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The University of Kent at Canterbury

Faculty of Humanities

English Board of Studies

POLITICS AND ART IN THE NOVELS OF
NGUGI WA THIONG'O AND GEORGE LAMMING: A
COMPARATIVE APPROACH

by
Kabir Ahmed

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English of the
Faculty of Humanities, University of Kent at Canterbury

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ABSTRACT

This thesis compares the novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and a selection of George Lamming's, using regional criticism, which situates literature within its cultural and socio-political contexts. Since this approach is based on the premise that literary works are not created in a socio-political vacuum, it emphasizes that a knowledge of the context of a literary work is an indispensable critical tool. It enables the critic to assess a writer's stand on socio-political issues, which he will manipulate according to his purpose in fiction. Also if a writer distorts history, a critic with contextual information at hand will be in a position to determine whether this is based on ignorance or whether a political or religious explanation can be found for the distortion.

This approach aided the comparison and the discovery that Ngugi, in his early fiction, was at a neophyte stage of his vocation as a political writer and as an artist, in contrast with Lamming who had already formed his political ideas and was already experimenting with indigenous forms in his early fiction. Section One of the thesis (consisting of Chapters One and Two) attempted to prove this point by analysing The River Between alongside In the Castle of My Skin, and pairing Weep Not, Child with Of Age and Innocence.

Chapter three is a hinge between the early and the latter part of the thesis. It attempts to account for the similarities between the two novelists, which can be traced to the common pasts of both Kenya and Barbados as British fiefdoms. Their later divergence, illustrated by Lamming's continuity and intensification, can be accounted for, at one level, by Lamming's fixed political ideas when he started writing. At the second level - that of art - it can be traced to Lamming's conformity with the experimental trend of writing in the West Indies, which reflects the essence of the environment by utilizing the folk culture and indigenous narrative forms. The chapter sees Ngugi as an apprentice writer who was developing and who at a formative stage of his career read and found instructive Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin.

The first part of Chapter Four establishes Lamming's literary influence on Ngugi. It uses A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi's first major political novel, to prove that the Kenyan writer had been influenced by Lamming both at the formal and thematic levels. The second part of the chapter compares Ngugi's novel with Lamming's Season of Adventure to reveal that although both writers express disenchantment with political independence, Ngugi (who has developed) is now a conscious artist, as adept as Lamming has been with form.

The two final chapters reveal that while both writers have continued to address political issues and experiment with form, they also diverge linguistically and ideologically. Chapter Five uses In the Castle of My Skin and Devil on the Cross, a Gikuyu novel, to establish the linguistic diversion. Chapter Six compares Natives of My Person with Petals of Blood to show that while Lamming has remained a psychological novelist, Ngugi has developed into a Marxist radical.

In conclusion, we observe that both writers excel in their different ways, with Ngugi who now sees exploitation from a socio-economic angle making his point in Petals of Blood as compelling as Lamming's whose psychological view of the West Indian predicament forcefully comes across in Natives of My Person.

Dedicated to Salwa and her
mother Zainab

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Introduction: Theoretical Considerations and Historical Background

It is one of the central assumptions of this thesis that social, political and historical information play an important role in the analysis of a literary work. The importance of situating literature within its socio-political context becomes meaningful in view of the fact that a work of art cannot exist in a social or political vacuum. It is conceived and written by an author who lives in a particular socio-cultural environment. According to Ernst Fischer, an Austrian literary theoretician, a writer is "a man who belongs to a particular age, class and nation."¹ If we are to see his work "in a real, not imaginary context"² it becomes necessary for us to "study the social conditions, movements, and conflicts of the period, the class relationships and styles and the resulting ideas - religious, philosophical and political."³

Furthermore, since the role of the literary critic is primarily one of illumination and explication he needs to equip himself with the necessary background knowledge of the environment of the author whose work he seeks to illuminate. It is only then that he can make clear the relationship between literature and society and also be in a position to assess not only a writer's interpretation of the socio-political reality he has captured in fiction but also detect areas where there is departure from historical reality and try to determine why. In this respect, Terry Eagleton has outlined the task of criticism, which is "to show the text as it cannot know itself, to manifest those conditions of its making (inscribed in its very letter) about which it is necessarily silent..."⁴

Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez also supports our central standpoint in his assertion that:

The relationship between art and society cannot be ignored, for art itself is a social phenomenon: first, because the artist, however unique his primary experience might be, is a social being;

second, because his work, however deeply marked by his primary experience and however unique and unrepeatable its objectification or form might be, is always a bridge, a connecting link between the artist and other members of society; third, because a work of art affects other people - it contributes to the re-affirmation or devaluation of their ideas, goals, or values - and is a social force which, with its emotional or ideological weight, shakes or moves people.⁵

Having said this, it is also necessary to add that every writer has an individual point of view. This point of view is determined by his philosophical and political beliefs, his religious orientation, his practical experiences as well as his literary influences. All of these impinge on the consciousness of an artist as he interprets the socio-political reality he has observed.

These central assumptions underpin my thesis, which juxtaposes the novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan, and a selection of the Barbadian George Lamming's novels, with a view to identifying the similarities and differences between them. To compare the two writers is to compare two of the most outstanding novelists from the new literatures of Africa and the West Indies who share thematic similarities as a result of their nation's common pasts as British fiefdoms. Yet the comparison must be a study of difference within affinity. Despite the thematic similarities between the two writers, their approaches to the examination of their societies is significantly different because notwithstanding their common subjection to colonialism, Barbados had been enslaved, while Kenya was not. Also since these old colonial times the two societies have evolved in different social and political ways. These differences must have affected their varying literary responses, since socio-political factors significantly affect literary output. We have earlier argued that literature is given shape and direction not only by a writer's sensibility (his artistic point of view), but also by the socio-political and historical context of the society he comes from. And of course when one engages in a comparative critical inquiry one does not expect to find identical

responses to events, although if writers do have historical links, one will find many similarities. The aim of comparison is, as Sylvan Barnet argues, "to call attention to the unique features of something by holding it up against something similar but significantly different."⁶

In conformity with our theoretical standpoint that literature should be situated within its socio-cultural and political contexts for a proper understanding of it, we advocate the use of 'regional' criticism in the assessment of the novels of Ngugi and Lamming, which will be discussed in this thesis.

Regional criticism seeks to analyse literature using the relevant social, political and cultural information deriving from the society in which it was produced. In the African and West Indian contexts it seeks to displace analyses by metropolitan critics who have chosen to annex these literatures to English literature and see them as adjuncts of the Great Literary Tradition. In Africa, one of the champions of regional criticism is Chinweizu who, with his co-authors Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike have produced Toward the Decolonization of African Literature (1980), a polemical study which advocates the development of an indigenous African aesthetic which can be used for the writing and criticism of African literature. Also in the West Indies, Edward Brathwaite has made a call, similar in effect to Chinweizu's, for the creation of a new Caribbean aesthetic. This is aimed at influencing the reading public to see Caribbean literature as an attempt by local writers to modify the Great (English) Tradition and articulate a specifically Caribbean experience. It is also aimed at saving the literature from what he sees as the scourge of metropolitan criticism.

The different schools of criticism in Africa and West Indies are too numerous to be mentioned in full. Moreover, it is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss all of them. It will therefore

suffice to say briefly that these schools in Africa can be broadly divided into two categories. The first is that of "Larsonist"⁷ criticism, (embracing Adrian Roscoe and Charles Larson) which insists on seeing African literature as an appendage of that of Europe. The second is championed mainly by Joseph Okpaku and Chinweizu and favours an Afrocentric criticism which situates literature within its socio-cultural context.

In the West Indies too Sylvia Wynter identifies two schools: that of "challenging criticism"⁸ (exemplified by Gordon Rohlehr, Jean Creary and Lamming), which moves towards 'genuine criticism', as opposed to that of "acquiescent criticism"⁹ which in the name of 'objectivity' analyses literary texts "imperfectly... or relate [them] to a background which is mythical rather than real."¹⁰ To the latter school, she puts scholars such as Louis James, who edited a collection of critical essays entitled The Islands in Between: Essays in West Indian Literature (1968). The local West Indian critics belonging to the first category qualify for inclusion there not only because their criticism is informed but also because of their ethnic background.

However, it is our contention that regional criticism can be carried out by any critic, irrespective of race or colour, who has familiarised himself with the socio-cultural context of the relevant region. It is all a question of training, of academic discipline and of dedication. In "Regional Writers, Regional Critics", Lloyd Brown, an advocate of regional criticism, persuasively argues that:

...despite automatic suspicion of the "outsider" in some quarters, "regional" criticism in practice need not preclude participation by the non-Caribbean or "expatriate" critic: implicitly, at least, there seems to be the recognition that a desirable "regionalism" may be a matter of perception (a clear understanding of the area and its literature) rather than a mere matter of geographical origin. (After all, some of the more forgettable neo-colonial exercises have been inflicted on the literature by one or two "locals")!¹¹

If regional criticism attacks metropolitan critics because of

their ethnic background, it is discriminatory and racist. If it fails to acknowledge their positive contribution to the literatures of the developing world, it is grossly unfair. If for example, some essays in Louis James's book might be criticized for seeing certain West Indian writers under western eyes, it cannot be denied that it was an important pioneering work. It helped to bring West Indian literature to the recognition of the outside world and gave it the acclaim it needed in those early days of its development. But if regional criticism frowns upon metropolitan critics for making "illegitimate demands and cast[ing] disorienting and unwarranted censure upon"¹² local literatures in Africa and in the West Indies, it is justified. If the latter case is true, it is also appropriate that Chinweizu should see those involved in this enterprise as bolekaja ("come down and let's fight!")¹³ critics not because they engage in physical confrontation with their opponents but because theirs is a challenging criticism aimed at the development of a home-grown poetics. It is vigorous and defiant. It is also polemical.

The development of a local poetics, as we saw, is applicable not only to criticism but also to writing. In his own essay, Chinweizu argues that there are two primary goals that should be met in order to establish a new African aesthetic, which is free from the cultural domination of Europe.

The first one is that the African writer must create a work that deals with the important social issues since "a writer does have a minimum professional responsibility to make his work relevant... to his society and its concerns. He may do so by treating the burning issues of the day, or he may do so by treating themes germane to his community's fundamental and long-range interests."¹⁴ This points towards the specifically socio-political function of literature.

The second is that the African writer must write for the African. There is a need, therefore, for him to produce works that will reflect his environment as well as be accessible to the members of his society. How can an African literary work be made to reflect its environment and be accessible to the majority of Africans?

Chinweizu is of the view that "an African aesthetic must be grounded in an African sensibility, and the incontestably uncontaminated reservoir of African sensibility is the African oral tradition. It is from there, therefore, that we must extract the foundation elements of a modern African aesthetic."¹⁵ Accordingly, he opines that since African "orature is rich in themes, attitudes and technical devices"¹⁶ local writers should attempt to incorporate these in their writing. As part of this attempt, he is of the view that African writers should use, in their fiction, traditional narrative devices such as parables, songs, proverbs, story-telling and aspects of the African cosmology, such as the interaction between human and supernatural beings.

On the linguistic level, Chinweizu is of the opinion that "ideally, African literature should be written in African languages".¹⁷ If another language is used, a novel can still qualify as African, in Chinweizu's view, if it is bent and flexed to allow the admission of vernacular idiomatic and rhetorical usages.¹⁸ It is on this account that Chinweizu's model for an 'African' literary work squarely fits Okot p'Biték's songs which although written in English "deal illuminatingly and well with matters of central importance to contemporary Africa. And they do so using authentic African imagery, proverbs, laments, invocations and curses, thereby successfully rooting the modern in the traditional."¹⁹

However, a literary work which combines aspects of the African orature with an African language will, in Chinweizu's opinion, qualify as a genuinely liberated African literature. When such a literary work is produced, African literature will have come of age and the

process of literary and linguistic decolonization will have started.

It is on the question of accessibility that Chinweizu lambasts certain African writers such as Wole Soyinka, Michael Echeuro and Christopher Okigbo, whom he calls "orphic messengers to the West",²⁰ writing about Africa in borrowed forms and alien mythology, which are not likely to appeal to the majority of Africans.

These writers have been attacked not only for using euromodernist techniques, but also for what Chinweizu sees as the deliberate obscurantism of their work. In his reply to Chinweizu's charges, Wole Soyinka calls the authors of Toward the Decolonization of African Literature the 'troika' and denounced their criticism which involved a "delimitation of poetic provinces"²¹ and the subversion of "the principle of imaginative challenge which is one of the functions of poetry".²²

It is my belief that a hankering for obscurity and esoterism for their own sake mars the quality of a work of art, which primarily intends to convey a meaning. This is a problem in majority of Wole Soyinka's poetry such as Idanre (1967), A Shuttle in the Crypt (1972) and his first novel The Interpreters (1965) which has often been considered 'problematic', for obscurity, in African literary circles.²³

However, there is nothing wrong with artistic experimentation, through which an author "struggle[s] to express new ways of looking at man and society."²⁴ It is achieved by an ingenious use of techniques: both modern and traditional. It can use both local and borrowed techniques in so far as the latter are domesticated and made to express a uniquely local experience. Paradoxically, in spite of his stance against the use of euromodernist techniques in African fiction, Chinweizu believes that experimentation, which very often depends on borrowing, is crucial. He explains that "the kind of experimentation called for may be described as traditionalist, that is to say, experimentation for the purpose of modernizing and revitalizing tradition."²⁵ (author's emphasis).

Such experimentation will provide an 'imaginative challenge', which Wole Soyinka, in a previous quote, argues, is one of the functions of poetry, and one might add, indeed the function of drama and fiction as well.

Like Chinweizu in Africa, Edward Brathwaite in the West Indies also calls for a literary renaissance in his advocacy for the creation of a local aesthetic which will serve as an alternative to the super-imposed European one. He believes that as an alternative to the 'well-made' European novel, the West Indian writer should create a new fiction using the local tradition:

If by tradition we mean a living acceptable, recognizable force, a body of achievement to which both the artist and the public can refer, then we can expect the artist to use this and be used by it. No novelist, no writer - no artist - can maintain a meaningful flow of work without reference to his society and its tradition.²⁶

To create art that will refer to his society and its tradition the West Indian writer will have to engage in experimentation. He will also have to fall back on the African past of the West Indies, which Edward Brathwaite reveals in "Timehri" (1970) is a potential source of creative material which local artists can use to address contemporary problems.

As part of his attempt to influence writers to bring their art closer to the indigenous tradition, Edward Brathwaite calls for the use in West Indian writing of nation language. In History of the Voice (1984) he writes about the pervasive use in poetry of nation language, which illustrates an attempt by West Indian writers to break out of linguistic imperialism and write about their society in a widely accessible medium. In a review, Mervyn Morris argues that the central problem of History of the Voice is that in the end, it is not quite clear what nation language is.²⁷ Does the term refer

to the Jamaican patois, to Barbadian or to Trinidadian dialect? Mervyn Morris further observes, "it seems eventually, that nation language can be whatever a Caribbean person speaks that sounds authentic when he speaks it."²⁸

It is possible, therefore, to talk of Barbadian, Trinidadian or Jamaican nation language, since in all these islands and more, there has been a process through which English combined with the language of the former slaves, producing a distinctively oral communicative medium, which is

more closely allied to the African aspect of experience in the Caribbean. It may be in English: but often it is an English which is like a howl or a shout or a machine-gun or the wind or a wave. It is also like the blues. And sometimes it is English and African at the same time.²⁹

Edward Brathwaite is also of the view that the West Indian novel must serve a social and political purpose. In "Jazz and the West Indian Novel" (1967) he seeks to establish a correlation between the new West Indian novel he has in mind and the New Orleans jazz, which for the urbanized Negro was a "shout of joy, mixed with the disappointment and the growl of protest".³⁰ A jazz novel in the West Indies will provide the West Indian writer with an instrument of protest against colonialism and neo-colonialism just as jazz music provided the New Orleans negro with a medium of protest, "a music of comfort and protection: a shield of sound behind which the individual and the group have been able to protect their spirit".³¹ This new novel, will therefore be political in nature, a vehicle for protest against the colonial and neo-colonial status quo.

At the technical level, Edward Brathwaite is of the view that a jazz novel is one which tries "to express the essence of [the] community as a whole, its characters taking their place in that community, of which they are felt and seen to be an integral part."³² An attempt by artists to express the essence of the West Indian community will, in the view of Edward Brathwaite, involve a deployment

in fiction of aspects of the folk tradition such as story-telling and Anansi tales, and the use of chorus, a dramatic technique.³³

Edward Brathwaite views the use by Roger Mais of chorus in Brother Man (1954) as exemplary. Since the use of chorus enables individuals to comment on their lives, it can be argued that the essence of the community, of which they are a part, can be conveyed through it. The novel's incorporation of aspects of the folk tradition (including the Rastafarian cult, whose philosophy Roger Mais builds into the texture of the story) and the essentially protest message of the plight of the underprivileged in Jamaica qualify Brother Man as a "jazz novel". The elaborate techniques which Edward Brathwaite has identified in Roger Mais's novel in "Jazz and the West Indian Novel" (1968) are so numerous and perhaps available in that number only in Brother Man. This is probably why most of the novels he discussed in the essay (such as Orlando Patterson's The Children of Sisyphus (1964) V.S. Naipaul's The Mimic Men (1967) and A House for Mr. Biswas (1961) hardly meet the criteria of a jazz novel.

However, it is arguable that if most West Indian novels do not fit the rigid criteria of a jazz novel, they nevertheless engage in adapting in their writing both the Amerindian and African folk tradition, in an attempt to break with the conventions of the Great Literary Tradition.³⁴ Thus, majority of contemporary West Indian writers, "no longer follow the earlier line of derivative imitative literature that was alien to our culture both in theme and style. It is, on the contrary, responding with sensitivity to certain compulsions that arise from socio-historic actuality."³⁵

This development in West Indian writing, which is evident in the experimental fiction of George Lamming, Sam Selvon, Roger Mais, Wilson Harris and the poetry of Edward Brathwaite, Michael Smith, Louise Bennett and numerous other 'performance poets' arose out of the need:

for post-colonial writers... to adapt literature to their indigenous forms, or to create new forms amenable to the peculiarities of their culture... No writer is really free from the history of his art form, for that history is one of the first contexts in which his writing is elucidated and judged...³⁶

It is clear then that both Chinweizu and Edward Brathwaite believe that literature should utilize the indigenous and folk tradition and produce writing which reflects its setting. They also unite in their belief that literature should be socially and politically useful.

Literature in both Africa and in the West Indies is essentially political, a literature of protest against colonialism and/or neo-colonialism. Therefore being a political writer in these regions means taking a stand against Europe and its cultural institutions during colonialism, and in the post-colonial period, expressing distaste for the native elite and the complex machinery of neo-colonialism, which is successfully operated with their support. This has been the case regardless of Edward Brathwaite in the West Indies, and Chinweizu who has advocated in Africa a socially and politically useful literature in view of the continent's "embattled culture."³⁷ Talking about the political nature of writing in Africa in Protest and Conflict in African Literature (1969) Louis James has long before Chinweizu's advocacy, noted that:

In situations as explosive as that of Africa today there can be no creative literature that is not in some way political, in some way protest.³⁸

This, as we shall see later, also applies to the West Indies. Before we consider the theme of protest in the writings of both authors it will be illuminating to briefly examine their nations' histories and reveal that the political nature of their fiction is, in part, a reflection of the socio-political processes in both Kenya and in the West Indies.

The colonial experience of Kenya started late in the nineteenth century. Soon after it was declared a protectorate of Britain in 1895, Sir Charles Elliot encouraged Europeans to settle in the fertile Rift Valley area. In 1902 the Crown Lands Ordinance gave the protectorate government jurisdiction over Gikuyuland and since no consideration was taken of the African ownership of the land, most of it went to the White settlers, who transformed its original owners into squatters. In addition to land-alienation, the Gikuyus were subjected to other repressive colonial policies such as direct taxation, compulsory labour, the kipande (registration certificate) and the refusal to allow local farmers to grow coffee and pyrethrum, cash-crops restricted to the Europeans.

The first political response to the repressive policies of the colonial regime was the formation in 1920 of the Kikuyu Association by Harry Thuku. Although he was jailed by the colonial authorities because of the protest gatherings which he headed, his movement stimulated other forms of rebellion against the establishment.

In 1924, a more militant organization - the Kikuyu Central Association - was formed. The Gikuyus used it as an organ to articulate their grievances against land-alienation, exploitative labour policies and the kipande system. According to Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham in The Myth of 'Mau Mau' Nationalism in Kenya (1966) the membership of the K.C.A. in this period became a symbol of dissent against the colonial authorities.³⁹ While in London in the 1930's Jomo Kenyatta refuted allegations that K.C.A. was subversive, arguing that the movements' central objective was cultural assertion, "to help the Kikuyu to improve himself as a Mu-Kikuyu not to 'ape' the foreigner."⁴⁰ The organization was also vocal in its opposition to the banning of

female circumcision, which the doctors of the Church of Scotland Mission, with the tacit approval of the colonial administration, sought to obliterate. This resulted in a conflict between the Church and those traditionally-minded Gikuyus who refused to forsake their customs. Because of this pressure from the Church, those dissenting Gikuyus formed break-away churches, such as the Independent Pentecostal Church.

This early expression of Gikuyu cultural nationalism was also evident in the educational sector, with the founding in 1934 of Gikuyu Independent Schools, when the missionaries decided to ban from their schools those Gikuyus who refused to forsake traditional customs.

Protest is also discernible in the Mau Mau movement, a Gikuyu-dominated political underground organization which swung into action in 1952. It was actually an extension of the Kikuyu Central Association in the sense that it also sought to end the discriminatory policies of the colonial administration. The difference between the two organizations was one of logistics. The K.C.A. sought to bring about change through constitutional means, that was through consultation and peaceful demonstrations. The Mau Mau sought to achieve through armed struggle the ends which the K.C.A. was unable to achieve constitutionally.

The actual war began with the assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu, a leading Gikuyu 'warrant' chief, who was returning home from a meeting with Governor Baring. This was followed by sporadic attacks on European farmers residing in the exclusive neighbourhood of the 'White Highlands'. On 20th October 1952, the Governor declared a State of Emergency, which involved the neutralization of African political activity and the detention of prominent local leaders. However, this did not stem the tide of violence. Already aggrieved Gikuyu peasants have launched a large-scale guerilla activity on European settlers and members of

the colonial administration. They operated from the forest headquarters of Mounts Kerinyaga and Nyadarwa with commanders such as Dedan Kimathi, Stanley Mathenge and General 'China' at the helm.

There were casualties on both sides of the antagonistic factions in the Mau Mau war. When it ended in 1960, eight years after it had started, a total of 13,500 Africans and 95 white settlers had been killed. Although casualties weighed heavily on the African side, it was essentially because of the orchestrated and unrelenting assaults on the settler colonial population that England eventually granted Kenya independence in December 1963.⁴¹

Edward Brathwaite cites absence of the American-type racial segregation in the West Indies as the reason for the non-development of jazz music there. He argues that "unlike the American, the West Indian Negro had no New Orleans, Chicago or New York to mix with, learn from, be hurt by, or protest against during his critical post-emancipation years."⁴² Absence of jazz in the West Indies was not, as Edward Brathwaite himself argues later in the essay, an indication that a protest tradition does not exist in the region.

A tradition of protest is not only an aspect of the historical experience of the region, as we shall see shortly. It is also part and parcel of the literature of the Caribbean, especially among writers of African descent, for it was this group, more than any other in the Antilles who experienced not only the ravages of colonialism but also those of slavery. Commenting on the debilitating effects of slavery on the Caribbean personality, A.J. Seymour argues that:

Slavery is of course one of the most intense forms of imperialism and the people of the Caribbean must be among the most malformed human fruit of slavery anywhere in history.⁴³

In support of our stance, Barbara Howes maintains that:

Due to the heavy history of the islands... social protest in one form or another is a frequent theme, a vigorous, at times

bitter, effort on the part of the writer to make his predicament, and the predicament of the transplanted African felt.⁴⁴

Just as repressive colonial policies resulted in creating a culture of resistance in Kenya they also did the same in the Caribbean, and an examination of the history of the region will reveal a deeply ingrained protest tradition.

When Christopher Columbus arrived in the Caribbean in 1492 he came along with a group of Europeans mostly sea merchants and adventurers. He and his compeers engaged in a systematic extermination of the native Arawak and Carib population, thus destroying most of the indigenous tradition of the Caribbean region.

This paved the way for European colonial powers such as Spain, France and England to later carve up the region into spheres of influence. Attempts to mentally indoctrinate the Negro slaves (which actually started during the 'middle passage' - the journey from the African Coast to the New World - when the slavers spoke with their captives and introduced them to the Western culture)⁴⁵ continued on the island through the employment of religion and education, and the decision to keep far apart slaves who spoke a common language. I share the view of Gordon Lewis that "Notwithstanding planter fears and official restrictions, ...it is plain enough that a rich and vigorous slave entertainment culture grew and flourished throughout [the Caribbean]"⁴⁶ This is illustrated by the resuscitation of the folk tradition (which colonialism sought to bury) by the West Indian peasant and working classes who, in Lamming's fiction, demonstrate a knowledge of proverbs, story-telling and calypso songs.

If settler colonialism failed to stop the survival of the folk tradition, it was successful in creating plantation societies, where life was oppressive, restricted and regimented. If the colonized in Kenya lost equal rights with their white counterparts and their land, they did not loose their freedom as the colonized and enslaved

members of the West Indian society did. George Beckford writing about the nature of a plantation society maintains that:

On each plantation, the white owner or administrator was the lord and master; and his mansion was the centre of social life for all within the community. All decisions affecting the lives of the black people emanated from there... Church facilities were provided on the plantation by the master who also exercised juridical and state functions. The political order was despotic with commands issued by the master to the slaves through an overseer. Slaves were herded together as an undifferentiated mass in compounds that had a kind of village character.⁴⁷

From these compounds also known as barrack-yards, the slaves daily left for work on the sugar plantations. While there, they were subjected to work for long hours under a tropical sunshine and severely punished if they showed any sign of tiredness. Since slaves were considered as personal property they were subjected to various forms of maltreatment such as being branded with hot iron for identification purposes and having their lips padlocked so that they did not eat sugar cane.

The decision of the plantocracy not to keep slaves from the same linguistic background in the same colony was meant not only to create a fertile ground for the white oligarchy to introduce their values to their captives as a way of consolidating their domination over them. It was also meant to avoid organized insurrections against the plantocracy.

However, this measure was not effective because when slaves retired from work they used the common denominators of their different languages and the language of the master to communicate. From this arose nation-language, which, as we saw, is a communicative medium with both African and European characteristics. Just as their separation did not prevent the flowering of the folk tradition, it also did not stop the birth of a protest sub-culture among the enslaved. There was, for example, a spate of slave revolts in the Caribbean during the seventeenth century. Several occurred in Barbados. The first one took place in 1649. It was

effectively crushed by the plantocracy. The organizers of the revolt were openly punished and those killed among them were dragged in the streets to discourage others from revolting in the future. The second one occurred in 1675. Like the first one, it was also effectively crushed by a militia force employed by the plantocracy. The punishment meted out to the participants in the uprising was much harsher than in the previous one. According to Manning Marable in African and Caribbean Politics (1987) after the 1675 revolt 11 blacks were beheaded, six burnt alive, hundreds of thousands gangraped, dismembered or castrated.⁴⁸

After the Emancipation in 1834 the tyranny of the plantocracy subsided as the former slaves were now free and most of them avoided estate work. More than a hundred years later, unfavourable job conditions and unemployment engendered an acute sense of colonial injustice among the ordinary people in the West Indies. This resulted in a wave of labour riots all over the West Indies between 1935 and 1938.⁴⁹ Albert Gomes commenting on the protest of the ordinary people in Through a Maze of Colour (1974) writes that "the masses must have been uniformly desperate, and insurrection was accordingly spontaneous. It had required bloodshed to arouse the sleeping British conscience to the diseased conditions of these neglected possessions".⁵⁰ He further adds that "the long stagnation had been disturbed, the masses seemed no longer willing to accept the gradualism of sterile oratory that had dominated their politics for so long. They felt a sense of urgency about their problems and clamoured for change."⁵¹ The mass discontents of the 1930's led to the creation of "effective mass organizations"⁵² and "at the same time, middle-class professional people with political leanings were beginning to organize political parties with specifically nationalist aims."⁵³

Thus it is undeniable that the 'heavy history' of the Caribbean region resulted, as it did in Kenya in creating a protest tradition.

Also in this region, wide-scale brutalization of slaves before the Emancipation and afterwards, the hostile conditions under which the Chinese and Indian indentured labourers worked, and the depredation which Indian women faced, meant that institutionalized violence was an aspect of life in colonial Caribbean, an aspect of its past. Also the fact that all the slave revolts which took place in the Caribbean failed, with the exception of the 1791 Haitian revolution led by Toussaint L' Overture, meant that a sense of despair lurked in the consciousness of most indigenes who lived during that era, and probably even in that of future generations. In recent times, the failure of the West Indian Federation - which was formed in 1958 but broke up three years later - would have confounded the sense of despair in the Caribbean psyche.

Therefore, in addition to a past of repression which resulted in creating a culture of resistance, the history of the Caribbean is also full of unrealized hopes and failed dreams. This is translated in Lamming's fiction into a sense of despair, an aspect of his writing which we shall encounter in the discussion of his novels in each of the chapters of my thesis.

As the title indicates, the thesis is about 'politics' and 'art' in the novels of Ngugi and Lamming. The comparison will first of all talk about the 'politics' of the novels. Our discussion will set out to prove that the novels do conform with the call of the respective African and West Indian literary theoreticians that literature should be socially and politically useful. It will then put the novels within African and West Indian literary contexts.

For convenience, we shall categorize the novels into two divisions. The ones which will be discussed in Section One belong to the colonial

era and are therefore considered as anti-colonial. They are Ngugi's The River Between (1965) and Weep Not, Child (1964); and Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin (1953) and Of Age and Innocence (1958). The ones which will be discussed in Sections Three and Four belong to the post-independent era and can therefore be appropriately classed as anti-neo-colonial, since they articulate the disenchantment of their authors with political independence. These novels are Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat (1967), Petals of Blood (1977) and Devil on the Cross (1982); and Lamming's Season of Adventure (1960) and Natives of My Person (1972). In the Castle of My Skin also falls in this category because as we shall make clear in Chapter One (which will discuss its anti-colonial aspect) and Chapter Five (which will dwell on its anti-neo-colonial dimension) the novel is not only about the colonial society of Barbados. It is also an attack on the Barbadian middle-class elite whom Lamming had prophesied would intercept the benefits of political independence.

Since Ngugi, as a budding writer, read and was influenced by Lamming the study will also trace the literary debt the former owed the latter. We will then discuss the 'art' in the novels comparing Ngugi's 'artistry' with Lamming's, assessing each author from the point of view of whether there has been conformity to the indigenous aesthetic developed in their respective societies. This will apply to the novels which will be discussed in Chapters One, Two, Four and Five. In Chapter Six, which will discuss the novels which, in our view, represent the third stage of the writer's vocation as political novelists, the criteria for judging their 'artistry' is whether Petals of Blood conforms with the stipulations of Marxist literary theoreticians as to what constitutes a 'good' Marxist novel, and whether in Natives of My Person, Lamming has been able to successfully fuse arts and politics, and also conform with the experimental nature of political novels in the region.

Being anti-colonial, their novels which will be examined in Section One (consisting of Chapters One and Two) deal with the role of the writer as a cultural and political nationalist who sets out not only to debunk colonial myths about the subjugated natives and their cultural institutions but also to show the confrontation between the colonial administration and a people in search of political independence. As we have already seen, both novelists come from societies where "colonialism... turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it."⁵⁴ They, therefore, felt duty-bound to correct the distortions to which their pasts had been subjected.

Section One will show that while Lamming's novels successfully carry out this task, Ngugi's succeed only partially because both two represent the early stage of his vocation as a political novelist. His view of religion, which he later realises is an instrument of indoctrination, was ambivalent in The River Between, an early novel in which Ngugi was torn between the call of nationalism and loyalty to Christianity. In Weep Not, Child these two opposing forces also dictated his conception of the Mau Mau movement both as a freedom movement and as a terrorist organization. They were also responsible for his ambivalence on Western education which is seen positively through Njoroge, a 'redeemer', as well as negatively through Jacobo, a whiteman's lackey. Lamming's novels, on the other hand, subvert colonial education and Christianity which, during the colonial times, were often manipulated by the establishment to serve as weapons of cultural indoctrination, the aim being to deprive the colonized of a sense of his past. The result of this is a feeling of rootlessness which assails the colonized in the fiction of both writers, although we shall argue in Chapter One that rootlessness for the Afro-Caribbean

is much more intense than it is for the Kenyan who had a rich cultural tradition before the advent of Europeans in his land.

Despite Ngugi being at a neophyte stage of his career as a political novelist, both his novels and Lamming's, which will be discussed in Section One are preoccupied with the quest for a cultural identity, a quest for roots. Both writers were however responding to an issue also treated in various ways by other African and West Indian writers, a brief examination of whose works will place Ngugi and Lamming within a wider literary context.

A quest for roots and an affirmation of the black cultural heritage constituted the primary motivating factors for a group of colonial students in France in the 1930's to start a movement called Négritude. The key members in the movement, Léopold Senghor, a Senegalese, and Aimé Césaire, a Martinician, all came from former French colonies where the policy of assimilation had forced the colonized to adopt the French norms, language, manners and cultural tradition. Since the French aimed to obliterate the local tradition in order to implant theirs, there was an underlying assumption in the assimilation policy that the black man's cultural heritage was insignificant. Hence Leopold Senghor, one of the exponents of the movement:

They [the French] esteemed that we had neither invented nor created nor written nor sculptured, nor painted, nor sung anything. To set our own and effective revolution, we had first to put off our borrowed dresses, those of assimilation, and affirm our being, that is our negritude.⁵⁵

The movement, therefore, was a reaction against the systematic attempt of the French to strip the colonized of their cultural identity. It was an attempt by Francophone Africans and West Indians to assert their cultural and racial identity. The basic tenet of Négritude was the celebration of the dark colour of the Negro, his customs, his life-style and his capabilities. In the process, the movement,

at times, tended to glamourize the pre-colonial days when the cultural values, destroyed by France, were still intact.

One of the upholders of the Négritude literary ideology the Senegalese David Diop conveys his revulsion at the 'civilizing mission' of the colonialists which involved bloodshed and cultural despoliation. He draws attention in the poem to the humanity of the African and writes about the

...foreigners who did not seem human
Who knew all the books but did not know love.
But we whose hands fertilize the womb of the earth
In spite of the desolate villages of torn Africa
Hope was preserved in us as in a fortress
And from the mines of Swaziland to the factories of
Europe
Spring will be reborn under our bright steps.⁵⁶

Léopold Senghor, in an attempt to refute the claims of Europeans that the colour black denoted savagery and ugliness, itemizes the qualities of Africa in his poem "Black Woman", in which the woman whose virtues he extols symbolizes the African continent:

Naked woman, black woman
Clothed with your colour which is life, with your form
which is beauty!
In your shadow I have grown up; the gentleness of your
hands was laid over my eyes
And now; high up on the sun-baked pass, at the heart of
summer, at the heart of noon, I come upon you, my
Promised land,
And your beauty strikes me to the heart like the flash
of an eagle.⁵⁷

It is this idealization of the African past by the champions of Négritude that prompted Wole Soyinka in his essay "The Fourth Stage" to see the movement as limiting "the principle of creativity" to "pastoral idyllism".⁵⁸ However, it is our contention that Négritude as a movement happened at a time when its therapeutic value to alienated Africans was undeniable. If it can be attacked for idealizing Africa, what was never put to question was the fact that Négritude was instrumental in debunking the myth of the inherent cultural superiority of Europe over Africa, the tabula rasa myth, and the denial of the

existence of an African cultural tradition.

We have earlier observed that Kenya was a colonial settler nation. But even in Uganda where colonial presence was not as pervasive as in its East African neighbour, a writer like Okot p' Bitek is also concerned with the issue of cultural identity, in his first song, in which Ocol represents the alienated African, and his wife Lawino is the embodiment of traditional values. His Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol (1972) presents Ocol, who apes European life-styles, as a product of colonial indoctrination which uses Western education, among other things, to convince the native about the backwardness of his tradition and the inherent superiority of the European culture to his own. Thus Ocol is of the opinion that:

Black people's foods are primitive,
But what is backward about them?
He says
Black people's foods are dirty;
He means,
some clumsy and dirty black women
Prepare food clumsily
And put them
In dirty containers.⁵⁹

As a result of Ocol's western education he believes that Acoli:

...is a primitive language
And is not rich enough
to express his deep wisdom
He says the Acoli language
Has very few words.
It is not like the whiteman's language
Which is rich and very beautiful
A language fitted for discussing deep thoughts. (p. 136).

In contrast with her husband, Lawino maintains her stance in the song as a 'black and proud' African who has no wish to imitate European ways:

I am proud of the hair
With which I was born
And as no white woman
Wishes to do her hair
Like mine,
Because she is proud
Of the hair with which she was born,
I have no wish
To look like a white woman. (p. 74)

Thus Lawino stands for the affirmation of traditional values and her knowledge of and self-confidence in local customs negates the tabula rasa myth about Africa, a belief which many writers have sought to refute in poetry and in fiction, which at times contains characters who are on a quest for their African roots which have been tampered with by colonialism.

Several other West Indian writers have also responded, like their African counterparts, to the theme of cultural identity. The Barbadian Edward Brathwaite seeks to draw attention in The Arrivants (1976) to the Afro-Caribbean's feeling of rootlessness, which is captured in a splendid image of his homelessness:

Where then is the nigger's
home?

In Paris Brixton Kingston
Rome?

Here?
Or in heaven?⁶⁰

Coupled with this is the cultural and historical void which colonialism and slavery created in the mind of the Afro-Caribbean. A concerted effort was made to render him ignorant of his African past. Hence his depiction in "Littoral" as a fisherman who

is blind... his eyes stare out like an
empty shell,
its sockets of voices, wind,
grit, bits of conch, pebbles; (p. 170).

Colonial stereotypes have induced in him a feeling of worthlessness, "for we who have achieved nothing... who have not built... who have forgotten all" (p. 13). The colonial enterprise in Barbados had involved not only an attempt to encourage the colonized to denigrate themselves. It had also involved, as Austin Clarke shows in Amongst Thistles and Thorns (1965), an attempt to keep him ignorant about

his 'true' relationship with Britain; as the young central character in his first novel reveals below:

I imagined all the glories of Britannia, our Motherland, Britannia so dear to us all, and so free; Britannia, who, or what or which, had brought us out of the ships crossing over from the terrible seas from Africa, and had placed us on this island, and had given us such good headmasters... and such nice vicar to teach us how to pray to God.⁶¹

Also when Pastor Humphrey is commenting about the attempt of the Jamaican masses to wrench their independence from the colonial government in New Day (1949) he churns out a common colonial myth regarding the inferiority of the black race:

"Over a quarter of a century ago our good Queen Victoria in her great wisdom gave freedom to her darker children of Africa. Men there were who questioned the wisdom of that gift and asked whether people who were clearly unfit for responsibility should be made citizens, holding in common with all the inestimable privilege of being freedmen of the British Empire."⁶²

In the view of Edward Brathwaite, self-knowledge and cultural self-confidence might be had through the Afro-Caribbean's awareness of his African roots. The Atumpan drum rhythms in the third movement of "Masks" (1968) are meant to put him in a trance and psychologically transport him back to Africa. This mental journey needs to be supplemented by a knowledge of history:

... the seven
Kingdoms
Songhai, Mali
Chad, Ghana
Tim-
buctu, Volta,
and the bitter
waste
that was
Ben-
in,... (p. 90).

The West Indian having gathered this knowledge of his past returns to place it into his Caribbean context. This is the point of "Islands" (1969) the last movement completing the trilogy, which starts with a journey from Africa to the New World, entitled "Rights of Passage" (1967). It then returns to Africa in "Masks" (1968) and then goes back to the "Islands" now so that the West Indian can use

this new knowledge of his past to come to terms with his West Indian realities.

The St. Lucian poet and playwright Derek Walcott also tackles the problem of cultural identity in the Caribbean in his play Dream on Monkey Mountain (1970). Derek Walcott is acutely aware of the psychological damage wrought on the Caribbean personality in a world inhabited by people of mixed ancestries but dominated by European values. The image of Africa which Souris, a character in the play, has is a negative one and is in addition grossly distorted as a result of early indoctrination, "When I was a little boy, living in darkness, I was so afraid, it was as if I was sinking, drowning in a grave, and me and the darkness was the same, and God was like a big whiteman, a big whiteman I was afraid of."⁶³ This distortion of values which puts the colour white on a higher pedestal than black and of which Souris is a victim, is a reflection of the crisis of identity which Makak, a black man, who is ashamed of his physical appearance, faces in the play. He is agonized by his colour but more especially by the meaning given to it by the 'other', the European. He argues that, "We are wrapped in black air, we are black, ourselves shadows in the fireflight of the white-man's mind". (p. 304). Thus Makak is a victim of colonization and of slavery which have distorted his self-image. If he is to discover his identity he has to overcome the stigma and transform his 'ugliness' to positive ends. Acceptance of his 'negritude' is seen in the play as the first stage towards achieving the ability to control his own destiny and consequently as a means to salvation. In an essay on Derek Walcott Lloyd Coke argues that "apehood is an evolutionary stage to which we must regress in order to escape the blind alley of mimicry. Unless ye become an innocent apeman, ye shall not behold the vision beautiful."⁶⁴

Having established similarities and differences and noting the widening gap in the political views of the two writers, the third chapter will set out, using their essay-statements as a lens, to probe the cause of the divergence between two writers who have a lot in common as Chapters One and Two will show. Nevertheless, the statements reveal affinity and even debt, Ngugi having had an intimate contact with Lamming's fiction as a student at Leeds and acknowledging an influence.

The establishment of this influence is the main concern of the first part of Chapter Four, sub-titled 'Influence and Diversion' so named because it will also discuss the various ways in which both writers differ. We are in full agreement with the assertion by Michel Zeraffa that:

the novelist must be considered absolutely as an artist: his work is the expression of a reality which... he expresses... by means of techniques, some of which he has inherited from his predecessors and some of which he has worked out himself from phenomena he has actually observed.⁶⁵

Accordingly, we shall reveal that Ngugi's development into a major political novelist with A Grain of Wheat (1967) can be partly attributed to literary influence and partly to his own skill with the pen. His study of Lamming's novels at Leeds had sharpened his awareness about the plight of the underprivileged and the need to create a new form to match his new commitment to the ordinary people of Kenya. Although detailed comment about this literary debt must wait until Chapter Three, it has to be mentioned here that our guiding principle in the analysis will be the one which interests the literary historian, which according to S.S. Praver, is a concern with "What [a writer] learn[s] and how [he applied] the lesson".⁶⁶ Accordingly, the sub-section will use In the Castle of My Skin (1953) to establish the debt Ngugi owes Lamming in A Grain of Wheat which, like its literary antecedent, centres on the travails of the common people after independence.

The second part of the chapter sub-titled 'The Writer and Independence' will put A Grain of Wheat side by side with Season of Adventure for analysis so as to show that both novelists share a concern, with the ordinary people, a sense of disillusionment following independence: All the novels which will be discussed in the remaining part of the thesis are concerned with this disillusionment and with the betrayal of the ordinary people by the black elite, which is why we earlier mentioned our intention to categorize them as anti-neo-colonial novels which condemn the socio-political directions of their nations following independence. Before we discuss the context of Ngugi's and Lamming's novels, a cursory overview of contemporary events in Kenya and Barbados is necessary to prove that the anti-neo-colonial novels of the two writers are, in part, a reflection of the socio-political processes in their societies.

Kenya became independent in December 1963, with Jomo Kenyatta as its President. A year later his party, Kenya African National Union (K.A.N.U.) merged with Kenya African Democratic Union (K.A.D.U.), (the opposition party) with the Luo Oginga Odinga as Vice-President. The merger did not, however, last long because the Luo radical politician had realized that government policies favoured only the educated elite and did not bring economic relief to ordinary Kenyans. As a result, he left government and formed the Kenya People's Union, a radical alternative to the conservative K.A.N.U. whose members were "prepared essentially to conserve the existing structure..."⁶⁷

Later in Not Yet Uhuru (1967) Oginga Odinga attacked Jomo Kenyatta who had left out in his inaugural speech as President:

the people who had laid down their lives in the struggle, the fighters of the forests and the camps who have been in danger in Kenya of becoming the forgotten men of the freedom fight because it suits the ambitions of the self-seeking politicians to divert our people from the real freedom aims of our people.⁶⁸

This laid foundation for the marginalization of Kenya's ordinary people by the native elite who are in league with European and Japanese

multi-national corporations, which assist the local leaders in appropriating the national wealth in a venture in which they also financially benefitted. According to the authors of Independent Kenya (1982):

multi-national corporations give influential Kenyans the opportunity to draw high salaries, sit idly but profitably on boards of directors, own shares, and take part in lucrative sub-contracting ventures. In return, Kenyan directors and allies ensure that multi-nationals will be able to operate without undue government interference, and will enjoy a certain privileged, near monopoly status in their undertakings. Both sides reap great advantages from their association.⁶⁹

Ngugi's distaste for Kenya's post-independence era in which "the leaders of the anti-colonial struggle have become traitors to their peoples' cause and have sacrificed Africa on the altar of their own middle-class comfort"⁷⁰ finds expression, through different techniques, in A Grain of Wheat, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross.

In Barbados, George Lamming calls the black elite, who have assumed power and whose insensitivity to the plight of the common people is powerfully evoked in both In the Castle of My Skin and Season of Adventure, "the new black planters".⁷¹ He continues, "the power of the old white planters derived from what they owned. The power of the new black planters derived from what they know",⁷² referring to their educational achievement, which was instrumental in their attainment of political power after Barbados gained independence in 1966.

When the radical Errol Barrow, who led Barbados for ten years after independence was defeated in an election in 1976, the Barbados Labour Party led by Mr. Tom Adams became a staunch ally of the United States of America. His strong support in 1983 of the International Monetary Fund against the advice of opposition leaders belonging

to the Democratic Labour Party testified to the proclivity of independent Barbados to play into the neo-colonial net of the metropolitan powers.⁷³ For the ten years that Mr. Errol Barrow had been in power as President, his non-alignment stance and openly anti-American policies could have made Barbados free from external manipulation and control. But any attempt in that direction would have been difficult, for although Barbados had been declared independent, in reality, it was still economically dependant. David Lowenthal asserts that "although displaced from political power, whites still own most Barbadian sugar estates, rum distilleries, major business firms, and export and import agencies".⁷⁴

This phenomenon is not only limited to Barbados. Other West Indian islands such as Trinidad, Guyana and Jamaica have also become satellites of the West. According to David Lowenthal, land, plants, machinery and port facilities in the West Indies belong to European and American merchants, while the key export commodities were in the control of multi-national companies such as Tate and Lyle, Demba, Akan and Reynolds.⁷⁵ Media houses are owned and controlled by private individuals who have a stake in the economy (the Barbadian 'Advocate' and the Trinidad 'Guardian' are both owned by Mc. Eneaney-Alstons Conglomerate) and therefore ensured that their publications did not destabilize the status quo. The major Caribbean dailies, according to Catherine Sunshine generally "support capitalism and middle-class consumerism; they are anti-communist; and they rarely challenge the principle of United States hegemony in the region or the world. All the major papers supported the United States invasion of Grenada, even in Trinidad where the government opposed it".⁷⁶ It is in view of this that Lamming's use of the fictional nation of San Cristobal to refer in his anti-neo-colonial novels to Anglophone West Indian nations, who are only independent in name, becomes meaningful.

Thus, although Barbados and other West Indian islands had won political independence, like Kenya, they were yet to achieve economic freedom.

Hence David Lowenthal:

Independence for each island is really nothing more than a flag, an anthem, a diplomatic corps that gets rich and ever more pretentious, poverty, exploitation of the land by British and American interests, and governments so fatuous that they believe that true independence is the ability to bar occasional white reporter who says something the ruling class does not like.⁷⁷

Thus Lamming, a political writer whose fiction reflects the socio-political processes in the West Indies, is acutely concerned that the men who have taken over power are insensitive to the yearnings of the common people, as he illustrates in In the Castle of My Skin and Season of Adventure. He is also worried that these leaders are willing to enjoy the privileges of power and totally dispense with commitment to the people who elected them, as he demonstrates in Natives of My Person (1972). But it is not only Ngugi and Lamming who have responded in fiction to the trend of events after political independence in their nations. Several African and West Indian writers have attempted to convey their disenchantment with the conduct of the new men in power.

For instance, Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born (1968) reveals the contemporary condition of Ghana, which parallels that of many independent African countries, where independence has propelled a new set of leaders into the seats formerly occupied by the colonial masters. The new leaders are accused of being thoroughly corrupt and expropriating the fruits of independence. In the novel, Ayi Kwei Armah mostly uses scatological imagery of grime, stench and putrefaction to convey his disgust at the venality of the new leaders, represented by Koomson, whose mouth at one instance in the story is described as having the "stench of rotten menstrual blood".⁷⁸ But at times, he employs direct commentary to accuse

the new Ghanaian political elite of perpetrating a crime against the masses, as in the excerpt below:

How long will Africa be cursed with its leaders? There were men dying from the loss of hope, and others were finding gaudy ways to enjoy power they did not have. We were ready here for big and beautiful things, but what we had was our own black men hugging new paunches scrambling to ask the whiteman to welcome them on to our backs. These men who were to lead us out of despair, they came like men already grown fat and cynical with the eating of centuries of power they had never struggled for, old before they had even been born into power, and ready only for the grave.⁷⁹

The Senegalese Sembene Ousmane expresses his own disenchantment with the leadership of contemporary society not by revealing their moral atrophy, but by showing in Xala (1974) that neo-colonialism means, in dramatic terms, that the new elite are not in control of the ship of state. Soon after independence people:

had come together from different sectors of the business community to form the 'Businessmen's Group' in order to combat the invasion of foreign interests. It was their ambition to gain control of their country's economy. Their anxiety to constitute a social clan of their own had increased their combativity, tingeing it with xenophobia. Over the years they had managed - with some help from the politicians - to obtain a foothold in the wholesale trade, and to a lesser extent in the import and export field. They had become more ambitious and had tried to acquire a stake in the administration of the banks.⁸⁰

But Sembene Ousmane reveals through the character of El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye that although Senegal has achieved political independence, the middle-class business and political elite are powerless to run the affairs of the country. This message is conveyed metaphorically through Beye's inability to consummate his conjugal duties with his newly-wed wife, as a result of sexual impotence, a xala, as it is known in Wolof. Thus, in spite of independence, political and economic decisions have to be taken abroad on behalf of the new business elite, who are still psychologically dependent on Europe. This dependence is illustrated in the story by their compulsive need of foreign goods, such as veal cutlets, which they import from Paris and their reverence for the French language.

Like the ruling and business elite in Senegal, the new leaders in Uganda are also, in the view of Okot p' Bitek, culturally enslaved. Their cultural dependence is conveyed through Ocol, a copycat of European values who is unable to discern the richness of his cultural heritage. Using Lawino as mouthpiece, Okot p' Bitek further launches an attack on the political leadership of independent Uganda. Lawino tells us that she does not understand:

The meaning of Uhuru!
 I do not understand
 Why all the bitterness
 And the cruelty
 And the cowardice,
 The fear
 The deadly fear that
 Eat the hearts
 Of the political leaders! (pp. 174-5).

Politics in contemporary Uganda has been turned into an arena of conflict and violence, and the employment of fair or foul means to achieve one's end:

Someone said
 Independence falls like a bull buffalo
 And the hunters
 Rush to it with drawn knives
 For carving the carcass.
 And If your chest
 Is small, bony and weak
 They push you off,
 And If your knife is blunt
 You get the dung on your elbow,
 You come home empty-handed
 And the dogs bark at you! (p. 175).

Thus independence is seen by the elite as simply providing opportunity for them to amass wealth. Because of their greed, the elite are conceived as hunters and as mere opportunists who can resort to the use of their brawns to 'grab' as much as they can while they can from the national coffers.

Meja Mwangi, a Kenyan writer, who also comes from Ngugi's own ethnic group, does not directly attack the new power elite. Instead, he reveals the consequences of their misrule through the miserable condition of the young unemployed and other urban dwellers, who are

often driven into crime because the society has refused to offer them opportunities to utilize their talents.

Kill Me Quick (1973), his first novel about contemporary Kenya, centres on two young school-leavers, Maina and Meja, who are caught up in an extreme state of desperation and deprivation in a society which does not offer them a decent means to earn a living. As a result, they are forced into the hostile atmosphere of Nairobi city, at one time falling prey to labour exploitation from the wealthy, and at another, having to scrounge for meals in street-side rubbish bins when no odd job is at hand.

Going Down River Road (1976), his next novel about modern Kenya, is set in River Road, a sleazy part of Nairobi and a haven for prostitutes, criminals pimps and drunkards, and because life is not guided by any moral standards there is described by the author as a "bewildering human jungle".⁸¹ In an interview, Meja Mwangi describes the novel as one "about labourers in the city, how they live, their life".⁸² This statement hints at the life of deprivation, squalor and misery of the underprivileged class of urban dwellers, whose desperation drives them into a life of hard-drinking, as exemplified in the life of Ben, the central character, or that of crime, as illustrated in the case of Onesmus, a professional killer. In all this, an implicit attack is being made on the power elite who have shunned their responsibilities of making life better for the working-class and other underprivileged groups who populate Nairobi's shanty town.

What Meja Mwangi hides, another East African writer from Tanzania, Crispin Hauli, chooses to make explicit in his poem "The Song of the Common Man". It speaks of the social inequality existing between the new elite and their underprivileged counterparts, drawing attention to where the fault lies: with the new elite:

They drive me along,
 they do they do,
 These my brothers no longer brothers -
 Their hands are whips, along they drive me,
 No longer am I the same mother 's child...

They kick me along,
 they do they do,
 These my playmates no longer playmates -
 Their actions are fates, my life they decide,
 No longer am I the same free-born human.⁸³

As we argued earlier, several other West Indian writers have like Lamming also expressed their disenchantment with the new men in power following political independence. Lamming's concern that West Indian politicians were not doing what they promised the electorate became evident from his early days as a minor poet in Trinidad when he had observed an atmosphere in which "Corruption is keen",⁸⁴

While politicians posing incredible paunches
 Parading their magical and primitive power
 Fit the incompetent into jobs.⁸⁵

In Chapter Four, we shall see how Edward Brathwaite, a fellow Barbadian writer, reveals his disillusionment with the political leadership of the new elite who have not made life better for the "Ninety-five percent of my people" who are not only "black" but who are still "poor" as he shows in "Caliban".⁸⁶ Also in "Glass" Edward Brathwaite tells us:

Through corneas of glass i see my people
 black
 i see them homeless still and shift-
 less, slack
 and hungry white
 lipped, ray mouthed,
 beggar at the corners
 bugged, drugged,
 crying out to the enemy for bread.⁸⁷

Edward Brathwaite, a poet who is concerned about the plight of blacks in the diaspora and at home on the islands, addresses in "Wings of a Dove" the predicament in contemporary Jamaica of a member of the Rastafarian cult. He is portrayed as a social outcast, pushed to the fringes of the city and forced to battle it out for space with

mice. His temporary means of escape from the misery of life is through ganja the "wisdom weed"⁸⁸ which also "stabilizes [the] mind".⁸⁹ Under its influence the mice around him are suddenly transformed, their:

eyes, hot pumice
pieces, glowed into his room
like ruby, like rhinestone
and suddenly startled like
diamond. (p. 42)

Also an eye-opener, ganja propels "Brother Man the Rasta Man" (p. 42) to rebel against the social system that marginalizes and oppresses him. The rebellion against the system is appropriately couched and reflected in Jamaican nation language. It is both a social and linguistic rebellion - against the system as well as against the language in which its policies are encapsulated. At the point of rebelling against white and Jamaican middle-class domination, the Rasta man has achieved linguistic and cultural emancipation:

Down down
white
man, con
man, brown
man, down
down full
man, frown-
ing fat
man, frown-
ing fat
man, that
white black
man that
lives in
the town. (p. 43)

The switch from West Indian Standard English to nation language is maintained throughout the poem. It is through nation language that Rasta man is exhorted to rise against the system and spearhead the Garveyist back-to-Africa movement, a basic tenet of Rastafarianism:

Rise rise
locks-
man, Solo-
man wise
man, rise
rise rise
leh we
laugh

dem mock
 dem, stop
 dem an' go
 back back
 to the black
 man lan'
 back back
 to Af-
 rica. (p. 44)

The social and economic deprivation of Rasta man which enhanced his desire to 'return' to Africa would suggest that the Rastafari cult is not merely a religious movement. Inspired by the Bible and Emperor Haile Salassie (the Lion of Judah whom the Rastas consider as the returned Messiah who will save them from the oppression of Babylon, which is contemporary Jamaica) the movement "totally rejected everything of Jamaica's colonial heritage".⁹⁰ It is also opposed to the urban problems of unemployment, homelessness and the political corruption of the middle-class, which brought about the social evils which the Rastas deeply resent.

The social evils which Edward Brathwaite's Rasta man has had to contend with constitute the subject of Michael Smith's "Me Cyaan Believe It". In the poem, Michael Smith, a Jamaican dub-poet, vividly registers the poverty and degradation of the lower classes, which in his own view, are too acute to be credible.

Me seh me cyaan believe it
 me seh me cyaan believe it
 Room dem a rent
 me apply widin
 but as me go in
 cockroach rat an scorpion
 also come in.⁹¹

Michael Smith attributes the predicament of the deprived members of his society to the Jamaican power elite. As a class they are uncaring. That is why the poet and indeed the whole class that he represents have had to suffer:

One lickle bwoy come in blow im orn
 an me look pan im wid scorn
 an me realize ow me five bwoy picni
 was a victim of de trick
 dem call partisan politricks

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an me ban me belly
an me bawl
an me ban me belly
an me bawl. (p. 45).

The Trinidadian calypso singer 'The Mighty Sparrow' also expresses his own disillusionment with the conduct of the men in power whose authoritarianism, arrogance and misuse of power he catalogues in 'Get to Hell Outa Here', a composition to which we shall also refer in Chapter Six. The song is based on a public outcry in Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad, following the decision of Prime Minister Eric Williams to reinstate an erring Cabinet Minister whom he had earlier publicly fired:

I am going to do what I feel to do
And I couldn't care less who vex or who get blue
And If you want to test how ah strong in an election
Leh we bet some money, ah giving odds ten to one
I control all the money that pass through this country
And they envy me for my African Safari
I am politically strong, I am the weight of town
Don't argue with me, you can't beat me in John John. ⁹²

Coming to the 'art' dimension, it is worth recalling our earlier assertion that the novels will be assessed from the point of view of whether they conform with the requirements of the indigenous aesthetic standards propounded by Chinweizu and Edward Brathwaite.

We have earlier argued that Ngugi's early novels belong to the early stage of his career as a political writer both because his political ideas had not yet been fully formed and because as an early writer his Christian sensibility seriously impaired his political vision. These novels also belong to the neophyte stage of his vocation as an artist. The separation between 'politics' and 'art' needs to be made because it is possible to write a good political novel (one which is artistically sound) as well as a bad political novel. Moreover, we fully share Kolawole Ogungbesan's argument in "Simple Novels and Simplistic Criticism" (1979) that "a true critic is never content with the simple enjoyment of a book, but must follow it up with a serious analysis of its artistry".⁹³

In support of the point that Ngugi started as an apprentice artist, it can be argued that although The River Between is meant as a novel about cultural nationalism we see very few aspects of the Gikuyu cultural tradition at play in the novel. This fails to conform with Chinweizu's recommendation that African historical novels should convey the flavour of African life in the place and period of their setting. This also applies to Weep Not, Child, which although set in the past and mostly around Gikuyu squatters and veteran First and Second World War fighters, neither utilizes aspects of the Gikuyu tradition nor attempts to capture the flavour of Gikuyu speech in the language of characters.

Section One will reveal that in contrast with Ngugi's novels both In the Castle of My Skin and Of Age and Innocence satisfy the requirement of Edward Brathwaite's call that West Indian novels should be experimental and make their work reflect the West Indian community.

One of the experimental characteristics of In the Castle of My Skin, which will be discussed in Chapter One, is the use of chorus, a technique borrowed from drama by Lamming and adapted in the novel to allow the various sections of the West Indian community depicted in the story comment on their experiences. In "Jazz and the West Indian Novel - III" (1968) Edward Brathwaite notes that Roger Mais's Brother Man (1954) also utilizes this technique, with which the novel opens:

The tongues in the lane clack-clack almost continuously, going up and down the full scale of human emotions, human folly, ignorance, suffering, viciousness, magnanimity, weakness, greatness, littleness, insufficiency, frailty, strength. They clack on street corners, where the ice-shop hangs out a triangular red flag, under the shadow of overhanging buildings that lean precariously, teetering across the dingy chasm of the narrow lane...⁹⁴

Although Lamming's and Roger Mais's use of the chorus differ, the effect is the same: to give the reader a dense portrait of the community under analysis as well as provide opportunity for members

of the community to comment on their lives.

Another characteristic which qualifies In the Castle of My Skin as experimental is the use of 'zoning-in' technique, the oscillation from the individual to the communal perspective and back. The Trinidadian Samuel Selvon's A Brighter Sun (1952) also utilizes this technique with chapters beginning from a public and then moving to the private dimension, at one point dwelling on the Trinidadian society and at another concentrating on the exploration of Tiger's consciousness. In each of these cases the use of the technique was not accidental. The chapters using the communal perspective aim to show the importance of West Indian society and its communal values, while those which have an individual perspective are meant to draw attention to the importance of the individual within that general pattern. While the emphasis on communality in the West Indies can be traced back to the essentially communalistic nature of Africa and India, the importance attached to individualism can be linked with the European ancestry of the region.

Chapter Two will argue that Of Age and Innocence is more technically competent than Weep Not, Child. As opposed to Ngugi's novel whose language does not reflect the Gikuyu cultural tradition, in Of Age and Innocence, Lamming heeds the call of Edward Brathwaite to West Indian writers to revitalize the local tradition and utilize it in fiction. In "Timehri" (1970) Edward Brathwaite maintains that:

In the Caribbean, whether it be African or Amerindian, the recognition of an ancestral relationship with the folk or aboriginal culture involves the artist and participant in a journey into the past and hinterland which is at the same time a movement of possession we become ourselves, truly our own creators, discovering word for object, image for the Word.⁹⁵

The Chapter will conclude that Lamming, by relating the legend of the Tribe Boys and the Bandit Kings (which recalls the attempt by the Arawak Indians to resist subjugation from Europeans) to the modern West Indian struggle for freedom, uses the rich cultural heritage

of the region to address a present problem: political nationalism of West Indians as they attempt to shake themselves free from the colonial tutelage.

In the first part of Section Three, which will deal with the artistic influence of Lamming on Ngugi, it will be argued that the success of In the Castle of My Skin and A Grain of Wheat as political novels can be attributed to the authors' employment of carefully crafted techniques. Ngugi depended on those he had borrowed from Joseph Conrad and from Lamming, and those he fashioned out himself. Lamming depended on the rich storehouse of the West Indian folk culture and the influence of James Joyce's first novel, which had strongly influenced him.⁹⁶

Lamming also depended on the West Indian folk culture, which was originally African, to write Season of Adventure, which is based on the Haitian voodoo religious ceremony. The second part of the chapter will show how Lamming creatively deploys this aspect of the West Indian past in fiction to 'shock' his alienated middle-class characters into a recognition of their past. The chapter will also show how in Season of Adventure, indeed in the majority of his novels, Lamming attempts an artistic 'homecoming'. This is illustrated by his growing reliance on the cultural symbols of his black heritage and his detachment from some western institutions and values.

Both novelists, in their works which will be discussed in Chapter Five are engaged in fictional experimentation: a consistent use of aspects of the oral tradition in order to communicate with an audience. It is with Devil on the Cross that Ngugi for the first time directs

his fiction at a popular audience. This necessitated a technical revolution involving, as we shall see in the chapter, the use in saturating quantities of aspects of the African and Gikuyu orature, such as story-telling, proverbs, songs, praise-epithets, intermingling between human and supernatural beings and parables. Ngugi's story is not eccentric. It belongs to a long tradition of African writing, which generously depends on African orature and its narrative techniques. Both D.T. Niane's Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali (1960) and Amos Tutuola's The Palm Wine Drinkard (1953) belong to this category as our discussion of their affinity with Ngugi's Devil on the Cross will show in Chapter Five.

Although not a work of conscious experimentation, Amos Tutuola's The Palm Wine Drinkard bears resemblance with Ngugi's Devil on the Cross. It is one of Tutuola's stories which Chinweizu claims "must be accepted as [a] legitimate African novel..."⁹⁷ presumably because it has, like Devil on the Cross, as we saw, also generously utilized aspects of the African orature. Both Tutuola's story and Ngugi's can pass as works of 'legitimate' African literature, even though the former was written in a highly idiosyncratic Tutuolan version of the English language.

But for what Chinweizu calls a genuinely liberated African literature which Devil on the Cross is and The Palm Wine Drinkard is not, one has to turn to either D.T. Niane's Sundiata: an Epic of Old Mali, a translation from Malinke, or to D.O. Fagunwa's Yoruba story translated into English in 1968 by Wole Soyinka as The Forest of a Thousand Daemons. Since we shall examine the former in Chapter Five, we shall here concentrate only on D.O. Fagunwa's story.

Like Ngugi's story it not only uses an African language. It also utilizes aspects of the African orature such as proverbs, praise-epithets, supernatural beings and parables. The story consists of a series of parables narrated by Iragbeje, who starts his series

with a tale about the proper upbringing of children, an important subject, "for it is the egg which becomes the cock, the child is tomorrow's father".⁹⁸ Proverbs also exist in abundance in the story and are mostly used to embellish statements. When a local chief asks Kako to secure from Mt. Langbodo an unnamed object, which would enable his domain to have "abundance of peace and well-being" and its fame to "resound to every corner upon earth" (p. 72) he responds with a proverb, "Wherever it pleases the wind even there does he direct the forest tops; the slave goes simply where his owner orders him - wherever you wish to send me, do so, I must go" (p. 71). When Kako-who-Wields-a-Leopard-Club is asked to surrender his club with which he killed a leopard as a boy of twelve, he says that "The shell never deserts the snail, wherever I go, my club must keep me company". (p. 89) Earlier in the story when Akara-Ogun is in combat with Agbako, "the sixteen-eyed dewild" (p. 22) D.O. Fagunwa alerts us to the interaction between human and supernatural beings, an aspect of the African orature found in the Yoruba society. When it dawns on Agbako that he might be defeated, he summons other creatures of the Forest of Irunmale "the ghommids... the birds... the animals" (p. 25) to come to his rescue.

Devil on the Cross, which uses an African language and aspects of the Gikuyu orature belongs to the third stage of Ngugi's artistic vocation. It represents an experimental breakthrough which combines the modern with the traditional to make a scathing anti-capitalist comment that is aimed at a mass audience.

The chapter will see In the Castle of My Skin, like it will do Devil on the Cross, as an anti-capitalist novel. It will also examine its use of aspects of the oral tradition such as story-telling, proverbs and the calypso which Lamming uses to communicate with the culturally alienated West Indian middle-class who might find them psychologically therapeutic. We will also discuss its use of the Barbadian nation language whose usage in literature Edward Brathwaite

claims is one way through which the West Indian writer can reach the ordinary people.⁹⁹ Notwithstanding Lamming's use of nation language, it is not possible for him to communicate with a mass audience because of his use of the novel form which is both complex and is in print.

Since it is not only mass illiteracy but also the use of the novel form that prevents In the Castle of My Skin from getting to the local audience, it can be argued that If a West Indian writer wants to write for and communicate with that audience, it is necessary for him to use not only a popular linguistic medium and other aspects of the oral culture. It is also necessary to use a form appropriate to an unlettered audience.

A category of West Indian writers who utilize both nation language and the verbal lore and therefore succeed in cultivating an easy rapport with the ordinary people are 'performance poets', who recite their poems to musical accompaniment. Their desire to maintain a communication link with the masses is further underscored by their role as artistes. Hinting at their role as performers, Mervyn Morris has written that, "Predominantly they write for the ear, and they crave opportunities to perform before vast audiences and to market their work on records".¹⁰⁰

The Jamaican Louise Bennett is one of the performance poets whose concern with the life of the ordinary people, especially rural women, qualifies her as a 'people's poet'. In one of her poems dealing with litigation between two women, the poet adopts a conversational style. The poem, entitled "House o'Law" is about a court case between Miss Milly and Miss Jane.

Me jus a - come from court-house, me
 Kean stop, me deh pon hase;
 Me ongle call fe tell yuh sey
 Miss Milly win de case.¹⁰¹

Following her testimony Miss Milly "put 'pit a her y 'eye and

start/Form cry" (p. 27). This provoked an angry response from her opponent who accuses her of pretence and duplicity. Milly's trick wins her immediate sympathy. Coupled with the hilarity of her testimony ("De court-house ketch a fire, even /De judge had fe laugh/ When him sey "Guilty or not Guilty?" / Hear Milly - "half and half" (p. 27). Milly's trick wins her the admiration of the whole court. The judge acquits her while her opponent is charged for contempt of court and asked to pay "two pounds or [endure] 'Tirty days hard layba" (p. 27).

Beneath the surface humour, the dominating concern of the poem must surely be an attack on a system of law that can so easily be deceived by the wiles of a confident trickster. The Jamaican audience can easily locate Miss Milly's trick within a known tradition since her action bears a striking resemblance to certain Anansi folktales in which the spider displays cunning in order to take advantage of his bigger but less intellectually endowed peers.

Chapter Six will look at Petals of Blood as belonging to the third stage of Ngugi's development as a political novelist and Natives of My Person as the highpoint of Lamming's intensifying political engagement. We shall reveal that Ngugi's Petals of Blood conforms with the prescription of Ernst Fischer, a Marxist theoretician who argues that a socialist artist should adopt "the historical viewpoint of the working class".¹⁰² This criterion is also met by God's Bits of Wood (1960), a Senegalese proletarian novel in which Sembene Ousmane like Ngugi advocates a change of community for the benefit of the oppressed. In his novel, Sembene Ousmane not only challenges traditional assumptions which must give way for the creation of a new socialist society, as we shall see in Chapter Six. He also reveals the symbolic demise of the old community through the death of Old Niakoro and the new roles which women and workers, whose initiatives have traditionally

been under-utilized, must play in the new society.

The chapter will also reveal that Ngugi is in agreement with and illustrates the view that a socialist artist should borrow from any source that will contribute to the creation of a rich and complex picture of society. He refers in Petals of Blood to organized religion, but only to undermine it since it is seen within the context of an emerging socialist dispensation. He uses the detective thriller form but only to subvert our expectations and introduce us to the social and political life of Kenya, making the murder investigation in Petals of Blood less significant as the story unfolds. In all this, Ngugi seems to share Ernst Fischer's contention that:

It is not a question of imitating any style but of welding the most diverse elements of form and expression into the body of art, so that it may become one with an infinitely differentiated reality.¹⁰³

Natives of My Person, which Chapter Six will compare with Ngugi's Marxist novel, will be seen not only as the highpoint of Lamming's political engagement, but also as a continuation of his attempt to develop a new art appropriate to a society which had been subjected to a long period of colonization and slavery. The chapter will show how Lamming uses an allegory based on a 16th century European slaving expedition to tell a modern story of the middle-class exploitation of the West Indian masses. It will also show that, it is largely due to the protracted era of colonial domination of the West Indies by Europe that an experimental political novelist, like Lamming, believes that the West Indian will as a matter of priority need a re-orientation of consciousness. Our comparison of Lamming with Wilson Harris, an experimental West Indian novelist from Guyana, will show how both of them attach importance to an internal change, which West Indians need before they can attend to changes in the structure of society.

Although their perspectives differ, both Wilson Harris and Lamming

are at one in calling for a new West Indian aesthetic. Like Lamming who illustrates in all his novels that West Indian fiction should reflect the peculiarities and be tailored to the needs of society, Wilson Harris demonstrates in his experimental fiction that the artistic means of assessing European society are not applicable to the West Indies. Wilson Harris had argued in "Tradition and the West Indian Novel" (1964) that the attachment of West Indian writers to the conventional novel of "persuasion" was inhibiting the creation of an aesthetic appropriate to an evolving society like that of the West Indies.¹⁰⁴

Our discussion of The Palace of the Peacock (1960) in Chapter Six will show the extent of Wilson Harris's experiment in a novel which dispenses with fixed characterization and logical sequence in narration. A reader is thus forced to suspend his disbelief when he recognizes that Mariella, a woman at the beginning of the story, becomes the destination of the voyage engaged by the multi-racial crew in the story. He is also compelled to engage in establishing a connection between disjointed symbols and imagery.

The novel demonstrates Wilson Harris's view of the primacy for the West Indian of a re-orientation of consciousness when it seeks to challenge old assumptions and concepts underpinning West Indian history. History in the region has traditionally seen the colonial enterprise in terms of the conqueror and the conquered. The novel, accordingly, subverts this conventional view by asking us to see Donne both as a victim of cruelty when he is shot by Mariella at the beginning of the story as well as being at the head of a voyage which seeks to conquer the folk inhabitants of the interior. A change in the consciousness of the West Indian, will in the view of both Wilson Harris and Lamming, lay the foundation for a change in society at large.

The thesis will start by looking at The River Between and In the Castle of My Skin as exercises in cultural nationalism in which Ngugi was at a neophyte stage of his career as a political writer and as an artist in contrast with Lamming who was from the very beginning already a skilled craftsman with fully-formed political ideas.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

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102. Ernst Fischer, The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach, p. 110.
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104. In "Tradition and the West Indian Novel" Wilson Harris describes the conventional 19th century novel as one of 'persuasion' which rests

"on grounds of apparent common sense: a certain 'selection' is made by the writer, the selection of items, manners, uniform conversation, historical situations, etc, all leading themselves to build and present an individual span of life which yields self-conscious and fashionable morality. The tension which emerges is the tension of individuals - great or small - on an accepted plane of society we are persuaded has an inevitable existence.

See Tradition, the Writer and Society: Critical Essays (London, New Beacon 1967), p. 29. In the same essay he advocates the use of experimental fiction which is more appropriate to the West Indian society.

SECTION ONE: THE WRITER AS A CULTURAL AND POLITICAL NATIONALIST

The first two chapters will examine the early novels of the two writers in pairs: The River Between (1965) and In the Castle of My Skin (1953) in Chapter One, Weep Not, Child (1964) and Of Age and Innocence (1958) in Chapter Two. They will do so from the point of view of cultural and early political nationalism, whereby the authors have dealt with the cultural and political histories of their two societies under a colonial dispensation and prior to their achievement of political independence.

Ngugi found his role as a cultural nationalist necessary because, in his own words, "the African... found his image of the past distorted. His colonial middle-class education and brain-washing told him that he had no history".¹ His ultimate aim, as we hope to show, is the political emancipation of his society, an end similar to that of Lamming who speaks about his duty, as a writer, to address the cultural past of his community:

...because this urgency to discover who and what they are demands that the past be restored to its proper perspective, that it be put on their list of possessions. They want to be able to say without regret or shame or guilt or inordinate pride: "This belongs to me. What I am comes out of this."²

Thus both writers conform with Chinweizu's and Edward Brathwaite's call for a socially and politically useful literature. But, as we saw in the Introduction, the political nature of their writing in these novels was in its early phase of cultural and political nationalism, the stage at which they are, in the first pair of novels, concerned with the recreation of their pasts which the colonial experience sought to distort and obliterate. In the second pair, they are concerned with political unity and multi-racial reconciliation in their nations, as they approached independence.

The aim of the two chapters in this section is thus to reveal the kinship between the two writers in this role of cultural and early political nationalism. Inevitably, there will be differences in the

approach to this issue, which can be accounted for not only because of the different socio-political milieus within which the writers had to operate. But also because, as we saw in the Introduction, Lamming was a more accomplished political writer than Ngugi, whose novels belong to the neophyte stage of his vocation as a political writer and as an artist.

CHAPTER ONE

THE WRITER AND COLONIALISM

In the novels under examination in this chapter, both writers acknowledge the existence in both Kenya and Barbados of traditional communities which shared common myths, jokes and a way of life. In spite of tensions and variations in beliefs, which are inevitable even in the most homogeneous groups, these communities had been relatively stable and closely-knit. However disruption sets in as soon as alien values and modes of life, which conflicted with traditional values were introduced into them. But a distinction between the two societies must be made in order to situate the examination by the two writers of each case in its cultural and historical context.

