

FICTIONAL STRATEGIES

"A Writer responds with his total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of sensitive needle, he registers with varying degree of accuracy and success, the conflicts and tensions in his changing society."

(Ngugi Wa Thiongo'o : Homecoming,)

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Novel is that bright book of life which is basically rebellious in nature and reflects fragmentation and loss of unity implicit in the movement of the society from traditional to industrial, rural to urban, collective to individualistic and colonial to non colonial. It flourishes particularly whenever there is a change in the social structure as there exists a close relationship between the internal structure of a literary work and the social structure. Goldmann calls it a "homology of structures."¹

Central to Goldmann's approach is the concept of "collective consciousness" which he believes to be "a dynamic reality, oriented towards a certain state of equilibrium." For him, collective consciousness is neither a primary reality, nor an autonomous one. It is implied in the overall behaviour of individuals who participate in the economic, social, political and other aspects of life. A novel, therefore, is not a mere reflection of a collective consciousness but "a culmination at a very advanced level of coherence of tendencies peculiar to the consciousness of a particular group."² It, therefore, is not a transposition of the conscious structures of a particular group, on the contrary, it is a search for values implicit in all

1. Lucien Goldmann, Towards a Sociology of the Novel

(London : Tavistock Publications, 1975), p.6-8.

2. Ibid, p.9.

members of the society. This search is carried out by a "problematic" individual - problematic because he searches for authentic values in a world of conformity and conventions. The values which the hero tries to authenticate are implicit in the world of the novel itself and are specific to each novel. It is these values which help the novelist organise the novel and lend it an aesthetic structure.

Novel, being a middle class epic, is characterised by a "radical rupture" between the hero and the world and the resultant degradation of the fictional world. The problematic hero usually stands at an ironic distance from his fictional world and the novelist maintains an ironic distance from the hero. The dynamics of the novel operates in this double distancing and the ironic mode but the nexus of this dynamics rests on the radical rupture between the hero and the world.

Colonial society, being a diseased society aggravates this "rupture" because of the obvious gap between the worlds of the colonized and the colonizer. The ever widening gap between the two worlds makes the rupture insurmountable for the problematic hero.

The colonial writer being the sensitive point of his community is an acute observer of this phenomenon. He therefore acts as the recorder of the anxiety, agony, anguish and anger of his race through the medium of his problematic hero.

Colonial intrusion changed the social structure of the

traditional tribal societies of Africa, brought an alien religion and most of all introduced a Western System of education which turned the analphabetic African society into a literate one. With the emergence of a new reading public, novel became a popular literary form. Similarly, in India too the novel came with the British and acquired a literary status in the hands of Bengali Writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Rabindra Nath Tagore in the late nineteenth century. This was a time of social, political and moral upheaval in India as the Indians had already launched their war of independence against the colonial forces in 1857.

Though the first black American novel, Clotel was published by William Wells Brown in 1853, it however flourished during the Harlem Renaissance of 1920s, more so during the Depression years which forced men like, Richard Wright to write for sheer survival. It was during these very years that the **Segregationist** policies of the racist government turned black America into an "internal colony" of the U.S.

The emergence of the novel in India, Africa and black America is thus related to the development of colonialism. The colonial novelist, whether native or expatriate is therefore almost always concerned with the problem of confrontation of two cultures. Being heir to two cultures, two contrary world views and mostly two languages, he is in a unique position to analyse, assess and integrate both the East and the West. This East-West encounter, therefore, keeps his attention engaged most

of the time, be he a Western novelist like Foster, Conrad, Greena or a native writer. Both the native and the expatriate novelists are concerned with the plight of the disturbed colonized. While the expatriate novelist concerns himself more with the economic and political exploitation of the colonized, the native writer's chief concern is with the emotional exploitation of the colonized as also with an assertion of his manhood and culture. He looks, "deep in his own experience and the experience of his community for the self knowledge which is a true pedigree."³

Confrontation with the West has produced different reactions among different native novelists. G.D. Desani, for example in All About H. Mattered has a mock-comic defiant attitude towards both the East and the West. As we have examined in the previous chapter, Raja Rao challenges the West with a spiritual authority in The Serpent and the Rope and Achebe defines the past of his people to assert that the Africans had culture much before the Europeans came to Africa with their self proclaimed civilizing missions.

Charles Larson in his recent study of the Third World novel traces its development on the basis of the depiction of cultural confrontation. The first stage of this kind of clash of cultures can be described as the historical confrontation, which results in a cultural chaos and also in the destruction of the native cultures. Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, One Man One Wife etc. are some of the novels dealing with this kind of cultural

3. Molly Mahood, The Colonial Encounter (London : Rex Collings, 1977), p.172.

situation. Mostly it is the culture that dictates the literary form at this stage. We therefore find a lot of anthropological material in these novels. Moreover, the focus here is on the situation rather than on character.

Once the colonial forces acquire supremacy, the native culture tries to adapt and accommodate itself to the colonial reality. The novels dealing with this stage of colonial intrusion, like The River Between, are less anthropological in nature. As the chief concern of the protagonists even at this stage is the survival of the whole community, collective consciousness forms the content of the novel. The rupture between the problematic hero and the world is representative of the rebellion against the world of conformity which has accepted the colonial reality and has no will to fight against it. The colonized problematic hero, like Waiyaki, searches for authentic values in the colonized world of conformity. The dynamics of the novel operates in the ironic distancing that the novelist keeps from Waiyaki who, in turn, keeps from the diseased fictional world of the colonized society.

Cultural reorganisation forms the central theme of those novelists who have compromised with the colonial reality and have realised that they perhaps cannot escape it. These novelists therefore aim at reorganising the native culture by projecting a positive picture. Larson emphasises the role of the novelist who has to fight colonialism in a subtle way. He calls it

"a struggle for life or death played out between the colonial powers and their 'possessions' in the colonies."⁴ George Lamming in his In the Castle of My Skin takes up an archetypal situation of the colonized's growing awareness of his racial consciousness and presents a composite picture of community by using a multiple point of view. By shifting his point of view from the community to the individual consciousness of the protagonist, Lamming successfully orchestrates the pains of colonialism and individual's effort at cultural reorganisation.

Similarly Jean Toomer in his Cane shifts the setting from South to North to South and also from prose to poetry to prose to poetry and finally ends up with 'kabnis' - a 'novella', 'a play' (Part III). All the three parts of this work of art, however, focus on the tenacity of the black American culture which has survived in spite of white oppression.

Cultural renewal from the age old strengths of Hinduism is the theme of almost all the novels of Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan and cultural revival through a liberal humanist historical perspective is the strength of Mulk Raj Anand's novels. As the colonial intrusion in India was not as intense as in Africa and also because the emergence of the novel in India like Africa coincided with the birth of nationalism, the Indian novels therefore do not describe the earlier stages of confrontation with the colonial forces. They are more concerned with cultural re-organisation and cultural renewal. Even the African novelists

4. Charles R. Larson, The Novel in the Third World, p.132.

in their post independence fiction are not concerned directly with the problems of colonialism. Disillusionment with post independence Nigeria forms the subject matter of Achebe's A Man of the People and Soyinka's The Interpreters. Similarly Okara's The Voice is "a gloomy parable of political and social life in Nigeria soon after Independence"⁵ Ngugi's The Petals of Blood expresses his ~~dis~~illusionment with post Independence Kenya and the betrayal of the people by politicians. All these novelists are as much concerned with cultural revival as with disillusionment.

These stages of cultural confrontation are rather arbitrary and the novelists do not follow them strictly. What happens, in fact, is that these stages overlap. A novel sometimes depicts two or more stages simultaneously. As these cultures are of diverse nature and their colonial encounter of varied forms, the emergent novel form too has undergone a big change from an expression of the collective consciousness of a village or a tribe to the expression of an individual consciousness. Some novels oscillate between the communal and the individual consciousness.

