

ENGLISH DOMESTICATED

"For the writer...has to deal with language which consists...of forms which are also contents. That is to say, they are meanings." The novelist "has to ask himself how the manipulation of words, themselves already charged with meanings, will convey the other larger meaning which is to be his content"

(Joyce Cary, Art and Reality : Ways of the Creative Process)

DOMESTICATED ENGLISH

"you taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse; the red plague rid you,
For learning me your language."

(Shakespeare : The Tempest, 1.II.363)

For Caliban, the archetypal colonized learning the language of Prospero might have been a profitless process as he uses it for cursing his colonial master and also his own lot. He, unlike Ariel, has no other use for the language of Prospero.

But the colonial writer has in fact wrenched it away from his erstwhile master in compensation for the plunder of his own national past. He has domesticated English to suit his native needs and has yet retained its international character. The native novelist of the erstwhile colonies "looks at the world from within the language and renders it, as it were, with sure bold strokes conveying a sense of fulness of life with its tragic and cosmic rhythms pulsating with equal force."¹ One thinks of the tragic grandeur of Things Fall Apart or the poetic subteletics and urbanity of The Interpreters or the incantatory liturgical celebration of Indian consciousness in Kanthapura or the anxiety, despair and rage of the racially discriminated American blacks in

1. J. Birje-Patil, "Kanthapura from an African Perspective" a paper-read at Commonwealth Literature Seminar, Mysore University, (July, 1979) p.1-8.

Baldwin's Go Tell it on the Mountain. The list can be further expanded to include Naipaul, Desani, Ngugi, Okara, Ellison, Jean Toomer and others. This magic wand of Prospero has over the years become a very effective tool in the hands of his colonized subjects.

The history of English as the language of colonization goes back to the days of colonization of Ireland : "Ireland was perhaps the first nation to be faced by the problems that result from English being a language of colonization."²

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man provides a "the classic model" for these problems. Stephen Dedalus, cannot accept the Gaelic language as he says "My ancestors threw off their language and took another... They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them" (p.207)³. Stephen does not want to be a martyr for the Irish cause lost ages ago by his ancestors. Moreover, he wants to preserve his freedom so very dear to all artists. He therefore tells Davin the nationalist: "you talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (p.207). Similarly while discussing his problems with Cranly he tells him "and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can.." (p.251). Though he chooses self exile as a means for fulfilling his artistic needs, he

2. Bruce Kuig, Literatures of the World in English,
(London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p16-18.

3. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
(London : Jonathan Cape, 1916, Definitive ed.rep.1975)

none-the-less tries "to forge in the Smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (p.257). A recreation of the conscience of one's race is also the chief concern of self exiled novelists like Naipaul, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Armah, Awoonor, Mphahlele and a host of other writers from India, Africa, West Indies and many other erstwhile colonies.

The question whether or not an artist can work through the medium of a foreign language is symbolically suggested through the use of word 'tundish', instead of the common English word 'funnel' by Stephen. This Irish word acts like "a rapier point to his sensitiveness" and he contemplates that English for him "will always be..an acquired speech". He even feels the oppression of this phenomenon. "I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets the shadow of his language." (p.194) But the question that arises in our mind is whose language is he talking about? Is it the language of the dean or is it the English language? The answer to these questions is suggested at the end of the novel when Stephen tells us that "tundish" is an English word, "good old blunt English too" Stephen writes in his diary : "Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us?" (p.256). He thus obscures the question of foreignness of English by tracing 'tundish' in English as well as in Irish. For an artist perhaps there is no foreign language; more so if he uses it for his creative purposes even when he is not born to it.

This question of foreignness of English has bothered almost all the novelists of India. The African novelist has not worried himself much about this problem, though. Mulk Raj Anand has written a full book, The King Emperor's English (1948) besides a number of articles in defence of Indian English. Raja Rao in his now famous "Foreword" to Kanthapura and also in his "Introduction to The Serpent and the Rope" defines his English, he does not bother himself with the question of defending his choice of English. R.K. Narayan too dismisses the question in a couple of articles, like, "English in India" etc.

The accusations against the use of English for creative purposes are summed up by B. Rajan in the following excerpt: "The Indian who writes in English is ex hypothesi UnIndian. He is a product of two cultures and therefore abnormal by the standards of either. His sensibility is mixed and therefore impure. In the dialogue between East and West he can speak for neither participant, though he may have some usefulness when the dialogue breaks down."⁴

Some of the above 'accusations', in fact, work in favour of the writer. If biculturalism makes him 'abnormal' to either culture and his sensibility 'mixed' and 'impure', it

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4. Balchandra Rajan, "Identity and Nationality",
Considerations, (ed.) Meenakshi Mukherjee, (New Delhi :
 Allied, 1977), p.2.

also broadens his perspective. The discordance between two cultures can result in creative tension as is demonstrated by Raja Rao in The Serpent and the Rope.

Bilingualism in fact is a necessary condition of the colonial situation. Being heir to two cultures, two languages and hence two world views, the colonial writer is trapped in linguistic dualism. Under the colonial circumstances, the two languages do not enjoy the same status. Hence the writer participates as we have already examined in an earlier chapter, in a kind of linguistic drama. Till the time the colonial situation prevails the writer gets no publisher for his native language and obviously there are just a few readers for his writings. But once the situation changes the writer too changes or tries to change under the influence of nationalism.

There may not be a living speech tradition of English in India, but there is a live written tradition almight. As Professor Walsh puts it : "There is, I am convinced, an Indian English which is founded on writing and learning rather than speech and ordinary life, but which, once mastered, does develop its own characteristic tone and manner. And certainly there are writers in India who use this language with force and delicacy and point."⁵ The fiction of R.K. Narayan

5. William Walsh (ed.), Readings in Commonwealth Literature (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1973), p.XVIII.

particularly uses this kind of English. With a limited vocabulary and range of sentence patterns there is a kind of structural monotony. But this "flat monotony has the effect of reflecting the inner space."⁶ Narayan's language is closest to the language of the Newspapers and Weeklies. There is no effort at translating or transcreating Indian languages in English, yet his language conveys the flavour of Indian speech in a subtle way. After having been insulted by the Secretary of the Co-Operative Bank, Margayya in the Financial Expert decides not to squat under the banyan tree, but transact his business standing. Narayan re-creates the peculiar Indian rustic scene with a rustic sense of humour and all :

"His clients were somewhat surprised to see him in his new dress. He didn't squat under the tree, but remained standing.

"Why are you standing, Margayya?"

"Because I am not sitting", Margayya replied.

"Why not?"

"Because I like to stand-that's all, "he replied.

He handed a filled up application to someone and said : "Give it in there, and come away.". He told another : "Well, you will get your money today.

Give me back my advance." He carried on his business without sitting down. One of the men looked up and down and asked :

6. V.Y. Kantak, "The Language of Indian Fiction in English" M.K. Naik, et.al (ed.), Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English (Dharwar: Karnatak Univ., 1972) p.210-222.

"Going to a marriage party?"

"Yes," replied Margayya. "Every day is a day of marriage for me. Do you think I like a change of wife each day?" (p.20).

The dialogue between Margayya and his clients is witty rather rustic in humour and faithfully recreates the picture of rural India. Innocence, the peculiar haunting quality of the rustic life authenticates the scene and makes it very Indian. Margayya's instruction, "Give it in there, and come away" and not 'come back immediately' or even 'come out' has a peculiar(Tamil) nuance and yet it is English. The sentence has an association of 'detachment' in the sense of a peg coming away from a wall.

The flatness of the following sentence, from The English Teacher is effective first because it reflects the inner space of Krishna's mind and secondly because it is so very Indian, particularly the image of the untouchable which evokes a host of associations in our minds :

"There was a slight twinge at my heart at the new designation my wife was given : "patient". She would no longer be known as a wife or mother or Susila, but only as a patient! And all this precaution - was she an untouchable? It was a

painful line of thinking, but I curbed it by much scientific argument within myself." (p.86).