The Introductory chapter has revealed that although Kenya and Barbados shared a colonial past, the experiences of both countries under English domination was different. When Europeans first arrived in Kenya in 1895, they encountered a rich traditional culture which they then systematically began to replace with the Western cultural tradition. On the other hand, the indigenous culture of Barbados had been entirely obliterated with the elimination of the original Arawak and Carib inhabitants in the sixteenth century. Therefore, the cultural tradition forged by the slaves brought to Barbados following the arrival of the English there in 1627, was a conglomeration of the bohemian life-styles of the white settlers and survivals of the African culture. Lamming asserts in "The West Indian People" that:

The West Indies, whether French or British, did not evolve out of /the/ system /of colonialism/ nor did they degenerate into /it/. They were actually created by it. And upon the basis of this creation, a structure of education and a whole kingdom of values were founded.³

Lamming's observation is true that the West Indies was created by colonialism. But their culture is not purely Western. It is hybrid.

It has undergone mutations and cross-fertilization before assuming its current but ever-changing form. Referring to its hybrid and unsettled nature, Edward Brathwaite, a Barbadian poet, views the West Indian culture as:

some-
thing torn⁴

but also "new";⁵ such as the society which members of Creighton village in their own corner of the West Indies have created. Therefore, the impact of disruption occasioned by the introduction of alien values was felt by both communities and acknowledged by both writers.

Ngugi's The River Between revolves around the question of division between two ridges, Kameno and Makuyu. The author portrays a relatively peaceful pre-colonial community, self-contained and insulated:

unaffected by turbulent forces outside. These ancient hills and ridges were at the heart and soul of the land. They kept the tribes' magic and rituals, pure and intact. Their people rejoiced together, giving one another the blood and warmth of their laughter. Sometimes they fought. But that was amongst themselves and no outsider need ever know. To the stranger they kept dumb, breathing none of the secrets of which they were the guardians. Kagutui ka Mucii gatihakagwo Ageni; the oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers.⁶ (the first emphasis is mine, the second is Ngugi's).

The fact that members of the insulated community sometimes fought means that the inter-ridge conflict predates colonialism, an accurate reflection of Gikuyu history recorded by Jeremy Murray-Brown in Kenyatta (1972). The author of the foregoing book hints at the "intense local rivalries of the Kikuyu, ridge against ridge, clan against clan"⁷ before the first European set his foot in Kenya. This rivalry is highlighted in the novel not only through the title, but also through the imagery of the two ridges facing each other like "two rivals ready to come to blows in a life and death struggle for the leadership of this isolated region" (p. 1).

The two 'antagonists' are joined by 'Honia' river, which means "cure, or bring-back to life. It was the soul of Kameno. It joined them. And men, cattle, wild beasts and trees, were all united by this life-stream." (p. 1)

A paradox lies in the symbolism of a river that serves as a common source of life to both ridges, even as it creates a physical gulf between them.⁸ This link signifies that notwithstanding the antagonism, there is a potential for reconciliation between the two ridges who after all, as we saw, share a common cultural heritage and a way of life, and are only divided by a tussle for leadership of the region.

This optimism, which surfaces through an adroit use of the river symbolism, is not out of place in a novel in which Ngugi is primarily concerned with the reconciliation of the two Gikuyu factions, whose conflict is now escalated by the advent of colonialism. Waiyaki, whose leadership qualities are revealed through his intervention to stop the fight between Kamau and Kinuthia early in the story, is saddled with the task of reconciling the two factions. Thus, his role as 'saviour' is one of the main strands of a story, which dwells on the first phase of the imperialist occupation of Kenya, showing the disruption of Gikuyu society as a result of the imposition of an alien system of values.

The most salient aspects of this system of values are Western education and Christianity. Through the former, the colonial administration tampered not only with the cultural unity of Gikuyuland, it also destabilized the psychic unity of the individual citizens who were exposed to it. In A History of the Kikuyu 1500 - 1900 (1973) Godfrey Muriuki outlines the centrality of traditional education existing in Gikuyuland before the missionaries brought theirs. He writes:

Being well-acquainted with traditional education was essential, for a departure from the accepted norms of deportment was considered a serious offence, because it brought shame to the

family. And since individual merit and achievement were regarded to be the criteria for leadership, no individual would have wished to remain ignorant of the forces which held the society together.⁹ (my emphasis).

Jomo Kenyatta, in his study of Gikuyu customs, points out how traditional education differs from the Western system of education:

Whereas in Europe and America schools provide courses in moral instruction or citizenship, the African is taught how to behave to father or mother, grandparents, and to other members of the kinship group, paternal and maternal. Whereas European schools in Africa provide training in nature study, woodwork, animal husbandry etc. much of which is taught by general class instruction, the tribal method is to teach the names of particular plants, the use of different trees, or the management of particular herd of sheep and goats or cattle.¹⁰

In The River Between, Ngugi acknowledges the existence in colonial Kenya of two systems of education: traditional and Western. He also shows, in agreement with Godfrey Muriuki and Jomo Kenyatta, that traditional education is an essential component of moral and intellectual training that keeps the individual citizen within the traditional framework. With this conviction in mind, Ngugi juxtaposes the two systems in The River Between to show that while one keeps the individual firmly in touch with his cultural environment, the other alienates him from it.

In the fourth and fifth chapters of the novel, Ngugi unveils the elaborate procedure of traditional education to which Waiyaki is introduced by his father. Chege enlightens Waiyaki about topics ranging from the Gikuyu creation myth (p. 17) to Mugo wa Kibiro's prophecy about the arrival of the whiteman and the necessity for the people to prepare for a formidable struggle because "you could not cut the butterflies with a panga" (p. 20).

In compliance with Mugo's oracular directive that Gikuyus should acquire Western education in order to more effectively challenge the whiteman, Chege sends his son to school. He, however, cautions him not to follow the Whiteman's "vices", (p. 119) erroneously assuming that Western education can be separated from Western culture.

It must be stressed that Ngugi's portrayal of Chege's conviction that Western education could assist Kenyans to fight imperialism was a reflection of what the Gikuyus thought about it in the 1930's.¹¹ Ngugi, who questions this view in the novel, asks us at this stage to consider what colonial education inculcates in the native Kenyan. Does it assist him in coming to terms with the realities of his society or does it alienate him from them?

Ngugi shows that one of the effects of Western education on Waiyaki is his estrangement from the Gikuyu cultural tradition. During the initiation ceremony, Waiyaki discovers that his education has so cut him off from his cultural values that he has now lost his enthusiasm for the circumcision ritual dances, "He did not like the dances very much, mainly because he could not do them as well as his fellow candidates, who had been practising them for years" (p. 39). Waiyaki's dampened enthusiasm is attributed to his "absence from the hills" (p. 39). This

had kept him out of touch with those things which most mattered to the tribe. Besides, however much he resisted it, he could not help gathering and absorbing ideas and notions that prevented him from responding spontaneously to these dances and celebrations. (p. 39).

On joining the dances later, "his body moved and his mouth responded to the words, but his soul did not fully participate" (p. 42). And after a half-hearted participation, the consciousness that he had violated the ethical code of behaviour which he acquired in Siriana nags at him, "he found himself wandering alone, blindly from the crowd, wrestling with a hollowness inside his stomach. He felt hurt. He had laid himself naked, exposed himself for all the eyes to see" (p. 43).

Waiyaki's 'initiation' into European values not only estranged him from Gikuyu ways of life as a youth. Ngugi takes a further swipe at colonial education by showing how the indoctrination to which an individual has been exposed as a child negatively affects his sense of judgement as an adult.

Accordingly, it is held responsible for misguiding Waiyaki when he later assumes the role of leadership in the community. In Siriana, Waiyaki had come under the powerful influence of Mr. Livingstone. In his belief that education must be separated from politics, Mr. Livingstone resembles the headmaster of Alliance High School, Edward Carey Francis who:

had never minced words about politics. He hated it through and through. A decent person had no business spending his whole life talking politics and haranguing people. Those of his boys who showed any great abilities in debate and rhetoric, he discouraged from translating that ability to active politicking. He told one boy, "I expect great things from you, If you keep away from politics and politicians".¹²

Waiyaki's notion that education and politics must not mix results in his resignation from the central political organization, the Kiama, in order to build more schools. (p. 101) His resignation, as we shall note later, ultimately paves the way for his political rivals to manipulate the organization and plan his execution. Waiyaki's political blunder, which leads to his tragedy, Ngugi shows, owes its origin to a system of education which implants values that are antithetical to the priorities of a society seeking political emancipation.

At the time when he wrote The River Between, Ngugi, a believer in Christianity, was apparently being pulled in two opposing directions. On the one hand, in a novel which centres on reconciliation, Ngugi is overcome by the desire to explore the possibility of merging Christianity with aspects of the Gikuyu tradition, not only because this trend was popular in the Kenya of 1920's but also as an expression of his desire for unity between Kameno and Makuyu. Waiyaki who is himself a Christian and respects the tradition by going through circumcision, enjoys Ngugi's endorsement in his belief that:

not all the ways of the whiteman were bad. Even his religion was not essentially bad. Some good, some truth shone through it. But the religion, the faith, needed washing, cleaning away all the dirt, leaving only the eternal. And that eternal that was the truth had to be reconciled to the traditions of the people. (p. 141)

This desire finds symbolic expression in Muthoni who attempts to reconcile Christianity with tradition as a way of achieving personal fulfilment . During the dances preceding the circumcision ritual she tells Waiyaki that: "No one will understand. I say I am a Christian and my father and mother have followed the new faith. I have not run away from that. But I also want to be initiated into the ways of the tribe". (p. 43)

Although Muthoni dies in the process of reconciling the two ways, the attempt is seen as a source of fulfilment for her because she had combined an important aspect of tradition - circumcision - with Christianity. Referring to this synthesis prior to her death, she asks Waiyaki to "tell Nyambura I see Jesus. I am a woman, beautiful in the tribe..." (p. 53). In Waiyaki's view, she "had tried to find salvation for herself, a surer ground on which to stand" (p. 106).

Notwithstanding the fact that her death signifies the difficulty of achieving a synthesis between tradition and Christianity, it is not pointless on a personal level. Her spirit will not wander lonely in the hereafter. Since Muthoni has fulfilled a traditional requirement by undergoing circumcision she will be amicably integrated into the world of the ancestral spirits. In this connection, Robert Serumaga argues that, "The girl, therefore, is dead but not destroyed. By trying to embody these experiences, she ceases to exist as a human being; but she dies knowing she has succeeded".¹³

In spite of its problematic nature, acknowledged through Muthoni's death, Ngugi was, as we saw, primarily tempted to explore the possibility of merging tradition with Christianity as an expression of his hope for Gikuyu tribal unity and political emancipation. When he studied the Bible, he would have discovered that positive values such as love, brotherhood and a call for peace enjoined by the Christian faith could serve the needs of a community experiencing internal dissension now aggravated by colonialism.¹⁴

He would also have realized that the struggle of the Jews for deliverance from Egyptian domination paralleled the attempt of the Gikuyu people to escape from the clutches of British colonialism.

On the other hand, as a cultural nationalist, Ngugi was obsessed by a desire to condemn a religion whose champions attempted to wipe out aspects of the cultural tradition he cherished. Its negative impact is shown in the destabilization it caused in the society which is now divided into two factions, thanks to the missionary activities of Mr. Livingstone, who insists on wiping out traditional customs, which some Gikuyus were not ready to forsake. On witnessing the dances on the eve of circumcision, Mr. Livingstone, a missionary, "was horrified beyond measure. The songs he heard and the actions he saw convinced him beyond any doubt that these people were immoral through and through". (p. 56) He becomes convinced that "Circumcision had to be rooted out. If there was to be any hope of salvation for these people". (p. 56) This move by the missionaries, as we shall see later, historically led to the founding of Independent School movements and break-away churches where Gikuyus could gain education and worship the Christian God without forsaking their customs. This, as we shall see, also had a positive impact on the Gikuyus as it opened their eyes to the fact that the missionaries and the colonial government were working hand in hand to wipe away local customs and replace them with Western values.

Nevertheless, a total acceptance of Christianity such as Joshua's is seen in The River Between as spiritually enervating since it cuts off the individual from his roots leaving him in a cultural void. With Joshua in mind, Waiyaki observed that:

A people's traditions could not be swept away overnight. That way lay disintegration. Such a tribe would have no roots, for a people's roots were in their traditions going back to the past, the very beginning, Gikuyu and Mumbi. A religion that took no count of people's way of life, a religion that did not recognize spots of beauty and truths in their way of life, was useless. It would not satisfy. It would not be a living experience, a source of life and vitality. It would only maim a man's soul, making him fanatically cling to whatever promised security, otherwise he would be lost". (p. 141)

(p. 141) (my emphasis).

The negative impact of the religion is also dramatized through the divisive effect it has had on Joshua's household. The faith to which he clings fanatically does not provide fulfilment to Nyambura, a loyal daughter who later rebels from the fortress that is Joshua's household. The atmosphere of his house where "religious uniformity... was binding" (p. 30) is stifling. Shortly before her defection, she ponders:

The religion of love was in the heart. The other was Joshua's own religion, which ran counter to her spirit and violated love. If the faith of Joshua and Livingstone came to separate, why, it was not good. If it came to stand between a father and his daughter so that her death did not move him, then it was inhuman. She wanted the other. The other that held together, the other that united. (p. 134)

As we earlier observed, both writers are concerned to show the disruptive influence of an alien way of life on the members of his community. Like Ngugi who portrays the disruptive impact of colonialism on Gikuyu culture, Lamming too shows how external influences disturb the normal flow of life, causing disruption in Creighton village.

The conversation between the boys in the third chapter of In the Castle of My Skin can appropriately be called 'The Way We Live' as it offers the picture of a community whose members, notwithstanding their divided loyalties and beliefs, were relatively contented until values which conflicted with the established pattern of life are introduced into the village.

This disruption is exemplified in the experience of Bambi, who lived with Bots and Bambina "real splendid together" (p. 134) until he is forced into a monogamy by a German missionary trying to impose her own set of values on the village.

The impact of marriage on Bambi is disastrous: he starts to drink and resorts to assaulting the two women, before dying from

a heart failure. According to Kenneth Ramchand in An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature (1976) Bambi's mental disintegration and his consequent death is "presumably intended to make us wonder about the appropriateness of marriage and monogamy in the ex-slave society".¹⁵ In a similar vein, Boy Blue attributes the tragedy to

the thing they call marriage. Like Bambi an' Bots an' Bambina. They live alright for only God knows how long, an' as soon as they get marry to the other, it don't matter who marry who, as soon as they is that marryin' business, everythin' break up, break right up"¹⁶ (my emphasis).

The villagers see the outcome of marriage on Bambi as a serious threat to communal stability. They:

sing like it wus the end of the world, 'cause they wus really frighten with what they see happen between Bots an' Bambina an' after the flood which they had some time back that nearly drown so many of us they start to feel that the Lord Almighty had really put His hand down. (p. 138)

Marriage as an institution, Trumper maintains, is alien to his community, it does not belong in Creighton village:

...it seem it don't belong to certain people, meanin' a lot of people put together, like the village for instance. Except for those who live sort of different, who live in the village but don't really sort of belong... (p. 142).

Those who do not really 'sort of belong' include the German missionary. An outsider, she cannot appreciate the fact that the presence of single-parent families such as Miss Foster (who has six children "three by a butcher, two by a baker and one whose father had never been mentioned" (p. 24) is customary in a village where most inhabitants would consider as normal, the question by a boy in chapter two: "How many fathers you got in the family?" (p. 47). The existence of one-parent and multi-father situation in the village goes back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when owing to the non-availability of white women on the island, female slaves served as concubines and mistresses to the white colonists.¹⁷

Sexual freedom was not limited to the masters. It also extended to the slaves, who were not allowed to marry, because they were considered as saleable property, but could have sexual relations with women belonging to the same estate.¹⁸ Although a minority of the Barbadian population were legally married, most of the white colonists and the African slaves discarded the elaborate procedures governing marriage and sexual relations that they had been used to in their former societies. Consequently concepts such as 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' were not applied to the offspring from such affairs because these terms had no relevance in the context of slavery.

F.A. Hoyos argues that:

The high level of illegitimacy in Barbados was accepted by common people as a fact that called for neither comment nor criticism among themselves. The desire to beget children was widespread among women whose overriding aim was to prove their fertility and this was accompanied by an equally marked desire to accept the rearing of their offspring. Whether these children were born within or outside of wedlock did not really seem to matter.²⁰

A reference to Brother Man (1954) by the Jamaican Roger Mais will serve to illustrate the acceptability of single-parenthood among the Afro-Caribbean communities in the West Indies. Roger Mais who writes about the largely black population of a Kingston backstreet has one of his characters, Minette in Brother Man comment on the normality of married couples living together and producing children. Although she does not share the bed of Bra Man, with whom she maintains a 'spiritual' union, she believes "there was nothing at all the matter with that; men and women lived like that all over the place, in the country and in the city alike. It didn't matter the least, it was nothing".²¹ As we earlier noted, this is the type of situation which Lamming exemplifies in Bambi's relationship with the two ladies, an arrangement which descendants of Afro-Caribbean slaves in the West Indies find perfectly normal. From the German's conversation with Bambi below, it is clear that the two people are operating at totally disparate cultural wavelengths,

each person guided in his thinking by the values of his own society:

Bambi by those of Barbados, and the lady, by those of Western Europe:

She got hold of Bambi an' persuade him to get marry, an' he take it into his head to do so. He had to choose, jus' like Jon an' Jen an' Susie. But he din't have no trouble with either. What wus on his min' wus whether he should do it at all. The white missis tell him yes, he should, 'cause it wus better to live in one mortal sin than two... an' If they had to go for a job... it would be much easier If the child had a name. Bambi tell her she make him laugh, 'cause all his children had names. 'Twus the first thing he do when they born, look for a name. But she says that wusn't what she mean, they din't really have a name If they wus livin' as they wus... (p. 135).

The intervention of the German missionary who forces Bambi into marriage not only exposes the insensitivity of foreigners to local West Indian values but also reveals their reluctance to appreciate the deep attachment of the local people to such values. Both the German lady and Ngugi's Mr. Livingstone in The River Between are outsiders with an aversion to local customs and are determined to wipe them out and introduce Western ones. Both carry the gospel message to communities they consider heathen to liberate them from 'darkness' although the other motive for this evangelization is the desire to make pervasive Western cultural modes in these societies.

If the evangelization of the German missionary is not pervasive as a weapon of cultural domination that cuts off the colonized from his values, the system of education, introduced by the colonial masters, as we saw in Ngugi, tends to alienate the colonized from his environment. Both writers see it as a tool of cultural imperialism that alienates an individual from his values by exposing him to alien cultural modes that have no relevance to his society. Because of this negative impact, it is seen by Lamming, like Ngugi, as a powerful weapon in the hands of imperialists who sought to impose Western cultural values on the colonized as a way of consolidating Western cultural and political hegemony in the colonized world.

Accordingly, the Groddeck's Boys' School in In the Castle of My Skin is depicted as a place where young minds are schooled to have reverence for English history and customs, and detest whatever is Black and Barbadian. The school eliminates the history of slavery, but hammers lessons about the Battle of Hasting and the military exploits of William the Conqueror into the impressionable minds of the pupils. Barbados, they are told, is not a colony of Britain but is 'Little England', it "was the oldest and purest of England's children, and may it always be so." (p. 37)

Since the curriculum of the school is entirely based on that of British schools, the assertion of Ambrose Kom is true that the:

children attend a school which attaches no importance to their immediate surroundings...²² such a sterile system of education has no raison d'etre other than to push to its extreme limit and perpetuate the relationship between the dominant and the dominated.²³

The products of such an educational system are necessarily cut off from their society and its values, making it difficult for them to fit into the life around them. In The Pleasures of Exile, Lamming asserts that his own education at Combermere School "had one intention... it was training me to forget and be separate from the things that Papa was: peasant and alive."²⁴ G's education in Groddeck's Boys' School (the fictional equivalent of Lamming's) and the new scale of values that he acquired, separate him from "the gang at the corner" (p. 113) whose company he cherishes and with whom he satisfies his craving to be "a boy among the boys" (p. 115). Furthermore, although Trumper's argument that "barring learning to count an' write your name there ain't much in these schools that will help you not to make a blasted mess o' your life" (p. 288) is an exaggeration, it is arguable that G's education fails to prepare him for a full participation in the life of the village at the peasant level. This is illustrated by his habitual withdrawal from the village and its problems.

He can no longer share the world of the shoemaker or that of Mr. Foster because his allegiances "had been transferred to the other world" (p. 22), the world of High School education and middle-class values that insulate the individual from the realities of his society. This world is as much the world of G. as it is that of the headteacher, who like G. becomes alienated from the village because of his colonial education. Through him Lamming relates a complex truth: the estrangement of the headteacher from the community corresponds with their isolation of him through their demands that he fulfils the role they expect of him of being different because of his education. Just as G's education excludes him from the world of the villagers who do not accept him as one of them, the headteacher is also excluded from that world. Therefore,

"he had to live in a way which they admired and respected but did not greatly care to follow. He had to think of them in any decision he made... He gave them the impression that he was what they expected him to be. If he failed to live up to their expectations he would immediately become one of them." (p. 67)

Yet the duality in Lamming's view of life enables him to view separation from the community also as positive in helping the individual to discover himself as we shall see later.

Frantz Fanon's observation that "The Church in the colonies is the white people's church, the foreigner's church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the whiteman"²⁵ might be applicable to Lamming's portrayal of Christianity in In the Castle of My Skin. But it is not applicable to The River Between in which Ngugi's attitude towards Christianity is, as we noticed, ambivalent. Although he was convinced from the start about the divisive and alienating effect of Christianity on the Gikuyu community, he still felt that its integration with tradition was a possibility, for reasons we have already examined.

Thus their common experience as products of missionary education and Christian indoctrination notwithstanding, Lamming's early rejection of Christianity sharply contrasts with Ngugi's ambivalence towards it. When Ngugi wrote The River Between, he was at a neophyte stage of his vocation as a political writer, since our discussion in Chapter Six will show that his later attitude towards Christianity - which has developed - would be very different. On the other hand, from the very start of his fictional career, Lamming acknowledges that Christianity is employed by the colonial establishment to alienate the individual from his community.

Thus in early Lamming, (unlike in early Ngugi) religion comes under attack because in its insistence on total loyalty to the leaders by the led it becomes a prop of the colonial order. This tallies with Lamming's recent pronouncement that "thirty years ago the Christian Churches in Barbados were all instruments of British imperialism, reliable guardians of the colonial status quo".²⁶

The myth pervasive in Creighton village that its inhabitants 'belong' through the Empire to the Garden may, according to Lamming, be "an accurate reflection of what was a genuine popular religious myth among the poor in Barbados".²⁷ The Christian God was seen as the "creator of the Universe and the British Empire as his temporal trustee"²⁸ creating the general impression among the people that the Empire and the Garden were synonymous and membership of the Empire therefore ensured eternal salvation. Accordingly, the villagers in In the Castle of My Skin believe that embracing Christianity

was a sort of salvation... salvation through grace. We are all going to the garden... and especially those who here on earth belonged to the empire. (p. 72)

They therefore link acceptance of Christianity with membership of the empire, to which some of them subscribe:

There was nothing to lose by belonging to the empire. They were all very poor... They enjoyed the parades and the flags and the speeches. It made them feel a little more important than they were. (p. 72)

Their belief that the Garden and the Empire are interlinked corresponds with their ignorance of their history. The information which filters down to them is sanitized to obscure the ugly aspects of their past:

The old people... had talked about the queen... They had talked about her as a good queen because she freed them... The queen had made them free. They must have been locked up once in a kind of gaol... Most of them were locked up in a gaol at some time in the past. And it would appear that when this good and great queen came to the throne she ordered that those who weren't free should now become free. (p. 56)

Since the church is as instrumental as the school in fostering colonial myths "these two buildings were erected within the same enclosure" (p. 35) a fact which "the boys never really understood". (p. 35) The reader however understands the significance of such a meaningful juxtaposition. Both are used in the novel by the colonial establishment as effective tools of mental colonization.

In her quietism and stoic indifference to the land question and acquisition of property, Ma is portrayed as a typical Christian convert. She completely identifies with the colonial system to the extent that she does not question the tyrannical hold of the landlord over the village community. She has no business acquiring material wealth because this world "aint no place to store riches..." (p. 87). She would rather "think 'bout the other land" (p. 87) and wait for her rewards in the hereafter, in the Garden. Through Ma it is obvious that religious evangelists in Creighton village are helping to operate an institution that colonizes the mind even as it offers spiritual consolation under the repressive atmosphere of a colonial dispensation. Lamming declares in "The Novelist... on Religion": "The religious functionary, irrespective of denomination [is] an accomplice in the support of the existing status quo".²⁹

If the colonial system used colonial myths through education and religion to distort the pasts of Kenya and Barbados, as cultural

nationalists, Ngugi and Lamming saw their duty as that of assisting their societies to create cultural identities, the achievement of which neither of the two writers oversimplify. By not simplifying the search for a cultural identity the writers are undoubtedly pointing towards its complexity emphasizing that the problems of self-fulfilment will, at the end, remain.

In spite of its problematic nature, the creation of identity is seen by both writers as an asset that might help individuals come to terms with the realities of their societies. The creation of a cultural identity in colonial Kenya is of paramount importance in the opinion of Ngugi who observes in Homecoming (1972) that colonial history has led the African to believe that he "did not really exist, had slept in the dark continent until the Livingstones and Stanleys woke him into history".³⁰ The Trinidadian V.S. Naipaul is holding a brief for Lamming and other politically committed West Indian writers in his assertion in The Middle Passage (1960) that, "Living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands".³¹

Notwithstanding the writers' common obsession with the creation of identity their approach to it is different given not only the different colonial orientations of their societies but also the length of time to which each was subjected to colonial domination. The Lesser Antilles, which includes Barbados, has had "two hundred years of slavery, three hundred years of colonialism"³² and these "have bitten deep into the psychology of the islanders".³³ This produced far-reaching and disastrous consequences on the identity of their populations. Hence the deep sense of rootlessness which Barbadian negroes experience. Identity for the Kenyan, who has had a rich cultural heritage before the advent of colonialism, is thus different from identity for the Barbadian negro who "had to rebuild himself out of a spiritual and cultural nullity"³⁴ not because he brought nothing from Africa, but because soon after

his arrival, as we saw in the Introduction, attempts began to mentally indoctrinate him and strip him of the values which he had brought along. As opposed to the protracted era of slavery and colonial tutelage to which the Barbadian was subjected, the Kenyan was subjected to less than seventy years of colonial domination, during which his traditional institutions faced a systematic annihilation which was only arrested by local resistance.

The different cultural and historical circumstances therefore dictated the response of the writers towards the question of identity. If the task of Lamming in In the Castle of My Skin is to show the process through which his characters attempt to create their own unique cultural identity from the imposed (colonial) and the inherited (African) tradition to which they have inevitably become heirs, Ngugi's in The River Between is that of recovering his own African culture which the missionaries tampered with.

In conformity with his desire to stress the need "for a renewal and a rebirth of African cultural... institutions that help the African to be at home in his society and in his physical environment"³⁵ Ngugi evokes the cultural past of Kenya revealing the complex process by which contemporary Kenyans try to seek integration into the community through its institutions. In A History of the Kikuyu 1500 - 1900 (1971) Godfrey Muriuki argues that in Gikuyu society, circumcision is more significant than the superficial interpretation that the missionaries who banned it had given it. He writes:

Circumcision was not merely a mutilation of the body, as the missionaries would have had them believe, but also a vehicle for the transmission and perpetuation of the norms and values of the Kikuyu cultural traditions.³⁶

If circumcision is instrumental in maintaining the continuity of an age-old norm, it is also seen as an important ritual that determines manhood in Gikuyuland, as Mugo Gatheru asserts

No Kikuyu is a man until he has been circumcized, until he has been 'bitten' by the knife, Kahiu until the ceremony of irua has been held... Circumcision is the sign that now a child has become a man. It is an important ceremony for every Kikuyu.³⁷

Its importance lies not only in its function as a marker for the attainment of adulthood. It is also a means through which the individual might achieve integration into the community as Godfrey Muriuki asserts:

Through it individuals gained membership to an age set which provided them with a new focus of identification with the society, a new frame of reference through which they relate themselves with its values and symbols.³⁸

In The River Between, Ngugi acknowledges the view that through circumcision an individual might gain acceptance into the Gikuyu community, both past and present. Waiyaki's realization of this cultural function of circumcision motivates him to undergo the operation alongside the members of his age-group. As his "blood trickled freely on the ground, sinking into the soil" (p.45) Waiyaki feels that he has established a link with the Gikuyu "earth, as if his blood was an offering". (p.45)

The dripping blood is indeed a sacrifice to satisfy the ancestral spirits and establish a link with them. It is in the land which absorbs Waiyaki's blood that the ancestors lie buried, "and it is through communion with [them that] the future generation is linked up with the past, thus bringing spiritually the three groups, i.e. dead, living and unborn, into one organic whole".³⁹ This is meant to endow the individual with a sense of integration into the ancestral world. It is also meant to give him the cultural self-confidence to tackle the problems of contemporary society.

As we saw earlier, after being circumcized, Muthoni feels integrated into the Gikuyu society. She becomes a "woman" (p. 44) in the Gikuyu sense, beautiful in the tribe, as she puts it and would have escaped social ostracism had she lived, "How could I be outside the tribe, when all the girls born with me at the same time have left me?" (p. 44). However, the difficulty of integration is revealed through her ordeals following the operation. Her death reveals its tragic consequences.

Although Waiyaki's circumcision (like Mũthoni's) integrates him into the spiritual world through the blood which serves as a sacrifice to the ancestors, the performance of this ritual does not assist him in coming to terms with the realities of colonial Kenya. As an educated leader who is also aware of the importance of traditional customs and is anxious to preserve them, as we saw, Waiyaki goes through the operation. But since his duty involves reconciling the two factions of his society, the traditionalists and the Christians, the latter group views him as a heathen for having gone through circumcision. The traditionalists, on the other hand, see him as a sell-out for keeping in touch with the Christian converts, who have capitulated to the new dispensation.

Clearly, Waiyaki has found himself in a difficult situation with tensions growing and oppositions polarized in the community, so that the only option open to him, if he is to fulfil his mission of reconciliation, is to keep in touch with each of the groups simultaneously. It is inconceivable that he can achieve his aim by keeping himself in touch with only one group and not shuttle from one faction to the other. Yet his desire is to reconcile the two factions of his society and also reconcile the two segments of his personality: the Western and the traditional African. But Ngugi depicts Waiyaki as a "cultural mulatto"⁴⁰ who is torn between two worlds: the traditional (of his Gikuyu customs) and the Western (of his colonial education). His inability to reconcile the two warring factions of his community corresponds with his failure to reconcile the two aspects of his personality and be at home in colonial Kenya. Although the contexts differ, Waiyaki's dilemma thinly corresponds with that of the persona of "Ivbie: a song of wrong" by J.P. Clark, a Nigerian poet. In this poem in which the persona is no longer at ease in his environment following the onslaught of colonialism on his local culture, he is left adrift:

...in my father's house I cannot sleep
 Nor shut myself up in peace
 But loud knocks,
 Absorbed in the thick of shocks,
 Come beating back on my door
 Crying: 'Sleep no more!'⁴¹

The educated persona is now without a cultural identity, equally uncomfortable in the Western tradition, which he has not fully mastered, as he is insecure in the local tradition, which has been structurally tampered with by colonialism. Both Ngugi and J.P. Clark reveal that acquiring a cultural identity in the colonial context is a complicated process, especially given the arduous task faced by individuals torn between "two worlds", who seek to regenerate their divided selves.

The West Indian who had been uprooted from Africa and through the Middle Passage taken to the New World, as we saw, faces a deeper identity crisis than the Kenyan. Therefore, his task is that of creating an identity and not that of recovering it. Lamming hints at the extent of this task early in In the Castle of My Skin, in which the abandonment of the hero by his father represents his severance from his ancestral and therefore African roots. The hero reveals that:

My father who had only fathered the idea of me had left me the sole liability of my mother who really fathered me. And beyond that my memory was a blank. (p. 11)

Whenever the hero attempts to remember or ask his mother for information about his ancestry she:

began to sing... Her voice was clear and colourless. It could indicate but not control a tune which I recognized only through the words. (p. 11)

The hero's lack of knowledge about his past corresponds with the community's ignorance of Barbadian history. His solitude resulting from 'absence of family relations' tallies with the alienation of the villagers from their ancestral roots.

Even the process of his growing up is meant to reflect the evolving Barbadian identity. By drawing parallels between the condition of the hero and that of the village community from which he sprung, Lamming attempts to indicate that both are rootless and in a dire need of a cultural identity.

In Barbados, colonial myths "had eaten through" the consciousness of both adults and children "like moths through the pages of ageing documents" (p. 27). Nevertheless, the search for identity focusses mainly on children in the novel, because as David Dabydeen and Nana Wilson-Tagoe put it, "the identity of this world, and its discovery, seemed more truthful when revealed through the impressions of the growing child".⁴² Louis James has much earlier succinctly emphasized the suitability of the child in the search for a West Indian identity:

The child can play a part in the emergent West Indian literature... because in culture seeking independence, the child enjoys a natural if precarious enfranchisement. He provides a fresh point of view; a Gulliver without fantasy, a Christopher Columbus of the present exploring the islands of manhood, remaking the maps.⁴³

In the above quotation Louis James conceives the West Indian child as an explorer. This description squarely fits In the Castle of My Skin, where the child constantly delves into his psyche, exploring. He also maintains a continuous interaction with his environment, discovering. In the words of Louis James, "The West Indies that the Caribbean child discovers is himself".⁴⁴

In an attempt to discover themselves and make meaningful a world that has not been sufficiently explained to them, the children in In the Castle of My Skin engage in trial and error. From a vague description of alienation by Boy Blue as "something go[ing] off pop in yuh head" (p. 142), A G, who achieves linguistic competence, is later able to define it more precisely as "a feeling you were alone in a world all by yourself, and although there were hundreds of people moving round you, it made no difference". (pp. 300-1)

They also keenly observe the adult world and its emergent values like single-parenthood and the multi-father situation in the village. Statements such as "Mothers stupid, that's why most of us without fathers" (p. 46), however indicate that the children are ignorant about the situation which gave rise to absentee fathers. Religious evangelism and the school system obscure the facts. This condition, is a basic aspect of "Caribbean society where the history of plantation slavery meant that the father had no official role to play in the family",⁴⁵ in which case, "the child belonged to the slave owner and the mother [who] was the only officially recognized parent."⁴⁶ Under a condition in which the men have "lef de yard"⁴⁷ responsibility for children devolves on the women, rendering the men itinerant visitors to the women who are their sexual but not necessarily their marriage partners.

The creation of a cultural identity will require the understanding of the West Indian contemporary situation to be supplemented by a knowledge of the West Indian historical past. An experimental novelist, Lamming uses the dream vision by Pa, one of the elderly characters in the novel, to take us back to that African past in order to redefine slavery and put it in the general context of exploitation and human degradation. Pa is made to 'relate' the process through which his ancestors were shipped to the New World "like a box of good fruit". (p. 210) In a society where the facts of history have been suppressed, the message in the dream provides an accurate portrayal of slavery, an alternative to the colonial myths that "it had nothing to do with people in Barbados", where "no one... was ever a slave..." (p. 57).

However, Lamming deliberately makes Pa's message not have an effect on the consciousness of the villagers. Only the reader, who has had an encounter with the myths about slavery in the story, gets the benefit of a truer and more inward sense of history. Thus history in In the Castle of My Skin does not yet as it will later

do in Season of Adventure (1960), serve to clarify the consciousness of characters, in the functional sense of assisting them to grapple with contemporary problems.

Even a comprehensive knowledge of the community does not, in Lamming's view, guarantee the achievement of a cultural identity. Lamming hammers home this point through Trumper who emigrates to America and returns during the transformation of the villagers into an urban proletariat.

While in America, Trumper had his sense of a negro community sharpened because of his encounter with the racial segregation which blacks face there. (p. 294-5) This knowledge enables him to comprehend and articulate the injustice in the dispossession of the villagers at home. (p. 287) In his essay on In the Castle of My Skin Ngugi asserts that:

When Trumper comes back, he has a better grasp and appreciation of Barbados. Exile is both a spiritual and a physical state. Emigration becomes the symbol of a struggling West Indian alienated from his past and immediate world.⁴⁸

But Lamming sees more ambiguously than Ngugi appreciates. He does indeed show that exile gave Trumper the opportunity to learn about his society, which both G. and the other boys are denied because of the disruptive influence of British colonialism on the creation of identity in Barbados. Thus on his return, he is able to see the changes at home in the context of racial and class exploitation.

However, compelling as Trumper's assessment of the displacement of the villagers is Kenneth Ramchand's statement that "Trumper's truth is not the truth of the novel, only one side of it"⁴⁹ is accurate. This is because Trumper's observation that identity is based on racial awareness is only a half-truth.

Since G. sensitizes us to the existence of a "you that's hidden somewhere in the castle of your skin" (p. 261) it means that identity is not only external. It is not simply limited to skin pigmentation,

as Trumper would have us believe, but extends to an inner life and identity within the 'castle' of the skin, which an aggressor cannot reach.

Through Trumper, a prospective politician and G., a budding artist, Lamming further indicates that identity is not only communal. It is also private. Trumper argues that G's frequent withdrawal into the inner self is "well an' good for the nursery [but] it won't do for what we call life". (p. 293) He therefore opts for solidarity with the negro community, dismissing G's option of withdrawal into self as too abstract and idealistic.

However, Lamming does not simplify the issue by dismissing G's option in favour of Trumper's since the thrust of In the Castle of My Skin, as we shall see, is to show the interplay between the public and the private consciousness and how one should normally enrich the other and vice-versa.

Trumper's political knowledge is not in itself capable of assisting the individual to discover his identity. It has to be married to G's solitary meditations which enable the individual to dig deeper into the inner recesses of the mind to know who he is at deeper levels. If Trumper has acquired racial self-confidence in America, and has now "found something to cradle his deepest instincts and emotions" (p. 299), G's probing into the consciousness has resulted in the production of a novel which dissects the socio-political problems of Barbados as well as acknowledging the need for the search of a cultural identity. The creation of identity, therefore, calls for an integration of G's individual consciousness with Trumper's public awareness.

The difficulty of acquiring an identity is such that by the end of the novel neither Trumper nor G. has achieved it. Trumper has returned home with a one-dimensional approach to solving complex problems; an approach which emphasizes political awareness and underplays private contemplation.

What makes Trumper's problem even more serious is the fact that he is "confident in his supposition" (p. 289) that his alternative is faultless. On the other hand, G. leaves the village merely expressing a hope of discovering his identity in Trinidad, which he presumably assumes is a less restricted society than Barbados. An informed reader however knows that although Barbados is more English-oriented than Trinidad - a multi-cultural society, which had a Spanish and American influence - both are equally colonially-oriented and share a common belief in the cultural superiority of Europe.

The problems of acquiring a cultural identity however, do not prevent the development of a political consciousness among the fictional Kenyan and Barbadian communities who have been exposed to a protracted era of colonial domination, during which they noticed contradictions inherent in the system. In both societies, political consciousness was sharpened by the emergence of leaders - educated and articulate - who alert their societies to the need for change. Accordingly, both novelists who see their roles as cultural nationalists as an adjunct of their political nationalism are anxious that the mantle of leadership falls into the right hands. But both eventually show disappointment that it has not. In Kenya, this disenchantment assumes the shape of failure of leadership, a reflection of Kenyan history of the 1920's where local leadership failed to effectively challenge the colonial establishment and bring about change.

Lamming's novel, unlike Ngugi's is prophetic. Ngugi's limits itself to the colonial dispensation and the canvassing for leadership of local heroes who, through one fault or another fail to qualify. Lamming's on the other hand, although written in the early fifties, several years before the Barbadian independence, goes beyond the colonial dispensation to reveal the betrayal of the community by

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a black political elite who are in collusion with the plantocracy. The betrayal which leads to the dispossession of the villagers also reveals Lamming's anti-capitalistic stance from the beginning, unlike Ngugi's, which became apparent for the first time in Petals of Blood, which will be discussed in Chapter Six. The anti-capitalistic dimension of In the Castle of My Skin will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five which will compare that novel with Devil on the Cross (1982) in order to prove that although the two novelists share a common attitude towards capitalism: that of open hostility, they have diverged at the linguistic level, with Lamming still using English language and Ngugi switching over to Gikuyu. However, since both Ngugi and Lamming were, in respect to political awareness, responding to different historical circumstances, it will be illuminating to look at each case in its context.

As we noted in the Introduction, a controversy developed in Kenya in 1922 surrounding the circumcision rites which had and still have a great significance among the Gikuyu who believe that they not only bound individuals to the ancestral lands, but also guarantee fertility in women.⁵⁰ As we saw, the Kikuyu Central Association, driven by a sense of patriotism, formally protested against the decision of the Church of Scotland mission to ban female circumcision. Some traditionally-minded Gikuyus became adamant in sticking to the old ways. In response, the missionaries, who had monopoly on schools, closed their doors to the upholders of traditional values. This led to the creation of Gikuyu Independent Schools, in which local children could secure Western education and still retain their cultural values. Later as a pupil, Ngugi himself has had to transfer from a missionary school (Kamandura) to a Gikuyu Independent School (Manguo Maringa) because of the realization that "in missionary schools some things were deliberately

held back from students, and that in Gikuyu Maringa Schools nothing would be hidden from the students to keep them ignorant".⁵¹

The River Between which reflects this historical process, with minor variations, reveals that Waiyaki too starts an independent school, Marioshoni, when the missionaries closed their doors to the children of the upholders of traditional values. (p. 60; p. 67) Polygamy and traditional dances are considered 'pagan' and banned alongside circumcision which, as we saw, Mr. Livingstone considers "a brutal mutilation" (p. 56) which had "to be fought by all means in their hands" (p. 56). This initiative by the Gikuyus came following their realization that the colonial establishment and the church had common objectives in Kenya: the annihilation of traditional culture and its replacement with the Western way of life. In Africanity (1972) Jacques Macquet draws attention to the close affinity between missionaries and colonial governments who were out in Africa not only to 'civilize' and spread the gospel but to achieve cultural and political dominance as well:

Thus Christian activity in Africa went beyond the religious sphere. Missions aimed at establishing a new way of life; to promote it they organized elementary education, they made their posts into agricultural enterprises, they exercised political influence over colonial administrations.⁵²

The Gikuyu realization of this link is captured in a vernacular expression "Gutiri mubia na Muthungu" which means "there is no difference between a missionary and a settler."⁵³ The fictional representation of this awareness gained largely through the efforts of Waiyaki who "had awakened his community to new visions, new desires and new aspirations" (p. 143) created a feeling of political nationalism in Gikuyuland. It prompts Kinuthia to express a deeply-felt sentiment that "the whiteman should go... go back to wherever he came from and leave us to till our land in peace" (p. 62). He outlines the imperative to fight against "all that is harsh, unfair and unjust" (p. 67). With his colleagues at Marioshoni he constantly engages in political debates which:

were a sign of what was happening all over the ridges... This feeling had been strengthened by this most recent alienation near Siriana forcing many people to move from places they had lived for ages, while others had to live on the same land, working for their masters. (p. 62)

Cultural repression was thus followed by political repression - land-alienation - which made the Gikuyu more politically conscious and even militant leading to an armed struggle - the Mau Mau - against the colonial regime in the 1950's.

However, political awareness in The River Between, unlike in In the Castle of My Skin where it led to a peasant revolt, did not pose a formidable challenge to the colonial establishment due to the failure of local leadership to properly channel it along revolutionary lines. Ngugi puts three characters in the story through various tests and found them severely wanting as leaders of a politically conscious society.⁵⁴

Joshua fails to measure up to the standards of a political leader because in his enthusiasm for the new religion he has totally forsaken his traditional past which might offer him guidance to tackle the problems of the present. He has therefore lost touch with the aspirations of his people whom he now condemns as heathen because of their allegiance to the "tribe's customs" (p. 84) which in his view are bad.

In spite of his desperation to lead Kabonyi also fails the test, not only because he confuses his personal hatred of Waiyaki with his quest for leadership. (p. 144) He also lacks a sound political vision of the future. Kabonyi wants the tribe to revert to the past, a stance which both Ngugi, whose view surfaces in the passage below, and the politically conscious Gikuyu community reject:

He /Kabonyi/ was the saviour for whom the people waited. Not that Kabonyi knew exactly where he would lead the people. How could he understand that the people did not want to move backwards, that the ridges no longer desired their isolation? How could he know that the forces that drove people to yearn for a better day tomorrow, that now gave a new awareness to

the people were like demons, sweeping the whole country, as Mugo had said, from one horizon touching the sea to the other horizon touching the water? (p. 144).

Even Waiyaki is not able to withstand the rigours of the test as his Western education, as we hinted earlier, seriously limits his perception of the political needs of his people. (p. 65) His antipathy towards politics, caused by Mr. Livingstone's indoctrination, leads to his resignation from the Kiama, an influential political organization in Gikuyuland. His resignation is meant to enable him devote more time to educating the people, but ironically it insulates him from the very people whose interests he claims to champion:

Waiyaki was losing that contact with people that can only come through taking part together in a ritual. He was becoming too obsessed with the schools and the widening rift and divisions. (p. 113)

His alienation from the community is intimately connected with his failure to acquire a cultural identity that might integrate him into one of the two factions of his community. As we saw earlier, Waiyaki is torn between two worlds and is unable to gain accommodation into either of the two:

There were the Christians led by Joshua, men of Joshua as they were sometimes called. Their home? Makuyu. Then there were the people of the tribe, who had always been against the Mission and its faith. Kameno was, as it were, their home or base... Where did people like Waiyaki stand? Had he not received the whiteman's education? And was this not a part of the other faith, the new faith? The Kameno group was strengthened by the breakaway group led by Kabonyi. Waiyaki felt himself standing outside all this. And at times he felt isolated. (p. 69)

Waiyaki is isolated from his community essentially because of his preoccupation with training children to the exclusion of other important aspects of his responsibility, such as the political emancipation of Gikuyuland. Kinuthia whose political sagacity stands in contrast to Waiyaki's naivety is highly impressed by Waiyaki's penchant for education

Yet he wondered If he knew that people wanted action now, that the new enthusiasm and awareness embraced more than the

mere desire for learning. People wanted to move forward. They could not do so as long as their lands were taken, as long as their children were forced to work in the settled ridges, as long as their women and men were forced to pay hut-tax. (p. 118)

Kinuthia's political maturity and his ability to escape Mr. Livingstone's indoctrination enable him to recognize the complementarity of education and politics in contrast to Waiyaki's view that the two are antithetical. This awareness enables him to conclude that:

Waiyaki was the best man to lead people, not only to a new light through education, but also to new opportunities and areas of self-expression through political independence. (p. 118)

This is a challenge which Waiyaki is not able to meet. Through his conduct and that of the other two characters - Kabonyi and Joshua - Ngugi draws attention to the failure of leadership in the Gikuyu society of the 1920's. However, it is through Waiyaki that Ngugi most forcefully hammers home his point about this failure of the local leadership to effectively challenge the colonial establishment. This is why he uses Waiyaki as a hero in The River Between in order to invite a comparison with the historical Waiyaki, who was a Chief from "Southern Kikuyu when Europeans first arrived in Kenya".⁵⁵

Both Jeremy Murray Brown⁵⁶ and Godfrey Muriuki⁵⁷ maintain that the historical Waiyaki, a Paramount Chief of Wakikuyu was not the nationalist he had been painted but an opportunist, who welcomed and went to considerable lengths to cement his friendship with the British colonial masters. On his arrival in Kenya, Frederick Lugard was welcomed with open arms by Waiyaki, who allowed, "one of the architects of Britain's colonial empire"⁵⁸ to erect a fort on his own shamba (land). In addition to this Waiyaki performed, together with Frederick Lugard, "a ceremony of brotherhood,"⁵⁹ which according to Godfrey Muriuki was "the highest expression of mutual confidence and friendship known to Kikuyu society"⁶⁰.

The fictional Waiyaki in Ngugi's novel does not exactly capitulate to the white regime, but his embrace of Western cultural values paralleled the attempt of his historical counterpart to fraternize with the Europeans. His lack of political sagacity also corresponds with the historical Waiyaki's political blunder, in welcoming Europeans on his own shamba. The colonial masters used their proximity to Waiyaki to make in-roads into the heart of Gikuyu society as well as into his own secrets, which made it relatively easy for them to replace him and send him to his death in Kibwezi after he had rebelled against them.⁶¹

Thus reference to Waiyaki in the story as "a black Messiah" (p. 38) is ironical since he fails to save his community. He is a leader called to save his people from domination but who fails as a political figure. So of course, in that sense did Jesus Christ whose mission changed the meaning of 'Messiah' from revolt to sacrifice. The Gikuyu society wanted a political revolutionary not a martyr. Like the Jews in the bible who expected a military leader to liberate them from the yoke of colonialism under the Roman Empire, the Gikuyus wanted an effective and resolute not a weak leader who would, like Waiyaki, allow himself to be imprisoned and executed. However, as we shall see later, his execution is beneficial to the community by providing the two factions with an opportunity to rethink their strained relationship.

Like Ngugi, Lamming too introduces us to the development of political consciousness in Creighton village. But while the leaders in Ngugi's community fail to channel the awakened political consciousness towards a revolutionary end, the revolt in Lamming's fictional village community shakes the colonial administration to its very roots. Nevertheless, far from benefitting the masses, the colonial revolt is used by the local leadership to enter into a covenant

with the colonial administration, which it hopes to replace.

The riots in the story, which form the basis of the class struggle in the story, are based on civil disturbances which occurred in the West Indies in the 1930's. The riots, as we saw in the Introduction, were part of a general political awakening of the West Indian workers, who now insisted on social justice and political freedom after a long spell of colonial subjugation. They yearned for and demanded change.

The flood at the beginning of In the Castle of My Skin which "could level the stature and even conceal the identity of the village" (p. 11) symbolically announces the beginning of socio-political changes in Creighton village. This message is made even more vivid when under the impact of the strong currents the very foundations of the village are threatened with obliteration. The lanes and valleys of the village, representing Barbados, a coral island, "crossed and multiplied below the tides that towed limestone and clay, shingle and brick through the canals and pipes to the river that ran far and wide into the sea" (p. 14). But in reality, although certain villagers, like the shoemaker, are aware of the contradictions inherent in the colonial system, which also tries to inhibit the development of a political consciousness among the people (p. 104) change does not start in the village until the outbreak of civilian disturbances, which as we saw, reflect the West Indian riots of the 1930's. (p. 189) Ian Munro argues that:

In the Castle of My Skin is clearly a political novel, a novel of class struggle depicting the transition of a society from semi-feudalism to semi-independence under the leadership of a national bourgeoisie.⁶²

The above quotation accurately describes Lamming's depiction, initially of a semi-feudal society under the control of Mr. Creighton, the landlord. Because at first the villagers do not understand their colonial relationship to the landlord, they view his care as paternal benevolence. Says Ma, "We ain't his children... but

the feelin' was something like that. He had to sort o' take care o' those who belong to the village". (p. 185)

The class struggle which marks the beginning of change in the village is ignited by Mr. Slime, formerly a school-teacher who later decided to become a politician. His appearance on the political arena of the village, like that of Waiyaki in Ngugi's fictional village in The River Between, sensitizes the common people to their political rights and the need to fight for them. He reveals that since religion forms a primary basis of their exploitation, the onus is on them to "stop payin' notice to that... joke 'bout a old man goin' born again" (p. 167). Under the leadership of Mr. Slime, the villagers acquire a new sense of political consciousness as opposed to their previous ignorance about their relationship to the colonial administration which denies them their rights.

They are no longer indoctrinated to the myth of the Garden and the Empire which had formed the basis of their exploitation. They are becoming liberated. Consequently their notion of the landlord as "the Great" (p. 29) undergoes a considerable revision now that the villagers are convinced that he depends on them as much as they depend on him, a conviction articulated in a verbal exchange below,

"What 'll happen If we don't unload the boats?" Bob's father asked. "They 'll stay where they is, that's all," said the shoemaker. "When the ship people ready, they 'll either take them back where they bring them from or If they rotten they 'll dump 'em in the sea." (p. 97)

This change in the balance of power is symbolically portrayed in the gradual descent of the landlord from his position as a demi-god on the ivory-tower, to that of an ordinary human being no longer distant from the villagers. When we first encounter him in the second chapter he is majestically driving in a horse carriage. When we meet him again in the company of Ma he is riding on a horseback. (p. 183) When we meet him again in the ninth chapter, when the last vestiges of his authority are stripped, he is trekking on

the road leading to his house with terror vividly written on his face, "no longer the assured, confident, poised, immaculately dressed Mr. Creighton."⁶³

As a political writer Lamming favours change, but is sceptical about the efficacy of violence, which is why he portrays it negatively in his first novel, as he does in all his novels which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. Before the riot, (which later spreads to the village) starts in town, one of the union leaders in the company of Mr. Slime had told a gathering of labourers that:

it wasn't his intention to make hooligans of the workers, but If you couldn't persuade certain people to be fair you were left with no alternative but to fight for what you wanted. (p. 196)

Yet when violence is introduced into the industrial dispute, Lamming makes us see it through the terrified eyes of the boys. We shall later argue in Chapter Five that Lamming's and Pa's views about violence coincide. Although both welcome political change, they also see violence as futile and not an effective means of bringing change about. This antipathy towards violence is also evident when the participants in the violent riot are conceived as crouching animals waiting to draw blood from their human victims, "They crouched on all fours along the train line through the wood, talking and pointing as they advanced" (p. 202). And later "Bob... couldn't understand what was happening as he watched his father crouch on the floor with his head close to the partition" (p. 204). When Mr. Creighton, the target of the rioters, approaches they are pictured again crouching "thirsty and ravenous for blood" (p. 206) "looking like beasts without reason" (p. 207). All this is meant to show Lamming's disgust at violence and to suggest, especially in the light of Pa's view, which will be discussed in Chapter Five, that violence is not a solution to socio-political problems.

As we shall argue in Chapter Five, as a political writer, Lamming advocates change but emphasizes, in his first novel, as he does in all the others discussed in this thesis, the primacy of an internal cure to the colonial and neo-colonial predicament. The exploited working class and peasantry in In the Castle of My Skin, are shown, as we shall see, as psychological casualties of the dispossession, in need of an internal therapy. The middle-class are also depicted as victims of mental indoctrination, which has continued in the neo-colonial period, and for which they will need an internal therapy, which can only be had through contact of that alienated class with its peasant and cultural roots.

However, the central political concern of In the Castle of My Skin, (which directly concerns us in this chapter) is to pin down the betrayal of the masses by the elite, who are the actual beneficiaries of the changes in the village. Lamming exposes the selfishness of the intellectual elite who employ their mental capacities to champion a popular cause and arouse public sentiment against the landlord, only to deflect the movement in favour of a compromise with the plantocracy with whom they first cooperate and then replace. The selfishness of this class is illustrated by Mr. Slime's manipulation of the rioting workers, whom he had "inspired to break out of their meek acceptance of their position of subservience,"⁶⁴ but refuses to aid in securing economic independence from the landlord, with whom he is now in alliance. Lamming's prophecy in In the Castle of My Skin that black leadership will betray its followers is later proved by the facts when the Barbados Labour Party led by Tom Adams became a satellite of the United States of America, which, as we saw in the Introduction, had a hand in certain economic decisions of the Barbadian island. In a neo-colonial context such economic decisions, as we shall see in Chapter Six, are more often than not taken at the detriment of the common people but in favour of the neo-colonial power and the ruling class of the satellite nation.

But since the plantocracy also have a say in the political and economic decisions of independent West Indian islands, as we shall see in Chapter Six, although they remained in the background, they enjoyed economic and political privilege as much if not more than the black elite who simply act as proxies for the white settler elite. The interests of the black elite in In the Castle of My Skin are championed by Mr. Slime who, masquerading as a populist, forms the Penny Bank and the Friendly Society, to enable the villagers save money for the 'rainy day'. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Slime betrays this cause by using the financial holdings of the cooperative to buy the land which the villagers inhabit from Mr. Creighton with whom, as we saw, he is now in alliance, but whom he later hopes to replace. Right from his first appearance in the story, Lamming invites us to view Mr. Slime as a dubious character, not only because of his suggested affair with the wife of the headteacher - a private betrayal - but also because of the connotations of his name which suggests dishonesty. (p. 94) The betrayal of workers by the educated elite is, however, not the sole political concern of Lamming in In the Castle of My Skin.

He also demonstrates a feel for and a sensitive empathy with the village peasantry and labourers who face mass ejection from their land, thanks to Mr. Slime's covenant with Mr. Creighton. Lamming condemns the insensitivity of the new order which attaches more importance to property than it does to individual villagers. The fate of most of them is now sealed. They have little choice but to become proletarians as one of them - Mr. Foster - has already become. (p. 300) He also reveals that the impact of the dispossession on the villagers is psychologically debilitating. It leaves a permanent mark on the shoemaker for whom the land has a spiritual significance, because his parents had lived there before him, "He won't be the shoemaker he was again" (p. 300). Another villager Boysie, "start to drink, he say he can't stand the thought". (p. 287)

Lamming's identification with the underprivileged is also evident in his sympathetic portrayal of Pa's dispossession. He evokes our sense of outrage against a system that will uproot a man of dignity like Pa from the privacy of his house, not long after the death of his wife, to the Almshouse. Once there, he will mingle for the rest of his life, with "the deaf and dumb, the blind, those who were swollen, sore-stricken and in some cases apparently leprous" (pp. 252-3).

When he came to write A Grain of Wheat as a student at Leeds University, Ngugi must have found Lamming's peasant bias instructive. This bias is not present in his early novels. It shows for the first time with the appearance of what in our view, as Chapter Four will reveal, is Ngugi's first major novel, in which his political commitment and empathy with the Kenyan peasantry first became apparent.

An experimental novelist who, as we shall shortly see, is concerned to evoke a rich sense of the community he writes about, Lamming allows members of this community in In the Castle of My Skin to comment on the events that have a direct bearing on their lives. Both the young and the elderly are, at various times in the story, given the opportunity to comment on the happenings in the village. At times these comments go beyond the narrow parameters of the village to situate the events in a wider context: The shoemaker, who escapes the massive brainwash exercise in Barbados, sees the changes in the village as part of the imminent decline of the British Empire:

God don't like ugly, an' whenever these big great empires starts to get ugly with the thing they does the Almighty puts His hands down once an' for all. He tell them without talkin' fellows you had your day. (p. 103)

Characters, therefore, serve as chorus in the story commenting on the events affecting individuals and the community. Writing about the Jamaican Roger Mais's Brother Man (1954) Edward Brathwaite argues that:

Everything that happens in this novel has its bearing on these people; on the community. They know what goes on, they talk about it, they react to what goes on, they talk about it, they react to what they know. We get to know them, through their various representatives, better and better as the novel progresses...⁶⁵

The choric function of the village community is evident in Brother Man when the 'chorus of people in the lane' comment about Bra Man in the aftermath of his arrest. (pp. 172-3) It is also apparent in their scandalized response to Papacita's attempt to take over Minette, Bra Man's lover. (p. 139) At times, the chorus comment on individual characters linking their fate with that of the community, as is evident when Bra Man's encounter with the ghost of Ole Mag - a bad omen - is juxtaposed with the possibility of having "'nodder hurricane dis year" (p. 106).

A variant of this technique is apparent in In the Castle of My Skin, where, in addition to other characters, Pa and Ma, whose dialogues are cast in the form of stage presentations, serve as a chorus in the story. Unlike other characters, however, the couple are made to serve a special choric function - that of reflecting the polarity of attitudes towards change in the village.

Representing two opposed moods in the village, Ma, as we saw, is portrayed as a committed churchwoman with an unqualified support of the status quo, while Pa is a pragmatist who follows the changes in the village with a keen interest. While Ma does not welcome change, Pa approves of it and is therefore an embryonic socialist whose materialist view of life and history qualify him as a radical philosopher, and a spokesman for the downtrodden section of the village community, as Chapter Five will reveal. There is, therefore, a sense in which Ma, the embodiment of conservative values speaks for the section of the village community, consisting of people like the taciturn Savory who are contented with and do not question the status quo. Pa, on the other hand, represents the radical section of the community comprising individuals like the shoemaker,

who will not be left out of any attempt to change a political order they view as decadent.

Throughout, we have been trying to show that the similarities between Ngugi and Lamming can be attributed to the fact that they both originate from colonial societies. But the fact that Lamming's own society was in addition enslaved, meant a basic difference between his own society and Ngugi's, which would consequently occasion a difference between the writers' portrayal of certain social structures and even the outlook of individuals, given the unique orientation of Barbados, a plantation society. But we also pointed out that certain differences can be attributed to the fact that Lamming was a more accomplished artist when he wrote his first novel, than Ngugi, who was at a neophyte stage of his vocation as an artist when he wrote The River Between.

Both writers, with varying degree of emphasis, bring to life in their stories the pictures of the communities they write about. The communities which they depict are however not monolithic entities. They are divided along religious lines. The existence of Makuyu and Kameno factions in The River Between testifies to this. Creighton village also contains practising Christians like Ma and those who are not bothered about religion like Miss Foster. But while the Gikuyu community in Ngugi's novel is dislocated by both internal and external forces, in Lamming's community it is colonialism that is held as being responsible for the divisions, by creating a feudal society, and dividing it into classes through the introduction of education and religion. It further intensifies them by sowing seeds of discord between the village community and the overseer class employed to protect the interest of the landlord. The mutual antipathy between the villagers and the overseer class is encouraged by the landlord who would

Occasionally... accuse the overseers of conniving, of slackening on the job, and the overseers who never risked defending themselves gave vent to their feelings on the villagers who they thought were envious and jealous and mean. Low-down nigger people was a special phrase the overseers had coined. The villagers were low-down nigger people since they couldn't bear to see one of their kind get along without feeling envy and hate. This had created a tense relationship between the overseer and the ordinary villager. Each represented for the other an image of the enemy. And the enemy was to be destroyed or placated... The landlord's complaint heightened the image, gave it an edge that cut sharp and deep through every layer of the land. (p. 26)

In spite of these divisions and hostilities, both peoples have a common origin and should the need arise, they can muster a sense of community to ensure their survival against external threats. Hence notwithstanding their mutual antipathy the villagers in In the Castle of My Skin have a 'sense of community' because they share a common language and ancestry, which is basically why, in Trumper's words, they "do so many things the same way" (p. 144). Likewise, in spite of their differences and even mutual hostility members of the Gikuyu community in The River Between, share a common ancestry and cultural heritage. This sense of community and oneness is hinted at by Ngugi early in the story through the symbolism of the river which essentially unites the two ridges even as it divides them.

As part of their political engagement, the writers also show interest in the unity, re-integration and well-being of these communities. When reference is made here or in the subsequent chapters to the 'community' we mean members of the Kenyan and Barbadian societies, peasant or worker, Christian or pagan, painter or musician, whose experiences the novelists try to articulate in their novels.

But as opposed to the sparsely-drawn portrait of the Gikuyu community in Ngugi's novel, in Lamming's the reader is introduced early in the story to a picture of intense communal activity. Lamming's dense portrait of the community is evident at the public baths, around the railtracks and in the main square around Savory's cart where villagers purchase their grocery.

The scene around Savory's cart, thronged with public activity, reveals members of Creighton village as they

buzzed round the cart sniffing and coughing and shouting in excitement. As the crowd thickened the voices rang louder and louder until no single order was clearly audible to Savory. Those who were farthest away from the cart couldn't see him at all and screeled loudest. Small boys slouching on all fours crept their way through the legs of the tall men and women, and emerged often unnoticed in the front row nearest the cart. (p. 91)

There is communal activity in the portrait of "little boys like a bevy of flies /who/ assembled around the lamp-post for gossip and stories" (p. 10). We also get a dense portrait of this community through the scene created by Bob and his mother after the former had 'killed' a neighbour's pumpkin. G. narrates:

On all sides the fences had been weighed down with people, boys and girls and grown-ups. The girls were laughing and looking across to where I stood on the pool of pebbles, naked waiting. They looked at Bob's mother and the broken fence and me. The sun had dried me thoroughly, and now it seemed that I had not been bathed, but brought out in open condemnation and placed in the middle of the yard waiting like one crucified to be jeered at. (p. 19)

The dense picture of the community in In the Castle of My Skin was to profoundly influence Ngugi to produce a rich portrait of the Gikuyu community in A Grain of Wheat (1967) which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

In spite of this basic difference, both writers take us into the "collective folk consciousness,"⁶⁶ the 'communal mind', whenever they intend to expose a problem or a belief shared by the whole community or a segment of it. They do so with the underlying assumption that what makes a community a community is a common way of viewing the world among a people who have a basic interest to protect.

Trumper comments in Lamming's novel that:

Everybody in the village sort of belong. Is like a tree. It can't kind of take up the roots by itself; we all live sort of together, except for those who don't really belong. An' tis the same in the other villages, Dean's village, Case village, Spooner's village, is the same thing; they sort of got the little things like us; they got the village choir an' they go in for the competition every Christmas mornin' 'against us an' the rest; they have the church for everybody an' they school for boys an' girls. (p. 144)

When members of Creighton village are about to engage in a strike the success of which might alter their standard of living, their thought is uniformly conveyed as a thought of the whole community:

If the strike was a success and they were given more wages, they were still as tenants at the mercy of the landlord. They turned the matter over and over in their minds trying to find as best as they could a solution that would fit any emergency... It was true that one village was like another, but their habits were formed and it was difficult for any of them to start from scratch among a new set of people. (p. 98)

In The River Between Ngugi enters the 'collective mind' of the 'traditional' faction of the Gikuyu community when it expresses disbelief upon hearing that Waiyaki is to commit a social taboo by marrying Nyambura, an uncircumcized girl:

Most still clung to the vision of the Teacher they knew the teacher whom they trusted, in whom they believed, a man they could always follow, anywhere. How could they believe this story about his marrying an uncircumcized girl, a daughter of Joshua, the enemy of the people? [Waiyaki] had restored to them their dignity as a tribe and he had given them the whiteman's education when the missionaries had wanted to deny them that wisdom. (p. 143)

When Ngugi enters the 'communal mind', apart from trying to familiarise us with issues of interest to the community, he is also attempting to reflect the social principle underlying traditional Gikuyu society, which is basically communalistic. The centrality of the communal ethos in African societies can be explained in terms of the elaborate pattern of belief in the ancestors, the family-unit, the age-group, the lineage group and the duty of the individual to ensure the continuity of these. If a member of the Hausa or Yoruba societies in Northern and Western Nigeria respectively, for example, procreates, the child is seen not only as his father's son but as a reincarnation of ancestors who is expected in turn, through procreation, to promote the continuity of the lineage in future. This also applies to the Gikuyu society as Jomo Kenyatta observes in Facing Mount Kenya:

One of the outstanding features in the Gikuyu system of marriage is the desire of every member of the tribe to build up his own family group, and by this means to extend and prolong his father's mbari (clan). This results in the strengthening of the tribe as a whole.⁶⁷

A child born into any of these societies thus becomes not only a member of a family but also a member of a clan, a member of a lineage, a member of an age-group and is expected to put the interests of all these before his own personal ones. He is trained from childhood through maturity to accept group responsibilities and attach importance to communal obligations. One of these stages is that of initiation, "when a sufficient number of young men reach biological maturity, [forming] a class cutting across descent groups. Its members are united for life in close solidarity."⁶⁸

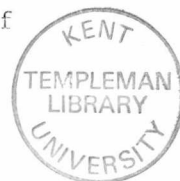
It is this emphasis on solidarity that lies behind the communal characters of traditional African societies. The communal pull creates a tension in The River Between, in which two extremes seems to be pulling Ngugi in different directions. The impulse to portray his educated central character as having a freedom of choice in the Western individualistic sense and the desire to portray the community as a corporate entity controlling and regulating his life. Owing to the communal character of the Gikuyu society, Waiyaki, the central character of The River Between is hardly allowed to enjoy freedom of choice, although the nature of his conventional function requires freedom of choice as to whether or not to conform to communal dictates.

On the other hand, due to the nature of Western European societies "founded on the rational pursuit of individual self-interest,"⁶⁹ characters in English fiction, in a reflection of a cultural norm, have the option to rebel against society and not have their freedom curtailed by communal obligations. This is evident in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916) in which Stephen Dedalus eventually escapes from his family, and the Irish society which he finds oppressive. Prior to his departure, he records in his diary a scene in which his mother packs his "new secondhand clothes in order"⁷⁰ praying that he may learn in his "own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels".⁷¹

Thus in the English literary tradition, the hero can go against the society and, depending on the purpose of the author, either seek and find fulfilment or experience "a tragic failure to find fulfilment".⁷² Often, his triumph is celebrated against that "social block"⁷³ called community with which he is at odds and from which he wants to wrench free so he can exercise his freedom. In the twentieth-century novel, according to Raymond Williams, the triumph of the individual hero is frequently pictured as "a man going away on his own having extricated himself from a dominating situation, and found himself in so doing."⁷⁴

On the other hand, it is made clear in Ngugi's first novel that the community validates the action of the individual, whose freedom is curtailed as he is forced to conform to the needs and dictates of the community even when they conflict with his own personal interest. If the individual goes against the will of the community, as the novel illustrates, he stands the risk of not only being pushed to the edge of the society but also of losing his life as Waiyaki does at the end of the novel. Although African writers rarely celebrate individualism that goes against communal interests, they also indicate that the community with its pressure on the individual to conform is not always right. This is clear in the exiling of Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958), in refusing Baako's talents in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fragments (1970), and in sacrificing Mugo in Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat (1967). It is also evident in the community's condemnation of Okolo and Waiyaki in Gabriel Okara's The Voice (1960) and Ngugi's The River Between respectively.

Shortly before Waiyaki is summoned for trial by the Kiama (the council of elders) his mother ominously warns him not to go against "the voice of the people. When the breath of the people turns against you, it is the greatest curse you can ever get". (p. 123) His decision to marry Nyambura is seen by the Kiama as a violation of communal values since her status as an uncircumcized girl means



that an initiated member of the community cannot associate with her. Members of the Kiama tell him that. But he does not easily succumb to that notion as the kind of 'initiation' he has had in Siriana has now taken the better part of his judgement:

Waiyaki rose. He was now really exasperated. What had Nyambura got to do with them? What? Could he not do whatever he wanted with his own life? Or was his life not his own? He would tell them nothing about Nyambura. (p. 128) (my emphasis)

Although Ngugi is critical of this communal encroachment on Waiyaki's privacy, he also reveals that there is a sense in which Kiama's claim is justified because Waiyaki is actually flouting a code of conduct and the tribal organization has a duty to call him to order. Accordingly, he reveals that Waiyaki is undoubtedly an individual in his own right. But he is also a member of the Gikuyu community whose initiation, as we saw, has linked him to the earth in which lie buried the ancestors whose code of conduct he must respect. However, his Western education which encourages individualism leads him to flout communal obligations and risk his life in a society which places a lot of premium on social conformity. Thus Waiyaki is caught up between public expectation and private obligation, and he predictably chose Nyambura, thus going against 'the voice of the people', "If he lost Nyambura, he too would be lost. He was fighting for his salvation". (p. 143). When Waiyaki is executed for upholding personal values we are immediately asked to see his death in the light of Muthoni's statement, "Was everyone to pay with suffering for choosing his way, for being a rebel?" (p. 49). However, the death of an individual may change communal consciousness.

In traditional Africa, sacrifice is made to appease angry gods, so that condition of life for human beings may improve. Here it is the Gikuyu ancestral spirits who have been offended by Waiyaki who has resolved to marry an uncircumcized girl. (pp. 126-7) His execution is meant to appease the gods in order to avoid a calamity

that might befall Gikuyuland.

This action is in consonance with Gerald Moore's definition of sacrifice as the ritual shedding of blood for the sake of the living community. He continues, "the shedding of blood is thus symbolic of shedding of his [the subject] mortal part so that the world may be renewed".⁷⁵ A death can only be defined as sacrificial if it leaves a prospect of some benefit to those who remain behind, otherwise it will come under the category of 'tragedy' which means that the death is wasteful, pointless and of no value to anyone.⁷⁶

Waiyaki's execution, as we saw, comes under the category of 'sacrifice' as defined by Gerald Moore above. After the hero's death, Ngugi reveals that the community is immediately overcome by a feeling of complicity in the judgement which sentenced the Teacher it loved and respected. The death is beneficial to the community in the sense that it will now force the divided factions to consider the possibility of reconciliation, which the hero has spent his life attempting to bring about in vain. This hope is symbolically conveyed at the end of the story in the picture of the two ridges lying side by side "hidden in darkness" (p. 152) while Honia river which we are told early in the story "meant cure, or bring-back-to life" (p. 1) "went on flowing between them... its beat rising above the dark stillness, reaching into the heart of the people of Makuyu and Kameno". (p. 152) (my emphasis).

Like The River Between, Lamming's novel too, as we saw, brings to life a traditional community which is basically communalistic. The communal character of Lamming's society might be connected with the African ancestry of majority of Barbadians. Within the space of twenty two years (1712 to 1734) up to 75,893 African slaves were imported into Barbados;⁷⁷ most of them from within the Akan-speaking basin of the Senegambia and Angola region.⁷⁸

Today with a population of nearly 400,000,⁷⁹ with only a five per cent white population,⁸⁰ the number of people of African descent (both black and mixed) is as preponderant now as it was in the eighteenth century.

Communality in Barbados, of which Creighton village is a microcosm, is further strengthened by "the proximity of dwellings, the communal fields, and... the mere contiguity of holdings."⁸¹ These links naturally result in "many contacts... and intimate knowledge of one another."⁸²

The communality inherent in Barbadian society lies behind the pressure on the individual in In the Castle of My Skin, not only to conform but also to expose his private life to public gaze. This is evident in the open-air sermon, where individuals are under pressure to confess their 'secret lives', "which were often embarrassingly intimate" (p. 161). However, the pressure for conformity to traditional demands which encroach on the freedom of the individual in The River Between exists to a lesser degree in Lamming's society. This is because the African customs brought by slaves came across the influences of European culture, which the proxies of plantation owners have passed down. This European influence is evident in the freedom which the individual can enjoy eventhough it might conflict with communal interests. Accordingly, Lamming reveals in In the Castle of My Skin that individuals have the freedom to resist the communal pressure for conformity, without inviting the wrath of the community, as the case of the boy who refused to confess at the open-air meeting illustrates. (pp. 161-2). He shows that people are able to jealously guard their private lives because although they are members of the community, they are also individuals in their own right. The individualistic ethos of G. and the boy likens them to Stephen Dedalus the hero of the James Joyce's novel, which, as we saw in the Introduction, has influenced Lamming. But since he was writing a West Indian novel, he has had to reveal both the individualistic and the communalistic dimensions of his characters, especially G. who has both a European and an African ancestry.

Thus in partial contrast with Ngugi, Lamming's duality of perception

dictated by the culturally mixed nature of his society - enables him to explore in In the Castle of My Skin, the tension between individuality and community, attaching equal importance to both. This duality is reflected in the novel which explores this deep tension in a society where, in Lamming's view, the individual can both be a member of the community and be separate from it.

To illustrate this, Lamming opens the first chapter of the novel with the picture of his protagonist in solitude, lamenting the rainfall, which has come to disrupt the celebration of his ninth birthday. Even in his solitude, however, the hero realises that his privacy is persistently ruptured by mental images, which "danced and jeered through the thick black space of this narrow room. My eyes opened and closed, but they would not go" (p. 14). The obsession of Lamming's protagonist with his privacy - a formidable task - is clearly underscored in the above quotation. It becomes apparent as the story unfolds that Lamming attempts not only to draw parallels between his protagonist and the village community, but also to reveal the difficulty of maintaining privacy in a communalistic society. Just as the hero is not really alone, even when he thinks he is because of the mental images that are formed in his brain, the average villager, in spite of being an individual, is not really alone because of the community.

The importance of and tension between the two worlds is further revealed through the patterning of In the Castle of My Skin in which there is a continuous shift of focus and point of view between the private and the public, the individual and the group. Ngugi found this technique instructive when he later came to write A Grain of Wheat (1967) which is similarly patterned on shifting points of view and perspectives as we shall see in Chapter Four. Although the opening chapter of In the Castle of My Skin is deeply private and narrated in the first person, in the end it suggests a sense of community and the place of the protagonist in it. In the second chapter, however, the individualized perspective of the opening chapter is replaced by the collective 'we' which at times, refers

to a group of children, such as Boy Blue and Trumper, and sometimes to the village community which is now the centre of attention.

The chapter begins with a description of the protagonist being bathed by his mother in the open - and the collapse of privacies as the lens widens, bringing into focus children peeping through the fence, which is supposed to create a barrier between one household and another. Lamming uses the scene to show eventually the togetherness of the community; the barriers erected between one household and another are pliable and hardly prevent communal interaction as they crumble under the weight of people curious to see one another: "The two yards merged. The barricade which had once protected our private secrecies had surrendered" (p. 18).