The characteristic which distinguishes the third world novel from its Western counterpart most is its "situational plot": "Ideally defined as a narrative in which the central character's importance is replaced by a collective group of people undergoing a

5. Arthur Ravencroft, "Novels of Disillusion", Readings in Commonwealth Literature, William Walsh (ed.), (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p.197.

a commonly shared experience."⁶ Here, the subject matter is not the individual's confrontation with his own problems, but the confrontation of two groups or cultures.

The focus of this novel, therefore, is not on character, it is rather on situation, which is usually a group-felt experience. Even when the attention is focussed on one or two individuals as is the case with Achebe's Things Fall Apart or Anand's The Village the story involves all the people, the whole community of Umuofia or Nandpur, which forms the collective consciousness of the novel. "Thus in Things Fall Apart, although Achebe focuses on Okonkwo much of the frustration... at the end of the story itself..... it is the entire community that has experienced the debasement rather than one separate individual."⁷ Similarly, the main characters in Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat, Raja Rao's Kanthapura, Aluko's One Man, One Matchnet, Mulk Raj Anand's The Village are the villages of Thabai, Kanthapura, Ipaja and Nandpur, respectively. These novels as we have examined in preceding chapters reflect the communal consciousness of these villages, even when they portray certain individuals.

Larson calls Things Fall Apart "archetypal" because, here Achebe reshapes "a traditional Western literary genre into something distinctly African in form and pattern."⁸ by presenting a

6. Charles R. Larson, The Novel in the Third World (Washington : Inscape Publishers, 1976), p-11-12.

7. Charles R. Larson, The Emergence of African Fiction (London : Macmillan, 1978; first published 1971), p.116.

8. Ibid, p.29.

full picture of the traditional life cycle of the Ibo society which is undergoing a painful transformation due to colonial intrusion. This transformation of society again is "archetypal" as it represents the breakdown of the culture of the colonized under a heavy attack of the colonizer's culture. The situation is repeated in Ngugi's A River Between, which can be called the East African counterpart of Things Fall Apart. The two ridges on the Honia river are trapped in a moment of history, the history of colonization. They have existed peacefully for centuries, but now with the arrival of Christianity, the things are falling apart. Aluko's One Man, One Wife too takes up a similar situation, though the conclusions that he draws, are slightly different from Achebe and Ngugi.

Ngugi's recent novel, Petals of Blood tells the story of disintegration of the small community of Ilmorog first due to white colonialism and then black capitalism. "It is microcosm of Kenyan community as a whole and its experiences are a paradigm of what happened to a number of similar communities."⁹ The novel is epic in scope and conception as it traces down the history of Ilmorog community from its nomadic past to its agrarian civilization and now to its present black capitalistic set up. Ngugi, here telescopes all stages of cultural confrontation, from the historical confrontation of the colonizer and the colonized to the cultural reorganisation and revival of the colonized, Once the colonizer has departed from the scene. Moreover, Ngugi here presents a most comprehensive analysis of the evils of gross materialism eating into the vitals of Kenyan civilization.

Another variety of situational novels is that of those

9. Eustace Palmer, "Ngugi's Petals of Blood", African Literature Today : 10 Retrospect and Prospect p. 153-166.

novels having no central character at all. The Interpreters and A Grain of Wheat are but two examples of this type. Here the novelists have used a multiple point of view technique to focus attention on 'situation' rather than on any individual. In both these novels the stories have five centres of interest in the form of five main characters each contributing his mite to the depiction of the 'situation'. The Interpreters, in fact has no plot in the conventional sense.¹⁰ "There is no orderly progression of events. The narrative has been given a form and pattern by the repetition of scenes and images, which are used as leitmotifs." By using multiple flashback and often a flashback within a flashback both Soyinka and Ngugi have successfully focussed the attention on the events which go in the making of the situation.

In A Grain of Wheat Ngugi is chiefly concerned with "discerning connections and patterns amid the apparently shapeless mass of day-to-day experience and examining the relationships between one event and another event."¹¹ He therefore weaves a pattern in time "With the present as the warp and the past as the woof." Thus by interlocking these phases of time he sifts and examines all kinds of evidence to focus his attention on the central event; the betrayal of the village community by individuals in the event of Uhuru. Like a judge in a court of Law, Ngugi examines all the evidences in the form of five main characters to find out what

10. Charles R. Larson, The Emergence of African fiction, p.246-47.

11. David Cook, African Literature, p.95.

exactly happens during the few days of Uhuru. By constantly shifting the narrative focus from one character to another character, Ngugi points out the complexity of the theme of betrayal of the community by individuals, its political, moral and emotional aspects, as also the fact that no individual can be reduced to a simple formula.

Another characteristic which makes A Grain of Wheat like Kanthapura a typical example of 'situational novel' is the use of first person plural 'we', thus telling the story from the point of view of the whole community.

A situational novel depends heavily on anthropological background. Achebe's anthropological passages in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God for example, evoke atmosphere and mood. Like Hardy's descriptive passages these passages in Achebe form integral part of the novels. Birth, marriage, death - the three major events which form the cycle of life, with all the anthropological details of the Igbos, have been beautifully presented in both these novels. A chapter-wise analysis of Arrow of God reveals that more than ten chapters (out of a total of 19) are devoted to anthropological details of the Igbos living in Umuaro and Okperi. The other chapters mostly describe the lives of the English colonizers who are living at Government Hill at Okperi. As we have already discussed earlier, these Englishmen form a 'non-community' which serves as a contrast to the well-integrated Igbo community. Festivals like the Feast of the Pumpkin and New Yam Feast, "marriage

celebrations, pregnancy rites and wrestling matches all are described graphically to paint an anthropological picture of the past of the Igbos. Chapters V to XII in Things Fall Apart similarly give anthropological details about the Igbo life : New year yam, Wrestling matches, rituals of marriage, bride-price, supernatural 'ogbanje' children, egwugwu dances, a traditional funeral etc.

A detailed description of the circumcision ceremony in Ngugi's The River Between serves the dual purpose of depicting a ritual central to the Gikuyu way of life as also a structural need of keeping the people of the two ridges separate. Like the Honia river, circumcision ceremony is a life giving force for the whole community and again like the river, it, ironically, divides the two ridges, though it should have united them. But this is the intentional structural design of the novel : "what Ngugi does in The River Between is to use irony to depict a gentile society in Africa that holds more fanatically to circumcision... than did the early Jewish christians."¹²

Celebrations or the religious festivals like 'Sankara-Jayanthi', 'Ganesh-Jayanthi' etc. in Kanthapura fulfil the religious and emotional needs of the villagers. 'Harikathas' of the village bard, mixing legend and history in the language and idioms of the villagers set the atmosphere and mood of the novel. It marks the continuity of the Indian tradition which has its

12. Charles E. Nnolim, "Background Setting : Key to the structure of Ngugi's The River Between", Obsidian, 2,2, (Summer-1976)--- pp.20-29.

its origin in the days of yore. Besides being sociological in nature, these 'Harikathas' are central to the structure of the novel as they form an integral part of the 'Sthalapurana' literary tradition to which Kanthapura belongs on the testimony of Raja Rao himself. A detailed discussion of the 'Sthalapuran' tradition appears in the previous chapter of the thesis.

