowflakes" flutters down upon Chicago. (p.1) They will now go home and sleep after having worked in a night shift. Life for Cross, particularly is boring :

"He yearned to talk to some one; he felt his mere telling his story would have helped. But to whom could he talk? To his mother? No,... Could he talk to his wife with whom he was not living? God, no! ... There was Dot, his sweet heart; but she was not capable of understanding anything. ...And there was not a single man to whom he cared to confess the nightmare that was his life" - (p.14)

Thus we see that primarily it is failure to communicate that makes him an outsider. He has failed his community and his community has failed him. For him, "To-day was like yester-day and he knew that tomorrow would be the same. And it had been like this now for months." (p.12).

So, it is with Mugo, the Chief protagonist of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat : "How time drags, everything repeats itself,

Mugo thought : the day ahead would be just like yesterday and the day before."²⁵ He too like Cross is living alone. Life for him is a burden. But he, living in a village of Kenya, maintains his daily routine closer to nature. He wakes up (though in despair) when "dawn diffused through cracks in the wall into the hut"(p.3). He cooks his break-fast and goes to work in the fields. On way, he accidently meets Warui, a village elder who asks him : "How it is with you, this morning?" "It is well" (p.4), and as usual Mugo walked away. But Warui involves him in talking.

Thus, in this small village of Thabai every one knows every one else and Mugo is saved from being a total outsider because of the joint efforts of the whole community.

The life at Thabai, like Kanthapura in Raja Rao's novel of the same name, is a collective affair. It is a kind of an extended family where the feeling of 'We-ness' is so strong that no one can remain isolated. To capture the collective consciousness of the village, Ngugi makes Thabai itself a character in the novel. Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen shift the point-of-view from the second person narrative of the earlier chapters to the first person plural form of "We". Chapter Thirteen opens with : "Most of us from Thabai first saw him at the New Rung'ei Market day the heavy rain fell. You remember the Wednesday, just before Independence?" (p.155) Here, Mugo is being watched by the villagers, as he is ^{the} only man walking in the rain. Some of them

25. James Ngugi, A Grain of Wheat (London : Heinemann, 1967,rpt. 1976),p.3

brand him a fool while others sympathise with him because he may have a long way to walk or maybe he has something heavy on his heart. Whatever may the comment be, every one in the village participates in this act. It is this feeling of being watched by the village women that makes Mugo regret his having come to the market place. This again, is responsible for Mugo's confession of his betrayal. It is through the symbol of rain (water) that Ngugi prepares the reader for Mugo's confession who was the only man in the rain and who needed a washing of his guilt. It is the collective consciousness of the village of Thabai which shakes Mugo's conscience :

"And then suddenly he heard the village people around his hut singing Uhuru Songs. Every word of praise carried for him a piercing irony. What had he done for the village? What had he done for anybody? Yet now he saw this undeserved trust in a new light, as the sweetest thing in the world"

(p.203)

He confesses his betrayal, though at the cost of being condemned. But he has thus saved himself from being an 'outsider'. Similarly, Njoroge in Weep Not Child, as we shall examine, is finally restored to his people.

Njoroge is a youngman who had his schooling at a Mission School. He always thought that education, English education was the key to solve all the problems of his people. Even as a child he thought that Mr. Howlands, a European Settler, was rich

because he was educated. The value of English education has been so much implanted on the colonized minds of Njoroge, Muihaki and others that they think that the black people of Africa would never have been enslaved if they had known English. But Njoroge remarks that "there was no body to teach them English"²⁶ It is this distorted view of reality which the colonizer is too eager to implant on the minds of the colonized.

Colonial education, as we know, was geared to produce servile subjects. The ideal archetypal colonial subject like Ariel in The Tempest is supposed to carry out the orders of his master Prospero. He is to behave like a robot. Jacobo in Weep Not Child is one such character who becomes a model for Njoroge.

Thus in Weep Not Child Ngugi tries to analyse the psychological effects of colonialism on the minds of adolescents who have to face the naked reality of a typical colonial situation. The tool with which they are to face the situation, ironically is the colonial education.

Chege, Waiyaki's father in The River Between asks his son to go to the Mission School to "learn all the wisdom and the secrets of the whiteman" so as to "be true to your people and the ancient

²⁶: James Ngugi, Weep Not Child.

(London : Heinemann, 1964 rpt. 1974), p.37

rites,"²⁷ - never understanding the limitations of the colonial educational system. Ramaswamy's father in Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope is reported to have asked him (Rama) to learn mathematics : "The British will not go till we can shame them with our intelligence. And what is more intellectual than Mathematics, son?"²⁸ Njoroge's insistence on learning English, Chege's faith in the efficacy of colonial educations, Ramaswamy's father's belief in mastering mathematics - all have one common limitation and that is the limitation of the colonized mind which believes the myth of the efficacy of colonial education. The myth is carried to its logical extension in the character of Waiyaki in The River Between. It is here that Ngugi goes deeper into the question of colonial education and examines it thoroughly. Waiyaki goes on organising school after school all over the Kikuyuland in the hope that it will help the people in getting liberated both from the colonial rule and their traditionalism. He believes that it is through education that the people will be modernised. But his dedication, as we learn, takes him nowhere finally : "Education for an oppressed people was not enough"(p.160) Thus, the whiteman's magic cannot and does not become an 'open

27. James Ngugi, The River Between (London : Heinemann, 1965), p.24.

28. Raja Rao, The Serpent and the Rope (1960 : New Delhi : Hind Pocket Books, 1968), p.16.

sesame' for the colonized. It can either produce robots like Njeroge or 'black white men' like Obis and Akpans.

Both Njeroge and Obi are basically tragic figures, made all the more tragic because of their education. They try to assert individualism in an African society where the communal structure still holds itself and a sense of community guides it.

R.K. Narayan also examines this problem of colonial education in The English Teacher. Krishna who teaches English at the Mission College in Malgudi finally gets fed up with the whole business. In his letter of resignation he plans to write to Mr. Brown, he writes : "This education had reduced us to a nation of morons ; We were straglers to our own culture and camp followers of another culture, feeding on leavings and garbage."²⁹

T.M. Aluko, a Nigerian novelist, too studies the problem of colonial education through the personality of colonial elite. His One Man, One Matchet is about Yorubaland where a black Nigerian, Udo Akpan, is appointed a District Officer, a post which had hitherto been held by the Europeans. He, being the first African in Administration, decides to take up the problems of Ipaja village "in an essentially African way"³⁰

29. R.K. Narayan, The English Teacher

(Mysore : Indian Thought Publications, 1955), p.205

30. T.M. Aluko, One Man, One Matchet

(London : Heinemann, 1964), p.24.