Narayan has "a personal, private feeling for English, an intimate fireside love for it."⁷ He has a kind of affection for English which he believes, is so "plaisant" and "absorbent"⁸ that "it has become the most resilient language in the world". It can communicate any experience that a writer wants to. For this, the writer does not have to write in the Anglo-Saxon English. English for him, like Sanskrit to his Dravidic, South Indian Brahmin ancestors, is the accepted language. Again like Sanskrit, it is the language of the educated elite, not so much the language of the colonizer or the colonized. Narayan in his fiction uses it as a diction of the common life of Malgudians. English, obviously is not the language of the Malgudians, not their first language in any case.

How to record the pulse of an ancient Brahminic culture of South India in English which is (not only unknown to most of the characters but is also twice removed from them as it does not belong to their long cherished aesthetic tradition but belongs to the culture of the colonizer, is the problem that Narayan faces. Unlike Okara, he does not break the

7. Raji Narasimhan, p.3.

8. R.K. Narayan, "The Maha", in Next Sunday (New Delhi : Orient Paperback, 1972), p.170.

English syntax to adapt English to his needs, neither does he make a deliberate use of Indian proverbs for "local colour" (as is done by Mulk Raj Anand and Khushwant Singh). His refusal to use Indian words in his fiction and then gloss them at the end of the book makes his novels highly readable.

What distinguishes his English from other Indian novelists is its general acoustics, its power to convey the Tamil forms of speech without translation, more so in case of those characters who do not know English at all. One way of giving a Tamil touch to his prose is the use of imperative 'let' at the beginning of a sentence : "Let him demand them immediately if he wants betel leaves also" (p.55) "Let her not worry, but just look into a mirror and satisfy herself" (p.162).

The use of continuous tense form, instead of simple present or past tense also lends an Indian touch to his English :

"How do you like this car?" his uncle asked.

"It is quite good."

"I bought it recently, giving away my old Essex in exchange."

"Oh," said Chandran. He felt quite happy that his uncle was speaking to him like an equal, and was not teasing him as he used to do before..." (The Bachelor of Arts, p.132).

Using new composite words such as 'nose-led', 'line-cleared' etc.; telescoping of words (a common feature of Tamil) and using abbreviated sentences⁹ - are some of the ways in which Narayan accommodates English to convey the peculiar flavour of the South Indian life as lived in a small town during the colonial and post colonial period.

Narayan establishes an autonomous relationship with English and accommodates it to his needs. But then, his needs are limited and monotonous in nature with the result that his vocabulary is restricted and sentence pattern repetitive. There is a general lack of variety and amplification in his language. At places his language, like some of his mediocre characters, looks stilted, fatigued and worn out. Narayan, again like his common folk, seems to be indulging in no violence, ~~verbal~~, non verbal or syntactic. Colonialism to the Malgudians is an external phenomenon. They, therefore, do not challenge it linguistically or otherwise. Within their small world, they feel secure and make a restricted use of English, which satisfies their needs, mostly.

Raja Rao's needs on the other hand are different and varied as he takes up a confrontist position vis-a-vis the colonizer. In order to prove superiority of his culture, he

9. Laxmi Holmstrom, The Novels of R.K. Narayan
(Calcutta : Writers Workshop, 1973), p.93.

challenges the colonizing West : "Such an attitude of authority, an assumption of not just equality but superiority vis-a-vis the West, is exceptional for the heavily colonized Indian mind!"¹⁰

Raja Rao sustains this position by draining all the linguistic resources as also by keeping English in a state of creative tension, which helps him celebrate Indian consciousness, ~~which helps him~~ in a language that roars, swings, is incantatory, liturgical and has a mantra like spell over the reader.

If Kanthapura is an expression of the collective consciousness of the villagers with a peculiar peasant sensibility, The Serpent and the Rope, of a metaphysical consciousness of Ramaswamy who vindicates Vedantic philosophy at a moment's notice, The Cat and Shakespeare an unveiling of the mysteries of a ration shop of the colonial India as also of the philosophical subtleties of Govindan Nair's mind, Comrade Kirillov is a stylized mock-comic defiance of Marxian dialectics as lived by an expatriate South Indian Brahmin.

Raja Rao brilliantly succeeds in evoking the Indian consciousness as a collective experience which fuses the

10. Raji Narasimhan, p.12.

the disparate experience of individual characters in Kanthapura. The tone and mood are evoked through a lyrical description of the place :

"Our village - I don't think you have ever heard about it - Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara."

"High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Mangalore and Puttur and many a center of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads, narrow, dusty, mud-covered roads, wind through the forests of teak and of jack, of sandal and of sal, and hanging over bellowing gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys, they turn now to the left and now to right and bring you through the Alame and Champa and Mena and Kola passes into the great granaries of trade." (p.7).

The language here, though English, has an authentic ring of Kannada about it. The rhetoric through which Raja Rao builds the paragraph is basically Kannada. The following sentence illustrates the point amply :

"Kartik has come to Kanthapura, sisters-Kartik has come with the glow of lights and the unrepressed footsteps of the wandering gods, white lights from clay-trays and red lights from copper-stands, and diamond lights that glow from the bowers of entrance-leaves; lights that glow from banana-trunks and mango twigs, yellow light behind white leaves, and green light behind yellow leaves and white light behind green leaves; and the night curls through the shadowed

streets, and hissing over bellied boulders and hurrying through dallying drains, night curls through the Brahmin Street and the Pariah Street and the Potters' Street and the Weavers' Street and flapping through the mango grove, hangs claved for one moment to the giant pipal, and then shooting across the broken fields, dies quietly into the river-and gods walk by lighted streets, blue gods and quiet gods and bright-eyed gods, and even they walk in transparent flesh the dust gently sinks back to the earth, and many a child in Kanthapura sits late into the night to see the crown of this god and that god, and how many a god has chariots with steeds white as foam and queens so bright that the eyes shut themselves in fear lest they be blinded." (p.118).

This page long sentence not only records the advent of the month of Kartik in Kanthapura, but also re-creates the peculiar Kannada rhythms of speech and rhetorical devices in English. Here, the cultural and aesthetic distancing has been minimized by internalising the linguistic features of Kannada into English as also by infusing the fast paced tempo of Indian life into it.

Raja Rao's virtuoso manipulation of language becomes evident if we compare two descriptions of The Indian Crowd, one of freedom movement and other of a prayer gathering in Kanthapura.

"The police Inspector shouts, 'Disperse the Crowd!'... While the policemen beat the crowd this side and that side, and groans and moans and cries and shouts and coughs and oaths and bangs and kicks are heard, while there is heard, 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki jai! Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!' (p.123-124)

Here the mood of the crowd is captured by crowding the verbs with connectives, verbs which describe action and enmass the emotions against police brutality.

But the atmosphere of the temple is prayerful, though there may be a big crowd of worshippers. The prose therefore takes on a stately garb and its moves in a grand way:

"And when the night is over, and the sun rises over the Bebbar Mound, people will come from Santur and Kuppur, people will come from the Kuppur Cardamon. Estate, from coconut gardens and sugarcane fields, and they will bring flowers and fruit and rice and dal and sugar-candy and perfumed sweetmeats, and we shall offer you all, dancing and singing-the bells will ring, the trumpets tear through the groves, and as the camphor rises before you, we shall close our eyes and hymn your praise. Kanchamma, Great Goddess, protect us! O Benign one!" (p.10).

The language here rushes, tumbles and runs on, as Raja Rao seems to claim in the famous Foreward to Kanthapura when he says :

"We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly and when we move we move quickly.