In "Caribbean Critics" (1969) Edward Brathwaite argues that In the Castle of My Skin is "primed and fired by folk rhythms and a concern for the communal life of the folk"⁸³ which is an accurate assessment of the novel. But his contention that "West Indian writers have on the whole abjured individualism"⁸⁴ and are simply "a body of writers mainly concerned with the communal values of their creole society"⁸⁵ is a half-truth. The Introduction has revealed that another West Indian writer, Samuel Selvon, also uses the 'zoning-in' technique in A Brighter Sun (1952) with chapters oscillating from the private to the public consciousness and back. This method, as we saw, is meant to highlight the importance of not only the community but also to emphasize the personal freedom of the West Indian to escape from his society in search of individual fulfilment. As a young man Pa is involved, away from the village community, in the building of Panama canal, a preoccupation which made him "well off" (p. 85) enabling him to "know what it means to drive in coach an' buggie, an' whatever the Great do in the open-air!" (p. 86). Also Trumper's journey to the United States later in the story, is carried out in response to the emigration drive which obsessed many West Indians in search of opportunity

in the 1950's, following the decline of the sugar industry and the resultant mass unemployment and poverty.⁸⁶ The hero of In the Castle of My Skin himself is shown at the end of the story leaving the village community for a teaching appointment in Trinidad. He is so different from Waiyaki who is compelled by the community to conform to its dictates and when he refuses loses his life. Thus in his freedom, Lamming's G. is closer than Waiyaki to the hero of James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), a novel which influenced Lamming, although as we saw, he wrote one different from it.

In addition, Lamming stresses in his novel the fact that the privacy which an individual can get from society enables him to freely interact with and contemplate the West Indian landscape. We earlier noted that cultural identity is not only communal. It is also private. The West Indian, therefore needs the freedom to be alone and periodically escape from the community in order to discover his identity at deeper levels. It is in this context that the freedom which the hero of the novel enjoys from his society further becomes meaningful. He enjoys a private life away from the demands of his community because he has to search for an identity. Furthermore, as a budding writer his inspiration partly derives from the natural environment with which he is in habitual communion. G's freedom to seek privacy is further illustrated by the existence of chapters in the novel in which the hero is depicted either alone contemplating the natural environment or in the company of his peers musing about private consciousness. Boy Blue comments on the apparent dichotomy between the private and the public worlds:

If everybody start this business o' dreamin', makin' a special little kind o' world of dreams for themself there won't be no need for what they call politics. They won't have much time to think 'bout anything that concern a lot o' people put together at the same said time. An' when everybody get that feelin' for himself then there won't be no more the people. 'T will be only me an' you an' he an' she. (p. 168)

As opposed to Boy Blue, Lamming sees the two worlds, which are in a constant tension, as complementary, and emphasizes the

importance of both.

Lamming's acknowledgement of the interplay between the two worlds does not, however stop him from drawing attention to the need for privacy and secrecy in a society in which individuals are anxious to maintain the integrity of the self. The humiliation and degradation of slavery have left a permanent mark on the psyche of the Afro-Caribbean. If the awareness of that past is obscured by colonial myths among members of the contemporary Barbadian society, it exists in them at a below conscious level as Pa's dream illustrates. An intrusion into the privacy of individuals in this society, as we shall note in Chapter Four, will mean an additional assault on the embattled West Indian psyche. Hence the need for privacy and the fear of being 'seen' by the other, expressed by a schoolboy.

After being 'seen' you

become part of the other's world, and therefore no longer in complete control of /your own/. The eye of another was a kind of cage. When it saw you the lid came down, and you were trapped. (p. 73)

The boy, therefore, enjoys darkness when he cannot be seen and is free:

The darkness brought a strange kind of release, and you wished secretly in your heart that darkness would descend on the whole earth so that you could get a chance to see how much energy there was stored in your little self. You could get a chance to leave the cage. You would be free. (p. 74)

Secrecy in this society is so crucial that the invasion of an individual's privacy, especially when guilt and shame are involved, invariably result in violence. This is demonstrated in the physical combat that results when Baby Parker calls Sheila Grimes a "nasty woman" who "ain't clean", and "a man killer" (p. 105). It is also evident in the unjustified assault on a school pupil by the headmaster who suspects that the pupil has a knowledge of his private life, including a domestic secret about his wife who is reputed to be "a hot-stuff" (p. 50).

If individual's in Lamming's society try to guard their privacy in order to avoid a further disintegration of their personalities,

they will have to come to terms with alienation, a reality of the human and West Indian condition which they cannot avoid. Lamming introduces the reader to alienation early in the story through the protagonist whose both childhood and adulthood are governed by loneliness:

My birth began with an almost total absence of family relations. My parents on almost all sides had been deposited in the bad or uncertain accounts of all my future relationships, and loneliness from which had subsequently grown the consolation of freedom was the legacy with which my first year opened. (p. 12) (my emphasis).

At a metaphorical level, the hero's 'absence of family relations' is the condition of alienation to which the hero as well as members of the village community are constantly subjected. The 'freedom' which alienation offers the individual and more precisely articulated by Boy Blue as a feeling of being "a sort of man on a rock with nobody else standin' near you..." (p. 143) is a fragile kind of freedom as it does not assuage the individual's sense of isolation, further exacerbated by colonialism, which uprooted in massive numbers Black people from their original homelands to face the ordeals of living in a plantation society. We shall note in Chapter Four that Trumper's assertion that alienation cannot "happen... to the whole village... 'cause we do so many things the same way" (p. 144) is erroneous. This is illustrated by the conditions of Jon and Bambi whose membership of the village community does not prevent them from experiencing the alienation which results in the death of one and the mental collapse of the other.

Neither does Lamming endorse G's assertion that language is an effective weapon against alienation since when Bambi had his own mental explosion, his ability to articulate his feelings ("his mouth was like a trumpet. He used to talk like a typewriter, rattattatat") (p. 136) does not stop the mental disintegration that is followed by his death. Bambi does not use language as a weapon, he rather uses it as a cushion against the unpleasant reality he

is facing. In all this, Lamming seems to believe with David Cauter in The Illusion (1971) that "solitude burns in the very heart of solidarity"⁸⁷ and vice-versa.

It will be illuminating to consider the treatment of alienation by Roger Mais, who like Lamming sees it as an aspect of life at once West Indian and universal. Alienation occurs in Brother Man when Jesmina bored with the monotony of life visits Minette to have a chat explaining that she, "Jus' came over to talk" because she "was feelin' kinda lonesome like, you know dat way?" (p. 48). Roger Mais adds another dimension to alienation by revealing that contact with other human beings can help alleviate the condition. As a result of Jesmina's contact with other individuals - Minette and Bra' Ambo who later joins them - at the end what must have been a therapeutic session for her, "she looked calmed, steadied" (p. 50) before returning home. In a later episode with Shine, overcome by a similar feeling, Jesmina confirms that "Talk could help somebody when dem feelin' like Ah feel, sure Ah feel, sure Ah would an' talk" (p. 86). (my emphasis) Even in his optimism, Roger Mais acknowledges that social interaction can only serve as a palliative but not as a cure of the condition. Following her relief, the next day, Jesmina is overcome by "the same dreary thoughts... her spirits at a low ebb" (p. 123) as she contemplates her relationship with Shine, her boyfriend, "and the hopelessness of their situation" (p. 123).

In Homecoming, Ngugi writes that, "Alienation seems to be a human condition, though for the West Indian it stems from his specific position as a colonial".⁸⁸ However, our analysis here shows, as it will in Chapter Four that although aggravated by colonialism, alienation, whether in the West Indies or in Kenya, as Ngugi himself reveals in A Grain of Wheat, is a universal human condition. But whereas Ngugi suggests, as we shall see in Chapter Four, that communal solidarity can assuage a feeling of alienation, Lamming, unlike

his Kenyan or even his Jamaican counterpart, Roger Mais, does not indicate that contact with other members of the community can alleviate alienation.

It has been our contention that in the early novels of Lamming and Ngugi analysed in the first section of this thesis, Lamming has been technically more competent than Ngugi, not only because he heeds Edward Brathwaite's call to reflect the West Indian environment in fiction, but also because he relates the symbolism and imagery of his novels to cultural and political nationalism, their basic concern. Ngugi's early novels are the work of an apprentice, trying, as a cultural and political nationalist to respond to the encounter of his society with the West. On the other hand, Lamming has written early novels which have, to a degree better than Ngugi's, matched form with content.

In his first novel, Lamming successfully combines elements of storytelling, drama, poetry, the chorus and a multiple perspective to create an organic West Indian form appropriate to a society consisting of disparate peoples attempting to create a cultural and political tradition. The combination of these diverse techniques into an artistic whole reflects the unity which Lamming wishes for the fragmentary Barbadian cultural tradition as well as the dislocated Barbadian personality.

Edward Brathwaite argues that "The problem facing George Lamming's work (and this is the burden of all true experiment and exploration) is one of form. His insights require poetry, and Lamming has been remarkably successful in deploying this within his novels' structure".⁸⁹ This is an accurate appraisal of In the Castle of My Skin, which notwithstanding the diversity of its techniques, can be termed a poetic novel in which as the story gradually unfolds events and characters illuminate each other. Also symbols and images in the novel are vitally linked to produce eventually a multi-layered picture which explicates the complexities of the life Lamming describes.

A peasant, the fisherman whom the boys meet on the beach is associated with the landscape, "The sand was firm where he stood, and the water hurried along, lapping his big, bare feet. He didn't twitch". (p. 146) He is also associated with the sea, which defines his character. Like the sea, he has benevolent and malevolent aspects. The malevolent aspect of the sea, which is also a source of life for Barbadian fishermen, is evident when its powerful currents sweep Boy Blue away. (p. 151). Through the fisherman's threat to let Boy Blue drown, Lamming sensitizes us to the malevolent streak in human nature, a view which is intensified in Of Age and Innocence (1958) and also in Natives of My Person (1972), which reveals the malignancy in human nature, both White and Black. By rescuing him from the sea currents, however, the fisherman evinces the benevolent streak in human beings. (p. 152) After he saves Boy Blue, the boys realise that the fisherman who had been enigmatic "was only big and strong, as we would say in the village, but he was like one of us, just like one of us. A man". (p. 153) The fisherman is big and intimidating, his solidity likening him to a castle, but as the boys realize, he is also human. Thus it is not only Mr. Creighton's house to which the word castle refers since it is also applicable to human beings.⁹⁰ After Trumper's return from America, in his confidence he assumes the stature of a human castle, "He found something to cradle his deepest instincts and emotions. He was a Negro and he was proud. He could walk in the sun or stand on the highest hill and proclaim himself the blackest evidence of the whiteman's denial of conscience". (p. 299)

Furthermore, characters in the story are associated with the crabs which the boys often come across on the beach. One of the children Boy Blue "looked like a big crab crawling on all fours, and he made us laugh with the shift and shake of his slouching movements". (p. 150) The movement of the crabs recalls the slow and painful movement of the boys towards maturity and the achievement of identity which, as we saw,

is in Lamming's view, an on-going process. The political awareness of the village community has also been slow, like a crab moving. Because they have been steeped very long in the colonial condition, the "crawling movement" (p. 149) of the crabs re-enact the villagers' gradual achievement of political consciousness.

The crabs' shells which are tough, are protective shields which, as we saw, recall the human skin, in which the individual can hide the integrity of his personality from external aggression. Boy Blue's skin which "was solid and smooth [having] a toughness... that made it seem impervious to the sun" (p. 126) recalls the resilience of a crab's shell in which it hides as it scuttles away out of people's reach. A human being can keep intact his inner identity within his skin, which to all intents and purposes resembles a crab's shell.

In the highly private eleventh chapter of In the Castle of My Skin, the hero encounters a pebble, which is one of the primary symbols recurring several times in the novel. The pebble which the hero finds on the beach is concrete, private and selected. For the hero, it ceases to be an ordinary pebble but a perceived object with a pattern of associations crystallizing around it, "each time I retrieved it I held it long and felt its shape and saw its texture until it was no longer a pebble. It had become one of those things one can't bear to see for the last time". (p. 214)

Since those 'things' "included people, objects and situations" (p. 215) G's friends, Boy Blue, Trumper and Bob, are each in his own way a special pebble to the hero as is his mother with whom he maintains a close relationship. (p. 278) Pa, who is the last person G. sees before his departure is also a special pebble. (p. 226) The first assistant who "was a kind of legend in the High School" (p. 226) is also a special pebble to G. In real life, he is a portrait of Frank Collymore, "the most respected, most influential and best loved master of Combermere School",⁹¹ which Lamming attended.

From his attachment to the pebble and his inability to find

it the next day, the hero learns that it is impossible to reclaim the past, such as the past of the village, which finally gives way following the symbolic collapse of the shoemaker's shop and the movement of Pa to the Almshouse. His romantic illusion that "there were things one couldn't lose" (p. 215) gives way to the reality of his growing out of his childhood innocence. This prepares him for the painful actuality of leaving behind his mother, his friends, Pa and the village community as he departs for Trinidad.

Thus the novel is not only as Ngugi argues "one of the great political novels in modern 'colonial' literature".⁹² It is also a novel in which Lamming achieves the artistic feat of combining various techniques to produce a work that illuminates the psychological, cultural and political problems of Barbados during the colonial era.

Such a claim cannot be made for The River Between. As an evocation of the first phase of the encounter between the Gikuyu society and Europeans, Ngugi's novel succeeds in so far as it adequately captures the conflict between the two factions who are rivals but whose reciprocal animosity has now been sharpened by the arrival of the missionaries in their midst. The portrayal of the Makuyu faction led by the overzealous Joshua to defend Christianity is as compelling as the picture of the determined efforts of the Kameno faction to defend Gikuyu cultural integrity by defending local customs. However, when one considers The River Between in the light of Chinweizu's assertion that "African historical novels need to convey the flavour of African life in the place and period in which their action is set",⁹³ one immediately notices that the novel lacks the wealth of cultural reference normally associated with African novels set in the past. The paucity of the novel's cultural depth can be identified by making a comparison with Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958) which similarly depicts the first phase of the encounter between the Igbos and Europeans. One can use the sphere of religion to illustrate this argument.

The religiosity of Ngugi's characters is less profound than that of Chinua Achebe's, whose first novel evokes the life of Igbo whose rituals and belief system were, like those of Gikuyuland, still intact before the advent of colonialism. As opposed to the single instance of Chege whose link with the religious system, (apart from his evocation of the Gikuyu creation myth) is not fully illustrated, Chinua Achebe presents an elaborate pattern of the religious life of a traditional community in which the lives of individuals are controlled by gods, religious custom and ritual. The picture emerges in the novel of a traditional society, with its religious roots still intact, in which any major undertaking must have the approval of gods.

Early in the story, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves is consulted for advice on whether or not Umuofia should wage a war against Mbaino, and the deference which the former have for their gods is illustrated in the observation that "Umuofia... never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its oracle..."⁹⁴ Individuals occasionally offer sacrifices to the gods, (as Okonkwo does at the end of the second chapter), so as to ensure peace and prosperity for their households. The gods must be appeased when an offence is committed. When Okonkwo accidentally kills a fellow clansman, the earth goddess must be placated. To this end, Okonkwo's house is destroyed and he is exiled to Mbaino for seven years.

Another area in which the shortcoming of The River Between can be discerned is in the area of language. Chinweizu argues that If an African novel is not written in an African language, it should at least be written in an English language that has been "flexed and bent to allow [local African] idiomatic and rhetorical usages to be presented."⁹⁵ Ngugi's novel does not capture the rhythms and tones of local Gikuyu speech. The author does not bend the English language to suit the local circumstances of his characters as Chinua Achebe does in his second novel, Arrow of God (1964).

Referring to his own innovative use of language, Chinua Achebe cites an instance when the Chief Priest is telling one of his sons why it is necessary to send him to the whiteman's camp:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the whiteman today will be saying had we known tomorrow.⁹⁶

He then cites another version of the same speech in formal English to show that although it is in English, Ezeulu's version reflects his Igbo background couched as it is in the local idiom peculiar to Igboland.⁹⁷

In contrast, no attempt is made by Ngugi to reflect the Gikuyu background of Chege, a traditionalist, whose reference as "the true embodiment of the Gikuyu" (p. 44) who "knew, more than any other person, the ways of the land and the hidden things of the tribe" (p. 7) notwithstanding, uses formal English when he speaks. This is evident when he decides to send his son to school. He tells Waiyaki, "Arise. Heed the prophecy. Go to the Mission place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the whiteman. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites". (p. 20)

Another important aspect of tradition, connected with language, missing in The River Between is the consistent use of proverbs. They certainly do exist in the Gikuyu cultural tradition as their generous and consistent use by Ngugi in Devil on the Cross (1982), which will be discussed in Chapter Five will show. Chinua Achebe argues that proverbs should form a vital component of African fiction set in traditional Africa:

The good orator calls to his aid the legends, folklore, proverbs... of his people; they are some of the raw material with which he works... One hopes that African writers will make use of them /proverbs/ in dialogue, for which they were originally intended.⁹⁸

However, The River Between is slim in this dimension. Although Ngugi creates the picture of a traditional society that prides itself in the knowledge of tribal secrets and its jealously guarded cultural heritage, it fails to come to life, as proverbs are rarely used with the suggestiveness of Chinua Achebe who builds them into the texture of his story about a traditional society, in which the art of conversation is given a high regard and "proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten". (pp. 10 - 11) Things Fall Apart). When the elderly speak their utterances should normally be spiced with proverbs as a way of reflecting their ancient wisdom. During Okonkwo's farewell party in Mbanta one of the elders comments about the negative impact of Christianity on the society illustrating his point with a proverb, which gives a graphic quality to his statement:

An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers. He can curse the gods of his father and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan. (p. 152)

Thus it is not convincing as we notice in The River Between for Ngugi to create traditional figures such as Chege and Kabonyi, and not let them use the kind of speech through which their knowledge of tradition can be transmitted. At one point in the novel, Ngugi comments that Kabonyi "could speak in proverbs and riddles, and nothing could appeal more to the elders, who still appreciated a subtle proverb and witty riddles" (p. 95). But we have to take this statement on trust as this aspect of traditional culture is largely missing.

The technical limitations of The River Between are also apparent in characterization. Ngugi's sympathetic identification with Waiyaki makes the novelist portray him less the author of his misfortunes than a victim of the evil machinations of Kabonyi whose enmity for the 'teacher' is rooted mainly in the tussle for leadership between the two men. (p. 93)

Because of this identification, the reader is made to disregard most of Waiyaki's blemishes, such as vacillation, indecision and political naivety, and see Kabonyi as the arch-devil causing Waiyaki's tragedy. (pp. 91 - 101)

As a result, the Kiama is reduced to a mere weapon in the hands of Kabonyi, who uses the council of elders to destroy his arch-enemy, Waiyaki. Before the rally which precedes Waiyaki's trial, Kabonyi "knew that his victory was the victory of the tribe; that tribe that was now threatened by Waiyaki. And he hated Waiyaki intensely and identified this hatred with the wrath of the tribe against impunity and betrayal". (p. 144)

It is significant that it is in the dead of the night that Waiyaki is summoned by the council of elders, whose sole mission is not to correct but to condemn. When Kamau and Waiyaki arrive at the Kiama sanctuary, the outside is dimly lit and the inside is no better as Waiyaki is only aware of "figures lurking in the edges of darkness" (p. 124). The Kiama is a sinister organization. It is to be feared. Ngugi's entirely negative portrayal of the Kiama is thus not only because at the time when he wrote The River Between his sensibility was fundamentally Christian. It is also because he is imaginatively so much on Waiyaki's side. As a cultural nationalist, Ngugi is torn between his urge to depict Kiama as an influential political organization in Gikuyuland, and the desire to reveal, since he was also a Christian when he wrote The River Between, (and also on Waiyaki's side), its sinister aspect. Because of this Ngugi reduces what, to the Gikuyu society is a council of elders which performs "judicial, religious and social functions",⁹⁹ as a mere weapon of vengeance in the hands of Kabonyi and his son Kamau, who has been outshone by Waiyaki both professionally and in Nyambura's heart.

In spite of its flaws The River Between is a novel by an author who is committed to the restoration of the cultural integrity of his community, which he sees as a prerequisite for its political emancipation. His evocation of the historical struggle of the Gikuyus to resist cultural and religious, and by extension, political domination, testify to this concern. The book has another technical strength which deserves mention. As we have already observed, at the end of the story, Ngugi does not provide any clear-cut solution to the problems of his society. He only suggests possibilities, and asks us to participate in the process of arriving at the answers. The River Between is a better novel for the complex suggestiveness that results from this method, because it sets our imagination working.¹⁰⁰

Arnold Kettle supports this kind of ending in his contention that:

Surely, If literature affects our action or changes someone's life, it is not by handing out a recipe for the applying but rather by disturbing us emotionally, mentally because it finds us, so that, after a series of such experiences and along with others that work in with it, we feel the urge to do 'something' or at least to ask ourselves the question: 'What is to be done?'¹⁰¹

Like Ngugi's novel, Lamming's has a complicated ending which leaves problems to be worked out. This is in conformity with the author's open-end technique in which "there is really no closing of the drama. This experience will be a creative legacy, the soil of some other movement in life."¹⁰² This technique also encourages us to engage in the active imaginative task of using textual evidence, (at times, a combination of hope and despair) to arrive at a conclusion. At the end of the novel, the old order has collapsed following the dispossession of the villagers, who are now in disarray, "On the whole the village was hopeless and bewildered" (p. 290). The riots are not followed by a political victory of the masses. But through his emphasis on the psychological damage of colonialism and neo-colonialism on the members of his society, Lamming strongly suggests the need for an internal therapy, both for the dispossessed peasants and workers and for the middle-class elite whom he also sees as victims.

He reveals that for the alienated West Indian middle-class this can be had through contact with their peasant roots, an issue which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. For G. who sets out for Trinidad, the problem of identity still remains. In spite of his uncertainty about the future, he feels it is his "duty to discover" (p. 299) the cultural identity that has eluded him as it has evaded the personality of the average West Indian.

In spite of the few similarities in technical achievement between the two novels, Lamming has been more successful than Ngugi in tying his artistic forms to the requirements of his cultural and political message. As a result, there is more consistency between mode and material in In the Castle of My Skin than in The River Between, in which Ngugi's loyalties, as our discussion has tried to show, appear divided. Therefore, Ngugi's novel cannot boast of a sophistication of style and technique that are the hallmarks of In the Castle of My Skin. The contrast is not, however, only a matter of the relative artistic achievements in these early fictions. For when Ngugi himself came later in Homecoming (1972) to write a compelling critical essay on Lamming's novel, the power of his insight into its 'political' side is matched by almost complete ignoring of the 'individual' and 'artistic' sides, as we shall note in Chapter Three. Much though they have in common, the differences from the start - will be no less interesting and significant.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "The Writer and His Past", Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics, (rpt; 1972, London, Heinemann, 1978), p.39.
2. George Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile, (London, Allison and Busby, 1960) p. 76.
3. George Lamming, "The West Indian People", Caribbean Essays: An Anthology, ed. Andrew Salkey, (London, Evans 1973) p. 8.
4. Edward Brathwaite, The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy 2nd ed. (1967; rpt. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 270.
5. Edward Brathwaite, p. 270.
6. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, The River Between, (London, Heinemann 1965) p. 3. The present and subsequent references will be to the 1983 edition, reset in 1975 with page numbers immediately following the cited passages.
7. Jeremy Murray-Brown, Kenyatta 2nd ed. (1972; rpt. London, Allen and Unwin, 1979) p. 27.
8. See Ime Ikiddeh, "James Ngugi as Novelist", African Literature Today, No. 2 (London, Heinemann 1965) p. 5.
9. Godfrey Muriuki, A History of the Kikuyu 1500 - 1900 (London, Oxford University Press, 1975) p. 9.
10. Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu (1938; rpt. London Heinemann 1962) pp. 120-1.
11. See "Tolstoy in Africa", an interview with Ngugi wa Thiong'o by R. Sander and Ian Munro. In it Ngugi argues that in The River Between he was "trying to capture what /he believed/ people thought about education or about other problems at this time in Kenya's history, in the 30's... Education was really seen as a tool, education was a weapon to wrench your independence from the colonial regime", Critical Perspectives on Ngugi wa Thiong'o ed. G.D. Killam (Washington, Three Continents Press, 1984) p. 50.
12. B.E. Kiprorir, "Carey Francis at the A.H.S. Kikuyu 1940-62", Biographical Essays on Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya ed. B.E. Kiprorir, (Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980) p. 153.
13. Robert Serumaga, "A Mirror of Integration," Protest and Conflict in African Literature ed. Cosmo Pieterse and Donald Munro (London, Heinemann 1969) p. 75.
14. See for example New Testament and Psalms (Oxford, Oxford University Press) (n.d.) where the bible talks about unity in Ephesians 4, p. 289; forgiveness and reconciliation in Ephesians 5, p. 290.
15. Kenneth Ramchand, An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature (London, Nelson 1976) p. 46.

16. George Lamming, In the Castle of My Skin, (London, Michael Joseph 1953) pp. 141-2. The present and subsequent references will be to the 1979 edition published by Longman Drumbeat with page numbers immediately following the cited passages.
17. See Philip Sherlock, West Indies (London, Thames and Hudson, 1966) p. 117.
18. See Philip Sherlock who argues on pp. 121-22 of West Indies (1966) that the situation in Barbados must be differentiated from that in Trinidad and the Guianas (Guyanas) where the East Indians brought in as labourers between 1850 and 1920 did not exercise such freedom. This was because the East Indians were able through a common language and religion to retain the values of their mother-country, such as marriage at an early age.
20. See F.A. Hoyos, Grantley Adams and the Social Revolution, (London, Macmillan 1974) p. 39.
21. Roger Mais, Brother Man 7th ed. (1954; rpt. London, Heinemann, 1986) p. 32. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
22. Ambrose Kom, "In the Castle of My Skin: Lamming and the Colonial Situation", World Literature Written in English, (Vol. 18, No. 2, Nov. 1979) p. 418.
23. Ambrose Kom, p. 411.
24. George Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile, p. 228.
25. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth trans. C. Farrington (London, Mac Gibbon and Kee, 1965) p. 32.
26. See George Lamming, "The Novelist on Religion", Caribbean Contact (Vol. II, No. 17, Nov. 1983) p. 15.
27. George Lamming, p. 15.
28. George Lamming, p. 15.
29. George Lamming, p. 15.
30. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "The Writer and His Past", Homecoming, p. 41.
31. V.S. Naipaul, The Middle Passage (London, Andre Deutsch, 1962) p. 68.
32. Barbara Howes ed. Introduction to From the Green Antilles: Writings of the Caribbean (London, Souvenir 1966) p. xii.
33. Barbara Howes, p. xii.
34. Arthur Drayton, "West Indian Fiction and West Indian Society" Kenyon Review, (Vol. 25, No. 1, 1963) p. 133.
35. Chris Wanjala, "The East African Writer and His Society", Kenya Historical Review (Vol. 2, No. 1, 1974) p. 34.
36. Godfrey Muriuki, A History of the Kikuyu 1500 - 1900, p. 135.
37. Mugo Gatheru, A Child of Two Worlds (London, Heinemann 1964) p. 57.

38. Godfrey Muriuki, A History of the Kikuyu 1500 - 1900, p. 135.
39. Quoted in James Olney's Tell Me Africa: An Approach to African Literature (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1973) p. 112.
40. In 'A Personal Note' J.P. Clark considers his case being an educated Nigerian (Ijaw) as being "a little bit more complicated being that fashionable cultural phenomenon they call "mulatto" - not in flesh but in mind". He further notes, "I sometimes wonder what in my make-up is "traditional" and "native", and what "derived" and "modern". See J.P. Clark's A Reed in the Tide (1965; rpt. London, Longmans, 1976), p. vii.
41. J.P. Clark, A Decade of Tongues (London, Longman, Drumbeat, 1981) p. 30.
42. David Dabydeen and Nana Wilson-Tagoe, "Selected Themes in West Indian Literature: An annotated bibliography", Third World Quarterly, (Vol. 9, No. 3 July 1987) p. 925.
43. Louis James, "The Sad Initiation of Lamming's G. and Other Caribbean Green Tales", Common Wealth: Conference of Commonwealth Literature ed. Anna Rutherford (Aarhus: Akademisk, Boghandel 1971) p. 136.
44. Louis James, p. 143.
45. Susheila Nasta, "Caribbean Women's Writing: Motherland, Mother-tongue, mother culture - Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, Zee Edgell", A paper read at an Institute of Commonwealth Studies Postgraduate Seminar on 28/4/1988 in London, p. 4.
46. Susheila Nasta, pp. 4-5.
47. Nefertiti Gayle, 'Black Woman Out Dere' in Watchers and Seekers: Creative Writing by Black Women in Britain ed. Rhonda Cobham and Merle Collins (London, Womens' Press 1987) p. 30.
48. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "George Lamming's 'In the Castle of My Skin', Homecoming, p. 128.
49. Kenneth Ramchand, An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature, p. 57.
50. Gichigi, John, Personal Interview. 19th June 1988.
51. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "The Making of a Rebel", Index on Censorship (Vol. 9, No. 3, June 1980) p. 20.
52. Jacques Macquet, Africanity, (London, Oxford University Press, 1972) p. 38.
53. F.B. Welbourn, "The Impact of Christianity on East Africa," History of East Africa, Vol. III, D.A. Low and Alison Smith (eds.) (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976) p. 392.
54. David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe endorse this point by arguing that "In The River Between /Ngugi/ is already scrutinizing his key characters as potential leaders of a new society. Joshua and Kabonyi obviously fail all the tests; but even Waiyaki is found sadly wanting". See Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings (London, Heinemann 1983) p. 28.

55. See Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham, The Myth of "Mau Mau" Nationalism in Kenya (London, Frederick Praeger, 1966) p. 82.
56. Jeremy Murray-Brown, Kenyatta, 2nd ed. (1972; rpt. London, Allen and Unwin, 1979) p. 25.
57. Godfrey Muriuki, A History of the Kikuyu 1500 - 1900, p. 150.
58. Jeremy Murray-Brown, p. 25.
59. Godfrey Muriuki, p. 150.
60. Godfrey Muriuki, p. 150.
61. Godfrey Muriuki, p. 149.
62. Ian Munro, "The Theme of Exile in George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin", World Literature Written in English (No. 20, Nov. 1971) pp. 51 - 52.
63. Gloria Lyn, "Once Upon a Time: Some Principles of Storytelling: In the Castle of My Skin, Critical Issues in West Indian Literature ed. Erika S. Smilowitz and Roberta Q. Knowles, (Parkesburg, Caribbean Books 1984) p. 123.
64. Edward Baugh, "Cuckoo Culture in In the Castle of My Skin", Ariel (Vol. 8, No. 3, July 1977) p. 31.
65. Edward Brathwaite, "Jazz and the West Indian Novel" Bim 46 (1968) p. 122.
66. See Helen Tiffin's "Looking Back into the Future: Literature in the English Speaking Caribbean", New Literature Review: Literature in the English Speaking Caribbean No. 7, p. 12 (n.d.)
67. Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, p. 163.
68. Jacques Macquet, Africanity, (London, Oxford University Press, 1972) p. 19.
69. Quoted in J. Abayomi's 'Commitment in the African Novel', diss., University of Leeds, 1981, p. 20.
70. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as A Young Man, 4th ed. (1916; rpt. St. Albans, Triad/Panther Books, 1977) p. 228.
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73. Obi Wali, "The Individual and the Novel in Africa," Transition (Vol. 4, No. 18, 1965) p. 32.
74. Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution 2nd ed. (1961; rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin 1984) p. 313.
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76. Gerald Moore, pp. 177-8.

77. See "Bajan Dialect: English or Sudanic?" by Mary Jo Willeford Bim (Vol. II, No. 44, Jan. - Jun 1967) p. 268.
78. Hilary Beckles, Black Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery 1627 - 1833 (Bridgetown, Antilles Publications 1984) p. 29.
79. F.A. Hoyos, Barbados: Our Island Home (London, Macmillan 1960). The current figure is arrived at using information on p. 1 of the above reference. Writing in 1960, F.A. Hoyos gave the population of Barbados as 23,000 "increasing annually at the rate of 4,000".
80. F.A. Hoyos, p. 10.
81. F. Tonnies, Community and Association trans. C.P. Loomies (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 49.
82. F. Tonnies, p. 49.
83. Edward Brathwaite, "Caribbean Critics", The Critical Quarterly (Vol. II, 1969) p. 272.
84. Edward Brathwaite, p. 271.
85. Edward Brathwaite, p. 272.
86. David Dabydeen and Nana Wilson-Tagoe, "Selected Themes in West Indian Literature", Third World Quarterly, p. 942.
87. David Caute, The Illusion: An Essay on Politics, Theatre and the Novel, (New York, Colophon Books 1971) p. 85.
88. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "George Lamming and the Colonial Situation", Homecoming, p. 140.
89. Edward Brathwaite, "West Indian Prose-Fiction in the Sixties: A Survey", The Critical Survey (Vol 3, No. 1, Winter 1966) p. 172.
90. In "Lamming's Poetic Language in In the Castle of My Skin" David S. West also acknowledges the fact that castle symbolism is used "with skill and subtlety" in a novel in which "each individual becomes a castle. the symbol of... the individual preserving his personal integrity and identity". See The Literary Half-Yearly, (Vol. XVIII, No. 2 July 1977) p. 74.
91. Bruce Hamilton, "Colly at Eight", Savacou 7/8 (Jan./June 1983) p. 15.
92. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin", Homecoming, p. 126.
93. Chinweizu et al, Toward the Decolonization of African Literature p. 240.
94. Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (1958; rpt. London, Heinemann 1962) p. 10. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
95. Chinweizu et al, Toward the Decolonization of African Literature p. 262.

96. Chinua Achebe, Morning Yet on Creation Day (London, Heinemann, 1975) p. 61.
97. "I am sending you as my representative among these people - just to be on the safe side in case the new religion develops. One has to move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch that those who fail to come to terms with the whiteman may well regret their lack of foresight". Quoted in Chinua Achebe, p. 55.
98. Quoted in Chinweizu et al, Toward the Decolonization of African Literature, p. 263.
99. Donald Barnet and Karari Njama, Mau Mau from Within, (London, Modern Reader, 1966) p. 44.
100. David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe in Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings have argued, in connection with The River Between that "Already Ngugi is not concerned with happy ending nor neat resolutions but with having some impact on his actual society by provoking and stirring his readers". (p. 33)
101. See Introduction to Marxists on Literature: An Anthology, ed. David Craig (Harmondsworth, Penguin 1977) p. 22.
102. George Kent, "An Interview with George Lamming", Black World (Vol. 22, No. 5, March 1973) p. 16.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WRITER AND NATIONALISM

This chapter compares and contrasts Weep Not, Child (1964) and Of Age and Innocence (1958) which centre on the colonial societies of Kenya and West Indies during the era of the struggle for independence. Both societies portrayed are going through the last stages of colonialism. Both are multi-racial and therefore melting-pots of diverse cultural and racial groups, which can be an asset, but is also a condition susceptible to segregation and domination of one group by another often leading to conflict and violence.

As political nationalists and advocates for unity, both writers concentrate on the problems bedeviling the emergence of national solidarity in their societies, tracing them not only to human beings but also to the arrangement whereby colonialism brought people from different cultural and racial backgrounds together. Both novels are therefore anti-colonial revealing that colonialism not only created the complex social environments but through fully-pledged colonial regimes also contributed to the escalation of the political crises and hostilities by institutionalizing a policy of divide-and-rule in both societies. Both novelists eventually take refuge in the world of children who symbolize hope in a world characterized by adult hostility and bloodshed.

In spite of the general similarities between the two novels, there are also differences which can be mainly accounted for by difference in sensibility as well as by the different historical experiences to which the two writers were responding as their societies approached political independence in the late nineteen fifties.

The White settler population in Kenya, as we observed in the Introduction, started arriving late in the nineteenth century. Around the same time, the building of the Mombasa-Lake Victoria railway necessitated the importation of semi-skilled labour from India. The Foreign Office therefore arranged the immigration of Asians in large numbers. This historical event which started in 1895 and "was to continue on a substantial scale until 1902"¹ brought Asians into a community which already consisted of a settler European as well as the indigenous African population.

Like Kenya, San Cristobal - a fictional composite West Indian community - is also multi-racial, consisting of Europeans, Afro-Caribbeans and the indentured Indian and Chinese labourers who were brought in after the Emancipation in 1834. In both societies Europeans constituted a privileged minority group controlling and manipulating political and economic power to the detriment of the other races. In Trinidad, a multi-racial community which can stand for San Cristobal, Samuel Selvon reveals that "White people came first, then Indians, and then the Blacks"² a social structure which bears similarity to Kenya's three-tier system, which placed Africans below a hierarchy which had Europeans on top and Asians in the middle position. Unlike Ngugi who does not portray poor whites in Weep Not, Child, because in reality all the Europeans in Kenya were either rich plantation owners or were allied to the colonial administration,³ Lamming reveals that being European does not always mean social and economic privilege, as illustrated by the example of Baden-Semper, a poor White. As opposed to Kenya, the immigrant population from Europe to the West Indies, apart from plantation owners or their proxies, consisted of white indentured labourers called

"Redlegs in Barbados"⁴ or those like Baden-Semper, who mismanaged a thriving business left to them by their enterprising parents.

(p.227)

Both writers believe multi-racialism is a strength: the different races can pool their resources together in building virile societies in which the concept of one nation, one destiny can emerge. In 1962, in a speech entitled 'Kenya: The Two Rifts,' Ngugi lamented the insularity between the races constituting Kenyan society:

They must remain strangers in the same land. They must remain sharply divided by a vertical rift. Few have been adventurous and courageous enough to cross the rift and see what is on the other side. The African, and especially the Asian and the European, had each lived in his racial shell...In Kenya then, there is really no concept of a nation. One is always a Kikuyu, a Luo, a Nandi, an Asian or an European.⁵

He further cautions that:

To live on the level of race or tribe is to be less than whole. In order to live, a chick has to break the shell shutting it out from the light. Man too must break the shell and be free. Political freedom and foreign rule, essential as it is, is not the freedom. [Freedom is the ability] to look from the tribe to a wider concept of human association...When this begins to happen, a Kenya nation will be born.⁶

Likewise, Lamming an ardent supporter of unification in the West Indies, has cautioned his fellow islanders against the dangers of disunity:

...We West Indians, shall travel the road of self-mutilation, if we do not quickly reconvene, and assume our tasks as men and women of one country...Those tasks must be founded on national solidarity towards which there is a stifled but certain yearning. We will not know the true volume of this feeling, until we are in full economic possession of the house in which we live...More than half of mankind is embattled in a drama of similar dimension and, in some cases, even greater rigidities. I do not believe that we will be denied the goodwill of men who are also trying to remake the world.⁷

Since the races in Kenya hardly mix, Ngugi does not provide a credible structural foundation on which multi-racial unity can

be based apart from the fact that all inhabit the same land. Therefore, Lamming makes a stronger case for national and multi-racial cohesion than Ngugi, by showing the historical foundations on which such integration can be based. His case for a Pan-Caribbean identity is based on the premise that in spite of their racial differences, all brought to the West Indies to be exploited should recognize their status as colonials of a metropolitan power, an awareness which Isaac Shephard later tries to implant in the minds of the San Cristobal population. (p. 167) Earlier on in the aeroplane, Shephard has voiced his dream of multi-racial unity and as demonstrated above that of Lamming in seeing San Cristobal as a place where, "Africa and India shake hands with China and Europe wrinkles like a brow begging every face to promise love... San Cristobal so old and yet so new, no place, this land but a promise."⁸

Lamming also reveals the cultural basis for such unity through interculturalisation, "a process of intermixture and enrichment"⁹ between cultures, which has been going on since the early nineteenth century, when indentured labour was introduced into a region formerly inhabited by Afro-Caribbeans and the White plantocrats only. Samuel Selvon, a Trinidadian writer, describes the process in which by the time he was in his teens, he was a product of his multi-cultural environment "as Trinidadian as anyone could claim to be, quite at ease with a cosmopolitan attitude, and I had no desire to isolate myself from the mixture of races that comprised the community."¹⁰ Although Sam Selvon's family are Indo-Trinidadians they "ate curry once a week - the other days it was creole food, souse and black pudding on Saturday night, and stew beef or chicken and callaloo for Sunday lunch,"¹¹ and as a

child he "was never stopped from being friendly with or playing with anyone in the neighbourhood because they were a different colour or race."¹² Edward Brathwaite in Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean (1974) refers to this process which has been occurring in a number of islands in the archipelago: "In some Jamaican cults, worshippers are possessed by 'Indian' gods. In Trinidad, East Indian festivals like Hosein have become integrated into the creole imagination; while some Indians consult obeahmen or are themselves such,...There is also their participation in carnival..."¹³ The process of interculturalisation is dramatized in Of Age and Innocence through the boys who notwithstanding their different racial backgrounds are united and participate in the carnival, an Afro-Caribbean ceremony originating from Trinidad. In order to feel part of an occasion which has always [been] an incredible spectacle" (p.121) to the San Cristobal's mixed community, the boys have used part of their savings to purchase costumes for the big day which they will not miss.(p.121)

Also notwithstanding their different cultural backgrounds, their new habitation has made them indigenes. Rocky the fisherman articulates Lamming's sentiment in his assertion that "San Cristobal can't claim no special colour...it hold every race that woman an' man can make an' every colour, too"(p.394). Being nationals of San Cristobal, the different races have therefore become heirs to a vibrant cultural tradition: the legend of the Tribe Boys and the Bandit Kings, which goes back to the Amerindian past of the West Indies. According to Frances Kay in This is Grenada (1966) the legend originated in Grenada. In 1650, she further argues, a Frenchman called du Parquet bought the island from its original inhabitants, the Caribs. The following year

they decided to change their minds about the transaction and fought courageously to regain the land. Du Parquet and Le Comte organized a strong force which fought and defeated the Caribs. Rather than surrender, the remaining thirty decided to leap into the sea from a precipice, which thereafter became known as Le Morne des Sauteur, or "The Hill of the Leapers."¹⁴ The remains of the fictional counterparts of the Bandit Kings lie buried in San Cristobal. (pp.87-88) This myth which Lamming transmutes into a heroic legend in Of Age and Innocence can inspire the races not only to unite as their forebears did in the past but also motivate them to fight the modern Bandit Kings, the colonialists, in order to gain their freedom in contemporary San Cristobal.

On the other hand, both writers show that multi-racialism can lead to ethnocentrism and racial tension. It can also lead to racial segregation and consequently to the liberation of malignant forces in humanity, in response, which produces violence, and can even lead to the annihilation of the whole community. In Ngugi's society, it is the domination of Africans by the European and Asian settler population that created the enmity between Africans on the one hand and the races on the other. This domination creates tension between the races in Kenya. Stephen Howlands, a European, alerts us to the tension one feels upon walking the Nairobi streets, where

...though the sky may be clear and the sun is smiling, you are still not free to enjoy the friendliness of the sky because you are aware of an electric tension in the air ...You cannot touch it, you cannot see it...but you are aware of it all the time.¹⁵

The tension is concretized in the poor relations between the Kenyan races. As a young boy, Njoroge's mother chides him for

accepting a sweet from an Indian boy because of the black antipathy towards Indians who occupied the middle-position in a social system which puts the Africans below them. (p.36) Later in response to Mwhaki's question whether Njoroge's father is a friend of Mr. Howland's, the hero responds with the comment that, "Europeans cannot be friends with black people. They are so high"(p.37). Here young Njoroge is revealing a vital historical truth about Kenya, the implications of which his callow mind cannot register. During the colonial period, Kenyan society was organized in a social hierarchy called the three-tier system. It put Europeans on top, Asians in the middle and Africans at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. This social structure was consolidated during the 1920's and 1930's when native Kenyans were subjected to forced labour and the Kipande system.¹⁶ According to R. Van Zwanenberg these two methods were used by European farmers to obtain African labourers and prevent them from leaving once they had been employed.¹⁷ All this led to further tension between native Kenyans and the other races, in a society where political and economic power was monopolized by Europeans and the commercial sector controlled by the Asian population whose number had reached 23,000 by 1921.¹⁸

The marginalization of Africans becomes more apparent by considering the fact that those of them who lived in the Rift valley - mostly the Gikuyu - had earlier on been moved from their most attractive and arable lands, now designated 'The White Highlands' and occupied by Europeans only. Without realizing its full political implication, Njoroge has earlier referred to land-alienation in Kenya:

You could tell the land of Black people because it was red, rough and sickly, while the land of the white settlers was green and was not lacerated into small strips. (p.7)

As he becomes more politically conscious he is able to realise that:

Black people had no land because of colour-bar and they could not eat in hotels because of colour-bar. Colour-bar was everywhere. (p.64)

The social and economic stratification which placed Africans on the lowest stratum and then deprived them of their land naturally led to a deep sense of frustration. This was one of the main motives behind the upsurge in the 1950's of Mau Mau violence when the dispossessed Africans launched a full-scale guerilla activity against an unjust system, in order to create one in which they could have "higher wages, increased educational opportunities, removal of colour-bar in its variety of discriminatory forms, return of the alienated lands and independence under an All-African government."¹⁹

In Weep Not, Child, one of the first responses of Kipanga villagers to the political and economic suppression they encounter is the strike in which Kiarie, a second World War veteran delivers a speech of protest. In a compelling speech, he reminds the villagers that the country is rightfully theirs, "The Indians had India. Europeans had Europe. And Africans had Africa, the land of the black people" (p.57). Referring to the land-alienation which deprived them of their treasured land, he adds that "...We have gathered here to tell the British...the time has come. Let my people go...We want our land! Now!" (p.58)

Weep Not, Child reveals Ngugi's ambivalence between a desire to portray Mau Mau as a freedom movement and an urge to condemn it because its violent character seeks to destroy his ideal for a multi-racial and united Kenya which, as a young student at

Makerere in 1962, he imagined was a possibility.

The first sign of Mau Mau conflict in the story is the murder of a local Chief which historically reflects the assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu in Kiambu in 1952. (p.62) This is followed by the arrest of Jomo Kenyatta and other leaders and the declaration of the State of Emergency when violence is unleashed on the whole community. Due to Ngugi's idealistic notion of a united and peaceful Kenya he reveals the horror of his young hero towards violence irrespective of who commits it: the Mau Mau fighters or the colonial administration. When Ngotho is detained by the colonial administration he is "beaten from day to day" (p.119) in order to force a confession out of him. When he leaves the detention camp he makes a pathetic sight. He "had to be supported by a man at either side. His face had been deformed by small wounds and scars. His nose was cleft into two his legs could only be dragged." (p.122) The hero too is presented as a victim of brutality administered by colonial homeguards. When he refuses to 'admit' having taken the Mau Mau oath which ensured loyalty to the struggle, he is mercilessly tortured. By the time the homeguards are through with him, "He was senseless. He was covered with blood where the hob-nailed shoes of the grey eyes had done their work." (p.117) Earlier on Njoroge, in the company of some villagers on their way to a prayer meeting, is horrified at the sight of "soldiers who lay hidden in the bush, with machine-guns menacingly pointed to the road". (p.101) On this trip, Isaka, an African member of a revivalist movement is intercepted by the security police and "led into the thick dark wood" (p.101). Shortly afterwards the villagers "heard one horrible scream that rang across the

forest". (p.101) The young hero "tried to hold his breath so that his stomach was taut." (p.101) After Isaka's final scream which "was swallowed by a deafening report of machine-guns... Njoroge suddenly felt sick, sick of everything"(pp.101-2) as the knowledge of Isaka's brutal murder dawns on him.

The horror registered in Njoroge's mind at witnessing the murder of Isaka is not very much different in its pathos from the assassination of Mr. Howlands, a European District Officer, caught unawares by his vindictive assailant (pp.128-129). Violence, whether Mau Mau or colonial is generally viewed as a sacrilege that will lead to the demise of multi-racial unity and cooperation in Kenya. Undoubtedly, Ngugi's obsession with this ideal in Weep Not, Child leads him to see the Mau Mau conflict as an unfortunate occurrence from which the two feuding races in Kenya come out badly scarred.²⁰

Like Ngugi, Lamming too shows that in spite of its promise, multi-racialism is a breeding-ground for racial tension, dissension and the attempt by one group to dominate the other, ultimately leading to violence when the dominated group seeks to tilt the balance in its favour. He reveals that, like in Ngugi's Kenya, racial tension is an aspect of life between the races constituting San Cristobal, where "When one turn the corner, the other hide" (p.82). The Trinidadian Sam Selvon whose fiction mainly dwells on race relations in the West Indies and London, reveals in A Brighter Sun (1952) the difference between the surface amity between characters and the tension beneath, which guides those relationships. Tiger's naivety presents Trinidad as racially homogeneous. He is not aware of the racial tension characterizing the episode when Joe Martin, an Afro-Caribbean, angered by his

wife's concern for the Tigers asks her to "keep out of dem coolie people business! What de arse yuh have to interfere wid dem for?"²¹ Neither is he aware of the mistrust and suspicion between the races underscored in the incident in which Urmilla's mother slyly pinches Joe's son who touches the little Hindu baby. In his innocence Tiger believes the fact that Trinidad is a melting-pot of races will automatically ensure the establishment of racial unity, "Ain't coolie does live good with nigger?" (p.214).

If Indians 'live good' with Afro-Caribbeans in San Cristobal, such amicability Lamming indicates is only superficial. He shows that the surface friendship between the races in San Cristobal hides deep mutual suspicion and mistrust. He illustrates this through the relationship between the three political leaders spearheading the movement for self-government on the ticket of the People's Communal Movement. The leaders Shephard, Singh and Lee, representing the main racial groups in San Cristobal, start a political coalition with the best of intentions: to foster unity among the ethnic groups and achieve freedom from the colonial government. Not long after the formation of a political coalition, the latent sense of distrust between the leaders expresses itself, threatening their dream of multi-racial unity. The suspicion which Singh harbours against his colleagues is underscored by his use of Baboo as a spy. Baboo, an Indian, is at the Bird Island on the day Shephard accidentally meets Penelope there and explained to her at length the motive of his behaviour on the aeroplane. (p.208) The meeting is non-political but Singh suspects that Shephard has been in league with the Whites, their opponents. While holding a party meeting in a secret sanctuary, Bill Flagstead, Penelope's lover, appears to warn Shephard about

a plot to assassinate him. Given the different racial backgrounds of the three men, Lamming observes that Bill's visit "was a simple fact which now challenged them to prove their unity" (p.253).

Predictably, their unity crumbles as Singh's fear about Shephard's covenant with the whites appear confirmed following Bill's intrusion into the leaders' hideout. Sensing Singh's mood Shephard thought, "This was the way things happen... From now on I must be careful with Singh." (p.254) The Chinese member of the coalition Lee "was trying to guess the nature of Bill's visit, and the degree of knowledge which Shephard might have shared with him. He always wanted to be cautious in his dealing with them both, and particularly at this moment, when things were likely to go wrong." (p.253) The sense of mistrust between the leaders has always been there but never revealed presumably for purposes of political decorum, which tallies with C.L.R James's observation that "everybody in public life [in the West Indies] pretends that ethnic differences do not exist,"²² but they do, as Lamming's fictional representation of the attitude of the leaders to one another at Bill's intrusion illustrates.

The disunity between political leaders in San Cristobal, which is followed by the break-up of the political coalition later, is in reality, evident in Trinidad, a multi-racial West Indian community. According to Dr. Eric Williams the founding leader of the People's National Movement which led the nation to independence in 1962, his party placed emphasis on "eliminating the tension which threatened to develop between Negroes and East Indians on the sugar plantations and in ordinary everyday life... it has

sought to bring all racial groups into its nationalist fold, under its four colour banner of black, brown, yellow, and white, symbolic of the major colour gradations in the country."²³ The party ruled the country for more than two decades until it was defeated in an election in 1981 by the National Alliance for Reconstruction. A political coalition between Indians and Afro-Caribbeans, the National Alliance according to Raffique Shah "came to power [in Trinidad] and the unity was there...but the unity was a unity against the P.N.M... They had to remove the P.N.M at any and all cost. It was not a unity for something. It was a unity against something so it was inevitable that the unity would collapse."²⁴ And collapse the political coalition did within one year of its formation. The split occurred along ethnic lines, following a rift between Prime Minister A.N.R. Robinson, an Afro-Caribbean, and his deputy Basdeo Panday, an Indian who was fired in May 1988 along with four other Indian ministers.²⁵

Racial disunity is also a reality in multi-racial Guyana (British Guiana) where the antipathy between Forbes Burnham, an Afro-Caribbean political leader and his Indian counterpart, Cheddi Jagan, spelt doom for multi-racial unity in the pre-independence era. In the early 1950's both leaders united under the banner of the People's Progressive Party. However, "In 1955 the P.P.P separated into two hostile factions: one led by Forbes Burnham, and the other by Cheddi Jagan. Although this division was not originally along racial lines, the fact that these two persons were identified as the leaders of their respective racial groups...made it easy for such a development to occur."²⁶ The split of the coalition aggravated the racial tensions in the

community leading to interracial bitterness and violence. According to Yereth Knowles, "Between 1962 and 1964 Guyana... was close to racial civil war, the Black West Indians versus the East Indians."²⁷

The violence which racial disunity unleashed in Guyana, which achieved independence in May 1966, corresponds with the portrayal in Of Age and Innocence of the consequences of racial prejudice, which the common people, unlike their leaders, bring to the surface, through both action and speech, with catastrophic results. Thief, an Afro-Caribbean, castigates Baboo in public with the allegation that "Indian man always meditatⁱn' murder" (p.84). Racial ethnocentrism motivates Baboo to murder Shephard so that Singh, an Indian "like myself...[can] rule San Cristobal" (p.384). Shephard's murder starts a chain of events leading to the outcry of San Cristobal community for revenge, "one eye... for a next eye, an' one tooth...for a next tooth"(p.345) on Mark and Bill, wrongly suspected with the assassination. Singh and Lee who learn about Crabbe's official order to have Shephard assassinated are in a vengeful mood. The former is on the point of killing Crabbe when Baboo beats him to it. The atmosphere in the end is characterized by violence, bloodshed and a total breakdown of law and order which leads to the intervention of troops (p.391). Commenting on the anarchy in which the nation is engulfed, Rockey puts his finger on one of the main causes of the problem:

...it seem that not only here in San Cristobal that end a islan' every eye can see, but all the world...and all the world wherever different interest an' claims for the earth collide, it happen, a murderin' evil just waitin' to hold mankind."(p.395)

The "different interests and claims" in San Cristobal are basically two, with the first having two strands. One of the strands of the first 'interest' is the desire of one ethnic group not to be economically dominated by another, which has been rightly put forward by Dr. Eric Williams as one of the main causes of tension in racially-mixed Caribbean societies.²⁸ For instance, according to David Lowenthal, Indians in Guyana today

"aspire to civil service and white-collar jobs once exclusively held by Creoles, and some Creoles venture into occupations, like taxi-driving, once customarily Indian. A survey in Guyana shows that Indians and Creoles rank occupations in the same order of prestige. And in all territories tension accompanies increased East Indian participation in many walks of life. Creoles resent Indian incursions; Indians claim Creoles hold them back."²⁹

The other is surely political domination. These, as we saw, are also the two main causes of tension between the races in Kenya. Indians dominated the commercial sector of the economy. Europeans monopolized the political sector and the civil service, while Africans served as the hewers of wood. Racial tension is thus symptomatic of a deeper problem: the threat and in some cases reality of political and economic domination of one ethnic group by another.

The second 'interest', which also happens to be applicable to the Kenyan situation is the desire of the colonial masters to perpetuate their hold on the community. "The State" Eric Williams argues "existed in Caribbean society to maintain the property relationship. The State became the organ of the plantocracy and the enemy of the people, a tradition which has not completely disappeared from the Caribbean scene even in these days of developing self-government."³⁰

The interest of the white settlers and the colonial government in Kenya, like in San Cristobal coincide, which is why both Ngugi and Lamming reveal in their novels that the colonial regimes are determined to perpetuate colonial rule and consequently the interest of that economically strong plantocracy in the West Indies and the European settler population in Kenya. The plantocracy and the State in the West Indies were in alliance just as the colonial administration in Kenya was a cohort of the settler population. According to David Throup in Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau (1987) Sir Philip Mitchell, a colonial governor in Kenya between 1944 and 1952, had entertained the dream of creating a multi-racial society not based on equity but based on the dominance of settlers over Africans. David Throup argues that "The harmonious mixing of Polynesians, Indians and Europeans in Fiji had made a profound impression on him and his diaries show that Mitchell had been inspired to attempt to recreate this tolerant atmosphere in Kenya."³¹ One of the consequences of his policy, was the racial tensions created by the marginalization of the Gikuyus who were dispossessed, and who, thereafter, started an underground movement which was to resort to violence as a response to the political domination to which they were exposed. By its very nature, a divide-and-rule policy ensures the maintenance of division in society, and creating a chaotic atmosphere for the colonial regime to intervene and maintain order while protecting its own political and economic interests. Violence is thus a natural product and consequence of the divide-and-rule policy established by the colonial regimes in both societies.

The policy of divide-and-rule by the colonial government in Kenya has been made easier by the lack of unity inherent in

the community. Lack of unity in the Gikuyu community is illustrated at a lower level by the failure of the local traders to cooperate. This leads to more prosperity for the Indians who are united and charge fairer prices. They attract all the customers, "people found it wiser and more convenient to buy from them" (p. 8). A local woman wonders why she should be grudged a chance "to buy from someone be he white or red, who charges less money for his things?" (p. 8).

Lack of unity in Gikuyu society is exacerbated by the introduction of western education which is seen ambivalently in Weep Not, Child. Through Njoroge it is seen idealistically as positive because it might prepare the individual for the battle against colonialism (p. 82). But through Jacobo, it is seen negatively as preparing native Kenyans to assume roles as supporters of the colonial administration fighting with it against their own society. Ngugi shows that as a class the educated elite in Kenya has in the late 1940's already been sharply defined, not only because it has economic interests to protect but also because of its deep attachment to Western values which it seeks to copy so it may be identified with its European counterpart.³²

Mr. Jacobo, unlike his working-class counterpart Ngotho, christens his daughter Lucia and his wife is called Juliana, all soft and smooth names, in strict conformity with Western values which are as much Christian as they are middle-class. Jacobo's house "looked like a European's house" (p. 18) and on one occasion, when Juliana invites children from the neighbourhood for dinner, they all received a severe chastisement from her when one of them giggles, in violation of the social etiquette of her class. Afterwards, Juliana assures her young guests that "her children

would never have done such a thing. She had brought them up to value Ustaarabu, and the rule of good manners."(p.18)

Jacobo's membership of this class, which apes European manners, has earned him economic advancement being "the only African allowed to grow pyrethrum" (p.40) a cash-crop normally restricted to European settler farmers only. During a strike of farmhands in Kipanga, Jacobo predictably supports the colonial regime and is used by his mentors to persuade the striking workers to return to work. Following Jacobo's plea one of the villagers expresses disappointment that a blackman should become a sell-out:

It would have been all right if it had been a whiteman, but a blackman - like you and me! it shows that we black people will never be united. There must always be a traitor in our midst. (p.60)

It is obvious that the 'traitor' in the community is Jacobo whose new alliances have earned him a membership of the middle-class. According to Adrian Roscoe in Uhuru's Fire (1977)

"Relations between the Jacobos of Gikuyuland and the peasant mass can never again be what they were in Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya"³³ precisely because through Western education, colonialism has created a class of native collaborators who are charged with the responsibility of promoting the interests of their masters.

During the Mau Mau war, as a District Officer using Jacobo as a homeguard to brutalize his fellow Gikuyus, Mr. Howlands relishes "the very ability to set these people fighting amongst themselves instead of fighting with the whiteman..."(p.77).

Having succeeded in implementing the colonial policy of divide-and-rule in Gikuyuland he can now sit back and gleefully enjoy the prospects of black-against-black violence:

Mr. Howlands felt a certain gratifying pleasure. The machine he had set in motion was working. The blacks were destroying the blacks. They would destroy themselves to the end. What did it matter with him if the blacks in the forest destroyed a whole village? What did it matter except for the fact that labour would diminish? (p. 97).

As soon as the Mau Mau "vermin" are eliminated he can regain peace of mind and keep his land. Meanwhile he is engaged in a mission to keep it from the imminent threat which these "mere savages" (p. 77) posed:

...he would wring from every single man the last drop till they had all been reduced to nothingness, till he had won a victory for his god... To conquer [Mau Mau] would give him a spiritual satisfaction, the same sort of satisfaction he had got from the conquest of his land. He was like a lion that was suddenly woken from his lair. (p. 77).

The brutality of Mr. Howlands can be compared with that of Mr. Crabbe, the Police Chief of San Cristobal, who enjoys immense political authority. Both characters are at the helm of administrations which use local people to create further divisions in the community so they can eventually achieve their goals: the perpetuation of their dominance over communities which are determined to achieve enfranchisement.

Thus if the aim of the administration in Kenya is to crush the Mau Mau insurrection in order to maintain the status quo, the administration headed by Crabbe is determined to use every means at its disposal to keep the nation under its hold.

The severity of the administration run by Crabbe is symbolically represented in his sexual affair with the Secretary from Ruby Lane. Lamming uses a technique here, also used in Natives of My Person (1977) which will be discussed in Chapter Six, through which sexual attitude serves as a comment on political habit. His brutal assault on the girl on whom he is seen "pouncin'

and paradin' like he was a whole army invadin' a fresh country" (p.236) parallels the total domination of the people of San Cristobal by the administration which Crabbe represents.

In the story Lamming reveals that in order to frustrate the efforts of the nationalist political movement to establish self-rule in San Cristobal the colonial regime has monopoly over dissemination of information. Crabbe personally runs the Government information services and has shares in Radio San Cristobal. He uses his influence to block the chances of Bill Butterfield, a liberal, to get employment there. Bill is surprised that his letter to the editor of 'Truth' is not published and that both Peter Flagstead and the Governor know about it. What he does not know and later finds out to his consternation is the fact that both the electronic and the print media are part of a gigantic network the administration uses to stifle opposition and maintain its political control over San Cristobal.

In addition to a "conspiracy of privilege" (p. 224) in which employees such as Peter Flagstead are coerced into accepting and supporting the policies of the administration whether they are right or wrong, the regime also operates a sophisticated espionage system. There is an official spy whose job is to advise "Crabbe and the Governor on public feeling"(p.213). In addition, the police Chief employs as the official sniper Baboo, an Indian, who is to carry out his orders to murder Shephard so as to frustrate the forthcoming national elections. In Crabbe's view, which also happens to be the view of the administration which he supports, "Shephard had to die if the future of San Cristobal was to be rescued from chaos" (p.347).

This view corresponds with that of Mrs Crabbe in her self-righteous assertion that all hell will let loose at their departure. (p.264).

Ironically, it is in spite of their presence at the helm of affairs that political chaos envelops San Cristobal. Singh echoes the popular belief in his contention that however chaotic it might be, self rule is better than colonial subjugation:

For the time being, we think of nothing but ruling this place, well badly, it does not matter, but ruling it ourselves. That talk of experience and lack of experience, is not for my ears. I am prepared to blunder and die, and let another like us blunder and die, blunder, blunder until we blunder into hell, the whole lot of us, or into a different kind of life in San Cristobal. (p.264)

Whatever the degree of their blunder, Lamming indicates that indigenous leadership is more legitimate, and in effect, better than the tyranny of a colonial dispensation that will order the assassination of a popular political leader and manipulate the law to destroy the incriminating evidence that will expose its heinous plans (p.367).

Like Ngugi, Lamming does not limit his attack to the system of colonialism, he also points an accusing finger at his society. We earlier saw that Ngugi blames his own society for being an easy prey to destabilization because of the disunity inherent in it. Lamming also reveals that if the colonial administration is to blame for institutionalizing a reign of terror on San Cristobal, the people themselves are to blame for their inability to disprove the colonialist assumptions that they will always remain divided and resort to violence at the slightest provocation. They are also to be censured for pandering to the stereotyping of rival ethnic groups. Samuel Selvon rightly argues that in the West Indies "Certain standards of cultural value and social behaviour have been allocated to us, and we behave and aspire accordingly."³⁴ For instance, the privileged Paravecino, an ally of the colonial administration has earlier prophesied the demise of the People's

Communal Movement, a political coalition which he sees as "false" because "every Indian knows what every Negro feels, and the surface friendship is going to spell misery for one group or the other"(p.244). In the story, the surface friendship which hides deep mistrust, culminates in the assassination of Shephard and the liberation of sectarian violence throughout San Cristobal. As we saw, it is the mutual distrust between Indians and Negroes that motivates Singh to employ Baboo as a spy with whom he has always been "hand in glove"(p.382) in an "obscene alliance"(p.383). Since he is working for Singh simultaneously as he works for the government, Baboo like Jacobo in Weep Not, Child is a stooge used by the colonial administration to further destabilize the community. Jacobo's hounding of Gikuyus into detention camps for Mr. Howlands in Kenya has a similar effect to the spying activities which Baboo carries out for Mr. Crabbe in San Cristobal: both are meant to sustain the antipathy between members of the same community and reinforce the supremacy of the colonial administration. As a government spy Baboo is engaged in double-dealing: working for Crabbe to release Bill and Mark from custody after being paid for the same purpose by Peter Flagstead. Through this action, and his assassination of Shephard Baboo proves himself treacherous: a role in which Indians have been stereotyped by Afro-Caribbeans in San Cristobal. (p.84)

Both writers ask the question: who is to help the communities they write about out of the political chaos which has led to violence and might probably prevent the achievement of independence from the colonial regimes? This inevitably leads to the examination of the role of the intellectual elite in the political

changes their societies are going through. Both writers show that redemption is unlikely to come from leadership provided by this social group for various reasons. Although he is temperamentally committed to the emancipation of his community, Njoroge is, among other things, a victim of his Western education which centres him on himself and his circumscribed dream world. The colonial experience of Mark Kennedy has had a debilitating impact on him and has resulted in totally crippling his sense of commitment to San Cristobal and its political life. And Isaac Shephard is an embodiment of a divided personality. This has made his condition as complicated as that of the community into which he hopes to introduce political unity.

Ngugi's attitude towards Western education in Weep Not, Child is ambivalent. As we saw, through Jacobo it is seen as an experience that prepares the individual to join the colonialist camp. Although the author later takes an ironic position on it, through Njoroge it is initially seen as a weapon against the invasion of colonialists. Both Njoroge and members of his community believe that Western education is a magic wand which the hero must acquire in order to deliver them from the clutches of colonialism. After passing his examinations to High School, Njoroge expresses the belief that "The land needed him and God had given him an opening so that he might come back and save his family and the whole country." (p.105)

This all-pervasive personal and communal thirst for education which is seen as an instrument for effective leadership, coincided with the return of Jomo Kenyatta from England in 1946³⁵ and the immense hope of Kenyans that he had returned to save them from

the yoke of colonial bondage by using his education as a weapon. There are several references in the novel to Jomo Kenyatta, who is often associated with Moses who had attempted to save his people from the shackles of Egyptian domination. (p.43, P.49)

When Jomo Kenyatta returned from England the racist restrictions which placed native Africans at the bottom of a social scale which favoured Europeans and Asians were, according to Jeremy Murray-Brown, as bad as ever.³⁶ In addition to segregation, as we noted earlier in the chapter, native Kenyans experienced unmitigated poverty as wage labourers on European farms. Kenyans, therefore, anxiously expected a Messiah to deliver them from the European control of their political and economic life, and the homecoming of Jomo Kenyatta provided that possibility. In the story, Njoroge firmly believes in the statement credited to Jomo Kenyatta that "Education is the light of Kenya" (p.38) and "thought that he would like to learn like Jomo and eventually cross the sea to the land of the whiteman" (p.38). This dream encourages him to see himself as a Kenyatta figure who is duty bound to deliver his community from domination.

Ngugi who takes an ironic stand on all this, reveals that the notion of leadership carried out by a "national messiah"³⁷ satisfies neither the aspiration of the people nor the personal ambition of the leader who believes he has a vital role to play in emancipating his community. It is clear in the novel that the author sympathizes with Njoroge against a society that seeks to involve him into the tumult of politics and the severely crippling conditions of the Emergency in spite of his age.³⁸ Nevertheless, he exposes him to ridicule by showing that his exposure to a colonialist education partly contributed to creating his illusion that he can use it as a weapon to liberate

his people. The hero even goes to the extent of visualizing himself, as "a possible saviour of the whole God's country." (p.82) But as the challenges of this ideal stare him full in the face he sadly realizes, as his slow but steady self-education continues, that there is a wide gap between articulated aspirations and the harsh political reality around him.

The debilitating conditions of the Emergency that Njoroge encounters can be compared with the tribulations - including imprisonment - which Jomo Kenyatta went through as he tried to emancipate Kenya from colonialism. Taking the parallels between Njoroge and Jomo Kenyatta further, Weep Not, Child becomes a prophetic novel. Njoroge's failure to deliver his community from domination can be compared with Jomo Kenyatta's inability to minister to the problems of Kenya's ordinary people in spite of the political independence which the country achieved in 1963. Despite the immense faith which Kenyans had in Jomo Kenyatta, popularly known as the "Hero of Our Race" and a "Saviour,"³⁹ as soon as he assumed leadership he adopted the policy of "forgive and forget,"⁴⁰ in favour of the landed European settlers. This policy was out of tune with the aspirations of Mau Mau militants who had fought to regain their appropriated lands and equity with the European settlers in Kenya. The theme of disillusionment with Kenyan politics is the focus of the second part of Chapter Four in which A Grain of Wheat (1967) will be discussed.

As opposed to Njoroge who in spite of his failure is at least temperamentally committed to the political life of his land, Mark Kennedy typifies an educated West Indian who is not able to participate in the politics of his native land because

of the damage his colonial status has wrought on his psyche.

In his analysis of Of Age and Innocence in Homecoming (1972)

Ngugi notes that:

Mark is an existential hero, aware of his individual existence, and like Camus' hero in L' Etranger will not be involved in a willed action or in 'normal' emotions of pity, love, regret or hatred. People, objects exist yes, but life has no meaning other than the individual's continual freedom to choose.⁴¹

Like his later assertion that Mark's alienation "is connected with his colonial status [divorced as he is] from the continuing life in the island...from its age-old customs and from those of his other ancestors from Africa..."⁴² Ngugi's comparison with the hero of Albert Camus' novel is apt. But taken further, a comparison with the hero of L' Etranger (1946) (translated as The Outsider) brings out even more vividly Mark's deeper estrangement from his society.

While Meursault speaks directly to the reader in a story which he narrates, Mark Kennedy mostly uses the diary to communicate with the reader and even with Marcia, his girlfriend. Unlike Mark who becomes increasingly remote from the people and environment around him, Meursault becomes steadily involved in the life around him. He expresses concern against Raymond's attempt to shoot an Arab who had provoked him. He then asks Raymond for the revolver and even expresses willingness to shoot should the Arab become aggressive. He eventually murders the Arab, one of the two lying down on the beach.⁴³

Mark is an alienated West Indian revenant par excellence whose lack of commitment to West Indian politics is appropriately reflected in his use mostly of the diary to communicate with those around him. Also throughout the journey to San Cristobal, Mark

is engaged in reading - an intensely private activity - ostensibly to ward off his fear of flying, but in reality a manifestation of his disconnection from the people and events around him. Mark is associated with the young German he and Marcia meet on a holiday in the Mediterranean whose face "does not seem to belong anywhere" (p.17). When he passes by, Mark hears from "the plodding hoof of his boots, the words: out of touch, out of touch" (p.18).

Mark Kennedy is completely out of touch with the political realities of San Cristobal which he left as a child. His insight into the historical past of the Caribbean reveals that Mark has a potential that he could have profitably used in the struggle against colonialism in San Cristobal. In his speech on Shephard's political platform at Sabina Square, he connects the action of the Tribe Boys, (who plunged en masse into the Caribbean sea rather than yield to the subjugation of the Bandit Kings,) to the modern struggle for freedom from colonial rule. Mark believes the action of the Tribe Boys is exemplary and should be emulated by the present generation of San Cristobal community. They must attempt to wrench their freedom from the modern Bandit Kings, the colonial masters. In his view the decision taken by the Tribe Boys:

was a terrible[one] but it was made in the name of that freedom which you sing. And it had to be made... Freedom is not a habit which may be overcome, nor is it a fashion which changes with opinion. It is an instinct, it is a nerve. And the spirit which gives life meaning revolts when that instinct is threatened. (p.173)

Notwithstanding the public-spirited nature of Mark's speech it is not an expression of political commitment. We are reliably informed that "His speech was a fragment of

dialogue between Mark Kennedy and himself, and the theme was his identity " (p.179). The speech is therefore a purely personal struggle, an attempt to discover his cultural identity, which he lost during his long sojourn in Europe. His alienation from his ancestral roots is as much responsible for his loss of identity, as it is to blame for his inability to complete the story he started about "a three-fingered pirate who was notorious in the West Indies during the first half of the eighteenth-century "(p.31).

Although Lamming sees individual meditation and politics as complementary in his first novel, he views the withdrawal of G. from the society less critically. This is because such withdrawal is seen not only as an avenue through which an individual might achieve self-knowledge, but also as a source of inspiration to G, a budding artist. Undoubtedly, Lamming's intensifying political engagement leads him to indicate that, unlike G's isolation in In the Castle of My Skin, Mark's withdrawal from the community is counterproductive. It has turned him into an artist without compassion, who cannot finish the biography about a three-fingered pirate, whose modern counterpart in the story is Thief.

Unlike Mark Kennedy, Shephard is politically engaged and his return from England, marks the beginning of a political career which transforms him into a national legend. (p.111) On his return home, he enters into a national alliance with Singh the founder of Indian Freedom Movement, which he turns into a national party-the People's Communal Movement. The outcome of this to the feuding races of San Cristobal is unity, "He make a bond between you an' me an' every race that live with

sufferin' in San Cristobal.(p.347)

The duality of Lamming's view of life enables him to unveil the other side of Shephard's nature as a power-drunk maniac who is determined to "hold this land in the palm of my hand, and bend it like a wheel to meet my intention"(p.317) and is as Ngugi has rightly asserted in Homecoming "in danger of using people as pawns."⁴⁴ This side of Shephard's nature sensitizes us to Lamming's notion of the malignancy which he believes is deeply rooted in human nature and is as destructive as fire, flood and hurricane which occasionally happen resulting in havoc to the West Indian communities.

Since this malignancy is evident in Crabbe, an Englishman, it cuts across racial barriers. In a later episode in which the children from the three races constituting San Cristobal are shown in an orgy of violence against a colony of ants, the message is clear that malignancy also cuts across age barriers (p.126). The implication of all this for Lamming is that the pursuit for political change has to go hand in hand with the need to purge the human consciousness of malice. In other words, colonial politics is as destructive as the malignant streak in human beings. Both have to be fought.

In Shephard's case, another internal enemy is his urge to force the 'other' to recognize him and in the process regain his self-confidence and identity of which his long sojourn in England has robbed him.⁴⁵ As he later explains to Penelope the victim of his attack on the journey to San Cristobal:

I was attacking the meaning which had made me...
I discovered that until then, until that experience,
I had always lived under the shadow of a meaning
which others had placed on my presence in the world.
(p.203)

Thus before he can enter the political arena in which he hopes "to redefine myself through action" (p.205) Shephard finds it necessary to force the 'other', the European, to see him in a new light: that of a 'self-confident' native who is also a politically committed nationalist ready to wrench his freedom from the colonial administration. In reality his violent behaviour is a thin veil around his insecurity which owes its origins to his regard for the 'other.' This insecurity is similar to that encountered by the persona of Francis Thompson's 'The Hound of Heaven' (1912) which Shephard sings during the trip to San Cristobal. The persona reveals that:

My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-droppings stagnate, spilt down ever
 From the dank thoughts that shiver
 Upon the sighful branches of my mind.⁴⁶ (my emphasis).

His insecurity notwithstanding, Shephard is motivated, as we saw, for purposes of self-definition, to launch a verbal attack on Penelope on the plane because of:

the desire not only to rebel against the consequences of a certain social classification, but also the desire to redefine himself for the comprehension of the other, and in the hope that the stage shall have been set for some kind of meaningful communication.⁴⁷

However, the very fact that Shephard feels compelled to prove something to the 'other' indicates that he embodies the contradiction in West Indian nationalists who, in spite of their drive to win cultural and political freedom remain psychologically colonized with the burden of 'otherness.' One will agree with Frantz Fanon that "in decolonization, there is...the need of a complete calling into question of the colonial situation,"⁴⁸ which Shephard does by promising to alter "the whole curriculum of privilege in San Cristobal" (p.204). But if he is still fixated

on Europe sharing the belief of the West Indian middle-class who "did not believe that the West Indies could long survive without the moral and physical presence of the imperial power"⁴⁹ then his split personality is almost a replica of San Cristobal, a nation divided between its need for and rejection of Europe and bereft of the single-mindedness necessary to successfully fight for political freedom.

Lanning has in fact made Shephard's character identifiable with San Cristobal. Referring to this affinity on the plane Shephard reveals that "I know San Cristobal. It is mine, me, divided in a harmony that still pursues all its separate parts." (p.58) (my emphasis). Also Thief most accurately tells us that "something split[Shephard] down the middle in two, an' one half never make a new meetin' with the next. He divide like a river runnin' for different direction" (p.355). The racial and political fragmentation of San Cristobal thus reflect the psychological disunity of Shephard, whose mental derangement, exacerbated by his contact with Europe, can originally be traced to his childhood (p.109).