Akpan is an upper second in classics and a Cambridge blue. In the opinion of Mr. Gregory, The British Agriculture Officer working with him, Akpan is an "excellent clubman" (p.13). Stanfield, his white boss also appreciates his qualities : "In all respects a fine youngman who is a credit to his race, and indeed to any race." (p.156). But to the native Africans, he is an outsider, a "black white Man", who does not speak their language as he is not from their region and hence like other Europeans needs an interpreter.

The people of Ipaja first look towards him with a sense of awe, because he holds a European post and then with suspicion which is created by some vested interests. Akpan addresses the villagers. But his attempt to establish a rapport fails when a chief remarks : "This man is not an African at all. He is truly a white Man. We must be careful not to be deceived by the colour of his skin." Another chief attending the meeting supports him : "He is not one of our own tribe. We do not understand his language. He does not understand ours. How then can he see things like us?" (p.40).

Akpan, being heir to two cultures, two polarities, is gifted with a kind of double vision. He belongs to the group of the colonial elite, which arose in the colonized nations under the British rule. The members of this group were Western educated and primarily Western-oriented people. It was indeed "a cultural

community with a core of common values and a communications system³¹ transcending the traditional barriers of caste, religion, region and tribe. But at the same time it created a new and alien status system, and a hierarchical value system based on the cultural and social system of the colonizer. They became, as Gandhi often said, strangers within their own country and at the same time were not accepted as equals to their rulers. They could only become, what Aluko has appropriately called, 'black white men' or in the Indian context, 'brown Sahibs.' It is the colour of their skin which alongwith the status of a colonial (however elevated and dignified that might have been) separated them from their masters. They could not have access to real political power, as they belonged to the subject races. Some sociological studies have compared their status to that of the "marginal man".

The 'marginal man' is a product of two or more social worlds and is poised in psychological uncertainty"³² of these worlds. Colonialism provides ideally suitable conditions for the birth propagation and retention of this human species, as it brings the two worlds of the colonized and the colonizer close enough to look at each other, but not so close that the two can have a free interaction.

31. Alice G. Tyrner - Stastny, Indo - Anglican Literature and the colonial Elite (unpublished, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1969, Cornell University), p.19

32. Ibid, p. 100.

It is this colonial elite to which Dr. Aziz in E.M. Foster's A Passage to India belongs. He is invited to bridge parties for minimising the gap. But, the gap between the two is widened on the contrary. It, of course, makes the colonized realize his marginal status. This realization either makes him go back to his community, as is done by Dr. Aziz, Or he becomes a total outsider like Obi Okonkwo in Achebe's No Longer at Ease.

The two characteristics of the personality of the marginal man are - alienation and ambivalence. The colonial elite "conscious of their role as potential leaders but denied access to political power" develop "alienation."³³ Western liberal education teaches them to reject the norms of their own traditional society. The system also teaches them to replace their norms with the egalitarian values of the colonizing society. But the colonial relationship is inherently so very hierarchical that even a European Liberal like Fielding (in A Passage to India) daily enjoys the racially based privileges that he ideologically rejects. In this process of a total rejection of his own norms and a marginal acceptance by the colonizer, the colonial begins to see himself through the eyes of his ruler. The more he attempts to emulate and assimilate the more he rejects himself. He, thus develops existential tendencies.

33. A.G. Tyrner-Stastny, p.105.

Ngugi's Njoroge in Weep Not Child develops these tendencies of a complete outsider. His ambivalent attitude leaves him indecisive on every issue and finally he decides to commit suicide out of desperation. But for the timely help of her two mothers, he would have died.

Titus Oti, in Aluko's Kinsman and Foreman has been so much alienated from his community and people, including his own mother whom he calls, "a little girl" and "a doting old woman" (p.120) when she refuses to go to the hospital for her treatment. The only person with whom he feels a sense of community is another outsider, Bola, his girl friend, who is away in England for her training. He complains to Bola about the "illogical, sentimental arguments and pleadings" of his mother in a letter and tells her that if he did not have an "understanding person like her :.!.I am sure I would go mad, stark-staring mad." (p.171) This as we have already seen is the case of an outsider against his society.

Obi Okonkwo, in Achebe's No Longer at Ease, maintains David Cook, "has been specially trained to be an outsider,"³⁴ He is torn, like the other black white Men, between a co-ordinated society, a living Ibo community and the other parts of

34. David Cook, African Literature : a view p.20.

his nature developed by his education and exposure to the Western Way of life and thinking. He has a national outlook transcending the Umuofian barriers of caste, region and tribe. He wooes, Clara, an outcaste who too like him belongs to the colonial elite. But, he cannot marry her because she is an outcaste.

Umuofia Progressive Union is a community of those people who hail from Umuofia and work in Lagos. To them Lagos is an alien land : "We are strangers in this land. If good comes to it may we have our share. But if bad comes let it go to the owners of the land." (p.6). Their world-view is still tribal and hence their value system is different. To them Obi's crime is not that he took bribe but that "it was a thing of shame for a man in the senior service to go to prison for twenty pounds" (p.5). In the opinion of the President of the Union, if Obi wanted to "eat a toad," he should have looked for a "fat and juicy one."

"The core of the novel," maintains Killam, "is the moral dilemma in which Obi finds himself."³⁵ He, because of his education and training has the moral awareness of a modern educated youngman, but lacks the moral courage to sustain

35. G.D. Killam, The Writings of Chinua Achebe.

(London : Heinemann, 1969), p.50.

and practise it. His education, both at the Mission School and in England has not equipped him with the required courage. His responses and reactions to almost all the situations, as the one to his father's blank refusal for his marriage to an 'osu' come from "the periphery, and not the centre, like the jerk in the leg of a dead frog when a current is applied to it." (p.124).

His Western education has equipped him with a sense of modern morality which distinguishes him from the rest of the Nigerian elite. It has, made him see himself as an individual in the traditional African society.