"There must be something in the sun of India that makes us rush and tumble and run on... We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us - we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought." (p.5). But the question that arises is : how far has Raja Rao internalised the speech habits of a Kannada Speaker into English? It is an "unusual language for a village woman, even one 'imbued with the legendary history of the region'"¹¹ comments a critic. The language no doubt is unusual as it is not the spoken language of the village woman who speaks no

11.8. Rajan, "India" in Bruce King (ed.), Literatures of the World in English (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p.86

English, any way.

Raja Rao here successfully successfully recreates The Volubility, the garrulousness and the speed of the old woman's Kannada speech into English. Maybe that the frequency of 'ands' in the above quoted sentence is little too much for a non Kannada speaker, but then the sentence has no punctuation as it would have been more unfaithful to punctuate her speech rather than to use a few extra 'ands'.

Raja Rao himself seems to have realised this in his next novel, The Serpent and the Rope where his language has a more deliberate movement, sentences are shorter and there is less violence to the syntax, as in the following paragraph :

"Little Mother slept. Her hands on the head of Sridhara, pressed gently against her breast... She slept as though the waters of the Ganges were made of sleep and each one of us a wave. But she would suddenly open her eyes and ask, "Rama, are you sure you are not cold? I am frightened of your lungs, son." (p.27).

While Kanthapura has a rhetorical opulence and 'mantra' like tempo of Sanskrit in abundance, The Serpent and the Rope too has its share : "Just as I could now see 'antara-Kasi, the "inner Benaras,.....by their names." (p.246). The eleven line sentence however has only one 'and' in it and of course a lot of punctuation. Unlike the monotonously repetitive sentence pattern of the earlier novel, the flow of the

sentence here is varied because of the quoted remark of the uninformed Indian official who says, "Don't you see, I am Indian now, and represent the Republic of India."

While in Kanthapura the narrative emerges from the consciousness of a village elder and is reported indirectly, here it emanates from the subtly intellectualized consciousness of Ramaswamy who reports in the direct narrative too. Being highly educated his vocabulary is rich and varied. He is as much capable of gnomic brevity of aphorism as of rhetorics : "Affection is just a spot in the geography of the mind." (p.18). "To wed a woman you must wed her God." (p.84) etc.

Another direction in which Raja Rao's prose has moved in The Serpent and the Rope is the dialogue. "A dialogue like the following takes one straight to an Upanishad like The Brihad-aranyaka - Upanishad where the sage Yagnyavalkya (whom, one remembers, Rama claims as his ancestor) discusses religion with his wife Maitreyi":¹²

"Therefore, what is truth? I asked.....
 "Is-ness is the Truth", she answered.
 "And is-ness is what?"
 "Who asks that question?"
 "Myself."
 "Who?"
 "I"
 "Of whom?"
 "No one."
 "Then "I am" is." (p.130).

The dialogue dealing with a metaphysical problem of defining

12. M.K. Naik, "The Serpent and the Rope - The Indo-Anglian Novel as Epic Legend", M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai and G.S. Amur, Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English. (Dharwar : Karnatak Univ., 1972), p.259-293.

Truth has deeper layers of meaning which come through when read deliberately. Like Sanskrit which Rao tells us may not be read in a hurry, the dialogue has its power in its beat and rhythms. It has, again like Sanskrit, "a gambhairyatha, a nobility that seems rooted in primary sound" (p.70).

A similar dialogue occurs in The Cat and Shakespeare :

"Are you happy? " asked Govindan Nair.
 "Are you?" she asked.
 "Can't you see I am happy?"
 "Where does it come from?"
 "Where does water come from?"
 "From the tap?"
 "And the water in the tap?"
 "From the lake?"
 "And the water in the lake?"
 "From the sky."
 "And the water in the sky?"
 "From the ocean?"
 "And the water in the ocean?"
 "From the rivers."
 "And the river waters?"
 "They make the lakes."
 "And the tap water?"
 "Is river water."
 "And so?"
 "Water comes from water," she said.
 (p.48)

Unlike the earlier dialogue, it appears to be frivolous and mock comic. It has the riddle-like quality of a folk lore and a prose with a river-like flow. It, non-the-less deal with an ontological problem of the essence of happiness. The girl's answers to Nair's questions indicate her naivete and yet Nair is in a position to bring home the truth by turning the dialogue inward : "I am a kitten" he says. He finally explains his philosophy of wise surrender in a simple way : "Man is happy : Because he knows he lives in a house three stories high." (p.49).

Pai's English is the 'babu' English spoken in government offices all over India, more so on the railways. "Babu" English, perhaps can be defined as "Indian modes of thought clothed in exotic English phrasing, resulting in some of the most ludicrous and disconcerting pieces of English literature, replete with violent invective, mixed with tearful sentiment, brought to end by an unexpected anti-climax and ending in a piece of unsurpassed grandiloquence." Perhaps, it can be simply defined as the kind of "English the poorly educated write in India."¹³ Pai's English has some of the qualities of 'Babu' English. Most of the clerks in the ration shop too speak this kind of English. In fact they are bi-lingual most of the time. Nair is multi-lingual who handles three languages with equal command.

Pai, the narrator uses language with a peculiar taste for striking comparisons which present his vision through English, as the following sentence : "Though there was no real connection between the ration office and the ration shop, yet somehow they worked together, like a husband and wife whose stars are different, but from marriage and progeny they go through to the final bamboo processions and the funeral anniversaries." (p.70) The Indian marriage which lasts till death even when the stars do not match is both a comment and a

13. Saras Cowasjee, Mulk Raj Anand : Coolie : An Assessment.

(Delhi : Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p.57.

factual statement. The image of going through "the final bamboo processions" telescopes a world view that attaches more importance to ritual than to reality, to conformity than to individual action. The Indianness of this peculiar marriage is suggested through the telltale image of the "bamboo processions."

Raja Rao makes a full use of different symbols that he uses here. Wall, cat, rationshop, the scales, account-keeping, house building and even a pen knife are all real tangible objects or activities in the novel and yet they are symbols of higher realities or spiritual concepts. The cat, for example, represents the Feminine Principle; and yet there is a real cat in the novel responsible for a death, though indirectly. The wall Govindan Nair jumps over many times a day is symbolic of the illusion that stands as a barrier to our perception of reality. Similarly 'house building' by Saroja and others is a selfish activity as they build it for themselves. For Govindan Nair it is an act of sacrifice as he builds it for Usha. The house that John builds is the house of corruption, while Ramakrishna Pai's house building is not such a corrupt act. The building of houses acquires a new dimension in a sentence like this : "In Brahmin streets there are lovely dilapidated structures ; why not build them anew?" The lovely dilapidated structures obviously are indicative of the Vedic past of India which needs to be revitalized.

The existence of rats in the ration office is reminiscent of the rat like existence of John and Velayudhan Nair who feed on what does not belong to them.

Even ordinary words like 'give' and 'take' here acquire extra dimensions in such sentence as : "Saroja is a true Brahmin, she knows how to take" And Shantha, we are told being a Nair, knows how to "give". These words are thus charged with meaning which freeze the racial prejudice inherent in the Hindu ethos. A classic example of this kind of relationship is manifested in Antha Murthy's Kannada novel, Samskara.¹⁴

Colloquial language in this novel is used both for ironic and comic purposes : "Everybody is half-brother to you, man and thing, so why worry? That seemed the principle on which Govindan Nair worked : I am, so you are my brother." (p.34).

Govindan Nair's English which is a mixture of The Vicar of Wakefield and Shakespeare is also the language of the half educated Indian of the thirties. It is also a mixture of Malyalam and Sanskrit. Nair adapts Shakespeare to his own needs, the spiritual needs in the play within the novel.

