An examination of the Politico-literary strategies of some Third World writers

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Preface -- An Abstract of the Dissertation

In this study I attempted to examine the politico-literary strategies of some "Third World" writers. I used the Marxian notions of class and ideology in order to investigate how writers' biographies determined their literary interpretations. Basic writings of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and the theoretical work of Janet Wolff were used in this respect. I also used the Marxian concept of Historical Materialism in order to distinguish progressive interpretations from reactionary ones.

The critical writing of Ernst Fischer was used in order to show that there was no unbridgeable gap between theoretical work in the "Third World" and the development of the aesthetic in Europe. The notion of socialist realism was of particular interest here.

Notions of neocolonialism and cultural imperialism were examined in order to set the context in which "Third World" authors write. The use of the mode of realism by these authors was investigated. The work of Hayden White was used to establish the fact that versions of history depend upon an author's moral purpose. The link was made between authors' moral purposes, their ideologies and their literary strategies.

Literary analysis of some works by "Third World" authors was undertaken in order to see whether or not the authors succeeded in their attempts to give progressive interpretations of their historical contexts. Three "Third World" novels, that is, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood, Sembene Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude

were examined in this regard.

It was finally concluded that literary strategies have a material basis which is founded on the authors' life experiences and the historical context in which they write. This material basis to the creative act is proposed as a way out of the labyrinth of textuality to which a "deconstructionalist" approach leads the critic.

Introduction

"Third World" literature has been marked by the overtly political intent of its writers. In attempting to reverse the legacy of colonialism, many writers from the "Third World" have attempted to rewrite the history of their lands in a way that will empower their masses politically. This study will concentrate on the link between the depiction of History and the politico-literary strategies of various "Third World" authors. I will hold that the way in which historical events are depicted in "Third World" Literature and the politico-literary strategy of the author concerned are in close relation. In literature of this nature this intimate relation overrides the relative autonomy of the aesthetic, and consequently the author's ideological outlook can be held to be the chief source of the politico-literary strategy which he/she adopts. This ideological outlook can be shown to be a product of the author's class-background and other biographical determinants.

The theoretical perceptions of Marx and Janet Wolff as well as the applications of Marxian theories in the writings of Chidi Amuta, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Ernst Fischer will be of particular importance firstly to establish the existence of classes and class-ideologies and then to show how these phenomena determine the literary interpretation and representation of reality. This will form the bulk of the first four sections of the study.

The Marxist perspective of Historical Materialism will then be considered critically in an attempt to establish the terms of "progressive" and "reactionary", with respect to various literary interpretations, on a basically scientific basis. This will form the basis of the fifth section.

The sixth section of the study will concentrate on the

characterisation of four basic literary genres i.e. critical realism, socialist realism, magical realism and mythical realism. Lukacs's theoretical perspective will be used to distinguish between the first two categories while the works of Gabriel Garcia Marques and Ayi Kwei Armah will be considered as representative of the latter categories.

The critical work of Hayden White will then be used to show the link between the way an author narrativises the past and his/her moral purpose. This will be of paramount importance for the establishment of the link between the author's narrative and his ideological position. An examination of White's work will form the basis of the seventh section of the study.

Sections eight and nine will be devoted to two socialist realist novels each of which purports to contain a fully revolutionary perspective. Literary analysis of Ngugi's Petals of Blood and Sembene Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood will be undertaken to discover how far the authors achieve their revolutionary intentions.

A reading of Marquez's A Hundred Years of Solitude will be undertaken in order to show how a revolutionary perspective can be camouflaged in order to escape the dire consequences of opposing a draconian state apparatus. Section ten will deal with Marquez's technique and consider the pros and cons of his literary strategy.

In the conclusion, the similarities and differences between the Latin American and African strategies will be considered and we will briefly see if the notion of a "Third World" literature is a valid one.

1. Notions of Class, Ideology and Neo-colonialism

1.1 Class and Ideology

Central to this study is the Marxian concept of class. The notion of class is integrally linked to the way in which Marx viewed society as being structured. The German thinker held that the basic structure of society depends on people's relations to each other in the process of producing everything which is used or consumed.