Although Ngugi's assertion is true that "Mark is sharply contrasted with the creative energy of Shephard,"⁵⁰ it is difficult to justify Sandra Paquet's assertion that "[He]... has found the answer to his deep personal crisis in political action."⁵¹ His commitment to the liberation of San Cristobal notwithstanding, Shephard does not overcome the split in his personality. Neither does he finally succeed in becoming communal, which is why he is ironically linked with the alienated Mark Kennedy, his childhood crony, who spoke on his political platform at Sabina Square.

Just as Shephard is unable to achieve psychic unity, San Cristobal is not able to achieve political cohesion in the end. Lamming illustrates this lack of unity at a national level with a vivid picture of the compartmentalization of the three ethnic groups on the island:

The Indians worked furiously with small push carts hurrying up and down along the pier. They were cruel with labour to their bodies, and their faces were strained with secrecy and spite and expectation. They were going to rob the future of what was left. The Negroes sat heavy, large, indolent, unwilling and destructive. They rebuked all possessions by a show of indifference. They were killing time with their hands. Their labour was irrelevant and misplaced. The Chinese moved everywhere with severe and stoic reservation. They were not worthy of any interruption, and they were now no part of any alliance, but they were going to earn their share of everything (pp.385-6).

The quotation above categorises into stereotypes the various races of San Cristobal symbolising the polarization between them, following the collapse of the political coalition. It also suggests the tendency of the people, as we saw earlier, to pander, among other things, to the expectations of the colonial masters who created a situation in which those divisions can be exacerbated and exploited. According to Merle Hodge, "History has cast the various races in certain roles, and this, along with the inevitable differences in attitudes, inclinations and ideals from one group to another, leads to racial stereotyping."⁵²

Stereotyping in the multi-racial West Indian islands such as Trinidad and Guyana is a common practice. The picture which Lamming paints of Indians as greedy and suspicious and Negroes as shiftless corresponds to the tendency in Guyana of Creoles "to regard East Indians as avaricious, stingy and secretive."⁵³ The Indians on the other hand regard Creoles as "feckless, childish, vain, pompous[and] promiscuous."⁵⁴

The effect of such stereotyping is the hindrance of mutual understanding between the races. This is worsened by another danger inherent in stereotyping - it encourages the lumping together of human beings giving them a common but very misleading tag. Because of the lack of understanding which stereotyping engenders, as well as other reasons, such as the economic competition between the races, life in Trinidad is characterized by "resentment, bitterness, tension and dissatisfaction between the Blacks and the East Indians..."⁵⁵

These obstacles prevent the achievement of national unity in San Cristobal, thus Lamming's Of Age and Innocence which is essentially a quest for multi-racial unity, ending on a bleak note and becoming prophetic of the break up of the West Indian Federation in 1962 only three years after its inauguration.

The anarchic picture which emerges at the end of the novel is a bleak one, involving a breakdown of law and order, multiple assassinations and the break up of the People's Communal Party. This picture which culminates in the "racial polarization"⁵⁶ at the end is according to Kenneth Ramchand, "the desperate contrivance of plot"⁵⁷ and he argues that "Lamming's account of the collapse of the multi-racial ideal is gratuitous and not validated by evidence in the fiction."⁵⁸

With due respect to Kenneth Ramchand, one can argue to the contrary that the chaos at the end is a product of the events depicted in the novel. Since all the killings are either racially or politically motivated, they represent a credible denouement to the unification saga of San Cristobal, whose mixed population cannot, as we have seen, understand one another and would rather resort to stereotyping thus simplifying and distorting their view

of each other and of human nature which in Lamming's view is many-sided. The chaos which results in the end is thus a natural product of a situation where as Lamming himself argues in 'The West Indian People':

History has left a cocoon of confusion. First, a population composed entirely of emigrants. That is people, slave or otherwise, who had no indigenous link, no ancestral claim on the soil which was to become their new home; a diversity of peoples organized by different European powers contending in a scramble for supremacy over them.⁵⁹

In an environment in which people are not able to overcome the condition of divide-and-rule which colonialism has imposed on them, the collapse of a political coalition between races whose surface appearance of amity hides a deep mistrust is inevitable.

Thus neither Shephard, who is committed, nor Mark, who is not, are able to contribute to ameliorating the situation in San Cristobal. In a different context, as we saw, Njoroge too proves powerless in the face of the insurmountable problems he comes across. Ngugi laughs at the pretensions of a hero who sees himself as a deliverer but is ignorant of the significance of Mau Mau as a movement, as his conversation with his compeers in chapter nine reveals (p.72). His naivety is contrasted with the first hand knowledge of the struggle by militants, such as Boro, who do not day-dream but are fully involved in the War. Njoroge's powerlessness is symbolically captured in his castration which left him dejected to the point of contemplating suicide. Shephard eventually loses his life, while Mark Kennedy contemplates suicide, which he is unable to carry out because of "a sudden failure of strength"(p.313) characteristic of an alienated hero who "had become superfluous to life, unfit to die." (p.378)

Thus all the three characters are united in their inability to control the anarchy that is loosed upon their societies, and

are in some cases, swept away by its strong current. The liberation of Dionysiac fury, the darker side of man in both societies encouraged both novelists to turn to the world of children, the world of 'innocence,' to which we will also turn after examining how each of the authors conceive violence.

Ngugi's view of the Mau Mau struggle in Weep Not, Child is, as we saw, ambivalent. As a political nationalist he sees it as a freedom movement through which militants struggle against imperialism to get back their alienated lands. Although not everybody in the sparsely-drawn movement agrees with him, the lieutenant, a freedom-fighter, believes that the primary motivation for fighting is "Freedom and the return of our lost heritage." (p.103). But Ngugi does not carry this dimension of Mau Mau very far because it seems overshadowed by his other concern. As a writer advocating national unity and a peaceful solution to the multi-racial conflict, his attitude towards violence in the novel- Mau Mau or otherwise - is negative. Thus, as we saw, notwithstanding his status as a cultural nationalist, Ngugi felt compelled to condemn Mau Mau as a movement since it involves violence which is against the ideals of multi-racial harmony which he advocates in Weep Not, Child.

Therefore, whatever its motivation, violence is seen in the novel as highly destructive and dehumanizing. Early in the story, Njoroge observes that, "A man who murdered was forever a curse in heaven and earth." (p.8) That conviction consequently coloured the judgement of Njoroge, who is the central consciousness in the novel, when he views Boro, his brother, as a horrific figure because of his involvement in violence.

When he returns home from the war to meet Ngotho on his death bed, Boro is presented as a wretched creature, "His hair was long and unkempt. Njoroge instinctively shrank from him "(p.124).

Also as Mr. Howlands presses a pair of pincers on the hero's private parts in the House of Pain, the District Officer is suddenly transformed into a maniac, a sub-human administrator of torture as he assumes the status of "the red beard and the grey eyes [which] laughed derisively "(p.118). In Mwhaki's view, Jacobo used to be "so kind and gentle "(p.94). His association with violent politics however estranges him from his daughter and from the wider Kipanga society whose members now view him as an instrument of terror, "The Chief was rarely seen. And when someone saw him approach his home, he automatically knew that something was wrong. The name of the Chief was becoming a terror in the land "(p.91). The homeguards in his company wear "red jerseys" which reminded [Njoroge] of the dead barber "(p.92).

Ngugi's stance against violence because it is against the spirit of a peaceful reconciliation which he advocates in Weep Not, Child is such that when Kipanga villagers protest against racial inequality by going on strike, they are encouraged to make it a non-violent struggle. Despite the stern radicalism in Kiarie's statement that the whiteman should be expelled (p.58), he cautions the villagers that "this must be a peaceful strike...if today you're

hit, don't hit back "(p.58). Eventually, the strike does not bring any benefit to the workers, presumably because it ends in a violent attack on Jacobo. The militant Boro whose violent wings are temporarily clipped here accuses Ngotho "of having spoilt everything by his rash action in spite of Kiarie's warning."(p.71)

Eventually, Ngogho's use of violence results in his ejection from his ancestral land and the loss of his job. (p.61) In Ngugi's view, violence is not only horrific, it is also not an effective means of solving social and political problems.

Although he shares Ngugi's view of the destructive aspect of violence; in contrast, Lamming believes that it may lead to renewal. This conviction is built on the premise that contemporary San Cristobal itself emerged from the remnants of the legendary flood, which when it came swept the whole nation, "scarcely a breath it spare of animal or bird, on that dark day" and "the sea climb every hill until it hide all recollections o' the living it settle quiet again into itself and never stop swimmin' with the evil confusion o' corpses on top."(p.65) This process of destruction followed by renewal is repeated following the Wild Fire which is started deliberately as an act of protest by slaves against the plantocracy, "those who remain take to livin' again like it was the beginnin' o' the world. An' we plant again,...an' in a time it come to happen, the land wrinkle an' work, an' sugar come ripe with the same sweat, but a different looking face "(p.69).

The double-sidedness of Lamming's conception of violence is interlinked with his view of the recurrence of cycles and historical continuity in San Cristobal. Just as the legendary Bandit Kings are reincarnated in the modern colonial masters such as Crabbe, the flood is followed by the Wild Fire and then the hurricane which "rip roots out the earth, an' sen' the trees clappin' crazy in the sky "(pp.70-1). Lamming provides us with two opposing views of breaking out of the repetitiveness of history. The first surfaces through Ma Shephard who believes that

only prayer can interrupt such cycles (p.66). The second, which Lamming seems to endorse is that of the children, who show that human will and determination might offer a way out of those seemingly interminable cycles. This does not imply that Lamming totally dismisses Ma Shephard. Her religious conservatism does not affect her important role as prophetess.

Since the historical fire was caused by injustice against the slaves, a "malice" which the clairvoyant Ma Shephard sees "makin' a move these days" (p.70) in the colonial dispensation, the fire at the mental hospital can be seen as a symbol of colonial revolt, annihilating the "innocent and guilty, native and settler, liberated young and maddened old age".⁶⁰

The fire is started by a madman who believes he has been unjustifiably sent to the asylum, just as the ordinary San Cristobal people believe they are being unfairly subjected to the caprices of the colonial administration. Because of its pervasive destructiveness, when the fire happened "it was as though a curse had settled for ever on the hopes of San Cristobal. They had lost their sense of peace. Hope had deserted them." (p.281). But not entirely. Because like those before it, the destruction spells out hope for a new San Cristobal which will rise from the ashes, a message symbolically portrayed in the determination of the boys, "the political hope of the novel."⁶¹

Essentially because both authors are throughout obsessed with the values of reconciliation, peace and unity they show disillusionment with the adult world characterized in the two novels by violence, political vendetta and mistrust, an anomaly which everybody including the local leadership, as we saw,

cannot put right. They therefore unite in their hope that the future lies with the younger generation. The two writers, however, portray their hope of reconciliation through children in different ways.

Ngugi highlights this in the love affair between Njoroge and Mwhaki, a love affair that cuts across class boundaries and which, for a while, remained indifferent to the belligerent atmosphere around them. If the responsibilities of leadership are insurmountable for Njoroge, his love affair with Mwhaki can serve for Ngugi as a symbol of peace in a world torn asunder by adult hostility. In Weep Not, Child, Ngugi is as much committed to the values of love and mutual understanding as he is to the Christian values of reconciliation and forgiveness, which he sees as an alternative to the division and hostility characterizing relationships between the races and classes in his community.

These values are embodied in the two young lovers whose platonic affair is an ardent call for the cessation of hostilities around them. In the heat of the Emergency and the resultant belligerence, the love affair between Njoroge and Mwhaki symbolizes for Ngugi warmth and tenderness in an atmosphere torn by conflict and violence.

Another symbol is the school environment which he had seen as an instrument of indoctrination in The River Between (1965) but now idealizes because the context here is that of Mau Mau conflict and his role as a nationalist, therefore, imposes another additional responsibility: that of a peacemaker. Ngugi is here pleading for a ceasefire.

Because he meant the school environment as a refuge for Njoroge from the feuding adult world, he portrays it as a haven of peace and unity. Siriana Missionary School is thus portrayed as a melting-pot of diverse cultural and linguistic groups and a place to foster unity in a divided country. At Siriana Njoroge:

met boys from many tribes...boys who were like him in every way. He made friends and worked with Nandi, Luo, Wakamba and Giriama. They were boys who had hopes and fears, loves and hatreds. If they quarrelled with any or if he hated any, he did so as he would have done with any other boy from his village "(p108).

Although most of the teachers are Europeans, "They never talked of colour; they never talked down to Africans; and they could work closely, joke, and laugh with their black colleagues who came from different tribes "(p.115).

In the middle of the Emergency, an inter-school football match provides an opportunity for unity among the boys, and particularly between Njoroge and Stephen Howlands, whose parents are each placed on the extreme end of the social divide and are totally hostile to each other. When the two boys meet each of them expresses hope that in spite of the darkness engulfing the nation, "things will be all right" (p.111) and Njoroge, on his own part:

wished the whole country was like this. This seemed a little paradise, a paradise where children from all walks of life and of different religious faiths could work together without any consciousness (p.115).

Ngugi eventually reveals how the insanity of the adult world catches up with the children and destroys their dreams and hope for reconciliation which cuts across all barriers. Initially Mwihaki sees the enmity between her father and Njoroge's "as a Jacobo-Ngotho affair that had nothing to do with her relationship

with Njoroge. Her world and Njoroge's world stood somewhere outside petty prejudices, hatreds and class differences "(p.88). But Mwhaki's relationship with Njoroge is temporarily strained following her father's murder by Boro. After it happened, "she felt betrayed by Njoroge. If what her mother told her was true she would never have anything to do with the boy." (p.130). Also through Njoroge's experience Ngugi shows that innocence has to grow up into experience. The hero is sadly wrenched from his "abode of peace" (p.108), the school, to the House of Pain, a detention camp to face torture (p.116). As he receives blows from the weapon of his assailant Njoroge "remembered the serenity of his school...a lost paradise" (p.112). When he meets Mwhaki in the last chapter, he reminisces on the period when he:

was young and foolish and thought of what I could do for my family, my village, and the country. I have now lost all - my education, my faith and my family (p.131).

This is one of the major points of similarity between the two writers: both make a wry observation that the world of the young has to grow up into experience as the violence of the adults catches up eventually with and destroys the peace of the children. Like Ngugi, Lamming introduces us in Of Age and Innocence to the unity between three boys which transcends racial and class barriers as opposed to the vendetta of the adult community. Lamming indicates that the world of 'innocence' is contrasted with that of 'age' and 'experience' into which the boys must inevitably grow. Like Ngugi, he shows that the dream of the boys is exemplary, but it is also ill-equipped to absorb the shock of the adult world of experience and unforeseen results of action.

However, much more than Ngugi who, at times, sympathetically identifies with his young hero, Lamming who is totally dispassionate with his children, more thoroughly identifies the inadequacy of their world. He shows that though in their unity the boys surpass the adults whom they condemn for their destructiveness, they need their world for the security which it offers. When they are faced with the difficult challenge of exonerating themselves from guilt after the madhouse inferno, the inadequacy of their world is shown in their need for adult support: "They were beginning to feel the need for shelter and the protection of their parents "(p.285).

Bob's statement that "Age is nothing if there ain't no doing" (p.116) is doubly ironic: after the fire the children suddenly feel they require the protection of the adult world from which they have tried to escape. Also in the process of "doing," generating funds to keep their society going, they unwittingly contribute in causing the fire which caused numerous casualties, including Rowley, one of their number.

The major difference between Ngugi's children and Lamming's is that while the former believe in religion for the amelioration of the socio-political problems of Kenya, the latter believe in acting against them. The predilection of Ngugi's children to Christianity is not only due to Ngugi's sensibility, which was deeply Christian when he wrote Weep Not, Child. It also has to do with his concern in the novel with the values of reconciliation and forgiveness which might bring about the peace he hopes for his community. Following the first discord in the hero's family, Njoroge "knelt down and prayed. 'God forgive me for I am wicked. Perhaps it is me who has brought uncleanness into our home.

Forgive me my sins. Help my father and mother. O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacobo, help thy children. Forgive us all." (pp.53-4). About the Mau Mau conflict engulfing the nation, the old preacher argues that for a solution to all plagues, including the Mau Mau one, "We must turn to God. We must go on our knees and behold the animal hung on the tree yonder" (p.89), Njoroge would certainly agree.

Lamming's children, on the other hand, believe in taking action to change the social system characterized by dissension, rivalry and racial bitterness. In their belief that changes can be effected, they are contrasted with Ma Shephard whose religious conservatism leads her to condemn direct political involvement in her conviction that "This ain't my Kingdom...this nor no corner on the earth" (p.263). Though the boys are inspired by her plea for unity and fellow-feeling, they reject her doctrine of prayer as a means of effecting social change (p.71). They believe in action, which is why

they had come together as a little society which worked in secret, and the unity which the speakers were urging San Cristobal to achieve was for them a fact. It seemed that they had in some way, surpassed their elders ...Sometimes they felt that the others would have to catch up on what they had already accomplished. (p.115)

What the boys have 'already accomplished' is, as we saw, a unity cutting across racial and class barriers in San Cristobal. The society initially consists of Bob, Singh and Lee, but the arrival of Crabbe's son, Rowley, and his acceptance as a member consolidates the ideal of inter-racial unity the boys attempt to forge, and in the words of Ronald Williams offers "a hope for renewed innocence capable of destroying the barriers between the different racial elements of the society."⁶²

But, as we saw, Lamming is circumspect about the dream of the children by revealing through them, the dark side of human nature, which in itself might result in jeopardizing any action taken by human beings to restore sanity in a world torn by dissension. On their way to one of their 'secret' meetings the boys are shown engaged in an orgy of destruction of a frightening proportion, which results in the death of a colony of ants. The boys are as capable of violence as the adults, a fact which Lamming illustrates in the gory scene which, after the merciless brutality of the boys against the ants, looks like a battlefield littered all over with bodies:

The marl was spotted with small black freckles like seeds which had failed to make roots. The weed had suddenly lost its stature, and the grass lay withered and simple in the sun (p.126).

Lamming's awareness that children contain a malignant streak contrasts with the idealization by Ngugi of children, who are seen as paragons of virtue in their platonic love affair further symbolized through Njoroge's aversion to the violation of flowers (p.36). Notwithstanding his renunciation of and aversion to violence he, as we saw, becomes one of its victims as Lamming's children also become embroiled in the political conflict which caused numerous casualties among both expatriates and the indigenes of San Cristobal.

Despite the bleak pictures at the end of both novels, the writers express optimism eventually, although Lamming's ending is as usual ambivalent and open-ended.

The optimism in Ngugi's Weep Not, Child is clear-cut. The author reveals that the child must not weep because brighter days lie ahead, a message which surfaces through the title of the book,

borrowed from a poem 'On the Beach at Night' by Walt Whitman, a nineteenth century American poet. In Walt Whitman's poem, a father addresses his daughter who has been lamenting the approaching clouds - difficult times - which threaten to cover the sky, that eventually light will follow darkness.

He tells her that the clouds:

...shall not long possess the sky,
 they devour the stars
 only in apparition,
 Jupiter shall emerge, be patient,
 watch again another night,
 the Pleiades shall emerge,
 They are immortal, all immortal, all those stars
 both silvery and golden
 shall shine out again,
 The great stars and the little ones
 shall shine out again.⁶³

The optimism in Walt Whitman's poem showing that the dark moments are temporary and that the "long enduring pensive moons shall again shine"⁶⁴ is transferred by Ngugi into the dark atmosphere of Weep Not, Child. When Njoroge and Stephen Howlands meet during an inter-schools football match and the latter laments over the dark atmosphere the hero soothes the European boy with the words "things will be all right [because] Njoroge still believed in the future. Hope of a better day was the only comfort he could give to a weeping child "(p.111). Following Njoroge's lead, Mwihaki soothes her mother after the assassination of Jacobo, "The sun will rise tomorrow "(p.130).

By the end of the novel Njoroge's problems have piled up threatening to overwhelm him. His catalogue of woes include expulsion from school, the rapid deterioration of his family, detention and torture, all leading to the notion that it is really Njoroge much more than any character in the story who needs soothing, he is the weeping child. When Mwihaki rejects his offer

of a physical escape, he experiences a sense of loss ("For the first time he knew that he was in the world alone without a soul on whom he could lean" (p.134) and decides to commit suicide.

The dark condition is illuminated when his mother goes out looking for him carrying "a glowing piece of wood...to light the way" (p.135) thus fulfilling her role prescribed in the Gikuyu society in which a woman is traditionally known as "Ndoryo ya mochye - the support of the home."⁶⁵ By rescuing the last male member of the family from death, Nyokabi succeeds in arresting the steady disintegration of Ngotho's family. On his own part, the hero has now achieved self-awareness with which he can face the challenges of tomorrow. With his new found maturity and awareness that life consists of gains and losses, he will be better placed to tackle the problems of his community with detachment and less romantic illusion. All this is illustrated when Nyokabi and himself meet Njeri, a confrontation which produces in him a guilty conscience, "the guilt of a man who had avoided his responsibility for which he had prepared himself since childhood" (p.136). A feeling of guilt at the end of Weep Not, Child is meant to produce an effect similar to that created at the end of The River Between: to prompt the consciousness into avoiding the mistakes of the past.

The ending of Of Age and Innocence is less straightforward than that of Weep Not, Child, thus engaging the reader in the active critical task of arriving at the conclusion. Shortly before the boys in Lamming's novel arrive at Rowley's graveside, Lamming, through apt imagery, conveys his sense of despair about an island that has just experienced a blood-bath and is facing the possibility of another following the trial of Shephard's political colleagues who are under detention:

A solitary bat dived headlong from the sycamore tree, settled its flight upon the magic of the light, and abruptly finished its journey in a fatal crash against the post. It struggled for a moment to find its wings, caught a brief current of wind, and rolled finally under a dark bed of weed that grew from the gutter (p.399).

But the candles lit beside Rowley's grave, the "biggest an' best in the whole, wide cemetery"(p.405) introduce light in darkness, they announce the possibility of hope, however faint, in an atmosphere of overwhelming pessimism. The open-ended nature of the story, however enables Lamming to reveal through the racial polarization at the end of the novel that the multi-racial problem remains largely unresolved. This unresolved question at the end of the novel must have led to Ian Munro's assertion that Of Age and Innocence is a novel about the failure of West Indian nationalism.⁶⁶ Such an assessment of the novel, although partly true, is reductionist and must have resulted from a reading of the book at only one level, the realistic one, neglecting the other levels at which it operates.

The novel operates at three different planes, and in the fictional world Lamming has created each level is as important to his creation as it is to his vision of a new San Cristobal society. The realistic plane is the most obvious and centres on the conflicts and political vendetta in San Cristobal. In spite of his stance as a nationalist deeply concerned with multi-racial unity, Lamming refuses to gloss over the unification problems of a complex and heterogeneous society undergoing a political transition. Neither would the historicity of the novel been kept intact since Of Age and Innocence is also meant, as we saw, as a critique of the Guyanese leaders in the 1950's for their inability to maintain political unity during

the process of decolonization. The novel, however, is as much a critique of that inability as it is a quest for a united multi-racial San Cristobal community. In the novel, the symbol of the new society is the association of the young generation who are portrayed at the end of the novel, mourning at Rowley's graveside. Their united attempt to ignore the martial law is symbolic of their rejection of the State of Emergency and the last vestiges of the colonial administration which must give way to the new order which Lamming hopes for.

Since allegory is defined "as an 'extended metaphor' in which characters, actions and scenery[refer] to spiritual, political [and] psychological confrontations,"⁶⁷ it is apparent that the allegorical plane of Lamming's novel deals with the confrontation between the forces of colonialism and those of nationalism in which the former are both physically and spiritually defeated. The ego of the Chief Justice presiding over the trial of those suspected of Shephard's murder is deflated and his authority is replaced by that of a 'people's court' which has a moral right to 'try' the custodians of a colonial legal system which is blatantly partisan (p.337). He also suffers a spiritual defeat in his verbal exchange with Rockey, when the latter testifies before the court insisting on choosing to respond in his own style to questions put to him rather than conforming to the conventional method (pp.337-338). His imposing and self-confident figure "makes the Chief Justice and the surrounding paraphernalia of the court seem irrelevant, ridiculous, absurd "(p.337). The high moral position which the fisherman occupies because he testifies truthfully is contrasted with that of the biased Chief Justice, who has "a comic face, soft and black, under the wig that carves his head like a calabash."(p.337)

The allegorical nature of the story can further be discerned through the names of key characters in the story such as Mr. Crabbe and Isaac Shephard. Mr. Crabbe described by Valentine Cunningham as "the Chief of Police and of almost everything else,"⁶⁸ the story illustrates, had San Cristobal under his 'claws' and refused to let go until he is physically eliminated. Before his assassination, his entire family are wiped out in a fire which, as we saw, is a symbol of colonial revolt. And although he is eventually transformed into a bad 'shephard' who cares more for his power than his 'sheep,' Shephard returns from England in time to participate in a national independence movement and see it through the process of decolonization.

When one comes across statements like Kenneth Ramchand's that "The reader has the feeling that Lamming is setting the novel away from detailed social analysis and observation and towards a fable of some kind,"⁶⁹ and V.S. Naipaul's that Lamming "is not a realistic writer. He deals in symbols and allegory. Experience has not been the basis of this novel"⁷⁰ one immediately realizes that both commentators have paid attention to only one dimension of the novel instead of looking at the other levels which are all vitally related.

Of Age and Innocence cannot be pinned down to a particular artistic category. It contains realistic, allegorical and symbolic elements. The novel marks a second stage of development of a political writer who has been trying out for new forms of expression appropriate to the West Indian environment, in conformity with the call of Edward Brathwaite, observed in the Introduction, that West Indian artists should revitalize the local tradition by incorporating it into their work. Thus like his first novel discussed in the previous chapter, Lamming's

third is experimental. In it he uses diverse modes and techniques to produce a novel that goes beyond the confines of Barbados to address the West Indian problems of unity in a multi-racial community.

He succeeds as a great craftsman able to combine the historical, the allegorical and the mythical to produce Of Age and Innocence, which is as compelling as it is cerebrally demanding to uncover its richness and literary depth.

His creative use of the legend of the Tribe Boys and the Bandit Kings is illustrative of this artistic feat which links modern San Cristobal with the Arawak tradition of resistance. All the main characters in Of Age and Innocence can be directly or indirectly linked to the myth. Mark Kennedy learns about it as a child, refers to it in his speech at Sabina Square but he is not inspired to fight for freedom because of his inability to overcome his alienation. Although Shephard does not refer to it, he is clearly influenced by it. This is illustrated by his commitment to the emancipation of San Cristobal from colonialism. The religious conservatism of Ma Shephard, a historian, who passes down the myth to others, prevents her from active political engagement which the myth enjoins. It is left to her son, whom she in vain tries to discourage from politics, to confront Crabbe, a modern Bandit King, and tries, following the lead of the Tribe Boys, to wrench his political freedom. Although a whiteman, Bill Butterfield does not support the modern Bandit Kings. Through him Lamming explores the possibility of a democratic and multi-racial society in which both blacks and whites can live in harmony. His dreams fail to materialize and his chances of getting a job at Radio San Cristobal, as we saw, are frustrated

because of his liberal ideas which the colonial administration cannot accommodate. Finally, the myth inspired the young generation not to die but to keep the struggle going, further encouraged by the flames around Rowley's grave which "looked triumphant under the press of the wind bending the candles nearer the dust." (p.412) Significantly the flames "survived, and the rain halted for a while" (p.412). All this indicate that Lamming has been moving closer to a more Caribbean tradition, a literary homecoming which becomes even more obvious in Season of Adventure (1960) which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The importance of situating literature within its socio-cultural context for a proper understanding of it was highlighted in the Introduction. If for this reason, Lamming's fiction is seen in the light of Edward Brathwaite's call for "an aggressive regional criticism,"⁷¹ Ngugi's fiction should also be seen in the light of Chinweizu's call to African writers for conformity with the local aesthetics and of giving pre-eminence to the African point of view.⁷²

It is arguable that at the time when Ngugi wrote Weep Not, Child his knowledge of Kenyan history was not sufficiently deep as a result of which the novel suffers from inaccuracies and is generally thin on historical details. 'Kenya Land Freedom Army' (K.L.F.A.),⁷³ which is the official designation of the movement is referred to as 'African Freedom Army' (p.67). Historically Mau Mau was mainly a peasant struggle but Weep Not, Child does not present it as such.⁷⁴ In addition, only the bare outlines of the onset of Mau Mau such as the assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu and the declaration of the State of Emergency are given. If one gets any sense of the State of Emergency in the novel it is that associated

with the violence unleashed on Kipanga villagers, which leaves out the villagisation programme, which is treated in greater detail by Ngugi as our discussion of A Grain of Wheat (1967) in Chapter Four will show.

If Ngugi's inadequate knowledge of Kenyan history accounts for the slimness of historical detail in Weep Not, Child, it cannot account for his negative depiction of Mau Mau as a movement.

After providing the bare outlines of Mau Mau, Ngugi goes on to concentrate on the tragedy of Ngotho and his son, Njoroge, who are not militants. He only marginally focusses on Boro and Kiarie, the freedom fighters, who are in most cases portrayed in a negative light because of their link with violence. For example, when Njoroge comes home from school the imagery of darkness which is used is not only meant to signal the onset of the Emergency. It is also meant to signal the presence of Boro, a freedom fighter. As he enters, "Njoroge saw the dark face of his father...[He] went right in and the gloom in the room caught him at once" (p.69). (my emphasis) Later, on his way to assassinate Mr. Howlands, Boro is described as running "quickly out, away from the light into the night" (p.125). Undoubtedly, as we saw, as a nationalist obsessed with peace, Ngugi felt compelled to underplay the revolutionary import of Mau Mau - a violent chapter in Kenyan history - since it went against the spirit of reconciliation between the races and classes in Kenya.

It is therefore open to debate whether or not the peace and reconciliation that Ngugi pleads for coincides more with an 'African point of view' than an accurate portrayal of the Mau Mau struggle, which historically led to the achievement of Kenyan independence. But surely an 'African point of view' which

is valid not only because of historical veracity but also because it was shared by the principal actors in the struggle at that time must be the one which locates Mau Mau in its historical-cum-revolutionary context, which Weep Not, Child has failed to do. However, to young Ngugi, Mau Mau must have been against the interest of national peace then, a view which went through a radical transformation in his next novel, A Grain of Wheat (1967), which acknowledges the import of the movement as a weapon with which the Gikuyu peasants won their freedom.

The language of narration in Weep Not, Child is basically formal, and that of discourse between characters has no African flavour to it. An illiterate Gikuyu squatter, Ngotho thinks aloud about taking responsibility for his own son's crime, in a language that does not reflect his cultural background:

Perhaps they'll kill him. Didn't they take him to the homeguard post? But why do - They don't want an old man's blood. Now, don't ask, Did I kill Jacobo? Did I shoot him? (p.123)

But occasionally the main character's language has a Biblical flavour to it as a way of reflecting his Christian faith, as the example of one of his speeches below shows:

Our people...We must turn to God... Then all our wounds will heal at once. We shall be washed by the blood of the Lamb. Our people, what is said in the Holy Scriptures is what I will tell you now. (p.89)

This was a prelude to Ngugi's growing craftsmanship in matching language to situation, in a novel in which, as our discussion illustrates, Ngugi was still at a neophyte stage of his development as a political writer and as an artist. In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi has become more assured about his political sense of direction as well as about his mastery of technique, a development largely attributed to the influence

of George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin (1953). But before examining this influence, we will discuss in the next chapter the essay-statements of the two writers in order to identify, among other things, the basis of the early similarities and the cause of the later divergence between them.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. J.S. Mangat, 'The Immigrant Communities (2)' in History of East Africa Volume III, edited by D.A. Low and Alison Smith (1957; rpt. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976)p.469.
2. Samuel Selvon, 'Three Into One Can't Go - East Indian, Trinidadian or West Indian?' Wasafiri, No.5, Autumn 1986 p.8.
3. In "Race and Politics in Kenya" Tom Mboya writes that "...of the 60,000 Europeans in Kenya only some 10,000 lived and have an interest in the "White Highlands," the rest live in urban areas, mostly engaged in commerce, industry or administration." See The Political Awakening of Africa ed. Rupert Emerson and Martin Kilson, (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall 1965)p.86.
4. David Lowenthal, West Indian Societies, (London, Oxford University Press, 1972)p.82.
5. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "Kenya: The Two Rifts" Homecoming; Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics p.23.
6. Ngugi'wa Thiong'o, pp.23-24.
7. George Lamming, "West Indian People," Caribbean Essays: an Anthology (London, Evans, 1973)p.15.
8. George Lamming, Of Age and Innocence (London, Allison and Busby 1958). p. 58. The present and subsequent references will be to the 1981 edition with page numbers immediately following the cited passages.
9. Edward Brathwaite, Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean(Kingston, Savacou Publications 1974)p.11.
10. Samuel Selvon, "Three Into One Can't Go", p.9.
11. Samuel Selvon, p.8.
12. Samuel Selvon, p.8.
13. Edward Brathwaite, Contradictory Omens p.53.
14. Frances Kay, This is Grenada (Trinidad, Frances Kay Brinkley, 1966)p.14.
15. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child (London, Heinemann 1964).pp 110-1 The present and subsequent references will be to the 1983 edition reset in 1976, with page numbers immediately following the cited passages.

16. R. Van Zwanenberg, "The Background to White Racialism in Kenya," Kenya Historical Review, (Vol.2, No.1 1974)p.8.
17. R. Van Zwanenberg, p.8.
18. J.S. Mangat, "The Immigrant Communities - 2" p.478.
19. Donald Barnett and Karari Njama, Mau Mau from Within: An Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt, (London, Modern Reader 1966)p.199.
20. Although we identified three main races with whom Ngugi is involved in Weep Not, Child, the Mau Mau War involved only native Kenyans and Europeans with Asians, whose involvement in Kenyan politics was peripheral, left out.
21. Samuel Selvon, A Brighter Sun (London, Allen Wingate 1952) p.122. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
22. Quoted in David Lowenthal's West Indian Societies, p.253.
23. Eric Williams, 'Race Relations in Caribbean Society,' Caribbean Studies: A Symposium ed. Vera Rubin (1957; rpt. Seattle, Univ. of Washington Press, 1960)p.59.
24. Raffique Shah, Race Relations in Trinidad: Some Aspects (Port of Spain, Classline Publications, 1988) p.10.
25. Jagroo, Laurel, Personal Interview. 9th August, 1988.
26. Harold A. Lutchman, "Guyana: A Review of Recent Political Developments," Guyana: A Composite Monograph ed. Brian Irving (Puerto Rico, Inter-American University Press 1972)p.15.
27. Yereth Knowles, "Guyana: Black Power?," Guyana: A Composite Monograph, pp.40-41.
28. See Eric Williams, "Race Relations in Caribbean Society," p.54.
29. David Lowenthal, West Indian Societies, p.167.
30. Eric Williams, "Race Relations in Caribbean Society," p.55.
31. David W. Throup, Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau 1945-53 (London, James Currey, 1987)p.43.
32. See Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington, (Harmondsworth, Penguin 1963)p.122.
33. Adrian Roscoe, Uhuru's Fire: African Literature East to South (London, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977)p.185.

34. Samuel Selvon, "Three Into One Can't Go," p.10.
35. See David W. Throup, Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau 1945-53, p.51.
36. Jeremy Murray-Brown, Kenyatta (1972; rpt. London, Allen and Unwin, 1979)p.265.
37. Arthur Ravenscroft, "Ngugi's Development as a Novelist" Common Wealth ed. Anna Rutherford (Aarhus:Akademisk Boghandel, 1971)p.86.
38. For example, Micere Githae-Mugo who shares this view notes in Visions of Africa: The fiction of Chinua Achebe, Margaret Laurence, Elspeth Huxley, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1978) that Njoroge is "a confused, naive...youth, helplessly battered by cruel forces that crush his dreams before they are even properly born and who is, moreover, forced to assume a man's responsibility prematurely."(p.133)
39. Jeremy Murray-Brown, Kenyatta,p.271.
40. Jeremy Murray-Brown, p.368.
41. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "George Lamming and the Colonial Situation," Homecoming, p.137.
42. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, p,137.
43. Albert Camus, The Outsider, trans. Stuart Gilbert (1946; rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin 1975)p.64.
44. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "George Lamming and the Colonial Situation," Homecoming, p. 142.
45. In "George Lamming and the Colonial Situation" Ngugi wa Thiong'o has, in a similar vein, argued that "The West Indian's alienation springs not from his immediate confrontation with machines, not even being in an industrial mass society, but from his colonial relationship to England "(p.142).
46. Francis Thompson, The Hound of Heaven (London, Burns and Oates Ltd, 1912)p.15.
47. George Lamming, "The Negro Writer and His World," Presence Africaine Nos. 8-9-10, June-Nov. 1956, p.329.
48. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington, (1961; rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin 1967)p.28.
49. Selwyn D. Ryan, Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago: A Study of Decolonization in a Multi-Racial Society (Toronto, Univ. of Toronto Press 1972) p.105.

50. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "George Lamming and the Colonial Situation," Homecoming, p. 138.
51. Sandra P. Paquet, The Novels of George Lamming, (London, Heinemann 1982)p.58.
52. Merle Hodge, "The Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago," David Frost Introduces Trinidad and Tobago, (London, Andre Deutsch 1975)p.35.
53. David Lowenthal, West Indian Societies, p.161.
54. David Lowenthal, p.161.
55. Samuel Selvon, "Three Into One Can't Go," p.11.
56. Kenneth Ramchand, "The Theatre of Politics," Twentieth Century Studies: The Third World: Tensions of Independence, (No. 10, Dec. 1983)p.25.
57. Kenneth Ramchand, p.25.
58. Kenneth Ramchand, p.25.
59. George Lamming, "The West Indian People," pp.9-10.
60. Valentine Cunningham, "The Colonizing Word," rev. of the 1981 re-issued edition of Of Age and Innocence by George Lamming, Times Literary Supplement, 4th Sept. 1981, p.1000.
61. Ronald Alexander Williams, "The Third World Voices: An Analysis of the Works of Chinua Achebe, George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul," diss., Lehigh University, 1982, p.215.
62. Ronald Alexander Williams, p.213.
63. Walt Whitman, The Portable Walt Whitman Selected by Mark Van Doren (1945; rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin 1977) p.272.
64. Walt Whitman, p.273.
65. C. Cagnolo, The Akikuyu, Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore, (Nyeri, Kenya, 1933)p.115.
66. Ian Munro, "Exile and Community: A Study of the Poetry and Prose of George Lamming," diss., Univ. of Texas at Austin, 1976, p.56.
67. Roger Fowler, A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms (1973; rpt. London, Routledge and Kegan 1987)p.5.
68. Valentine Cunningham, "The Colonizing Word", p.1000.
69. Kenneth Ramchand, "The Theatre of Politics," p.23.

70. V.S. Naipaul, "New Novels," rev. of Of Age and Innocence, by George Lamming, The New Statesman, Vol.61 No. 1447, 6th Dec. 1958, p.827.
71. A quote from Jeannette B. Allis' "West Indian Literature: A Case for Regional Criticism," p.7, Critical Issues in West Indian Literature: Selected Papers from West Indian Literature Conferences 1981-1983 ed. Erika Smilowitz and Roberta Knowles. This tallies with Edward Brathwaite's advocacy for a regional criticism.
72. Chinweizu et al, Toward the Decolonization of African Literature, p.141.
73. See Tabitha Kanogo, Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905-63 (London, James Currey 1987)p.6. Also in a recent article "The Language of African Theatre" in Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature (1986) Ngugi, whose knowledge of Kenyan history has significantly improved since the early days of Weep Not, Child writes that "The Mau Mau militant organization which spearheaded the armed struggle for Kenya's independence was officially called the Kenya Land and Freedom Army." (p.44).
74. Although Tabitha Kanogo argues in Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905-63 (1987) that some members of the "Squatter elite, who owed their privileged position to the settlers... did participate in Mau Mau activities," (p.130), Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama assert in Mau Mau from Within: An Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt that at the beginning of the struggle in 1953 "several thousand Kikuyu, Embu and Meru peasants withdrew to the forested areas of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares and began organizing themselves into fighting groups with the avowed purpose of achieving their politico-economic aims through the use of force."(p.71). This indicates that majority of the fighters were indeed peasants.

CHAPTER THREE

Our basic assumption, as stated in the Introduction, is that since literature is not created in a social vacuum, its historical and political contexts are important and will therefore serve as a necessary guide to critical analysis. David Cauter also shares our stance in his opposition to the structuralist assertion that only the intrinsic-cum-linguistic factors of a literary work are needed in analysing a literary text. In The Illusion (1972) he argues that If the literary critic ignores what is known about a writer's life and his environment he is indeed amputating a vital critical limb.¹

It has also been our central argument that both Ngugi and Lamming are political writers but that in their early stage as writers Lamming is more accomplished than Ngugi as a political writer and as an artist. Through a comparative analysis of their early novels, Chapter One and Two attempted to prove this assertion. The third chapter will serve as a hinge between the early and the latter part of the thesis: the early part had looked at the early novels of the two writers and now the latter part will look at their later work, and particularly note the development of Ngugi into a major political novelist, with the appearance of A Grain of Wheat (1967). The section will also anticipate what is coming up in the last part of the thesis, which will examine the linguistic and ideological divergence between the two novelists. It will stress and account for Ngugi's marxist-indeepening in contrast to Lamming's intensification and continuity. As part of our belief in the importance of situating literature within its context by using extra-textual information, the chapter will where necessary use as a 'lens' the essay-statements and interviews by the two writers.

We have earlier made most of the points we shall discuss here. But we need to re-state them here for a different purpose: to account for the similarities between the two writers and determine the causes

of their later divergence. As we saw in the Introduction, both Ngugi's and Lamming's early novels belong to the category of cultural and political nationalism. In the novels, both writers are essentially concerned with cultural regeneration, national reconciliation as well as political unity in Kenya and in the West Indies.

We have also seen in Section One that in response to the onslaught of the colonial establishment which used both education and religion to indoctrinate people in colonial Kenya, Ngugi has argued in "The Writer and His Past" (1968) that:

the African novelist... attempted to... restore the African character to his history. The African novelist has turned his back on the Christian god and resumed the broken dialogue with the gods of his people. He has given back to the African character the will to act and change the scheme of things.²

So as a cultural nationalist, Ngugi responded by writing his two early novels. However, the discussion of The River Between and Weep Not, Child has revealed Ngugi's divided loyalties: as a cultural nationalist concerned with protecting the cultural integrity of his society and as a Christian whose faith encouraged him to view with disdain certain aspects of that culture. For instance, in his portrayal of Christianity in The River Between Ngugi is both encouraged to see religion as positive because it taught reconciliation and unity - his two main concerns in the story - and also as negative because its champions attempted to wipe out aspects of Gikuyu cultural tradition which he cherished as a cultural nationalist.

The fact that Ngugi is at a neophyte stage as a cultural nationalist, with his political ideas still in a nebulous form when he wrote his first novel, can further be proved by comparing the role of the Kiama (which Ngugi distorts in his first novel) with the function of its Igbo counterpart, the ndichie, comprehensively portrayed by Chinua Achebe in Things Fall Apart (1958). Both Gikuyuland and Igboland had democratic political systems before the arrival of Europeans. Decisions were taken by a selected group of elders

(the Kiama in Gikuyuland and the ndichie in Igboland) and traditional chieftains in both Eastern Nigeria and in Kenya were creations of the colonial administrations in these areas. As opposed to Ngugi whose Christian bias led him into portraying the Kiama as a sinister organization in his first novel, his Nigerian counterpart Chinua Achebe dwells on the cultural and multi-dimensional function of a similar legislative body (the ndichie) in Igboland. This group of elders, Chinua Achebe shows, does not only settle disputes among the members of Umuofia community in Things Fall Apart. It also takes final decisions on matters affecting the whole community. When the missionaries arrive at Mbanta it is the council of elders that decides to give them "a portion of the Evil Forest"³ to build a church. In contrast with Chinua Achebe's depiction of the ndichie, the Kiama is, as we saw in Chapter One, depicted by Ngugi as a sinister organization subject to the manipulation of Kabonyi, who used it as a weapon against Waiyaki, his arch-rival.

Unlike Ngugi whose loyalties as a cultural nationalist^d were divided, Lamming had from the beginning fully-formed ideas about education and religion, which he viewed in his early novel as props of the colonial order. In The Pleasures of Exile (1960) he outlines what he sees as the essentially nationalistic role of the writer in a colonial society: that of correcting the distortions about the past, promoted by the colonial establishment. He argues that, "Our duty is to find ways of changing the root and perspectives of that [colonial] background, of dismantling the accumulated myth, both cultural and political, which an inherited and uncritical way of seeing has now reinforced".⁴

Lamming shows that in a^d culturally fragmented society like his, a writer is duty-bound to help his society get rid of the colonial myths to which his people has been exposed. Through a variety of

subtle means these myths have fostered subservience to and identification with the Western culture which, "had made us pupils to its language, baptised us in the same religion, until Empire ceased to be a dirty word and seemed to bear little relation to those forms of domination we now call imperialism".⁵ So in reaction, In the Castle of My Skin sets out to undermine both a religion and an educational system used by the colonial administration to "inflict a terror of the mind"⁶ which was also "a daily exercise in self-mutilation"⁷ on the West Indian.

The differences between the two writers can be attributed not only to the more accomplished nature of Lamming's early political writing. They can also be traced to the different socio-political contexts of the two writers. As we saw, the communalistic nature of Gikuyu society led to Ngugi's creation of a hero whom the society expects to always conform and even sacrifice his needs for the community. So that although Ngugi gives attention to the "treatment of individual destin[y]"⁸ The River Between, we discovered in Chapter One that the tendency is for the individual not to be granted individualistic freedom.

On the other hand, Lamming's portrayal of G, a hero, who is both a member of the community but can also be separate from it, is dictated by the racially-mixed nature of the author's society which has both African and European roots. The 'private' world of the writer to which Lamming refers in "The Negro Writer and His world" (1956) and to which he says he owes a responsibility, is related to the European dimension of his culture. It is also linked to the individualistic freedom which an individual can secure from the community since in both cases a temporary withdrawal from the larger community is involved.

In Lamming's view:

This world is private. It contains the range of his ambitions; his deceptions, his perplexity, his pride, his shame, his guilt, his honour, his need. All these qualities are there, hidden in the castle of his skin.⁹

However, the implication of ^awriter ensconced in his "private and hidden-self"¹⁰ is the obvious temptation to lock himself up for too long forgetting the world around him, and the responsibility that the society expects him to fulfil, which in the view of Lamming, a deeply political writer, includes the duty of "shaping of national consciousness, giving alternative directions to society."¹¹

As we saw in Chapter One, the artist figure in Lamming's first novel is often cut off totally from the community, immersed in a private world, contemplating the natural environment instead of addressing the harsh realities of daily existence in the village. Although, as we saw, the isolation has a positive side to it, it also has a limitation since in Lamming's view, dramatised in In the Castle of My Skin, private contemplation constitutes only one dimension of the West Indian problem, the other aspect being active political engagement. Boy Blue is fully aware of the existence of the two worlds and the danger of the one world eclipsing the other, when "this business o' dreamin'"¹² overshadows "what they call the politics".¹³ But Lamming who goes a jump ahead of both the limited perception of his protagonist and Boy Blue's view that the two worlds are antithetical, attaches equal importance to both the private and the public worlds. In the Castle of My Skin is as a result patterned on a continuous shift of focus from the private to the public world, from the individual to the communal preoccupations.

In their second novels discussed in Chapter Two both writers reveal their obsession with national reconciliation and political unity in their respective nations. This leads, as we saw, to their use of the symbol of children whose mutual love and innocence are meant to spell out hope in an atmosphere of conflict and inter-racial violence. But from the start, Lamming's deep belief in the malignant

streak in human beings (a view which intensified in his later novels) makes him circumspect about childhood 'innocence'. This, as we saw, led to his depiction of the boys engaged in an orgy of violence which portrays them as no less destructive than the adult community who have been embroiled in political conflict. Here as in the early novels discussed in Chapter One, Lamming proves himself a more accomplished political novelist than Ngugi because as opposed to Lamming whose political views have already been formed in his early fiction, Ngugi still had his loyalties divided as a cultural nationalist and as a Christian at the time when he wrote Weep Not, Child, his second novel.

As we saw in Chapter Two, although he later takes an ironical stand on Western education, Ngugi's divided loyalties led to his ambivalence towards it in Weep Not, Child. It is initially seen through Njoroge idealistically as a weapon that an individual might use to achieve freedom from colonial rule. It is also seen negatively through Jacobo as preparing the individual for the role of a collaborator of the colonial regime. These divided loyalties also led to his ambivalence towards the Mau Mau movement in his second novel. As a political nationalist Ngugi felt the need to portray it as a freedom movement through which Kenyans were determined to achieve emancipation from colonial rule. But because of his deep Christian faith, Ngugi also saw it in negative terms, an attitude which was reinforced by his early obsession with national peace and reconciliation. Later on, Ngugi was to change his attitude towards both Western education and the Mau Mau movement. The development of his political views led to his conception of Western education in Petals of Blood (1977) (which will be discussed in Chapter

Six) as a prop of the colonial establishment. Also in Chapter Four we shall see that the radicalizing of Ngugi's sensibility led him to view the Mau Mau not as a terrorist organization but as a freedom movement which contributed to the achievement of Kenya's independence.

With Ngugi's third novel A Grain of Wheat, one notices a remarkable change in his political views; he now situates the Mau Mau revolt within its revolutionary context and consequently sees violence in positive terms not only because he believes it is now justified but also because of his awareness of the complex truth that death can be sacrificial and might lead to renewal. Also like in his early novels, Ngugi uses biblical allusions in his new novel. But unlike the early novels A Grain of Wheat gives a radical interpretation to the bible. Through Kihika, Ngugi shows that the bible can be used to serve a revolutionary purpose since it actually inspired Kihika to become a radical politician.

Ngugi's sharp focus on Kenyan politics is matched by the mature technique of A Grain of Wheat. As opposed to the early novels which have single heroes and a narrow narrative focus, the new novel is built upon a deep exploration of individual consciousness as well as a strong bias for the Thabai community. In order to underscore the importance of the individual as well as the community Ngugi makes the chapters in the novel modulate from the communal life of the people to the individual consciousness and back. Its technical sophistication is further illustrated through Ngugi's revised attitude towards the concept of hero. In this respect, W.J. Howard rightly argues that:

While earlier Ngugi began with either a tribal hero (Waiyaki) or a simple character who aspired to be a people's saviour (Njoroge) in A Grain of Wheat the alliance of the author is downward, away from the saving hero to the people of the village themselves. 14

Thus, the four main characters - Kihika, Mugo, Karanja and Gikonyo are equal in stature: they can be seen now as heroic and when the lens switches as the opposite. If there is a 'hero' in the novel at all, it is the village community, whose dense portrait Ngugi has brought to the reader alive mainly through the unnamed peasant narrator, who is a living witness to the psychological and political drama unfolding in Thabai four days before independence. But experience is not related through a single consciousness in A Grain of Wheat. Ngugi deliberately presents a broad range of perspectives from which experience may be viewed. At one point the Mau Mau War is seen through the blinkered eyes of John Thompson, a colonial administrator. At another through Kihika, a committed revolutionary, all the time Ngugi leaving us in no doubt that his sympathy is with the victims of the Emergency and the army of the underprivileged in newly independent Kenya. But because he wants to evoke sympathy for all his characters, irrespective of class or race, Ngugi intentionally distorts the chronology of his story, using several flashbacks to enable us know enough about characters and events before we pass a judgement. What, one might ask, was responsible for the technical maturity of a writer who had been content with the limited narrative perspectives and unilinear plots of Weep Not, Child and The River Between?

When Ngugi went to Leeds in 1964 he came under several literary influences. It was here that he researched into West Indian literature and produced what in Peter Nazareth's view was "one of the best analyses of Lamming's work".¹⁵ We also learn in Homecoming (1972) that it was at Leeds that Ngugi encountered, among other things, Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth (1965) and Robert Tresselt's The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (1955).

However, our main concern here is with the direct literary influences which made A Grain of Wheat not only a complex work of art but also Ngugi's first major political novel. To this end, it is significant to note that Ngugi had also read Joseph Conrad at

Makerere and was undoubtedly familiar with the Polish-born writer to whom he even acknowledged a literary debt.¹⁶ If Under Western Eyes (1911) whose storyline has a striking resemblance to A Grain of Wheat's offered Ngugi the fictional framework for his story, Nostramo (1932), with its complex narrative structure, taught him how to combine "several stories, with distorted chronology, so that only gradually, after continual flashbacks, do we come to understand the present."¹⁷ Although Ngugi was captivated and certainly influenced by Joseph Conrad, the next chapter will show that his third novel offers "a creative criticism of Conrad",¹⁸ since it is firmly rooted in Kenyan social and political scenery. Ngugi's decision to drop the idea of writing a thesis on Joseph Conrad at Leeds and write A Grain of Wheat instead, becomes meaningful in view of his disenchantment with the vision of his literary predecessor. Although Chapter Four will take this up in detail, it will be illuminating at this stage to make a brief contrast between A Grain of Wheat and Under Western Eyes.

While Haldin, on whose character Kihika's is modelled, is portrayed as a revolutionary terrorist, his African counterpart is a committed freedom-fighter. Joseph Conrad reveals his antipathy towards revolutionaries such as Madame de S____, seen throughout Under Western Eyes as a walking corpse,¹⁹ and the dogmatic Peter Ivanovitch, who must "direct, inspire, influence".²⁰ On the other hand, in spite of their weaknesses, Ngugi's freedom fighters, such as General R. and Lt. Koinandu, are seen compassionately. Their activities in the forests are not condemned but revealed in their historical contexts as justifiable. Through the narrator of Under Western Eyes, Joseph Conrad conveys his scepticism towards change,²¹ while A Grain of Wheat stresses the primacy of change, a change of self, which might be followed by a change of society. The visions of the two novelists, as revealed in the novels mentioned above, are basically different: While Ngugi is a deeply political writer having an unmistakable empathy

with the revolutionaries seeking to introduce change, Joseph Conrad is sceptical towards the motives of such characters whom he views with disdain. Thus although both writers take up political issues in their novels, Ngugi is committed to the transformation of society in a way that Joseph Conrad is not.

It is our contention that George Lamming, even more pervasively than Joseph Conrad, played a primary role in transforming Ngugi into a major novelist. Like Joseph Conrad's novels, Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin also influenced Ngugi's artistic development. It was from Lamming's first novel that Ngugi learnt the 'zoning-in' technique through which chapters and passages oscillate from the individual to the communal perspective and back. Furthermore, the dense picture of Thabai community that emerges in A Grain of Wheat (missing in Ngugi's early novels) can be attributed to the influence of Lamming's first novel, whose use of choric and different voices to get an insight into the community taught Ngugi how rich a portrait of a society could become.

In addition, Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin helped to sharpen the focus of Ngugi on the socio-political problems of Kenya. Ngugi's fascination for Lamming started as a "personal passion"²² which later developed into an obsession with the literature of a world which has had certain similar experiences with Kenya during colonization, and in the present having common aspiration, to be "culturally and economically free"²³ from external domination. In his embrace of Lamming, Ngugi had found not only a familiar and artistically stimulating terrain but also a literary creed which tallies with his own belief that literature should serve social and political purposes and specifically address the predicament of the underprivileged majority. Having read In the Castle of My Skin at Makerere in 1961,²⁴ Ngugi wrote about it at Leeds paying particular attention in his essay to the portrayal of the peasantry as an exploited class, the examination of alienation and the betrayal of the common people by their middle-class leaders.

Ngugi has also closely examined these aspects in A Grain of Wheat giving them a local Kenyan flavour. In the quotation below, Ngugi expresses his unqualified admiration of Lamming as a writer:

I was overwhelmed by George Lamming. I read him, uncritically - from cover to cover. He really overwhelmed me.²⁵

Although Ngugi was overwhelmed by Lamming, as a writer, he had borrowed and used in his third novel only what suited his artistic temperament and was relevant to his socio-political setting. It will be the concern of Chapter Four to prove this point as well as examine the influence of In the Castle of My Skin on Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat.

Although Ngugi the essayist has become a Marxist, left-wing ideas have not yet begun to seep into his fiction. This is why he could simultaneously produce A Grain of Wheat, which has a strong peasant bias, but is not Marxist, and an article on In the Castle of My Skin which offers a Marxist analysis of the colonial and neo-colonial predicament of the Barbadian peasants and workers. Thus his politicization had a strong impact on his literary criticism, in which his left-wing political sympathies are very apparent. In a 1975 interview which would have held good in 1964 Ngugi had argued that "no matter how beautiful a work is, if it is not returning the people's struggle or march toward self-realization as a people, then the work cannot be good".²⁶ It was this tendency to emphasize only socio-political issues that ultimately led to Ngugi's neglect of the 'artistic' side of In the Castle of My Skin in his Homecoming essay, which treated only one dimension of the novel, as Chapter One has revealed. It was also this preoccupation with its political aspects, as we saw towards the end of Chapter One, that led to his almost total neglect of the 'private' and 'individualistic' dimension of the novel represented by G.

This led to his concentration on Trumper who represents the political dimension of the novel. As we saw in Chapter One, Ngugi was unable to see the ambiguity of Trumper's position. This is precisely because being a budding politician whose statements are at times spiced with a certain degree of militancy, Trumper is idealized by Ngugi, who was inclined to see In the Castle of My Skin from a Marxist perspective. Although Lamming's writing is political and evinces a peasant bias, it is not Marxist. Therefore application of Marxist literary criteria to it is surely bound to obscure the picture Lamming seeks to portray and mask the novel's essentially experimental nature.

In order to further illustrate the argument that Marxist ideas were predominant in and tended to impair the quality of Ngugi's criticism, one needs to consider his analysis of African writing in Homecoming. Ngugi holds the view that the African writer should point out the ills of society as well as throw his weight behind the masses in "articulating the feelings behind this struggle".²⁷ In this spirit, Ngugi sees a value in 'critical realism' which according to him, can be "both analytic and synthetic".²⁸ According to Arnold Kettle this mode has to do with:

...literature written in the era of class society from a point of view which, while not fully socialist, is nevertheless sufficiently critical of class society to reveal important truths about that society and to contribute to the freeing of human consciousness from the limitations which class society has imposed on it.²⁹

Nevertheless he was highly critical of writers in that 'tradition', the reason being his attempt to impose Marxist categories on writers who are not operating within the 'socialist art' tradition. Thus Ngugi approves of Chinua Achebe's attack on the ailing Nigerian society in A Man of the People (1966) but faults him on attributing the societal malaise to individuals instead of tracing it to the socio-political system which needs dismantling, "Which do you change first in a society - its politico-economic base (new foundations for a new house of a different nature) or the morality of individual men and women?"³⁰

Ngugi asks. Again he spiritedly applauds Wole Soyinka's attack on the chicanery of the Nigerian political elite in his work but deplures his suggestion that the salvation of society will come through the heroic feats of an individual, instead of through the organized resistance of the common people. Ngugi asserts that Wole Soyinka fails to recognize the potential that lies in the 'creative struggle' of the common people in their ability to change the course of their history. Thus Ngugi:

Soyinka's good man is the uncorrupted individual: his liberal humanism leads him to admire an individual's lone act of courage, and thus often he ignores the creative struggle of the masses. The ordinary people, workers and peasants, in his plays remain passive watchers on the shore or pitiful comedians on the road.³¹

In the same article, T.M. Aluko is censured not only for depicting the peasants as "merely ignorant and incapable"³² but also for his failure to attribute the problems he depicts in One Man, One Matchet (1964) to the colonial political structure which needed uprooting.³³

Our criticism is not that Ngugi has made these comments about changing political structures at all, but that there is a contradiction in his insistence that an author employing 'critical realism' should in addition to analysing the 'disease' go ahead and advocate a solution as well. As a model of writing 'critical realism' cannot go beyond revealing vital truths about society. It cannot, for instance, go deeper than identifying the problems which need solution, neither can it spell out the kind of society a writer envisions. Doing so will mean trespassing into the domain of 'socialist art', the method of Ngugi's 'proletarian novel', Petals of Blood.

This imposition of Marxist criteria where it is inappropriate also applies to Ngugi's analysis of Lamming's fourth novel in Homecoming. As we shall see in Chapter Four, Ngugi frowns at what he sees as Lamming's failure to specify the kind of society he envisions in Season of Adventure (1960), a novel which does not purport to make such predictions since being open-ended it cannot categorically provide a solution to the

problem it explores. Neither the Nigerian novels nor the work of Lamming examined by Ngugi belong to the category of 'socialist art'. The Nigerian novels appropriately belong to 'critical realism', while Lamming's novel is experimental, an issue to which we shall return later.

If Ngugi's left-wing ideas adversely affected his analysis of Lamming's novels, the influence of the West Indian writer on Ngugi's fiction, as we saw in the Introduction and earlier in this chapter, helped to develop his fictional technique. The second part of Chapter Four will reveal how both Lamming and Ngugi utilize carefully crafted techniques to explore the post-independent problems of their nations. Ngugi found highly instructive the techniques of and certain political ideas raised in In the Castle of My Skin, which he adapted to the Kenyan situation in A Grain of Wheat. We shall reveal, as we saw in the Introduction that his use of the voodoo religious ceremony in Season of Adventure indicates that he has moved even closer to the cultural symbols of his African heritage.

Ngugi's mature technique now matches that of Lamming and Chapter Four will reveal the technical sophistication of the two political writers as they unveiled the post-independent problems of their nations. But their attitudes towards issues such as violence and the role of the peasantry in bringing change about diverge because while Ngugi continues to develop as a political novelist, Lamming's fixed political ideas continue to intensify. Ngugi who had seen violence as horrific in Weep Not, Child now sees it in A Grain of Wheat as justifiable and regenerative. This attitude tallies with the opinion expressed

in "Mau Mau, Violence and Culture" (1963) where he argues that:

Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man. Violence to protect and preserve an unjust, oppressive social order is criminal, and diminishes man.³⁴

Ngugi's change of attitude towards violence also influenced his view of it in A Grain of Wheat as an effective instrument of socio-political change. This attitude contrasts with that of Lamming who has in all his novels consistently maintained his antipathy towards violence, which although seen as inevitable in Season of Adventure is also viewed as counterproductive. This difference is responsible for their contrasting attitudes towards the peasantry: while Lamming shows that they can aid the process of change through a musical revolt, Ngugi reveals that they can bring about social change through a violent revolt, as we shall see in Chapter Four.

The radicalization apparent in Ngugi's fiction is a prelude to his development into a Marxist novelist who now advocates in fiction a complete eradication of the neo-colonial capitalist political system in Kenya. As early as 1969 he had expressed in "Towards a National Culture" his preference for the socialist order and called for a

break with capitalism, whose imperialistic stage - that of colonialism and neo-colonialism - has done so much harm to Africa and dwarfed our total creative spirit. Capitalism can only produce anti-human culture, or a culture that is only an expression of sectional, warring interests.³⁵

One might ask why it took Ngugi several years to translate his leftist political ideas into fictional reality. The most obvious reason might be that Ngugi had from the beginning a fictional plan into which all his novels chronologically fitted, starting with the early cultural nationalism of The River Between to the later political commitment of Petals of Blood. But this could not have been true, especially of his early novels, since it was only later - after they had been written - that Ngugi came to see them as fulfilling a

background stage in the struggle for economic and political emancipation of Kenya.³⁶

Ngugi's transformation into a Marxist novelist was a complex process. It can be attributed to several factors. The first is the influence of Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin which taught him how to write about the peasantry and their plight in a neo-colonial political setting, thus contributing towards the radicalization of his sensibility. It is also the case that left-wing views alone (which became apparent for the first time in his essay on In the Castle of My Skin) could not be transformed into a compelling work of art, such as Petals of Blood without the support of observed social reality or what Georg Lukács calls "the author's own intensive experience of the social process".³⁷ One of such experiences was the historical role of the Gikuyu peasants in the political transformation of Kenya. As we noted in the Introduction, it was essentially because of the orchestrated and unrelenting assaults on the settler colonial population that England eventually granted independence to Kenya in 1963. This historical occurrence must have contributed in shaping Ngugi's sensibility as a champion of the oppressed Gikuyu peasantry, a stance which first became apparent in A Grain of Wheat. The major experience more directly connected with Petals of Blood is of course, the excesses of neo-colonial capitalism in Kenya which, as we observed in the Introduction, involved the proliferation of multi-national companies and their alliance with the local bourgeoisie to dispossess the Kenyan peasantry, some of whom have been turned into an urban proletariat. Also later when he came to write Devil on the Cross (1982) and I Will Marry When I Want (1982) Ngugi's involvement and close contact with Gikuyu peasants at the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre must have influenced his depiction in these two works of their creative potential and their ability to map out strategies, initiate and follow up to the end, a plan of political action.

Although we noted in the Introduction that socio-political conditions shape a writer's vision, we also observed, in perfect agreement with Terry Eagleton that "every writer is individually placed in society, responding to a general history from his own particular standpoint, making sense of it in his own concrete terms".³⁸ This is why although Mwangi Ruheni or even Meja Mwangi (whose novels about contemporary Kenya were discussed in the Introduction) shared the same neo-colonial environment as Ngugi, they did not become Marxist writers as he did.

As soon as Ngugi became a Marxist novelist he discarded 'critical realism' for a method which is expressly socialist. He had thus developed from 'critical realism' to what Ernst Fischer calls 'socialist art', which "implies that the writer is in fundamental agreement with the aims of the working class and the emergent socialist world".³⁹ As opposed to the former method which simply examines society and lays bare its shortcomings, 'socialist art' is unmistakably and overtly left wing as it "cannot content itself with blurred visions. Its task is, rather to depict the birth of 'tomorrow' out of today, with all the attendant problems".⁴⁰

In his next collection of essays Writers in Politics (1981) Ngugi expressed the view that "free unfettered human intercourse is impossible within capitalistic structures and imperialism".⁴¹ He therefore enjoined African writers, including himself to

join the proletarian and the poor peasant struggles against the parasitism of the comprador bourgeois, the landlords and chiefs, the big business African classes that at the same time act in unison and concert with foreign business interests.⁴²

Given all the factors, enumerated earlier, which contributed to shaping his vision, Ngugi has now become even more of a conscious artist who employs carefully crafted techniques in his fiction. Both Chapter Five and Six will set out to prove the linguistic and ideological divergence of Ngugi and Lamming who have nevertheless continued to

address the socio-political predicament of members of their societies. It will also reveal the artistic development of Ngugi and the continuity of Lamming as an experimental novelist, concerned to express his own vision of the West Indian society. Chapter Five will reveal the use by both Ngugi and Lamming of aspects of the oral tradition to address different audiences: Lamming, the middle-class elite, and Ngugi, the Gikuyu peasantry. This marks a development in Ngugi whose early novels rarely made use of aspects of the oral tradition. But now they have been made an important aspect of the texture and structure of Devil on the Cross, as we shall see in Chapter Five. On the other hand, Lamming's use of the oral tradition has intensified from novel to novel.

The Chapter will show that they exist in In the Castle of My Skin, in The Emigrants and in Season of Adventure. But while verbal lore is used by Ngugi to communicate with and provoke the common people into action, Lamming used same to assist the alienated West Indian middle-class achieve psychological therapy.

Ngugi's mature fictional technique is evident in his Marxist novels, two to date. When he wanted to express his distaste against capitalism in Petals of Blood he structured his story around a murder mystery. The Kenyan neo-colonial saga in his 'proletarian novel' largely unfolds through a murder investigation carried out by police Inspector Godfrey. If Godfrey Munira (whose prison notes form the bulk of Petals of Blood) 'writes' most of the novel, Inspector Godfrey, his namesake, carries out the inquiry into the murder of the three directors of Theng'eta Brewery, which provides the on-going narrative thread of the story. However, the murder inquest as we saw in the Introduction is important only in so far as it provides Ngugi with a means of investigating into Kenya's socio-political circumstances which are responsible for the predicament of his main characters and the army of the dispossessed peasantry in contemporary Kenya. Thus the fact that both the policeman

and the 'writer' share the Christian name 'Godfrey' is not accidental. It is a deliberate method to alert the reader to the fact that both characters are meant to give him a guided tour of neo-colonial Kenya. Its condition, which are responsible for the psychological and socio-economic predicament of ordinary Kenyans will receive detailed treatment in Chapter Six.

Another collection of essays which appeared in 1983, entitled Barrel of a Pen raises issues related to oppression and resistance in modern Kenya and stressing the central role of literature in alerting the peasants and workers about the necessity for change. In "Mau Mau is Coming Back" (1982) Ngugi asserts that "the distance between the barrel of a gun and the point of a pen is very small, what's fought out at pen-point is often resolved at gunpoint with the possible overthrow of one class by the other".⁴³ And since it is Ngugi's conviction articulated earlier in Writers in Politics that writers should "form an essential intellectual part of the anti-imperialist cultural army of African peoples for total economic and political liberation from imperialism and foreign domination"⁴⁴ it is not surprising that he should hold the opinion that literature should be didactic, "Our pens should be used to increase the anxieties of all oppressive regimes... The pen may not always be mightier than the sword, but used in the service of the truth, it can be a mighty force".⁴⁵

This statement reads like a blueprint for Devil on the Cross, a didactic novel, in which Ngugi makes an extensive use of the aspects of the Gikuyu oral tradition in order to make his most scathing comment on neo-colonial capitalism. While Petals of Blood is used to show the reader at a stretch how capitalism divests ordinary human beings of their human essence, Devil on the Cross, modelled on traditional story-telling, is meant to show Ngugi's audience that the system of neo-colonial capitalism has the capacity to reduce human beings to man-eaters, who have lost their faculty of reasoning.

When Ngugi delved into the rich storehouse of Gikuyu orature, he discovered that man-eating ogres (called marimu in the vernacular) can be equated with the Kenyan bourgeoisie. As soon as parallels between the two are established, it was Ngugi's hope that his audience might feel duty-bound to take action against both Kenya's political system and its operators.

There is nothing inherently wrong with a literature that instructs as far as the writer expresses his ideas in a form that delights and excites the imagination even as it 'teaches'. Martin Gray in A Dictionary of Literary Terms (1984) defines 'didacticism' (derived from Greek 'teaching) as literature

designed to instruct or to persuade. Its purpose is not purely or primarily imaginative, though many didactic works are prodigious works of the imagination, in which the imaginative material is ordered to illustrate a particular doctrine.⁴⁶

Like Martin Gray's, the definition below also reveals that didactic literature can do much more than espouse doctrines. In A Glossary of Literary Terms (1957) M.H. Abrams argues that:

didactic literature... may... take on the aspect and attributes of imaginative works, by translating the doctrine into narrative or dramatic terms in order to add a dimension of aesthetic pleasure, and to enhance its interest and force.⁴⁷

Devil on the Cross can be termed a didactic story that is also imaginative by translating 'the doctrine [it espouses] into narrative or dramatic terms in order to add a dimension of aesthetic pleasure, and to enhance its interest and force'. It does so, as Chapter Five will reveal, through a skillful use of aspects of the African and Gikuyu oral tradition to tell the story of exploitation by the elite of the Kenyan peasantry, whom Ngugi wants to provoke into revolutionary action. The story, because of its structural innovation, excites the imagination, illustrating the fact that a didactic work can be aesthetically satisfying depending on the technical skill of the artist.

A literature that would teach must also be meaningful to its audience. Since Ngugi intends to communicate with the Gikuyu peasants he felt there was a need not only for a technical but also a linguistic

revolution. Hence his new militancy about language and his choice of Gikuyu to communicate directly with the peasantry in whose hands he believes the onus for socio-political change rests.

This brings us to the ideological diversion between Ngugi who now advocates a change of community as a priority and Lamming who has maintained that the West Indian should have an internal therapy first. We shall note that as a deeply psychological novelist, as illustrated by A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi's development into a Marxist radical must have influenced his advocacy now for a change of community. Lamming's insistent advocacy for an internal therapy, as we shall see in chapter Six, is connected with the protracted era of colonial domination in the West Indies. This led to a fixation on Europe and the tendency of West Indians to imitate the British ways of seeing. In The Pleasures of Exile (1960) Lamming argues that:

To be colonial is to be in a state of exile. And the exile is always colonial by circumstances: a man colonized by his incestuous love of a past whose glory is not worth our total human suicide; colonized by a popular whoredom of talents whose dividends he knows he does not deserve; colonized by an abstract conscience which must identify its need with another's distress through a process of affection called justice; colonized, by the barely liveable acceptance of domestic complaint; colonized, if black in skin, by the agonizing assault of the other's eye whose meanings are based on a way of seeing he vainly tries to alter; and ultimately colonized by some absent vision which for want of another faith, he hopefully calls the Future.⁴⁸

There is a continuity of this depiction of the West Indian's state of exile in all of Lamming's novels. It starts in In the Castle of My Skin in which the myth of 'Little England' is so pervasive and its application so subtle that the villagers, who know little about their African ancestry, can hardly succeed in discovering their identities. Although attempts are made by members of this community to discover their identity, Lamming reveals how arduous a task it is in a colonial system which uses every means at its disposal to frustrate these attempts.

The consequence of this according to Lamming is the absence of a frame of reference as a guide to action:

On the political level, we are often without the right kind of information to make argument effective; on the moral level we have to feel our way through problems for which we have no adequate reference of traditional conduct as a guide. Chaos is often, therefore, the result of our thinking and doing. We are made to feel a sense of exile by our inadequacy and our irrelevance of function in a society whose past we can't alter, and whose future is always beyond us.⁴⁹

How can the West Indian alter this past? How can he correct the chaos created by colonial history? One way out of the quagmire is to acquire a cultural identity and sense of confidence in being West Indian.

Psychologically this attempt becomes not only futile but also endless because the alienated West Indian attempts to prove his sense of worth not to himself but to the 'other', the European. An attempt to prove his dignity to himself would have been infinitely more therapeutic and therefore likely to bring the cycle to an end. But unfortunately, as Lamming observes in "Caribbean Literature: The Black Rock of Africa" (1966):

history has baptized him [the West Indian] with a need to achieve the approval and the ultimate embrace of a spiritual authority which is dedicated to his perpetual self-imprisonment.⁵⁰

The lack of cultural identity of the West Indian is what made the journey to England necessary in The Emigrants, which takes up the quest for identity outside the restrictive island environment. But even here their attempts fail. The 'emigrants' are unable to shake off their inherited colonial attitudes which encourage them to see the English as a superior race, an attitude which reinforces their own sense of inferiority. Nevertheless, they persist in their interminable quest which the Jamaican aptly puts, "An' If you ask what it is them want to prove the answer sound a stupid answer. Them want to prove themself".⁵¹ This problem continues to assail the West Indian in Of Age and Innocence, a novel of return to the island.

One of the revenants, Shephard, is unable to overcome this problem as in spite of his attempt to fight the colonial regime, he still seeks the approval of the 'other' for his action. In Lamming's view, which he expressed in an essay-statement:

/Shephard/ cannot think of himself, his lack of authenticity, his absence of root, without summoning the other as judge or accused.⁵²

If the West Indian is still imprisoned by colonial history in the age of anti-colonial nationalism, it is not a surprise that Season of Adventure set in independent San Cristobal should be preoccupied with cultural and psychological freedom from colonial values, deliberately underplaying political independence, which it is meant to celebrate. Natives of My Person shows the attempt of independent West Indies to escape from this 'prison', an attempt which does not succeed because even on their symbolic journey from the Old to the New World, the officers, through their relationship with their women and the 'men down below', re-enact the history of greed and oppression on which the colonial past they are escaping from is based.

Furthermore, Chapter Six will show that unlike Ngugi who has developed into a Marxist novelist, Lamming has remained an experimental novelist who explores the socio-political problems of the West Indies, identifying the problems which "hinder the development of the Caribbean region"⁵³ but leaves his stories open-ended. The open-end technique, as we saw in Chapter One, does not give a clear-cut solution to the problems explored. It is a combination of pessimism and despair. This is at work at the end of In the Castle of My Skin where the masses disperse confused and leaderless but Lamming simultaneously revealing that G's search for a cultural identity continues. This ending tallies with Lamming's definition of 'open-end', quoted in Chapter One, through which the author refuses to close the drama which he believes is an on-going process, with a possibility of renewal.