Raja Rao is at his ~~best~~ while caricaturing the physical appearance of the protagonist of Comrade Kirillov : "...his

14. U.R. Anantha Murthy, Samskara, translated from Kannada by A.K. Ramanujan, (Delhi: Oxford Univ.Press, 1976).

pants too dissimilar for his limbs, his coat flopping a little too fatherly on his small, rounded muscles of seating, his lips tender, slow and seegregate...his narrow, dun eyes gave an added touch of humanity to his ancient and enigmatic face." (p.7). But the picture is not complete without his neck-tie which had "such a praterplusparenthetical curve as though much concrete philosophy had gone into its making, and it revealed a soul so ambivalent that I could not gaze on its self-aware turpitudes without human compassion" (p.25). It is through these physical traits that Kirillov's character is built. The mock-comic tone of the narrator, and a judicious use of such phrases as 'dun eyes', 'ancient and enigmatic face', 'praterplusparenthetical curve' help us understand the paradoxical character of Kirillov, who is an enigma.

The novel has an anological matrix flowing like a subterranean stream appearing occasionally on the surface in such sentences as : "...and one could almost see our Kirillov, a pistol in his pocket, going round and round his shouting wife's (other man's) child, like Shatov..." (p.25). Here Dostoevsky's The Idiot has been used to explain Padmanabha's character as Shakespeare's Hamlet is used in the The Cat and Shakespeare to highlight Govindan Nair's philosophy. In both the cases however the language is put under great stress and dead metaphors are used for value assertion.

Raja Rao coins certain telltale phrases in Comrade Kirillov: "rank and riceless poverty", "navel-looking ascetics and reincarnate cows." (p.74). "Smitten with dialectical despair" (p.25)..." British Empire (will) go crash and ash" (p.38). The novelist here very successfully conveys the Indian experience through English : "History, said the Mahabharata, is like the collyrium of the feminine eye - your perspective becomes more beautiful, and your nostrils have the camphor of the antiseptic." (p.46). The simile looks periscopically at history and makes an intellectual discipline a peculiar Indian aesthetic experience. Collyrium used for beautifying the eyes is also an antiseptic - the novelist juxtaposes the traditional and the modern and transforms it into a memorable image. Here, Raja Rao fashions out an English which is at once universal and is able to carry his peculiar experience.

Raja Rao's use of the archaic form "be" instead of 'is' or 'are' needs to be considered in detail. While some critics believe that the novelist does it to approximate his English sentence pattern with that of Sanskrit, the other like McCutcheon dismiss it as "dubious rhetoric" and "an irritating trick...to strike a profound note."¹⁵ A critic suggests that "these devices are intended to create a distance between the reader and the happenings of the novels and to give the impression of timelessness,"¹⁶ as in the following sentences:

15. David McCutcheon, "The Novel as Sastra", (ed.) Meenakshi Mukherjee, Considerations (New Delhi: Allied, 1977), p.90-101.

16. Meenakshi Mukherjee, Twice Born Fiction, (New Delhi : Heinemann, 1971), p.183.

- (1) "And so came Kirillov...to the California Coastline where perforce all new religions are born, and wherein, through theosophical selectivity the new Benares be established, and the fine Disciples of the future Master be trained for world discovery."
(Comrade Kirillov, p.9)
- (2) "What wonderful animals these be in our land"
(The Serpent and the Rope ; p.25)
- (3) "the sorrow of woman be indeed the barrenness of man" (The Serpent and the Rope, p.25)
(emphasis added)

Another archaic form that he uses is the repetition of the name of the speaker as in the following sentences from The Serpent and the Rope

"He was so noble and humble, Grandfather was." (p.17)

"He is the whole of himself, is Onkle Charles" (p.85)

"Her hair was so long, she needed a comb wherever she went, did Madeleine" (p.94).

Mulk Raj Anand, on the other hand, has no use for archaisms as he does not concern himself with the metaphysical problems of timelessness of Raja Rao. Instead his main concern is with the wretched of contemporary India.

He believes that colonialism has broken the whole of our life process : "under foreign rule, the whole of our life process had been broken up by the assaults of an alien

culture."¹⁷ The impact of this assault is felt in all walks of life, but more so in politics. At the level of the individual, the new Indian concerning himself with the social, political and psychological problems of an emergent society and orthodox, ritualistic Hindu society given to fatalism, has tried to revitalise itself under the impact of Western democracy and humanism : "The themes of transformation from a fatalistic society to a dynamic confrontation with destiny compelled us to ask many questions" asserts Anand. The questions that therefore confront Anand are the questions of caste, class, woman etc. They, in fact, form the raw material of his novels.

He, therefore, tries to discover the meaning of life through these characters. He calls his method "expressionism, which I define as enactment of the body-soul drama of human beings, through the imagination."¹⁸ This enactment of the body-soul drama, Anand tries to recapture through the speech of his characters. But as English is not the language of the Indian proletariat, he devises an idiom for this purpose.

But Anand surely is not the first novelist to make this experiment. Rudyard Kipling, had done all this much before Anand did it and had employed "Indianisms in a variety of ways in Kim (1901)."¹⁹

17. Mulk Raj Anand in answer to the questionnaire sent by M.K. Naik. Quoted in M.K. Naik, Mulk Raj Anand (New Delhi : Arnold - Heinemann India, 1973), p.175.

18. M.K. Naik, Mulk Raj Anand, p.176

19. Ibid, p.168.

While Kipling uses Indianisms in a limited way, Anand uses it in abundance, and also in a variety of ways appearing in diction, phraseology, idiom, imagery and dialogue, which lends a peculiar Indian flavour to his English. In fact, Anand is so rich in Indianisms that any one of his novels can illustrate the point. Let us take a few examples from The Village :

1. "No son, there is no talk. "(p.193-94).
2. "It is neither Udho's taking, nor Madho's giving, mother" (p.197)
3. "But mother, don't do all this 'khaichal' " (p.194)

All these sentences are translations from the vernacular.

"there is no talk", "Are you talking true talk?", "Is there any talk?" may sound quaint to a non Punjabi/Hindi listener but such sentences are as frequent in these languages as "what is the matter?" in English.

In the second sentence, word "mother" is used honorifically. Such complimentary phrases, peculiarly Indian, are used by Kipling and Raja Rao also. But Anand's use of 'they' and 'their' by a wife while referring to her husband (though undoubtedly Indian) sounds jarring and confuses the reader, as in the following sentence from Gauri : "Mother, "they" lost "their" temper because "they" was pressed from every side', Gauri explained! (p.100)

The use of the word "Khaichal" (literally, 'movement' but here, formality of offering some eats to welcome a visitor) in the third sentence no doubt reminds us that the speaker is a Punjabi; it however does not add anything to our understanding of the character of the situation. Similarly, in Gauri Laxmi while coaxing Gauri to go with Lata Jwala Prasad tells her : "Come, one does not do such 'hat'. We are not murdering you. " (p.116). One wonders whether the word 'hat' (stubbornness) really serves any purpose! Another character, Hoor Banu protests "Hai hai, Sakhi Sandi!" (p.226) in the same novel. The phrase 'Sukhi Sandi!' undoubtedly authenticates the speech and it also helps locate the character in rural Punjab, but makes a reader look askance at the novelist as the phrase remains a riddle even to a non Punjabi Indian.

Like Raja Rao in Kanthapura, Anand uses proverbs as the repository for the received wisdom of generations. Again, like the rural characters of Raja Rao, it is the villagers who use the proverbs to authenticate their experience, to re-inforce the narrative as also to explain characters. In Gauri when Laxmi and Adam Singh go to have a drink of Whey at the stall of a confectioner who looks suspiciously at them, Laxmi tries to prove her innocent relationship with Adam Singh through the following remark :

"Lust, itch and cough, these are not concealed"
 "We know this well enough!" commented the confectioner.

"All of you villagers have the marks of syphilis on your faces."

"I talk of God and you talk of the Devil" Laxmi parried.