Arun Joshi's The Strange Case of Billy Biswas is the story of a rich, U.S. educated Indian anthropologist who makes a trip into the tribal wilderness of central India and decides to abandon civilization in favour of the primitive life of the tribals, more so to the lure of Bilasia who is "as primeval as the forest that surrounded her." Bilasia is the primitive force that calls Billy away from the civilization. Over a period of ten years Billy becomes a demi god to the tribals and comes back to meet the collector, his one time friend, who could have been killed but for Billy's timely intervention. His reappearance in the civilized world brings his doom and he dies a tragic death. It is an absorbing tale told with passion. It is pity that Joshi has not been in a position to explore the rich anthropological material about the 'baigas' - the 'gonds', the 'pardhans' whose picture he paints in this novel. Unlike the African novelists, Joshi fails to create a worthwhile picture of this community. Bilasia too has not been fully realised in fictional terms. We are told about the distant drums inviting the villagers to participate in the communal dances, but the picture is not half inviting to the

reader because it lacks in the anthropological authenticity.

Billy's reasons for abandoning civilisation in favour of Bilasia are more in the tradition of the Western Love story than in the tradition of the African noble savage.

Anthropological material in the novels of Achebe, Ngugi and Raja Rao forms an integral part of the very structure of these works, but with lesser artists like Anand, Aluko, Ekwensi, it is not ~~xxxxxxx~~ so. For example, Anand's Gauri opens with a description of Panchi's marriage which runs in twenty seven pages. It is a fascinating portrayal of a typical Punjabi wedding held some fifty years ago. But the description has little to do with the central theme of the novel which portrays the sufferings of Gauri, the heroine and not the disillusionment of Panchi. Similarly, Aluko in Kinsman and Foreman describes rather graphically the traditional welcome given to Titus. The ~~initiation~~ ceremony of Titus in the ways of the tribe too is described in some detail, but neither the protagonist, Titus, nor the reader feels involved in it. Even Simeon, the Kinsman seems completely detached from the whole scene. Alex Haley's effort at stuffing his Roots with tones of anthropological material makes it a geneological epic but weakens its structure so much so that one wonders whether it should be called a novel at all.

Thus, we see that there is a preponderance of anthropological material in African fiction. Black American fiction is socio-logical in nature, but is not stuffed with anthropology heavily. Indian fiction, except for the works of Mulk Raj Anand, is not even

sociological, it relies heavily on mythology.

The sociological novel in the West came into its own when the realists and naturalists in France and the United States attempted to develop a narrative technique which would examine the causes of contemporary social decadence by concentrating on sociological details. Zola's "experimental" method needs a special mention here as for him, "the ideal was to place one's characters in a certain environment, as one places specimens in a laboratory experiment, and to observe and report without fear or favour how they acted according to natural laws."¹³ African setting provides such an ideal environment for Conrad who strips Kurtz off his European (albeit 'civilized') vestments and examines him, through Marlow, against the 'savage' African background. The sociological/anthropological material is here subordinated to Marlow's analysis of Kurtz's personality against the background of Victorian anthropological assumption that the African belonged to the beginnings of time and had therefore inherited pristine experience to teach to the 'civilized' European. The tradition of this kind of novel without the background support of the hero's society can be traced through great works like Robinson Crusoe, The Heart of Darkness and more recently to Lord of the Flies, where we meet tribal group of savage children.

13. Richard Chase, The American Novel and its Tradition (Ludhiana : Kalyani Publishers, 1973, Originally New York : Anchor Books, 1957), p. 186.

"The African novel cannot be said to be anthropological in this sense"¹⁴ as unlike Conrad there exists no irony for the novelist between the fictive world and the African Noble Savage. The erstwhile savage himself becomes a hero in his fiction. He therefore cannot expose savage instincts beneath the veneer of material civilization and sophisticated behaviour as in some of the novels of Jane Austen, Henry James, and Scott Fitzgerald. The African novelist, again, cannot remain a mere observer of social institutions and material culture. "His art recreates for us the problems and efforts of a people creating a viable culture in response to the demands of their environment"¹⁵ so as to lend some insights into the men of culture they have created. Anthropology and sociology come very handy for this purpose of cultural re-organisation and revival. By adopting this narrative strategy of fictional documentation of cultural and sociological details, the African novelist tries to correct the romantic view of Africa. It is a literary reaction against 'Noble Savage' image of the African perpetrated through the works of European writers over many centuries. With the advent of Darwin's Evolutionism, the Noble Savage image was transformed into 'ape man' and later on 'Sambo'. The African novelists fight these images with the help of sociological and anthropological material in their novels.

14. Dan Izvbye, "Issues in the Reassessment of African Novel"
ALT : 10 p.17.

15. Dan Izvbye, "Issues in the reassessment of the African novel", ed. Eldred D. Jones, African Literature Today : 10 : Reassessment and Prospects (London : Heinemann, 1979) p.18.

The Indian novelists, particularly R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao maintain a superior stance vis-a-vis Western cultural dominance.

These novelists write within a continuous living tradition and hence they re-create a picture of their society through mythology, instead of anthropology. Even Mulk Raj Anand, whose basic theme is tradition versus modernity and who is a committed writer, does not take recourse to anthropology for the portrayal of a village community through folklore as is the case with Gauri.

Richard Chase in The American Novel and its Tradition points out two defining aspects of the American novel : the extreme range of experience and the number and size of unresolved contradictions. "In black American fiction one does not find the first characteristic at all, and one only finds the second in a different form."¹⁶ The contradictions in the black American fiction are not so much personal as social, "posed by the world outside and they are enormous in size. It is these contradictions inherent in the white racist American social structure which define the very being of the black characters, whose main preoccupation is an assertion of their manhood. Even when they are existentialists like Cross Damon and others, their existentialism too has sociological roots, as has already been examined earlier. Again, having no historical roots in America most black novelists do not concern themselves with anthropology. But none-the-less

16. Roger Rosenblatt, Black Fiction, p.2.

they have "a consistent and built-in mythology to draw on, one formed out of difficult and often ugly and brutal elements, and one in which the gods frequently behave as demons."¹⁷ Ellison, in fact, denounces the role of the sociologist in the making of black fiction. He moves beyond protest and probes into the inner personalities of his characters. Baldwin, except for If Beale Street Could Talk, is all for social protest. His earlier work is as much a re-creation of a black image as a protest against white racism.

But most of the black literature of 1960s and 1970s is not a literature of social protest, it is a literature of affirmation. It has moved from bitterness to wrath, from frustration to power. It pulsates with a desire to accomplish a cultural revolution in America. 'Reassessment, 'rejection' and 'revival' are the terms that best sum up the literary output of these two decades. The two typical novels expressing this new mood are Baldwin's If Beale Street Could Talk which is discussed earlier and Ernest Gaines's The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. Ernest Gaines here deals with the concept of 'black peoplehood' and leadership in the spirit of elitism and renaissance. Miss Jane, 110 years, is a legendary character who has 'endured' the history of blacks suffering in America. The secret of her endurance is that she

17. Roger Rosenblatt, p.6. See also Lawrence W. Levine's Black Culture and Black Consciousness (New York : Oxford Univ. Press, 1977) for a detailed discussion of this mythology.

keeps moving with time and maintains a harmonious relationship to transcend it. Time helps her to carry the burden of life. Miss Pittman learns that time itself is change and that it is only by accepting it as such that man can order the present. Talking about building dams across the rivers Miss Jane tells the story of a Frenchman who built a 'levee' across a river and the 'levee' did not last in spite of the man's repeated attempts.

"Now he's built his concrete spillways to control the water but one day the water will break down the spillways just like it broke through the levee. That little Frenchman was long dead when the water broke his levee in '27; and these that built the spillways will be long dead, too, but the water will never die. That same water the Indians used to believe in will run free again. You just wait and see."¹⁸

"You just wait and see" summarizes the message that Miss Jane has for the blacks in America as this is the secret of her endurance, the virtue which makes her live through all the turmoil and confusion of black American life from slavery to war to Reconstruction and to the black militancy of 1960s.