Obi, therefore, unlike his other fictional counterparts of Aluko, has not only to commute between the traditional and modern worlds of tribal values and modern Western norms. — the dual world of the villagers and the rich elite : but he has also to "commute between the corporate world of an integrated society and lonely world of an individual consciousness"³⁶ a polarity which makes him an outsider.

Obi has no one in this world with whom he can share his

36. David Cook, p.84 37

confidence. His relationship with his girl friend, Clara, is of a physical nature, mostly. If he had a deeper involvement, he would have fought against an irrational caste system which he ridicules. As a matter of fact, immediately after his mother's death, "he alienates and rejects Clara more finally than even traditional society had done."³⁷ Similarly, there is no warmth in his relationship with his father.

The only person with whom Obi seems to have a deeper relationship is his mother. But this too, on a closer scrutiny is found superficial. He refuses to go for the funeral of his mother, on the ground that "It was more useful to send all the money he could for the funeral instead of wasting it on petrol to get home." (p.147). He however, does not send the money either. His rationalisation, reminds us of another outsider, Meursault in Camus's The Outsider, who is not sure when his mother had died : "Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday. I can't be sure."³⁸ This tone of indifference, typical of an existential outsider, is similar to Obi's line of thinking : "Obi wondered whether he had done the right thing in not setting out for Umuofia yesterday. But what could have been the point is going?" (p.147) Within three days of his mother's death, Obi fails to picture her clearly. Even Nathaniel's story

37. David Cook, p. 90.

38. Albert Camus, The Outsider (tr. Stuart Gilbert, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1946), p.9.

of the tortoise who would not go to bury his dead mother produces absolutely no effect on Obi, though the other listeners in his room observe "a long and embarrassed silence." (p.147).

A few days after his mother's death, Obi writes in his diary that he feels like a brand-new snake emerged from its slough" (p.150.) His thoughts, reminiscing his past, give him "a queer kind of pleasure. They seemed to release his spirit. "He no longer felt guilt. He, too, had died. Beyond death there are no ideals and no humbug, only reality." (p.151) (emphasis added) With a deft stroke of irony, Achebe tells us that "the slough "Obi discards and the "ideals and humbug" he rejects are the values of the Western morality, as immediately after this, he accepts bribes and thus joins the Nigerian elite. But, this too, as we learn, is a temporary phase only. He does not feel happy, anyhow. For him, "every incident" of accepting a bribe, "has been a hundred times worse than the one before." (p.154).

Obi's incapacity to have deeper involvement with any ~~one~~ - Clara, family, Umofians, Nigerians, elite, like that of Meursault's, stems from his sense of unreality. Meursault's last reflections on the eve of his execution bring him a sort of insight : "with death so near, mother must have felt like

someone on the brink of freedom, ready to start life again... And I too felt ready to start life again. "(p.103) He is happy now and discovers that he always had been happy. Although this discovery is very late, "but at least it has given him a notion of the meaning of freedom"³⁹ "Freedom," which he understands, "is release from unreality" Obi, too, seems to be echoing these words when he thinks that "beyond death" there was "only reality". He, however, does not think of freedom. His sense of release has a limited scope and meaning. His mind lacks the metaphysical subtlety of Meursault's mind. He has gained no self knowledge.

While Achebe on the one hand, "seems sadly to be depicting the educated elite as spineless"⁴⁰ in the character of Obi, on the other, he points out the complexity of situation by closing the novel with the following remark : "Everybody wondered why. The learned judge, as we have seen, could not comprehend how an educated young man and so on and so forth. The British Council man, even the men of Umuofia, did not know. And we must presume that, in spite of his certitude, Mr. Green did not know either." (p.154).

The judge, Mr. Green, and the other British Council men

39. Colin Wilson, The Outsider p.30.

40. David Cook, p.91.

are all white and hence enjoy the privileges of the colonizer. They thus, having conditioned minds fail to understand the pressures of the extended Nigerian family which pull Obi apart. The men of Umuofia with their limited loyalties and a narrow sense of nationality do not understand the pulls of new morality which Obi has learnt at the Mission and in England. Both the colonizer and the typical colonized fail to understand the complexities of the crossroads of culture at which they stand. Being heir to two cultures, the colonial elite is specially privileged to understand this complexity. In this process, however, they like Obi, weaken their decisiveness, their will to act. They become victims of ambivalence and alienation.

Obi's tragedy, typical of the colonial elite, is the tragedy of a man who fails to make a coherent sense of his new and complex situation. His colonial education, like Waiyaki, Nwoye, Akpan and others of the colonial elite, fails him utterly at this time (of fighting against 'osu' prejudice) of real test. He leaves the stage not with a bang but a whimper and through him Achebe has questioned the stature of the educated colonial elite.

Obi's grandfather, Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart, also is a tragic figure. But he has a heroic stature. He too suffers 'alienation' but has no 'ambivalence' or 'ambiguity'

a prerogative of the colonial elite. Moreover, his alienation is different from Obi both in texture and content.

Okonkwo, like other African fictional outsiders, asserts his individuality in a well-integrated, corporate, tribal community of Umuofia. In this community, we are told "man was judged according to his worth" (p.7) and his "achievement was revered" (p.8). But all this had to be done within the well defined social boundaries of the pre-colonial Ibo community, which is under an attack of the colonial forces.

Okonkwo is both an individual and a representative character. With a lesser artist he could have easily ~~tuned~~ into a 'type'. But Achebe with his artistic control and skill, keeps Okonkwo moving between the two polarities - "the individual and the social, by narrowing and broadening the focus of the narrative"⁴¹ His "fixation on success"⁴² wins him all the titles of the Iboland; but, it, at the same time, makes him blind to the weaknesses of others. His fear of being called a weak~~man~~ deprives him of his sense of discrimination and consequently he kills Ikemefuna, His

41. See Kate Turkington, Chinua Achebe : Things Fall Apart (London, Edward Arnold, 1977) p.36-38 for a detailed discussion of this technique.

42. Ibid, p.38.

insistence on 'manliness' and strength finally determines his isolation, when he takes a lone revenge on the whiteman by killing his messengers. The act, as we know, is not approved by his clan, which is more flexible than Okonkwo. Okonkwo is an individual who has "an exaggerated and even pathological sense of communal duty."⁴³ He performs more than is expected of an individual and ignores Ezeudu whose word of mouth is the word of law for the Umuofians.