"Han Mai, it is easy to talk of God after you have "rolled the papads!" (p.195)

The two proverbs, "Lust, itch and cough..." and "rolled the papads" present a contrast in the attitudes of two characters. For the village woman a proverb provides a grammar of values, it is a kind of a resonator of moral ideas as it is an expression of the collective wisdom accumulated over the centuries, but for the towny, a proverb is not such a serious affair. He therefore uses it for mocking the sexual morality of Laxmi who has "gray green eyes" - a physical trait of sexual looseness in the Punjabi folklore.

Unlike Raja Rao and Achebe, Anand is not successful at internalising the vernacular proverbs into the medium of English. Mulk Raj Anand translates an Indian proverb as "After eating seven mice the cat is going on a pilgrimage". Raja Rao internalizes this proverb in Kanthapura when the village women speak of the cat that has "taken to asceticism only to commit more sins" (p.85). Anand's translation makes the proverb aggressively Indian, while Raja Rao's transcreation universalizes it, and yet it remain essentially Indian because of its reference to asceticism.

Anand again exhibits his aggressive Indianism in using English words with Indian spellings. This habit of mis-spelling, apart from indicating that the words have been Indianized, serve no artistic purpose. If anything, they obstruct the smooth reading of his novels. Words like "injan", "gentreman",

"laften gorner", "phrunt" etc. are some of the common examples.

His use of colourful swear words like "illegally begotten", "Rape-mother", "son of a swine", "eater of your master" etc. has made a critic remark : "Colourful swear words reeking of the rustic soil are so plentiful in Anand's fiction that a whole dictionary of choice terms of abuse could be compiled out of his work."²⁰ One is not very sure of the aesthetic value of these abuses.

Anand's prose too is sometimes full of purple patches. This happens particularly when he strains for a special kind of effect through exaggeration and poetic images. "Occasionally, one comes across whole passages written in an inflated, lofty jargon. Rhythm, not sense, becomes the dominating feature of his prose..."²¹ as in the following paragraph from The Village :

"The luminous birds of his eyes flew towards the sun, but the showers of the bright rays sent them back in a panic, and for a moment they were enveloped in utter darkness. Then they opened their wings furtively and flew across the uneven gulley towards his house." (p.19)

At times he writes plain bad English. A few examples from Gauri will illustrate the point :

20. M.K. Naik, p.169.

21. Saros Cowasjee, Mulk Raj Anand : Coolie : An Assessment (Delhi : Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p.58.

"the orchards of fruit trees" (p.186)

"Panchi was again empty faced as though his brain would never work." (p.27).

"Wah ohe Panchi! What to say of your alotness!" (p.48) (emphasis added)

Anand's aggressive Indianisms sound exotic. They look more like museum pieces or handicrafts proclaiming their local origin than like the fibres woven into the fabric of the language of his fiction. Unlike Raja Rao or Narayan his Indianness does not always emerge as a composite creative experience conveyed through a language that shows no sign of self conscious linguistic jugglery.

A symbiosis between the indigenous culture and the properties of Western culture embodied in English is an essential part of colonial consciousness, which Raja Rao and G.V. Desani among all the Indian novelists have been in a position to attain through the medium of English language. The other Indian novelists have succeeded only partly.

Most of the African novelists, on the other hand, have achieved this symbiosis - be he Achebe, Ngugi or Soyinka : "The Africans are no longer playing Sambos carrying for the white Big Game Hunter. They are hunters themselves who lead the safari of language and are not mere carriers of the white man's burden."²² They have created an idiom which is

22. J. Birje - Patil, p.3,

authentic in experience, rich in meaning and yet retains its African identity.

One important reason for this symbiosis is the confidence with which the African Writers have accepted English. Achebe, for example, believes that he has no other choice except to write in English. "But for me there is no other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it."²³

The African writer in fact has wrenched the language from his erstwhile colonial master and has made it bear the burden of his African experience. The experiment, of course, has not been an easy one, though it has excited many writers. Amos Tutuola's The Palm Wine Drinkard, perhaps is the first fictional experiment in the direction of linguistic symbiosis. Achebe calls Tutuola, a "natural" because of his unsophisticated English which he turns into a weapon of great strength as in the following :

"When I saw that there was no palm-wine for me again, and nobody could tap it for me, then I thought within myself that old people were saying that the whole people who had died in this world, did not go to heaven directly, but they were living in one place somewhere in this world. So that I said that I would find out where my palm-wine tapster who had died was." (p.9) 24.

Simplicity of language authentically re-creates the speech of the semi-literate narrator who is in the tradition

23. Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language", Morning Yet on Creation Day, p.62.

24. Amos Tutoula, The Palm-Wine Drinkard (London : Faber and Faber, 1952) New York, Grove Press, 1953), (p.9).

of a folktale hero. Through the dialect of the narrator, Tutuola succeeds in evoking a bizarre world.

Achebe being a conscious artist achieves better results by handling English competently and imaginatively. His language unlike Tutuola's is at once universal and is yet in a position to carry his peculiar experience. This certainly is not the English of Achebe's colonial masters as it has undergone a process of adaptation and is symbiotic in nature. Perhaps the best example of this process is the final section of Things Fall Apart in which Okonkwo's suicide is reported in such a way that the two opposite views; that of the white D.C. and of Obierika, merge into one. We are told that the white D.C. is fascinated by the refusal of the tribe to handle the dead body, as he is a "student of the primitive customs". The phrase makes us discover our status as readers. "We suddenly become aware that what we have been reading is an English which has reproduced through its rhythm, syntax and structure as well as its proverbial patterning and social commentary, Ibo thoughts and speech patterns."²⁵ This becomes all the more clear when we learn that the white D.C. has not understood a single word of Obierika's furious outburst in Igbo. "That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog..." (p.187). But for Achebe's successful rendering in

25. Gareth Griffiths, A Double Exile, p.18.

English, we too, like the D.C., would have been complete outsiders to the Igbo culture.

To record the pulse of such a society in the language of its oppressors is full of pitfalls, the biggest of which, perhaps is the problem of authenticity. Achebe solves this by deliberately choosing a style, which David Cook, rightly calls "epic" or "heroic".²⁶ It is a style based on "artistic stoicism", a detachment both from the character and the event and operates through the ironic mode as in Things Fall Apart where he uses a trussed up and carefully modulated prose which successfully conveys the sense of stability and confidence that the pre-colonial traditional way of life has. Here the paragraph too is formalised. The symmetry of the style emphasises the balance and order of that society :

"With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. But in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed..." (p.17).

The sureness of touch with which Achebe handles his prose here is marked where we contrast it with the language of the whiteman's interpreters whose dialect, although Igbo, is so different and sounds harsh to the ears. Their attempt to ape their whitemaster's tongue becomes a source

26. David Cook, p.78.

of humour, even when the situation is tense and charged.

Achebe also uses Pidgin for giving a colloquial touch to his language. Odili, in A Man of the People takes to Pidgin while talking to Elsie, the nurse at her dormitory. It is Elsie who first switches over to Pidgin and then Odili follows her. He speaks Pidgin to win her favours, perhaps

"By the way,' I said backing out and straightening up again, 'I met an American lady called Elsie at a party the other night...whenever her name was called - my mind went to you.'

'Who tell am say na Elsie be im name? When you see am again make you tell am im own Elsie na counterfeit. But Odili, you self na waa! How you no even reach Bori finish you done de begin meet another Elsie for party? Make you take am je-je-o.'

"Relax, ' I said, imitating Jean. 'What is wrong in telling you I met your namesake at a party?'

'Na lie', she said, smiling her seductive, two-dimpled smile. 'The way I look you eye I fit, say that even ten Elsies no fit belleful you.'

'Nonsense,' I said. 'Abi dem take Elsie make juju for me?' I asked laughing.

'I know?' she shrugged.

'You suppose to know', I said.