There is a continuity of the use of this technique in all the

novels discussed in the thesis including Natives of My Person, which as we shall see in Chapter Six is replete with images of death, mutilation, aborted resurrection and violation. Nevertheless, Lamming provides an image of the women - dedicated, responsible, loving - hoping that the men who have abandoned them might learn from that example and try to build a new relationship based on equality and reciprocity. The despair in Lamming's writing is, as we saw in the Introduction, a reflection of the history of the West Indies which has been full of destruction

and a sense of despair. It needs re-stating here that there was massive loss of lives during the 'middle-passage', the journey of slaves from the African coast to the New World; later, on sugar plantations on the islands, workers were tortured and mutilated. There were aborted dreams in the failure of slave revolts and of recent, in the failure of the British West Indian Federation. All these contributed to the dark strain in Lamming's writing. But as a political writer deeply committed to change he integrates an element of hope in his open-end technique. This tallies with our earlier argument that although a writer's vision is shaped by socio-political conditions, "this reality is determined, in part by the artist's individual and social point of view".⁵⁴

It is not only historical factors and contemporary events in the West Indies that are responsible for continuity in Lamming's fiction. Continuity in Lamming can also be accounted for by his already fixed political ideas when he started writing as opposed to Ngugi whose ideas developed from novel to novel. That is why, for instance, Lamming condemns religion and education in his first novel as well as in Natives of My Person, but Ngugi was not able to do this in his early fiction because of his Christian sensibility, until he wrote Petals of Blood, a Marxist novel. That is also why aspects of the Gikuyu cultural tradition are missing in his early novels about cultural and political

nationalism and do not appear in his fiction in a consistent manner until he wrote Devil on the Cross. On the other hand, aspects of the West Indian oral tradition, as we saw, exist in varying degrees in all Lamming's novel, except Natives of My Person, an allegory of West Indian history and Water With Berries (1971), set in London around the life of a group of culturally alienated West Indian artists.

From the discussion of the development of Ngugi and the intensification of Lamming as political novelists, using their essay-statements as a 'lens', it emerges that fiction is more complex than expressed views. At times the ideas do tally with the fiction. Sometimes the simplicity of the ideas does not match the complexity of the fiction. In conclusion, it can be asserted that ideology and theory are very revealing but in the end, it is the qualities of imaginative fiction that are important as the previous chapters have shown and as the remaining chapters of the thesis will show.

NOTES ON CHAPTER THREE

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32. _____, p. 59.
33. _____, p. 59.
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SECTION THREE: THE WRITER AND THE COMMON MAN

In the three novels under discussion in this section both Ngugi and Lamming show empathy with the common people - consisting of peasants, traders, craftsmen, painters and prostitutes - whose standard of living has not improved following political independence in both Kenya and San Cristobal, the fictional West Indian island.

Although In the Castle of My Skin (1953) is set during the colonial period, it jumps ahead of time, as we saw in Chapter One, to reveal the betrayal of the ordinary people by the educated elite, who have taken over power from the colonial regime. Similarly, A Grain of Wheat (1967) reveals the disillusionment of the masses in independent Kenya (in reality, still a dependant Kenya), which it shows side by side with the psychological consequences of the Mau Mau War and the Emergency. Season of Adventure (1960), also set in post-independent San Cristobal, records the disillusionment of the West Indian ordinary people, following political independence, which in reality is just a 'flag' independence devoid of the freedom which it ought to have brought.

The first sub-section is a study of the artistic influence of Lamming on Ngugi, who had read In the Castle of My Skin at his formative stage as a writer. Whether or not Ngugi read Lamming uncritically as he said he did, in an interview quoted in the previous chapter, we hope to prove that he made use only of the carefully selected elements of Lamming's fiction he found relevant to Kenya and suitable to his own artistic temperament.

The questions which S.S. Praver in Comparative Literary Studies: An Introduction (1973) claims a meaningful 'influence' study should seek to answer, have served as a useful guide in this analysis. They are as follows:

What is there in the earlier work which made it 'possible' for the later to be produced? In what way did the later work build on (and modify) ground prepared by the earlier one? What expectations aroused by the earlier work did the later disappoint or satisfy?

A Grain of Wheat will be used to identify the qualities and characteristics which Ngugi imbibed through reading Lamming, and where appropriate also through reading Joseph Conrad, another source of influence on him.

Having suggested the influence, the chapter will then go on to show how Lamming himself was, and is no longer satisfied with the kind of art he employed in In the Castle of My Skin. Lamming, through conscious experimentation, engages in an artistic 'season of adventure' beyond his first novel to produce a new and highly symbolic fiction in order to articulate his vision of the newly independent San Cristobal community. Lamming's fourth novel, Season of Adventure, will therefore be partly the focus of discussion in the second part of the chapter, which will compare that novel with A Grain of Wheat, seeing them both as novels of disillusionment with political independence.

CHAPTER FOUR

PART ONE: INFLUENCE AND DIVERSION

A Grain of Wheat is a novel half-way between the cultural and political nationalism of Ngugi's early novels and the political commitment of the later works, notably Petals of Blood. Although not a fully political novel in the sense that Petals of Blood is, A Grain of Wheat exhibits a sound mastery of modern fictional techniques, as well as a deep awareness of the socio-cultural events in Kenya. In the book, Ngugi proves himself as confident in the handling of complex structural techniques as he is authoritative in narrating a story about the world of the ordinary people in Kenya.

In the previous chapter we had observed that Lamming's portrayal of the West Indian peasantry in In the Castle of My Skin had strongly fascinated Ngugi as a student at Leeds. The impact of this fascination is illustrated in A Grain of Wheat which tells the independence story, mostly from the point of view of the common people. The novel marks the development of a writer, who has consciously chosen to write now about the peasants and other underprivileged groups instead of about the teacher, as he has done in The River Between (1965), or about an educated boy as in Weep Not, Child (1964). Ngugi shows a definite bias now for the peasant farmer, the shopkeeper, the Mau Mau guerilla and the craftsman. In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi's true potential becomes apparent for the first time, and the result is the creation of a new form to match a new kind of complex socio-political vision.

In the story, the present coincides with the end of the Mau Mau war and the return of Gikuyu militants to their villages which have been dislocated as a result of the war and the Emergency. Back home, the survivors of the freedom struggle reflect on their past actions and involvements so as to come to terms with the present opportunity of freedom that Uhuru may occasion.

The former colonial masters are ready to depart while the new African politicians look forward to occupying the vacated positions of power. The elders of Thabai village are busy putting finishing touches to the celebration preparations and eager to locate renegades who had betrayed their comrades, and to pass judgements.

Though on the surface there is an atmosphere of celebration due to independence, beneath each of the characters has a guilty conscience because he or she had in one way or another wronged someone, renounced an ideal or betrayed a national cause in the past. Therefore guilt, betrayal, confession and punishment are the key elements in the novel which link all the characters - especially the central ones - with one another. Although we shall later argue that individual betrayals play an important role in the novel, the betrayal of Kenyans by their new leaders occupies an important position in a book which mainly focusses on the tribulations of the underprivileged class.

The unnamed peasant narrator reflects:

As soon as they were elected, they ran to Nairobi and were rarely seen in their areas, except when they came back with other national leaders to address big political rallies.²

The interest of Ngugi's new narrator - whose voice is dominant in the story - is intertwined with the interest of Thabai village community. Despite the fact that other social classes (such as the colonial masters, represented by John Thompson) are given the opportunity to articulate their own side of the story in A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi leaves us in no doubt that he ultimately sides with the voice of the peasant narrator and those whom the voice represents. In the village, he reveals the harrowing ordeals to which the ordinary people are subjected by the security forces, all the time leaving us in no doubt as to where his sympathy lies: with the Thabai village community. Shortly after the Emergency is declared, a security policeman shoots and kills Gitogo whom he suspects of being a Mau Mau fighter. In reality, Gitogo is deaf and dumb and could not have therefore heard the order stopping him to identify himself.

Furthermore, he shows us the Thabai womenfolk who, together with the old and the young are made to feel the pinch of the villagization programme. With their homesteads destroyed, Thabai women are compelled to assume male responsibilities in erecting new compounds in the new areas to which they had been moved. In addition to the severe punishments to which they are subjected, the women and certain undetained villagers are forced to dig trenches in order to fortify the new villages. Historically, the programme was meant as a punishment to loyalists who assisted the Mau Mau fighters. By fortifying the new areas and digging trenches around them, the forest fighters were meant to be totally cut off from their life-line, although Mau Mau loyalists devised other means of supplying the fighters with food and ammunition.³ This important aspect of the Emergency period is largely missing in Weep Not, Child, an early work, but is present in A Grain of Wheat, a novel which exhibits a firmer grasp of Kenyan history and a sharper focus on its politics.

We also get an insight into the conditions of the rehabilitation camps in Rira and Yala where detainees have developed a siege mentality because they are totally cut off from the outside world and from Kenyan reality. The ordeals to which the detainees are exposed in these concentration camps are so psychologically devastating as to drive a man of fortitude such as Gatu to commit suicide.

Through these several pictures, Ngugi reveals that the stories of Mau Mau brutality are paralleled by and no worse than the tortures carried out on ordinary citizens by the colonial security forces.

Ngugi is able to vividly register his message to the reader through the employment of several voices to narrate the experience of Thabai community. Both the veteran freedom fighters and the peasant narrator use the 'we' 'us' and 'our' pronouns to articulate their own personal experiences which reflect the experience of Thabai community. Early in the novel, Wambui comments that "We too cannot forget our sons. And Kibika was such a man, a great man" (p. 19).

A couple of pages later Gikonyo observes: "On Independence Day we shall remember those from our village and ridges near, who lost their lives in the fight for freedom" (p. 22) and General R. in his vengeful search for Kihika's betrayer in the aftermath of the guerilla activity insists, "We must find our traitor" (p. 25). Towards the end of the story, the peasant narrator maintains that "We wove new legends around his name and imagined deeds. We hoped that Mugo would come out and join us, but he did not open the door to our knocks" (p. 178) and later on Uhuru day, he expresses scepticism about the efficacy of the new administration, "would the government now become less stringent on those who could not pay tax? Would there be more jobs? Would there be more land?" (p. 187).

Undoubtedly, the use of choric and different voices by Lamming to offer the reader an insight into what has happened to Creighton village community in In the Castle of My Skin, influenced Ngugi to create a dense picture of Thabai community in A Grain of Wheat. As we saw in Chapter One, the multi-vocal technique used by Lamming in his first novel enabled both men and women, the young and the elderly, to narrate their own experiences as a way of telling us what has happened to the community. Using a variant of this method in A Grain of Wheat Ngugi achieves the effect of making us intimate with Thabai community at large: a whole range of families and households whose tensions, anxieties and aspirations are laid bare before us as they face a momentous occasion in their national history.

Since he is also an artist in his own right, Ngugi does not limit himself to the multi-vocal technique he borrowed from Lamming to glue our attention to Thabai. His handling of the concept of the hero in A Grain of Wheat went through a radical change in line with his new interest in the Thabai community. Thus although the idea of 'heroism' remains central, the novel questions it and subverts our notion of the hero by depicting four central characters whose portrayal defies any attempt by the reader to categorize them simply

as heroes or villains. Not only is there no single hero, but in the process of reading the novel, Ngugi gradually shatters our illusion about heroism or, for that matter villainy. Each of the central characters, and indeed all the other characters who make up Thabai village, are shown to have their good and bad sides. If the opening pages of the novel, for example, depict Mugo as a hero because of his legendary commitment to the Kenyan freedom struggle and his refusal to 'confess' the Oath of Unity during the Emergency, (which in reality he did not take p. 167) we learn at the end of the sixth chapter that he is the betrayer of Kihika, the freedom fighter. But his public confession and sacrifice at the end cast him as a 'hero', but of a wholly different kind. The point of this technique is not only to discourage the reader from simplifying human experience, which in Ngugi's view is highly complex, but also to ask us to focus our attention on what has happened to Thabai village community to which each and every member belongs.

In order not to create the impression that in A Grain of Wheat Ngugi is simply interested in Thabai community as a monolithic entity, it must be pointed out that individual members of the village also have a place in it. This point is fully illustrated by Ngugi's use of a technique he borrowed from Lamming, through which passages and even chapters alternate from the communal life of the village to the individual consciousness and vice-versa. In Chapter One, we had observed that In the Castle of My Skin is patterned on an alternation between the communal and the individual consciousness. A Grain of Wheat follows Lamming's lead, with its chapters modulating from the public life of Thabai village to the exploration of individual consciousness. An example of this technique can be found in the sixth chapter. It starts with the voice of the peasant narrator commenting on Gikonyo's return from detention and his engagement in business and local politics. It then switches over to a group of Thabai villagers on a visit to their Member of Parliament, before

exploring Mugo's psychological turmoil, which is confounded at this stage by the Party's request that he leads the Uhuru celebrations. It ends with a private dialogue between Mugo and Gikonyo, which is interrupted by the seventh chapter; a beehive of public activity. Though most of the activities it describes are communal - the ordeals of the Mau Mau detainees at Yala camp, Kihika's political speech to a village audience and the race - it also dwells on private consciousness, as exemplified in Karanja's vision of solitude when he realizes on arrival at the railway station that Mumbi, the object of the race, had stayed behind with Gikonyo, his rival. The private dialogue between Gikonyo and Mugo which is chronologically broken at the end of the sixth chapter is taken up in the eighth chapter, which like the other two chapters, alternates between the private and the public consciousness.

But while In the Castle of My Skin strikes a balance between the individual and the community, even as it emphasizes selfhood Ngugi's novel reveals that Thabai's claim on the individual tends to encroach on his privacy and freedom. Eventhough the personal history of G. merges at times, with the social history of Creighton village in Lamming's novel, a separation can be made between what happens to G. (an individual in his own right, who leaves Barbados at the end of the story) and what happens to Creighton village, which at the time of his departure is under the corrupt hold of the black elite. As we saw in Chapter One, this is a reflection of both the communalistic and the individualistic character of the West Indian society, which requires the individual to conform but is also willing to give him the freedom to escape from it. The same separation cannot be made in A Grain of Wheat, in which Ngugi shows that despite his attempt to be separate from it Mugo is, for instance, bound up with the community, like almost all the characters in the novel. He is a fragmented individual (all the characters in the story are depicted as psychological casualties) just as the society, of which he is

a part, is shattered, as a result of the Mau Mau War. The society has had to die, give up its old image and assume a new shape, in which the fragmented individuals it contains can be accommodated, just as Mugo has had to die in the end, sacrificing his life for the survival and indeed the regeneration of others. John Thompson's reflection, "A man was born to die continually and start afresh" (p. 50) aptly illustrates this process.

By interlinking the destiny of both the individual and the community, Ngugi intends to reveal the extent to which members of Thabai village are organically related to their society - a reflection of the communalistic nature of his society - a point reinforced by the 'we' and 'us' narrative voices which emphasize a collective destiny for Thabai villagers. Furthermore, through this method Ngugi implies the primacy and therapeutic value of group solidarity - an individual must merge with the community in order to achieve solace and reassurance in a society whose members have been emotionally traumatized following the Mau Mau War and the Emergency. Ngugi further illustrates the strong link between the individual and the community through Mugo's inability to cut himself off totally from the community. When a Thabai community delegation visits Mugo to ask him to make a public appearance, which he detests, Gikonyo emphasizes a similar point, "You want to be left alone. Remember this, however: it is not easy for any man in a community to be left alone" (p. 23). It is also precisely when Mugo believes that he has cut off himself from the community around him that Kihika barges into his life and violates the privacy Mugo thought he had kept intact. In "Marx, Politics and the African Novel" Ben Obumselu writes,

When he shuts the door of his hut at night he means to lock out the world. But this does not prevent Kihika from breaking into this defended citadel. Society with its problems is so much the medium in which he lives and moves that he cannot shut it out.⁴

Nevertheless, Ngugi is sympathetic towards Mugo's individualistic ethic as he gives us the background to his isolation by exposing the humiliating past from which he tries to escape. The death of Mugo's parents when he was a child deprived him of parental love. His drunkard aunt who brought him up failed to offer him this psychological need. She forced him to share the floor with her goats, accused him of stealing and even challenged his manhood, "Whatever he did or made, she would deride his efforts. So Mugo was haunted by the image of his own inadequacy" (p. 8). The ordeals she forced him to go through, coupled with her verbal assaults meant to undermine his efforts inculcated a deep sense of inferiority complex in him. It is essentially this sense of worthlessness of a squalid and degrading past that Mugo attempts to put behind him by engaging in a single-handed attempt to have a record of achievement to his name. Defending Mugo's individualism in this light, Ben Obumsele writes that "being-for-oneself is not 'corrupt' or predatory or villainous, if anything it is admirably sturdy, disciplined and self-reliant."⁵ Mugo's attempt to escape from society can be further appreciated by comparing him with Razumov, his fictional antecedent.⁶

Early in Joseph Conrad's Under Western Eyes (1911) the narrator reminds us, in a statement that can as well be applied to Mugo that "The peculiar circumstances of Razumov's parentage, or rather his lack of parentage, should be taken into the account of his thoughts."⁷ From the foregoing comment, it is clear that like Mugo, Razumov too is an orphan. Both characters are thus obsessed with the psychological need to make a mark on history, through personal effort, as a way of compensating for the insignificance of their pasts. Both remain politically uninvolved out of a deep conviction that public exposure may interfere with their personal missions. Furthermore, as Razumov argues when he is being exposed to the hazards of revolutionary politics, it is understandable that Haldin who is "a son, a brother, a nephew, a cousin" (p. 57) can afford the luxury of revolutionary enthusiasm

and commitment. To both Razumov and Mugo who have no family connections, a personal goal to succeed and establish themselves in society is understandably more important than a public cause. A peasant farmer, Mugo's mission is to "labour, sweat, and through success and wealth, force society to recognize him" (p. 9). While as a student, Razumov's priorities are "his work, his studies, and... his own future" (p. 17). Razumov, in defence of his own stance against Haldin's request to help him escape after assassinating Mr. de P-, is also holding brief for Mugo who has been asked by Kihika to organize an underground political movement in Thabai:

"Did it ever occur to you how a man who had never heard a word of warm affection or praise in his life would think on matters on which you would think first with or against your class, your domestic tradition - your fire-side prejudices?... Did you ever consider how a man like that would feel? I have no domestic tradition. I have nothing to think against... Am I to let my... aspirations towards a better lot, be robbed of the only thing it has to go upon at the will of violent enthusiasts?" (p. 58).

Yet becoming part of the community does not automatically prevent the individual from experiencing alienation, which both writers have explored. In Chapter One, we noted that Lamming reveals that although alienation is exacerbated by slavery, it is first and foremost a human condition, lying deep in the fabric of society. He further reveals that membership of the community does not necessarily prevent an individual from experiencing a mental explosion which makes him aware of the solitude of his existence. G. expresses this solitude as: "a big bad feeling in the pit of the stomach. A feeling you were alone in a world all by yourself, and that although there were hundreds of people moving round you, it made no difference. You got giddy."⁸

Following Lamming's lead, Ngugi shows in A Grain of Wheat that in spite of colonization and the psychologically devastating effects of the villagization programme, which displaced people from their land the phenomenon of alienation cannot simply be attributed to the socio-political changes in the Kenyan society.

Mugo's alienation which is, for instance, depicted at the beginning because it is representative and meant to set the tone of the story, is not caused by colonialism or the State of Emergency. His past shows that soon after his aunt's death, which marked his last claim to familial relationship of any sort, Mugo asks himself:

Whom could he now call a relation? He wanted somebody, anybody who would use the claims of kinship to do him ill or good. Either one or the other as long as he was not left alone, an outsider. (p. 9)

This feeling of deracination leads to his expression of self-pity at the detention camp, where his silence, which actually derives from a sense of guilt, is mistaken for an act of heroism:⁹ "I did not long to join my mother, or wife or child because I did not have any. Tell me, then, whom could I have loved?" (p. 58).

Mugo is the most alienated of all the characters in the novel, but eventually comes to pinpoint, represent and expiate the others. But he is by no means the only character who displays the symptoms of alienation, for Ngugi creates a deliberate pattern: the sense of solitude and desolation is felt and expressed by several other characters in the novel. Karanja's desolation over Mumbi prompted him to announce that "every man in the world is alone and fights alone, to live" (p. 128). On Gikonyo's return from detention and finding that his family world had been turned upside down, he argues that:

One lived alone, and like Gatu, went into the grave alone. Gikonyo greedily sucked sour pleasure from this reflection which he saw as a terrible revelation. To live and die alone was the ultimate truth. (p. 102)

The 'ultimate truth' which is also a universal truth, is again shown in Karanja's vision, following his loss of Mumbi, which led him into betraying the larger national cause and joining the homeguards:

They [people] ran in every direction; men trampled on women; mothers forgot their children; the lame and the weak were abandoned on the platform. Each man was alone with God. (p. 82)

Karanja's vision of aloneness, and the revelation he gets that life is an extended power struggle in which competition reigns supreme

and each person is therefore expected to fend for himself, reveals a profound truth about life in general and an uncomfortable element in the Gikuyu society, in particular. He asks himself, "Why should I fear to trample on the children, the lame and the weak when others are doing it?" (p. 82) (my emphasis).

It is true as Karanja envisioned and later observed that the atmosphere of self-interest, competition, ruthlessness and rivalry is common in Gikuyu society, for all its communality, and it is the intensification of this tendency by neo-colonial capitalism that partly led to the creation of the dog-eat-dog and acutely materialistic world of Petals of Blood, which will be discussed in Chapter Six. It is also what partly alienates one individual from another fostering an atmosphere of hostility and dissension, as we have seen, for instance, in Gikonyo's antagonistic relationship with Karanja, his best friend, over Mumbi.

By its very nature, competition has both positive and negative qualities. Although it improves the lot of the individual, it nevertheless fosters egoism, riding rough-shod over others and the employment of fair or foul means to achieve one's end. The race between Gikonyo and Karanja for Mumbi, in the middle of the novel, reveals a classic example of competition between two men in which each is determined to outshine the other. It is also clear that although it is a communal event in which both the young and the elderly of Thabai folk participated, the race on Uhuru day, at a deeper and structural level, exhibits a society which attaches importance to competition as much as to individual effort to succeed. In the post-Emergency period, Gikonyo is transformed into a mini-capitalist, a trader with a Machiavellian frame of mind, out to succeed but also anxious to prove himself as a self-made man. If he trampled on others in the process, this would be seen as part of the game, which in the eyes of the Thabai community is exemplary as "some even tried to follow his example with varying degrees of success" (p. 52).

Furthermore, in their eyes Gikonyo is now a model worthy of emulation; his experience "carried a moral every mother in Thabai pointed out to her children" (p. 52). It is arguable then, that if the spirit of competition lies deep in the heart of the community, which encourages it, and the individual, who loves to engage in it, it is not a surprise that alienation should affect an individual, whether he chooses to remain isolated, like Mugo, or to be part of the community like Gikonyo, who "had been absorbed into the community and its daily rituals" (p. 64). As it is, the awareness of human solitude strikes Karanja in the middle of the community of Thabai men and women, who in his visionary moment appear to him separated from one another, each of them totally "alone with God". (p. 82). Thus, in spite of the psychological effects of the Emergency, which created deep divisions among the people, Ngugi refuses to identify it as the sole cause of estrangement in a fundamentally materialistic society which has institutionalized the 'rat-race' as well.

In his optimism, Ngugi sees a possible solution to alienation in a strengthening of traditional communality and compliance to the national motto, following independence, of 'Harambee', a Kiswahili term which means "Let us pull together".¹⁰ This is a plea to the psychologically dislocated Kenyan people to pull the remaining pieces of their shattered personalities together and collectively face the challenges of Uhuru. Like Garcia Marquez, Ngugi also believes that "solitude... is not the human condition, but a moment in human history that will be overcome".¹¹

In the story, Ngugi suggests that one way of overcoming the situation is through a change of self in a community in which individuals are encouraged to open themselves to one another. Whereas Lamming, one of Ngugi's teachers had shown the individual hiding his secret within the 'castle' of his skin and resisting the communal pressure to confess, in A Grain of Wheat Ngugi shows that in spite of its discomfort, public confession can be highly therapeutic to the individual

as well as to the society, which will be inspired by it.

In their treatment of confession, neither Lamming nor Joseph Conrad reveal that it can assist in regenerating a whole community. In his own novel Lamming had shown that by refusing to confess, the individual was able to maintain the integrity of his inner self from the intrusion of others. The communal demand to ask the individual to confess, in Lamming's view, represents a threat of a further assault on the embattled West Indian personality which has to contend with an identity crisis as well. Michael Gilkes commenting on the West Indian novel writes that "... the integrity of the personality is always the subject, and its establishment and preservation most frequently the main theme"¹² The foregoing statement is true of Lamming's first novel. G. reveals his mortal fear "of being known; not because they really know you, but simply because their claim to this knowledge is a concealed attempt to destroy you, and thank God that's why they can't kill you". (p. 261) This fear forces the individual to resist confession, especially when deeply private matters are involved, and seek refuge within the castle of his skin.

Joseph Conrad's approach to confession in Under Western Eyes (1911) is closer to Ngugi's because in both cases guilt is involved. His story shows that Razumov confesses his betrayal of Haldin both privately to Nathalie Haldin and publicly to a group of revolutionists. Confession is psychologically liberating both to Razumov and to Mugo. Following his confession, Razumov looks at Nathalie Haldin "with an appalling expressionless tranquility" (p. 293) just as Mugo feels "free, sure /and/ confident" (p. 204) after his public confession. Razumov's confession reveals exceptional courage and selflessness in him, which provokes Sophia Antonovna to see his action in heroic terms:

...tell me, how many of them would deliver themselves up deliberately to perdition... rather than go on living, secretly debased in their own eyes?... And please mark this - he was safe when he did it. It was just when he believed himself safe and more - infinitely more - when the possibility of being loved by that admirable girl first dawned upon him. (pp. 312 - 313)

Although Razumov's confession is therapeutic to him it does not influence anybody around him.¹³ On the other hand, with the Kenyan situation in mind: a newly independent nation in which old hostilities must be confronted and exorcised. If the whole community is to join hands in nation-building, Ngugi reveals the therapeutic function of confession at the societal level as well. Accordingly, he reveals in A Grain of Wheat that Mumbi's confession of her affair with Karanja to Mugo impels him to confess to her his betrayal of Kihika. After hearing of Mugo's confession, Gikonyo pays a glowing tribute to Mugo's moral courage:

He was a brave man, inside... He stood before much honour, praises were heaped on him. He would have become a Chief. Tell me another person who would have exposed his soul for all the eyes to peck at. (p. 202)

Having been influenced by Mugo's example, Gikonyo has had a change of heart and is now willing to agree with Mumbi about the imperative "to open our hearts to one another, examine them and then together plan the future we want" (p. 213). Thus Mugo's public confession not only relieves him of a psychological burden, it also influences others, like Gikonyo, to rethink their private relationships and start again on a new basis of compassion and trust. The reconciliation at a private level is also meant to apply to the Kenyan community at a public level. The freedom fighter and the loyalist, the injured party and the aggressor party are all called upon to forgive and forget, and join hands in reconstructing Kenya. Furthermore, Mugo's sacrifice signifies that old selves have to die in order to give way to the regeneration of new selves and a new society, demonstrating that we have to "correct ourselves before we begin correcting society",¹⁴ a stance which tallies with Lamming's in Natives of My Person, which will be discussed in Chapter Six. Like Kihika before him, Mugo dies so that the community might be regenerated, so that a new life may be created from the 'grain of wheat' that has been sown (read buried) in the ground.

His sacrifice illuminates one of the biblical quotations in the novel:

Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.¹⁵

Since he first initiated the chain of confessions and later sacrificed his own life, it is, in a religious sense, appropriate that Mugo's name should translate in Gikuyu as "Man of God".¹⁶ It is also appropriate that his name should be linked with Kihika's (whom Warui calls "a high priest of this our freedom" (p. 22) who sacrifices his life for the community, and also with that of Moses (p. 108) who had been ordered by the Lord to "Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, ... Let my people go".¹⁷ The action of Moses was meant to politically liberate his people from the Egyptian domination. The result of Mugo's action is the psychological liberation of the confessants who are now ready to attend to contemporary Kenyan problems, "the field needing clearance and cultivation" (p. 212), in Gikonyo's words.

But Ngugi does not gloss over the problems the newly independent state will face. He shows that although the common people are willing to engage in soul-searching and attempt a collective reconciliation, an ominous threat to this possibility is posed by a new class of self-seeking Members of Parliament who "rush to take over the very land they should be delivering to the common people."¹⁸ This illuminates Ngugi's epigraph to A Grain of Wheat, which appears at the beginning of the novel and which basically deals with the deep-seated fear that the new political elite is very likely to deflect the movement for political and economic freedom.

Betrayal is a major theme in both Lamming and Ngugi (as well as in Conrad),¹⁹ and although set in pre-independent Barbados, In the Castle of my Skin, like A Grain of Wheat attributes this crime to the black elite who have replaced the whites and possesses the political clout and the structural opportunities to stop any threat to their political and economic interests.

Gikonyo's failure (even in his capacity as a local party official) to secure a loan in order to boost local agriculture is a sad commentary on the new men in power, who neglect the electorate and stifle the birth of local business enterprise. Gikonyo's fears about the betrayal of the people and their Uhuru aspirations by the new leaders are confirmed by the trend of events following independence when the political elite intercept all the benefits.

Both novelists treat betrayal at both private and public levels. Private betrayals, which also involve sex are illustrated in both novels in Mumbi's affair with Karanja and Mr. Slime's suggested relationship with the headteacher's wife. The authors also unite in their refusal to condone public betrayal, for which Mr. Slime and the Member of Parliament in the different novels are largely responsible. However, Lamming is not willing to sympathise with individual betrayal, which is why he suggests a link between Mr. Slime's adulterous behaviour - a private betrayal - with his betrayal of Creighton villagers.

On the other hand, Ngugi's new awareness about the complexity of motives guiding human action enables him to sympathise with his characters' foibles which lead them into betraying each other. Accordingly, he introduces us to a pattern of betrayals and their 'whys' in A Grain of Wheat. He reveals that Mrs. Thompson betrays her husband by having an affair with Dr. Van Dyke. But he makes clear that Mrs. Thompson is a victim of marital neglect resulting from her husband's total preoccupation with his administrative activities. (p. 44). It is this much more than "the anarchic joy of breaking a law" (p. 45) which drives her into the lecherous hands of Dr. Van Dyke.

Gikonyo's wife, Mumbi, betrays her husband while he is away in detention by sleeping with Karanja. Nevertheless, Ngugi frowns at Gikonyo's harsh judgement on Mumbi, whom he calls a "whore" (p. 146), before learning about the circumstances surrounding her sleeping with Karanja.

It turns out that it did not happen as a result of moral atrophy but because of her excitement at hearing from Karanja of her husband's imminent release. (p. 131 - 132) Unlike the public betrayal of Thabai villagers by the M.P., a sparsely-drawn figure who is meant to attract our ire, all the private betrayals are shown within their natural contexts and explained in such a way that the reader is made to sympathize with the characters.

To further illustrate this point, we shall briefly examine Mugo's betrayal of Kihika. When we meet Mugo at the beginning of the story very distraught and highly self-conscious, we only need to go further in the novel to discover that this feeling is brought about by guilt owing to his betrayal of Kihika. Mugo has barely started building his life from the shambles of his past: he had built a hut and developed his shamba fixing his hope on a future full of opportunities and possibilities when the idealistic Kihika came into his life, after killing Thomas Robson, a white District Officer. From the point of Kihika's intrusion to the end of the thirteenth chapter, we get a negative description of the otherwise heroic freedom-fighter and radical politician. This is essentially because we are made to see him through the eyes of Mugo, who sees him as a threat to his dreams because he seeks to involve him in the tumult of active politics. Shortly after Kihika's visit, Mugo ponders:

A few minutes ago, lying on the bed, in this room, the future held promise. Everything in the hut was in the same place as before, but the future was blank. He expected police or homeguards to come, arrest him or shoot him dead. He saw only prison and death... To be caught harbouring a terrorist meant death. Why should Kihika drag me into a struggle and problems I have not created?... He is not satisfied with butchering men and women and children. He must call on me to bathe in the blood... I have not done harm to anybody... And now I must spend my life in prison because of the folly of one man! (pp. 168-9). (my emphases)

Earlier on at a public gathering where the wide-eyed Kihika had talked about the duty of every Gikuyu to lay down his life and fight in order to regain freedom:

Mugo felt a constriction in his throat. He could not clap for words that did not touch him. What right had such a boy, probably younger than Mugo, to talk like that? What arrogance? Kihika had spoken of blood as easily as if he was talking of drawing water in river, Mugo reflected, a revulsion starting in his stomach at the sight and smell of blood. I hate him, he heard himself say... (p. 15) (my emphasis).

After Kihika's departure from Mugo's hut, the latter asks,

"How... can Kihika to whom I have done no harm do this to me?... The reflection revived his old hatred of Kihika now so strong it almost choked him. /Kihika/ had people who would mourn his end, who would name their children after him, so that /his/ name would never die from men's lips. Kihika had everything; Mugo had nothing". (p. 169)

and

If I don't serve Kihika he'll kill me. They killed Rev. Jackson and Teacher Muniu. If I work for him, the government will catch me. The whiteman has long arms. And they'll hang me. My God, I don't want to die, I am not ready for death, I have not even lived. (p. 169)

Mugo is therefore faced with a Hobson's choice: disobeying Kihika's request would have meant death; becoming involved with the Mau Mau would have meant the demise of his cherished dream. In order to save his life and dream Mugo gives Kihika away to the colonial administration.²⁰ Thus Ngugi had skillfully made us intimate with Mugo's yearnings and special circumstances so that when we finally learn about the betrayal we realize that if it cannot be morally justified, Mugo's crime can at least be understood. Ngugi, the novelist, seems to say that 'since I extend the hand of compassion to my creations I expect you the reader to do the same'.

Although Ngugi fully accepts the substance of General R's statement that "No one will ever escape from his own actions" (p. 206), he nevertheless exposes to attack the process through which Wambui, Warui, General R. and Lt. Koinandu arrogate the judgement of human conduct to themselves, echoing the Professor of Modern Languages' thought about Razumov in Under Western Eyes, "who would care to question the grounds of forgiveness or compassion?" (p. 313).

If Mugo is guilty of betrayal, Lt. Koinandu is also guilty of "deliver[ing] Dr. Lynd into the hands of rapists"²¹ and General R. with his mentor Kihika, had almost turned into fascists under the strain of fighting for freedom. If nobody is blameless, as Ngugi shows, he further asks: who is morally competent to try someone for an offence he himself might have committed in one way or another? Because of his reservations on this, Ngugi shows that the arbiters delegated by Thabai community to try Mugo are full of misgiving. None of them initially expected Mugo to be the betrayer of Kihika, and at the end of their trial they are all overcome by a collective sense of guilt, which however provides a sound basis on which a new 'freedom' and sense of togetherness can be built. For Warui, one of the judges, the whole event "was like warm water in the mouth of a thirsty man. It was not what I had waited for, these many years". (p. 208) and about Wambui Ngugi writes, "she was lost in a solid consciousness of a terrible anti-climax to her activities in the fight for freedom". (p. 210)

As readers we are meant to be critical of Wambui's statement about Mugo: "There was nothing to save... Nobody could have saved him" (p. 209) because as the novel demonstrates, at the verge of his death Karanja is saved:

The train was only a few yards from the crossing. He moved a step forward. Then it swished past him, the lights, the engine and the coaches, so close that the wind threw him back. The earth where he stood trembled. (p. 200)

The moral then goes that If Karanja can be saved both from the irate crowd on Uhuru day and the fast-moving train, then Mugo too could have been saved, contrary to Wambui's observation. If Karanja can be redeemed so can Mugo whose sacrifice is redeeming, as the 'grain of wheat' which might enable the community to achieve rebirth and renewal. This is exactly where the irony in Wambui's statement lies. Having just participated in a court which sentenced Mugo, she observes that "Perhaps we should not have tried him..." (p. 210).

The reader of A Grain of Wheat will have realised, much earlier than Wambui, - (whose awareness came rather late) that throughout the novel, Ngugi invites us to sympathise with all his characters by using a cumulative rather than the unilinear patterning of his early novels. The author now deliberately makes us delay judgement on characters and events until sufficient information is revealed to allow us make a balanced assessment of them. It is in this light that Ngugi's depiction of all his characters, including even the minor ones such as Githua, must be seen. In the opening pages of the novel Ngugi invites us, through Githua, to beware of false heroes who can easily cash in on the Emergency. Githua deceives us, for the better part of the novel, into thinking that he is an Emergency casualty, until he reveals that Githua's disability was really caused by a motor accident. But in conformity with the authorial tendency to treat every character with equal degree of compassion in the novel, Ngugi extends understanding even to Githua who, his lies notwithstanding, is not cast simply as a villain. It is also the use of this technique, as we saw, that enables us to sympathise with Mugo's attempt to cut himself off from the community. Ngugi had given us an insight into Mugo's past and his aspirations, which placed his social withdrawal into a wider historical context, thus discouraging us from seeing him merely as a self-centred individualist.

Thus, although Ngugi borrowed a lot from Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin here he goes ahead of his mentor, as the narrative technique of A Grain of Wheat is cumulative in a deeper sense than Lamming's novel. Though it employs some time-shifts and flashbacks In the Castle of My Skin chronologically traces the development of G. from childhood to maturity and his departure from Barbados. On the other hand, A Grain of Wheat employs a more complex flashback technique that goes backward and forward in time demanding that every piece of information be considered before a final judgement is made.

Commenting on the technique of A Grain of Wheat, Eustace Palmer argues that Ngugi requires the reader to make a special effort while reading the book: "Indeed his role is very much like the judge's in a court of law: to sift the evidence, hear all the aspects of the case, organize the material, and find out exactly what happened".²² Clearly, what enabled Ngugi to go beyond Lamming is the influence of Joseph Conrad's Nostramo (1904) which, as we observed in Chapter Three, employs several stories, has a distorted chronology and utilizes complex flashbacks.

Finally, although Ngugi has learnt how to write about the world of the ordinary people from Lamming, his portrayal of their political victory in A Grain of Wheat - a historical fact - contrasts with the picture of Creighton villagers who at the end of In the Castle of My Skin are, as we saw in Chapter One, "hopeless and bewildered" (p. 290) after their leader has betrayed them. The disarray of the dispossessed villagers at the end of Lamming's novel sharply contrasts with the portrayal of the central role of the Mau Mau guerillas in the achievement of Kenya's independence.

Ngugi deliberately undermines the official version of Kenya's history which gives the credit for independence to the nationalist elite and attributes it to the Mau Mau fighters whose image, as we shall note in the second part of the chapter, undergoes a radical change in A Grain of Wheat. The Party - whose origin is as old as the advent of the Whiteman in Kenya - had organised the struggle and now that freedom had been won, Ngugi deliberately diverts our attention from the official national day celebrations in Nairobi to the events locally organized by the Thabai peasants. The prominence which he gives to the peasantry in A Grain of Wheat foreshadowed the appearance of Petals of Blood. While there is an unnamed peasant narrator whose interest is linked with that of the Kenyan ordinary people in the former novel, the version of that voice in the latter novel is boldly and unmistakably committed on the side of the people.

What the narrator's voice says in Petals of Blood modifies, for instance, the uncommitted utterances of Godfrey Munira or the patently ~~right~~-wing statements of Inspector Godfrey, who "had been brought up to believe in the sanctity of private property".²³ To the Inspector:

The system of private ownership, of means of production exchange and distribution was... synonymous with the natural order or things like the sun, the moon and the stars which seemed fixed and permanent in the firmament.²⁴

Petals of Blood is expressly socialist, while A Grain of wheat, in spite of its bias for the peasantry and the underprivileged is not. It is in the light of the difference between these two novels that the critical observation below should be assessed.

In Literature and Society in Modern Africa (1972) Peter Nazareth argues that although historical reasons may prove otherwise, A Grain of Wheat is "socialist by implication".²⁵ He goes on to cite textual evidence, such as the adoption of the point of view of the underprivileged and the fact that one of the guerillas "General R. has given himself the name of General Russia because the people admire Russia as they believe it is ruled by ordinary people".²⁶

With due respect, one must reply that A Grain of Wheat appropriately belongs to the category of 'critical realism', because at the time when Ngugi wrote it he had not yet developed into an ideologically committed novelist. Also the definitions of 'critical realism' and 'socialist realism' which we quoted in the previous chapter would indicate that Ngugi's third novel appropriately belongs to the first rather than to the second category, because as we observed, while the first category comprises novels which identify the socio-political problem, the second consists of those which, in addition to identifying the problem also specify a blue-print for action.

No socialist world, even by implication is emerging in Ngugi's third novel, which is basically a plea for reconciliation with the fractured self as well as with the dislocated community emphasizing the fact that individuals must open themselves up to achieve inter-personal

amnesty, as a way of achieving personal and communal regeneration. Though it indicts the new political elite emerging in independent Kenya, it is substantially different from Petals of Blood in which Ngugi emphasizes the need for a change of community; and one in which, for the first time his ideological commitment became apparent, as we shall see in Chapter Six. As a writer, Ngugi has gone through several stages of growth, and with each novel we witness a significant development of his technique and socio-political vision. Notwithstanding its new technical accomplishments, which can be largely attributed to the influence of Lamming and Joseph Conrad - A Grain of Wheat is, as we argued in this chapter, an essentially Ngugi novel, in which the unique vision of a developing African writer unfolds. However, Ngugi has admitted in a different context in 1964, prior to starting work on A Grain of Wheat, that he was still "too confused in social outlook"²⁷ to be able to write a fully political novel then. This point can further be supported by the method of characterization in which Ngugi sympathetically identifies with all the characters irrespective of their race, political conviction or philosophical beliefs. A socialist novel is most unlikely to employ a method which lumps all humanity (read characters) together, casting a sympathetic glance at all their human foibles irrespective of their class base or political philosophy. The fully socialist work had to wait until the appearance of Petals of Blood in 1977.

PART TWO: THE WRITER AND INDEPENDENCE

Having suggested the literary influence of Lamming on Ngugi, however, it is necessary to show that Lamming became dissatisfied with the artistic mode which had influenced and partly inspired Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat, and sought a new artistic medium to put across a new message at his nation's achievement of independence. Season of Adventure illustrates a bold attempt by a writer trying to combine the realistic and the symbolic in a single work, in order to penetrate the politics as well as the psychology of Anglophone West Indies following independence.

The two novels under comparison focus on Kenya and San Cristobal revealing the authors' concern with the fate of the underprivileged classes. Accordingly, both authors show their scepticism towards the efficacy of political independence, especially to the ordinary people, the quality of whose lives remain unchanged in spite of a change of leadership. In The Wretched of the Earth (1963) Frantz Fanon comments on the tendency of third world leaders to marginalize the ordinary people and deny them the fruits of political independence. Thus to the common man the granting of political 'freedom' is of little or no significance:

The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil, and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly-coloured though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed.²⁸

The two authors fully share Frantz Fanon's opinion expressed above. Consequently, both A Grain of Wheat and Season of Adventure take up the issue of disillusionment of the ordinary people with independence because their standard of living has not improved under black leadership. In Ngugi's novel, the Whites are in the process of departing, but a strong impression is created by the conduct of the M.P. that for the common man, prospects are still bleak.

Through the M.P.'s failure to attend the independence celebrations at Thabai, Ngugi hints at the kind of leadership his people will get: the type that will abdicate its constituency and even its official obligations once it is securely in office. (p. 56) In the first section of the chapter, we referred to the betrayal of Gikonyo and other Thabai locals by the Member of Parliament who promised to help them with a government loan so they can buy the farm of a departing European. Behind their back, the Member of Parliament completed arrangements with Mr. Burton who "had left Kenya for England" (p. 147) and Ngugi reveals in a classic betrayal of the aspirations of the people that, "the new landowner was their own M.P." (p. 147). In reference to Jomo Kenyatta's plea that Kenyans should all 'pull together' in Harambee spirit, the authors of Independent Kenya (1982) reveal their disillusionment and that of their fellow countrymen, years after independence, the prelude of which Ngugi captures in A Grain of Wheat: "We have long been told that by pulling together and working hard we will soon climb out of poverty. Instead, we find ourselves faced with growing landlessness, unemployment, inflation, shortages of food, and hopelessness".²⁹

Likewise, although most of the colonial masters have departed from the administrative and political scene of Lamming's newly independent San Cristobal, the discriminating structures they had erected have been effectively maintained and consolidated by the new ruling class. Following independence, this class has physically moved to the elegant neighbourhood of Maraval Hills while the underprivileged members of the society still reside in the shanty town of Forest Reserve. By moving house, at a deeper level, this class also attempts to escape from its past, an attempt which Lamming's story shows to be not only retrogressive but also near impossible, because of the interconnectedness of the past with the present. This continuity between the past the the present is a historical truth about Lamming's society, which he illustrates through some of his

characters. Chiki, the working-class painter, is a reincarnation of Hippolite, just as the legendary Jack O'Lantern is the historical counterpart of both Young Jack O'Lantern and the drummer Gort, in present day San Cristobal.

Like the ordinary people in Ngugi's Kenya in A Grain of Wheat whose disillusionment with the new regime is voiced by Gikonyo (p. 54), independence means very little to the inhabitants of Forest Reserve as can be gleaned from Powell's response to Grim's assertion that independence will occasion real change:

'Change, my arse', he shouted, 'is independence what it is?' One day in July you say you want to be that there thing, an' one day a next July the law say all right, from now you's what you askin' for. What change that can change? Might as well call your dog a cat an' hope to hear him mew. Is only words an' names what don' signify nothin'.³⁰ (my emphases)

Through Powell's statement, Lamming indicates that for the common people in San Cristobal independence is an empty concept, a mere political slogan which has not made any positive impact on their economic condition. This is illustrated by the fact that majority of the Forest Boys - representing the underprivileged group - have to resort to crime in order to survive. The economic condition of the inhabitants of the Forest Reserve is so bad that it has forced certain members, such as Belinda, into prostitution so they can satisfy their needs. (p. 199) Through Powell's statement that "If ever I give you freedom... then all your future is mine, 'cause whatever you do in freedom name is what I make happen" (pp. 18-19), Lamming hints at the psychological and cultural bondage which the artificial granting of independence will promote. The tendency to imitate the colonial masters, in the middle-class characters who fly the flag of independence, fully illustrates this absence of real freedom. Lamming further shows that by comparison with the educated elite, the masses are psychologically and culturally independent in a way that their rulers are not.

He indicates that personal liberation from the colonial mentality which the peasantry has and Fola later achieves - is the genuine liberation from colonialism, and not the artificial transfer of power to the indigenous middle-class, a process which, as the story illustrates, consolidates their cultural and psychological bondage to the metropolitan powers. Accordingly, the attention of the ruling class in Season of Adventure is directed at cheap imitation of foreign values, a travesty; and at image-making, so as to impress its foreign masters, an indication of its cultural enslavement. In the new state of San Cristobal:

There was a committee for everything under the sun; cat shows, beauty contests, volume competitions between radiograms, artists' endeavour (the poet who wrote the new anthem got a scholarship to England and never returned), and any activity which attracted public notice in the capital. The most powerful of the lot was the Piggott's committee for raising the moral tone of the country's name abroad" (p. 102).

If the attention of the ruling class following independence is on image-making, it is not a surprise that the aspirations of the underprivileged in San Cristobal should be dashed and their needs largely uncatered for.

With all the differences of style and form that distinguish Lamming from Edward Brathwaite, a fellow Barbadian, their views about the politics of West Indian independence are in accord and a comparison of their opinions will show that both believe that political independence has failed to provide succour to the masses. The sense of disillusionment felt by Lamming's characters in Season of Adventure assails the persona in Edward Brathwaite's The Arrivants (1967). Having returned to the Caribbean after his spiritual pilgrimage to Africa he discovers how self-seeking the island politicians have become while the poor suffer. Evidence of socio-economic deprivation suffuses the whole section of the poem entitled 'Legba'. The small pension which the emasculated figure of the 'god' (representing the average West Indian commoner) receives is not enough to sustain his family.

As a result:

His children eat dirt,
are pot-

bellied, knobble-
kneed sticks down

to their ball-
bearing ankles;

the drifting sand
ruins their eyes;

they go to school to the head-
master's cries,

read a black-
board of words, angles,

lies;³¹

The fragmentation of words in the poem reflects the truncated lives of most West Indians after independence while the images of drought and desert plants (such as cactus and bamboo) underscore the spiritual aridity of the leaders who contributed to bringing the condition about. Earlier on the persona had lamented the fact that following political independence, the ruling elite have turned:

...blind
to that harsh light and vision that had once
consumed them; eager now, ambitious,

anxious that their single-
minded fames should rise

...while the

supporting poor, famished upon their simple
politics of fish and broken bread,

begin to catch their royal asses,
denuded into silence like the stones

where their shacks sit, which
their picks hit, where beaten spirits,

trapped in flesh,
litter the landscape with their broken homes... (pp. 60-1).

Edward Brathwaite's view of contemporary West Indian politics permeates the whole trilogy. It is present from the opening section; Although on the surface 'Rights of Passage' (1967) deals with the odyssey of the Negro slaves through the Atlantic, it also effectively captures the modern predicament of the West Indies where political independence has not been accompanied by a change in the quality of life of most people.³² The persona reflects that:

it is not
it is not
it is not enough
it is not enough to be free
of the red white and blue
of the drag, of the dragon (p. 222)

Thus what is important in the view of both Lamming and Edward Brathwaite is the amelioration of the suffering of the poor rather than the replacement of the colonial with an indigenous leadership that has only "succeeded in inflicting on the masses more disabling disasters than the departed imperialists".³³ Thus both the leadership of San Cristobal and that of Kenya are guilty of abnegation of responsibility for different reasons, although the effect of this on the ordinary people is similar: a sense of hopelessness and despair that their standard of living has not improved under indigenous leadership.

Both writers view the first step towards overcoming contemporary problems in their independent societies as the willingness of individuals to take a 'backward glance'. They both believe that psychological freedom, which might help individuals come to terms with contemporary problems, can only be gained by a recourse to the past. Although both writers believe in the importance of the past, given their different

cultural and political contexts, they communicate their messages in different ways.

In Kenya, Ngugi is dealing with a society which had just experienced a lengthy warfare with the colonial administration. This had involved destruction of property and original homesteads, separation of families, sexual betrayal of men who had left their women behind and went to fight in the forests, and all the psychological consequences of these experiences on the Thabai community. Because of this, Ngugi attaches significance to two kinds of independence in A Grain of Wheat; the political and the psychological. At times, political independence in the novel is underplayed to give prominence to psychological freedom from guilt, anxiety and the trauma of the Mau Mau War and the Emergency. Here, Ngugi is of the opinion that the past has to be confronted; both the militants and the collaborators with the imperialists have to confront the past and exorcise its ghost in order to be psychologically balanced to address current problems. In this regard, a critic succinctly argues that "no seed can grow without cracking open its case, no life can continue and develop without dealing with suffering and pain, and especially with the agony of guilt over one's past".³⁴ The way to confront this past, as we saw in the previous section, is through a private or public confession, performed at different times in A Grain of Wheat by Mumbi, Gikonyo and Mugo. Confession and the sense of sympathy, togetherness and psychological equilibrium that it produces, represents the concrete foundation upon which a new and virile independent society can be built. If confession results tragically in death, as it does in Mugo's case, a 'grain of wheat' will have been sown in the ground with a future promise of renewal for the community.

Like Ngugi's novel, Lamming's Season of Adventure also deals with two kinds of independence; two kinds of freedom: political freedom from colonial rule and psychological freedom from colonial mentality.

Like Ngugi, Lamming too shows that political independence is not complete without psychological freedom but not from the trauma of War as in Ngugi's Kenya but from colonial values which in Lamming's view imprison the psyche, keeping the individual in a perpetual mental servitude.

Unlike Ngugi who shows that the War is chiefly responsible for the psychological bondage of his characters, Lamming indicates that the cause of the mental bondage of his characters lies deep in their inability to overcome the circumstances of colonial history, in other words, they are still captives in what Lamming calls in The Pleasures of Exile (1960) the "prison of colonialism".³⁵

As we saw in Chapter Three, it is true that in spite of political independence in the West Indian islands, people still remained psychologically colonized to foreign values. In support of this view, David Lowenthal asserts in West Indian Societies (1972) that long after the granting of independence",... fealty more than physiography still makes Barbados 'Little England', Jamaicans, Trinidadians, and other small islanders all emulate English manners, take pride in the Commonwealth status, and pursue British honours..."³⁶ Lamming's point in Season of Adventure, therefore, is that the potentialities of political independence can only be realized when the West Indian is able to forge a cultural identity that will assist him in dismantling the basic attitude among West Indians that "much of what is good is ... only slightly West Indian, and much of what is thoroughly West Indian is inferior."³⁷

Because of the crucial significance which Lamming attaches to psychological freedom, this theme deeply engages the author's attention in Season of Adventure, a novel which is neatly divided into two sections. In the early section, attention is devoted to a character's pursuit of it, and in the second, which is part-real and part-mythical, (and which we shall examine later) deliberate techniques (anticipated in the early section) are created by Lamming to match the West Indian

personality's search for a cultural identity following political independence.

In the first section of Season of Adventure, Lamming shows that the African past of the West Indies is a vital component for the search of self-knowledge which might lead to psychological independence. One of the avenues to this past is the Ceremony of the Souls, which is a ritual of coming to terms with the past in order to prepare for the challenges of the present. In The Pleasures of Exile, Lamming describes the religious ceremony as the occasion when:

The Dead need to speak if they are going to enter that eternity which will be their last and permanent future. The living demand to hear whether there is any need for forgiveness, for redemption; whether in fact, there may be any guide which may help them towards reforming their present condition³⁸ (my emphasis).

In 'The West Indian People' (1966) Lamming further illustrates the significance of the Ceremony:

It is not important to believe in the actual details of the ceremony. What is important is its symbolic drama; the drama of redemption; the drama of returning; the drama of cleansing for a commitment towards the future. A part of our cleansing has to take the form of the backward glance, not in a state of complaint or in a state of rancour, but the backward glance as part of the need to understand.³⁹ (my emphasis).

Both quotations indicate that the function of the ceremony is to put an individual in touch with the past as a way of assisting him to understand the present. In the tonelle ceremony, an individual participant is possessed by ancestral spirits. Alfred Métraux, in his study of the Haitian voodoo, the religious ceremony on which Lamming's story is based, asserts that the "drum rhythms... attract the spirits. That is why they are assigned a predominating role in nearly all ceremonies"⁴⁰. Accordingly, Lamming reveals that during the ceremony, when music from the Steel Drums reaches a crescendo, "The women's voices grew suddenly loud, exulting in the chorus which started to summon their dead" (p. 17). And "when the dancing came to an end, the gods would enter their chosen priest with a power that gave him full command over the dead" (p. 22) that is, the ability

to 'communicate' with them and acquire ancestral wisdom. Therefore, music emanating from the Steel drums - an essential component of Ceremony of the Souls - is seen as a deeply spiritual experience through which individuals are mentally reconnected with the past.

The emotional experience is psychologically liberating from self-alienation induced, in Lamming's view, by a colonialist education and membership of the hedonistic West Indian middle-class. Since the experience transports an individual back to the world of the ancestors through hypnosis, it is therefore culturally nourishing - an attempt to create identity through continuity. The possessed individual apprehends spiritual experience below the conscious level, hence "Only the dead can do it" (p. 92), or someone like Fola ("the living who are free", p. 92) who is ready to shed her middle-class trappings in order to take a 'backward glance' at her past. It is through the peasant ceremony that Fola begins to perceive the need to confront the 'ghosts' of her own past that her parents sought to bury. Since the ceremony takes place in the Forest Reserve its inhabitants are never separated from the African past which constitutes their cultural tradition in present-day San Cristobal. They are sharply contrasted with the dwellers of Maraval Hills - the new political elite - who make conscious and even frantic efforts to ignore their peasant heritage not only in cultural but also in psychological terms, cutting themselves off from the deeper dimensions of self.

Since the tradition which Lamming evokes is originally African, it is not a surprise that there is a clear analogy in the Shona cultural tradition evoked by the Zimbabwean Charles Mungoshi in Waiting for the Rain (1975), a brief reference to which novel will further illuminate the function of drum music in Season of Adventure. In Charles Mungoshi's novel, Garabha under the influence of music, goes back in history and assumes the place of "his own great-great ancestor in that story of the founder of the Tribe the Old Man has often told him".⁴¹

Music of the drums is thus capable of opening up the subconscious mind to make an individual aware of his own past, which his conscious self cannot fathom. It also has a religious dimension through which it rejuvenates one's sense of justice and morality. According to Powell in Season of Adventure, "it make the deadest conscience wake up" (p. 47) because in the words of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, it is "the voice of God".⁴²

It is the cultural richness and the spiritual vitality of the tonelle and the Steel Drums music with which the peasantry in Season of Adventure are associated and from which the black elite, through conscious choice, are divorced.

In contrast to Ngugi who shows that all the members of his society have to confront the past, Lamming is of the view that only the middle-class characters who attempt to escape from the past should be courageous enough to confront it. The middle-class in Season of Adventure try to escape this cultural tradition not only because it reminds them about their slave past but also because it recalls Africa which their system of education had conditioned them to view as the 'dark continent' that must be despised.⁴³ In his study of the reciprocally destructive relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in Tunisia, which equally applies to the West Indian situation, Albert Memmi writes that "Just as many people avoid showing off their poor relations, the colonized in the throes of assimilation hides his past, his traditions, in fact all his origins which have become ignominious."⁴⁴ Accordingly, Lamming shows that the middle-class in the newly independent San Cristobal are loath to come into contact with their peasant heritage. Piggott, the Police Commissioner, is determined to "clean the bands" (p. 103) ostensibly because the Forest Boys who man them are criminals but in reality because Steel Bands represent a past he and other members of his class would rather bury. In the story, they are therefore shown as being content to grapple only with the present, and ask:

the past, as they have always done, to stay entombed. They are scared to breathe until the past has promised like a corpse to hold its tongue. Near the capital, the families along the Federal Drive are vigilant and nervous as they wait, begging the past to hold its tongue; begging the present to disperse the weight of that evidence which crawls and collects like the nightmare clouds moving under and beyond the ceiling. (p. 335) (my emphasis).

The sandflies crawling 'under and beyond the ceiling' are not only a visible evidence of corruption in the lives of the middle-class, of which more later, but also a powerful reminder to the reader of the unpleasant past they choose to hide, without success. This recalls Fola's experience at the tonelle, when she "had lived in the shadow of two terrors: hypnosis and the sight of rats. She thought of both and the dancing made her shudder" (p. 25). Both the Ceremony of the Souls, which is her history, and rats, which hide in the sewerage and are dirty, but are also symbolic of all that is squalid in her life, are basic components of her past: the impressive and the ugly. Lamming is of the view that it is better to confront them than try to put a cordon sanitaire over them, because the effect of sanitization is temporary, a palliative at best.

In Season of Adventure, Lamming attacks the middle-class characters for seeking to bury their past, and applauds Fola's courage in attempting to embrace both its good and bad aspects. It is the willingness of characters to embrace the past or their reluctance to do so that becomes the gauge of moral strength in Season of Adventure. In Lamming's view, a 'backward glance', as we saw, is crucial for the West Indian for it represents, "a confrontation with self, a coming to terms with origin"⁴⁵ which is the first step towards the exorcising of "fear and shame"⁴⁶ which he has associated with his past. The experience of Fola in the story can be used to illustrate this contact with the ancestral past. Fola, a middle-class girl of mixed origins, engages in a quest for identity, and by extension a search for the moral and psychological strength that will assist her to come to terms with life in the newly independent San Cristobal.

Her step-father Piggott and her mother Agnes insist on bringing Fola up according to middle-class values, but the story shows her determination to discover her real identity against all odds. Her journey to the Forest Reserve, particularly her encounter with Chiki, helps her to realize that her parent's protection, "was a prison especially built to secure her loyalty. A prison which was securely guarded by the families' arrangements for her future". (p. 244). For Fola then, this is not only a problem of a blocked off past but of a determined future as well, against which she rebels. When Fola and her expatriate history teacher Charlot, enter the tonelle, Lamming makes us view the ceremony from her own perspective, revealing her apprehension and by implication, her alienation from the world she is now in contact with:

...the atmosphere of the tonelle had increased in its effect upon her. There was something intimidating about the women. The dance had become more feverish. Fola recognized what they were doing, but there was too much tension in their bodies. She expected something to collapse inside them. (pp. 24-5)

The fact that it is Charlot, an expatriate, who takes Fola to the tonelle, and brings her into contact with her own cultural past, to which she had been a total stranger, is deliberately ironic and meant to show the insensitivity of her class to that past. Fola's 'backward glance', to which we shall return later, succeeds in transforming her outlook and helps her to shed her middle-class attitudes, as she gets closer to Chiki and the Moon Glow Bar, one of the settings of her metamorphosis. In the hedonistic world of Maraval Hills, Fola breaks new grounds in attempting a 'backward glance', in spite of the resistance of her parents who are determined to make a model middle-class daughter out of her. (p. 116) As soon as Fola begins her spiritual pilgrimage and decides to "wage her war in the sanctuary of Maraval Hills" (p. 245) she begins to see the privileged families of San Cristobal, including her parents whom she has now rejected, for what they really are when the surface veneer is removed,

"decrepit skeletons residing near Federal Drive, polluting the live air with wave upon wave of their corpse breathing" (P. 247). It is therefore, partly the attempt of her parents to impede her process of self-discovery and partly the corruption of the middle-class that motivate Fola to seek refuge in Forest Reserve, which Ngugi has called "the masses' spiritual centre"⁴⁷ in Homecoming.

Here, as in most of Ngugi's analyses of the West Indian novelist in Homecoming, he ignores the duality characterizing Lamming's fiction. This tendency results in his ability to see only one dimension of the Forest Reserve, which Lamming sees positively in Season of Adventure, but refuses to romanticize. He shows that if it houses the tonelle, Forest Reserve is also a hide-out for criminals, hooligans and a haven for prostitutes. This duality is further revealed through Chiki's physical ugliness, which is intimately connected with the squalor of Forest Reserve. But like the seedy locale which produced Chiki, his personality is ugly without being repulsive. His ugliness, in fact, is a surface veneer that hides an impressive personality with a deep sense of morality which could only have been stimulated by his proximity to the tonelle and the Steel Drums. His spirituality, as we shall see later, must have sharpened his sense of selflessness, which leads him into fraternizing with Fola whom he aids to discover her roots. Fola is initially shocked at his ghastly physical appearance. When he appears at the Moon Glow Bar where she has been waiting for him Fola is gripped "with the sight of horror. She gasped aloud. The glass fell from her hands, and all eyes were turned towards the noise of broken glass and the waste of coca-cola swimming across the table and on to the floor" (p. 214). But when later he promises to help Fola discover her past, that impressive aspect of his personality predominates. Like us, the readers, "She notices that his ugliness has disappeared". (p. 233)

If the two novelists have both cautioned their societies to take a 'backward glance' with an eye on confronting the problems

of the present, they also unite in identifying corruption as one of those problems. Accordingly, both have brooded about the negative values of materialism and acquisitiveness deeply entrenched in their societies. They express concern that these might hinder the emergence of post-independent societies that can unite to achieve goals for the benefit of the whole community. Both therefore reveal their hostility to embryonic capitalism and materialism in their societies and stress the importance of their replacement with the more positive values of receptivity and fellow-feeling, openness and a meaningful contact between the rulers and the ruled.

Through the figure of the corrupt M.P. who, as we saw earlier, uses his political office to further his own interests, Ngugi indicts the self-seeking Kenya's political elite who replaced the colonial masters after independence. In his study of colonialism, Frantz Fanon writes:

Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie.⁴⁸

The action of the M.P. in A Grain of Wheat graphically illustrates the process described by Frantz Fanon above. Ngugi further shows that it is not only the corruption of the elite that poses danger to the newly independent nation. He indicates that the methods which certain individuals adopt in pursuit of their material goals pose an equally dangerous threat to the young republic. In the previous section, we referred to Gikonyo's post-emergency occupation as a ruthless mini-capitalist who hoards agricultural products and tramples on others in order to achieve success. As a result, "Gikonyo was respected and admired as a symbol of what everyone aspired to be: fiercely independent, bending all effort to success in any enterprise" (p. 20).

Although this attitude is fully accepted by Thabai community, Ngugi is critical of it. He is manifestly not opposed to the enterprising spirit of Thabai people. Rather what he frowns at is the devious method an individual employs to achieve his goal. So that although we are made to revise our attitude towards him later in the story, Mugo is depicted as an opportunist in a frenzied attempt to establish himself as a successful man in Thabai community. The only person who gets in his way - Kihika - pays the price with his own life. This perspective enables us to see that Mugo's betrayal of Kihika is as much a vengeance on the overzealous freedom-fighter for frustrating Mugo's attempt to get on in a competitive society, as it is a commercial venture in which Mugo (who actually refers to himself as Judas, after the man who had betrayed Jesus Christ for a material reward p. 193) hopes to benefit from the price put on his head by the colonial authorities:

He would buy more land. He would build a big house. He would then find a woman for a wife and get children... His place in society would then be established. He would be half-way on the road to power. And what is greatness but power? (p. 171).

In order to single out this streak for attack Ngugi reveals that apart from saving his dream to prove his manhood, Mugo has another motive for betraying Kihika: financial. Thus although he uses a technique to make us sympathise with the foibles of his characters, Ngugi reveals that the ruthlessness demonstrated by Gikonyo and Mugo in order to achieve their goals is an aspect of the community's life which people must watch and try to curb in independent Kenya.

Like Ngugi, Lamming too attacks embryonic capitalism, dishonesty and political corruption in Season of Adventure. At a lower level, through the petty traders Flo, Mathilda and Unice in their competition with one another, the worst of enemies, often engaged "in the worst kind of war" (p. 252) Lamming shows in Season of Adventure the tendency

of mini-capitalist rivals in modern San Cristobal to unite in public exploitation. In spite of their commercial rivalry, the women are at one in retailing sugar at an extortionately high but uniform price, in order to protect their economic interests.

Although their methods differ, the middle-class also comes under attack for exploitation as illustrated in the unholy alliance between Vice-President Raymond and Carol Baden-Semper to share the loot from Old Guru's earnings which the police discover after the jeweller is murdered by Uncle Titon, a Forest Boy. "People 'fraid to talk" Eva Bartok argues "but ask Lady Carol where she get her money. Ask her whose money build her mansion in the Maraval Hills", (p. 170), a house which has been described as "the finest example of colonial architecture in San Cristobal" (p. 69). The reader knows the source of the money - Old Guru's treasure - and he is certain that Lady Carol will dare not answer that question truthfully as she has an 'image' to protect. Thus the materialistic ethos which Lamming attacks has transformed itself into corruption in political circles. There is an irony in the attempt of the administration to "clean the bands" (p. 103) in the Forest Reserve under the pretext of a moral crusade, since in reality, the real criminals who engage in shady deals on a massive scale reside in Maraval Hills. In this world, where materialism is the guiding principle, money's value is elevated to the status of a religion, as Fola is later to discover when she gets deep in the process of her spiritual pilgrimage:

Money was the answer which grew loud and more menacing than the nightmare blackness of the sky. Those ordinary decorative bits of metal and paper which could not appease any hunger, make adequate shelter for any head; yet punished every appetite with the enormous power which a vain and incredible hunger had bestowed upon it. Those simple digits of spending which men had invented and which men could no longer order to behave like the metal and paper on which they were inscribed! Ordinary fragments, like used Christmas paper, which changed their size and smile from hand to hand like a magician's trick! (p. 245). (my emphasis)

Along with its imitation of foreign values, as we saw, the preoccupation of the elite with a purely materialistic ethos, which

it cannot control, leads it to abdicate its moral responsibility to the people it governs. The elite inhabit a world of false bourgeois values which has no compassion for the governed. This attitude forces the underprivileged to take desperate measures in order to survive in a society based on money-civilization. It leaves the underprivileged members of the society only a choice of dishonesty, prostitution and crime. Hence corruption and crime at the lower level is a direct consequence of the economic deprivation to which the underprivileged are subjected by their leaders.

Early in the novel, Powell reveals that it is "Money, money" (p. 35) that forced Uncle Titon to murder Old Guru and escape with a casket which contains a false set of teeth instead of the diamonds he had expected. Also it is mainly her poor economic circumstances that forced Belinda to prostitute her body in order to sponsor her son's education. Like the other inhabitants of the Forest Reserve, Belinda sees little significance in the change of guards that brought the black elite to power, "I don't know what all the new freedom mean... 'cause they all crooks the political lot, all crooks, but I see how things start to change. An' I decide to back my little boy future..." (p. 199).

In Season of Adventure, it is basically the insensitivity of the ruling class to the yearning of the common people that motivated the latter to employ violence on the former. The first indication of revolt against the ruling class by the governed is shown when Crim, obviously infuriated by Vice-President Raymond's mean treatment of Little Boy Charlie at a party, slips a broken glass in his pocket which later cut his finger. (pp. 144-5) This pre-figures Raymond's death at the hands of embittered Powell near the end of the story. But as a writer deeply sceptical about the efficacy of violence although he refers to its therapeutic value elsewhere,⁴⁹ and even sensitizes us to its regenerative and destructive aspects in Of Age and Innocence, and Season of Adventure, in a continuity of his antipathy towards

violence, Lamming shows that, it is neither a positive act nor a redeeming principle. It does not, for instance, heal the rift between the two feuding classes in the story. Instead it deepens it, culminating in the proscription of the Steel Bands by the Police (pp. 314-5). This historically recalls the "violent suppression of the Negro canboulay /in which drumming plays a prominent role/ in 1818",⁵⁰ and the subsequent banning of the drum in 1883 by the colonial administration in Trinidad.⁵¹ Before then, a violent scene in which Gort's tenor drum is destroyed by a police corporal recalls "the famous Arouca riot of 1891 /in which/ Constables broke up a drum dance and were beaten off by stickmen".⁵² The fictional representation of this riot in which Gort loses his drum is used by Lamming not only to show the intimacy between Gort and his musical instrument and the psychological devastation which he experienced after its destruction. (pp. 289 - 290) It is also meant to underscore the deepening tension between the ruling class and the Forest Boys, which is only aggravated by the reciprocal employment of violence. Furthermore, it is not violence against the leadership that brought about a change of government, rather it is a 'revolt of the drums', engineered by the peasants - to which we shall return later.

If the insensitivity of the black elite led to violence in Season of Adventure, the injustice of the colonial administration in Kenya resulted in violence which Ngugi, in contrast to Lamming, reveals is effective in bringing about social change. This shows that while there is continuity and intensification in Lamming's attitude towards violence, there is a development in Ngugi's attitude towards it. Violence was frowned at by Ngugi in his early fiction, notably in Weep Not, Child, discussed in Chapter Two. It was seen then as morally reprehensible, dehumanizing and not an effective instrument for bringing about social change.

This point is underscored, as we saw, through the negative result of Ngotho's use of violence during a Kipanga farmhands' strike. Ngotho loses his job and is ejected from his ancestral land. But in A Grain of Wheat it is seen as being responsible for the achievement of Kenya's independence. As we saw in the first part of the chapter, the role of the nationalist elite is underplayed and that of the peasant guerillas emphasized in the achievement of freedom from colonial rule.

Because of the radicalization of Ngugi's sensibility, the Mau Mau movement is seen mostly through Kihika, a radical politician and activist, whose belligerence, which at times veers towards eccentricity is nevertheless defined in the appropriate context of Gikuyu militancy, in the 1950's, against land-alienation and the repressive colonial policies which they could no longer tolerate. Mau Mau violence is seen through Kihika, a freedom fighter, who enunciates its ideology putting it within its historical and revolutionary context. He tells Mugo that:

We don't kill just anybody... We are not murderers. We are not hangmen - like Robson - killing men and women without cause or purpose... We only hit back. You are struck on the left cheek. You turn the right cheek. One, two, three - sixty years. Then suddenly, it is always sudden you say: I am not turning the other cheek any more. Your back to the wall, you strike back. (p. 166)

The justification of Mau Mau violence - whose image has undergone rehabilitation in A Grain of Wheat - is also connected with Ngugi's view of it as a form of sacrifice and a necessary step towards the achievement of political change in Kenya. This view comes across through Kihika who believes in sacrificial death; to die for a greater cause of freedom for the nation. He argues that:

In Kenya we want a death that will change things, that is to say, we want a true sacrifice. But first we have to be ready to carry the cross. I die for you, you die for me, we become a sacrifice for one another. (p. 83)

Blood-letting is here seen as sacrifice, an exemplary act which all Kenyan patriots should undertake. It is not a sacrilege as it was conceived in Weep Not, Child.

As a result of this positive view of violence death through sacrifice is seen as regenerative and a complex process giving rise to renewal.

This process is conveyed in the quotation, we examined earlier:

Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.⁵³

In that sense, Kihika, who sacrifices his life in the fight for freedom, as we saw, can be seen as a 'grain of wheat' through whose death society might achieve renewal. So can Mugo who willingly gives his life so that Karanja (wrongly accused of Kihika's betrayal) might live. Both are 'grains of wheat' whose sacrifice promises a rebirth for the whole society, whose members are called upon to have a change of heart, forget old hostilities and join hands in reconstructing Kenya.

But both writers believe in the ability of the peasantry to challenge the establishment and influence the process of change. They do so in different ways. This difference is dictated by their opposing views concerning violence. Ngugi believes that they can bring about change through violence, which, as we saw, is seen in A Grain of Wheat as morally justified and regenerative. Lamming reveals that the peasantry can aid the process of change in two ways: the psychological change which Fola is able to achieve through contact with the peasant world and the external change of government brought about by a 'revolt of the drums'. It is significant to note that because of Lamming's antipathy towards violence, political change in Season of Adventure is brought about not through a violent revolt but through a musical one. In contrast with Ngugi who shows that there is a need for some to die for the good of the community, Lamming, in spite of his belief in the vitality of the peasantry, fears that any attempt to change the existing order by force may be marred by mob-action, which liberates the dark forces in humanity, the Dionysiac fury. This will result in the annihilation of the very people the political change is meant to save.

This scepticism about the efficacy of violence is, as we saw, conveyed in In the Castle of My Skin and Of Age and Innocence. The continuity of this view in Lamming's fiction encouraged him to opt in Season of Adventure for the 'revolt of the drums' as a method of achieving political change because it is music, hence more orderly and less open to anarchic destruction of people and property. The language of the drums enters the masses at the sub-conscious level and spurs them to engage in a daring act, illustrated in the large peasant support Gort had in his bold step of defying official orders proscribing the Steel Drums. (pp. 358 - 359) The language of drums is intoxicating, "Once you hear it, it fills you up, it shakes you down to the roots"⁵⁴ - but nevertheless it is not anarchic, but contains in itself a new order.

At the beginning of the second section of this chapter, we noted that Lamming, in order to convey his message about the importance of the search for identity had to create a new technique to match this personal quest which later becomes also a national search for identity.

In the Introduction, we referred to the experimental nature of Lamming's writing, which is in conformity with Edward Brathwaite's call for the creation of a new art which can match the needs of an evolving society. Accordingly, Lamming found it necessary to combine both 'realism' and the 'mythical' in Season of Adventure in order to match the search for identity in which Fola and by extension the nation are engaged.

Realism is here used in the sense in which it is used in fiction "to give the illusion that it reflects life as it seems to the common reader"⁵⁵ that is, a "more accurate description of things as they 'really' are",⁵⁶ in short, a use of events and circumstances in fiction which are closer to the real world.

This is different from the employment of the 'mythical' whereby a writer tells a story

which makes allusions to a compendium of mythological themes and symbols as were appropriate to a contemporary theme. Usually, that novelist manipulates the materials in such a way that they become, not extraneous but, complementary or integral to a new mythic, imaginative activity whereby they acquire new existence, a new significance.⁵⁷

As we argued, the 'mythical' world of Part Two, transcending ordinary reality, had been anticipated from the beginning. The voodoo ceremony, which takes place only once in the novel, is a testimony of Lamming's belief that the living and the dead do interact at a metaphysical level. So it is necessary for a 'true' fiction to find ways of depicting the 'encounter' between the living and the dead, in which the latter, through the "invocation of music, song, dance and prayer"⁵⁸ can interact in "a final dialogue with the living",⁵⁹ settle unresolved disputes, and finally be allowed eternal rest. The 'real' world must be made to combine with the 'mythical' world. Throughout the story, Lamming keeps oscillating between the visionary and the 'real' worlds so as to 'shock' Fola into self-awareness. In one of her dreams in the fourth chapter, Fola 'visualizes' the fashionable Lady Carol and Veronica, the image-conscious daughter of Vice-President Raymond,⁶⁰ participating in a tonelle ceremony in the Forest Reserve. Since we know from the context of the novel that it is inconceivable for the ladies to compromise their social 'respectability' and be there, the episode is meant to emphasize the distance of the two characters from their peasant origins and underscore Fola's courage in attempting to embrace those. But further, dream is also shown as being prophetic and offering insights which are hidden from the waking self. Fola is taking, in her subconscious, a courageous step towards self-knowledge which neither Lady Carol nor Veronica can attempt. When Charlot takes her to the tonelle ceremony, Fola had to be hypnotized before she could emotionally and physically link herself with the tonelle world thus starting

the process of exorcising the fear and shame she has associated with her past. Similarly, the Houngan Priest officiating at the Ceremony of the Souls is part-human and part-spirit. Lamming deliberately creates an atmosphere of nightmare around the ceremony but, such is the complexity of the vision, that the mysterious figure of the Houngan is also depicted as a member of the human community, as illustrated in his interaction with Liza's mother and Chiki, the working-class painter. Like the Nigerian Wole Soyinka's Murano in The Road (1965), with one leg in the real world and the other in the spirit world, the presence of the priest in the tonelle adds to the mystical quality of the Ceremony without totally divorcing it from the real world.