It is through the character of Obierika that Achebe shows the central path of compromise. Obierika is gifted with a vision and can see the social reality and also the stress and strain of colonialism. While Okonkwo does not undergo any educative moral process. Obierika recognizes the catalytic effect of the colonial forces on the destruction of the Igbo way of life as also on its chief representative Okonkwo.

Okonkwo, like the other outsiders that we have discussed is an individualist. His value system though based on the traditional Igbo life style is individualized because it is inflexible and is not prepared to accept the historical reality of colonialism. While the Igbo community has accepted the reality of colonialism and is thus changing itself, Okonkwo, its greatest champion at one time, paradoxically dies the death

43. Gareth Griffiths, A Double Exile : African and West Indian Writings between Two cultures (London : Marion Boyars, 1978), p.16.

of a dog. In his death he denies all that he had lived for. Thus, "he has reached the point of absolute disillusionment"⁴⁴ which is a special privilege of the outsider. In his death he has proved that things have fallen apart irrevocably.

The much talked about irony of the last paragraph of the novel, is the irony not so much of Okonkwo's life, as it is the irony of his clansman who allow their chief representative to die like a dog and also to be dismissed by only one paragraph in the book that D.C., the white man, is planning to write." The only figure who escapes this final irony is the dead Okonkwo,⁴⁵ mainly because by committing suicide he has freed himself from the bondage of the customs and traditions set by his clansmen.

Ezeulu, the hero of Arrow of God is another individualist and therefore atypical in the otherwise well-integrated Ibo society. He unlike Okonkwo, accepts the reality of the colonial situation and consequently develops some kind of relationship with Captain Winterbottom. While Okonkwo refuses to take cognizance of the missionary activity by condemning Nwoye's joining the church, Ezeulu, though himself a "priest-king", asks his son, Oduche to go to the Mission - to learn the ways of the Whiteman.

Similarly the Igbo community of Umuaro too has undergone

44. David Cook, p.79.

45. Ibid, p.80.

a change, but the colonial forces have so far not disturbed its basic structure. This community has "continuity" and "cohesion", "energy and competitiveness"⁴⁶ The villagers of Umuaro live like the members of an extended family. The village festivals like 'Ilo', when the living members of the clan meet the dead and the New Yam Feast, form the centre of communal life. Thus the village community at Umuaro is a "community in the normative and approbationary sense of the term."⁴⁷

This community is contrasted with that of the European colonialists who live at Government Hill at Okperi. The five officers stationed over there have no women or children living with them. They are divided by class and official protocol and are jealous of each others' position and privileges. Unlike the villagers, they have no festivals and celebrations. Moreover, because they are living in an alien land, even the climate is, hostile to them. Even for Winterbottom, though a "hardened coaster" the country turns into "a furnace", the wind is "treacherous" and "beguiling" which might give a "death kiss" to the "unwary European" (p.29) When he falls sick, there is practically no one to look after him. Though they have created a small England over Okperi, they feel totally alienated from the land and the people. Because of an intricate official protocol, they do not share each other's lives either.

46. M.M. Mahood, The Colonial Encounter : A Reading of Six Novels (London, Rex Collings, 1977), p.38.

47. Ibid, p.40-41.

The village community is being guided by Ezeulu who has an immense power over the people's lives, but as he reflects "his power was no more than the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his" (p.3). Being the chief priest of Ulu, he can refuse to name the day for various kinds of celebrations. But, he knows that he cannot do that : "But could he refuse? No Chief Priest had ever refused... He would not dare." (p.3) Thus, we meet Ezeulu whose mind is in a dilemma. The two contradictory drives of his nature are - his will to serve his community and his individual ambition to dominate it. It is this tension between "communal responsibility" and individual ambition"⁴⁸ which forms the theme of this novel. The tension is magnified by the colonial dimension added to this problem of individualism in the corporate life of Umuaro.

Ezeulu, however, has to fight against the reactionary forces, symbolised by Nwaka and Ezidemili, the priest of Idemilli too. They challenge his moral and spiritual authority over the lives of the people. But Ezeulu is more than a challenge to them. The situation precipitates when the colonial forces of disruption act as catalysts and Ezeulu fails to name the festival of the New Yams because he has been put behind the bars by the white man and hence he could not finish the

48. Molly Mahood, p.49.

sacred yams. He alongwith many others, requests Ezeulu to find out some solution so that the harvest is not ruined and the children are saved from starvation. But Ezeulu turns down all appeals. The elders of Umuaro are prepared to take the abomination of Ulu on their heads if Ezeulu agreed to eat the remain-yams. But Ezeulu refuses to oblige them on the ground that this was the wish of Ulu as "the gods sometimes use us as "a whip" (p.208).

Examining the question of the existence of Ulu, we find that Ulu is an "anthropomorphous god"⁴⁹ who will end one day. He is like one of the lesser gods of Umuaro who are created every year at the New Yam Festival and are forgotten soon afterwards. Unlike Idemilli, the god of Ezedemilli, Ulu's existence has not been noted by any anthropologist so far. He, in fact, has no existence outside the novel and even within the book. Achebe has treated him with an ironic stance. "Ulu is a figment of Ezeulu's mind"⁵⁰ Ibo community, therefore, has an ambivalent attitude towards Ulu. The rivalry shown between Ezeulu and Ezedemilli symbolises the ambivalent and ambigeuous attitude of the people towards Ulu. People finally desert Ulu when they learn that they have been betrayed by him : "Ulu, the creation of the people at a time of intense need, is rejected by the people in like circumstances when he is seen to conspire against them."⁵¹

49. Molly Mahood, p.48.

50. M.Mahood, p.47.

51. G.D. Killam, p.79.

Ezeulu's tragedy is the tragedy of an ambitious man for whom personal truth is greater than the collective truth. It is also the tragedy of his god, Ulu, whose arrow he was. The tragedy stems as much from Ezeulu's personal flaw as also from the historical circumstances of colonialism which are beyond his control and comprehension.