The conversation ends, as expected, not in Pidgin, but in chaste English with Odili's remarks : "I'll be here on Thursday then - at four. Run along now and sleep, darling."
(p.57-58).

Odili's world, however, is post colonial Nigerian society of the corrupt politicians. His language too therefore is satiric. It is a world in which the potency of the word has been lost. The traditional proverbial Igbo culture is dying and its proverbs, once a repository for the received collective wisdom of generations, no more provide the grammar of values they used to provide in the pre-colonial societies of Umuaro and Umuofia. Odili gets exasperated in the beginning of the novel. He tells us : "As I stood in one corner of that vast tumult waiting for the arrival of the Minister I left intense bitterness welling up in my mouth. Here were silly, ignorant villagers... Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you - as my father did - if you thought that a sensible man would spirt out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth." (p.2) (Emphasis added).

The old proverb, here, is being used to support a value system diametrically opposed to the earlier code.

The proverbs in the pre-colonial Igbo communities of Umuofia and Umuaro fulfilled a completely organic function as they arose from the communal consciousness of their people. These proverbs contain the truths, consolations and

frame of reference for a whole people.

"The proverbial commentary which is so central a feature of the Ibo language is used as a device to point the meaning of episode and character"²⁷ asserts Griffiths. He is of the opinion that the proverbs must be studied in context before we can fully understand and appreciate them. This is so because Achebe being a master of irony and ambiguity so places them that when taken out of context, they no longer serve the desired purpose." Griffiths insists we must watch how these proverbs operate within the larger lexicon of rhetoric built into the novels before we can attach moral meaning to them," as they have a semantic elasticity."²⁸

A proverb which is repeated three times in Arrow of God is "that a man who brings home ant-infested faggots should not complain if he is visited by lizards." First, it is Ezeulu who uses it while talking to his wife when it is discovered that Oduche had tried to kill a python. Ezeulu uses the proverb ironically :

"you do not know? He he he he he he," he laughed mechanically and then became very serious again. 'you must be telling me in your mind that a man who brings home ant-infested faggots should not complain if he is visited by lizards...' (p.59).

27. Gareth Griffiths, A Double Exile, p.25.

28. Bernth Lindfors, "The Blind men and the Elephant", African Literature Today, No.7 (1975) p.53-64.

Though the proverb refers to colonialism (as Oduche's Christian education responsible for the planned blasphemy is only a by-product of colonialism), the irony is self directed because the man who brought the "ant-infested faggots" home is no one else but Ezeulu himself.

Ezeulu next time directs this irony against the people who, he believes, are responsible for bringing the whiteman to Umuaro :

"Don't make me laugh" said Ezeulu again.
 "So I betrayed Umuaro to the whiteman?...with all their power and magic whitemen would not have overrun entire Olu and Igbo if we did not help them...So let nobody come and complain that the white man did this and/ did that. The man who brings ant-infested faggots into his hut should not grumble when lizards begin to pay him a visit." (p.133).

Nwaka, a village elder uses this proverbs, after Ezeulu's arrest, to blame him for all the evils that the whiteman has brought :

"What I say is this" continued Nwaka, 'a man who brings and ridden faggots into the hut should expect the visit of lizards. But if Ezeulu is now telling us that he is tired of the whiteman's friendship our advice to him should be : you tied the knot, you should also know how to undo it. You passed the shit that is smelling; you should carry it away. Fortunately the evil charm brought in at the end of a pole is not too difficult to take outside again. " (p.144).

In this beautiful passage, Nwaka explains the proverb with the help of three other proverbs. All the four proverbs spring from the symbiotic relationship between man and nature and are

marked by their exclusively African identity.

By repeating the same proverb three times in the novel, Achebe reinforces a major historical point: the arrival of white colonialism in African society.

Even if we free the proverbs from their context, they remain "independent resonators of moral ideas" and gain "amplification through frequency of sounding"²⁹ Their meanings get clearer and re-inforced with every repetition. These proverbs also provide a "grammar of values" by which the deeds of characters can be measured and evaluated.

Another method used by Achebe to capture the Igbo oral tradition is the use of speeches in his fiction. For the Igbo the art of oratory and conversation is the central linguistic art. The elders cultivate this art and practise it with the result that their word of mouth becomes a law for their people : "An old man like Ezeudu is the library of the society and proverbs and stories are its books."³⁰

Achebe uses metaphorical language in the speeches of the elders in his fiction. One such example is Nwaka's speech on page 144 in Arrow of God, part of which has already been discussed. This speech, like most other speeches, is measured and has a slower rhythm which lends dignity to its

29. Bernth Lindfors, p.60.

30. Gareth Griffiths, A Double Exile, p.27.

delivery. By piling one proverb over the other the speaker makes it very effective.

Achebe also retains the oral element of the Umuofian culture, by defining each unit clearly in its time and place.

"The feast of the New yam was approaching...

For the first time in three nights...

and numerous other paragraphs in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God illustrate this method of the oral narratives.

Unlike Mulk Raj Anand, Achebe does not try to Africanize his fiction by using Igbo words just for the sake of local color. Instead, even inevitable Igbo words that he uses are explained through action itself : "...even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was agbala. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that agbala was not only another name of a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken, no title". We now know that 'agbala' cannot be translated into English as it implies a way of life, and a view of reality, in fact a female cult ministered by a priestess, whose Oracle the Oracle of caves and Hills is also called "Agbala".

Thus we see that Achebe brings an authentic and original African voice to English fiction. He also brings the two worlds of the colonizer and the colonized together almost inseparably by looking out through his proverbial, gnomic

and metaphoric English at the traditional Igbo life from within the African oral tradition periscopically.

Gabriel Okara in The Voice too, tries to look at his Ijaw world through English. Unlike Achebe who avoids translation, Okara, in fact directly translates from his language. Instead of using words like 'soul' or 'spirit' he uses 'inside' and 'shadow'. He avoids the former in order to convey an essentially African world view. But this produces a new problem. In English words like 'inside' for example, are connotative of digestive system in such phrases as 'my inside', 'their insides' etc. It might also refer to "a serious surgical operation, and often facetiously so"³¹ asserts Ravenscroft. Okara solves this problem by building-up these concepts of 'inside' and 'shadow' within the novel itself. Initially, the reader is baffled, but soon he discovers that what he is reading is not the usual kind of English, it is Ijaw translated into English. He, therefore, starts reacting to it differently, freshly and that is perhaps, what the novelist expects us to do.

The reader's suspicion is confirmed when he encounters such passages as :

31. Arthur Ravenscroft, "Introduction" to The Voice (1964; Heinemann, rept. 1975), p.16.

"When Okolo came to know himself, he was lying on a floor, on a cold cold floor lying. He opened his eyes to see but nothing he saw, nothing he saw. For the darkness was evil darkness and the outside darkness was black black night. Okolo lay still in the darkness enclosed by darkness, and his thoughts picked in his inside. Then his picked thoughts his eyes opened but his vision only met a rock-like darkness. The picked thoughts then drew his legs but his legs did not come. They were as heavy as a canoe full of sand. His thoughts in his inside began to fly in his inside darkness like frightened birds hither, thither, homeless." (p. 76)

The evocation of an experience of confusion, weariness and desolation in the above extract is done successfully by inverting the English word-order and also by using un-English syntax occasionally. Though the language used here, is simple, almost primitive, it, none-the-less, conveys the sense of difficulty the protagonist experiences in establishing his grammar of values in a thoroughly corrupt world. His difficulty is compounded when we learn that the world in which he lives attaches more importance to money than to 'words' : "Money may be lost "forever" he tries to assert, "but words, teaching words, are the same in any age" (p.52).