It is part of the experimental nature of Lamming's fiction that he should create a fiction-within-fiction in Season of Adventure, in order to further give us an insight into Fola's process of self-discovery. Although Lamming truly states that Chiki is a partner in Fola's 'season of adventure', one of the most crucial aspects of her 'adventure' takes place before she meets Chiki, following her visit to the maternity wing of San Cristobal's hospital. There Fola witnesses Camillon's maltreatment of single mothers and by extension the insensitivity of her whole class, which Camillon represents, towards the less privileged members of San Cristobal community. (pp. 141-4) It is also here that she discovers the proclivity of the middle-class to sanitize reality, in the hope that its ugly part will remain hidden. But the making public of Camillon's affair with Eva Bartok who dies from an abortion shows that reality cannot be suppressed. (p. 283) And Fola's discovery of her own bastard origins ("so we are all like that") (p. 174) leads to her imaginative invention of the circumstances of her bizarre conception. The fictitious story she tells Veronica in the Moon Glow Bar about her 'affair' with Constance Spring evokes her mother's rape by two men, one black, the other white. Like her mother's rape, her 'affair' with Constance is brutal and sadistic. (p. 184)

The link between the two episodes shows Fola's acknowledgement of her multiple parentage which her mother hides from her, but she is able to discover through an imaginative effort and a constant search. That knowledge becomes part of her consciousness as she plunges deeper in her "season of adventure which no man in the republic could predict" (p. 185).

Fola's fiction, inventing a new self and a new identity for herself issues in a new challenge to those who have imposed a false identity on her, to acknowledge a deeper reality in themselves.

From then onwards, Fola:

was determined to offer an image of herself that would work like disease on her certainty. She would discover the families and her friends through their attitude to the details of this history which she was going to bestow on the self that was Fola, and other than. This would be her way of knowing. (p. 176) (author's emphasis).

Once she becomes emotionally reconciled with her new identity of "Fola and other than" (p. 175) - a fusion of the identity others have made for her and the identity she invents for herself - her relationship with Chiki strengthens, paving the way for his contribution towards her mental liberation by the imaginative portrait of her father, a powerful symbol of her past. Fola's search for her father through this 'mythical' picture becomes a public search for Raymond's murderer, and at a deeper level, a national search for identity. (p. 307) This culminates in the upsurge of the masses against San Cristobal's corrupt and insensitive administration. So that which is visionary/fictitious, becomes the agent of change in the 'real' - a change which only that which is beyond-the-real (Fola and 'other than') is able to accomplish. As always in Lamming the personal and the public merge, the individual's search for identity mirroring the nations, but this time change can only be accomplished by vision and the imaginative effort of the artist which complements that vision.

Lamming's art in Season of Adventure is not only "experimental"⁶¹ in the technical sense but it is also innovative in the sense that it is "moving away from the European tradition... towards a different and more 'Caribbean' form altogether".⁶² He "has gradually become more and more involved with the cultural symbols of his black heritage and simultaneously more detached from some western institutions and values".⁶³

It is a measure of his 'homecoming' which made Lamming return to the role of the artist in the West Indian society, which the author himself plays by writing novels which stress the need for socio-political changes. As he disclosed to George Kent in an interview, in the West Indies:

The novelist, the poet, the painter is very conscious of doing with the imagination something more than creating so-called works of art. In other words, there is a sense in which he is undertaking a public task as distinct from the situation in contemporary England where the writer is a law unto himself.⁶⁴ (author's emphasis).

Lamming has placed the responsibility of aiding the cultural and political transformation of his society on artists who have consciously chosen to remain close to their roots and depend on the folk culture as their main source of inspiration. His deep belief in the central role of the artist in the politics of the West Indies has intensified from novel to novel. Although the artist figure in In the Castle of My Skin is not politically engaged, Trumper his complementary in the story, is a budding politician who proclaims his determination to fight for the rights of this people. (p. 297). Mark Kennedy in Of Age and Innocence is seen negatively by Lamming because although he is aware of the West Indian folk tradition (the legend of the Tribe boys) to which he alludes in a campaign speech, he is not committed to the political transformation of San Cristobal. In both Natives of My Person, which will be discussed in Chapter Six and Season of Adventure, Lamming has made his artist figures not only sensitive to the aspirations of the underprivileged but

also temperamentally committed to the transformation of the West Indian society. It is therefore significant that the artists in Season of Adventure are not alienated from their environment and its aspirations. Gort, the drummer, is unlettered. Nevertheless he is a very effective folk artist capable of self-expression through the language of the drums. (p. 20) In his attempt to financially assist the inhabitants of the Forest Reserve to keep their land, Chiki risks his life in Virginia where he masquerades as a man of God. The result of his action is brutalization by the "very hands he had baptized" (p. 189) who leave him helpless, "his blood... pouring like the river of Jordan itself" (p. 189). While on the one hand, the reader sympathises with Chiki for being assaulted by the converts who discover that Chiki is a trickster, he is also made to feel that Chiki deserves the punishment for deceiving a whole village congregation into thinking that he is an evangelist. A reader gets a similar complex response from reading the stories of Anansi, the folk hero in Jamaican folk tales, on whose figure Chiki's character might have been modelled, an indication of Lamming's intensifying sensitivity to the 'cultural symbols of his black heritage'. Like Chiki, Anansi is a confident trickster, cunning and very imaginative. In West Indian folk tales Anansi is normally portrayed as a character who constantly takes the advantage of the bigger but less intellectually endowed animals.⁶⁵ He is usually cornered, even punished but he eventually manages to use his sharp wit to escape.⁶⁶ The reader is made to admire his skill when he dupes other gullible animals but also jubilates when he is punished for his slyness. Chiki has most of the Anansi qualities, except laziness and selfishness.⁶⁷ In spite of the brutal assault he faces in Virginia, he manages to escape with his earnings which the inhabitants of Forest Reserve use to acquire "the land they live on" (p. 133).

Chiki has also demonstrated a tremendous courage by sacrificing the middle-class comforts that his education would have offered him to join his peasant compeers in the Forest Reserve where he lives the life of a working-class artist. As we saw, the 'mythical' picture of Fola's father which he imaginatively reconstructs not only aids Fola in her process of discovery but by extension also assists the newly independent nation, which joins in the search, on its journey towards freedom and a new identity. This journey culminates in a major political change brought about, as we saw, by the peasantry through a 'revolt of the drums' spearheaded by Gort. There is a suggestion here that the final and radical move to identity must come from the peasantry, in vital touch with the ancestral past. Chiki, the working-class painter is Lamming's alter-ego in Season of Adventure: both are educated but had elected to remain allied to the world of the peasantry which they reflect in their art. The 'Author's Note' which appears towards the end of the novel is not only symbolic of the failure of the middle-class to maintain contact with the peasant class as Sandra Pacquet claims.⁶⁸ It is also an apology by Lamming, the artist, who has been unable like Chiki, to join his compeers in the Forest Reserve. Lamming recognizes his own broken relationship with the peasantry, a confession of his own measure of guilt. He could not become a novelist without his education; but the inevitable effect of that education has been to physically separate him from the agents of change in Season of Adventure - his peasant 'half-brothers' in the Forest Reserve.

However, as we shall note in the next chapter, Lamming's broken relationship with the peasantry has not stopped him using folk material such as proverbs, aspects of the calypso, story-telling and nation-language in the majority of his novels. Thus he has not emotionally severed his links with the Forest Reserve. His education, like that of Chiki, has not resulted in alienating him from his peasant heritage.

He has written novels about the West Indian ordinary people, just as Chiki's paintings are about the working-class who populate the Forest Reserve. If Lamming's peasant 'half brothers' cannot understand his fiction because they cannot read, he derives a vicarious pleasure that they can at least appreciate Chiki's paintings which set them going on the road towards self-knowledge. And his educated 'half brothers', the local middle-class elite, can find mentally therapeutic, his generous employment of the West Indian peasant culture in his fiction. Lamming's use of folk culture in fiction has intensified from novel to novel. It is present in varying degrees in all his novels (discussed in the previous chapters and in the next one) except Water With Berries (1971) and his allegory of West Indian history, Natives of My Person dealing with the neo-colonial stage of the region's life, which will be discussed in Chapter Six.

It is also part of the experimental nature of Season of Adventure that the novel depends a lot on a skillful combination of the realistic and the symbolic. As a result, most of the characters in the novel are symbolic as well as realistic and a reader who chooses to view them at one level only will certainly misinterpret Lamming's message and the important roles characters are meant to play in the story. Lamming's use of personal sterility to make a comment on the cultural and spiritual sterility of the middle-class exposes the symbolic dimension of Piggott's character. But in spite of his association with the world of the middle-class under attack in the story, Piggott received a sympathetic portrayal from the author, so that we do not merely see him as a representative of his class, but also as a human being. We are made in the story to admire his attempts to treat Fola as his natural daughter and made to sympathise with him when she finally rejects his claim of fatherhood on her. In that picture all his middle-class trappings are removed and we see him as a shattered man worthy of and evoking our pity:

Piggott could still hear her denial striding backwards from her room.

'You're not my father, not you'.

Alone, he sat and watched the early night grow thick with clouds over the garden. His eyes were wet. In the solitude of his last wish, Piggott was surrounded by the sad and familiar regret his life had always known. He was not her father, he was no one's father. His wish had grown dormant. Piggott could feel his last claim, like the weight of some personal inadequacy, painfully dissolve within him. (p. 127)

Also the symbolic importance of Agnes is central to the story, although on a realistic plane we see her, in a deeply human sense, as the extremely attractive and self-confident companion of Piggott on whom she exerts immense control. However, on the symbolic level of the rape in which both a black man (Chiki's brother) and a Whiteman (the bishop's nephew) participate, Agnes represents West Indies brutalized by a combined force of Europeans, in the colonial era, and by the black elite, following independence.

Therefore Fola, the product of that ancestral rape, to whose double-parentage our attention is drawn is like the contemporary nation, a bastard, searching for her identity. Her search reveals that it is not only her African past, embodied in the drums and the tonelle, that is important, but the European dimension of that past as well, which is embodied in European law administered by the middle-class in San Cristobal.⁶⁹ Fola's experience in the first part of the novel illustrates her emotional reconciliation with the African dimension of her self. Her attempt to come to terms with the European self proves problematic because she cannot ally herself with the custodians of the European law who, in San Cristobal, are, as we saw, both hedonistic and corrupt. Only a change of 'guardians' is likely to purge the seat of power, and the European law abused and grotesquely distorted by the black elite. The combined efforts of Chiki and Fola inspire the search which culminates, with the assistance of Gort's tenor drum, in 'The Revolt of the Drums' that eventually topples the inept administration.

The new regime of Dr. Kofi James-Williams Baako is most likely to crown Fola's and the nation's search for a cultural identity because "the new political order recognizes and incorporates the African as well as Western elements of San Cristobal society".⁷⁰

Through the name of the new leader, which combines both European and African elements, Lamming illustrates the necessity for the new regime to recognize not only the Western but also the African aspects of its heritage in addressing the current problems. Dr. Baako believes that the colonial structures should be overhauled and the educational system more geared towards serving the needs of an underdeveloped economy. The new president:

wanted the new republic's university to forsake the ritual of cap and gown, to desert the lunacy of mumbling its thanks for food in an ancient and irrelevant Latin tongue; forsake the quiet and obsolete splendour of academy, and assume the burden of the bush. (p. 323)

Regarding the cultural tradition,

He said he would ask the citizens of the Reserve and all like them to think again about their relation to the tonelle. He would not order them to change, but he would try to find a language which might explain that the magic of medical science was no less real than the previous magic of prayer. The difference was one of speed. Injections worked faster than a bribe for knowledge they could not guarantee. (p. 363). (author's emphasis).

However, Dr. Baako is not for scrapping the vibrant folk tradition which ushered in the administration which he heads. His sensitivity to the San Cristobal's cultural tradition is expressed through his interest in Chiki's working-class paintings, which he collects.

(p. 322) Consequently, the new political leader believes that the traditional approach is as effective as science in solving contemporary West Indian problems, emphasizing the fact that it is 'speed' rather than efficacy that distinguishes the two methods.

Through his negative portrayal of the middle-class, Lamming endorses Dr. Baako's belief that they constitute an obstacle to the progress of San Cristobal. This is symbolized through their insensitivity to the folk tradition and illustrated by their imitation of metropolitan

values, which has made them too image-conscious and Europe-oriented to be able to minister to the problems at home. Dr. Baako argues that:

The country had inherited two difficulties from its past history. Illiteracy was the burden of the poor. It was a great danger, but not greater than the danger of a derivative middle-class which, by the peculiar curriculum of their education, could easily become an active enemy to the country. (p. 362) (my emphasis)

Although the folk values provide us with the moral perspective with which to judge characters in Season of Adventure it is an overstatement to argue, as Edward Brathwaite has done that "Crim, the drummer, is the central consciousness of Season of Adventure".⁷¹ There is no central consciousness as such in the novel. It is part of the experimental nature of the novel that "individual characters never dominate"⁷² but that each character is important in illuminating the particular aspect of his personality focussed upon or the symbolic function he plays in the novel. This is illustrated, as we saw, in the characters of Fola, Agnes and Piggott, the Police Commissioner. Chiki is the 'teacher' who aids Fola's spiritual pilgrimage - a central event - but he cannot be considered the central consciousness in the novel. Neither can Gort, the drummer, who leads the musical revolt that topples the First Republic, nor Crim his assistant. Lamming focusses our attention on each character, in turn, unveiling his role before switching over to the next. In a slight misunderstanding of this technique, Kenneth Ramchand writes that:

A further source of difficulty is that although Fola is given most exposure in the novel, each of the other characters (whether Belinda the prostitute, or Piggott one of the new exploiters of the people) becomes a centre of interest in turn. The author's compassion for his characters in the toils of a pressing set of social and political circumstances never permits the reader to rest with one character as in Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas, for example.⁷³

What Kenneth Ramchand believes is a source of difficulty in the novel is a deliberate technique by Lamming to give us maximum exposure to the whole gamut of West Indian society after independence, stressing the fact that each character, whether middle-class or peasant, plays an important role in the general pattern.

In respect to the end of the novel, Ngugi argues that "Lamming's attempt to bring about a resolution between his opposing class - to show the exiled middle-class the way to go home - does not come off in Season of Adventure because of his treatment (we do not really enter into the lives of any of the groups) and also because it is not in the province of a novel to give answers".⁷⁴ Contrary to Ngugi's assertion, we believe that the novel only 'resolves' its central conflict by stressing that, in order for the middle-class characters to achieve psychological independence, they must be ready to acknowledge their past "with humility, fearlessness and receptivity. If the future is to be free and alive".⁷⁵ Only then can they hope to improve their contemporary personal, interpersonal, inter-class and social problems. Lamming's ending is not a solution to a problem but a process of tying the narrative threads together, restoring the hope of order where chaos existed. This is one of the central preoccupations of most good novels, and Lamming's Season of Adventure is no exception.

It is our contention that like all Lamming's novels, Season of Adventure does not attempt 'to give answers' but conforms with the open-end technique (which Ngugi failed to appreciate) which does not give a clear-cut solution to the problems raised. In the technique a sense of possibility is suggested in the midst of a general state of despair and the reader left to work out the conclusion. The defiance of the official orders by Gort and Crim, in order to perpetuate the language of the drums; and Gort's determination to teach the youngsters the art of drumming; are balanced by the facts that the world of children, in which hope is reposed, is that of innocence and vulnerability that often collapses upon impact with reality and that although "the drums have not ceased to play;... their call is not the same". (p. 365)

The drums are not as vibrant as they used to be because this is a new San Cristobal, not ancient Africa. A new dispensation needs the past, but it also requires the adoption of modern values upon which a twentieth-century civilization must be built. Nevertheless, cultural

independence is important in Season of Adventure.

Lamming is not playing the role of a cultural guerilla, merely advocating a cultural rejuvenation for its own sake. Rather he believes, as we stressed throughout the chapter, that cultural independence is an antecedent of political independence, and only through a recourse to the values of the peasantry from which they sprung, will the West Indian middle-class get rid of their dependancy syndrome, and prepare for the challenges of the present and the future.

Thus as opposed to A Grain of Wheat, which, as we saw at the end of the first section of this chapter, belongs to the category of 'critical realism', Season of Adventure is experimental. The technical divergence between the two novels will prepare us for the linguistic divergence between Ngugi and Lamming, which is the focus of the next chapter. Lamming has, as a matter of necessity, continued to creatively use the West Indian Standard English, while Ngugi has developed into a vernacular novelist with his embrace of Gikuyu, the original linguistic medium of Devil on the Cross (1982).

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. S.S. Prawer, Comparative Literary Studies: An Introduction (London, Duckworth, 1973) p. 52.
2. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat p. 54. (London, Heinemann 1967). The present and subsequent references will be to the Heinemann 1983 reset edition with page numbers immediately following the cited passages.
3. For a further discussion of this aspect of the Emergency see Gucu G. Gikoyo's We Fought for Freedom (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1979), p. 160.
4. Ben Obumsele, "Marx, Politics and the African Novel", 20th Century Studies, The Third World: Tensions of Independence, (No. 10, December 1973) p. 123.
5. Ben Obumsele, pp. 122-3.
6. Razumov is the main character in Joseph Conrad's Under Western Eyes (1911; rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980).
7. Joseph Conrad, Under Western Eyes (1911; rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin 1980) p. 29. Further references are to the 1980 edition with page numbers given after quotations in the text.
8. George Lamming, In the Castle of My Skin (London, Michael Joseph, 1953) pp. 300-1. The present and subsequent references will be to the 1979 edition published by Longman Drumbeat with page numbers immediately following the cited passages.
9. Discussing the significance of speech and silence in "Ngugi wa Thiong'o's A Grain of Wheat: Season of Irony", Kenneth Harrow maintains that "Mugo's silence... is mistaken for courage - another irony, since it is actually his sense of guilt which drives him to accept the punishments". Research in African Literatures (Vol. 16, No. 2 Summer 1985) p. 257.
10. Jomo Kenyatta, Suffering Without Bitterness, (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1968) p. 207.
11. Mike Gonzalez, "The Book of Solitude", rev. of Chronicle of a Death Foretold and The Fragrance of Guava by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Third World Book Review Vol. I, No. 1 (1984), p. 13.
12. Michael Gilkes, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel (London, Longman Caribbean 1973) p. xxv.
13. See Peter Nazareth's "Is A Grain of Wheat a Socialist Novel?", Critical Perspectives on Ngugi wa Thiong'o, (Washington, Three Continents Press, 1984), p. 251.
14. Chris Wanjala, Conversation with African Writers, ed. Lee Nichols, (Voice of America, Washington D.C., 1981) p. 294.
15. a verse underlined in black in Kihika's Bible from St. John 12:24 facing p. 174 of A Grain of Wheat.
16. Mugo Gatheru, Child of Two Worlds (London, Heinemann, 1965), p. 1.

17. a verse underlined in red in Kihika's personal bible from Exodus 8:1 facing p. 28 of A Grain of Wheat.
18. Felix Mnthali, "Continuity and Change in Conrad and Ngugi", Kunapipi (Vol. III, No. 1, 1981) p. 98.
19. Razumov's betrayal of Haldin constitutes the main plot of Joseph Conrad's Under Western Eyes.
20. The second motive for his betrayal of Kihika will come up for discussion in the second part of the chapter.
21. Gerald Moore, Twelve African Writers (London, Hutchinson 1980) p. 274.
22. Eustace Palmer, An Introduction to the African Novel, (London, Heinemann 1972) p. 25.
23. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Petals of Blood (1977; rpt. London, Heinemann 1978) p. 333.
24. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, p. 333.
25. Peter Nazareth, Literature and Society in Modern Africa, (Nairobi, East Africa Literature Bureau 1972) p. 151.
26. Peter Nazareth, p. 152.
27. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary (London, Heinemann 1981) p. 159.
28. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth, Penguin 1963) p. 136.
29. Independent Kenya, (London, Zed Press, 1982), p. 38.
30. George Lamming, Season of Adventure (London, Allison and Busby 1960). p. 17. Further references will be to the 1982 edition with page numbers immediately following the cited passages.
31. Edward Brathwaite, The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy (1967 rpt. Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 174. Further reference to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
32. Roselle Thompson has expressed a similar view in "The Quest for a Voice in Caribbean Poetry - Brathwaite, Walcott and the Dub Poets," Presentation at a Postgraduate Seminar at the Institute of Commonwealth studies, University of London, 7th December 1987, p. 11.
33. Emmanuel Obiechina, "Post-Independence Disillusionment in Three African Novels," Neo-African Literature and Culture: Essays in the Memory of Janheinz Jahn eds. Bernth Lindfors and Ulla Schild (Wiesbaden, Verlag, 1976) p. 126.
34. Kenneth Harrow, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o's A Grain of Wheat: Season of Irony", Research in African Literatures, (Vol. 16, No. 2 Summer 1985) p. 260.
35. George Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile (London, Allison and Busby 1960), p. 36.

36. David Lowenthal, West Indian Societies (London, Oxford University Press, 1972) p. 267.
37. David Lowenthal, pp. 278-9.
38. George Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile, pp. 9-10.
39. Andrew Salkey ed. Caribbean Essays: an Anthology (London, Evans 1973) p. 7.
40. Alfred Métraux, Voodoo in Haiti trans. Hugo Charteris 2nd ed. (1959; rpt. London, Andre Deutsch 1972) p. 189.
41. Charles Mungoshi, Waiting for the Rain, (London, Heinemann 1975) p. 1.
42. Edward Brathwaite, "On West Indian Poetry", Caribbean Arena, B.B.C. Radio 4, London. 16 July 1986.
43. The attitude of the West Indian middle-class elite towards the local tradition has abated with the advent of the Black Power Movement in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The period saw the acceptance of 'The Mighty Sparrow's' calypso music as a form of middle-class entertainment in Trinidad and the official recognition and elevation of the vodun and local patois as symbols of national cohesion by the regime of Francois Duvalier in Haiti. For a further discussion of this issue see David Lowenthal's West Indian Societies (1972) pp. 280 - 292.
44. Albert Memmi, The Colonizer and the Colonized (Boston, Beacon Press, 1957) p. 122.
45. David Dabydeen and Nana Wilson-Tagoe, "Selected Themes in West Indian Literature: an annotated bibliography", Third World Quarterly (Vol. 9, No. 3, July 1987) p. 933.
46. David Dabydeen and Nana Wilson-Tagoe, p. 933.
47. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "George Lamming and the Colonial Situation", Homecoming, p. 132.
48. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 133.
49. See "Interview with George Lamming "by Ian Munro and Reinhard Sander, KAS-KAS, Occasional Publication of the African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin, p. 15.
50. Errol Hill, The Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre (London, University of Texas Press 1972) p. 44.
51. Errol Hill, p. 45.
52. Errol Hill, p. 45.
53. a verse underlined in black in Kihika's Bible from St. John 12:24 facing p. 174 of A Grain of Wheat.
54. Charles Mungoshi, Waiting for the Rain (London, Heinemann 1975) p. 1.

55. M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd ed. (1957; rpt. New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971) p. 141.
56. Martin Gray, A Dictionary of Literary Terms (Longman, Harlow, 1984) p. 169.
57. Shuaibu Oba Abdulraheem, "Mythology and the African Novel", diss; University of Kent, Canterbury, 1982, p. 5.
58. George Lamming, "Creating an Independent Caribbean Culture", The Black Scholar (May/June 1984) p. 6.
59. George Lamming, p. 6.
60. Veronica has been to San Cristobal's exclusive girls' school and is as image-conscious as her class counterparts, as illustrated by her conversation with Fola about what being seen in Moon Glow Bar will do to their social image. (p. 178).
61. See Edward Brathwaite, "West Indian Prose - Fiction in the Sixties: A Survey," The Critical Survey, (Vol. 3, No. 1, 1966) p. 171.
62. Edward Brathwaite, p. 173.
63. Lloyd Brown, "The Crisis of Black Identity in the West Indian Novel", Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction (Vol. XI, No. 3, 1969) pp. 111-2.
64. George Kent, "A Conversation with George Lamming", Black World (Vol. 22, No. 5, March 1973), p. 90.
65. See 'Anansi and Snake the Postman' in Philip Sherlock's West Indian Folktales (London, Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 71.
66. See 'Anansi and Candlefly in Philip Sherlock, p. 97.
67. In 'Tiger Story, Anansi Story' the spider has been called "The weakest of all animals in the forest", Philip Sherlock, p. 47.
68. In The Novels of George Lamming (1982) Sandra Paquet talks about "the artist from Forest Reserve, whose secondary education and pursuit of privilege cut him off from his origins in the tonelle, from his half-brother Powell, and from the Boys of Forest Reserve". (p. 75).
69. In his article "The Poet as Novelist: The Novels of George Lamming" Mervyn Morris argues that the novel sets in opposition "the law (basically of Europe) and the drums (basically of Africa)" p. 81, The Island in Between: Essays on West Indian Literature, ed. Louis James (London, Oxford University Press, 1968). We however believe that both are components of Fola's ancestry that she must come to terms with.
70. Lloyd Brown, "The Crisis of Black Identity in the West Indian Novel", Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, pp. 106-7 .
71. Edward Brathwaite, "Caribbean Critics", Critical Quarterly (Vol. II, 1969) p. 274.

72. Joan Davies, "George Lamming: The Novel and Revolution", Stand (Vol. 5, No. 1, 1963) p. 58.
73. Kenneth Ramchand, The West Indian Novel and Its Background (London, Faber and Faber, 1970) p. 140.
74. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "George Lamming and the Colonial Situation", Homecoming, p. 131.
75. Kenneth Ramchand, The West Indian Novel and Its Background, p. 149.

Section Four: Neo-Colonialism

The last two chapters will attempt to prove the linguistic and ideological divergence between the two writers who have nevertheless continued to be committed to the transformation of their societies, which have in the modern era been ensnared by neo-colonial capitalism.

Following political independence, the majority of third-world countries entered a phase when the 'pivotal problem' for colonial powers was, according to Kwame Nkrumah:

... How to retain these countries within the colonial relationship once open control was removed. Thus has opened up a new phase in imperialism, that of the adaptation of colonialism to the new condition of the elimination of political over-lordship of colonial powers, the phase in which colonialism is to be maintained by other means.¹

This other means is neo-colonialism, a stage in which the national economies of 'independent' countries are largely controlled by vested commercial interests in metropolitan countries. In Neo-Colonialism: A Background Book (1964) Brian Crozier illustrates this political phenomenon:

A country does not become truly independent merely because an imperialist power confers sovereignty on it ... Even though it may surrender political power, the imperialist country is able to retain its ultimate control by other means. These may be economic, military or cultural, or a combination of all three ... Whether separately or in combination, such methods are stratagems whereby imperialist powers seek to acquire or perpetuate their domination and constitute neo-colonialism.²

In the same book, the author quotes a Ghanaian representative at the United Nations who had told a meeting of the General Assembly that:

Neo-Colonialism [is] the practice of granting a sort of independence with the concealed intention of making the liberated country a client-state, and controlling it effectively by means other than political ones.³

These other means are principally economic. As we saw, neo-colonialism involves the control of the national economy of 'independent' countries by multi-national corporations. It thrives on the support of a native middle-class weaned and groomed for the purpose of protecting the economic interests of its metropolitan overlords.

Since monopoly of the economy of client-states is aimed "at subverting the desirable patterns of indigenous progress to the imperialist objectives of the financial monopolists,"⁴ it consequently results in the pauperization of the common people, the geese that laid the golden eggs and got very little in return for their toil.

However, the damages of neo-colonialism on society, to which both writers are acutely aware, are not only socio-economic but are also deeply psychological. In Dual Legacies in Contemporary Caribbean (1986) Tony Thorndike expounds on the psychological dimension of neo-colonialism in the West Indies, which might as well apply to the situation of modern Kenya:

Everywhere and at all times, the emergence and persistence of imperialist domination has been inextricably linked to the operationalisation of techniques which successfully encourage individuals and groups to accept ideas and orientations about themselves and their societies which bear little or no truthful relationships to the concrete or real world situations in which they live.⁵

As we saw in the previous chapters, Lamming has always emphasized internal change - which he believes should precede any attempt to change the West Indian political system. On the other hand, Ngugi, who has developed into a Marxist radical after A Grain of Wheat, began to put more emphasis on external changes which might culminate in the dismantling of capitalism in Kenya. Ngugi's ideological development in fiction first became apparent in 1977 through Petals of Blood and subsequently through his Gikuyu novel, Devil on the Cross published in 1982.

Through a comparative analysis of Devil on the Cross and In the Castle of My Skin, Chapter Five entitled 'The Writer, Audience and the Choice of Form' attempts to prove that both writers are sensitive to the folk cultures of their societies and are concerned with the emancipation of the oppressed.

It will further prove, as we saw in the Introduction, that while Ngugi is seeking to communicate with that class in Kenya with the linguistic and technical revolution he carried out in Devil on the Cross, Lamming is not so much concerned with reaching the West Indian peasantry and working class through In the Castle of My Skin. The proper audience for his novel, largely written in "West Indian Standard"⁶ English is certainly the West Indian middle-class, the majority of whom are alienated and to whom a knowledge of the literary validity of their peasant heritage might be psychologically therapeutic.

Chapter Six entitled 'The Writer and Neo-Colonialism' will then compare and contrast Petals of Blood with Natives of My Person to show the ideological contrast between Ngugi, who is now a Marxist radical, and Lamming, whose view about the primacy of psychological therapy in a colonial and/or neo-colonial situation has only intensified.

Both Devil on the Cross (1982) and In the Castle of My Skin (1953) are anti-capitalist and state in unambiguous terms the disenchantment of their authors with the political systems in Kenya and in Barbados. In his own story, Ngugi intends to alert the workers and peasants to the need for a political revolution in Kenya by revealing and in effect condemning the collusion of the local middle-class with their European counterparts to exploit the poor. Taking his audience through the methods which the local elite employ to bamboozle the underprivileged, Ngugi eventually advocates revolutionary violence as a means to eradicating the system. This is illustrated through the attack on the local and foreign bourgeoisie by the workers and peasants of Njeruca who as they pursue one of the 'robbers' chanted, "There he is" Hunt him down! Hunt him down! Catch thief! Catch thief".⁷ It also becomes apparent through Wariinga's assault on the Rich Old Man of Ngorika whom she kills as a result of her conviction, shared by Ngugi, that as a member of the Kenyan middle-class elite, he is "a jigger, a louse, a weevil, a flea, a bedbug ... and a parasite that lives on the tree of other people's lives!" (p. 254).

The anti-capitalist nature of In the Castle of My Skin is clear in Lamming's denunciation of the collusion between the colonial regime and the local elite to dispossess the peasantry. As we saw in Chapter One, through the industrial strike, the riot which nearly ended in an attack on Mr. Creighton and the dispossession of the villagers, Lamming had shown a clear bias for and empathy with the West Indian ordinary people. The impact of the dispossession is basically economic as the proletarianization of Mr. Foster illustrates. But Lamming, as always, chooses also to dwell on the psychological aspect of exploitation. He demonstrates this through the likely debilitating mental effect landlessness will have on Boysie who has resorted to hard drinking (p. 287). It is also apparent in the transformation of the normally taciturn shoemaker into a hyper-sensitive and violent

individual. (pp. 237 - 240) This is also shown in the mental effect eviction might have on the dignified Pa who has against his wish been moved to an Almshouse, which Lamming describes in The Pleasures of Exile (1960) as "a tomb from which no man or woman could return to dignity in the judgement of his community."⁸ By drawing attention to the psychological effect of dispossession, Lamming is suggesting the need for an internal therapy - (a view which intensifies in Natives of My Person) - before individuals can attend to the duty of correcting society.

Side by side with the psychological impact of dispossession on the poor, Lamming draws our attention to the exposure of the middle-class elite to a more subtle internal damage wrought by neo-colonial capitalism. This involves absolute mental dependance of the elite on Europe because, as we saw, neo-colonialism, like its precursor colonialism, also encouraged the colonized to have preference for ideas, concepts and material objects originating from metropolitan countries, which is not a surprise, since neo-colonialism is also defined "as a situation in which socio-political priorities are defined by values which emanate from without society."⁹ Moreover, whether in the colonial or neo-colonial setting Lamming has always stressed the mental colonization of his middle-class characters, which he reveals they must get over if the West Indies is to achieve real freedom. This is true of his first novel, as it is of all the others discussed in the previous chapters and in the last one. Lamming is acutely aware of this dimension of neo-colonialism on educated West Indians who, if they are to achieve mental liberation, have to get rid of their dependancy syndrome through a knowledge of their peasant and cultural roots. Only this might offer them a sense of cultural self-confidence and a degree of self-knowledge thus paving way for a solid cultural and political regeneration in the West Indies.

In his first novel, Lamming draws attention to the culturally assimilated village teacher with a shallow knowledge of the West Indian past, which he passes down to his pupils (p. 57). Similarly, he alerts us to the predicament of the headteacher who is alienated from the villagers by virtue of his training, with a private room at Kirton's, the village drinking parlour (p. 51). An educated man is not supposed to mix with the local villagers, a fact also illustrated through G. whose admission into the High School made it "more difficult [for him] to participate in the life of the villagers"¹⁰ at a peasant level. Later when Mr. Slime enters politics, one of his motives as a mentally colonised West Indian is to help perpetuate the grip of colonial overlords on Barbados in a neo-colonial arrangement in which he also has a vested economic interest. Thus the middle-class are as much the victims of neo-colonial capitalism as their peasant and working-class counterparts, albeit at different levels. In "The West Indian Middle-Classes", C.L. R. James writes, "These people have to know what they are. Nobody except our novelists is telling them",¹¹ and George Lamming is one of the writers fulfilling this function.

Thus although both novels under analysis address neo-colonialism and also employ aspects of the oral tradition they convey different messages to the different audiences to which they are directed. The employment of elements of African and Gikuyu orature combined with the use of Gikuyu language to make Devil on the Cross a story that can appeal to illiterate Kenyan peasants when it is read to them, as has occasionally happened in buses, in taxis, in public bars and in family compounds.¹² On the other hand, In the Castle of My Skin, although it tackles the economic and psychological impact of neo-colonial capitalism on the West Indian masses, it is not directed at them. Rather it is directed at the culturally alienated West Indian middle-class who can read and understand a complex novel such

as Lamming's. The impact which the novel had on Edward Brathwaite as a culturally alienated student at Cambridge in the early 1950's was almost hypnotic:

Here breathing to me from every pore of line and page, was the Barbados I had lived. The words, the rhythms, the cadences, the scenes, their people, their predicament.¹³

The fact that In the Castle of My Skin helped to rouse Edward Brathwaite from his cultural slumber (it taught him that the West Indies "could be written about and explored")¹⁴ indicated that this kind of fiction can get to the West Indian middle-class not only as a source of entertainment but also as a form of cultural therapy. Lamming's use of the oral tradition in the novel might enhance the folk consciousness of middle-class West Indians who have now begun to appreciate folk values which they used to consider with disdain. According to Noel Dexter folk song performances are for instance no longer backyard affairs in the Caribbean. They now attract the attention of middle-class elite, "What used to be enjoyed by the peasant population has gained 'respectability' and has won the applause of those at the top of the social ladder, as folk music performances have taken on all the trimmings that go along with Art Music".¹⁵

As we observed in Chapter Three, Ngugi through Devil on the Cross intends to communicate with Kenya's ordinary people whose revolutionary consciousness he aims to arouse. Because of that he employs in the story elements deeply rooted in the African tradition, which he believes might appeal to them.

The appeal to audience (illiterate or educated) could not have been settled without first addressing the question of medium of communication. For Ngugi who was writing for an illiterate audience the problem was more crucial than it was for Lamming whose middle-class audience can understand the message he conveys whether it is in 'West Indian Standard' or in 'Nation language', since they can read and understand both. On the other hand, the problem of communicating with a peasant audience had worried Ngugi since the completion of his third novel at Leeds in 1966 when he commented that:

I felt I dealt with the Kenyan or African institutions so intimately. Then I felt that people who fed the novel, that is the peasantry as it were, will not be in a position to read it. And this is very painful. So I really didn't see the point of writing anything at all.¹⁶

When he wrote and produced a Gikuyu play Ngaahika Ndeenda with the assistance of Kamiriithu peasants in 1977 Ngugi observed that:

Here the choice of language was crucial. There was now no barrier between the content of their history and the linguistic medium of its expression. Because the play was written in a language they could understand the people could participate in all the subsequent discussions on the script. They discussed its content, its language and even the form.¹⁷

Later when Ngugi came to write Devil on the Cross, it occurred to him that the question of language is intertwined with that of a literary tradition. So the choice was between the Afro-European novel, written in English language, and the African novel, which he believes should be written in the vernacular. He settled for the latter:

In a sense the choice [of language] had been settled for me by Kamiriithu and by the fact of my detention. I would attempt a novel in the very language which had been the basis of [my] incarceration. I would reconnect myself not to the Afro-European novel of my previous practice, but to the African novel of my new commitment.¹⁸

Ngugi's choice of Gikuyu as a medium for literary communication was not simply dictated by the needs of his new audience. He believes there is an underlying literary convenience of using a language in which a writer thinks and conceptualizes to write fiction:

In writing one should hear all the whispering, and the shouting and crying and the living and the hating of many voices in the past and those voices will never speak to a writer in a foreign language.¹⁹

This factor probably accounts for the effectiveness and vividness of the figurative language (to be examined later) in Devil on the Cross, a novel which Ngugi initially wrote in Gikuyu and later personally translated into English language.

As a West Indian novelist concerned with the cultural rejuvenation of the middle-class elite, Lamming employs in his first novel, 'nation language' in order to demonstrate the literary validity of a linguistic medium created by the lower class. In the Castle of My Skin is basically written in what Kenneth Ramchand calls "West Indian Standard", whose "vocabulary is the same as that of Standard English but with the addition of a small number of West Indianisms which have passed from the dialect into educated usage."²⁰ Side by side with it, nation-language is used both as the language of discourse between characters as well as the language of thought. This is one major difference between Ngugi who has now completely turned his back on English language and Lamming who continues to use in the majority of his novels a West Indian variant of it, reflecting the cultural background of his characters. In The Pleasures of Exile (1960) George Lamming argues that Prospero, the colonizer, has given him a gift of language:

and with it an unstated history of consequences, an unknown history of future intentions. This gift of language meant not English in particular, but speech and concept as a way, a method, a necessary avenue towards areas of the self which could not be reached in any other way ... Prospero lives in the absolute certainty that language, which is his gift to Caliban, is the very prison in which Caliban's achievements will be realized and restricted.²¹

But Caliban, the colonized, has proved wrong Prospero, the colonizer, because he has transformed the English language into:

nation language, which is the kind of English spoken by the people who were brought to the Caribbean, not the official English now, but the language of slaves and labourers, the servants who were brought in by the conquistadors.²²

On his own part as a creative writer George Lamming has altered the gift of Prospero. The language bequeathed to him has been "turned upside down, bent, shifted"²³ and used in fiction to give his characters a distinctive Barbadian identity. When his characters speak their language is identifiable as an expressive medium made up of English words but delivered with African sounds and certain usages which are Bajan.

The eldest couple in the village, Pa and Ma, discussed in Chapter One, provide an example of characters who use nation language throughout the passages allotted to them in the novel. As we observed, their conversations mostly deal with the changes taking place in the village: Ma's from a religious point of view and Pa's from a materialist perspective. From her language which is replete with Biblical imagery and allusions Ma is undoubtedly a proponent of Christianity. The slavers put the Bible to great use in plantation societies. "It was the sole official text which blacks were permitted to read during slavery, as it taught them to be mice, and helped in making them into Anancies."²⁴ Ma, a descendant of Barbadian Afro-Caribbean slaves, has undoubtedly been turned into a supporter of the status quo by Christianity. When Pa talks approvingly of Mr. Slime whom he later equates with Moses, Ma chides him and tries to convince him that salvation lies not in human beings but in the hands of God:

"Tis beyond the wisdom o' the wise, an' If the Almighty God can put His hand out to help a poor pigeon who aint mean more to Him than your soul an' mine, I says to myself there aint no reason why He won't deliver us in His own good time. I pray the grace of God go with Mr. Slime in all he do or don't do, but bank or no bank, the riches o' this life is as naught in the sight of my saviour. 'Cause this world's evil, Pa, 'tis very evil. (p. 77)

and

"it ain't in my right to put him side by side with Moses, 'cause Moses was God elect. God call out Moses from wherever He call him to make him do what He make him do, an' that's as big a callin' any man can expect. But we ain't know 'tis the same with Mr. Slime though I wish him from the bottom o' my heart God's blessin" (p. 78) (my emphases).

Ma's speech above is matched to her character as a religious convert. It also matches the convention of Barbadian nation language whose speakers are indifferent to verb tenses, as exemplified in Ma's reference to Mr. Slime's establishment of a bank - a completed action - in the present tense.²⁵ This is also evident in the underlined verbs in the second quotation. According to Mary Jo Willeford, the indifference to the verb tense in Bajan nation language reflects a cultural and philosophical attitude which originated in Africa. She persuasively argues:

Verb tenses, as they appear in English, reflect our concept of time. The idea of time having a beginning and an end, and having a flowing movement which can be cut up and measured, is a Western European concept. The African had no such concept, and what he has of it today is borrowed. The African languages reflect their own particular way of looking at events, which is outside the time barrier. When something happens is not important. The important thing is a complete description of the nature of the action, and a conclusion as regard its completeness or incompleteness. And every forward step in Physics seems to show the wisdom of the African point of view.²⁶

As opposed to Ma, Pa is an embryonic socialist. In spite of his wife's evangelical efforts he refuses to embrace the gospel, "I not givin' in to anything you say, Ma" (p. 89). In conformity with his deeply materialist world view, Pa believes that members of Creighton village should own the houses in which they have always lived, which tallies with the belief of his creator that social justice should be established in neo-colonial Barbados. (p. 87)

Pa's awareness of the futility of violence, which coincides with Lamming's own view, as we saw in the last chapter, makes him a left-wing radical without making him a revolutionary.

Like Lamming his creator he welcomes change but has a natural aversion to violence. (p. 187) Thus in spite of the strike action of the working-class being part of the current of change in the village, Pa is totally outraged at the assault on the landlord's daughter by some villagers, "This, too, was a change. All the other changes seemed a little soiled by this ... This change had soiled everything." (p. 188).

Through the character of Pa, Lamming succeeds in proving not only the high expressive capacity of nation language but also the fact that, like 'West Indian Standard' spoken by the elite, it can be employed to articulate complex philosophical thoughts. This might make the alienated West Indian middle-class view with respectability an aspect of the folk culture which their education and orientation encouraged them to look at with disdain.

Yet it is not only Pa who uses dialect to articulate his deeply felt philosophical observations about society in the novel. The radical shoemaker, also, is able to encourage other villagers to inculcate discipline and dignity of labour in their children, who do not have the chance to benefit from an elitist system of education reserved for the privileged. (p. 102) His intense political awareness is conveyed entirely in nation language. It enables him, among other things, to sound a warning to the villagers to make the best use of the social and political changes taking place around them:

"'The times is changin'... If nothin' change ever in Creighton's village, times is changin', and all I gotta say to you here an' now is this, If times goes on changin' changin', an' we here don't make a change one way or the next, 'tis simply a matter that times will go along 'bout it business an' leave we all here still waitin'." (p. 102).

Having used in fiction the languages which the ordinary people use in their day to day affairs, the two novelists also employ a salient aspect of the oral culture of their societies: story-telling.

If Lamming uses the story-telling sessions in his novels to sensitize his middle-class audience to an aspect of their peasant heritage, Ngugi, uses story-telling in Devil on the Cross to glue the attention of his audience to his story, which is why although it departs from it in the end, the story is cast in the mode of an oral tale. Early in the story, Ngugi writes that:

Certain people in Ilmorog, our Ilmorog, told me that this story was too disgraceful, too shameful, that it should be concealed in the depths of everlasting darkness. There were others who claimed that it should be suppressed so that we should not shed tears a second time.

I asked them: How can we cover up pits in our courtyard with leaves or grass, saying to ourselves that because our eyes cannot see the holes, our children can prance about the yard as they like? (my emphasis). (p. 7)

The above excerpt has a conversational style, characteristic of most of Devil on the Cross, a story with a unilinear plot which also employs other modes such as parables or a story-within-story, as we shall see later. The semblance of storytelling is further created by the narrator's use of direct address to the listeners such as "Let me tell you the lesson Wariinga taught that man", (p. 221) and at the climax of the story before the Rich Old Man from Ngorika is formally introduced to Wariinga, his prospective daughter-in-law, who had been his mistress. At this stage, the narrator directly tells his listeners, "You who were there, what more can I say?" (p. 246).

To crown the oral quality of Devil in the Cross, Ngugi uses the variant of a Gicaandi player to narrate the story. In Gikuyu society, a Gicaandi player is a professional raconteur who "goes round the country like a medieval story-teller [stopping at] markets and squares to sing his poem to the accompaniment of his bottle-gourd".²⁷ His expertise and mastery of what he narrates is such that he "challenges any other singer to know as many verses as he does."²⁸

Furthermore, his offering "may go on for a whole day"²⁹ for the benefit of an audience whose interest in the material would normally glue them to their seats listening to a story they might already have heard but would enjoy hearing over and over again depending on the skill of the raconteur.

The oral quality of Ngugi's story becomes more apparent when it is compared with D.T. Niane's Sundiata (1960) an historical epic set in Mali.

In spite of the differences of language, religion and colonial experience between Mali (a West African French ex-colony), and Kenya (an East African former English colony) like Devil on the Cross, Sundiata utilizes traditional narrative techniques of an African oral tale, notably the use of a professional raconteur. The narrator of Sundiata opens the story thus:

I am a griot. It is I, Djeli Mamoudou Kouyate, son of Bintou Kouyate and Djeli Kedian Kouyate, master in the art of eloquence. Since time immemorial the Kouyates have been in the service of the Keita princes of Mali; we are the vessels of speech, we are the repositories which harbour secrets many centuries old. The art of eloquence has no secrets for us; without us the names of Kings would vanish into oblivion, we are the memory of mankind;...³⁰

The most obvious similarity between the two stories is that both are narrated by raconteurs. In the Malian context, the counterpart of Gikuyu Gicaandi player is, as the above excerpt shows, the griot, who tells the story in Sundiata, thus fulfilling his traditional function of educating and entertaining his listeners.³¹ The griot has multifarious roles in Mali. According to B.T. Kishani he is "a narrator, singer or musician, genealogist [and] historian",³² thus performing identical roles with his Gikuyu counterpart.

Thus both are story-tellers whose deep sense of history enable them to tell their audiences about the past in order to clarify the present. Furthermore, the style of ordinary speech characteristic of both stories link them to local tales which are orally narrated.

Both Devil on the Cross and Sundiata therefore conform to the recommendation of Chinweizu that like traditional tales African fiction should consist of "a master story-teller, a spell-binding raconteur whose delivery will conform to the styles of traditional story-telling, utilizing its familiar techniques and rhetorical devices..."³³ However, while Sundiata is an historical epic concerned with the political career and military exploits of Mari Djata, Devil on the Cross is a modern story centred on the tribulations of Wariinga and the army of the underprivileged in contemporary Kenya. D.T. Niane's story utilizes elements of African orature to tell a historical story. On the other hand, Ngugi skillfully interweaves the traditional narrative elements in Devil on the Cross and tells the story of contemporary exploitation of the Kenyan workers and peasants by the local and foreign businessmen.

If Ngugi uses story-telling in Devil on the Cross in order to arouse the interest of his audience to the revolutionary message it carries, Lamming uses it in In the Castle of My Skin to draw attention of his middle-class audience to an aspect of the West Indian peasant culture, the knowledge of which might help them overcome their cultural alienation.

Early in the story, through Miss Foster, we encounter the employment of this device which according to Maureen Warner-Lewis is the "narrative means used by rural communities to comment on social manners, the communal or individual ethos, and the tensions within a society."³⁴ Miss Foster's sharp instinct for story-telling is almost legendary, confirming the assertion by Nana Wilson-Tagoe and David Dabydeen that "West Indian women were historically considered to be the repositories of folk wisdom and the oral tradition."³⁵ As G. plays the bear in order to escape the wrath of his mother for 'killing' a neighbour's pumpkin, Miss Foster arrives at the scene

and "Someone said from the fence, Poor Miss Foster, she must have a story to tell" (p. 20). The story she narrates involves a village urchin, Gordon Bess, who tries to sell a cock to a neatly dressed white gentleman. While trying to reveal the qualities of the 'rooster' Gordon brings the animal too close to the white gentleman who had his body messed up by the cock, "It went on the helmet, and splatter over the suit" (p. 20). Deflated, the white gentleman hurries to his house in order to avoid further embarrassment among the villagers who because of the social stratification based on colour consider the white members of the Barbadian society as the 'Great'. Anxious to demystify figures of authority, the village boys have already composed a song reminiscent of the Trinidadian calypso, "a ballad of social comment,"³⁶ through which a local artist brings a public or private event to public attention, "and gets it inescapably focused in an outrageous exposure or sheer scandal of a song."³⁷ The song which reads "Look, look what fowlcock do, / Look what fowlcock do to you" (p. 21) has the simplicity and humour of calypso compositions and recall songs such as 'Mighty Sparrow's' "Somebody in de Party" or Merchant's "Pan in Danger", although it might as well have been inspired by the songs of 'Red Plastic Bag' a calypso group based in Bridgetown, the Barbadian capital.³⁸

Miss Foster's penchant for story-telling is again demonstrated in her narration of her momentous visit to the landlord's house in the aftermath of the flood which swept away her house. The vividness and accuracy to detail normally associated with accomplished raconteurs is exhibited by Miss Foster in her description of the effect of the wind on her house during the flood when she and her beloved companion Jimmy "see a roof fly up in the air like a kite" (p. 33).

The skill displayed by raconteurs in Lamming is not limited to In the Castle of My Skin. It is also found in his second novel The Emigrants (1954) in which the governor, a sailor, tells of his return home from duty one night in an attempt to check on the rumours that his saucy wife (he calls her a leg thrower) has been entertaining men in his absence.

The Governor's audience egg him on to continue whenever he pauses as in a real traditional story-telling session. (p. 47) As is normal with professional raconteurs the Governor takes his time, builds suspense into his narration and even allows his listeners to reach a conclusion he will later disprove. At this point, "The Governor waited and the men seemed to draw nearer. They had almost completed the story for themselves. The surprise homecoming had made it clear."³⁹ However, the Governor disappoints his listeners when his story fails to match their expectations - they had obviously expected to learn that the Governor had met his wife in her lover's arms. But what happened is even more stunning and as is the case with some local tales it subverts our expectations. When her happy-go-lucky American lover walks in the Governor's suspicions are not only confirmed, he is also left speechless when the "Yankee" persistently referred to him as "shortie" and his wife, when she later emerges introduces him to her lover as just "a friend" (p. 49). Before the climax is reached, "The men were quiet and tense, listening with a kind of greed to the Governor's story" (p. 49) in a perfect simulation of a story-telling session. In these episodes Lamming is undoubtedly exhibiting a talent for story-telling, an art brought to the Caribbean from Africa three centuries ago and kept alive by the Barbadian peasantry and working class.

This talent is further demonstrated through In the Castle of My Skin where Boy Blue's narration of Bambi's story-running to eight pages - is a great feat even by professional standards.

Lamming uses the story to introduce us to the folk world of Creighton village, its practices and its beliefs, which have now assumed the status of a living tradition, since following the death of Bambi, certain villagers have concluded, as we observed in Chapter One, that marriage as an institution is alien to Creighton village.

Before Boy Blue's story, Trumper had narrated the life history of Jen and his involvement with two women whom he was to marry simultaneously but did not because on the wedding day he hid himself on a tree from where he could see the wedding arrangements taking place in both churches. (p. 125) Highly comic, Jen's story provokes Boy Blue to narrate the longer and more serious life history of Bambi. It is usual in traditional story-telling gatherings that a story told by a raconteur would provoke a listener to narrate a story slightly resembling the one heard. This process is actually in operation when Boy Blue responds to Trumper's story with the comment that, "You hear something, an' it come to you as a kind of surprise, then it connect up with another something you'd hear long time back, an' what with one thing an' another, they all put themselves together in a big something. Suddenly when they all together you see yourself face to face with something that is true or very very strange. Or it make you remember something that you didn't remember all the time" (p. 133).

However Bambi's story, unlike Jen's is a mixture of tragedy and comedy as it involves both his death and the hilarious account of the fight between two undertakers representing Bots and Bambina each of whom is bent on taking the responsibility for Bambi's burial. As the undertakers hired by Bots attempt to steal Bambi's body from Bambina's hut while she sleeps noise wakes her up.

Seeing the body of her deceased husband raised Bambina is frightened, presumably thinking that she had seen a ghost, "She see Bambi sort of half standin' up an' she was so frighten she bawl for murder" (p. 140).

Without the tragic aspect of the story it could have been a fertile subject for the calypso. "There is not a scandal in town that the calypsonian does not know about, and for him to know of it is to sing it", George Lamming writes.⁴⁰ Discussing 'Mighty Sparrow's' music, Gordon Rohlehr maintains that calypsonians "reflect both the mistrust of the small backyard society where everyone tries to conceal his action from a gossiping neighbour who either knows about it already or will know about it next day."⁴¹

Another aspect of the oral tradition which both writers use are proverbs. These are witty statements in which traditional values and mores are encapsulated. Whether conveyed "more or less literally through a simile, or (most commonly) through a metaphor"⁴² they represent a distillation of folk wisdom, used by Ngugi and Lamming in their respective stories.

Ngugi's deployment of proverbs in Devil on the Cross is highly creative in the sense that it distinguishes members of the peasantry and working class from the members of the middle-class elite, who are depicted mainly as types. Proverbs used by the narrator and characters belonging to the first category are plain and ordinary and refer mainly to the flora and fauna of Gikuyuland. Early in the story, the narrator describes Wariinga's admirable physical characteristics:

Her voice was as smooth as perfume oil. Her eyes shone like stars in the night. Her body was a feast for the eyes. Often, when she walked along the road without self-consciousness, her breasts swaying jauntily like two ripe fruits in a breeze, Wariinga stopped men in their tracks." (p. 11).

When Wariinga narrates the ordeal in neo-colonial Kenya of Kareendi, the prototype Kenyan woman, exploited and then cast away by the men, she defends her (Kareendi's) choice of a prospective husband with an apt proverb:

The yam that one has dug up for oneself has no mouldy patches.
 The sugar cane that one has picked out has no unripe edges.
 Those whom one loves do not squint. The young man who you
 claim is uncircumcized is my chosen one. (pp. 22-3)

And when Warĩnga, whose experience reflects that of Kareendi, is impregnated and then jilted by the Rich Old Man, the narrator tells us that "the dreams of a girl in her virgin youth could blossom quickly, and then, just as quickly, droop and fall to the ground like flowers in a dry season" (p. 148).

On the other hand, the proverbs used by the elite and their cohorts all carry violent images and make reference to their predatory nature, to which Ngugi aims to draw the attention of his peasant and working-class audience. Talking about the competition among the local 'robbers' as an opportunity for them to improve their skills in exploiting Kenya's poor, the Master of Ceremony opines that, "a homestead with a whetstone at the gate never has a blunt knife" (p. 87). He also suggests that the less experienced should learn from the veterans of the trade because "The leopard did not know how to kill with his claws until he was taught by the herdsman" (p. 87). Mwaura, a member of the Devil's Brigade, a professional hit squad used by the wealthy in neo-colonial Kenya draws the attention of the passengers in his Ilmorog-bound matatu taxi to the fact that "The Mwaura you see has not been sharpened on one side only, like a matchet" (p. 33). Contemplating on the best method to seduce young women Boss Kihara concludes that he will henceforth be bold in his approach, "The hunter who stalks his prey too stealthily may frighten it off in the end" (p. 21). Also the Master of Ceremonies, trying to re-introduce a sense of order into the competition when certain participants are threatened with expulsion from the Cave, comments that "There is no hawk too small when it comes to hunting in the modern style." (p. 125)

Another instance in the story when the figures are called upon by Ngugi to incur the wrath of his audience is during the Competition in the Cave before the International Order of Thieves and Robbers. The debate which generously depends on the verbal wit of the contestants is, according to David Cook, "cast in the form of public discussion,"⁴³ which "recalls more closely a meeting of elders than it does a modern platform debate."⁴⁴ During the debate, which closely resembles its traditional equivalent, Ngugi draws the attention of his audience to the fact that the world unfolding before their eyes is that of overturned values in which the middle-class elite seek to win applause by exposing their methods of exploitation. The figures appear to be testifying so as to impress, but in reality, they are making confessional statements which, since they are about exploitation and repression in neo-colonial Kenya, will certainly enrage Ngugi's audience. After all, it is they and their spokesmen who are at the receiving end of policies such as preventive detention and political murders.

Kihaahu wa Gatheeca talks about the threat posed by those "who want to awaken the masses" (p. 117) and the necessity of detaining them "just like the fellows you all know about" (p. 117). The figure is here obviously referring to radical academicians like the University of Nairobi-based historian Maina wa Kinyatti and Ngugi himself, who had been detainees because they refused to comply to "Nyayoism", which in contemporary Kenya means "the philosophy of follow-my-footsteps,"⁴⁵ demanded by the K.A.N.U.-led regime. Kihaahu further argues "But I normally send my thugs round to those who are obstinate - after plying them, of course, with drugs and alcohol and money - and then they cart their bodies along to the hyenas on Ngong Hills." (p. 117)

This is again, a direct reference to the bloody fate of radical politicians such as J.M. Kariuki, "the most outspoken critic of the government"⁴⁶ who was murdered in March 1975 and whose "mangled corpse was later found in the foothills [of Ngong] near Nairobi."⁴⁷

Another contestant, Gitutu wa Gataanguru, has been exploring ways of increasing landlessness in neo-colonial Kenya. He announces that:

as soon as hunger and thirst for land have increased far beyond their present level, we who have the land will be selling soil in pots and tins, so that a man will at least be able to plant a seed in them and hang them from the roof of his shelter!
(p. 107.)

Gitutu's plan to make ordinary Kenyans buy soil containers in which to grow food is meant to evoke the wrath of Ngugi's audience by alerting them to the threat posed by monopoly capitalism and its local allies on their livelihood. Although the testimony will endear Gitutu to the presiding 'robbers', it will portray him as insensitive to the ordinary men and women who know that private land ownership (to which he aspires) is antithetical to the Gikuyu traditional belief that land is a communal property, and should not be monopolized by an individual.

During the debate, Ngugi invites his audience to laugh at the figures who employ self-praise as a means of winning the coveted trophy of exploitation in this world of overturned values. One of the figures who resorts to self-praise is Kihaahu wa Gatheeca, who delves into the storehouse of Gikuyu orature, likening himself to "the cock that crows in the morning [silencing] all the others." He further tells the gathering that:

I am the lion that roars in the forest, making elephants urinate.
I am the eagle that flies in the sky, forcing hawks to seek refuge in their nests. I am the wind that stills at breezes.
I am the lightning that dazzles all light. I am the thunder that silences all noise. I am the sun in the heavens during the day. I am the moon, king of stars at night. I am the king of kings of modern theft and robbery. (p. 109.)

Some of Ngugi's audience who are familiar with the rich world of Gikuyu proverbs will know that Ngugi has an ironic intention in asking the figures to recommend themselves before the Visiting Robbers. This is because a Gikuyu proverb, one of the several recorded by C. Cagnolo in The Akikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore (1933) reads "self praise is no recommendation", a translation of the original Kanyoti Kabariti Keminagera njoya.⁴⁸

If self-praise is used for comic relief, the employment of pointed and carefully selected local images to describe the figures participating in the debate has a more serious intention: to hammer home the point that neo-colonial capitalism has dehumanized its champions beyond redemption. One of them Gitutu:

had a belly that protruded so far that it would have touched the ground had it not been supported by the braces that held up his trousers. It seemed as if his belly had absorbed all his limbs and all the organs of his body. Gitutu had no neck - at least, his neck was not visible. His arms and legs were short stumps. His head had shrunk to the size of a fist. (p. 99) (my emphasis).

The above excerpt forcefully describes the physical and spiritual distortion of Gitutu's personality as a result of his alliance with a system that deprives majority of Kenyans their right to a decent existence. The description reveals that as a result of Gitutu's obsession with materialism he has lost all his vital human faculties, including that of reasoning. The mouth of Gitutu's compeer, Kimeendeeri wa Kinyuanjii:

is shaped like the beak of the red-billed ox-pecker, the tick bird. His cheeks are as smooth as a new-born baby's. His legs are huge and shapeless, like giant banana stems or the legs of someone who is suffering from elephantiasis... His neck is formed from rolls of fat, like the skin of the hairy maggot" (p. 186) (my emphasis).

Kimeendeeri's conspicuous consumption is illustrated by his sheer physical size. But more important is Ngugi's choice of images to describe his disfigured personality. The author's selection could not be more effective in depicting a member of the "dependant class, a parasitic class in the kupe sense" who is incapable of standing on his own feet.⁴⁹

Because of their insatiable appetite wherever the middle-class are mentioned in the story emphasis is always laid on eating, swallowing, dominating, devouring, violation and devastation. They are portrayed as sharks always in a state of "ravenous greed" (p. 175). They can never get enough of food or women. After having a breakfast of eggs, butter, milk and bread, and putting away a couple of pounds of cooked mutton at ten o'clock, at twelve o'clock Gitutu "attack/s" four pounds of beef (fillet steak) dipped in wine and then nicely roasted over charcoal... At six /he/ nibble/s/ at a piece of chicken, just to have something in the belly as a base for whisky, pending supper proper in the evening" (p. 100).

In addition to his wife and his enormous size notwithstanding, Gitutu has two 'sugar' girls whom, in his own words, he can competently handle. (p. 100) Although he has only one wife, Ndikita has numerous girlfriends, "I belong to them, ears, horns and all. I suffer from two diseases: I can never get enough of that or of food. Good food makes for a fine, healthy body, and the smooth thighs of young girls make for a fine, healthy soul". (p. 176)

Before he impregnates and later deserts her, the Rich Old Man from Ngorika often played the game of the hunter and the hunted with Wariinga in which she represents the hunted. Whenever he and she are on a motor-boat ride at Naivasha lake he often lectures her on "how the small fishes were used by men to trap bigger ones, and how the big fishes lived on the smaller ones... they swallow them whole." (p. 144)

Their high drive for food and women is equated with their appetite for the material benefits they derive from the economic exploitation of the Kenyan peasants. Since the exploitation is seen in terms of "drinking of the blood of the workers... milking of their sweat /and/ devouring of their brains" (p. 187) it is not a surprise that the Kenyan bourgeoisie should also be portrayed as cannibals.

They are portrayed as "a class of man-eaters" (p. 186) who inflict physical and emotional wounds on the weak with impunity. For the creation of his ogre-like figures Ngugi did not have to look beyond his homeland for inspiration, as the Gikuyu oral tradition is rich with stories in which ogres, known as "Marimo in the vernacular", feature prominently.⁵⁰ In Agikuyu Folktales (1966) Ngumbu Njururi records several tales about "the one-legged, two-mouthed cannibalistic ogres of East African tales."⁵¹ One of them is called "The Girl and the Ogre."⁵² It involves a two-mouthed ogre disguised as a Tutuolan 'complete gentleman' who takes a beautiful girl into the forest, locks her up securely in his hut and goes to invite his fellow man-eaters to a feast. In her attempt to escape, the girl pushes a human skull down to the floor. The skull, one of the ogres' human victims, arranges the girl's escape. On her way home, the girl bypasses the group of ogres on their way to the feast and is nearly intercepted by a highly sensitive multi-headed ogre. On her arrival home, she fulfils her promise to the human skull who had saved her life; she tells her father to invite the villagers to the ogres' den to wage a war and exterminate all of them. "Konkeyi and His Father the Ogre"⁵³ is horrific (its impact on me is comparable to watching a blood-curdling horror movie) as it involves the slaughtering and eating of a human victim that Konkeyi and his father caught. When they finish their feast on the woman, who had been pregnant, Konkeyi collects the three babies he found in her womb, takes them to his mother and asks her to cook them for him. His mother, a human being, married to Konkeyi's father against her wish, cooks three mice for her son instead and secretly brings up the three babies. The babies belonged to her sister who had been on her way back home when Konkeyi spotted her on a tree and joined his father in killing her. The three babies grow up into men and later kill Konkeyi⁵² and his father, thus giving the woman who had saved them the freedom she needs to escape back to her village.

In Devil on the Cross, the Gikuyu masses are asked to compare the middle-class bourgeoisie with the "one-eyed ogres" (p. 37) in Gikuyu folktales who can attack and insensitively devour human beings alive. Once the comparison is made it would then be easy for Ngugi's audience to believe that the extermination of human beings who are as callous as ogres is not only justified but is also their primary duty as Kenyan citizens, an issue to which we shall later return.

In Africa and the Caribbean: Legacies of A Link (1979) Maureen Warner-Lewis argues that the fact that Caribbean fiction makes little use of proverbs "is an indication of the Caribbean writers' distance from the world of the peasantry."⁵⁴ Because George Lamming uses them in his first novel the implication of her statement therefore is that his ears are well attuned to this world like that of Ngugi. One major difference between the two writers, however, is that while Ngugi makes both his elite and peasant characters use proverbs, Lamming restricts its use to the peasantry, the class which is more in touch with the natural landscape and the oral culture of the Caribbean, two main sources from which proverbs derive. Lamming, by not allowing his middle-class characters to use proverbs aims to show their alienation from their cultural roots. On the other hand, although Ngugi argues in Decolonising the Mind (1986) that, "It is the peasantry and the working class who are changing language all the time in pronunciations, in forming new dialects, new words, new phrases and new expressions"⁵⁵ he reveals in Devil on the Cross that the middle-class elite too have contributed as much as their peasant and working-class counterparts in extending the expressive capacity of language. They also display considerable verbal dexterity in trying to outshine one another during the debate and can marshal what Chinweizu calls "rhetorical fireworks"⁵⁶ such as praise-epithets and "insults and innuendos" (p. 119) used during the circumcision festival.

Thus Ngugi, writing for an illiterate audience reveals that proverbs belong to a common storehouse from which both peasants and the educated elite can borrow to enrich their communication with one another. Lamming, on the other hand, reveals that proverbs are mainly produced by the peasants and workers, but can be used by a West Indian writer in fiction as an aspect of oral culture with which the liberated middle-class or those seeking liberation are likely to identify.

The fact that those who mainly produce them - the peasants - cannot read the books in which they are reproduced, a constant worry for Lamming, has to do with his choice of form to which the illiterate have no access, due to reasons we shall examine at the end of the chapter. Lamming's apology in the Author's Note of Season of Adventure (1960) discussed in the previous chapter, has to do with guilt over the author's divorce from his peasant background because of his education. The use of verbal lore in In the Castle of My Skin (1953) in The Emigrants (1954) and in Season of Adventure (1960) is a gesture of solidarity with that world and a dramatic expression of his longing for the world from which his education had removed him. It can also be seen as an attempt to expiate his guilt for not being able to communicate with the peasants. If he cannot write for them, he can at least write about them in an alien form but generously using material created by them for the benefit of their alienated "half brother/s".⁵⁷

Early in the novel when G. and Bob discuss the punishment to which they are subjected by their parents, G. quotes his mother, a peasant housewife, who often justifies her assault on him with a proverbial utterance, which derives from the Bible, "Spare not the rod and spoil the child" (p. 21). G. fully shares her opinion arguing that "'tis only that she don't want to spoil me". (p. 21) Later as a teenager, prior to his departure for Trinidad G.'s mother revives her habitual corrective punishment on her son.

Trying to assert her authority for the last time, G.'s mother uses a proverb, "You never miss the water till the well run dry" (p. 264) to chide her son whom she has always seen as a source of 'botheration' and who might realise her importance only when she is dead. "What sweeten goat's mouth burn his tail" (p. 264) is meant as a warning to G. from his mother about the adult responsibilities he is about to assume. Although he is going to be free from maternal control, If he does not temper his freedom with a sense of responsibility he might land in trouble. When Ma tells Pa about her meeting with the landlord who had revealed to her his deep worries about the changes in the village, the old man responds with a proverb, "There be more in the mortar than the pestle" (p. 187). The proverb is meant to urge Ma to reveal the deeper source of the landlord's worry; it turns out to be a personal motive, the assault on his daughter by a group of rioters whom Ma calls 'vagabonds'. When G.'s mother tries to separate her son from the "gang at the corner" (p. 113) so that her middle-class aspiration for him might succeed, she clinches her point with a saying, "I know what the old people say is true. You carry a horse to the pond but you can't make it drink" (p. 113). The proverb is meant to emphasize the point that she can dutifully assist G. but she cannot make him succeed. Apart from reminding us about the oral aspect of the West Indian culture of which the users of these proverbs are a part, the one deriving from the Bible reveals the religious dimension of that culture. The rest of the proverbs show the attachment of their users to the animals they tend as well as to the rustic environment they inhabit. Collectively they reveal the age-old wisdom which the peasantry acquire through observation and a constant battle with their material environment.

Both novelists are sensitive to the musical heritage of their cultures and employ the medium of song to appeal to their different

audiences. Music is rooted in the history of Kenya as well as in that of the West Indies, where members of the working class used it as a form of entertainment as well as a medium for expressing revolt. The Gikuyu of Kenya, as we shall see, used the medium of song in the 1920's and 1930's to protest against forced labour and other discriminatory policies of the colonial administration. They also used it during the Mau Mau peasant revolt. Likewise, enslaved Africans in Trinidad used calypso not only to entertain themselves and their masters, but also to take a swipe at them. They also used it occasionally to protest against the harsh conditions of the plantation system. This led, as we shall see, to the proscription of the calypso in 1868 in Trinidad, since in addition to its function as a means of entertainment it could also be made to serve a revolutionary purpose. Thus it can be established that songs are part of the peasant cultures about which both Ngugi and Lamming write. Both writers however use the form in their novels for different purposes.

In Devil on the Cross, a novel that sets out to arouse the anger of the peasantry against the Kenyan middle-class, songs have been used to maximum advantage. They are essentially functional and used to reinforce the narrative. As we saw, Ngugi in Devil on the Cross was using a form very close to the heart of his audience. Historically, songs played an important role in Gikuyu society, where people used the form to convey their protests against land alienation, the imposition of hut tax and the kipande system.⁵⁸ The landless peasants also used worksongs to lessen the psychological tension of forced labour on large tracts of the White Highlands belonging to their European employers. Quoting L.S.B. Leakey in Oral Literature in Africa (1970) Ruth Finnegan testifies to the effectiveness of the form in moulding public opinion at the onset of the Mau Mau struggle:

The leaders of the Mau Mau movement... were quick to realise the very great opportunity which the Kikuyu love of hymn singing offered for propaganda purposes. In the first place propaganda in 'hymn' form and set to well known tunes would be speedily

learned by heart and sung over again and again and thus provide a most effective method of spreading the new ideas. The fact that such 'hymns' would be learned by heart, by those who could read them, and then taught to others, meant that they would soon also become well-known to the illiterate members of the tribe. This was very important, for there were many who could not be reached by ordinary propaganda methods... There is no doubt at all that these hymns, which were being sung at K.A.U. /Kenya African Union/ meetings, at Independent Schools and Churches, in the homes of thousands in the Kikuyu Reserve, in squatter villages and kitchens of European homes, were one of the most powerful propaganda weapons of the whole Mau Mau movement.⁵⁹

Later on, when the dispossessed Gikuyu peasants moved into the forests to fight against the colonial administration, songs had contributed in strengthening their sense of unity and in boosting their morale.⁶⁰ Ruth Finnegan argues that "songs can be used to report and comment on affairs, for political pressure, for propaganda, and to reflect and mould public opinion".⁶¹ Undoubtedly Ngugi was fully aware of the potentiality of songs in moulding public opinion - particularly in his society - when he decided to use them in Devil on the Cross. Earlier on he had successfully used them in his Gikuyu play Ngaahika Ndeenda produced in 1977 and translated in 1982 as I Will Marry When I Want. Ngugi was aware that the sense of identification of the audience with the performance would be stronger if recognizably local songs were used in a play. The author therefore employed in his play traditional songs such as the Gitiro, which his audience might know because it is the classic song performed at Gikuyu wedding ceremonies.⁶² C. Cagnolo asserts that at wedding occasions "the women do the dancing, everyone from the youngest brides to the oldest married women... As soon as the bridegroom has delivered one or two cows to the bride's father, the women relations of the bridegroom, assisted by their neighbours, repair to the bride's house at daybreak and sing the Getiro".⁶³ It was then easy for Ngugi to use traditional tunes to fit in the revolutionary exhortations carried in the several songs in I Will Marry When I Want. The songs carry explicit protest messages meant to stimulate the latent Gikuyu revolutionary awareness as the two examples below illustrate:

We do not mind being jailed
 We do not mind being exiled
 For we shall never stop
 Agitating for and demanding back our lands 64
 For Kenya is an African people's country...

and

The Trumpet of the masses has been blown
 Let's preach to all our friends.
 The trumpet of the masses has been blown.
 We change to new songs. 65
 For the revolution is near.

The banning of the play by the Kenyan authorities in December 1977 and the official order stopping the rehearsals of Maitu Njugira (Mother Sing For Me) (1981) a dramatic musical evoking the response of Kenyan workers against the labour conditions of the 1920's and 1930's show that oral forms can be used in drama to directly communicate with the masses; and in the hands of a left-wing writer like Ngugi they can prove dangerous as they can be collectively marshalled to serve as an instrument of public incitement.

Songs, which could have been modelled on traditional Gikuyu ones, have been skillfully integrated into the structure of Devil on the Cross, a story in which Ngugi basically addresses the Kenyan peasants and workers. When Muturi encounters Wariinga early in the story, he uses song to illustrate to her the deepening individualistic ethos characterizing life in neo-colonial Kenya:

That which pecks never pecks for another.
 That which pinches never pinches for another.
 That which journeys never journeys for another.
 Where is the seeker who searches for another? (p. 16)

He tells her that her malaise - expulsion from her job and ejection from her rented room - is caused by the ethos of greed and crass materialism which have resulted in a total subversion of moral values in contemporary Kenya:

Crookedness to the upright
 Meanness to the kind,
 Hatred to the loving,
 Evil to the loving,
 Evil to the good. (p. 16)

This subversion of moral values permeates every aspect of political life in modern Kenya. The concept of Harambee coined by Jomo Kenyatta after independence enjoining all Kenyans to 'pull together' and rebuild the nation has in the modern era been subject to corruption. Muturi illustrates this corruption through song. He talks of two kinds of Harambee: the one for patriots under Mau Mau who sang of:

Great love...
 Among women and children
 A bean fell to the ground
 We split it among ourselves. (p. 39)

and the other for supporters of imperialism who are obsessed with

Self-love and the love of selling out
 Among the traitors of the land.
 The bean fell we steal from the people -
 We struggle to see who can grab it all. (p. 39)

In its essence, as we saw in the previous chapter, 'Harambee' is a call for unity and togetherness in solving the problems facing the new nation. However, in neo-colonial Kenya 'Harambee' gatherings are used by the political elite for the purposes of consolidating their positions and keeping the nation under the full grip of the ruling party, K.A.N.U. Financial contributions for 'Harambee' projects are often embezzled by local party officials, and even by members of government headed currently by Daniel Arap Moi.⁶⁶ Thus the political elite are part of a 'grabbing' sub-culture hinted at by Muturi in the above song.

As we saw earlier, it is the 'grabbing' tendency of the middle-class elite that is responsible for Ngugi's depiction of them as being primarily engaged in "social cannibalism",⁶⁷ a heinous crime against the Kenyan peasants and workers. In the example below, Muturi and Wangari are portrayed lamenting the plague caused by the political elite:

Famine has increased in our land
 But it has been given other names,
 So that the people should not discover
 Where all the food has been hidden. (p. 50)

Later in the story when the peasants and the industrial proletariat of Njeruca march towards Ilmorog Golf Course to confront the contestants for the exploitation trophy, song is used to reinforce the popular determination not to give up the struggle:

Come one and all,
And behold the wonderful sight
Of us chasing away the Devil
And all his disciples!
Come one and all! (p. 201).

This call ends in the violent attack on the political and business elite participating in the competition. (p. 207) When the foreign delegation is about to leave the Cave, "The people roared like a thousand angry lions whose cubs had been taken away from them, and they seized their sticks and clubs and iron rods and pressed forward towards the foreign thieves, who were surrounded by their local home-guards" (p. 208). A radical student leader announces that:

Let us all now join hands with the working people in their just war against the drinking of human blood, the eating of human flesh, and the many other crimes perpetrated by imperialism in its neo-colonial stage. (p. 209).