Ezeulu's madness is the result of the disturbance in the delicate equilibrium between his communal responsibility and individual ambition. This happens mainly because of the intrusion of an alien religion set forth by the colonial forces. These disruptive forces of colonialism first alienate Ezeulu from his natural community and then from himself in his megalomaniac state of mind. At the end of the novel we are told that another God is found and the "alienation process continues by the cultivation of these pursuits which were operative in causing Ulu to flee and in destroying Ezeulu"⁵²

Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters is set in independent Nigeria. The focus of the novel is fixed on five friends - Sagoe; the journalist, Bandele and Kola, the University lecturers, teaching economics and art, Egbo, working in the foreign office, Sekoni, a devout Muslim engineer, and Lasunwan, lawyer. All these are young and had their education abroad and

52. G.D. Killam, p. 83.

are back in Nigeria trying to make their careers, enjoy themselves and influence the affairs of their own thoroughly corrupt country in a general way. They alongwith a few other characters represent the new Nigerian elite. Unlike Aluko's 'black white man', all stereo-typed, these young men are individualized with a common characteristic, - vigour : "By no means a band of saints, their great virtue is their vigour and their determination to think for themselves"⁵³

Dehinwa, Sagoe's emancipated girl friend, an unnamed self possessed second year girl student who gets pregnant by Egbo and Mrs. Faseyi, radiologist's mother-are the female interpreters of new morality, as they, like their male counterparts, face life with no illusions. The country they live in is being exploited by a group of people who are hypocrites and are out to serve their vested interests only. This group too represents the Nigerian elite of an older generation : Professor Oguazor, the anglicized Nigerian academic, with his highly affected pronunciation and a lip sympathy to the 'merals' (moral) at the University campus, the nameless Managing Director going abroad at his country's expense twentieth time and collecting a "pachydermous radiogram" (p.78) and other junk, speaks pompous but sub-standard English : "How can an interview be conductable with

53. Elderred Jones, "Introduction" to The Interprets

(1965 : London : Heinemann, rpt. 1976), p.2.

someone who is not taking the matter serious?" (p.79) : Dr. Faseyi, a radiologist who gets cross with his English wife because she fails to bring gloves when they are to be 'presented' at an embassy party and then there are the two chiefs - Winsala and Sir Derinola. They are all very important people and are responsible for controlling the destiny of their country.

Wole Soyinka in an interview once remarked that "human beings are simply cannibals all over the world so that their main preoccupation seems to be eating up one another."⁵⁴ It is this kind of "personal relationship Cannibalism" which is one of the themes of The Interpreters. Here, Soyinka takes a critical look at the human situation in modern Nigeria and exposes how some people eat up other humanbeings through their "phoniness and callousness."

If we look deeper, we discover that almost all the phonies in the novel are typical colonials : anglacised Professor Oguazor and Dr. Faseyi, Chiefs Winsala, and Derin, the Managing Director, etc. Oguazors, according to Sagoe live in the "Petrified Forest" (p.140) with plastic fruits hanging in their drawing rooms : "Have they petrified brains to match?" (p.140) asks Sagoe satirically. The phoniness of the Professor is exposed through his deliberately distorted pronunciation : Oguazor tells

54. Dennis Duerden & Cosmo Pieterse, African Writers Talking (London, Heinemann, 1975) p.173-75.

Bandele, "The college cannot afford to have its name dragged down by the moral turpitude of irresponsible young men. The younger generation is too morally corrupt." (p.250).

Faseyi, a typical colonial, marries Monica because of "the prestige of a white wife" (p.214). His phoniness is exposed by his mother who tells Bandele that his son started addressing her 'Mummy' when he went to England: "...that Mummy habit he picked up in England. And what annoys me is that he does it only in front of people. Why? You tell me why?" (p.213) Similarly Kola fails to understand why Faseyi being such a brilliant man cannot treat Monica as a wife.

Ayo Faseyi's limitations like that of Professor Oguazor and Carolin are the limitations of a mind totally circumscribed by the colonial consciousness as defined in Chapter One. They are the Shakespearean Arieles, living on their own island which has now been abandoned by Prospero. They have adopted the life style of Prospero without his philosophy and understanding of human nature. They have been alienated from their natural community so much and for so long that they cannot go back to it. For them a conformity to the Victorian style of giving and value system has become a second nature. They attach importance to anything and everything connected with the white race; white wife, plastic flowers, affected English, observation of correct protocol - are

all expressions of their colonial consciousness which has a hierarchical system of values based on caste, colour, creed, etc. These people are outsiders within their own country.

Sagoe and his detribalised friends - "tribeless tribemen" are "caught up in the new society."⁵⁵ They are emancipated and have renounced their natural community. Sagoe, in the beginning lives in a hotel, then with his friends - Bandele and Dehinwa. He seems to have acquired no geographical location. He wants to maintain his status of placeness so much so that he does not inform his family about his return. He decides to pay only a 'courtesy visit' to his family. On being asked about the woman relatives who visited her at night, Dehinwa tells Sagoe : "They were blood-sucking witches from my home town" (p.62). She does not feel a sense of community with her mother and Aunt who taxi down all the way to Lagos to warn her against marrying a Northerner. But Dehinwa very coolly tells them to mind their own business. Egbo, an heir to a big chieftaincy goes to his village only to pick up Simi. Sekoni, though married is also always away from his family. The two foreigners, Joe Golder and Peter too are far away from their families. Except for Sagoe who comes in contact with Mathias of the Independent View, they do not have any connection with the lower life of Nigeria, either.

55. O.R. Dathorne, African Literature in Twentieth Century
(London, Heinemann, 1976) p.119.

Thus, we see that on the one hand, they have cut themselves from their natural community and, on the other, have not developed any new connections. They however, have formed a group of their own. But without any sense of direction or purpose, they seem to be groping in dark. While the elder elite group is outsider to its country, it none-the-less has a viable community and a purpose like the other 'marginal men' we have discussed. This group of detribalised younger elite, too are outsiders primarily because they have no community to swear by and also because they feel powerless. Egbo feels suffocated among the "dull grey file cabinet/ faces of the Foreign Office" (p.12). Lasunwon's helplessness is expressed in a telling phrase, when Soyinka, compares him with "an eternal garbage can "carrying ~~xxxxxx~~ the group's sporadic splurges" uncomplainingly (p.15). The condition of the group is described picturesquely by Lasunwon who while looking at a fish in the aquarium remarks : "We human beings are rather like that, living in a perpetual trap, closed in by avenues on which escape is so clearly written." (p.19). Like the other 'black white men' of Aluko, Ngugi and Achebe, they are trapped in a situation which is their colonial heritage. They are politically alienated and socially isolated. They are fully aware of the complexities of the social and moral problems facing their country and feel that they should help their people to solve them. But, ironically enough, they fail to locate the problems even. They, like the other 'marginal men' we discussed, are a confused lot.