So, one of the main concerns of the protagonist here, is the corruption of words. For fighting it out, the novelist tries to re-vitalise the linguistic resources at all levels: vocabulary, syntax, sentence pattern and rhythm. One method (as discussed in the preceding chapter) that he uses is that of re-charging linguistic symbols, like 'it', and building them into concepts through a controlled process

of cumulative suggestions. Another method, perhaps, more effective, is that of re-charging English words with Ijaw connotations and nuances :

"Some of the townsmen said Okolo's eyes were not right, his head was not correct. This they said was the result of his knowing too much book, walking too much in the bush, and others said it was due to his staying too long alone by the river.

So the town of Amatu talked and whispered; so the world talked and whispered. Okolo had no chest, they said. His chest was not strong and he had no shadow." (p.23).

Here, the various parts of human-body like 'eyes', 'head', 'chest' acquire a special meaning. Similarly, 'knowing', 'walking', 'staying' etc. do not remain just physical activities, but acquire cultural dimensions.

Thus, we see that Okara's unusual use of language is a serious attempt to tackle an artistic problem.

Soyinka's similar attempt in The Interpreters, yields different results, though. Being a poet and a dramatist, he makes a sensitive use of imagery and dialogue in this novel also.

Soyinka uses metaphor to fuse two images together and give us a double version of one and the same action. Egboe's fat guardian figure is fused with that of 'amala' which made him fat. The point can perhaps be illustrated by looking at different images which describe, Simmi, who is attractive, but her attractiveness could be fatal. First, we are reminded

of Cannibals : "For men lost hope of salvation, their homes and children became ghosts of a past illusion, learning from Simi a new view of life, and love immersed in a Cannibal's reality." (p.50). Then, she is compared with snakes and bees (p.53,54) : She is "the beast that lay in wait to swallow him"; and finally she is compared with a 'thornbush' (p.56),

Thus, Soyinka builds up the character of Simi by repeating these images of her fatal nature. The images, here, are of African origin. The novelist, however, makes no effort at translating from the vernacular languages. This does not mean that he does not use the African languages at all. In fact, he uses them in such a way that they neither need translation, nor any explanation, as it happens in the dialogue quoted below :

"Just wait outside a moment, please, Mr. Sekoni."

"Is he mad?"

"Omo tani?"

"Why do we employ these too-knows?"

"No, no, no," and the chairman soothed them" (p.27).

The phrase, 'Omo tani' (whose son he thinks he is?), even if not comprehended by the reader, does not distract his attention. If comprehended, it adds to his enjoyment.

Soyinka avoids the temptation of translation, even in a more complex situation; as the one described below :

"Egbo looked round widely, daring to believe in Simi was no longer there. Angrily he gripped the boy by the ear, pinching him on the lobe. 'Are you trying to joke with me?'

The boy twisted in pain, protesting 'Go on. Which madam? Where? Where?'

'Nta. Won wa nnu taxi.'

Egbo sobered with an effort, determined to destroy hallucination." (p.58).

Here, the sentence in the vernacular is explained away through action.

Unlike Okara, Soyinka uses standard English in his fiction. He does not break the syntax of the English sentence. If anything, he uses a condensed syntax: "What runs between two full stops may not be a conventional prose sentence, although it conveys meaning and suggestion." ³² An interesting example of this is provided by the Managing Director and his radiogram, which reflect each other : "Like two halves of a broad bean, the pachydermous and the Managing Director."

Thus, in Soyinka, we find an urgency and restlessness which refuses to accept the existing forms. This linguistic and formalistic experimentation sometimes results in a kind of ambiguity, which once resolved, becomes an aesthetically rewarding experience for the reader.

Soyinka's special effort to domesticate English to suit his aesthetic needs, in a way, is typical of the efforts

32. Eldred Jones, "Introduction" to The Interpreters (1965 : London : Heinemann, rpt. 1976), p.5-6.

While Soyinka's needs are personal in nature, Achebe's are communal. One common feature which they share, along with a host of other African writers, is the oral tradition in their novels. Achebe uses all sorts of oral elements in his novels : "idioms, figures of speech, jokes and word games, 'blason populaire', and the more often noted proverbs and folktales"³³ The other African novelists too use at least some of these linguistic devices to convey the domestication of English to the African climate.

Black American writers too share this tradition of incorporating the African oral elements in their writings with their one-time ancestors. The best examples of this commonality are found in the black dialect which the Afro-Americans have evolved over two centuries of living in America. This could happen because : "From the first African captives, through the years of slavery, and into the present century black Americans kept alive important strands of African consciousness and verbal art in their humour, songs, dance, speech, tales, games, folk beliefs and aphorism."³⁴ The blacks in the U.S., in fact, had to evolve this dialect primarily to share among themselves certain secret codes as

33. Bu-Buakei Jabbi, "Influence and originality in African Writing", African Literature Today : 10 (1979), p.106-123.

34. Lawrence W. Levine, p.444.

survival strategies. Later on these cultural traits, through a complex process of colonial dominance, got associated with peculiar negro traits and hence inferiority. Over a period of time and because of various black nationalist movements, the dialect has acquired a recognition. It has even affected the white American English to a small extent. It has been known through different names like Black Dialect, Black Idiom, Black English and more recently Ebonics.

Geneva Smitherman ably argues that Black English is a vital and effective language with a set of grammatical and phonetic rules, a special lexicon and a particular rhetorical style. It "is an Africanized form of English reflecting Black America's linguistic-cultural African heritage and the conditions of servitude, oppression and life in America."³⁵ Thus, it combines "Euro-American speech" with an "Afro-American meaning and nuance, tone and gesture." Smitherman claims that it is used by eighty to ninety percent of American blacks. It is through this language that the Afro-Americans could create a culture of survival.

Semantically, Black English has three types of words from West African languages. They are words of direct African origin, loan-translations from African languages and inflated vocabulary.

35. Geneva Smitherman, Talkin and Testifyin : The Language of Black America (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p.2-3.

Yam, gorilla, jumbo, jazz, sorcery, juke, cola, banjo, okay are some of the words of African origin. 'Bad' meaning 'good' in Black English represents an African process in which a negative term is used to express a positive idea/meaning".³⁶ This process, known as "calquing", claims Smitherman, is a common feature in Black English. Words like 'bad mouth' (to talk about somebody negatively), 'dig', 'hip', 'fat mouth' (to talk too much) etc. illustrate 'calquing'.

Some of the Achebe characters like Uduche, Obierika (Things Fall Apart), Ezeulu, Nwaka (Arrow of God) and the members of Umuofia Progressive Union use overellegant vocabulary even to describe an ordinary situation. It is an exaggerated language used in formal situations like Obi Okonkwo's reception by the Umuofia Progressive Union in No Longer at Ease where the secretary of the Union describes Obi as having returned from the "United Kingdom in quest of the Golden Fleece." Black English has incorporated this quality in the form of 'High Talk', 'verbal posturing' etc. An interesting example of this kind of verbal posturing is provided in the highly flavoured speech of True-blood in Invisible Man. Another character who uses this device is Vet in the same novel.

36. Geneva Smitherman, p.44.

Servitude and oppression compelled the colonized Negro to codify his language in such a way that it could convey two meanings : Harmless to the white eavesdropper but charged with powerful meaning for the black listener. Thus "Miss Ann" becomes on a Black Semantic level, a derisive reference to the white woman."³⁷ Similarly 'ofay, 'is a derisive term for whites in general. Thus, 'rap' functions as a register of exclusion around white Americans. It is through these raps that the black folk are acculturated and initiated into the black value system. Exaggeration, mimicry, proverbial statements, punning, spontaneity and boasting are some of the characteristics of the raps. Mary Rambo in Invisible Man 'raps' to initiate the protagonist into the ways of the black world of oppression and segregation.

Music and Black church are the two important influences on Black English. Some musical expressions from the black folk traditions have come to acquire special meanings in this English. For example, 'jazz' also means, 'to speed up', 'to excite', 'to act uninhibited' etc. in Black English. Similarly, 'hot', 'cool', 'funky' etc. too have special meanings for the American blacks.