The Autobiography is a novel in the guise of the tape-recorded recollections of Miss Jane's long life and is epic in scope and intention. Like Odyssey Jane's travels manage to summarize the history of her race. Gaines uses the first person narrative technique and tells the story from the point of view of Miss Jane who is a maker and at times a critical observer of all the major events in the history of her race. The troops of the

18. Ernest J. Gaines, The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman (1971; New York : Dial Press, Bantam Books, 1972), p.150.

"Secash Army" come riding down the road suppressing the rebels during the civil war. Miss Jane quotes one of the troops saying "who they think they is trying to destruck us way of living? We the nobles, not them. God put us here to live the way, We want live, that's in the Bible" and then parenthetically she remarks "I have asked people to find that in the Bible for me, but no one's found it yet." (p.4). The innocent remark from a girl of ten (now a narrator of one hundred and ten) brings home the truth of the great American Lie.

Miss Jane reminds us of Achakka, the woman narrator of Kanthapura. Both Jane and Achakka are archetypal grand mother figures of the traditional oral tales all over the world. Both of them are typical representatives of their races and are guardians of customs. Both of them voice the communal consciousness of their people. They narrate their stories in fast paced prose and have "artless grrulity" (which we have already discussed in the case of Achakka). Their stories have 'finish-me-now, non-stop reading' power. Both of them are memorable wise old ladies with great insights into the human condition and are the recorders of history of their people. Miss Jane expounds the concept of 'Black Peoplehood' stressing that the people and leaders together form social solidarity and cultural identity. It is they who create the manhood of their ethnic group with their combined strength. Achkka need not create a 'peoplehood' as she lives in the pre-industrial India of 1930s where the whole village is an extended family and all except seven families participate in the

Freedom Movement whole heartedly.

The distinction between the two situations can be clarified by examining their points-of-view further. While Achakka chooses the first-person plural ('we') for her narration, Jane prefers the singular 'I' as she tries to be exact in quoting the other characters. In Achakka puts these statements in her own words as much as she can which indicates her deeper relationship with the other characters in the novel. This also brings out the contrast between the American and Indian social structures. While the former is more individualistic, the latter is more communal in approach. The fragmentation of the worlds of the two colonized societies of the black Americans and the Indians are also of different natures. The world of Miss Jane is completely shattered. Only a few characters survive the racist oppression. But the world of Kanthapura, though fragmented, is still intact more or less. Though the village of Kanthapura has fallen in the hands of the colonizer and the villagers have gone to other places, they have a hope of going back and attaining independence.

Miss Jane's world has no such hopes and yet she 'endures' - all the suffering and change heroically. Both of them have heroic stature. While Miss Jane attains self-knowledge through patient suffering and endurance, Achakka does not. For her wisdom has been defined in Upanishads, Ramayana and other scriptures.

But self-knowledge is not the prerogative of all the black heroes, be they American and African. Except for the Invisible Man

Cross Damon and few other existential characters, almost all the black American heroes die violently, prematurely and without self knowledge. In fact, traditional or Romantic heroism is impossible for them as they are denied all the opportunities connected with traditional heroism, like straightening out - confusions, righting the wrongs, clearing up perspectives or "in the Byronic a sense, rise godlike above his predicaments."¹⁹ Their heroism however lies in endurance and the strategies of survival that they evolve in order to have their being in a hostile world. Their pantheon of heroes consists of people who could take punishment like Jack Johnson, the folk hero :

"One thing you left with us, Jack Johnson.

One thing before they got you.

You used to stand there like a man,

Taking punishment.

With a golden, spacious grin;

Confident.

Inviting big Jim Jeffries, who was boring in :

"Heah ah is, big boy; yuh sees whah Ise at.

Come on..."

Sterling Brown, "Strange Legacies"²⁰

Miss Jane Pittman is a 'hero' in this tradition. When she asks her mistress to address her not as Ticey, but as Miss Jane Brown the new name she has acquired from an officer of the liberation army, Jane gets flogged : "That night when the master came in from

19. Roger Rosenblatt, Black Fiction, p.161.

20. Quoted in Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness, (New York : O U P, 1977), p.367.

the Swamps she told my master I had sassed her in front of the yankees. My master told two of the other slaves to hold me down. One took my arms, the other one took my legs. My master jacked up my dress and gived my mistress the whip and told her teach me a lesson. Every time she hit me she asked me what I said my name was. I said Jane Brown. She hit me again : What I said my name was. I said Jane Brown" (p.9) Even after getting a good whipping from her master she still maintained that she was Jane Brown and not Ticey. She thus symbolized the strength, dignity and courage that the heroes usually have.

Okonkwo and Ezeulu too are heroic characters like Miss Jane and Achakka. Like them they are the recorders of the tensions of their race and preservers of their traditions. They are also the custodians of the values rated high among their people. While Miss Jane and Achakka are the grandmother figures of the oral tale tradition, Okonkwo and Ezeulu are the archetypal pre-colonials. While both the female characters develop and try to understand the human condition either because of their individual effort or due to the wisdom accumulated in the Hindu ethos, their male African counterparts do not acquire self knowledge.

A general lack of "character growth" in African Literature in fact is what Larson points out in both of his studies. He asserts that there is practically no character growth in the novels of Achebe, Aluko, Soyinka and Ekwensi.

Almost all their characters are wooden and stereotypes. Some of the Nguġi characters, however, show a tendency for growth.

Lack of growth of character in the African fiction is attributable to its situational plot where the interest of the novelist is in the event. Like the Nineteenth century English fictions, the African novel is social in nature as distinguished from the "novel of sensibility" and "the novel of sensation" of the Twentieth century which is the product of a fragmented atomized society.

"In the novel of sensibility the shimmer of consciousness occupies the whole field of vision. Happenings are broken down into the tiny discrete sensory impressions..."²¹ It is a novel in which nothing happens and little irrelevant things are noticed and registered on the consciousness of the protagonist, while big socio-historical events are ignored. In this novel each individual is an island in himself and human communication therefore is a problem. Here the uniqueness of the individual is stressed through his purely personal experience as a contrast to a mass culture emphasizing socialization, standardization and uniformity. The problematic hero reacts sharply to this world of conformity and searches for authentic values which lend aesthetic structure

21. Marry McCarthy, "Characters in fiction", Critical Approaches to Fiction, (ed) Shiv K. Kumar, Keith McKean (New York : McGraw Hill, 1968), p.79-95.

to the novel. The 'radical rupture' (which we have already discussed) between the protagonist and his fictional world is caused because the hero has an individual vision and asserts to impose it on the world.

In typical African fiction, the rupture is caused not because of any individual vision (except in The Voice) but because the hero asserts his individualism in the corporate African life. As we have discussed earlier, an individual is "atypical" in African fiction while he is the everyman in Western fiction. While in the latter the focus is on the individual's consciousness, in the former it is on his efforts to keep himself aloof. He is that 'odd-man-out' who makes heroic efforts at not submerging his individuality in the identity of a too insistent a group. Okonkwo in this effort dies tragically. Ezeulu too meets a similar fate. Achebe in both the novels shifts the focus from Okonkwo's mind to Umuofia and from Ezeulu's consciousness to the collective consciousness of the villagers. Here Achebe is more concerned with the plight of the villagers rather than with the consciousness of his protagonists. His characters therefore do not grow. They represent the obstinacy of some individuals who refuse to see change. They have an implacable resistance to change and hence are the monoliths of a decadent system of values which cannot hold things together any more.

"The distinctive talent of the writer of fiction is to make events: the mark of his maturity is to offer, by way of

events, a community of individual lives in the act of defining themselves"²² This is wherein lies the greatness of Dickens or Jane Austen. Most of the Third World novel has towed this line as basically it is social in nature. The Third World novelist is a recorder of the history of his people be he Achebe, Ngugi, Anand or Baldwin. His characters therefore live through an ordered sequence of time. They have motives and their conduct has consequences for the whole community which they represent. Even Ellison's *Invisible Man*, living in an industrial society, indulges in the act of defining his identity by participating in many events which recall the history of the black American race. He does not indulge in the luxury of analysing his own consciousness. He gains self knowledge not through an act of meditation but through sheer indulgence in the eventful history of his race.