Because Ngugi believes that neo-colonial capitalism has dehumanized the political and business elite of Kenya beyond the point of redemption, he never seriously bothers to penetrate them deeply. The effect of this is less identification with the elite whatever the degree of humiliation to which they are subjected. The figures, as we observed, are throughout the story associated with eating and swallowing hence the emphasis on their bulging paunches to draw attention to their conspicuous consumption at the expense of the underprivileged. Whether he is dealing with the caricatured figures like Gitutu wa Gataanguru or with the Rich Old Man from Ngorika, who is depicted as a human type, Ngugi is content with a surface description of them through which he pinpoints their despicable nature so they can be unreservedly condemned by his audience.

The main preoccupation of other members of the elite who are not caricatured is sexual exploitation of hapless women such as Wariinga or the dispossession of veteran Mau Mau activists like Wangari. Members of the elite who belong to this category are recognizably human. Ngugi endows them with these qualities not because he wants to draw attention to their humanity - which has been eroded - but because he wants to make credible their social interaction with their victims. For instance, the sexual exploitation of Wariinga would have been less credible if it had been carried out by a caricatured figure. Likewise, for Mwaura's story to be plausible as a matatu (taxi) driver and a member of a hit squad who freely mixes with other people, he has to have qualities recognizably human, even if less human than those of the people he helps to secretly suppress.

But in the final analysis Ngugi is no less sympathetic to the aforementioned group than he is to the figures. Both are meant to attract the ire of his audience. They are collectively held responsible for the plight of the Kenyan peasants and workers. Ngugi, therefore, discourages his audience from feeling the tragic sense of identification at the death of the Rich Old Man from Ngorika or the shooting of Kihaahu and Gitutu since both have contributed to the plight of ordinary Kenyans. (p. 254)

As opposed to the middle-class elite, the stories of the oppressed members of the society - like Wariinga and Wangari - are sympathetically handled. Ngugi portrays them not only in their present circumstances, but in their past lives as well. Ngugi's motive in making members of the oppressed class relatively well-rounded is so as to enable his audience identify with them as human beings subjected to the brutality of Kenya's power elite. When they cry or bleed or are chased by the police from what the oppressed see as a legitimate duty to attack their oppressors, the audience are with them because

Ngugi has endowed them with identifiably human attributes. Wariinga's portrayal can be used to illustrate this point.

In Wariinga, Ngugi has created both a symbol of the brutal and excruciating social and political system of Kenya as well as a compelling individual in her own right. Her being associated early in the story with "Kareendi", the central character of a parable establishes her role as a symbol and a representative of the exploited Kenyan womanhood. Parables are defined as "short narrative[s] devised so as to give a clear (but not necessarily explicit) demonstration of a moral or lesson".⁶⁸ The parable, which Wariinga herself narrates, is about the tribulations of Mahua Kareendi, a prototype Kenyan girl whose ordeals at the hands of men are symptomatic of an uncaring society whose members have no feeling for one another except where money and/or sex are involved. Kareendi will not get a job until she is liberal with her sexual favours. When she rejects Boss Kihara's advances, she is fired. Her boyfriend who has been living off her earnings jilts her after realising that her source of income has dried up. "The grade cow has stopped yielding milk. So it is now fit only for slaughter?" (p. 25). The parable ends with an observation that

"To the Kareendi's of modern Kenya, isn't each day exactly the same as all the others? For the day on which they are born is the very day on which every part of their body is buried except one - they are left with a single organ. So when will the Kareendis of modern Kenya wipe the tears from their faces? When will they ever discover laughter?" (p. 26).

Through Wariinga Ngugi later advocates revolutionary violence as a way of settling scores with the exploitative members of the power elite, the Boss Kihara class.

At the same time, Ngugi reveals the tortured consciousness of an individual, initially torn between her love for bourgeois comfort and her love for freedom, whose rounded picture he reveals not only from her own accounts, but also from her interaction with her parents, her friends and her employers.

Because so much about her surfaces in the story, when she falls into the lecherous paws of the Rich Old Man from Ngorika, Wariinga attracts deep sympathy. But because her portrayal coincides with Ngugi's attempt to create a revolutionary character who will not tolerate exploitation by men and by society, he refused to portray her as a passive victim.⁶⁹ Her depiction is neither sentimental nor contrived. Ngugi had revealed a stage in her life when under the hold of the Rich Old Man she had stoically accepted her fate. He then shows her transition from a naive country girl to a self-reliant woman whose wealth of experience partly contributed to her newly-found self-confidence. A contrast of her character with Wanja's in Petals of Blood (1977) will serve to illustrate that through Wariinga Ngugi has critically revisited the position of the Kenyan woman who is now asked to struggle against the abuse and exploitation of her body and the oppression of her society.

Like Wanja, Wariinga has been exploited by the system and those who operate it, but unlike Wanja, Wariinga refuses to capitulate to the system as a way of fighting it, a refusal clearly endorsed by the author. Like Wanja, she is an active participant in the life around her, but unlike Wanja she attempts to stand out of it in order to fight it. In contrast with Wanja, whose life is revealed mostly through Munira and Karega, we mostly see Wariinga during the second stage of her life through her own eyes and on her own terms. It is her independence that Ngugi seeks to emphasize here. As a student at the Polytechnic she refuses Gaturia's offer to contribute towards her fees and takes up a part-time job. Later as a mechanical engineer she proves more competent than the men, "The Wariinga of today has decided to be self-reliant all the time, to plunge into the middle of the arena of life's struggles in order to discover her real strength and to realize her true humanity" (p. 216).

The transformation of Wariinga's character can be partly attributed to practical experience and partly to the inspiration she had from a Voice which spoke to her while she was having a break from the competition taking place in the Cave. The Voice sensitizes Wariinga to the presence of a third and revolutionary world. Previously she had been passive because of her awareness of the existence of only two worlds: that of the exploiter and that of the exploited. The Voice which describes itself as a "roaming spirit... the roaming spirit who distributes the knowledge who enables men to tell the difference between good and evil" (p. 184) is an eye-opener to Wariinga:

Take yourself, for instance. When the Rich Old Man from Ngorika snatched your body, what did you do? You decided that you wouldn't put up a fight. You said to yourself that since he had taken away your body, he might as well take your life too. (p. 191)

When Wariinga asks what else she could have done the Voice replies that "You could have demanded the return of your eye and your tooth" (p. 191) which would have meant taking vengeance on her oppressor.

The Voice in Devil on the Cross is a fusion of both benevolent and malevolent elements as it simultaneously asks Wariinga to fight her oppressors and tempts her to revert to her former role as the "delicate flower to decorate the lives of the class of Boss Kihara" (p. 192). Wariinga refuses to comply with the latter option. She agrees to become part of the revolutionary world committed to the "overthrow of the system of eating and being eaten" (p. 188). Earlier on when the Voice declares that it is the "Lord of Hell" (p. 193) but nevertheless asks Wariinga to courageously resist oppression, a local audience who knows that there are benevolent as well as malevolent spirits and gods in African societies will not be puzzled by this duality in the Voice.

In the Gikuyu system of belief, although the departed spirits may if they wish be benevolent, "Ngai [the Supreme Being] allowed [them] to have some powers... they could cause the death of their relatives unless the deity intervenes to prevent it."⁷⁰

Geoffrey Parrinder writes that "Spirits, according to African belief, are ubiquitous, there is no area of the earth, no object or creature, which has not a spirit of its own or which cannot be inhabited by a spirit".⁷¹ The intervention of supernatural beings in human affairs as well as their duality is an integral part of life in African societies which has found expression in literature. It features prominently in D.T. Niane's Sundiata in which Sassouma Berete employs witchcraft to get rid of young Sundiata who constitutes a political threat to her son, who is the reigning King of Mali. The witches commissioned to eliminate him are touched by his kindness on a visit to his mother's vegetable patch and promised to offer him protection, "watch over" (p. 26) him, in the words of Soumosso Konkomba, the senior witch. In spite of his declared faith in Islam, Sundiata himself attributes the success of his military exploits to supernatural beings. His inability to destroy Kita in the end is attributed to the benevolent protection the latter enjoyed from "the jinn of the great mountain", (p. 70) to whom the inhabitants of Old Mali Empire including Sundiata, often offer sacrifices. In Amos Tutuola's The Palm-Wine Drinkard (1953) spirits intermingle freely with human beings because Tutuola operates within the compass of the Yoruba cultural tradition in which gods and spirits influence and regulate the lives of human beings. On his way to the 'Dead's Town' to recover his dead tapster, the hero has often slept on trees with spirits. When he ran out of money he changed himself into a canoe, to transport passengers across a lake, with the help of "one juju which was given to me by a kind spirit who was a friend of mine".⁷² Later when he travels by air so as to avoid the forest containing wild animals and boa constrictors he uses the magical amulet given to him by the "Water Spirit woman in the Bush of Ghosts"⁷³ and transforms himself into "a big bird like an aeroplane and flew away with my wife".⁷⁴ Chinweizu has mentioned the presence of "magic, ghosts and the supernatural" as part of the African indigenous narrative

tradition that can be usefully integrated into modern fiction.⁷⁵

In their different ways, the three writers have reflected this tradition in their novels. In spite of the differences between the Yoruba's plurality of gods, the Gikuyu belief in the supreme deity (Ngai), and the Mandingo's combination of Islam and animism (portrayed in Sundiata), all the three writers portray societies in which supernatural beings can intervene and influence the course of human destiny.

To a lesser degree than Wariinga, Gaturia also undergoes a radical transformation which enables him to reconsider his stand and that of his educated compeers on the class struggle in Kenya, "Are we on the side of the producers or the side of those who live on the products of others? Are we on the side of the workers and peasants or the side of the exploiters?" (p. 205). Although he does not join the militant forces like Wariinga, he decides to lend his intellectual capabilities to the struggle against capitalism. Just as Ngugi has proved that an old form - song - can be used to serve the revolutionary needs of the present (Wariinga uses an initiation rite song which announces an individual's transition from childhood to adulthood in Gikuyuland to announce her transformation into a revolutionary (p. 212), he also reveals through Gaturia's academic research that music, as a form, can be employed as a tool of cultural decolonization. Gaturia's training took place abroad where his syllabus comprised "the history of Western music from the time of J. Bach and Handel in the sixteenth century to the more recent times of Tchaikovsky and Igor Stravinsky" (p. 134). Yet on his return home, he becomes involved in research on African traditional music - using song to rewrite the history of Kenya, giving the ordinary people and native heroes such as Waiyaki and Koitalel prominence. In the course of his research, Gaturia encounters and is inspired by a parable narrated to him by the Old Man of Bahati; a parable with a clear revolutionary message advocating the employment of violence as a means of attaining freedom from exploitation.

It tells of Nding'uri, a good-natured man, generous, magnanimous, industrious and contented with his meagre earnings and possessions. A pestilence which strikes the village destroys all Ndinguri's possessions including his livestock, an event which drives him into the wilderness in search of relief. He meets an evil spirit whose avarice is illustrated by his possession of "two mouths, one on his forehead and the other at the back of his head" (p. 64). He mortgages his soul to the evil spirit for prosperity and from then onwards becomes mean and insensitive to other human beings, including his wife and children, seeing value only in material and more material acquisitions. (p. 64) Ndinguri's greed turns inordinate, "His meanness protruded like the shoots of a sweet potato. When people were dying from famine, that was when Nding'uri was happiest because at such times people would dispose of their property as readily as they would give away broken pots" (pp. 64-5). He refuses to listen to counsel from the villagers who are mortified by his sudden transformation. When he reveals that his new condition is caused by the removal of his soul, now possessed by an evil spirit, the villagers realize they have been harbouring a parasite. They therefore decide to wrap "him up with dry banana leaves, and burned him and his house" (p. 66). Gatuiria's musical composition, like the story which inspired it, is revolutionary and advocates violence as a means to ending exploitation.

The first movement of the song is an evocation of a pristine traditional epoch when the Gikuyus danced, told stories and cultivated the land. Subsequent movements reveal the disruption of traditional life through land alienation and forced labour introduced by colonialism. These resulted in armed resistance against the colonial regime in the 1950's. Since the post-independence era brought more repression, this time by the local elite, the fifth movement of the song dwells on the resurgence of 'Mau Mau', announcing "sounds and voices of a new struggle / To rescue the soul of the nation" (p. 229).

Due to its content and message Gatuiria's song is what Ngugi, a Marxist radical, would call a progressive one. The completion of Gatuiria's research is a good omen for the middle-class elite: it indicates that its intellectual wing can overcome its cultural alienation and achieve a triumphant homecoming. It also shows that the resources of Western culture - in Gatuiria's case classical music, which formed the basis of his training - can be adapted to serve the needs of another culture. Gatuiria's successful musical composition can be equated to Ngugi's victorious attempt, through the employment of Gikuyu and other traditional narrative forms, to write a genuine African novel, what Chinweizu calls an example of a "genuinely liberated African literature".⁷⁶

In her discussion of the criteria for the evaluation of what she terms the 'Third World Novel', Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell argues that:

The break with the English literary tradition is not possible... If Third World Writers continue to depend on the myths of Europe. For the myth is an expression of the collective beliefs of a society that penetrates every aspect of that society...⁷⁷

Contrary to Nunez-Harrell's stand, it is our belief that depending on his purpose and expertise, a third-world writer can utilize and infuse European myths with a new significance in his fiction. Ngugi is an example of a third-world writer who has skillfully appropriated the European myths he employs in his story. For instance, he totally subverts our notion of the Biblical myth^s he employs in Devil on the Cross. The 'parable of the talents' which the Master of Ceremonies used in his opening speech in the Cave (pp. 82-86) bears resemblance to 'The Parable of the Talents' (Mathew 25:38) in that both involve exchange of money in which the recipients are expected to multiply what they had been given. In the bible a master gave his servants money prior to a trip. On his return he calls them to settle "accounts with them".⁷⁸ The first two made profits and are accordingly rewarded. The one who returned the sum of money he had received without a profit had his talent taken away from him and given to the first servant who multiplied five times the money he had received.⁷⁹

In Ngugi's story, the parable involves money which a departing colonial master gave his local servants to invest and the reward which the two most successful investors received and the punishment which the last, who simply buried the money in the ground suffered. He is arrested and deprived of "even the little that he has... For unto the man of property more will be given, but from the poor man will be taken even the little that he has kept in reserve" (p. 85) which echoes the Biblical "For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him".⁸⁰ Ngugi's audience, who are familiar with the Bible because of the many parallels between the Biblical mythology and theirs,⁸¹ will have little difficulty in understanding that Ngugi literally applies in Devil on the Cross the parable which in the Bible has a deeper significance. In the Bible, Jesus Christ is talking about the heavenly rewards which faithful believers, "those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word and retain it"⁸² might receive, while Ngugi is referring to the earthly benefits that a ruthless local 'middle-man' will get from his metropolitan overlord following a profitable 'investment'. Also through the title of the novel, Ngugi subverts our notion of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Chimalum Nwankwo succinctly observes that:

The Cross has never been for the devil. It is for Christ who died there to save the Christian believer. Every Christian knows the color of the devil. It is not "red as that of a pig's skin" or "white as that of a very fat European woman".⁸³

Thus the 'devil on the cross' is not synonymous with Biblical Christ. He is the embodiment of capitalism who is seen as a many-headed monster appearing at various stages in the story, exploiting the powerless. Although he assumes a half-human, half-spirit shape in Wariinga's dream, his size, attire and multiple mouths would suggest that he is interchangeable with the middle-class elite depicted as oversized and greedy ogres. He appears to her:

clad in a silk suit, carrying a walking stick shaped like a folded umbrella. On his head there were seven horns, seven trumpets for sounding infernal hymns of praise and glory.

The Devil had two mouths, one on his forehead and the other at the back of his head. His belly sagged, as if it were about to give birth to all the evils of the world. (p. 13)

Chimalum Nwankwo is therefore right to assume, as he does below, that the 'devil' appears on several occasions in the story as a member of the exploitative middle-class elite:

He is the old man who impregnates Wariinga and truncates her life's ambitions. The devil is also Wariinga's boss who fires her for repulsing his sexual advances.⁸⁴

These various manifestations of exploitation are responsible for Wangari's song about the necessity of chasing away the 'devil' when she and other members of the exploited class confront 'him' in the Ilmorog Cave. (pp. 74 - 75)

As we observed earlier, like Ngugi, Lamming too is sensitive to the local peasant musical tradition. He is fully aware of the folk music of the West Indies - the calypso - which he has incorporated into his own fiction for the sake of the middle-class elite who seek cultural liberation.

Calypso has been traced to the Hausa expression "Ba ka da kaito", meaning "You will get no sympathy; you deserve no pity; it serves you right"⁸⁵ This definition tallies with its contemporary use as a satiric weapon by local West Indian musicians. Calypso was a form of entertainment for slaves in their own circles as well as among French settlers like Begorrat, who in the late eighteenth century had made it a habit of inviting slave singers to amuse his guests and favourite slaves.⁸⁶ "Their songs" according to Errol Hill, "were usually sung extempore and were flattering or satiric, depending on whether they wished to praise their master and his friends or berate his enemies".⁸⁷

In addition, slaves also used the calypso to ease tension at work. Also Shango worshippers in Trinidad used the form for religious songs. But of more concern to the colonial administration and the plantocracy was its association with insurrectionary slave songs.

This firmly roots calypso in the protest tradition, thus becoming a tool in the hands of the colonized who could employ it to strengthen their will to resist the harsh labour conditions of a plantation society.

The fear of the revolutionary potential of calypso might have led to the prohibition in 1868 of the singing of any ballad or song considered profane by the colonial regime. It might also have led to the police censorship of calypso music during the West Indian revolts in the 1930's. Nevertheless, the freedom of the calypsonian to express himself remained. Today his music is one of the most vibrant cultural expressions of the working class in the West Indies, with the annual carnival in Trinidad providing a forum for calypsonians to make public their latest musical compositions.

Some West Indian writers, such as George Lamming, have attempted to reflect this vibrant cultural tradition in fiction. Our discussion of story-telling in In the Castle of My Skin indicates an awareness by George Lamming of the calypso musical tradition. But it is in The Emigrants (1954) and Season of Adventure (1960) which contain a large number of culturally alienated West Indians (such as Dickson in the former and most members of the political elite in the latter) that Lamming draws attention to this working-class art form, which they might find culturally therapeutic.

In The Emigrants Lamming sensitizes his audience to the satiric function and prevalence of this popular musical form in the West Indies. Like the other emigrants in the novel, Miss Bis shares the deep psychological need of West Indians to "prove to somebody dat them doin' something or that them can do something..." (p. 66). But her other compelling motive for taking flight from Trinidad is so as to avoid further embarrassment in the wake of her abortive love affair, which had become the subject of a calypso. Miss Bis represents the light-skinned West Indian with a confused identity and a compulsive need for white company.

Also in a colour-conscious society where for most people "'to raise the colour of the family was to raise its social status"'⁸⁸ it is not unusual that Miss Bis should reject a black in favour of a white prospective husband.

After Fred, an Englishman on a visit to Trinidad, jilts her she decides to go to England under the simplistic assumption that, "If she had attracted a whiteman's attention in Trinidad where they seemed as stupid as they were inaccessible, it would be easy to make contact with them at home" (p. 73). Formerly known as Una Solomon, Miss Bis is a new name which the fair-skinned lady has assumed so as to cut off herself from her past identity as well as the scandal which the local calypsonian has permanently linked with that name:

In the calypso tent where the local minstrels use that kind of scandal as their raw material Miss Bis had become the subject of a calypso. The calypsonian had made a perfect story and everyone soon learnt through the calypso that Fred was a Russian Jew who organized cockfights on the Venezuelan border. On the last day of the Trinidad carnival the best calypso of the season which for the occasion is called the road march bore the title: No Love Without Passport. Miss Bis took flight. (p. 73)

Later in England, Miss Bis chose her company carefully. With the exception of her confidant Queenie, she avoids "all other West Indians for fear of being known as the woman about whom the calypso was composed" (p. 194). As the harsh reality of life encroaches on her Miss Bis sadly realises that she cannot translate her dreams into reality. She meets Fred again in London. However his intention to marry her in order to atone for the guilt of his past will come to nothing since we know from his relationship with Peggy that he is sexually impotent. Thus her ambition to merge her personality into the white world is thwarted. Like the other shattered emigrants she discovers that "England was simply a world which we had moved about at random, and on occasions encountered by chance. It was just there like nature, drifting vaguely beyond our reach". (p. 229)

Also, as we mentioned earlier, Lamming in Season of Adventure depicts calypso as an oral art form created by the working class

and which the alienated middle-class can find culturally invigorating. There are several instances in the novel when calypso music is played in Moon Glow Bar at Bruton Lane. This is the haven for the working class and the underprivileged, where, as we saw in the previous chapter Fola, a middle-class girl seeks cultural independence through contact with her peasant roots. A bustle of activity goes on in the bar while calypso music blares from the radiogram:

Sometimes I love you
 Sometimes I hate you
 But when I hate you
 It's 'cause I love you. (p. 203)

Another calypso number to which Lamming draws the attention of his middle-class audience is the one popularized during and after the Second World War when American troops were stationed in Trinidad and business boomed for the local prostitutes. The composition, referred to in Season of Adventure as "one of the wittiest and most decisive... in the history of carnival" (p. 193) was composed to mock prostitutes who attend to the local people only after the departure of rich American soldiers who lavish money on them. In their presence they completely ignore their regular customers. When the sailors depart, the local population:

...catch them broken
 /and/ get it all for nothin'
 Yankees gone away,
 An' Sparrow take over now. (p. 193)

In all his novels where calypso has featured, Lamming only draws the attention of his audience to its function in the West Indian society both as a satiric weapon and a kind of local news medium as well as revealing the closeness of the working class to the cultural tradition they hold dearly. He does not go as far as Samuel Selvon has gone to integrate it into the texture and structure of his fiction perhaps because unlike Lamming, born in Barbados, Samuel Selvon originates from Trinidad the homebase of the calypso.

He thus had his ear very close to the working class musical tradition which he has skillfully integrated into his fiction, unlike Lamming, who as we saw, merely draws attention to its function and prevalence in the West Indies.

In a short-story entitled "Calypsonian",⁸⁹ Samuel Selvon conveys, among other things, the disdain with which brainwashed West Indians view aspects of their vibrant culture such as the calypso. Whenever the calypsonian, in the story of that title, is on the threshold of musical creation,

he went inside now and then, and tell the clerks and them that he does write calypsos. But they only laugh at him, because they does think that calypso is no song at all, that what is song is numbers like "I've Got You Under my Skin" and "Sentimental Journey", what real American composers write.⁹⁰

Since the story is based on the ups and downs of Razor Blade, a Port-of-Spain based calypsonian, through it, Samuel Selvon subverts the notion of inferiority which certain West Indians attach to their indigenous tradition. He proves that calypso as a musical tradition is a subject fit for creative endeavour. It therefore deserves recognition by the elite who have often spurned at it. In The Lonely Londoners (1956) his story about West Indian emigrants in London, Sam Selvon illustrates this belief by integrating elements of the calypso in the story. The name of one of the central characters whom Moses Aloetta receives at Waterloo station is Henry Oliver, who is also known as Sir Galahad. His two names reflect the tendency of calypsonians to have an official name, usually a hyperbolic one, in addition to their own personal ones, which normally remain in the background. For example the 'Mighty Sparrow's' real name is Francisco Slinger, that of 'Atilla the Hun' is Raymond Quevado and that of the 'Mighty Spoiler,' Theophilus Phillip.⁹¹ The similarity is not limited to names only. The care-free life-style of Sir Galahad and his cronies bears resemblance to that of characters in certain calypso songs. He and his other West Indian mates jubilate, tell each other humorous stories and chase women about.

Assuming the airs of a Lord, "the old Galahad" is pictured:

walking out to the road, with plastic raincoat hanging on the arm, and the eyes not missing one sharp craft that pass, bowing his head in a polite 'Good evening' and not giving a blast If they answer or not. This is London, this is life oh lord, to walk like a king with money in your pocket, not a worry in the world."⁹²

Although a Nigerian, Captain has integrated into the West Indian group with whom he shares a life-style. His acquaintance with the boys is such that, "he does forget proper English and many times you would mistake him for a West Indian, he get so hep" (pp. 35-6). He might even have been meant by Sam Selvon as a character straight from the world of calypso. His numerous escapades with women, and reluctance to work to earn a living, always putting off serious matters in order to have a good time likens him to the main character in Arrow's "Long Time", who hasn't had enjoyment for a long time, but now wants to seize the opportunity of the carnival show to jubilate. Captain, like the calypso character is now obsessed with:

Celebration all around
Party fever, rock in the town
Long long time since we entertained
Longing to shake it up
Time to make it up
Come on enjoy yourself.⁹³

In addition, The Lonely Londoners makes a generous use of calypso rhythm, with lines re-enacting calypso music. This technical innovation has been carried out with effective results in "Rights of Passage" by Edward Brathwaite, a Barbadian literary poet who also considers himself a 'performance poet'.⁹⁴ It appears in a section sub-titled "Calypso", which when read aloud echoes a calypso composition:

The stone had skidded arc'd and bloomed into islands:
Cuba and San Domingo
Jamaica and Puerto Rico
Grenada Guadeloupe Bonaire

Curved stone hissed into reef
wave teeth fanged into clay
white splash flashed into spray
Bathsheba Montego Bay.⁹⁵

Samuel Selvon who attempted the experiment in fiction, adds a degree of repetition to it, a technique also used by calypsonians to sustain the attention of their oral audience. This is evident in the narrator's lengthy account of Captain's adventures in London, especially at the instance when he observes that:

Cap was a fellar like that - a fellar that you never know what he will be doing, which part he will be, what he will say. If you hear that Cap is Prime Minister of England, don't be surprised. If you hear that Cap kill four-five people in the Circus, don't be surprised. If you hear that Cap join a order of the monks and go to Tibet to meditate, be unconcerned.
(pp. 40-1)

This rhythmic structure coupled with repetition is also found in a calypso song quoted in V.S. Naipaul's Miguel Street (1971) an early collection of short stories by the Trinidadian-born writer. The song is about the relationship between Nathaniel and Laura, his new woman. Nathaniel, like certain members of the West Indian working-class take out their frustrations on the women by assaulting them, a practice which a popular calypso captures:

Every now and then just knock them down.
Every now and then just throw them down.
Black up their eye and bruise up their knee
And then they love you eternally.
Is gospel truth about woman.⁹⁶

This rhythmic structure and repetitive pattern is a basic feature of Arrow's "Rock it", an original calypso composition:

Would you like to rock it with me baby
Would you like to jump with me honey
Come on rock it with me baby
Come on rock it with me honey.⁹⁷

This is one of the few areas in which Lamming's use of the oral tradition is not very profound. Nevertheless, it does not significantly reduce the stature of In the Castle of My Skin as a novel employing in saturating quantities traditional narrative forms which might appeal to the West Indian middle-class elite.

As anti-capitalist novels, Devil on the Cross and In the Castle of My Skin diverge in suggesting different remedies to the predicament of the exploited. In addition to advocating the dismantling of capitalism, Ngugi's novel also reveals the need for internal change among the exploited in neo-colonial Kenya. Ngugi puts across this message by giving a double significance to the attack on the middle-class elite by Njeruca peasants and workers. It is an attempt by the workers to eliminate their exploiters and end the system. But through their action, the ordinary people are also induced to shed their fear and uphold the revolutionary ethos that neo-colonialism and its local agents are not merely paper tigers but are ridiculous as well. It is meant as a psychological therapy to a society that has been conditioned to viewing its middle-class leaders as invincible because of the power apparatus at its disposal. An iconoclast, Ngugi undermines this view. He reveals that the functionaries can be stripped of their authority and laughed at. Hinting at the advantages which an audience can derive after witnessing the demystification of figures of authority in literature, Mikhail Bakhtin writes that:

Through this victory laughter clarified man's consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life... The acute awareness of victory over fear... We always find in them the defeat of fear presented in a droll and monstrous form, the symbols of power and violence turned inside out, the comic images of death and bodies gaily rent asunder. All that was terrifying becomes grotesque... This grotesque image cannot be understood without appreciating the defeat of fear.⁹⁸

In the same vein, Wole Soyinka argues that psychological

liberation is only possible when figures of authority have been successfully demystified, as the figures in Devil on the Cross have been, as they are shown fleeing for their lives from the Cave. Thus Soyinka:

liberation involves strategies of reducing the status and stature of the power-wielding class in public consciousness, exposing and demystifying its machinery of oppression.⁹⁹

But because of Ngugi's development into a Marxist radical, he underplays internal change and emphasizes a change of community in Devil on the Cross. This is championed by Muturi, a worker, who mobilizes the peasants and workers of Njeruca to attack the class of local and foreign 'robbers' and contribute to ending the system. A member of the militant team, the student leader, argues that all hands should be on deck to fight neo-colonial capitalism conceived in the story as "the drinking of human blood and the eating of human flesh". (p. 209)

As usual with Ngugi, in Devil on the Cross he avoids a simple solution showing that the attacks of the peasants and workers on the middle-class and Wariinga's elimination of the Rich Old Man mark the beginning of an arduous struggle that lies ahead. The masses have not overthrown the political system. Five of them have been killed in the confrontation. Wariinga has lost not only her fiancée. Her future is also fraught with danger as "the forces of bourgeois law" (p. 214) are certain to catch up with and charge her with murder and unlawful possession of a lethal weapon. With such an ending Ngugi will surprise his peasant and working class audience who are used, traditionally, to stories with happy endings. They would have expected an ending similar to the one in most ogre stories in which the beasts are eliminated or the ones in which young lovers get married and 'lived happily thereafter', and not the one in Devil on the Cross in which Gatuiria is unable to marry his fiancée, who kills his father and wounds an invited guest. Here Ngugi wrenches them out of their customary complacency and asks them to gird their loins for the numerous hurdles that lie ahead.

Since as we observed in Chapter Three, none of Lamming's novels is expressly Marxist, it is not a surprise that although anti-capitalist, In the Castle of My Skin does not advocate a violent revolution in

the manner of Devil on the Cross. It shows the devastating effect of capitalism on the working class. But as we saw earlier in the chapter, through Pa Lamming disapproves of violence. He does not see it as a solution, and later through Of Age and Innocence (1958) and Season of Adventure (1960) he reveals that it is counterproductive and may even lead to the annihilation of the very people it aims to deliver. It further shows how the middle-class elite are victims of subtle indoctrination and suggests a psychological cure, an internal therapy which Lamming puts forward in all his novels as the first priority for the culturally alienated West Indian middle-class.

But both novels utilize in large quantities aspects of the peasant and working-class cultures. Therefore they are both firmly rooted in the indigenous traditions of their respective local settings; Ngugi's novel that of Gikuyu orature, and Lamming's that of the African past of the West Indies.

Devil on the Cross, as we saw, meets the criteria of what Chinweizu calls an African novel with "a genuinely African flavour"¹⁰⁰ to it. It has employed "traditional devices in saturating quantities",¹⁰¹ an effort which Chinweizu argues will "impart an African tone to the product".¹⁰² In the Castle of My Skin also meets the criteria of a West Indian novel which is rooted in the local folk tradition. Edward Brathwaite, in his discussion of Aubrey Williams whose art is rooted in and reflects the Amerindian past of the West Indies argues that "What is important is the primordial nature of the two cultures [Amerindian and African] and the potent spiritual and artistic connections between them and the present."¹⁰³ In his first novel, Lamming has recreated the African heritage of the West Indies and compellingly suggests that the current predicament of the educated elite might be improved through contact with that heritage. Through the novel, Lamming illustrates Edward Brathwaite's argument that the African past of West Indies is a potential source of creative material which West Indian writers can use to address current problems.

From his first novel onwards, Lamming has shown continual interest in folklore and utilizes in all his novels, up to Season of Adventure, (1960) material created by the West Indian peasants and working class pointing towards its therapeutic value on the local middle-class elite, who can have access to such novels. Lamming's use of folklore in fiction has, as our discussion shows, only intensified.

On the other hand, Ngugi who started with what he now calls "Afro-European novels"¹⁰⁴ such as The River Between (1965) and A Grain of Wheat (1967) has been through various stages of development. He finally decided, as we saw, to write not only about the Gikuyu peasants but also for them a story that their literate compeers can, in the manner of traditional tales, read for them. Hence his venture into Gikuyu orature and the consequent technical and linguistic revolutions carried out in Devil on the Cross. In this novel, Ngugi has reached a stage in his artistic vocation when his commitment to a new audience encouraged him to write a story structurally less complex than his earlier ones, notably A Grain of Wheat. In "The Language of African Fiction" Ngugi, justifying the technical revolution he carried out in Devil on the Cross asks whether he could write "for an audience that had never read a novel in the same way as he would write for an audience that had read or was aware of James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Wole Soyinka or Ayi Kwei Armah"¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, Lamming's/ notably In the Castle of My Skin, have complicated structures that only the educated might find accessible and cannot therefore reach the masses, "the people whose lives are the substance of the book/s",¹⁰⁶ in contrast with Devil on the Cross, a people's story.

By translating it into English, Ngugi is able to communicate simultaneously with the masses and with the educated elite. Like his latest novel Matigari Ma Njiruungi (Those spared by the bullet to continue the struggle)¹⁰⁷ (1986) Ngugi's Devil on the Cross is directed at the peasantry and the working-class.

Through it he intends to sharpen the revolutionary consciousness of the people and mobilize them into taking action against their leaders. Members of the middle-class who cannot read Gikuyu because of the multi-lingual nature of Kenya can benefit from Ngugi's translation. Alongside their Gikuyu middle-class compeers they can learn Ngugi's message, based on revolutionary zeal, that the political consciousness of the peasants and workers has matured. He reveals that as a class they will no longer accept their position as passive victims of bourgeois misrule.

Notwithstanding the linguistic diversion between Ngugi and Lamming, our discussion has revealed that they have continued to treat common political themes addressed to different audiences. Their ideological diversion, which will be discussed in the next and final chapter, will also reveal that they continue to share a common interest in the political destiny of their nations and their peoples, who have in the contemporary period remained victims of bad leadership.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. Kwame Nkrumah, Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stages of Imperialism (London: Nelson, 1965) p. 41.
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3. Brian Crozier, p. 22.
4. Kwame Nkrumah, p. 50.
5. Tony Thorndike, "The Political Economy of Independence of the Former Associated States of the Commonwealth Caribbean", in Dual Legacies in the Contemporary Caribbean: Continuing Aspects of British and French Dominion ed. Paul Sutton (London, Frank Cass 1986), p. 150.
6. Kenneth Ramchand, The West Indian Novel and Its Background (1970; rpt. London, Heinemann, 1984), pp. 92 - 93.
7. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross, (London, Heinemann 1982) p. 207. The present and subsequent references will be to the cited edition with page numbers immediately following the cited passages.
8. George Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile, (London, Allison and Busby 1960; rpt. London, Allison and Busby, 1984), p. 213.
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11. C.L.R. James, Spheres of Existence: Selected Writings (Connecticut, Lawrence Hill & Co. 1980) p. 135.
12. See Ngugi wa Thiong'o's, "The Language of African Fiction", Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature (London, James Currey 1986) p. 83.
13. Edward Brathwaite, "Timehri", Savacou: A Journal of the Caribbean Artists Movement, (No. 2, Sept. 1970) p. 37.
14. Edward Brathwaite, p. 37.
15. Noel Dexter, "Folk Song Performance in the Caribbean", Caribbean Quarterly, (Vol. 29, No. 1, March 1983) p. 66.
16. R. Sander and I. Munro, "Tolstoy in Africa" an Interview with Ngugi wa Thiong'o Critical Perspectives on Ngugi wa Thiong'o, (Washington, Three Continents Press 1984) p. 48.
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18. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, p. 71.

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20. Kenneth Ramchand, The West Indian Novel and Its Background (1970; rpt. London, Heinemann, 1983), pp. 92 - 93.
21. George Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile, pp. 109 - 110.
22. Edward Brathwaite, History of the Voice: the Development of Nation-Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry (London, New Beacon Books, 1984) pp. 5-6.
23. George Lamming, "Prospero's Other Island", Bookmark, B.B.C. T.V. 2, 27th Nov. 1986.
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25. Mary Jo Willeford, "Bajan Dialect: English or Sudanic?" BLM (Vol. II, No. 44, Jan. - June 1967) p. 270.
26. Mary Jo Willeford, p. 270.
27. C. Cagnolo, The Akikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore (Nyeri, Kenya: The Mission Printing School, 1933) p. 166.
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50. C. Cagnolo, "Kikuyu Tales", African Studies (Vol. 12, 1952-53) p. 64.
51. Ruth Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa, p. 355.
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53. Ngumbu Njururi, pp. 11 - 13.
54. Maureen Warner-Lewis, Africa and the Caribbean: The Legacies of a Link, p. 115.
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59. Ruth Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa, pp. 286-7.
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65. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, p. 115.
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67. Chimalum Nwankwo, "Ngugi's Revolutionary Ambience", rev. of Devil on the Cross, by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Obsidian: Black Literature in Review, (Vol. 8, Nos. 2 & 3, Summer/Winter 1982) p. 190.
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 Because the women are the most exploited and oppressed section of the entire working class, I would create a picture of a strong, determined woman with a will to resist and to struggle against the conditions of her present being".
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89. Sam Selvon, "Calypsonian", West Indian Stories ed. Andrew Salkey (London, Faber and Faber 1960) pp. 106 - 115.
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CHAPTER SIX

THE WRITER AND NEO-COLONIALISM

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of Petals of Blood (1977) and Natives of My Person (1971), two novels which represent the highpoint of their writers' political commitment. As we saw in the Introduction, both novels represent the third stage of the writers as political novelists. They both go far deep into the history of Kenya and West Indies but deal essentially with the contemporary societies of their settings. Both offer deep analyses of the modern period partly tracing the predicament of the present to the past. Ngugi traces the beginning of the economic exploitation of Kenya's ordinary people to a period well before the beginning of colonialism. Colonialism intensified it and brought it to its apogee in the contemporary period, with the imposition of neo-colonial capitalism. Lamming sees the neo-colonial predicament of the West Indies as going back to the very remote past, which is why he complexly relates in Natives of My Person, the Atlantic slave trade with the contemporary problems of his society. The writers also offer diagnoses of the problems of society and of human beings with Ngugi attributing malignancy mainly to the political system of Kenya, and Lamming arguing that malignancy is deeply rooted in human beings. This major difference is dictated by Ngugi's development into a Marxist radical seeing hope for change in his society essentially through a political revolution, and Lamming, who has remained a deeply psychological novelist, advocating, as a matter of priority, an internal cure to the West Indian neo-colonial predicament.

Since the novels under examination are primarily concerned with the neo-colonial period of their nations, they necessarily focus on and attack, directly or indirectly, the political ideology of capitalism which underpins and sustains neo-colonialism in third

world nations.

However, the aim of the chapter is not only to show the authors' dissatisfaction with the onset of neo-colonialism in their respective societies. It also sets out to determine whether the novels under analysis have satisfied the criteria of 'good' political novels, that is novels which aspire to pass as works of art, while having politics as their subject matter. In the case of Petals of Blood, a 'proletarian novel,' the chapter will seek to determine whether in it Ngugi has produced a Marxist novel that conforms with the tenets of good 'socialist art' as enunciated by Ernst Fischer and other Marxist literary theoreticians. In the case of Natives of My Person an experimental novel, which speaks about the past as a way of speaking about the West Indian neo-colonial present, the chapter will seek to determine whether it meets the challenge of a novel which tries to combine politics and art. It will try to determine, whether in the words of Irving Howe in Politics and the Novel (1961), "what the violent intrusion of politics does to, and perhaps for, the literary imagination"¹ and to the work itself?

The similarities between the two novelists here can be accounted for by their anti-capitalist stance and also because they were both responding to a more-or-less similar expression of a political phenomena in which majority of third world nations were engulfed following political independence. The differences between them can be attributed to their ideological divergence and to the fact that although they were both responding to neo-colonialism they were also operating within different social and political milieus.

Both writers are deeply concerned about the fate of their communities in neo-colonial Kenya and West Indies, where the

ordinary people are portrayed in both Petals of Blood and Natives of My Person as victims of abandonment, brutal exploitation and betrayal, all manifestations of political irresponsibility by the political and business elite, who constitute the ruling class in these societies. This message is conveyed by the novelists through different methods.

Ngugi offers a scathing attack on the political elite in neo-colonial Kenya for turning a blind eye to its responsibilities with dire consequences for the ruled. When Petals of Blood opens, the inhabitants of Old Ilmorog are going through a severe drought.

This is shown threatening the very livelihood of the occupants of Ngugi's fictional village, whose Member of Parliament is not even aware of the tribulations his electorate is going through until a delegation is sent to Nairobi to inform him. The drought has become a topic of discussion in every household amongst the herdsmen who have lost most of their livestock and the peasants who have been rendered inactive and impoverished due to lack of rainfall:

With little to do in the fields everybody's nerves seemed affected by the dust and the searing sun and people would often quarrel for nothing. They all knew but did not want to accept that there would be only one season that year. As if forewarned of meagre harvest, the traders who usually came and bought the produce to take away to the cities this time did not appear.²

During the drought, Munira, a school teacher arrives in town and joins the villagers in trying to survive the harsh conditions in Ilmorog, a microcosm of neo-colonial Kenya. Munira's school is described as "a four-roomed barrack with broken walls, a tin roof with gaping holes and more spiders' webs and the wings and heads of dead flies"(p.5). Like Ilmorog, the

school is abandoned, by those in whose care it is entrusted.

Mzigo, a school inspector, rarely pays a visit there and when later he takes an interest in Ilmorog, he simply goes there to oversee his shop rather than to inspect the school. (p.274)

Its decrepit, barren nature thus reflects the condition of Ilmorog, a "waterless, rainless cloister" (p.96) whose inhabitants are left to suffer from the vagaries of natural and man-made disasters.

It is however to man-created problems that Ngugi draws our attention in Petals of Blood revealing the inadequacy of neo-colonial capitalism as a system and the treachery of the local middle-class who support it, thereby creating hardship for the ruled and dashing their dreams for progress in neo-colonial Kenya.

The Ilmorog M.P. Nderi wa Riera has abandoned the members of his constituency and their problems. He only visits the village when an election is around the corner in order to scout for votes. (p.18) He collects the hard-earned savings of the villagers ostensibly for a Harambee water project. (p.116) But he uses it as a collateral for a bank loan with which "he bought shares in companies and invested in land, in housing and in small business" (p.174). When the Ilmorog delegation visit Nderi wa Riera in Nairobi, Abdulla illustrates the betrayal of the people by their elected representative through a parable involving a Hare and an Antelope who both fell into a hole. The Hare promises to help the Antelope out by climbing on his back. When he is safely out on "dry sunny ground" (p.179) he starts to walk away forgetting the Antelope, which represents the common people who are now entrapped in poverty. Nderi wa Riera has now accumulated wealth and he therefore no longer belongs in the same category as the common people on whose shoulders he rode to power.

Ngugi also reveals how individuals in contemporary Kenya are victims of an unjust political system ran by a set of leaders whose humanity has been eroded by the very system they operate.

He conveys this message mainly through an elaborate use of flower symbolism, which he relates to certain characters in the story. The symbolism speaks of stunted growth, violation and destruction, which Ngugi wants us to link with the characters.

The flower which Munira's pupils encounter in a practical lesson early in the story is associated with the fate of Wanja. The pupils tell Munira that they have seen a blighted flower with "no stigma or pistils...inside" (p.21). Munira tells them that the moth-eaten flower cannot bear fruit. That's why we must always kill worms...A flower can also become this colour if it's prevented from reaching the light."(p.22)

Wanja is seen as a flower who has been prevented from reaching the light in neo-colonial Kenya. Her past life reveals that Wanja is a victim of sexual brutalization as a school pupil, an event which terminates her educational career, denying her the chance to fully develop her potentialities. (pp.38-40) The villain is Kimeria, formerly a transporter of Mau Mau bodies killed by the colonial forces, now a business tycoon with shares in the industrial sector of New Ilmorog. As a result of her exposure to the harsh realities of capitalist Kenya she is kept from the light and therefore denied the opportunity of living the life of a decent citizen.

Apart from the fact that Wanja's sexual brutalization by Kimeria is an expression of the rough deal women have to endure being "the most unequal among unequals"³ in neo-colonial Kenya, her experience is symptomatic of the callousness of the ruling

class towards the underprivileged whom they exploit with impunity. Having been responsible for her expulsion from school, Kimeria sexually exploits Wanja again on her way to the city in the company of the Ilmorog delegation. (pp.155-7) There are obvious links between the sexual brutalization and the buying out later of Wanja from her Theng'eta business by Kimeria, his compeers and an Anglo-American multi-national company. (p.281) Both represent the taking away of something of value from its owner by the powerful on account of the powerlessness of the owner, in this case the Kenyan masses being the victim of their power elite who remorselessly exploit them. Karega too can be seen as a flower and his experiences in neo-colonial Kenya illustrate the destructive capacity of a socio-political system that denies highly gifted Kenyans the chance to develop their natural abilities and potentialities. He is expelled from school for spearheading a strike to protest against a college curriculum which he views as irrelevant in the Kenyan context. (p.170) From then onwards he hovered between joblessness and failure to keep a steady job because of his radical ideas, which his employers cannot accommodate. He then graduates from a sheepskin seller to a trade unionist - all of this a long and seemingly interminable odyssey, which however pays back for allowing him an insight into neo-colonial Kenya and how best, in Ngugi's view (since Karega is his ideological alter-ego) to approach Kenya's predicament, an issue to which we shall return later.

Earlier on, when Munira meets Karega drunk and dejected in a local bar he observes, "How...could the young, the bright and the hopeful deteriorate so? Was there no way of using their

energies and dreams to a purpose higher than the bottle, the juke box and sickness on a cement floor?". (p.103) Karega himself, when later Wanja tells him that she joined the exploitative camp of the Chuis and the Mzigos so as to beat them at their own game, laments the dog-eat-dog nature of contemporary Kenya where the power elite strangle the weak and intercept the economic benefits brought by Uhuru:

Had he not seen this since he was forced out of school? Had he not himself lived this truth in Mombasa, Nairobi, on the tea and coffee plantations? On the wheat and sugar estates and in the sugar mills? This was the society they were building since Independence, a society in which a black few, allied to other interests from Europe, would continue the colonial regime of robbing others of their sweat, denying them the right to grow to full flowers in air and sunlight. (p.294)

If Wanja and Karega are depicted as flowers blighted by the parasitic worms that have been identified as the Kenyan middle-class elite, Abdulla's experiences illustrate the fact that neo-colonial Kenya cares little for veteran Mau Mau fighters who sacrificed their youthful energy and even limbs for the nation's freedom.

Following independence Abdulla waited in vain for land reforms and redistribution and is shocked to realize that he doesn't stand a chance to own part of the land which he and his comrades fought hard to regain. When he wanted to acquire a farm left by a departing European, Abdulla realized to his mortification that the system is constructed in such a way that only the wealthy can reap its benefit. He finds out to his consternation that contemporary Kenya is a:

new Kenya. No free things. Without money you cannot buy land: and without land and property you cannot get a bank loan to start business or buy land. (p.254)

This situation is illustrative of the tendency of Kenya's ruling class throughout 1960's and 1970's to use the slogan "Hakuna cha bure, the Swahili equivalent of "You cannot get something for nothing."⁴ According to Chris Leo in Land and Class in Kenya (1984):

Jomo Kenyatta expressed that sentiment when he was explaining his reasons for accepting a colonial settlement of the land question. 'We do not believe in being given this or that free, he said, ' I do not want Africans to adopt that attitude. I want them to work with their own hands on a piece of land. Hakuna cha bure... became a central proposition in the individualist ideology underpinning Kenya's political and economic system.⁵ (my emphasis)

But the irony of this in Abdulla's case is that he is unable to secure a piece of land on which to work. Neither is he able to secure a job in a manufacturing company ostensibly because of his crippled leg, an injury which he sustained during the Mau Mau struggle. They tell him that free things do not exist in New Kenya; if he wanted free things he should "go to Tanzania or China." (p.255) But we know that Abdulla is not looking for free things. His career as a shopkeeper and a donkey cart transporter reveals that if given a chance, Abdulla can be industrious. His inability to get a job is thus meant to put across the hostility of the new system to the small man whose limited chances of progress are blocked at each turn. However, the company which denies Abdulla a job has offered Kimeria (who had in the past betrayed both Abdulla and his comrade Ndinguri to the colonial regime) a lucrative contract. (p.255) As Abdulla is about to leave the company's premises, frustrated, he sights Kimeria "in a black suit [coming out of a] Mercedes Benz" (p.255) an episode which is meant to illustrate the marginalization in Kenya of the underprivileged from Uhuru benefits while "Kenya's

new bourgeoisie were offered privileged access to land and were able to use franchises, directorships, and trading licences as avenues to wealth easily- or not earned at all. Mwenye nguvu mpishe - Power will have its way."⁶

Later when full-scale industrialization comes to Ilmorog, it is again the powerless members of the community who are depicted as victims of a political system which ministers only to the needs of the ruling class and their foreign allies. When the peasant narrator announces the birth of New Ilmorog, he shows Nderi wa Riera openly campaigning for big business among his own people. With the plan of Chiri County Council to build a shopping centre in Ilmorog in mind, Nderi wa Riera has disclosed that:

A few acres of land would...be taken from the people for the purpose, but the County Council would pay adequate compensation. Then as a result of his representations... it had been decided to develop the whole area into ranches and wheat fields. A tourist centre would be set up and a game park further on would be enclosed and made out of bounds for the herdsmen. People, whether herdsmen or ordinary farmers, would be given loans to develop their land and their ranches. But first people had to register their lands in order to acquire title-deeds which in turn would act as security with the banks. (p.267)

It turns out when Nyakinyua and other Ilmorog peasants accept loans from the African Economic Bank they are falling into a trap set by the apostles of big business. Unable to pay back the loans during the period earmarked, their lands are, in the spirit of acquisitive materialism, auctioned to the highest bidders. (p.275)

The tribulations of the Ilmorog peasants worsened following their ejection from their original homesteads. They are forced to move to the shanty town of New Ilmorog as tenants where they will now be subjected to the whims of shylock landlords. (p.283)

One of the development projects which happened at the same time as the bank in Ilmorog is the Trans-Africa highway. Ostensibly meant to facilitate international communication (pp.263-4), in reality it is aimed, like the railway line in A Grain of Wheat (significantly called the Iron Snake) to allow multi-national companies such as "Lonrho, Shell, Esso, Total [and] Agip" (p.263) easy access to the hinterland. A powerful symbol, the road is thus a harbinger of the major social changes in Ilmorog, which result in economic progress for the Kenyan bourgeoisie, but the strangulation of the ordinary people, displaced from their lands and forced to earn a living as proletariat. Those who, like Wanja and Abdulla, have started selling Theng'eta to "the builders, carpenters, masons [and] contractors" (p.270) in New Ilmorog are sold out of business by the combined team of Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria and their foreign partners. (p.281) This pushed Wanja into full-scale prostitution and transformed Abdulla into an orange seller. Thus the story of progress in Ilmorog means a catalogue of woes, dashed hopes and shattered dreams for the ordinary people, who have been identified by Ngugi as victims of abandonment, betrayal, neglect and economic exploitation by the ruling class of neo-colonial Kenya.

The fate of the Kenyan masses is also shared by the West Indian ordinary people, who are portrayed by Lamming as victims of the political irresponsibility of their power elite. In Natives of My Person, Lime Stone represents contemporary West Indies, the community whose fate under the neo-colonial dispensation Lamming has intensively explored. He reveals the picture of a nation in which political power is under the monopoly of a

commercial institution.

Although Lime Stone has a house of parliament, political and economic decisions emanate from the all-powerful House of Trade and Justice headed by the morally corrupt Lord Treasurer, Gabriel Tate de Lysle. The author invites a comparison between the Lord Treasurer and Tate and Lyle, a multi-national sugar company, which has monopoly over the sugar industries based in West Indian islands such as Trinidad, Jamaica and British Honduras.⁷ As we noted in the Introduction, Tate and Lyle is one of the several multi-national corporations which, in spite of independence, have continued to control both the politics and the economy of West Indies. In a similar vein, George Beckford argues that:

...today we find throughout the West Indies government administrations comprised of black people who essentially exercise authority and control on behalf of their financial backers - the white planter, commercial and industrial classes that remain for the most part in that background of political activity.⁸

The links which Lamming seeks to establish between the Lord Treasurer and monopoly capitalism are meant to indicate that the House of Trade and Justice plays a role similar to that of a multi-national company in the West Indies. Tate and Lyle has control over the West Indian economy just as the Lord Treasurer controls the coffers of Lime Stone. The power which the Lord Treasurer wields enables him to manipulate ordinary citizens as well as the social institutions of Lime Stone to his advantage.

He uses his position to steal the navigation charts belonging to Steward and tenders them to the House as his own. (p.209) He builds an orphanage in his own name ostensibly to assist the poor. But in reality it is a clandestine tactic to use the nubile inmates and consolidate his hold over men of

easy virtue as well as satisfy his unbridled sexual desire.

(p.139) He does all this through the House of Trade and Justice, which in actual fact, is obsessed more with creating wealth for the minority elite than in dispensing justice to the poor, who are on the receiving end of a neo-colonial capitalist political system.

In neo-colonial Kenya too, as we saw, multi-national corporations such as the Anglo-American combine, play decisive roles in the economic life of the nation. With the assistance of the local elite, such corporations contribute in the pauperization of the ordinary people. As we saw, the Anglo-American combine engineers the dispossession of Wanja and Abdulla from their land and Theng'eta business, transforming Abdulla into an orange seller (p.284) and pushing Wanja into full-scale prostitution as a brothel owner.(p.293)

Likewise, the control and manipulation of wealth by the House of Trade and Justice has resulted in abject poverty of the majority of people in Lime Stone who are portrayed as victims of an exploitative political system. This is why men "of every age and sex" in Lime Stone can be seen:

plundering nature in the countryside. No sheep can trust the wool it wears when the Kingdom's army of vagabonds grows so large; men made barbarous and bitter by their hunger, eating rats and feeding off the very roots of plants not yet a day in the ground. Not a rose, dandelion, or the wildest undergrowth of weed can escape this savage massacre of men who battle with swine for their daily meal. From childhood to the grave there are men who have never known the ordinary smell of bread.⁹

Hunger, oppression and marginalization are all seen in Natives of My Person as symptoms of social inequality, an aspect of the West Indian body politic which Lamming singles out for

attack. This picture is vividly conveyed through the material condition of the ship crew recruited by the Commandant for his voyage to San Cristobal. The men are:

a fairly typical reflection of the continent of Lime Stone. Unfortunately born, or with appetites out of all proportion to their status, they had found in the ship their last chance of rescue from the perils of the land...Some had no memory for the laws which ruled their Region, and so regarded the sea as their safest home. Others had to flee from the ancient afflictions deriving from religious contention in the Kingdom. But hunger had recruited most of the men. (p.13)

The Commandant himself is vehemently opposed to the system that concentrates wealth in a few hands and marginalizes the poor. (p.55) A 'revolutionary', one of his motivations for the journey is to "break loose" from a morally decadent socio-political system, and create a new society. Thus both the Commandant and the crew attempt to escape from a system they have found unacceptable: the crew because they are victims of exploitation, the Commandant because he finds it morally repugnant.

However, Lamming effectively exposes the pretensions of his main character, who represents a post-colonial West Indian leader, whose action contradicts his statements and who is liable to use the ordinary people as pawns. Accordingly he reveals that the Commandant is guilty of deception. The reader knows, through his diary, that the current expedition is different from all the others - it is not for slaves - but the crew are not aware of this until very late. (p.135) Thus there is a disparity between the set goals of the Commandant, who wants to create a new society, and those of the crew who joined the expedition, essentially "driven by a vision of gold." (p.13) The intention of the Commandant is to use the ordinary people as objects in his

idealistic plans asking them to "sail for a purpose not to their knowing" (p.132). His comment to Steward later in the journey that "I would rather lose half of any crew in natural adversity than have a single example of doubt cast on my action"(p.184) portrays him as a dictator whose caprices must predominate over the views of his followers. Thus although he is opposed to the alienation of the masses in Lime Stone, he sees his crew as mere social units having no right to self-expression but only a function - the fulfilment of his dream. His treatment of the crew as mere objects in his ambitious plan recalls his occupation as a slaver who regarded his captives as objects to be used.

The Commandant's behaviour bears a striking resemblance to actual instances of authoritarianism and tendency to disregard public opinion in contemporary West Indian leadership. During the tenure of office of the former Trinidadian Prime Minister, Eric Williams, his decision to reinstate an erring Minister was met with some public protest. He angrily told the nation that anyone who did not like his decision should "Get to Hell outa Here." His statement became the title and subject of a calypso composition in which 'The Mighty Sparrow' satirizes the Prime Minister in this manner: "This land is mine, I am the boss/What I say goes...¹⁰ Who gave you the privilege to object?/Pay your taxes, shut up and have respect."¹¹ In this connection David Lowenthal argues that "Many West Indian leaders consider the people incapable of independent judgement, lambs to be led, children to be chastised."¹² "Viewing their positions as proof of progress, rulers in many territories tend to treat any opposition as ill-motivated if not seditious."¹³

In 1968, in response to protests against

"a seditious and undesirable Publications Act that threatened to throttle the local press, a government release urged all sections of the community to recognize that the present government is the lawfully elected government of Dominica... and not for ever try to purvey... to the world that the people of Dominica have been so foolish as to have elected a totally bad government."¹⁴

When petitioned to repeal the Act, the Premier

"replied that he had been elected and would rule as he saw fit as long as he held office".¹⁵

While the common people are subjected to the exploitative and authoritarian nature of the administration they are, furthermore, subjected to betrayal from a middle-class elite who have failed to commit themselves to the demands of their political office in neo-colonial West Indies. The West Indian ruling class bear similarity with Ngugi's middle-class characters in Petals of Blood who are willing to enjoy the economic advantages that go along with political power. But they cannot for one moment "commit themselves fully to what they felt authority over" (p. 325) in this case, the Kenyan masses who as we saw, are exploited and abandoned by their leaders.

Eventhough both writers generally treat the issue of exploitation of the masses by the elite, they, as we saw, employ different methods to convey this message. Lamming's message is symbolically conveyed through the relationship between the leaders of the expedition - representing the West Indian power elite - and their female partners representing the West Indian masses. Their relationships have mostly been characterized by abandonment, desertion, exploitation and abuse.

Earlier on we saw that Ngugi reveals that Kimeria's sexual exploitation of Wanja is not only an illustration of the degree of harassment to which women are subjected in neo-colonial Kenya, but is also a symptom of an uncaring society whose leaders ride rough-shod on the ordinary people. Sexual exploitation in Ngugi is therefore a reflection of political irresponsibility in contemporary Kenya.

Likewise, by sensitizing us to the degree of sexual exploitation of women in his society, Lamming is reflecting in fiction the violent history of the Caribbean, which in Merle Hodge's view has in the present "not evaporated...it is there in the relations between adult and child between black and white, between man and woman. It has been internalized, it has seeped down into our personal lives."¹⁶ Like Ngugi, Lamming is not merely reflecting an aspect of his environment in fiction, but is also attempting to symbolize the political irresponsibility of the West Indian elite towards the masses through the sexual exploitation of women.

But unlike Ngugi whose novel treats sexual exploitation as just one among several aspects of political exploitation in neo-colonial Kenya, Lamming, whose allegorical message lies mainly in the relationship between men and women in Natives of My Person, more elaborately than Ngugi weaves an intricate pattern between politics and sex in which marital desertion and sexual exploitation represent abdication of political responsibility. The neglect, betrayal and abuse of women by men stands for failure in political responsibility to the community of Lime Stone, where men are "made barbarous and bitter by their hunger, eating rats and feeding off the

very roots of plants not yet a day in the ground"(p.55). This pattern of sexual exploitation is portrayed in Natives of My Person through the relationship of the Commandant and his mistress and subsequently, through that of the officers and the women in their lives.

Although the Commandant's mistress "was a colony of joys given over entirely to his care"(p.65) he does not reciprocate this love. Instead he is married to his profession of 'conquest' and 'command.' "I have no plans outside my order"(p.77) he tells her, prior to his departure for yet another expedition not long after his return from another.

When his desire for his mistress is still fresh, he takes her passionately in one of the most sexually vivid scenes in Lamming's fiction. (p.65) As soon as he has had his fun, his habitual silence, which she finds even more painful than his frequent departures, predominate. The Commandant's persistent silence excludes his mistress from his world most of the time he is awake, and when he is asleep, his dreams are about his past adventures into African jungles for slaves. Although his partner shares his bed, the deep emotional involvement of the Commandant is elsewhere. As he sleeps:

There was a treasure of naked flesh in his arms, heaving and sobbing like the wind. But he couldn't feel her legs grow tight and quivering between his thighs; his desire had taken root elsewhere. An imperial joy had shipped his pride over the ocean seas. Her breast shook and heaved over his own. She was kneading her hands down the root and testicles of his strength; his sperm, however was nurturing a different soil, his star was ascending a foreign sky(p.71) (my emphases).

A comparison between the Commandant and the Jamaican John Hearne's Master Reynolds in The Sure Salvation(1981) will serve to illuminate Lamming's belief that an individual's occupation

significantly contributes in shaping his attitude towards other aspects of his life. Just as the Commandant's occupational habit - exploitation - spills over into his sex life, the occupation of Master Reynolds, a slaver, affects his sexual relationship with women. At Benguela in Angola he is offered a big coffee-coloured girl who had been tickled and strung up in order to attract his attention to no avail. "That was never my way" he reveals, "Proffered goods are insipid and of little value in the long run. To take to seize to hold. And to dispose of what has been taken when one grows weary of it or sees a greater prize."¹⁷ His statement is illustrated when he intercepts Mtishta (who becomes his mistress on board 'Sure Salvation') in the same manner as he would waylay a slave before capturing him, "As the first woman began her descent, Reynolds had reached into the thick of the slowly moving cluster, closed his hand round a wrist and pulled a girl out, drawing her to his side and then behind him..."(p.78). Although he reveals in a reminiscence that he feels more than mere lust for Mtishta his treatment of her as a sexual object reveals that his sexual habit is undoubtedly a product of his professional habit. (p.81) Likewise, the Commandant's treatment of slaves as objects guides his relationship with his mistress whom he takes when he needs her and neglects afterwards. His sexual habit is a reflection of his occupation. In both, the story is that of exploitation without commitment.

Although Lamming, an experimental writer, does not conform with the nineteenth-century realism, his depiction of characters conforms with a technique which Leo Tolstoy had used and George Lukács singled out for praise. This technique surfaces:

In individual traits which on the surface seem to have nothing to do with exploitation-in what his characters think of the most abstract problems, in the fashions in which they make love, and in many other things, Tolstoy demonstrates with admirable realist artistry-which instead of merely analysing and commenting, renders palpably obvious the true existential inter-connections-the link between such traits in his characters and the parasitic nature of their existence.¹⁸

Surgeon has consistently maintained an exploitative relationship with his wife. His opportunism is so acute that he will stop at nothing to further his ambition to progress materially. He unjustifiably sends his wife to a mental asylum on the ostensible reason that she has been blocking his chances for advancement.(p.175) If it does not suit her mental temperament, her new environment, however qualifies her to assume responsibility for a scandal of medical supplies in which he is involved. She does so willingly, out of love, thus staving off the possibility of her husband being prosecuted. (p.338) Surgeon pursues his love of prosperity as vigorously as he attends to his appetite for food. During the Christmas dinner on board "Reconnaissance,"

Surgeon wore that blissful, remote look of a horse chewing in sleep. He had a habit of soaking the dry prunes in his wine; then he would suck for a moment before grazing on the acrid black flesh. His temples inflated while he ate, as though tubes were pumping air up to his head. (p.155)

Thus if his relationship with his wife reveals the exploitative attitude of men towards women in Lime Stone, his eating habit portrays him both as a ravenous slaver and a member of the West Indian middle-class elite whose unhealthy material appetite enables him to exploit people entrusted to his care with impunity. He also typifies the post-colonial middle-class bourgeoisie that Frantz Fanon mentioned in The Wretched of the Earth (1967); a member of an unproductive but voracious class of consumers of what others have produced in metropolitan countries.

It is through Steward—also guilty of marital abandonment—that Lamming most vividly conveys the blindness characterizing the relationship between men and women in *Lime Stone*. Like the Commandant who erroneously believes that expensive jewellery is all that his mistress needs from him (p.64), Steward too suffers from a blindness which prevents him from realizing that all his wife requires from him is love rather than material gifts. (p.189) Steward unjustifiably accuses his wife of envy and greed because she insists that he must get back his navigation charts stolen by the Lord Treasurer. (p.209) But they live in a highly competitive society and his wife wants him to find a secure place in it, because he "had become...a native of my person" (p.334) the only person whom she loves, but Steward's moral blindness will not let him see that. And what Surgeon sees as the "tyrannical virtue of his wife" (p.177) is in reality, unqualified love, as Pinteados, the allegorical interpreter of the story, discloses (p.178); and as she herself reveals in her assertion that whenever his interest is concerned "I simply chose on his behalf" (p.334) because "He was a piece of my person" (p.333). Her assertion is proved by her confession to the medical supplies offence he committed against the House of Trade and Justice. (p.338) Undoubtedly, Lamming meant their inability to properly understand their women to serve as an index of their moral blindness. Their concern with materialism has overshadowed their sense of responsibilities to those whose care is entrusted with them. Their attempts to link the motive of their expedition with care for their women is phoney. It only provides them with an opportunity to desert them and engage in their professional pursuits to which they are emotionally linked.

Lanning resumes his consistent attack on the political system of Lime Stone through the complex relationship between the Lady of the House, the Lord Treasurer and Boatswain. In the web of relationships between the three, a society is portrayed in which individuals use others without regard for their feelings. In a marriage of convenience, the Lady of the House, whose name connotes prostitution, uses the Lord Treasurer to secure 'Reconnaissance' which she presents to her lover the Commandant. (p.283) She wants to put her affair with her lover back to normal and sees the influential Lord Treasurer as a tool who can bestow a "rescue which some men cannot afford, and only husbands are able to provide!"(p.349) For satisfying her material needs, the Lord Treasurer can keep her at home since his "status required a Lady for his parlour!"(p.349) Deserted by the Commandant and kept simply as a ceremonial wife by the Lord Treasurer, who rummages "like a common dog for his sex outside" (p.349), the Lady of the House uses Boatswain in despair, not only for sexual gratification but also as a tool to ward off the boredom of her loneliness. (p.345) Boatswain allows himself to be used by the Lady so as to "make contact with her husband"(p.260) and secure a lucrative maritime assignment. A man uncertain of his status, Boatswain is ready to try anything to achieve a semblance of manhood in a highly competitive society where "everyday you hear of a new adventure. East and West in every corner of the earth men are declaring fortunes that make your head swim" (p.187). Because he believes she has violated him by reducing him to a mere instrument, Boatswain attacks the Lady of the House and leaves her for dead in a church. (p.261) But in reality the violation is reciprocal since, as we observed, each uses the other as an object. Each of them is a prostitute:

Boatswain in his relationship with the Lady and the Lady in her relationship with the Lord Treasurer. The Lady even goes to the extent of admitting her own whoredom. In the last section of the novel, she argues that her whoredom:

is also the whoredom of the House of Trade and Justice. It is the national principle of the Continent of Lime Stone. What safer consolation or protection can a citizen have than to know that his private vice is the nation's religion? (p.349).

The Lady's testimony that prostitution is both a private and public vice and that there "were rumours of adulterous living in [the ruling circles]" (p.260) reveals that the prostitution metaphor is linked with the political corruption of leaders who exploit the ordinary people in contemporary West Indies. Alongside the several stories of sexual exploitation, the Lady's testimony exposes the picture of a morally corrupt nation in need of a collective therapy and purgation.

Thus Lamming's and Ngugi's use of the prostitution metaphor in their novels coincide. If Lamming's use of it is linked to the political corruption of Lime Stone, a society in which the leaders view ordinary people as objects, Ngugi's use of it is intimately connected with his portrayal of neo-colonial Kenya as a dog-eat-dog society where the powerful oppress the weak with impunity. Karega alerts us to the fact that prostitution is a national principle in neo-colonial Kenya, characterized as it is by frenzied competition and social inequality:

We are all prostitutes, for in a world of grab and take, in a world built on a structure of inequality and injustice, in a world where some can eat while others can only toil, some can send their children to schools and others cannot, in a world where a prince, a monarch, a businessman can sit on billions while people starve or hit their heads against church walls for divine deliverance from hunger...we are all prostituted. [We are all victims]. (p.240)

Thus for Ngugi, prostitution is seen in terms of cut-throat competition and economic exploitation, which constitute the Kenyan national principle, as it does that of Lamming's society. Both writers see the two ladies, depicted as actual prostitutes in their stories, as proponents as well as victims of neo-colonial capitalism. Both Wanja and the Lady of the House use others and are also used by others in societies where leaders have lost compassion for the led and are willing to employ any means to maintain the exploitative systems.

Both writers believe that the successful maintenance of the capitalist system rests upon the use of organized religion behind which members of the elite hide to exploit the masses. This is why both Ngugi and Lamming, anti-capitalist novelists, undermine it and expose the holy pretensions of its exponents who are morally bankrupt and use religion merely to prop the system of exploitation.

Through Ezekieli Waweru, a respected member of the Presbyterian church whose material advancement is closely tied with his embrace of the new faith, when it first came to Kenya in 1895, Ngugi seeks to establish a link between Christianity and acquisitive materialism. (p.90) Although Ezekieli Waweru masquerades as a holy man complete with his exalted Presbyterian position, his moral corruption is illustrated by his advances to sexually exploit Karega's mother, a member of his plantation workforce. (p.58) His pretensions as a holy figure are thus exposed so that his link with the sinister Kamwene Cultural Organization (KCO) can be more convincingly established.

In order to expose how religion is used to buttress the system of private ownership in neo-colonial Kenya, Ngugi alerts us to the

"new alliance of the church and K.C.O."(p.96), which is ostensibly "a cultural organization to bring unity and harmony...between the rich and the poor"(p.95). But in reality, it is a coercive instrument designed to "defend the holdings of the rich"¹⁹. It does so by organizing oathing ceremonies in which the ordinary people are forced, sometimes violently, to swear loyalty to the Gikuyu tribe and protect their "hard-won property and accumulation of sweat [which is under threat from] another tribe"(p.85). Ezekiel Waweru, the architect of the K.C.O. provides a religious justification for the oathing, arguing that it "is for peace and unity and it is in harmony with God's eternal design"(p.95).

The use of oathing ceremonies, which the Kenyan elite preach are sanctioned by religion, historically recalls the appeal to tribal sentiments by the Gikuyu bourgeoisie in 1969 "to keep the government in Kikuyu hands,"²⁰ following the assassination of a popular Luo politician, Tom Mboya. He was seen by the Gikuyu power brokers as a threat to the Gikuyu monopoly of the presidential seat, then occupied by the ageing Jomo Kenyatta. Following the assassination, engineered by the Gikuyu-dominated security service (General Service Unit), it might have occurred to the Gikuyu elite that popular support and sympathy might swing into the Luo direction. The Gikuyus therefore decided to take a step to avert this possible development.

According to Chris Leo, the ruling party "K.A.N.U.; in order to solidify its political support, resorted to a campaign of compulsory oath-taking across Kikuyu country".²¹ "In Nyadarua, people who expressed their reluctance to take the oath were harassed and threatened"²² and "a good deal of violence was used

against reluctant oath-takers."²³ The violent aspect of the ceremony is exemplified by Ngugi, in Petals of Blood, through the picture of a recalcitrant participant at the oathing ceremony who is hit "with a flat panga by a man who emerged from nowhere and as suddenly disappeared into nowhere"(p.92). Also another peasant who refused to take the oath, narrates Munira, who had been to Gatundu for "tea," a euphemism for the ceremony, is beaten "in front of us. They stepped on his neck and pressed it with their boots against the floor, and only when he made animal noises did they stop"(p.93). In the view of M. Tamarkin, "political stability [in neo-colonial Kenya] is enhanced by the emasculation of the masses as a political factor...stability is [also] served by a policy which combines a selective use of coercion against disruptive elements"²⁴ such as those who are reluctant to take the oath to protect the wealth of Kenya's power elite, who are as willing to use physical violence as they are ready to use religion to protect their economic interests.

Like Ngugi, Lamming too undermines Christianity and exposes it for what it is: an instrument put in the service of neo-colonial capitalism. Lamming reveals the link of slavery with the system, through Priest who, as we shall see represents the religious arm of capitalism, an endorsement of Eric Williams's assertion in Capitalism and Slavery (1944) that the church (consisting of the Jesuist, Dominican and Franciscan denominations) did support the slave trade.²⁵ If Ngugi reveals how the holy pretensions of his religious figures is phoney because it is only skin-deep, Lamming reveals how the power of sin frustrates the spiritual

efforts of Priest on board 'Reconnaissance,' notably during the death of the Commandant and two officers, when he discovers that he had "lost the power to name that word which would bring them within the orbit of Your mercy"(p.329). Also just as Ezekiel uses religion to justify coercion through KCO to defend the wealth of the privileged class in Kenya, Lamming has Priest defend the slave trade and consequently his economic interest and that of his sponsors. We know of this through his reminiscence of "the glorious days when faith was a weapon in his hands and men waged a war with words to justify some divinity of right over these black cargoes" (p.116).

A West Indian novelist concerned to probe the slave past of the West Indies so as to provide an understanding of the present, Lamming goes on to show how simplistic assumptions are made to link slavery with salvation, here echoing how certain European slavers tried to psychologically cope with the burden of enslaving human beings. In Capitalism and Slavery (1944) Eric Williams speaks of an elder of the Church in Newport who before the arrival of a slave ship from the coast would thank God that "another cargo of benighted beings had been brought to a land where they could have the benefit of a gospel dispensation."²⁶ This corresponds with the depiction of how enslavement of their counterparts taken to the New World is viewed by Pierre in Natives of My Person. Pierre deceives himself into thinking that slavery equals "great liberation"(p.128), so that the capture of human beings for sale can be a religious mission. As one of the recruits of the Commandant on 'Reconnaissance', Pierre believes that he is a religious figure out on a missionary enterprise to save the "heathens" from the iniquities of their own leaders for, when eventually transported to Lime Stone, they "do

show a great improvement in their nature, which being slow to change, may yet if it be the will of God approximate in time to some resemblance of a true Christian piety" (p.128). Since we know that slavery is not liberation but naked exploitation and bondage, the character of Pierre reveals the false pretension of the champions of a religion whose aim is to 'civilize' and 'enlighten' even as they economically exploit, an enterprise which in Lamming's view has far reaching psychological consequences.

We noted in Chapter One that although both Kenya and Barbados had been exposed to colonialism the latter and in fact, majority of West Indian islands experienced a longer period of imperialist domination. The psychic wounds left on the West Indian are therefore arguably more profound than those left on his Kenyan counterpart who had a rich traditional culture before the advent of colonialism and whose colonial tutelage began in 1895 and lasted only sixty eight years. We argued that this difference dictated the varying approaches of the two writers to cultural identity: while Ngugi's characters are concerned with its recovery, Lamming's, attempt to create their own unique identity from the colonial and the inherited African traditions.

But the exposure of Kenya and West Indies to the neo-colonial dispensation started roughly at the same time when in the early sixties political independence was granted to several nations in Africa and in the West Indies.

Nevertheless, there is a difference of emphasis between Ngugi's and Lamming's portrayal of the impact of neo-colonialism on their societies. This can be attributed to the fact that Lamming sees the neo-colonial dispensation in the West Indies as an extension of

the long history of slavery and colonial exploitation. This is one of the reasons why he complexly relates, in Natives of My Person, the Atlantic slave trade with the neo-colonial predicament of the West Indies. He therefore sees the psyche of the West Indian as having been seriously tampered with, hence his emphasis on the internal damage. As we saw in Chapter Three, this gave rise to the intensification of Lamming's psychological view of the West Indian predicament, encouraging him to underplay the socio-economic and give prominence to the psychological aspect of neo-colonialism.

Although Ngugi too views the neo-colonial predicament of Kenya within a wider historical context of the White settlement of East Africa, and acknowledges its psychological impact on his characters, as a Marxist radical, he underplays the psychological and gives prominence to the socio-economic dimension of neo-colonial capitalism.

Although Ngugi puts emphasis on the socio-economic dimension of capitalism in Petals of Blood, he acknowledges but refuses to fully develop the psychological impact of neo-colonialism on his characters. Wanja refers to all the four main characters, including herself, as psychological casualties with "maimed souls... looking for a cure" in Ilmorog. (p. 73) But it is only two of them whose psychological problems can be directly linked to capitalism and its champions. Wanja is a psychological casualty in contemporary Kenya, a victim of her past life of sexual brutalization which she in vain tries to put behind her. Following Kimeria's sexual abuse of Wanja as an adolescent she becomes pregnant, delivers a child and casts it away, an event which clings to her memory, constantly torturing her. (p. 292) This psychological burden is behind her life

of wandering searching for love, understanding and another child as she confesses to Karega, Munira and Abdulla when they visit her at Sunshine Lodge. (pp.291-2)

Abdulla too is portrayed as a psychological casualty. His psychological problem, which is remotely connected with neo-colonial capitalism, is over non-fulfilment of a vow he takes to avenge his and Ndinguri's betrayal by Kimeria. (p.224) Munira's psychological burden is not as much related to neo-colonial capitalism as it is linked to his Christian background, which we shall discuss later. All this indicate that although Ngugi acknowledges the psychological dimension of capitalism in Petals of Blood, he is not really very much interested in exploring it as much as he is keen to probe the socio-economic aspect of it.