Soyinka, here, like Achebe in A Man of the People, discusses the moral paralysis of the people immediately after the Independence

of Nigeria. The failure of the younger generation to be the interpreters of the new political reality to their people, is the failure of the "black white man", a typical by-product of colonialism.

As examined earlier, the colonial experience in India was different from that of Black America and Africa. It was more in the form of a cultural encounter and a two way process that gave birth to 'biculturalism rather than a plain naked intrusion. Almost all the Indo-Anglian novelists deal with this kind of situation. Most of their fictional characters also live and have their being in this world of two cultures.

R.K. Narayan's earlier novels have a real colonial situation. The English rulers are there occupying all the key positions in Pre-Independence India but then there is no social interaction between the ruler and the ruled. Principal Brown of the Albert Mission college of Malgudi figures in The Bachelor of Arts and The English Teacher. This is how Chandaran describes him in The Bachelor of Arts : "He is here not out of love for us... All Europeans are like this. They will take their thousand or more a month, but won't do the slightest service to Indians with a sincere heart..." (p.5) Chandran doubts the altruistic motives of the British. Bgt unlike his African counterparts, he is quite sympathetic to them : "Why not give the poor devils - so far from their home - a chance to club together at least for a few hours at the end of a day's work?" (p.5).

Similarly, we are told in the opening chapter of The English Teacher that Mr. Brown gets a shock when he finds that a student of English spelt 'honours' without a 'u' in it. An urgent meeting of the Department of English is called to maintain the purity of language. Gajapathy, Assistant Professor of English takes a very serious view of the situation. But Krishna, the protagonist views it differently. He asks Gajapathy : "Let us be fair. Ask Mr. Brown if he can say in any one of the two hundred Indian languages : 'The cat chases the rat'. He has spent thirty years in India." But Gajapathy dismisses the question. "It is all irrelevant." (p.3). Gajapathy and Raghavachar are trapped in the colonial drama. They have accepted their roles and also comfortable positions without bothering about the political, economic or emotional implications of the colonial situation. Raghavan at the inaugural function of the Historical Association asserts : "If we were asked what the country needed most urgently, he would not say Self-Government or Economic Independence, but a clarified, purified Indian History" (p.37). By which he implies an interpretation of Indian history favourable to the colonizer.

Krishna, the protagonist of The English Teacher however has a questioning self. He, unlike Gajapathy and Raghavachar, is not satisfied with the traditional role of an English teacher in Pre-Independence India. He is no political activist like some of Ngugi characters. His quest is a kind of spiritual journey taken in order to find out an answer to some ontological problems.

His metamorphosis is the result of a kind of re-education responsible for his spiritual awakening and a realization of the ideal of selflessness, a state which has been achieved by Govindan Nair in Raja Rao's The Cat and Shakespeare. By rejecting the Western education system, Krishna rejects the "Western intellectual edifice"⁵⁶ and gains a cultural independence. He renounces all that he believes in earlier - teaching English, a stable comfortable job, family life and parental duties and all the other worldly obligations and attachments. This, in turn, lends him a private world view, a prerogative of the outsider. Krishna's refusal to see life like his other colleagues at the college results in a temporary alienation from the group consciousness. But it is only when he meets the Headmaster of his daughter's school and more so when he has had telepathic communion with his dead wife that he is totally alienated from his people and their society. It is by acquiring the status of an outsider that he seems to have answered his own question : "What was wrong with me?"

Another outsider in The English Teacher is the eccentric Headmaster of Leela's school. He is a Romantic idealist who is trying to replace the colonial system of education with his own 'Leave-it-Alone' system. This is as much an assertion of Indian

56. Charles R. Larson, The Novel in the Third World.

(Washington : Inscape Publishers, 1976), p.161.

culture as Krishna's resignation from his college job. This headmaster, a firm believer in astrology however, does not die at the time and date predicted by a hermit. He takes his survival as a god sent opportunity to declare his freedom from life. He tells Krishana, "Leave me alone.... I feel such a freedom now" (p.192) For his bewailing wife and children he is dead or at the most "one who has taken Sanyasa Ashrama". (p.192). Though his Sanyasa is a joke or at best an escape from a tyrant wife and vagabond children, he uses it as a label. As a Sanyasi he is given licence to follow his idealistic mode of life which for a house-holder was considered eccentric and irresponsible.

Krishana and the Headmaster now have rejected the lives being lived by their fellow humanbeings. They have realised the sense of unreality about the world. Both of them have also defined their identities only after rejecting the traditional roles assigned to them. "The irreversibility of death is changed into the theme of re-birth,"⁵⁷ which takes us away from the norms of a rational belief advocated by the colonial Western education. Although they have become sociological outsiders, they have asserted their cultural roots. Their position in the community is finally restored as educators who have founded a new anti-colonial system of education.

Krishana's rebellion against the colonial society unlike that of the other outsiders is totally non-violent. His 'definite act'

57. Charles R. Larson, The Novel in the Third World, p.158.

of resigning his jobs of a colonial servant though planned earlier as an attack on the system, finally ends in a simple letter or resignation. This, unlike the other outsiders we studied, happens because he has taken to spirituality. He attains a kind of detachment which he has learnt from the telepathic communion with his dead wife.

While taking recourse to spiritualism, is, Krishana's turning inward to exploit his cultural roots, Moorthy's full hearted involvement in the non-co-operation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi in Kanthapura is an immersion of his individual identity into the communal consciousness of Kanthapura. Moorthy we are told by the narrator is an outsider to the village of Kanthapura. He like other social outsiders is lonely. Given the existential reality of the black American world, he would have been another Thomas Bigger. But Kanthapura is no New York. It is, like the villages of Thabai, Umuofia and Umuaro a well knit small unit experiencing the tensions of colonial intrusion and the emergence of freedom movement. It is a microcosm of tradition and caste ridden India. But it is also the microcosm of a new India emerging phoenix-like from the ashes of its hoary past. In Kanthapura, every one knows every one else. They all have collective existence, listen to the Harikathas together and participate in the freedom struggle.