Like the nineteenth century fiction, event and not the consciousness of the character, is the unit of most of the Third World fiction. Character comes in so far as it helps the event. Even The Serpent and the Rope and Comrade Kirillov, primarily novels of ideas, are located in history. In fact the protagonists in both these novels have training in the discipline of history. Though the one has a metaphysical and the other a Marxist dialectical leanings, their

22. Marvin Mudrick, "Character and Event in Fiction",
Critical Approaches to Fiction, p.105.

moorings are in history which provides them with the basic data for their analyses and history as we know is concerned with the event and not with the consciousness of the character.

Even when the novelist tells the story through the consciousness of one of his characters as is the case with Weep Not Child, the focus still remains on the event. In Weep Not Child though the story emanates from "central consciousness of Njoroge, Ngugi's main concern remains relationships. Ngugi here uses the technique of 'character introspection for portraying his characters : "Characterisation is impressionistic and vivid, full of sounds and colors and emotional tones rarely expressed in the African novel."²³ Njoroge, in the opening chapter, is told by Nyokabi, his mother that he would go to school but being poor, he won't be getting a mid-day meal. He remarks : "I understand'.

'you won't bring shame to me by one day
refusing to attend school?'

Now Ngugi enters the child's mind and reports :

"O Mother, I'll never bring shame to you.
just let me get there, just let me."

These words remain unspoken, because they are the inner most thoughts of Njoroge. All that he tells his mother aloud is : "I like school" (p.3) Ngugi later on shifts the point-of-view of Njoroge to the third person narrator as in chapter

23. Charles Larson, Emergence of African Fiction, p.123-24.

Four. After having dramatized a class room scene in which the whole class repeats certain sounds after the teacher, Ngugi, through a "narrated monologue", peers into the consciousness of Njoroge : "It was so funny the way he said this. He made yet another mark on the board. Njoroge's heart beat fast. To know that he was actually learning. He would have a lot to tell his mother" (p.34).

As discussed earlier, Narayan's characters follow the classical Indian pattern of order-disorder-order of the Sanskrit literature. The conflict in these novels arises from the "taamsik" and the "Saatvik" tempers of the characters, which they represent. But unlike Ben Jonsonian characters, who are the sole representatives of "humours" these characters oscillate between the two "gunas" (tempers). Even Vasu, whom Sastri equates with a demon, has certain redemptive features. He picks up Nataraj in his jeep even when they are not on good terms. Margayya shows his love for children even in his bad days. Mani is a bully and Rajam, a snob. But in spite of these predominant features in their characters, they still are warm and affectionate human beings. Narayan does not simplify his characters to a crude level of good-bad conflict. "His sense of objectivity is so strong that it is to be found even in the make-up of a single character."²⁴

24. Rajeev Taranath, "The Average as the Positive", M.K. Naik, et.al. (ed.) Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English (Dharwar : Karnatak Univ., 1972) p.298.

The classical India pattern of the two 'gunas' interests him in so far as it helps him in perceiving his characters objectively. He abandons this pattern in favour of producing better art as is the case with Raju, the protagonist of The Guide.

Raju's predominantly agricultural community of Malgudi undergoes a transformation with the arrival of the railways which herald industrialisation of this small town. Raju, the village boy, becomes Raju, the railway guide. His small book shop helps him get an insight into the business world and it also provides him an opportunity for self education. His role of the railway guide brings out his uncommon potential. Like a water-diviner he develops an instinct for guiding his customers. He can read their minds and can thus handle them properly. If he gets an academic type customer, he becomes deferential, to an ordinary man he poses to be an intellectual. He actually classifies all his patrons and thus instinctively decides that Rosie and Marco could be his life long customers.

Raju, as the lover of Rosie marks the second phase of the development of his character. Raju comes to symbolize the warmth of life which had been denied to Rosie all these years and Rosie symbolizes the liberating experience that real art is. Together, they symbolise the "problematic hero" who rebels against society in order to justify his own set of values. Raju - Rosie relationship becomes acceptable only when we take these symbols into consideration. Rosie leaves Raju who

by now has become commercial minded and forges her signatures on a cheque which lends him in a jail.

The novel opens with Raju's recent release from the jail, which marks the Third phase of his life. He now is at Mangala and has established himself as a saint with a beard and all. His hold over the life of the villagers is complete. When it does not rain the whole village turns to him for a solution to this problem as Velan innocently declares that the Swami has undertaken a fast for propitiating the rain god. It is the collective consciousness of Mangala which forces him to pursue his fast thoroughly : "If by avoiding food I shall help the trees bloom, and the grass grow why not do it thoroughly "he asserts to himself. The comic element here turns serious. The simple faith of the village moves him the locale itself - the temple, the hills, the river all influence his mind and above all his readiness to rise to the occasion to live upto the reputation of being the "guide" impel him to act for other's sake. He does it at the cost of his life. The last pages of the novel reveal Raju in his glory and agony. Raju oscillates between the individual pain and public glory for which he had tried all his life. The uncommon potential which Raju had so far used for inflating his ego, is now being used for the development of his singular consciousness. For the first time in his life, the novelist tells us, Raju was now learning "the thrill of full application outside money and love ; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not

personally interested." This gives him strength to go through the ordeal of living the forced role of the martyr and the recluse.

Thus we see that Raju's "self-awareness is hard earned but not in any way in which a tragic character earns it, self wrung, self strung."²⁵ His 'pilgrim's progress' from a deceitful, self seeking, immature human being with a fragmentary view of life to a selfless mature saint with a comprehensive vision of reality, is arduous but non-the-less it is an indicator of the development of his singular consciousness. It is the victory of the people, as also the victory of the Swami : "Raju becomes significant only as the anonymous 'Swami'. His identity is affirmed, but his individuality is annihilated in the will of the people and in the determined universe"²⁶ of Hindu ethos.

Similarly in English Teacher Krishna the protagonist evolves "singular consciousness" passing through various stages and crises. Krishna right in the beginning tells us "what was wrong with me? I couldn't say, some sort of disaffection, a self-rebellion I might call it"(p.1) Whatever he does, he does

25. C.D. Narasimhaiah, The Swan and the Eagle

(Simla : Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1969), p.158.

26. Laxmi Holmstroms, The Novels of R.K. Narayan

(Calcutta : Writers' Workshop, 1975), p.73.

it to perfection and yet there always remains "a sense of something missing" in his life. Like the other problematic heroes Krishna's 'questioning self' allows him no rest till he rebels against the conventions of society and its well defined views. His rebellion is three fold : First, it is against the colonial system of education which conditions the mind of the colonized so much so that a spelling mistake in the language of the colonizer is treated as a sin. Secondly, Krishna rebels against the conventional role of a father by leaving his daughter to the care of his parents. This becomes all the more important when we learn that he loves his daughter very much. Moreover, Krishna challenges the irreversibility of death by treating it as a theme of spiritual re-birth.

Krishna's archetypal quest ends up in his metamorphosis because of the antological nature of his problems. But this spiritual quest is within the well defined ways of the Hindu 'ashramas'. Moreover, it is a repetition of the theme of man's journey from attachment to detachment, from "Asakti " to "Nirasakti" as has been laid down in the Hindu scriptures. While Raju is ironically trapped into sainthood, Krishna achieves it through his hard work. But both reach the same end: detachment, as is done by many other Narayan characters too. Their evolution to a heightened consciousness aware of a deeper meaning of life takes them back to the cultural roots of India,

the 'Dharma', 'Artha', 'Kāma' and 'Moksha' paradigm of a man's life on this earth. Thus, in these characters the "private agony" forming the individual consciousness becomes communal consciousness and Narayan's achievement lies in making their private history move backward"into the main stream of public history."²⁷

Larson notes an evolutionary pattern in the novels of the third world. At its earlier stage of development, it was an expression of the communal consciousness of its people. The plot in these novels is situational and the focus is on the group undergoing change due to colonial intrusion. Conflict is usually triggered by outside events, like an exposure to another culture. This novel needs anthropological and sociological material to sustain itself. Characterisation, here, occupies a secondary place. Though this novel has some epic characters like Okonkwo and Ezeulu, most of the characters remain wooden. These characters do not grow and hence attain no self knowledge.