37. Geneva Smitherman, p.47.

The role of the Black Church in the evolution of Black English and so also in Black consciousness cannot be over-emphasised. Black Church not only provided the slaves with a culture for their survival, it also provided them with a kind of codified language of survival. The Church in fact forms central core of their existence. Baldwin bases his Go Tell it on the Mountain on the precepts and practices of the Black Church and the influence it has on the lives of the Negroes, most of which is brought out through a very careful use of language.

Smitherman discovers a "push" and "pull" syndrome in Black American English, which oscillates between a "push" toward Americanization and a counterbalanced "pull" of retaining its Afro-American character.³⁸ This dynamics of "push" and "pull" can explain the complex sociolinguistic situation that continues to exist in Black America. Baldwin uses this push-pull syndrome in Go Tell it On The Mountain successfully. The "push" movement is marked by narrator's sophisticated, detached and at times poetic language and the "pull" towards Afro-American idiom is represented in the rhythm, accent and colloquialisms of Harlem speech. The contrast is brought out at all levels : grammatical, phonetic, syntactic and semantic. The two aspects of the city

38. Geneva Smitherman, p.10-11.

of New York illustrate this technique. The tension in novel, too, is built around the clash of two conceptions of the city of New York as "Harlem is an urban nightmare; New York is Vanity Fair."³⁹

John climbs the hill in Central Park and looks around reflecting :

"Then he, John, felt like a giant who might crumble this city with his anger; he felt like a tyrant who might crush this city beneath his heel; he felt like a long-awaited conqueror at whose feet flowers would be strewn, and before whom multitudes cried, Hosanna! He would be, of all, the mightiest, the most beloved, the lord's anointed, and he would live in this shining city which his ancestors had seen with longing far away. For it was his; the inhabitants of the city had told him it was his; he had but to run down, crying, and they would take him to their hearts and show him wonders his eyes had never seen." (p.33).

The effect of this narrative style is created through a scrupulous use of the tense, particularly the past tense for every event ; present, past and even future. Looking at Broadway he reflects : "Broadway : the way that led to death was broad, and many could be found thereon, but narrow was the way that led to life eternal, and few there were who found it." (p.34). The language here has biblical undertones. The narrow way that he is forced to choose is 'The way of the cross as also the way of 'humiliation forever': "where the houses did

39. Charles Scruggs, "The Tale of Two cities in James Baldwin's Go Tell it on the Mountain", American Literature, Vol.LII, No.1 (March 1980), p-1.17.

not rise, piercing, as it seemed, the unchanging clouds, but huddled, flat, ignoble, close to the filthy ground, where the streets and the hallway and the rooms were dark, and where the unconquerable odor was of dust, and sweat, and urine, and homemade gin. " (p.34). This, again, is the language of the sophisticated narrator, who is a part of the mainstream American life. He, therefore, prefers an educated speech, which can cope up with the inner conflict arising in the mind of young John. The novelist separates himself from the narrating voice by using third person point-of-view, here.

Baldwin maintains ironic distance from his characters. Sometimes he uses biblical language to maintain this ironic stance : "The ministers were being served alone in the upper room of the lodge hall - the less specialized workers in Christ's vineyard were being fed at a table downstairs" (p.107). The irony is also created by describing human situations in terms of divine providence :

"Tarry Service officially began at eight, but it could begin at any time, whenever the Lord moved one of the saints to enter the church and pray. It was seldom, however, that every-one arrived before eight thirty, the Spirit of the Lord being sufficiently tolerant to allow the saints time to do their Saturday-night shopping, clean their houses, and put their children to bed." (p.49).

Gabriel's character too is painted with ironic detachment. It is Florence who successfully points this out, when Roy's would is being dressed by Gabriel :

"It ain't my fault," she said, "that you was born a fool, and always done been a fool, and ain't never going to change. I swear to my Father you's try the patience of Job."

"I done told you before", he said..., "that I didn't want you coming in here and using that gutter language in front of my children."

"Don't you worry about my language, brother," she said with spirit, "you better start worrying about your life. What these children hear aint going to do them near as much harm as what they see."

"What they see," his father muttered, "is a poor man trying to serve the Lord. That's my life."

"Then I guarantee you", she said, "that they going to do their best to keep it from being their life. You mark my words." (p.44).

The dialogue effectively highlights almost all the qualities of Black English : force, vigour, earthiness and tonal semantics. Gabriel accuses Florence of using a "gutter language" for two reasons - first because it is directly offensive to him and secondly because he has a tendency to use Standard English rather than Black English. To an educated speaker like him, Florence's English is bad in grammar and phonetics. But to the speaker of Black English, it has a directness that white English lacks. Florence therefore is proud of her language and tells her brother not to bother about it, instead he should bother about his life which is full of hypocrisy.

Gabriel's hypocrisy is also attacked by Esther when she

tells him that she would go away from him with his baby in her belly but not with any shame : "I ain't ashamed of it - I'm ashamed of you - you done make me feel a shame I ain't never felt before. I shamed before my God - to let somebody make me cheap, like you done done." (p.133). The words ring in our ears because of the peculiar tonal semantics of Black English. Translated into Standard English, they would lose their peculiar charm.

Richard Wright too uses the black idiom to create atmosphere in Native Son. But it lacks the emotive force that Baldwin's language has. A dialogue between Thomas Bigger and his sister, Vera illustrates the point :

'you get the job?'

'yeah.'

'How much you making?'

'Aw, Vera. Ask Ma. I done told her everything.'

'Goody! Bigger got a job!' sang Vera.

'Aw, shut up,' he said.

'Leave him alone, Vera', the mother said.(p.140).

Ellison's use of Black English in Invisible Man is effective. He uses it both for comic and serious purposes. Characters like Rinehart and Ras are competent speakers of Black English. Invisible Man too puts it to comic use when he purchases hot yams with butter from a countrified old Negro and eats them

with great satisfaction. He exclaims : "I yam what I am." The anecdote also marks the beginning of his acquisition of self respect.

Ernest Gaines perhaps, is most successful among all the black novelists to recreate the history of his people through the consciousness of Miss Jane Pittman in her own language, which, of course, is Black English at its best. The novel, The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, opens thus :

"It was a day something like right now, dry, hot and dusty dusty. It might 'a' been July, I'm not too sure, but it was July or August. Burning up, I won't ever forget. The secesh Army, they came by first. The officers on their horses, the Troops walking, some of them dragging the guns in the dust they was so tired. The Officers rode up in the yard, and my mistress told them to get down and come in....." (p.3).

Here the language is that of a woman who has not been to any school, but has acquired the wisdom from the school of life that she has attended. Her language therefore is the language of her people. It is also an expression of the collective consciousness of her people. It is a kind of language which is a hybrid of two cultures, of two ways of living and of viewing reality. But, it is the authentic dialect of a people who have survived through various kind of oppression and colonialism. Her language, perhaps can be called, a representative expression of colonial consciousness.

While Raja Rao and Achebe re-create an idiom to record the colonial consciousness of their protagonists, Gaines just

records a dialect which is getting scarce due to aculturation, into the majority community in the U.S. Whatever may the future of Black English be, it has none-the-less given us a rich literature of its people who share a common heritage of oppression, segregation and torture with the other colonized people of the world.

It would not be too much to claim that colonialism, though deprived the people of their material, psychological and even spiritual native resources, it however gave them a powerful instrument to orchestrate their agony, their pain and now their joy through the common medium of English, which the colonized writers have domesticated to suit their needs. If the African novelists have enriched English with their rich oral tradition, the Indians have brought to it the flavour of their spiritual civilization and the black Americans have coloured it with the 'blues' and 'spirituals' of their culture of survival.

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