Kenchamma, the village deity "forms the still-centre of their lives and makes everything meaningful"⁵⁸ Marriage, funeral,

58. C.D. Narasimhaiah, Raja Rao

(New Delhi : Arnold-Heinemann, n.d.) p.41.

sickness, ploughing, harvesting and now the independence struggle—all are performed in her benign presence. It is she who protects them and now motivates them with necessary dynamism to fight the British Colonialists, an incarnation of the Puranic demons.

The communal motif is built as much through the description of Kanthapura, its people, Goddess Kanchamma, and the place itself—as through the use of the plural pronoun.

It is Achakka, the female narrator, who knows every one inside out and is the real agent behind the political and social change. By relinquishing his omniscient position to Achakka, who narrates the story in the plural form, Raja Rao has made Kanthapura a long oral tale in the tradition of a 'Sthalapurana', or legendary history. The woman narrator has the authenticity of the legendary grandmother of oral tales told all over the world. She, being rooted deeply in the soil captures the genesis and The Spirit of the place which is reflected in her description of the people in ~~idioms and~~ idioms and phraseology : "Waterfall Venkamma", "Nine-beamed-house", "Nose-skretching Nanjamma", "Temple Rangayya" etc.

She calls Moorthy, "our Moorthy" "as honest as an elephant" (p.18). She has her caste prejudices and tells the reader "of course, you would not expect me to go to the Pariah quarter.." (p.13) Through her fast paced prose and garruility, she reminds us of "an oral stream of consciousness or automatic writing"⁵⁹

59. Charles R. Larson, The Novel in the Third World, p. 139.

Again, by keeping no central character in Kanthapura, Rao has made the village itself a 'character' which is revealed through the consciousness of Achakka. She thus represents the communal consciousness of the village. Kanthapura being a collective experience fuses the disparate experiences of individual characters into one common vision.

This vision as we see is represented through the character of Moorthy who is in the Indian tradition of the holy vagabond or a saint figure. But his way to renunciation is through action. Moorthy, being young and college bred (colonial education) has to go a long way before he can attain the equanimity of a Sanyasi. He, therefore, like Arjuna, the protagonist of Bhagwad Gita has to practise disinterested action in order to become a 'Karma Yogi'. He performs this by fighting the colonial forces through Gandhian methods of non-violence and truth.

Moorthy's disinterested action has three sides : religious, social and political. He integrates them in his personality and practises 'Pravarti Marg' (the way of activity). He has no selfish aims, motives, intentions and designs. Though towards the end, he is disillusioned with Gandhiji's methods and joins Jawaharlal's socialist group, he, however, does not abandon action. He leaves Kanthapura, perhaps never to return. He was only "a catalyst, an outsider to the village"⁶⁰ His final letter to Ratna informing her about his future plan of action is also a farewell to attachment he had for her. By cutting

60. Charles R. Larson, The Novel in the Third World, p.134-5.

this thin bond he attains the freedom of a philosophical outsider.

In Moorthy we find a youngman being trained up by the colonial system of education for the role of a 'black white man'. But he rejects this system and plunges himself into the freedom movement which provides him with an identity. His immersion in the communal consciousness of Kanthapura purifies him, removes his caste prejudices and makes him peep into the socio-economic realities of colonial India. It is from this communal experience that his individual consciousness is awakened.

Govindan Nair, the central character of The Cat and Shakespeare, on the other hand is no outsider to the world. He too like Moorthy has had colonial education. But the India in which he lives is contemporary India: corrupt, starving, and made up of paper plans. Historically it is the colonial India during the Second War.

Govindan Nair in his encyclopaedic mind knows the causes of India's downfall. He does not blame the British for this. If anything he 'loves' them and 'respects' them "because they are such shopkeepers. What can you do after all? If you have to buy you must sell." (p.24).

It is this wonderful capacity of transcendence of mind with which he can amalgamate disparate experiences to mould them into a "unified sensibility" and yet remain in this world of the daily gossip and political change reported by The Hindu and the Malayarajyam, that Govindan Nair acquires a "dual personality" with which he tries to draw out the best from each religion,

discipline and culture. His power of transcendence is, represented in the novel by the symbol of the wall that he jumps over many times everyday makes him "an ideal man of Raja Rao's vision."⁶¹ The equanimity of mind that he has, is something that Moorthy in Kanthapura tries to acquire.

While Moorthy fights the colonial forces, Govindan Nair maintains a philosophical detachment because his is the way of the kitten, the path of wise surrender: "The kitten is being carried, by the cat. We would all be kittens carried by the cats, ...I like being the kitten." (p.8) Here Raja Rao is re-vitalizing the Upanishadic concept of 'marjala kishora nyaya' in which the devotee is presumed to be protected and guided by God like the kittens by the mother cat. Govindan Nair therefore worships cat like the Guru.

Of all the Indian characters we have studied so far, Govindan Nair is the most bi-cultural as he has imbibed the best from both the English and the Indian cultural traditions. His style is not only "a mixture of The Vicar of Wakefield and Shakespeare", (p.8) as explained by Pai, the narrator but it also has a touch of the mantra-like incantation and the briskness of Malayalam:

"Chee-chee !" This body. And this mind, with its encaged gramophone record, another His Master's Voice, and all it needs is a white dog listening to its music. Yes, that's the mystery, Sir! The dog listens to this machanical music." (p.95)

Here Govindan Nair through his telescopic imagination juxtaposes the technologically advanced civilization of England ~~and~~ with the metaphysics of India and unifies it into a whole.

61. G.D. Narasimhaiah; Raja Rao, p.165.

He probes further into the relationship of body and mind in order to pose an ontological question about the ultimate cause of the song. Perhaps there is no better way of presenting bi-culturalism.

Govindan Nair with a perfectly detached mind and altruistic habits is a "Jivan Mukta"⁶² - a man who is free from life internally though he performs every thing externally. His equanimity of mind, a Buddha like quality is maintained even when his son dies, as also when he goes to prison for alleged bribery. Unlike the existential outsider, his is not the way of suffering. On the contrary, it is the path of bliss. He has achieved a vivid sense perception and a balance of mind and a vision of human life. That is why The Cat and Shakespeare is a comedy, and not a tragedy.