Later on the Third World novel has evolved "from the collective consciousness to the individual consciousness".²⁸ The novels in this category are introspective and the focus is on the individual rather than on the group. Plot, here,

27. Larson, The Novel in the Third World, p.164.

28. Charles R. Larson, The Novel in the Third World, p.175.

becomes secondary to character development and the conflict is triggered by personal problems. The individual protagonist in this novel passes through various stages of development and his consciousness finally evolves to resolve some of the basic contradictions that he faces.

While we might agree with Larson's analysis generally, it is too schematic to be accepted wholly as it does not take into account such experimental novels as The Cat and Shakespeare, The Voice, The Interpreters to name but a few. Moreover, Larson ignores the black American fiction (except Cane) almost completely as it does not fit in his scheme of things.

Okolo, the protagonist of Okara's The Voice while being tried on some concocted charges by Chief Izongo, analyses contemporary African situation perceptively: "our fathers' insides always contained things straight. They did straight things. Our insides were also clean and we did the straight things until the new time came.." (p.50) The problem that worries the contemporary African novelist writing in post colonial period is the problem that worries Okolo. With the change of time, the 'insides' of the people have not remained clean. They are no more "straight" like their ancestors" who had epic dimensions. The fact of the new time, stresses Tebewoei, is that "Everybody's inside is now filled with money, cars and concrete houses and money is being scattered all around" (p.50) Tebewoei makes no pretensions about his being a part of the new game of acquisition and

and consumerism. The second messenger (rather a 'thug') who is sent to beat up Okolo puts it explicitly : "As for me...if the world turns this way I take it : If it turns another way I take it. Any way the world turns I take it with my hands. I like sleep and my wife and my one son, so I do not think." (p.25). It is these "think nothing" people who, according to Okara, are exploiting post colonial African situation in collaboration with political bosses like Chief Izongo.

Okolo as we see is a problematic hero who tries to authenticate a set of values implicit in his undefined search for "it". His rebellion is not so much against the self seeking, grossly materialistic political bosses with no "shadows", as against the corruption of words. The Voice, therefore, is as much "a gloomy parable of political and social life in Nigeria soon after Independence", as it is "a parable of the artist's moral (not moralistic) function in his society"²⁹ And as a literary artist works through the medium of language, the corruption of words therefore is much more harmful than any other form of corruption. Okolo in one of his introspections reflects that the people do not realise "that the words and money are not the same thing. Money may be lost forever but words, teaching words, are the same in

29. Arthur Ravenscroft, "Novels of Disillusion", in Readings in Commonwealth Literature, William Walsh (ed.) (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1973), p.186-205.

any age..." (p.51-52) It is this sanctity of words that the novelist wants to preserve. He therefore in The Voice makes experimental use of language, semantically, syntactically and even grammatically. By making a frequent departure from the normal English sentence pattern and also by changing its syntax, Okara introduces the linguistic characteristics of Ijaw into English. Moreover, it brings a kind of freshness to a rather hackneyed theme of the courage of a man pitted against national thuggery.

The Voice is poetic in conception and scope. The novelist does not spell out every detail, instead he relies heavily on suggestions. Unlike a philosophical novel, here the novelist states a concept vaguely and then builds it up "with new layers of meaning that grow into one another organically," through a very controlled "process of cumulative suggestions". Like a well wrought poem, Okara here uses a "sparse, non-abstract language".³⁰ One such concept that he tries to build through the novel is that of "it". To begin with, the reader has no idea what "it" can possibly mean. But slowly by a process of associating "it" with both the types of people who have "it" and those who do not have "it", we begin to form certain associations of meaning until all the vagueness evaporates. By the end of the novel the reader understands this

30. Arthur Ravenscroft, "Introduction" to The Voice
(London : Heinemann, 1964 rep. 1975), p.9.

concept fairly clearly. Yet the novelist manages to avoid a clearly-defined meaning of "it" as he is neither dogmatic nor categorical in his statements. Okara uses this technique in building up the concepts of "inside" and "Shadow". By avoiding the conventional terms like 'spirit' or 'soul' for 'inside', Okolo plays the role of the poet whose job (to borrow a well known T.S. Eliot phrase) is to "purify the dialect of the tribe" and through it to purify the society of its socio-political corruption.

While Kafka and Orwell transcend the parable by subverting the form, Okara being pre-occupied with the problem of corruption - social, political and hence linguistic, is unable to do so. The narrative, therefore, remains traditional without any experimentation. Okolo's search too ~~does~~ not take on a universal dimension. To a large extent it remains undefined and therefore highly personal. Because of its paradigmatic form and stereotypical characterisation, The Voice, remains at best a parable of corruption. Unlike Orwell's Animal Farm the allegorical element in the novel becomes too obvious to miss.

Artist's moral function in the post colonial society, again, is the main theme of The Interpreters. As we have already discussed in this chapter and also in chapter three, the failure of these "interpreters" to locate the problems facing their country is due to the moral paralysis and political corruption which is a hang over of the erstwhile colonial rule. The situation has been aptly described by sago when he looks at the crowd chasing an alleged thief near Hotel Excelsior: "Run,

you little thief or the bigger thieves will pass a law against your existence as a menace to society." (p.114) This is exactly what happens in The Voice where Okolo has to die just because he has become a menace to the "bigger thieves." Okolo, of course, is no thief. Neither, is the running boy in this novel a thief.

The Interpreters, divided into two parts, is a "loose concatenation of episodes"³¹ linked by common characters, same location and the sardonic satire on urban Nigeria. While the first part is comic, rather rabelaisian, the second part is serious and sombre. The structure of the novel is essentially dramatic. It incorporates a number of small playlets with very effective dialogues written in English with the Yoruba prose qualities of ebullience and the arabesque.

Like a Yoruba ritual drama, The Interpreters is not easily understood if we do not try to understand the Yoruba metaphysics and particularly its pantheon of gods³² on which the book is based. In fact, Kola, one of the five 'interpreters' remains busy through out the novel painting "The Pantheon" which has all the important gods of Yoruba mythology. The other characters now and then act as 'models' for Kola's pantheon. Time and again, the reader is told that Kola is not to be disturbed as he is obsessed with his painting, which he takes fifteen months to complete. But is he really happy with his creation? Far from it, he confesses to Monica that he is "simply sick and fed up with the sight of this canvas." (p.227)

31. Peter Alcock, "Something Different : Problems of cultural Relativism in Non-European Literature" ACLALS Bulletin, V,1 (July 1978), p.48-66.