We have earlier on noted how the Kenyan peasantry are victims of a physical drought. When the authorities become aware of the plight of Ilmorog they seek to 'correct' it with development projects such as the Trans-African Road and African Economic Bank. As we saw, these manifestations of 'progress' turn out to be more devastating on the masses than the drought which nearly brought life to a standstill in Ilmorog. In the wake of the new 'development projects,' Njuguna is economically ruined when his four sons return from the city and asked for their own shares of the ten-acre farm, which they exchanged for money. "Njuguna was a sad man," having been left with only "two acres that remained to him." (p.268)

Ngugi further sensitizes us to the socio-economic consequence of capitalism in Petals of Blood by revealing that most of the villagers displaced from their lands have been transformed into an urban proletariat. The author takes us through the consciousness of Munira as the economic degradation of the villagers passed through it:

Wambui, Muriuki's mother, was staggering behind the handles of a wheelbarrow piled high with stones. The demarcation and the fencing off of land had deprived a lot of tillers and herdsmen of their hitherto unquestioned rights of use and cultivation. Now they were hiring themselves out to any who needed their labour for a wage. Wambui, a labourer! Now she had joined others who had been drawn into Ilmorog's market for sweat and labour. (pp. 272-3)

The dispossession of Nyakinyua by the African Economic Bank is representative of the fate of several Ilmorog peasants:

She was not alone: a whole lot of peasants and herdsmen of Old Ilmorog who had been lured into loans and into fencing off their land and buying imported fertilizers and were unable to pay back were similarly affected... without much advice they had not been able to make the land yield enough to meet their food needs and pay back loans. Some had used the money to pay school fees. Now the inexorable law of the metal power was driving them from the land. (p. 275)

Nyakinyua tries in vain to organize a protest march against the dispossession of Ilmorog peasants. Her failure indicates that the forces of neo-colonial capitalism are very powerful and the puny efforts of Nyakinyua not effective enough to arrest the rapid deterioration of the socio-economic condition of Ilmorog peasants.

If the radicalization of Ngugi's sensibility led to his view of exploitation primarily in socio-economic terms, it also led to his view of alienation through Wanja in purely Marxian terms. We have earlier on noted that her emergence into full-scale prostitution is intimately connected with the snatching of her Theng'eta business and premises by a multi-national company and its local allies - Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria. In order to fulfil the wishes of her deceased grandmother who, following her imminent ejection, and prior to her death said "she could not... think of being buried in somebody else's land". (p. 276) Wanja has had to redeem the land using every shilling she had made from her Theng'eta business. (p. 277)

Her prostitution of herself, in order to survive, then is an expression as well as a forceful indictment of the fierce atmosphere of competition under which people live in neo-colonial Kenya. A courtesan employing other girls with whose bodies she traded at Sunshine Lodge, Wanja has succumbed to the capitalist ethos of reducing human relations and value to a cash basis:

'I carry my only property - my labour power, my hands - everywhere with me. Willing buyer... a seller who must sell... It is the life under this system.' (p.291)

If land has become a commodity whose worth can only be quantified in financial terms, it is not a surprise that under this dispensation sexual relations have also become commercialized. When Wanja invites Munira to Sunshine Lodge he is flabbergasted to realize that the warmth which has characterized his relationship with her has disappeared. As he gets ready to join her in bed she tells him in a menacing voice:

"No Mwalimu. No free things in Kenya. A hundred shillings on the table if you want high-class treatment... This is New Kenya. You want it, you pay for it, for the bed and the light and my time and the drink that I shall later give you and the breakfast tomorrow. And all for a hundred shillings. For you. Because of old times. For others it will be more expensive." (p.279)

In Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (1959) Karl

Marx rightly observes that:

"The estrangement of man, and in fact every relationship in which man [stands] to himself, is realized and expressed only in the relationship in which a man stands to other men. Hence within the relationship of estranged labour each man views the other in accordance with the standard and the relationship in which he finds himself as a worker."²⁷

Wanja is, in a Marxian sense, alienated. The measure of her alienation can be gauged by her treatment of Munira. Her attitude towards him reveals a Marxian example of alienation: she views

Munira as an object because in her relationship with others she is also treated as such. This leads to a denial of her human essence, which she sacrifices on the altar of financial advancement, the new 'language' which governs interpersonal transactions in New Ilmorog. However, she is just responding to the dictates of the times, for Karl Marx argues in The Communist Manifesto (1948) that under capitalism, labourers "who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce"²⁸ and Wanja is no exception. So if Munira wants to take her to bed he would have to pay one hundred shillings - her price - which he eventually does. (p.280)

Like Ngugi, Lamming also reveals the socio-economic impact of neo-colonial capitalism on his characters. He alerts us to the marginalization of the ordinary people in Lime Stone and their attempt to escape from the oppression engineered by the House of Trade and Justice. But on their journey to San Cristobal they are also shown as victims of the authoritarianism and exploitation of the Commandant who uses them as pawns. Later on the journey, Baptiste reminds the 'Reconnaissance' crew, representing the ordinary people, about their systematic exploitation by their leaders who have pushed them to the fringes of society, "Whatever name you honour it with, I tell you now the same fevers mutilate your villages. Hunger is no less savage. The same hands of authority organise your decay. They name you adventurers for the purpose of turning you into common animals of prey"(p.312).

But as we pointed out, Lamming, whose psychological view of the West Indian predicament has only intensified dwells in Natives of My Person more on the psychological consequences of neo-colonial

capitalism. Before going to that, it will be illuminating to note how Lamming interweaves the story of neo-colonial West Indies with that of the Atlantic slave trade, making Natives of My Person a story about contemporary West Indies which also dwells on its slave past revealing the guilt with which the slave traders have to live.

The recollections and several conversations in Natives of My Person reveal that the slave trade provided the key figures in it with an opportunity for plunder. Boatswain ponders how, with the Commandant, "He had fought against his country's enemies. He had assisted in the plundering adventures that had brought glory to Lime Stone. He had a hand in the fortunes which had built its name: San Souci, Belle Vue." (p.263)

They also reveal the horror and violence involved in the enterprise. The Commandant's mistress is a witness to its violent aspect when as a child her father Master Cecil took her to the Demon Coast, where the absence of men - all captured - has produced catastrophic results for women and children:

For eight months of the year, heavy with child inside them, almost to the very day of their delivery, the women were the only hands left to work on the farms. Ten thousand mothers dead in one month. My father had taken their men away. Ten thousand! And the children; we could not count the children where they lay. (p. 85)

Through Pierre's diary he discloses that slavery involved the destruction of traditional African communities and separation of families. He writes about a woman who must bear:

the sorrow of knowing she would never see her offspring again, nor would father set eyes on son, nor brother on the next ever after; for it to be the custom of experience on the coast to distribute this human livestock in a manner which will not allow common speech and understanding between one slave and the next. (p.124) (my emphasis)

Since the slaves are seen as 'human livestock' by their captors, it is not a surprise that they should be treated like animals in captivity. In another expedition the slavers had to use sophisticated weaponry in order to subdue a bunch of recalcitrant natives. (p.110) After their capture, Pierre tells us:

We made a lasso around them eight or nine together, and hauled them up in bundles on to the deck, where they did remain chained for safety at the ankles until the Commandant was ready to give the final order for their care and maintenance. (pp.110-111)

Their 'care and maintenance' take on a particular significance in a context in which the slaves are seen as 'human cargo' which can be owned, punished and disposed of as the master wished. They are considered as property since according to Pierre "they had no authority over their own flesh" (p.124) As they can be tortured, whipped and scalded their humanity is not as important as their commercial value from which the slavers and their sponsors materially benefitted. (p.124)

Financial returns from slavery contributed to the prosperity of Little Aberlon, which according to Priest's recollection is:

a small seaport that had grown fabulous with the rewards of adventure. Half the fortunes of the trading vessels were concentrated there: to the anguish and fury of the rest of Lime Stone. The taverns multiplied overnight. Men deserted their homes and congregated all day under the marquees. No one could tell who remained to supervise the offices which they had been chosen to occupy. They drank amidst a loud and repetitive licentiousness. Fortunes flooded their throats. Their houses, stately and overwhelmed with the spoils of privilege, served them as kennels, where they retired in the early morning to sleep. Affairs of state were conducted from the beds of concubines. Negotiations for the fitting of ships were sealed by the passing of a rumour. One slip of paper had the power of winds to sail men to the conquest of lands they had never seen. (p.259)

These instances of plunder, torture, violence and moral debauchery are in the background of a story which at a physical level is a journey to San Cristobal, but on a psychological plane,

an inward journey of the European slavers into their traumatized minds plagued by guilt. Thus, the journey is not only physical but also psychological, revealing the damaging impact on the psyche of the principal actors, of their involvement in the slave trade.

On that plane, the Commandant can be compared with Sir Francis Drake, a slaver and pirate whose maritime exploits in the sixteenth century wrought immense havoc to Guinea Coast and to Spanish ships resulting in material gain for himself and his English sponsors.²⁹ He can also be compared with Sir John Hawkins, who in 1562 in response to a great demand for Negroes in Hispaniola (now Haiti) set out on an expedition to Sierra Leone "where, by force and purchase, he obtained three hundred negroes; then with the help of a Spanish pilot, he crossed the Atlantic, and obtained reasonable utterance of his living commodities in the ports of Hispaniola."³⁰

Like Sir John Hawkins, the Commandant is a knight, with nine silver buttons decorating his tunic, as an expression of Lime Stone's appreciation of his maritime achievements. Like his fictional counterpart, Sir John Hawkins had been engaged in several voyages, in 1562, 1564 and 1567.³¹ In the 1564 expedition he used a borrowed ship for his voyage. While in Africa, "he collected his Negroes and proceeded with them...to the ports of the Spanish Main. Negro slaves were much coveted; and by a mixture of persuasion and armed force he succeeded in disposing of them all. He brought back to England a handsome profit for those who had financed his expedition."³²

If the Commandant is an English slaver, Lime Stone can be seen as England and Antarctica, its maritime rival, as Spain. The two fictional nations are constantly in conflict in Natives of My Person. In reality, England and Spain had in the sixteenth century been

involved in clashes at sea culminating in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.³³ If Lime Stone is England, Little Aberlon can be seen either as Liverpool or Bristol, two of the great trading ports during the period of the slave trade. According to Eric Williams in Capitalism and Slavery the prosperity of Bristol, "the second city of England for the first three quarters of the eighteenth century" were based on wealth derived from the slave trade.³⁴

However, it is in the nature of the form Lamming is using—allegory—that it is amenable to multiple interpretations. In Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (1964) Angus Fletcher hints at the rich suggestiveness of allegory:

The whole point about allegory is that it does not need to be read exegetically: it often has a literal level that makes good enough sense all by itself. But somehow this literal surface suggests a peculiar doubleness of intention, and while it can, as it were, get along without interpretation, it becomes much richer and more interesting if given interpretation.³⁵

Thus Natives of My Person can be seen as a story about the involvement of Europeans in the slave trade, as well as a story about contemporary West Indies, in which, as we saw, the Commandant, representing a West Indian political leader attempts to "break loose" from the despotic pattern of leadership in Lime Stone. The journey to San Cristobal can therefore be seen as an attempt by the Commandant and his officers, representing the West Indian middle-class, to build a new society following independence from colonial rule. (pp.16-17)

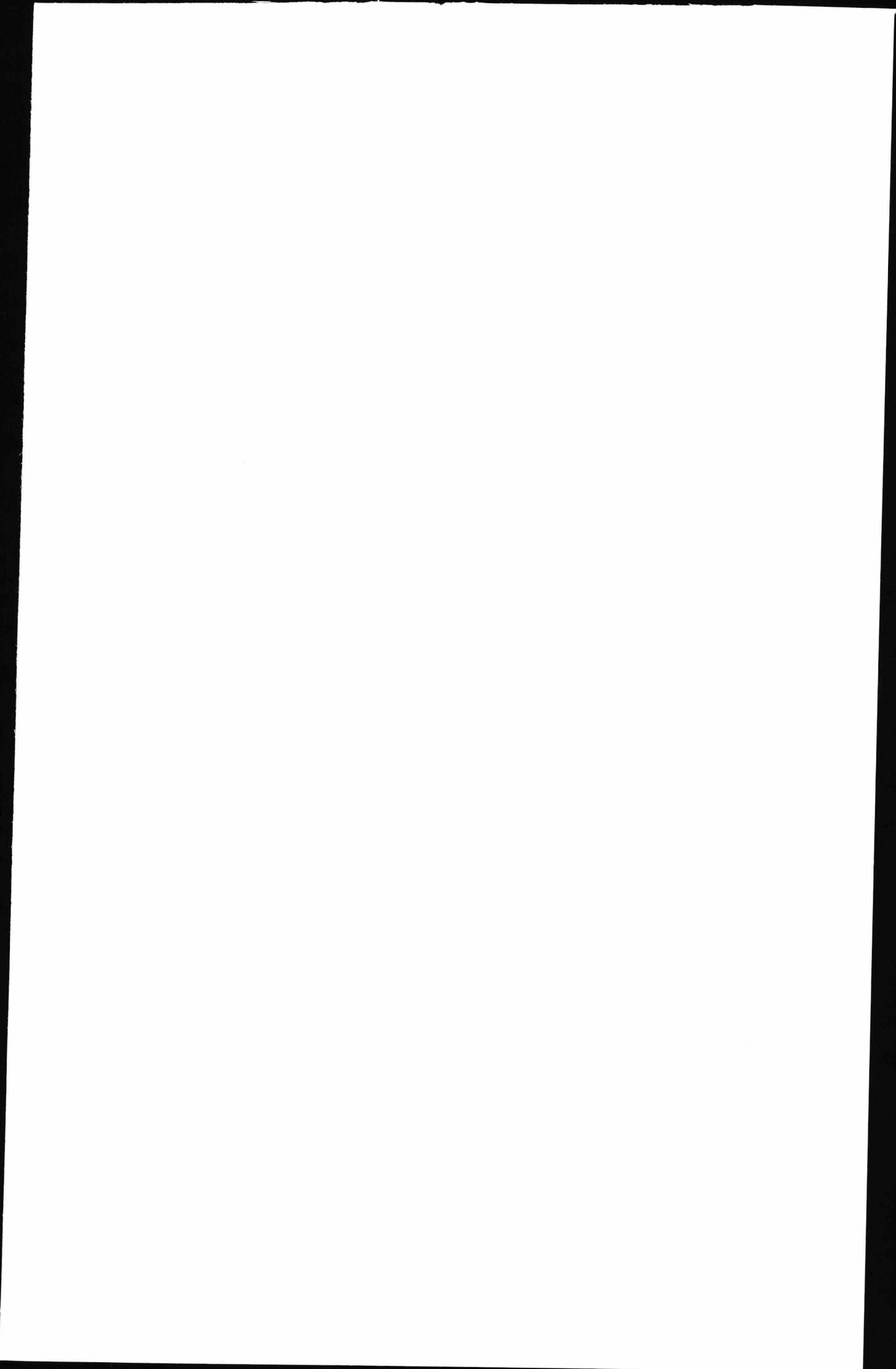
Still in connection with its suggestive nature, Stephen Barney argues that "allegory assumes, and imposes on us, the idea that there is something underneath".³⁶ Therefore, Lamming's

use of names such as the Commandant, Priest and Surgeon have a deeper significance relating to their roles not only on 'Reconnaissance' but also, as we shall see, on the 'ship' of state in neo-colonial West Indies.

By dwelling on the psychotic condition of the characters, Lamming at once reveals the guilt felt by the European slavers because of their involvement in human trafficking as well as the guilt experienced by the local middle-class for betraying the independence aspirations of the common people in neo-colonial West Indies. Lamming who has linked sexual betrayal with political betrayal in the novel also successfully reveals that physical brutality on slaves can be equated with the political betrayal of the West Indian masses, whose oppressors have to put up with the impact of their action at a psychological level.

The novel gives a complex insight into the human psyche as it struggles to come to terms with guilt associated with slavery and sexual betrayal which in Natives of My Person are synonymous with political betrayal. In the section of the novel entitled 'The Middle Passage' Lamming reveals the psychological discomfiture of the officers. He subverts our expectation of the physical 'middle passage' of slaves from Africa to the New World and takes us instead into the minds of the officers who struggle to come to terms with their guilt.

One might question why a novel with a section entitled 'The Middle Passage' does not have slave characters. Probably in John Hearne's novel published ten years after Lamming's Natives of My Person, the Jamaican novelist was doing just that. If he was, his novel The Sure Salvation (1981) which resembles Natives of My Person (1971) in many respects, might be a rejoinder on the latter insisting that a novel that takes up the issue of slavery has to have slave characters in order to reveal the full horrors of the enterprise. The use of scatological imagery by



John Hearne to convey his disgust at slavery is the more effective because it arises naturally out of the condition below the deck where slaves eat, sleep and vomit the "strange food" (p.86) which their constitutions find revolting. He might have felt that a ship such as the one in Natives of My Person ought to have slaves on board revealing their interaction with their captors in order to better expose not only the privations and brutalities they suffer, but also the process of cultural and psychological assimilation which begins even before captives have reached plantations in the New World.

In defence of Lamming's novel, it can be argued that notwithstanding the absence of slaves on board 'Reconnaissance' Lamming has been able to vividly convey the horrors of slavery as it exists in the minds of characters who had been involved in it, whose dreams and recollections we have already noted. More significantly, one of the reasons why 'Reconnaissance' does not take any slaves is because Lamming wants to focus our attention on the drama going on in the slavers' minds. As opposed to the officers in John Hearne's novel, those in Lamming's do not struggle with a human cargo. Instead they struggle with their tortured psyches obsessed as they are with the memories of their involvement in slavery and/or their abdication of marital and by extension their political responsibilities.

Priest who should under normal circumstances be a radical critic of the system by virtue of his calling, actually turns out to represent the religious arm of capitalism, always ready with a moral justification for slavery. Priest had discarded his career as the "shepherd of this coast" (p.116) and turned

into a supplier of slaves to the rival nation of Antarctica. Although in the present his job is to spiritually minister to the crew of 'Reconnaissance' the weight of moral guilt refuses to leave his consciousness and is probably responsible for his inability to resolve the spiritual crisis the Commandant and other officers experienced on board. In Boatswain's turmoil, after his confession about his affair with the Lady of the House, Priest becomes helpless, "He didn't know what he should advise". (p.262)

Furthermore, in the wake of the tragedy involving the Commandant, Surgeon and Steward, Priest can only deplore the consequences of his inability to intervene. "What sign was given by those deaths I can never without the help of my Lord signify." (p.328)

Just as Priest is powerless to manage the spiritual crisis on board, Surgeon is unable to forget his callous treatment of his wife the thought of which has turned him into a mental wreck. Following a recollection about his wife provoked by Pinteados the "echoes from the past pursued Surgeon" (p.175) and made him even more uneasy following Pinteados's disclosure that he has had an affair with his wife at Severn Asylum. (p.177)

Boatswain too becomes mentally the victim of his past involvement with the Lady of the House. The words of the woman he had 'serviced' and later attacked "had become a part of his own flesh, secreted in the hollow of his mouth, defiling his tongue".(p.265) On the journey to San Cristobal, the image of Steward's wife "had become a permanent noise in his ear!"(pp.302-3) He could still hear "the absent and familiar voice of his wife

prophesying doom for all his efforts. He kept a firm grip on his reactions. He had to resist those intrusions from the past"(p.303) a futile attempt in Lamming's view. For each of the officers, as for Steward, the past is symbolized by his wedding ring, which becomes a constant reminder of the past of relationships from which they want to escape without success. The ring "was like a warrant, pursuing him, a signal of retribution that he had sworn to wear wherever he went. A scar that wouldn't heal. He would have to endure it for a lifetime!"(p.186)

If through Steward, Lamming vividly reveals that the past is a scar which the officers have to endure eternally, through Boatswain he crystallizes the psychological discomfiture affecting all of them. Following his confession to Priest, the horror of his treatment of the Lady stares at him full in the face. He becomes agitated and unable to keep calm under such a mental stress. This forces him to publicly confess the extreme discomfiture of "a man of many parts. Now all in pieces."(p.268)

Boatswain's condition leads to self-mutilation, and he is sent to join the victims of the slave trade in Severn Asylum where "You were safe from your worst enemy" but the inmates nevertheless, cut "a pitiful sight" because "Each would inflict damage on himself. Terrible wounds!"(p.166) Pinteados who has been at Severn in hiding from the authorities of Antarctica witnessed a man who had bitten his tongue to shreds, "His mouth was like a fountain pouring blood with the bits of tongue falling in lumps on to his chest!"(p.167)

Lamming uses the asylum - also an actual mental home in the story as a powerful psychological symbol of the insanity underlying

the trafficking in human beings. The name of a beautiful river in Gloucestershire near Bristol, Lamming associates Severn with slavery because of the historical links of Bristol - a former slave port - with the enterprise. The actual River Severn is very spectacular, it "narrows and curves dramatically toward Gloucester, and the incoming tide sweeping up from the Bristol Channel forces its way against the outward flow and charging along at some thirteen miles an hour, roaring like an express train."³⁷ In the story, Lamming undermines the beauty of the river revealing that what emanates from the inmates of Severn is not crystal-clear jets of water - which made the river famous - but blood and fragments of human flesh. A very nauseating image. However, Lamming meant it to be just that, his intention being to evoke the horror inherent in the slave trade.

Boatswain is not only a European slaver but also a member of the post-colonial West Indian middle-class whose guilt, originating from his abuse of power has turned him into a psychological casualty. Since sexual abuse and political irresponsibility are interchangeable in Natives of My Person, Boatswain's abuse of the Lady represents his misuse of power. In that case, the psychological discomfiture he suffers cannot be limited to his involvement in slavery. It can be extended to his role as a wheeling-and-dealing West Indian politician who has become a psychic victim of political chicanery.

If Ngugi, a Marxist radical, sees alienation through Wanja principally in Marxian terms, Lamming sees it only as partially socio-economic through the marginalization of the 'Reconnaissance' crew, who represent the West Indian masses. (p.312) However, he sees it as essentially psychological, through which the main

political actors in Natives of My Person experience "a loss of contact with some necessary, stabilizing essence or sense of harmony"³⁸ resulting in "some basic discord or contradiction in [their] ontological or social existence."³⁹

Accordingly, Lamming casts Natives of My Person in the form of a psycho-drama that connects the inner world of the mind with the outer world of political and sexual relationships in which the men are willing to dominate the opposite sex but are unwilling to shed their machismo and treat the women as equals, thus refusing to reciprocate the total devotion of the women on them. Alienation here consists of the basic discord in the personalities of the officers whose roles impose on them a duty to minister to the needs of their women, but whose actions negate those expectations. They should all normally reciprocate the devotion of their women. Because they can't, each of them is portrayed as a victim of a split personality; a mental wreck of his failure to fulfil his responsibilities. As Pinteados, Lamming's alter-ego puts it, referring to the treatment of women by men, and by extension the treatment of the ordinary people by West Indian political leaders who should under normal circumstances minister to the needs of the led:

To feel authority over the women! That was enough for them. But to commit themselves fully to what they felt authority over. That they could never master. Such power they were afraid of. (p.325)

Discussing the West Indian political leaders he attacks in Natives of My Person Lamming writes in 'The West Indian People' that:

Conditioned by the laws of charity, they have never truly believed in their right to the authentic seats of power. They have been pleased to trespass within the orbit of power; but to seize that power itself is a matter of fear and trembling.⁴⁰

Their insecurity is connected with their role as clients of metropolitan powers. They are leaders in proxy who are not in control of the seat of power since in a neo-colonial setting real power lies in metropolitan countries. In order to illustrate their impotence Lamming makes Natives of My Person a psycho-drama which, as we saw, attributes the disintegration of personality to the inability of individuals to adequately handle their private relationships, which represent their political responsibilities.

Lamming further reveals the psychological alienation of the leaders through the disarray of their personalities showing how their actions contradict and subvert their declared intentions. This tallies with the Lukácsian observation that "the life of a parasite, of an exploiter, can never permit him to be in harmony with himself and with others..."⁴¹ a statement which echoes David Caute's definition of alienation referred to earlier. The Commandant is divided between his love for democracy (attempt to create a new society) and his obsession with autocracy (his love for 'command'). Priest is spiritually ambitious but his love for the material comfort that Little Aberlon offers undermines and frustrates his spiritual efforts. Surgeon is torn between his desire "to heal whatever sickness the Kingdom was suffering" (p.336) and his inability to control his crass opportunism. Through his conduct in the novel, Lamming compels us to ask how society can be healed when the supposed healer is himself thoroughly corrupt. The more Steward pursues his love of independence to promote his "profound and aggressive self-regard" (p.189) the more he realizes that in fact, he is 'colonized' by his past, which includes his wife, her influential relative the Lord Treasurer and the daughter with whom he has unknowingly had an incestuous relationship.

There is also a clear split between Boatswain's efforts to "prove [his] honour"(p.262) and the method he employs to achieve it. He ends up undermining the very manhood he attempts to prove by reducing himself into a mere stud in the hands of the Lady of the House whom he services "three times a week at night, and twice in the afternoon".(p.260) Lamming suggests that maintenance of reciprocity in private relationships and by extension political accountability is the only way open to these characters to achieve wholeness and re-integration of the 'natives of their persons,' an issue to which we shall later return.

Thus both writers reveal their disenchantment with the socio-political systems they have examined in their novels. Ngugi attacks a political system operated by a set of leaders whose callousness has made it impossible for them to minister to the needs of the peasantry, whose cause he champions. Lamming, in his own novel, lambasts the West Indian middle-class who are insensitive to the yearnings of the masses. But the scars of misrule show on both the leaders and the led. If Ngugi's masses are portrayed as socio-economic victims of a decadent political system, their leaders are depicted as "capitalistically corrupted type[s],"⁴² victims of spiritual aridity, which calls their humanity into question. Also if the masses in Natives of My Person are victims of political chicanery which results in economic dispossession, Lamming draws our attention to the psychological casualty sustained by their leaders.

Nevertheless, both writers reveal the disenchantment of the masses with the kind of leadership they get and show their attempts

to bring about change. Ngugi's socialist vision has led him to emphasize a change of community which he sees as the primary solution to the problems of Kenya, in contrast to Lamming who underplays external change and emphasizes a psychological therapy to the West Indian predicament.

Ngugi has developed from a deeply psychological to a Marxist novelist. His first major political novel, A Grain of Wheat, is deeply psychological and our discussion of it in Chapter Four shows that the author emphasizes the psychological dimension of the Mau Mau War and the Emergency on his characters. A deeply psychological novel, A Grain of Wheat puts forward an internal solution (a change of heart) to Kenya's post-independent problems, as we saw in Chapter Four. Undoubtedly, his embrace of political ideology encouraged Ngugi, a writer with a deeply ingrained psychological view of the Kenyan predicament to forcefully advocate now in Petals of Blood for an external solution.

Lamming, whose psychological view of the West Indian predicament has only intensified, has shown from novel to novel that internal change must have priority over any attempt to alter the political structure. Our discussion of In the Castle of My Skin in Chapter Five reveals that Lamming recommends a psychological therapy to the West Indian neo-colonial predicament. Such point of view is articulated in Of Age and Innocence and Season of Adventure (discussed in Chapters Two and Four respectively) in which Lamming advocates internal therapy, which he has consistently revealed must precede external changes. There is a continuity in this advocacy for psychological healing in Natives of My Person, a novel which is as psychological as A Grain of Wheat. Both novels have characters who feel a deep need for secrecy as well

as an overpowering need to confess the contents of their traumatized psyches. Also both advocate an internal solution to Kenyan and West Indian political problems. All this is a result of the two novels showing members of the two societies as casualties with traumatized psyches which need regeneration. Although Petals of Blood also shows that characters are psychological casualties of the neo-colonial enterprise, this dimension is shown only as secondary in a Marxist novel which emphasizes the dismantling of what it sees as a decadent political structure.

Yet both novelists reveal that there is a need for an internal change because they believe mental colonization to which certain members of their societies were exposed is an aspect of political oppression and is as injurious at a psychological level as exploitation is harmful at both mental and socio-economic planes. But while psychological therapy for Lamming occupies a primary position, internal change for Ngugi is only a means to an end - the dismantling of the decadent political structure of neo-colonial Kenya.

Ngugi draws attention to this psychological wound through Munira. His puritanical upbringing is seen by Ngugi in Petals of Blood as being largely responsible for his inability to meet the challenges of the adult world in neo-colonial Kenya. As a Christian, Munira had his circumcision in hospital. Therefore, he doesn't belong to his rika (age-group) together with whom he should have been initiated into traditional Gikuyu society. (p.204) He is alienated from it and cut off from its rituals

such as circumcision dances which he "only watched, feeling slightly left out, an outsider at the gate of somebody else's house [because] he did not really know the words, and his body was so stiff" (p.207). He is also an outsider in the contemporary society of Ilmorog where he is habitually insecure and jittery. When the peasants and herdsmen of Ilmorog discuss, Munira" did not take part in such talk: he felt an outsider to their involvement with both the land and what they called 'things of blood'"(p.18). When later she arrives in Ilmorog, Munira's sense of insecurity and lack of assertiveness renders him incapable of winning the love of Wanja. One day in her company, as insecure as he has always been, it suddenly dawns on him that "he was still a prisoner of his own upbringing and Siriana Missionary education"(p.72), a system of education which in Eustace Palmer's view is not only "irrelevant [but is also] obviously geared towards perpetuating white domination and instilling into the pupils a respect for British institutions and attitudes."⁴³

Since there are people like Munira who have been psychologically crippled by Christianity and a colonialist - oriented education, Ngugi draws attention to the need for a change of consciousness if a political revolution is to take place in neo-colonial Kenya.

Accordingly, he reveals in Petals of Blood, the need for historical awareness. Like the traditional wisdom which is acceptable only on the basis of its applicability to modern needs, African history, which has been mainly Eurocentric, must be retold from the perspective of the ordinary people whose revolutionary roles in it have always been underplayed. Therefore, in Petals of Blood, a proletarian novel which "expresses the

thoughts, feelings, moods, point of view and hopes of the new epoch and of its new class,"⁴⁴ Ngugi offers a radical interpretation of the past so as to prepare the community for the struggle ahead. This is the purpose of Chapter Four in Petals of Blood, which dwells on local history.

It shows that there has been resistance and justified violence when Ilmorog peasants and herdsmen burnt the farm on which they are subjected to forced labour and later burnt the bungalow of its owner Lord Freeze-Kilby (p.69). It also reveals that foreign exploiters have in the past been flushed out of the system. After his arrival in Kenya, Ramjeeh Ramlagoon Dharamashah soon established himself as an enterprising businessman. He is later intimidated into fleeing the country following his exploitation of a native woman who had served as his maid as well as his bed-mate whenever his wife travelled. (p.70) Her offspring-Ole Masai - became a freedom-fighter in the Mau Mau movement which was the pinnacle of the ethos of resistance in the community. Nyakinyua, the village historian, speaks of the multiple sacrifices which Kenyans were forced to make during the two World Wars and stresses the imperative of the sacrifice they should make for their own political emancipation in the present. She uses Gitiro song to convey the message that:

It was always the duty of youth to drive out foreigners and enemies lodged amongst the people: it was always the duty of youth to fight all the Marimus, all the two-mouthed ogres...(p.210)

In "Petals of Blood as a Mirror of African Revolution" Grant Kamenju argues that "Ngugi, like Marx, can see the revolutionary side of poverty in that poverty engenders resistance, revolt and insurgency as well as the search for a way out of

exploitation and misery."⁴⁵ However, despite the hard times 386.

experienced by the Ilmorog peasants and herdsmen, Ngugi stresses the fact that for a political revolution to happen the community will need not only selective historical knowledge but a deep political awareness, which is meant to consolidate their disenchantment with capitalism. This is the main purpose of the trek - the avenue through which the Ilmorog village delegation - the revolutionary vanguard - achieve revolutionary consciousness. Ntongela Masilela accurately observes that the trek to Nairobi, "maps a historical awareness of the Ilmorog community to the evils of capitalism and neo-colonialism."⁴⁶

Afflicted by hunger during the course of the trek, the villagers pass through the house of a religious evangelist, Reverend Kamau Jerrod-Brown. In spite of his immense wealth - illustrated by his palatial mansion - he finds it impossible to sympathise with and offer assistance to the starving villagers, and instead gives them a "spiritual diet", "the food of the spirit, the bread and fish of Jesus".

(p. 149) In Literature and Revolution (1960) Leon Trotsky has termed religion as one of the "social illusions" used by the ruling class for the purpose of "deceiving and blinding the oppressed."⁴⁷ If they are to alter the system that oppresses them, the people have to overcome the illusion that salvation can be gained through religion. They have to see it as an instrument subject to the manipulation of the ruling class, which in Ngugi's view turns its exponents into individuals bereft of humanity.

Still in search of help, they stumble into another 'Blue Hills' mansion. One of the ladies attending the party hosted by Raymond Chui, "flabbergasted by the apparition", (p. 151) that is Munira, cries out for help and faints. This attracts helpers and Munira nearly lost his life from a gunshot. Hawkins Kimeria viewed the villagers as "funny-looking fellows" (p. 155), a

pack of liars and uses their 'trespass' on to his property to sexually assault Wanja. Thus if through Jerrod Brown and Ezekieli Waweru before him, organized religion is exposed and undermined, through Kimeria and Chui, capitalism is demystified and portrayed, through its apostles, as a system that does not provide succour to the needy.

In his review of Petals of Blood Homi Bhabha agrees that the trek of Ilmorog villagers is "a journey of knowledge. The illusions fostered by the church, capitalism and the state are shattered and a socialist consciousness is born,"⁴⁸ but notes later that "Nothing in fact, could be less dialectical or materialist than such unproblematic portrayal of change and progress."⁴⁹

Contrary to Homi Bhabha's assertion, Ngugi does not show that change has actually taken place. He only reveals the development of a revolutionary consciousness, a process which will prepare ground for the eventual change he hopes for. After the worker's strike - which didn't usher change - Karega, the union leader, is thrown into jail. And as the last section of the novel (reading La Luta Continua!) reveals, Ngugi believes that the struggle to alter the system - a complicated process - has just started. In all **this**, Ngugi is conforming to the requirement of 'socialist art' as articulated by Ernst Fischer:

The socialist artist believes man's potential for development to be unlimited, without, however, believing in an ultimate "paradise" state - without, indeed, even wanting the fruitful dialectic of contradiction ever to come to an end.⁵⁰

Likewise, Lamming shows that the psychological wounds members of his society sustained during the colonial enterprise - which have continued in the neo-colonial era - require internal healing first. In Natives of My Person, Lamming shows that irrespective of whether they are the leaders or the led, members of his society have all been inwardly damaged by a long history of slavery and neo-colonial oppression. If some are victims of socio-economic oppression, and others are psychological casualties, there are yet others who have been mentally indoctrinated not to question established authority.

The extent of this indoctrination can be gauged through a member of the crew in Natives of My Person who, in the wake of the insurgency championed by Baptiste, threatens to inform the Commandant "That you tried to make rebellion against his command. That you ask us to pollute the name of Lime Stone and the reputation of the Commandant, which everyone in the Kingdom honours".(p.311)

Because of all these reasons, Lamming shows that his characters need a re-orientation of consciousness. They all need an internal therapy, the re-integration of the 'natives of their persons' - before they can start thinking of rebuilding society. Although the radical peasants in Natives of My Person feel the onus to change the corrupt system is placed on them, their creator, a non-Marxist, takes the view that important as they are, external changes are not really the priority of a society whose members have sustained psychological wounds which need healing first. Nevertheless, Lamming, a deeply political writer, allows his political ideologues in Natives of My Person to have their say.

The Commandant had earlier, in consonance with his plan to create a new society of gentlemen and women in San Cristobal, ordered that 'Reconnaissance' will not take any slaves, and had baffled the 'men down below' by doing so:

They could detect no fragment of reason in such a decision. The Commandant had shown surprising generosity in his arrangements for distributing the fortunes that came within the ship's possession. And he made history with his offer of future ownership in the vessel 'Reconnaissance.' And suddenly - without warning - he had deprived them of the first certain gift of fortune that the enterprise had brought them. It was like a breach of contract, supervised by a man who had lost his memory. They wouldn't comprehend such lack of reason. (p.138) (my emphasis)

This amounts to a grand deception of the crew by the Commandant, 'a breach of contract' against the people who expected financial benefit from the enterprise. The last straw comes when on arrival at the island of Dolores, he unilaterally orders the expedition to come to a halt because he no longer want to re-unite with the Lady of the House. This comes after Boatswain's disclosure that he has had a sexual union with her. In the Commandant's eyes, the Lady of the House is now an embodiment of the moral corruption from which he is trying to escape. Therefore, for a purely personal reason the Commandant orders the stoppage of the expedition thereby shattering the material aspirations of the crew who feel they have been betrayed. Following the announcement of the Commandant's orders, the men are shocked that their dreams of financial advancement have been shattered, "knowledge of their return to Lime Stone would be like a law of doom deciding all their future!" (p.275)

In Ivan and Baptiste, the crew, representing the common people, find leaders who are prepared to back and articulate

their protest against the Commandant. In Ivan whose name has Russian and therefore communist links, Lamming draws our attention to the political role of the artist in throwing his weight on the side of the common people, fighting with them for the emancipation of society.

With each new novel, the extent of Lamming's political engagement has intensified and so does that of his artist figures. In his first novel, the artist figure G. is withdrawn from the world of peasant struggle, although the role of Trumper, a political figure is shown as being complementary to that of G., as we saw in Chapter One. In Of Age and Innocence (1958) Mark Kennedy, the artist, attempts but fails to become politically engaged. In Season of Adventure (1960) Lamming had started to see the need for the involvement of the artist (Chiki) in the struggle of the peasantry to bring about political changes. In Natives of My Person (1971) Lamming has, through Ivan, acknowledged the need for the artist to put his vision to the service of the common people. And in both Season of Adventure and Natives of My Person characters have, whether they are artists or not, become much more interested in politics as it affects the quality of life in their society.

Now in the course of the expedition and under the influence of Baptiste, whose name recalls the Biblical John the Baptiste, who came to testify "concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe,"⁵¹ Ivan the artist - visionary makes the "dangerous commitment" (p.310) of supporting the common people against the despotic leadership of the Commandant. When Baptiste realises that opinion is divided about a revolt with some members of the crew still remaining loyal to the Commandant, he reminds

them about their alienation in Lime Stone, a condition which the story illustrates, does not significantly change on the ship where they have been subject to the whims of their leader. (p.312)

Like the followers of John the Baptiste who believed his 'revelations' including the fact that he was not Jesus, who was to come later, the crew of Natives of My Person buy the ideas communicated by Baptiste and agree to isolate the Commandant. Both the crew and their leaders, therefore, decide to defy the official order and set out to San Cristobal on their own.

In order to prove that Lamming does not intend to deeply explore the theme of external power struggle in Natives of My Person, one can argue that the author reveals that Baptiste's call for change is quasi-radical. For example, it does not call for the eradication of the system, rather it advocates its continuation, "We were too near to the completion of such a labour to give ourselves over wholly to such waste" (p.315). And Baptiste further testifies that he is not alone in this quasi-radical conviction:

Even at this tragic moment there were men of the opinion that if by some reversal of fate the news was in error and the Commandant and officers had pursued us with the assurance that the enterprise was not over, that the promise which started this fateful journey would be restored, then they would very likely accept the old arrangement, conceding obedience to the officers as before. (p.316) (my emphasis).

If both Baptiste and the people whose cause he champions are not very keen in radically altering the system of neo-colonial exploitation, it can be argued that the manifestation of class conflict and struggle in Natives of My Person is just a gesture from Lamming to further affirm his solidarity with the common people who are subjected to exploitation from their leadership.

The decision of the crew to pursue the journey to San Cristobal on their own, representing an attempt to perpetuate the system, brings to an end, somewhat abruptly, the theme of external power struggle in the story.

Through his novel, Lamming illustrates that you cannot have a simple appeal to 'the people' - irrespective of whether they are the leaders or the led- because all people have been inwardly damaged by a long history of slavery and colonial domination. This must have led to his deep conviction about the primacy in the West Indian situation of an internal therapy, a call to members of his society to re-integrate parts of their psyche, which are in disarray. We have earlier on examined the psychological discomfiture of all the officers who are in a dire need for internal healing as much as those members of the society who have been brainwashed into acquiescing official policy, however unjust. Accordingly, Lamming emphasizes the fact that society has a chance of renewal once the tortured psyche which needs healing is effectively regenerated.

A comparison of Lamming with the Guyanese Wilson Harris will show that another major West Indian writer also believes in the Caribbean man's urgent need for an internal cure, given the long history of slavery and colonial domination in the region. Accordingly, both writers subscribe to the notion that "personal re-integration...must precede... a change in society at large."⁵²

In his first novel, The Palace of the Peacock (1960) the multi-ethnic crew is depicted on its way to Mariella, on a journey which is both physical and psychological. The search for the Amerindian folk through the jungles and rapids of Guyana, at a deeper level, becomes a search for self-knowledge which the

embattled crew achieve following an odyssey, which involved multiple deaths. But death in the experimental fiction of Wilson Harris is not the end of existence. It catapults an individual to a higher-cum-spiritual plane of existence on which his perception of reality (both physical and metaphysical) is heightened. Following his multiple deaths in the story, Donne achieves the capability to see with "the spiritual eye of the soul."⁵³ Likewise, on the sixth day of creation - the culmination of the journey, da Silva, one of the casualties of the hazardous enterprise:

stood within the door in the half-shadow. He looked old and finished and beaten to death after his great fall. Donne stared at him with nervous horror and fascination and in his mind he knew he was dead. He could see nothing and yet dreamt he saw everything clearer than ever before. (p.109)

At the end of the journey, all the members of crew are united at the palace sharing the message emanating from the music - a unifying and re-integrating principle enabling the characters to come to terms with their divided personalities. Carroll, the negro musician, who drowned to death in the second part of the novel, now more 'alive' than ever in the company of his voyage mates tells us that:

This was the inner music and voice of the peacock I suddenly encountered and echoed and sang as I had never heard myself sing before. I felt faces before me begin to fade and part company from me and from themselves as if our need of one another was now fulfilled, and our distance from each other was the distance of a sacrament, the sacrament and embrace we know in one muse and one undying soul. Each of us now held at last in his arms what he had been forever seeking and what he had eternally possessed. (pp.116-7) (my emphasis).

Earlier on the narrator had drawn our attention to the dual character of the music, which stands for the paradoxes of life

in general, and in particular the experience of the crew, which involves considerable hardship but offers a gift of self-awareness in the end. The musical notes:

Flew and vanished in the sky with a sound that was terrible and wonderful; it was sorrowful and it was mystical. It spoke with the inner longing of woman and the deep mystery of man. Frail and nervous and yet strong and grounded. And it seemed to me as I listened I had understood that no living ear on earth can truly understand the fortune of love and the art of victory over death without mixing blind joy and sadness and the sense of being lost with the nearness of being found. (pp.113-4)

Thus both writers give priority in their novels to the psychic regeneration of their characters. But Wilson Harris is more optimistic than Lamming, who reveals that at the end of the 'Reconnaissance' voyage, the Commandant and his officers are still victims of self-delusion, bereft of self-knowledge. At the end, they are still trapped in the moral blindness which has characterized their relationships with the opposite sex, and by extension their public responsibilities. As soon as the officers gather that their female partners await their arrival in San Cristobal they decided to rebel against the Commandant and in the words of Steward simply "demand to be relieved" (p.306). Thus, like the Commandant, the officers are also determined to stop the voyage because "They could not find the courage to accept re-union with their women." (p.320)

It is obvious that the men are loath to meet their women because, as we saw earlier, those with women in their lives, are in each case guilty of exploitation and desertion. Their reluctance to re-unite with the women caused the abortion of the enterprise, which is a symbolic expression of the inability of the men to create the egalitarian society of their dream.⁵⁴

The multiple tragedy which followed could have been averted if the Commandant had told his assailants - Steward and Surgeon - (later killed by Sasha) that he had also decided to bring the journey to a halt. Their deaths signify their inability to come to terms with the present: a meeting with their women. This would have involved a temporary shedding of their machismo and an acknowledgement of the feminine side of their personalities.

Lamming has, much earlier in the story, prepared us for the abortion of the expedition through imagery. In the fifth chapter, this message is conveyed through the picture of the sea-hawk helplessly diving into the sea. "The solitary eye of the size of a bead, streaked with a pale gold splinter from the sun. The current carried it forward, pushing the sleek body of feathers around and over"(p.41). Baptiste who watches the bird as it falls, "saw in it some terrible omen of adventure"(p.41). Later a sea fowl is shown diving into the sea, "The needle beak was plummeting dangerously down towards the deck... The bird flew blind as a bat and finally tangled its neck between the shroud of ropes which fell from the sails"(p.104). And shortly afterwards, a huge flock of sea fowls forced the men to run:

for cover as the first wave of wings crashed over the deck. The bodies began to pile high, like the total death of an army. They spilled from the deck, rolling in huge numbers over the ribs of the ship, then sank with a great rush of water into the deep bowels of the river.(p.104)

Helen Tiffin is therefore accurate in her observation that Natives of My Person is replete with the images of "imprisonment, mutilation, corpses, disease, violation and aborted resurrection"⁵⁵ all pointing to the overall pattern of the dark picture which Lamming has sustained in the book.

However dark Lamming's socio-political vision, it always carries a glimmer of hope in line with open-end technique, through which the author refuses to close the drama, which he believes is an on-going process, with a possibility of renewal. Wilson Harris has written that Lamming "is deeply knowledgeable about the sickness of politics."⁵⁶ Because of that, in his fiction, especially in the deeply political Natives of My Person, he attempts to show that:

There is no turning away from the hideousness of the past... And yet the wildness with which this debasement is portrayed, the curious life of that wild psyche that portrays this debased thing, in itself is a portent of hope. That wildness witnesses the something beyond the shell through which it runs.⁵⁷

That "something" must certainly be the moral courage and commitment of the women to the ideal of reforming relationships, which would have meant breaking from the tyranny of the past. In their dedication, they become a "future" which the men "must learn" (p.351) if the old power relationships are to be abandoned in favour of egalitarianism, a message which Lamming, characteristically does not make obvious in line with the imaginatively provocative ending of all his novels, which the reader must make an extra effort to discover.

If Lamming underplays external revolution and gives priority to internal change Ngugi, a Marxist radical, emphasizes the dismantling of the capitalist system, giving a re-orientation of consciousness, as we saw, only a secondary position, a means to an end.

Each of the main characters in Petals of Blood are, as we saw, portrayed as victims of the political system. But they also

have a vision of how to re-order society each according to his/her own outlook based on his/her own background and experiences in pre-independent and neo-colonial Kenya. Because Ngugi sees them as members of the victimized class, he also shows us why they adopt their ways of seeing. But as a Marxist radical to whom change means a total eradication of the political structure, Ngugi also takes a stance, revealing the strengths and limitations of each character's vision in the light of this stance.

We have earlier noted that the main reason for Wanja's descent into whoredom is Kimeria's sexual exploitation of her which resulted in pregnancy and her expulsion from school. When later Kimeria and his business associates buy her and Abdulla out of business, she realizes that in neo-colonial Kenya one has to be ruthless in order to survive. Hence her transformation into a courtesan and brothel owner and the founding of a philosophy of "eat or you are eaten"(p.293). Wanja's bitter experience with the apostles of big business enables her to realize that "This world... This Kenya... this Africa knows only one law. You eat somebody or you are eaten. You sit on somebody or somebody sits on you"(p.291). It also leads her to conclude that in neo-colonial Kenya:

"If you have a cunt...If you are born with this hole, instead of it being a source of pride, you are doomed to either marrying someone or else being a whore. You eat or you are eaten."(p.293)

Ngugi lets us into Wanja's world and makes us fully understand why she has taken the stand she has adopted, leading to the ruthless logic of her philosophy, but he asks us to reject it as an option even in the dog-eat-dog world of capitalist Kenya. Contrary to her belief that she can beat the system

by joining it, Ngugi demonstrates that her dictum of "You eat somebody or you are eaten" (p. 291) is "an expression of the destructive rivalry of capitalism"⁵⁸ and that "her prostitution of herself is not a challenge to corrupt capitalism, but an accommodation to its values."⁵⁹ Since her action tantamounts to capitulating to the materialistic ethos of capitalist Kenya, instead of seeking to change it, Ngugi frowns at it even as he asks us to appreciate Wanja's reasons for thinking that way.

In the same way, Ngugi explains the bitterness Abdulla harbours for his betrayer Kimeria and his resolution to physically eliminate him. In Land and Class in Kenya (1984), Chris Leo argues that "the importance of forgiving [in contemporary Kenya] seemed to be widely accepted in principle, but in practice many people found it difficult. Both former loyalists and their former adversaries lived in Nyadarua and each was reminded of the past by the presence of the other."⁶⁰ Ngugi fictionalizes this frequent meeting through a degree of coincidence which has often brought Abdulla and Kimeria together making it difficult for the former to 'forgive and forget' the betrayal, and also the opulence in which Kimeria lives and the penury in which Abdulla finds himself. This culminates in the resolution Abdulla takes to eventually eliminate Kimeria. Both Wanja and Abdulla decide to employ against their employers, violence, leading to the assassinations and the murder inquiry which, as we saw in Chapter Three, provided the framework for Ngugi to introduce us into the socio-political problems of neo-colonial Kenya. Ngugi, a Marxist radical, does not condemn this, because of his conviction that:

Violence in a just cause is fully justified... Abdulla had decided to kill Kimeria on the day of the fire, and Wanja had already killed him with her panga before the fire started. In both cases their actions were indicative of their rejection of evil and were thus justified.⁶¹

Nevertheless, Ngugi does not view violence as the solution to Kenya's neo-colonial predicament since the elimination of key

individuals will not alter the political system, his major concern.

If violence though justified is not seen as a solution to Kenya's contemporary problems, Munira who acknowledges the imperative to "change people's hearts" (p.306) also has his own vision censured by Ngugi, who had advocated this solution in A Grain of Wheat but now, as a Marxist radical, views it as inadequate. We have earlier noted Munira's Christian background about which Ngugi is very critical because of the link which he believes exists between religion and neo-colonial capitalism. This background must have contributed to Munira having a moralistic vision of Kenya's solution to its neo-colonial predicament. Thus for Munira, a 'new earth' means "a new world" (p.295) of Christian brotherhood in which misguided characters like Karega should be rehabilitated and stopped from "thinking that he and his workers could change the evil...could change this world (p.299) and 'depraved' ones like Wanja be subjected to 'death by fire'. Munira's association with fire goes back to his adolescence, when he burns the effigy of a house in which he had an affair with a prostitute, to atone for his sin. By burning Wanja's 'whorehouse,' which when alight reveals "the tongues of flame from the four corners forming petals of blood" (p. 333), Munira repeats an act which he hopes will destroy an embodiment of sin and salvage Karega from the clutches of a woman he views as Jezebel, an evil woman. He will then be discouraged from the pursuit of communist ideals and be sensitized to the imperative for a change of heart, about which Ngugi is now very sceptical not only because it is rooted in Christian fundamentalism, but also because it might not tamper with the system, which in the

author's view, needs uprooting.

The visions of all the three main characters failed to measure up to Ngugi's revolutionary expectations. This is probably why he makes his ideological alter-ego, Karega, undergo a journey of knowledge in contemporary Kenya, in search for a more adequate solution, "the force that would change things and create the basis of a new order"(p.294).

Earlier on as a school teacher in Ilmorog, Karega sensibly contends that Africa should form the centrepiece of curriculum in Kenyan schools. (p.170) His experience in teaching leads him to discover the bankruptcy of Kenya's education system, which Ngugi subverts in Petals of Blood, exposing it as an instrument designed to "mould a select few to be the petty officials and agents of Christianity and alien rule."⁶² Karega's dismissal from Ilmorog Primary School coincides with his disillusionment with the teaching profession, in which he is unable to translate his idealistic plans into reality.

His entry into the world of trade unionism later is consistent with his belief that workers and peasants must be mobilized to collectively fight the system. One of the most crucial stages of Karega's 'education,' before this, is his encounter with the Lawyer, who reinforces his convictions about the inadequacy of capitalism in modern Kenya, since as a system it engenders social inequality, unemployment and frenzied competition(pp.163-166). But his vision does not sufficiently attract Karega because he is not so much against the system as he is against a certain category of people having too much while others possessed too little. Thus although he is a

vocal opponent of it, the Lawyer is not asking for the eradication of the system. His stand is that everybody should have a fair share within the system, which need not be structurally altered. This stance is not very much different from that held by Lamming's quasi-radicals Ivan and Baptiste, who protest against exploitation. They do so not so as to change the system. But because its continuity is under threat from the current leadership, they seek to seize power and continue with the system in which everybody can have a fair share of wealth.

Quasi-radicals such as Ivan and Baptiste fit into the picture of Lamming's Natives of My Person, a story in which external power struggle takes a secondary position. But for a Marxist radical like Ngugi, a quasi-radical such as the Lawyer is not good enough. He is admired so much for his courage and empathy with the oppressed, including the Ilmorog delegation, whose case he presents in court, but censured because "he had too much faith in the very shrines created by what he called the monster"(p.288). Both Munira who advocates the moral approach, and the Lawyer, who believes in improving the system clearly do not fit into the pattern of Karega's vision, which involves an attempt to create "another world, a new earth"(p.294).

For both Ngugi and his ideological alter-ego, Karega, the creation of a 'new world' will entail a political revolution in which:

The system and its gods and its angels [are] to be fought consciously, consistently and resolutely by all the working people! From Koitalel through Kang'ethe to Kimathi it had been the peasants, aided by the workers, small traders and small landowners, who had mapped out the path. Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn

the system of all its preying blood-thirsty gods and gnoming angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh. (p.344)

It is due to Karega's conviction that the whole system needs dismantling that he basically disagrees with the principle of political assassinations. He argues that:

There are many Kimerias and Chuis in the country. They are the products of a system, just as workers are products of a system. It's the system that needs to be changed and only the workers of Kenya and the peasants can do that." (p.308)

One can put forward several arguments in support of the assertion that Petals of Blood satisfies the criteria of a well made proletarian novel. It is pertinent here to refer back to our earlier observation that Ngugi's novel does not oversimplify the process of change. It reveals the decadent nature of the political system, spells out a process of political awakening and points out that the system can be changed by the organized revolt of the peasants and workers. A good Marxist novel, Petals of Blood states that the machinery of change has been set in motion. It does not say that a successful peasant and workers' political revolution has taken place.

A peasant bias is one of the salient marks of writing belonging to the category Ernst Fischer calls 'socialist art' in which the writer depicts the life of peasants from the inside, "as a peasant among peasants."⁶³ In conformity with this, the story in Petals of Blood has consistently been told from two perspectives. That of the main characters whom, as we saw, Ngugi identifies as victims of the system and its operators.

And that of the Ilmorog peasant narrator whose fate is inextricably intertwined with that of the community from which he sprung and for whom he speaks. The peasant narrator invariably uses the pronouns 'our', 'us' and 'we' to refer to the collective experiences of the Ilmorog peasant community, such as the transformation of the village into an urban centre (pp.262-268). We also learn about the central role of Munira, Karega and Abdulla in the trek to the city from the narrator who comments that, "They saved us. Their knowledge of the city, their contacts in the city, their unselfish involvement in our lives: all this saved us." (pp.241-242) (my emphases).

According to a Nigerian Marxist theoretician Omafume Onoge, socialist artists "name the existing reality - capitalism."⁶⁴ They also acknowledge that "There are classes"⁶⁵ and that "a capitalist social formation, like all class societies, is inherently based on the exploitation of the majority by the privileged few"⁶⁶ as Ngugi's Petals of Blood aptly illustrates asking us to always connect the predicament of the main characters and the peasantry directly with the ruling class.

In the same essay, Omafume Onoge argues that African socialist artists:

understand the essence of the colonial epoch in Africa to be the incorporation of our continent into the capitalist social order. Although cultural repression did occur, they did not mistake this for the primary motivation of the colonizer. The motivation was economic. This awareness allows the socialist realists to anticipate correctly that an internal African revolution will also imply structural disengagement from the capitalistic structures of Europe.⁶⁷

He further argues that there is a tendency in socialist art from the third world to "trace this development of exploiting capitalist relationships to its colonial roots."⁶⁸

Although Petals of Blood acknowledges that the consequences of colonialism and neo-colonialism are primarily economic and advocates a clean break from the 'capitalistic structures of Europe' it refuses to portray capitalism as being solely responsible for the 'exploitation of Kenyan peasants, an indication that Ngugi does not see economic exploitation in purely anti-European terms, or indeed related to colonialism only.

The novel shows that there has been exploitation which alienated people from their lands as well as from the products of their labour in Gikuyu society before the advent of colonialism. The mbari lord system, a powerful pre-colonial institution, which was meant to protect the interests of both landed and less privileged Gikuyus only resulted in creating a class of wealthy individuals who used their so-called tenants-at-will as wage labourers.⁶⁹ Petals of Blood indicates that the institution provided an avenue for opportunistic mbari lords to fully express and respond to the competitive ethos of Gikuyu society, in which the roots of capitalism are deeply embedded, as we saw in Chapter Four. Imported capitalism is thus, not the first to be responsible for the economic exploitation of Kenyans, since feudalism, in the not too remote past, had enabled a group of powerful mbari lords to displace Ezekiel Waweru and his father from their own land. As a result:

Here in Kiambu they had to start all over again with his grandfather having to work his way up from a ndungata on yet another powerful family's land to the time when he got a few goats to strike out on his own. Waweru had seen all that and he hoped that when he grew up he too would acquire even more potent magic and create an even more powerful house. (p.89)

In the neo-colonial period, Ezekieli Waweru has become a landowner himself, in a position to employ among others, Karega's mother, as part of his labour force. (p.104) This materialistic instinct is also evinced by peasants who have remained poor not out of choice but because of reasons beyond their control, such as poor soil condition or their inability to muster the sufficient enterprising ability needed to progress in Gikuyu society. An Ilmorog peasant, Njuguna, nurses the ambition of becoming a feudal lord and secure the opportunity to:

wear ngome on his fingers' knuckles as a sign that he had said kwaheri to soiling his hands. He would then be like some of the mbari lords of his youth. Some of the famous houses had so much wealth in cows and goats they would get ahois and hangers-on to work for them. The ahois and ndungatas of course hoped to get a goat in payment and strike out on their own in the virgin common lands or unclaimed grassfields. (p.9)

Like Ezekieli Waweru, Njuguna is therefore a potential capitalist who, had he been lucky, would have naturally and willingly responded to the Gikuyu materialistic ethos. He also would have possessed land and a group of ahoi to work for him.

Since Ngugi has shown that like capitalism, the traditional system is also exploitative, he goes on to indicate that an attempt to create a 'new earth' must not only eliminate the existing political system. If an egalitarian society is to be built the traditional system, which had enabled the wealthy to turn the less privileged into serfs in Gikuyuland, must also be purged. This is mainly why Ngugi refuses to romanticize traditional society in Petals of Blood. He shows that although much can be learnt from traditional institutions and customs, the African past must be viewed critically with the priorities of an emerging socialist community in mind. For example,

Mwathi wa Mugo is an oracle invested with supernatural powers. The whole community depends on him for spiritual guidance. He "was the spiritual power" in Ilmorog "somehow, invisibly regulating their lives"(p.17).

In the wake of the drought he suggests that Abdulla's donkey should be sacrificed so that community may achieve renewal. However at Karega's suggestion, his orders are rejected for a more practical and radical option: a trek to Nairobi.

In order to further illustrate Ngugi's radical revision of the African past, a comparison can be made with Sembene Ousmane, his Senegalese left-wing counterpart. Sembene Ousmane also believes, like Karega that the past is only useful for the "lessons we can draw from it in today's battlefield of the future and the present"(p.323). He illustrates this in God's Bits of Wood (1960) where the wisdom of Fa Keita is cherished only when it can further the cause of the striking railway workers. When he advises against publicly trying Diara - a strike-breaker, his counsel is rejected because it is against the spirit of a new society that has decided to take its destiny into its own hands. There is no going back for the workers who have "realized that, for the first time, they were being called upon to play the role of a man - of their own man."⁷⁰

In "Tolstoy and the Development of Realism," George Lukács argues that:

The true artistic totality of a literary work depends on the completeness of the picture it presents of the essential social factors that determine the world depicted...in such a masterpiece the most essential social factors can find total expression in the apparently accidental conjunction of a few human destinies.⁷¹

It is our contention that Petals of Blood has achieved that 'true artistic totality' which Lukács talks about. Ngugi achieves this feat by revealing that aspects of the traditional Gikuyu society are ingrained in the main characters as much as aspects of the new epoch-capitalism-are ingrained in them too.

In "Ngugi's Apocalypse: Marxism, Christianity and African Utopianism in Petals of Blood" Govind Sharma says about the four main characters:

Having a tender social conscience, they are reluctant to throw themselves wholeheartedly in the unprincipled pursuit of wealth, position and power which is the sole concern of the new elite in the country.⁷²

One is inclined to share Govind Sharma's assertion, albeit with a slight qualification. Although they surpass the new elite in moral principles, the pursuit of wealth and privilege in the main characters differs from that of the middle-class only in degree and not in kind. Ngugi shows that like the new elite, his main characters also have acquisitive tendencies. Even before capitalism is fully established in Ilmorog, Wanja is portrayed as a mini-capitalist by her commercialization of the Theng'eta plant - a local elixir - which she uses to brew alcoholic drinks for sale to willing customers. Abdulla becomes a shareholder and Ngugi shows the two in a relentless pursuit of wealth, a "communal rite of making money"(p.270). This act brings them only a stone's throw away from the foreign and local capitalists, their exploiters. Ngugi further shows that like their oppressors, the main characters too can be exploitative. Abdulla exploits young Joseph, whom he initially uses as a slave until Wanja insists that he should be sent to school.(p.286) Wanja sexually exploits Munira, in order to get a child, under

the oracular directives of Mwathi wa Mugo. Both the middle-class and the ordinary people, Ngugi illustrates, are members of the highly competitive Gikuyu society.

Before proceeding, it is pertinent here to note the major difference between the two writers regarding malignancy. Lamming whose view of humanity has only intensified shows in Natives of My Person as he has shown in all his novels, that human beings have in them a malignant streak which has to be purged if society is to achieve renewal. This view is partly responsible for his emphasis on psychological therapy. It is conveyed in Natives of My Person through Marcel, a fisherman, who when his slaving team suffers a defeat at the hands of Antarctica, is one of the six men ransomed to the rival nation, in place of twelve negro slaves, "which were the property of Master Cecil and which he was resolute he would not part with" (p.39). Marcel is subsequently imprisoned, tortured with sleeplessness and had his ear cut. After his bitter experience, Marcel alerts us to the "careless depravity of man"(pp.39-40) the bestiality inherent in human nature generally, and in the practice of slavery in particular. He reveals that there is "no difference between two legs and four"(p.143) expressing his disenchantment with human conduct and unveiling Lamming's deep belief, also revealed in Of Age and Innocence (1958) discussed in Chapter Two, that malignancy resides in humanity irrespective of race, colour or age.

On the other hand, Ngugi who has developed into a Marxist radical reveals that it is the political system which engenders the potentiality of evil in human beings. This conviction lies

behind Ngugi's emphasis on the uprooting of capitalism. He reveals in Petals of Blood that it is capitalism that has made the extant materialistic ethos in Gikuyu society more acute, making individuals like Wanja and Abdulla engage in more frenzied competition as participants and later as victims of the political system. It has also overnight transformed Nderi wa Riera from 'a man of the people' into an exploiter. The Ilmorog M.P. started as a radical politician who championed "such populist causes as putting a ceiling on land ownership, nationalization of the major industries and commercial enterprises; abolition of illiteracy and unemployment and the East African Federation as a step to Pan-African Unity"(p.174). Not long after Nderi wa Riera had accepted "offers of directorships in foreign-owned companies" (p.174) his line of thinking changed. Now:

"he...was convinced that Africa could only be respected when it had its own Rockefellers, its Hughes, Fords, Krupps, Mitsubishis..." (p.186).

If Ngugi's emphasis on the uprooting of the political system can be partly accounted for by his conviction that malignancy resides in capitalism, his introduction of a seed of corruption in each of his four main characters means that he does not idealize human nature at this late stage of his vocation as a political writer, as he did through the young lovers in Weep Not, Child.

It also coincides, as we saw, with Georg Lukacs insistence that in order to provide a rich and differentiated picture of reality a writer should like Leo Tolstoy, connect the fate of characters with the "totality of objects,"⁷³ the important events and objects related to the theme and historical period being portrayed. Thus Georg Lukaćs:

The epic presentation of the totality of life...must inevitably include the presentation of the externals of life, the epic-poetic transformation of the most important objects making up some sphere of human life and most typical events necessarily occurring in such a sphere.⁷⁴

If a writer succeeds in this attempt his characters become 'typical' as Ngugi's main characters in Petals of Blood have become. Georg Lukaćs further explains:

Precisely because the characters are typical in the most profound sense of the word, they must of necessity meet the most important objects of their sphere of life more than once in the course of their typical career. The writer is free to introduce these objects when and where they have become typical and necessary requisites in the drama of life he is describing.⁷⁵

As we saw, the personalities of his main characters embody salient aspects of the Kenyan traditional society. A competitive society whose members have also often exploited one another, the characters fully evince this aspect of the Gikuyu society. Ngugi also reveals how the great historical milestone of their time- capitalism- has permeated, influenced and transformed their lives. Each of the characters is caught in its complex web as a victim trying to eke out an existence in an atmosphere now characterized by a more frenzied cut-throat competition.

Like Ngugi who doesn't see capitalism in purely anti-European terms, Lamming too refuses to see neo-colonialism in purely anti-Western terms, a message which he conveys through his allegory, a rich form amenable to multiple interpretations.

We have earlier sought to establish the double-sidedness of Lamming's allegory which can be seen as an attack on European slavers, since some characters, such as the Commandant, are

identifiable as key figures in the Atlantic slave trade. Also Lime Stone and Antarctica, the two fictional maritime rivals in Natives of My Person can be seen as England and Spain, two countries which played primary roles in the sixteenth century slaving expeditions. Yet it is possible to see the allegory as a comment on the political irresponsibility of the West Indian middle-class, represented by the officers on 'Reconnaissance.' The Commandant's treatment of the ship crew and the sexual betrayal of women by the officers can both be seen, as we saw, as a symbolic representation of the political irresponsibility of the West Indian political elite towards the common people, who are referred to as 'the men down below' in Natives of My Person. Thus Lamming attributes the contemporary West Indian political problems not only to European slavers but also to West Indian political leaders, an indication that the 'violent intrusion' of politics in Lamming's novel does not damage the work of art, it also did not make the author lose his sense of artistic restraint.

Lamming further proves that it is possible to fuse politics with art without doing damage to the work of art through the character of Boatswain, who is seen, like the other officers, both as a European slaver and as a member of the post-colonial West Indian middle class elite. Through the dual racial identity of Boatswain, Lamming acknowledges the role of both Africans and Europeans in the slave trade. The fact that he is portrayed both as a victim and a victimizer indicates that Lamming does not see slavery and neo-colonialism in merely anti-European terms. Thus his intensified politicization has not led him into viewing the exploitation of his community from only one angle; an illustration of the fact that it is possible to combine politics with art without making injury to the work of art.

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CONCLUSION

This thesis has been concerned with trying to examine both 'politics' and 'art' in the novels of Ngugi and Lamming. Section One attempted to examine the early responses of the writers to the cultural and political predicament of their nations and concluded that Lamming started as a more politically mature novelist. Also Lamming was judged as more technically sophisticated not only because his symbolism, characterization and imagery are all related to cultural and political nationalism. But also because when he started writing he was already experimenting with forms in an attempt to adequately capture in fiction the predicament of the colonized West Indian.

It was also argued that as a result of several influences on *the Kenyan writer*, particularly his reading of Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin, Ngugi developed both as an artist and as a political writer. This maturity is illustrated in A Grain of Wheat, a novel which he used to convey the tribulations of his community during the Mau Mau War and their predicament after political independence.

Both A Grain of Wheat and Season of Adventure which were discussed in Section Three of the thesis demonstrated that Ngugi has now become a mature craftsman, as conscious of his art as Lamming has been. At this stage of their vocation as writers both would share Ernst Fischer's view that:

It would be sheer nonsense to say that no weight should be attached to form and to the development of form in art. Without introducing innovations of a formal kind, literature cannot bring new subjects or new points of view before the new strata of the public.¹

The thesis also showed that although the two novels discussed in Section Four revealed the formal and linguistic diversion of the two writers, it also went on to show that both Ngugi and Lamming continued to *write* not only as political writers but also (now that Ngugi has matured) as experimental novelists who are conscious of

their duties as artists and as political writers. If In the Castle of My Skin, which was discussed in Chapter Five, revealed an adroit use by Lamming of aspects of the West Indian folk tradition, Devil on the Cross also showed a consistent use of elements of the African and Gikuyu orature. Also If Natives of My Person is experimental and able to successfully combine politics with art, our discussion in Chapter Six has shown that Petals of Blood is a good example of a proletarian novel which meets the criteria of several Marxist theoreticians, and is even more complex than what a local Nigerian one has stipulated. The development of Ngugi into a Marxist radical at this stage, enabled us to draw a major contrast between his later political vision and Lamming's, who although deeply political, nevertheless remained a psychological novelist. But each of the two novelists is very strong along the path he had chosen to tread, and the political vision of each comes across in these later novels loudly and clearly.

Ngugi's Petals of Blood provides an assertive, concrete and graphic analysis of exploitation from a socio-economic angle. It defines oppression from a vivid and deeply materialist perspective enabling the reader to see that neo-colonial exploitation means the affluence of the political elite and the pauperization of Kenyan peasants and workers.

If a writer had been exposed to a literary influence such as Lamming's, whose novels evince an empathy with the oppressed, and if his family had been victims of naked exploitation as peasants in colonial Kenya (as Ngugi's had been)² and his society is full of instances of political corruption, in which the native middle-class collude with international monopoly capitalism to dispossess the poor, the chances are high that he would, like Ngugi, produce a Marxist novel, which sees exploitation essentially in socio-economic terms.

On the other hand, Lamming's Natives of My Person sees exploitation primarily as a psychological problem and this message comes across forcefully and convincingly. The thesis has argued that the continuity of Lamming's psychological view of the West Indian predicament can be accounted for not only because of the protracted era of colonial domination there. The fixation of the West Indian on Europe is also partly to blame. If Lamming should be concerned with this never-ending fixation of the West Indian on the metropolitan society in all his fiction, it is natural that this view will be crystallized in Natives of My Person, a novel in which his political ideas are at their most intense. Here, Lamming sees the psyche of the West Indian middle-class elite all in pieces. If the psychology of the West Indian is in total disarray, one would then be tempted to share Lamming's view that psychological therapy is of paramount importance and must therefore precede the attempt at changing socio-political structures.

The experimental nature of Lamming's fiction, which employs carefully crafted techniques and creatively utilizes the folk tradition, as we have stressed throughout the thesis, is a reflection of the current trend of writing in the West Indies. We cited examples of writing by Edward Brathwaite, Roger Mais and Wilson Harris to prove this point.

The West Indies then is not a cultural desert but is an environment with a rich and vibrant tradition which only needed resuscitation. V.S. Naipaul's assertion in The Middle Passage (1962) that nothing was created in the West Indies and that there was "no civilization"³ there, was later disproved by Edward Brathwaite who argues in Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica (1970) that the middle passage occasioned a physical disruption for the West Indian. But it did not tamper with the cultural continuity between Africa and the New World.⁴

Also in Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean (1974) he argues that

"... for the Caribbean, as elsewhere, the basis of culture lies in the folk, and that by folk we mean not in-culturated, static groups, giving little; but a people who, from the centre of an oppressive system has been able to survive, adapt, recreate; have devised means of protecting what has been so gained... and who begin to offer to return some of this experience and vision.⁵

This folk culture, as we saw, provided inspiration as well as creative material for many West Indian writers.

At a later stage of his writing, Ngugi also became experimental in the sense in which Chinweizu has used the term, that is fusing the traditional with the modern, as he has done in Devil on the Cross. Simon Gikandi's statement in "The Growth of the East African Novel" that "As a rule, the East African novel has not been a highly experimental literary form"⁶ now seems dated given the appearance in 1982 of Devil on the Cross, a story which utilizes the oral and written forms of expression, skillfully fusing the modern with the traditional in order to make a scathing attack on neo-colonial capitalism. Simon Gikandi's later assertion that "This lack of experimentation with form has something to do with the generic irrelativeness of the novel within an East African, indeed African context"⁷ is belied by the experimental fiction of Isodere Okpewho and Femi Osofisan, all Nigerians. Isodere Okpewho's The Last Duty (1976) is set during the Nigerian Civil War and is concerned with the psychological consequences of the war on the society. An experimental novel, with its chapters having names of characters as titles, The Last Duty seeks to expose the reader to the individual reactions to the war as a way of giving him a comprehensive and more balanced view of this major event as it affected different sections of the community. Okpewho's novel very much resembles the style used by the American William Faulkner in As I Lay Dying (1930) to introduce the reader to the individual responses of Addie Bundren's children and husband to her death on their journey to her place of burial.

Experimentation here does not imply a slavish imitation of the original as we have stressed throughout the thesis. Rather it means a conscious and creative attempt by an author to assimilate borrowed material and make it intrinsic to his work and relevant to his society. This method is at work in Isodere Okpewho's The Victims (1970) which utilizes a dramatic technique, the chorus, borrowed from the Greek classical drama. In Okpewho's novel it occurs in the episode where two old women sensitize us to the squabbles of the polygamous and strife-town Obanua's household.

Another experimental work from Nigeria is Femi Osofisan's Kolera Kolej (1975) which is based on a killer epidemic, (cholera) afflicting a University campus, a microcosm of contemporary Nigeria, whose body politic is characterized by repression, official violence and tribalism. Femi Osofisan, in order to unveil his distaste for the political life of contemporary Nigeria, uses not only a technique which allows characters to speak in turn as if they are on a dramatic stage. He also uses a combination of farce and satire, proverbs and a generous reference to the Yoruba cosmology, including the art of Babalawos (diviners) and ends up subverting our expectations of a novel as it is known in the Western conventional sense. One of the most memorable events in the story is a farcical cabinet meeting (chaired by the Prime Minister) which breaks up on account of the inability of members to maintain inter-ethnic unity, "How could an Ijebu, a mere son of sacrificial helots, challenge a pure-bred son of the soil! And soon the cabinet was ripped into rival factions as each tribal group confronted the other with the exploits of its ancestors".⁸

Since this thesis is also a comparative study of Ngugi and Lamming, it will be appropriate to outline the advantages of such an academic exercise. A comparative study of authors brings to the surface issues that might have remained undiscovered by individual

studies. This is even more so with writers such as Ngugi and Lamming whose societies had both been colonial outposts, but who also provide a classic example of literary influence, Ngugi having been influenced by Lamming at a formative stage of his career as a novelist.

The thesis shows that by analysing the work of the writers together, one ends up with not only a more profound understanding of both. One is also made aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the writers. For example seeing Lamming's early cultural and political nationalism, as expressed in his clear attack on Western education and Christianity, it becomes much easier to pin down Ngugi's ambivalence towards these in Kenya and establish the fact that when Ngugi wrote his first novel he was still at a neophyte of his vocation as a political writer.

Also when Petals of Blood and Natives of My Person are compared with each other, it becomes much easier to detect that Lamming emphasizes a psychological change deliberately underplaying an external revolution, in contrast to his Kenyan counterpart, a Marxist radical, who puts more emphasis on a change of community in Petals of Blood.

A very important discovery made in the course of researching the thesis is that literary works should in the first instance be assessed in terms of their own internal logic before external criteria is employed on them. This is not to de-emphasize the importance of extra-textual information in critical analysis. It is to draw attention to the dangers of imposing inappropriate categories on literary works and stress the importance of first determining their nature before labelling them. Our analysis in Chapter Three revealed the wisdom of this stance considering Ngugi's misreading of certain experimental novels by Lamming and also his prejudiced assessment of certain African writers whose novels he saw through a Marxist lens.

Finally, it can be asserted that this study has illuminated the political and the psychological dimensions of Ngugi's novels and a selection of Lamming's, which have been analysed essentially within their socio-cultural and political contexts. This theoretical base, in our view, aids the critic in his attempt to interpret and illuminate works of literature.

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