While Govindan Nair is a matured 'Jivan Mukta' : like a lotus leaf he has ~~from~~ his being in the water and mire of the pond and yet is always above it, Ramaswamy, the hero of The Serpent and the Rope, struggles to achieve this state of being. He is young, intellectualized and has been too long in the West. His marriage with Madeleine, a French girl favourably inclined to the East, fails because "they touched each other tangentially evading the deeper levels of being."⁶³ The two world views, two "epistemologies" represented by Rama and Madeleine are "contrary"⁶⁴ Rama's consciousness is permeated with the

62. For a detailed discussion see Meenakshi Mukherjee's Twice Born Fiction (London : Heinemann, 1971), p.101-2.

63. C.D. Narasimhaiah, Raja Rao, p.103.

64. S. Nagarajan, "An Indian Novel" in Meenakshi Mukherjee (ed.) Considerations (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1977)

pure non-dualistic philosophy of Samkara's 'Shuddhadwaita', while she cannot transcend her dualistic approach to life. Again, the two cannot stay together because of their contrary ideas about marriage and roles of Man and Woman in it, as defined by their philosophies..

Rama's metaphysical journey to renunciation is symbolised in terms of his going to Travancore in search of a Guru. But this happens only towards the end of the novel when he has undergone all the worldly experiences of death (of mother, two sons), separation (from Savitri, divorce from Madeliene), suffering (Saroja's marriage to a vulgar businessman, Madeleine's self-inflicted suffering) and oppression (Bombay wife whose husband ran after white woman, Hindu Muslim riots). All these experiences make him sad : "Sadness is Rama's keynote"⁶⁵. But this is not the sadness of a defeatist or an escapist as maintained by McCutchion. Rama is a kind of "modern Indian Siddhartha"⁶⁶ who is on his way to renunciation and self-realization. He has not yet achieved the ideal state of "Jivan Mukta" of Govindan Nair. He has however, become homeless : "There is nobody to go to now : no home, no temple, no city, no climate, no age." He has only one ontological question : "who are you and whose : whence have you come" (p.402) - the eternal question posed by a philosophical outsider

65. McCutchion, "The Novel as Sastra", Considerations, ed.

Meenakshi Mukherjee, (New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1977) p.98

66. M.K. Naik, "The Serpent and the Rope : The Indo-Anglian Novel as Epic Legend," Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English (Dharwar; Karnataka University Press, 1972) p.280.

From the dizzy Himalayan and Alpine heights of Rama's metaphysics, when we move on to the luxuriant valleys of Kulu and Kashmir and also to the Gangetic planes of Mulk Raj Anand's sordid reality, we meet Bakhas and Bhikhus, the wretched of the Hindu world. They seem to be sociological outsiders who have no place in this hierarchical caste system of the Hindus.

In Untouchable Anand portrays an eventful day in the life of a young sweeper living in a colony of the outcastes. Like the 'osus' in Things Fall Apart, these social outcasts live a wretched existence. Misery, humiliation, insult and oppression is their lot. Bakha the protagonist hates his lot, but like ~~***~~ Fate in Greek tragedy, it is inevitable. When he wants to buy some sweets ('jalebis'), his racial Consciousness of thousand years of inferiority makes him feel ashamed of himself : "He was vaguely ashamed and self conscious at being seen buying sweets." (p.49). His sense of shame is further aggravated when he is cheated by the shopkeeper who does not give him his money's worth and he cannot do anything about it. The crisis, however, is reached when he inadvertently touches a caste Hindu who howls : "Why don't call, you swine, and announce your approach! Do you know you have touched me and defiled me, cock-eyed son of a bow-legged scorpion! Now I will have to go and take a bath to purify myself. " (p.51) Bakha simply pockets the insult as he knows that there is a barrier between him and his tormentor. Being an outcaste he cannot break it : "But then he realized that he was surrounded by a barrier, not a physical barrier ...but a moral one."(p.52).

Bakha's development is marked in three clear stages. First stage ends when he meets the traumatic experience of pollution in the market place. Before this experience he has had rather easy life. Second stage begins with his crying, "posh posh, sweeper coming" and ends with the fiasco of the hockey match which is followed by a discussion with his father, Lakha. Third phase is indicated through Colonel Hutchinson's meeting Bakha, who runs away from the padre. Anand thus records the growth of Bakha's career.

Apparently, Bakha's growth is a kind of intellectual awakening of the boy's consciousness of his status as a social outsider and the novel seems to have a very simple design of a beginning (a problem), a middle (consequences) with a climax and a denouement (possible answers). But the design is not as simple as it looks, because it is "based on a traditional Upanishadic tale.. the famous tale of Shvetaketu. The book, therefore, claims Alcock on the authority of Anand himself, has "an organic unity and depth of another order"⁶⁷, that is the metaphysical order of understanding the real self. Bakha's progress is therefore not only the progress of a social outsider, but it is the progress of the self in search of the real meaning of life. Like the other Indian outsiders, he too is a metaphysical outsider, who finally

67. Peter Alcock, "Something Different", ALCALS : 10, p.59-62.

seems to grasp the meaning of his existence. Unlike the 'osus' in Achebe's fiction, Bakha rejects the religion of the colonizer and tries to remain within the folds of Hinduism, however diseased that may be. This clearly indicates that he, like, Shvetketu, comes to grips with certain contradictions of Hinduism through some kind of knowledge which is the privilege of an outsider.

So, the outsider figure in the fiction of Anand, Rao and Narayan finally tends to be philosophical. While Bakha does not flaunt a philosophy (he in fact seems to be ignorant) Ramaswamy talks so much about Vedanta and other philosophical concepts that we get tired of it. Krishna, on the other hand, stops talking about everything in order to establish a telepathic communion with his dead wife. All of them have one common feature—a reverence for holiness. Even Bakha attempts to worship at the temple. It is this desire which makes them aspire to be a "Jivan Mukta", which perhaps can be translated as 'holy outsider'. Govindan Nair may be called the best example of this species of the outsider. The holy outsider transcends all reality—colonial, non-colonial, and aspires to acquire self knowledge.

The outsider figure in the black American fiction, on the other hand, tends to be existential in nature. Being preoccupied with the racial problems and his helplessness, the black outsider tries to define the 'absurdity' of his condition through the 'existential' paradigm of the 'human condition'.

The black African outsider, rooted deeply in the social reality of his marginal existence, tends to be sociological in nature. The 'black-white man' in the fiction of Aluko, Achebe and Soyinka, lives a 'marginal' existence of the new African elite. A committed novelist like Achebe feels concerned about the marginality of his characters and tries to correct it by searching deep into the historical roots, which we examine in the following chapter.

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