32. For a detail discussion refer to Beeth Lindfors, Folklore in Nigerian Literature (New York : Africana, 1973)

Egbo who started Kola on the paintings, gets so angry with him that he wants to take back the ram he brought to celebrate the completion of 'the Pantheon'. He who models for Ogun, the explorer, warrior, creative god believes that Kola has not done justice to him : "Look at that thing he has made of me for instance, a damned blood thirsty maniac from some maximum security zoo. Is that supposed to be me? Or even Ogun which I presume it represents?" (p.233)

The other gods in the pantheon are Shango, the god of lightning and electricity, represented in the novel by Sekoni ; Esumare, the rainbow modelled by Lazarus, the albino, Orisa-nla, the principal diety is lived by Bandele, Bandele in the novel also performs the priestly functions assigned to the chief diety in traditional yoruba ritual drama, which becomes evident particularly towards the end of the novel. He does not seem to be a part of the Joe Golder concert. During the concert we are told "Bandele was a total stranger, and becoming increasingly by inscrutable" (p.244). At the theatre he sat apart from others. Like Obatala, the creator god, Bandele looked at the concert with a dispassionate eye : "Bandele sat like a timeless image brooding over lesser beings." His picture is complete when we are told that he looked with pity at all the mud slinging, hypocrites who were busy scandalizing the unnamed student impregnated by Sagoe. With a deft stroke Soyinka brings out the

god like qualities in the character of Bandele :

"He was looking at them with pity, but...
Bandele, old and immutable as the royal
mothers of Benin throne, old and cruel as the
Ogboni in conclave pronouncing the Word". (p.251).

But who is there to listen to his word. All those who matter in the fictional world are typical colonials and his "tribeless tribesmen" are disintegrating : "After the interval of the Golder show they do not move at all." But they stood unbelieving. By Sekoni's Wrestler Simi waited. Kola poised near her in confusion. Egbo watched her while she walked towards him... like a choice of a man drowning..." (p.251) Thus the disintegration of the group is complete. They now seem to be diverging to accept their separate destinies as their artistic tribe has almost failed to function with the death of Sekoni. Sekoni, a devout idealistic Muslim could not ^{get} passed yet his power station that he planned and designed through the thoroughly corrupt beaureaucracy? He died a frustrated man leaving his 'Wrestler', a sculptur for his friends.

The theme of disintegration has been powerfully brought out through the character of Egbo : "Through the book there are recurrent, poetic, highly memorable, episodes where Egbo is exposed to just this consciousness of disintegration, experience of the void."³³ Egbo expresses it through the destructive

33. Peter Alcock, "Something Different..."

ACLALS, V,1 (July,1978), p.55.

images of water which are scattered all over the book. While canoeing down a river, Egbo tells the story of his childhood fascination of the water of river Oshun. As a child he thought that his dead parents would rise up from the river water whenever there was a chance for that".. so night after night I went and called to them and placed my ear against the water, on the line of water against the bank.." But, as expected, it was a futile exercise. None-the-less, Egbo finds a "depth also in that turbulence.." (p.9). Similarly, his sexual encounter with Simi, the courtesan, is also conveyed through water images. After his initiation, "Egbo felt he was like the quarry at Abeokuta when all the granite had been blown apart and nothing but mud-waters of the rain fill the huge caverns underground" (p.125).

Rain too is used as a symbol of destruction in the book. Sekoni dies in the season of rain and harvest. When some rain-drops fall into his glass, Egbo throws it out muttering, "I don't need his pity. Someone tell God not to weep in my beer" (p.7) (emphasis added)

Part Two opens with the rain symbol. "The rains of May become in July, slit arteries of the sacrificial bull, a million bleeding punctures of the sky-bull hidden in convulsive cloud humps...." (p.155). It is these rains which make Sekoni "the sacrificial bull" of Ogun, the god of creativity and the guardian of the road.

Sagoe's 'Books of Enlightenment' propogating his so called philosophy of Vaidancy is a mock epic attempt at describing the state of disintegration through which all the "interpreters" are passing in the novel. Sagoe, first reads it to Mathias, the office peon who repeatedly tells him that he does not understand it at all. Later on Dehinwa reads the books from a random page to Sagoe and the reading ends with a cryptic sentence : "To shit is human, to voidate divine.
 . . . This was the Birth, the concrete formulation of Void-ancy" (p.156). Through this verbose attempt of Sagoe, Soyinka not only satirizes the profession of journalism, but his main aim seems to bring home the truth that all artistic intentions in the fictional world of The Interpreters are being thwarted by public necessity.

Kola's canvas of the pantheon of gods, Sekoni's sculptor and Sagoe's "voidancy"-all these artistic efforts, serious and non-serious are recurrent exercises in disintegration, which is "the core of yoruba myth"³⁴

Regeneration and integration of this community is hinted at through "the church of Lazarus" in the second part of the novel. But the church like the efforts of the artists, does not succeed fully.

34. Peter Alcock, "Something Different", p.57.

If The Voice, The Interpreters and The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born are any indicators of the new trend, we can perhaps surmise that these novels are not a development of the old form. They are a new departure examining post colonial realities and dilemmas of Africa. A Grain of Wheat which questions the idealistic euphoria that accompanied Kenya independence is an expression of the novelists' sense of disillusionment with the black rule which is a continuation of the old colonial ways. To grapple with the new situation, Ngugi finds the old realistic form of the novel inadequate and hence he successfully experiments with certain new techniques of narration which we have already discussed. It is however in The Petals of Blood that the post independence disillusionment gets a fuller expression. Ngugi, here, on one hand creates a local arcadia through the idyllic picture of the past of the community of Ilmorog by using legend and oral lore judiciously, and on the other hand, he presents an authentic view of the evils pervasive in post colonial Kenya under black rule. For a novel with epic dimensions, he evolves a method of narration through reminiscences. "There are both thematic and stylistic reminiscences, here, not just of Ngugi's own earlier novels, but of Ousmane, Armah, Achebe, Soyinka and others."³⁵ Similarly, Soyinka in his Season of Anomy tries

35. Eustace Palmer, "Ngugi's Petals of Blood", African Literature Today : 10 : Retrospect and Prospect, p.153-166.

to establish a relationship of art and politics through the medium of myth. "So far in African fiction the full potential of the political allegory is still to be exploited. But the union of vehicle (the novel) and political idea which we expect of the political allegory is at its best in Season of Anomy."³⁶

So, in Africa the cultural nationalism of 1960s produced the novel of social realism which attacked colonialism and idealized the African past. The novelist was primarily concerned with cultural affirmation and hence he made little or no innovation in his technique of narration. But the post colonial experience in Africa is producing the novel of disillusionment. This novel is akin to the Western political novel in essence but is different in form because it is based on the native culture and mythology. While Man of the People is a satirical force, The Voice is a parable of political and social life. The Interpreters is a recreation of the traditional ritualistic yoruba drama in fictional terms depicting disintegration as part of the divine scheme. Basically, they are all satirical in nature. The characters here are simplified and tend to be stereotypes.

The other direction in which the African fiction seems to be marching is that of political allegory (Seasons of Anomy)

36. Dan Izevbaye, "Issues in the Reassessment of the African Novel", African Literature Today : 10 (1979), p.7-31

and reminiscences (The Petals of Blood). Perhaps it will not be wrong to conclude with Izevbaye that "the history of the African novel has been essentially a history of an evolving racial consciousness."³⁷

Izevbaye's remark is equally applicable to the black American fiction too. From Cane to Invisible Man to The Outsider to Another Country to If Beale Street Could Talk and finally to The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman the black fiction has moved with the history of the development of the racial Consciousness of the blacks in the U.S. Its movement can be traced from existentialism to social protest to reassessment and now to affirmation in the form of black 'peoplehood'. Black American fiction unlike its African counterpart has mostly been experimental in nature. Black American fiction, being in the mainstream of the Western fiction, has mostly been experimental in form. But its experimentation too has been circumscribed by its social concern, and has not been as free as that of the white American novelists. Cane, Invisible Man, If Beale Street Could Talk, and An Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman to name but a few, all deal with the racial consciousness of their protagonists.

Indian fiction on the other hand has not followed this line of evolution. Hence, there is no marked difference

37. Dan Izevbaye, ALI, 10 (1979) p.27-28

between the colonial and post colonial fiction. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan have been essentially writing within the Indian literary tradition. Even Untouchable apparently a very simple story, is "based on a traditional Upanishadic tale-I think this was the famous tale of Shvetaketu-

"It is the self, and thou O Shvetaketu, art it"-

Tat Tvam asi."³⁸ The book, therefore claims Alcock on the authority of Anand himself has an "organic unity and depth of another order", that is the metaphysical order of understanding the real self. Bakha's progress therefore is the progress of the self in search of the real meaning of life." He moves out of a condition of 'avidya', unspiritual ignorance, into a state, perhaps analogous to the desired traditional Hindu end of 'moksha', "Liberation."³⁹ Anand's Gauri as we have examined in chapter IV reformulates the Sita myth in the Nineteenth century realistic narrative technique.

Similarly, all the novels of R.K. Narayan are essentially Hindu fables. His comedy and irony are part of the Hindu response to the world, the response of a novelist who maintains an aesthetic distance both from his fictional Hindu world and also from the response of his characters is conditioned by the theory of Karma. His fictional paradigm

38. Peter Alcock, "Something Different", p.59.

39. Peter Alcock, "Something Different"

of order-disorder-order is well within the Indian 'Desi-Marga' aesthetic tradition which admits no tragedy in the Western sense of the term. Narayan's fictional world is held in equilibrium both by the tropical security of Malgudi and the 'Desi-Marga' tradition which follows the middle passage. The conflict between the 'Saatvik' and the 'taamsik' tempers is therefore temporary as it is manifestation of 'Avidya', illusion which disappears as soon as the protagonist gains wisdom. Narayan however is not a modern fabulist like Kafka and others as he fails to subvert the traditional fictional form to suit the needs of modern sensibility.

Mulk Raj Anand and Narayan particularly seem to be satisfied with the traditional fictional forms. Both of them make no experimentation whatsoever. Except for Raja Rao and G.V. Desani, there seems to be little experimental fiction in India and their works too being at least three decades old seem to be providing no direction for the Indo-Anglian fiction.

After having examined the Indian, African and black American fiction separately, let us now examine the relationship between colonialism and the novelistic form. Novel was transplanted on Indian and African soils by the people who have had British education. These novelists inherited two traditions - the vernacular and the colonial. Their loyalties therefore, remain divided between the two polarities and they thus acquire a double consciousness. But, they cannot be loyal to either tradition wholly. Their sensibilities also get mixed up and do not remain pure. To change the metaphor, a

colonial writer experiences "a double exile" as he is "exiled culturally from the sources and traditions of English as used in England,"⁴⁰ and "linguistically from the landscapes and people" he writes about.

This "exile" has often proved to be a stimulant rather than a disability to those writers who have maintained a detachment from their time and place without destroying their commitment to special values of both the cultures.

While some novelists use this double exile to the advantage of their art, the others either imitate the colonizer or only push the claim of the nationalist colonized without imbibing the qualities of either tradition in their fiction.

African fiction, among all the three provides examples of both the varieties and can therefore be illustrative of the phenomenon. Tutuola's The Palm Wine Drinkard (1952) perhaps is the first novel where the novelist adopts the loose, episodic and non-sequential structure of a traditional African mythic tale to a novel format. Here, the novelist takes over the oral legendary and mythological material unaltered.

Achebe improves upon Tutuola's method by developing a style which accommodates the traditional oral form to the English language. But both Tutuola and Achebe make no effort

40. Gareth Griffiths, A Double Exile : African and West Indian Writing between Two cultures (London : Marion Boyass, 1978), p.9.

at evolving new formal novelistic strategies to accommodate the colonial consciousness of its African protagonists. They, like most Indian novelists, have successfully used forms which their European or American contemporaries find closed for them or at least available only within some distancing framework of irony and parody. Their aesthetics is based on the traditional view of art which makes it responsible for social change and therefore attaches more importance to content than to form. Here the society, mostly moral, and semi-literate is under a heavy attack of colonial or neo-colonial forces. The achievement of these writers lies in the fact that they have extended the frontiers of English language by recording in it internal pulse of their cultures in which English was almost unknown. A detailed discussion of this phenomenon appears in the following chapter.

Recently some African writers have tried to use their post-colonial experiences for breaking new grounds in the novelistic form itself. They use their traditional culture for themes and images, but model their fictional form on the contemporary Western novels.

Almost all the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah fall in this category. These novelists do not always take a functional view of art and do not try to play the novelist as teacher. Their social commitment, if any, is limited. They look towards the West for experimentation in the fictional modes. Black American fiction almost from its beginning has been in this

tradition. Unlike the earlier fiction which is rural oriented, this fiction (except Ngugi who is not a typical representative of this variety) is urban and therefore individualistic and urbane. This fiction, has been practised in "South Africa, where labour policies and urban segregation led to a dislocation of traditional life and a model which shared as many features with black America as with black Africa."⁴¹ Indian fiction, in general, has not followed this line. Even East and West African fiction following this pattern has not yet come of age, as most of it is imitative in nature. Achebe⁴² bitterly attacks Armah's novels because they try to imitate the Western models without finding their relevance to the African scene. Similarly, Kofi Awoonor attacks Armah and Camara Laye for adopting the technique and 'role' of European artist : "The novels of Camara Laye are initiations of Kafka"⁴³ and novels of Armah are "a sham and parody."

To sum up then, perhaps we can group the fiction under study in three broad categories according to the novelistic strategies it evolves to accommodate the colonial consciousness of its protagonists -

41. Gareth Griffiths, A Double Exile, p.50.

42. Chinua Achebe, "Africa and her writers", Morning Yet on Creation Day (London : Heinemann, 1977) p,25-26.

43. Kofi Awoonor, "Voyagers and the Earth", New Letters Univ. of Missouri-Kansas City; Vol.40 No.1 (Autumn 1973), p.87-88.

First category consists of such experimental fiction which extends the limits of the available fictional form to adapt itself to the native narrative techniques. While Kanthapura is a 'Sthala Purana', The Interpreters a Yoruba ritualistic drama and Invisible Man, a blues in the garb of a novel. Narayan's attempt at accommodating the 'Desi-Marga' tradition of Sanskrit tales to the novelistic form does not succeed always, though.

In the second category we can put all those novels which make an experimental use of English but accommodates the colonial consciousness of their protagonists in the traditionally available formalistic modes of narration. All About H. Hatterr and The Voice are representatives of this variety.

The third group of novels forms a kind of half way house between the first two categories. Here the experimentation is both at the formalistic and linguistic planes, partially, though. The novelist, here, evolves fictional strategies to accommodate the colonial consciousness of its protagonists through the native narrative techniques and also domesticated use of English. The Cat and Shakespeare is a happy union of Indian and Western narrative techniques as also a successful example of domesticated English. Achebe's weaving of the oral tradition of the Igbos into the available fictional fabric through a domesticated English is another successful example of this kind of fiction. Most of the fiction of Ngugi too belongs to this category.

Most of the black American fiction is of this nature, though not all of them are successful. Cane, Invisible Man, If Beale Street Could Talk, and The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman are some of the successful attempts at blending the black American oral tradition into the novelistic form.

This categorization, like all such attempts, has its limitations and no claims can obviously be made. Moreover, the experiment is too fresh to be evaluated, finally. Achebe beautifully sums up the situation in "Thoughts on the African Novel" and it would not be out of place to quote him at length :

"I do admit to certain residual superstitions; and one of the strongest is the fear of names, of hurrying to a conclusion when the issue is still wide open. If I may paraphrase a proverb which seems to me appropriate : ' Do not underrate a day while an hour of light remains.' In other words, be careful for one hour is enough to do a man in..... The world of the creative artist is like that. It is not the world of the taxonomist whose first impulse on seeing a new plant or animal is to define, classify and file away. Nor is it the world of the taxidermist who plies an even less desirable trade."44

44. Chinua Achebe, Morning Yet on Creation Day, p. 49-50.

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