Initially, tribes existed by hunting and food-gathering. Here a simple division of labour was based on sex. As technology developed, however, specialist functions increased and class relations were formed. With the formation of classes, the notions of class-interest and class-struggles develop with groups of contending individuals seeking to wrest the ultimate power in society from each other. It is for this reason that Marx held in the Communist Manifesto:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in the revolutionary re-constitution of society at large,

> or in the common ruin of the contending classes. (Quoted in Kevin Waddington, Outlines of Marxist Philosophy p. 13.)

In seeking to understand how such antagonistic social relations could have come about, Marx and Engels were led to ask what was the fundamental relationship between people that is common to all forms of society. They came to the conclusion that people always enter into relations of production in order to work together on nature to fulfil their needs. These production relations have always existed although they take different forms in different societies. They are indeed universal to all societies and are essential for the maintenance of life. They are the basis on which any society is founded, because as Engels held at Marx's grave-side, " mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion etc" (Waddington p. 13.).

Every individual in society thus stands in a particular relation to other members of the society on the basis of the productive processes of society. This particular relation determines the class into which the individual falls and every individual in society therefore has a class position. The notion of class is therefore is an entirely materialist one and can be verified by empirical investigation.

In modern capitalist society Marx identified two main strata. The bourgeoisie are the owners of the means of production while the proletariat own nothing but their labour power. Between these two main camps stands the middle peasantry which owns land and

tools but perform their own labour. Their position is one of being petty-bourgeoisie. Artisans form part of this class as do professionals and intellectuals. The position of intellectuals is of cardinal importance to us for it is from this stratum that most of the "Third World" writers come.

Intellectuals like the other members of the petty-bourgeois stratum vacillate between the positions taken by the two main classes. Being both owners and workers, the class position that they adopt depends greatly on their economic status and the balance of forces in the class struggle. With a revolutionary "high tide" many of the intellectuals free themselves of their bourgeois trappings and go over to the side of the proletariat. Others, however remain a spokesperson for the bourgeoisie. Crucial individual experience is often the deciding factor in this regard.

Now every class has its own particular ideology or world-view. Here a particular set of doctrines is not intended but, rather, as Terry Eagleton puts it, "the way men live out their roles in class society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions" (Marxism and Literary Criticism p.17). It is to the typical ideology of their class that individuals approximate.

Marx outlines the theoretical foundation for this in his preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy :

> In social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive

> forces. The sum of these total relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production conditions the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. (Quoted in Marxism and Literary Criticism p.4)

Though some neo-Marxists consider this to be an over-simplification, I hold it to be the basis of Marxist thought -- as long as one bears in mind the dialectical relation of mutual influence between base and superstructure. Marx was very conscious of this relation but pointed out that the base always remains the prior aspect of the relationship between the two.

Every individual, however, remains an individual. Firstly, no one individual represents class-ideology in its pure form since influences from other class-ideologies impact on him/her due to their societal pervasiveness. Secondly, each individual faces a particular set of circumstances uniquely his/her own. Reactions to these circumstances vary according to the particular ideological "mix" of the individual as well as the nature of those circumstances themselves. Therefore, despite the fact that class-position remains the basic determinant of ideology, there is no formulaic reduction and the varied responses of individual writers to their life-circumstances give the best of "Third World"

literature its life.

It can be seen, then, that no one ideology holds exclusive sway in any given society. The ideology of the dominant class is the most easily recognisable since it pervades most sections of society. As Janet Wolff points out in The Social Production of Art, "it can be shown that the economically and politically dominant sections of society generally dominate ideologically too" (p.52). This is so since the dominant class has at its disposal structures within the superstructure through which its ideology can be promulgated. Control of the education of the members of society as well as control of the "opinion-making" media should be considered here.

In capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and their intellectuals are separated from direct participation in the productive process. Consequently, their ideology takes the form of theory separated from material practice. This separated theory is then imposed on the rest of society and becomes the dominant ideology. However, the ideas springing from the proletariat and their attached intellectuals are directly related to the productive processes. The proletarian ideology thus exists in contradiction with the dominant ideology and the extent of its emergence depends on the relative balance of forces in the class-struggle.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood as well as the Ousmane's Gods Bits of Wood are works which indicate the existence of proletarian ideology as an oppositional ideology to the dominant ideology of their capitalist states in which the bourgeoisie holds sway. Besides the oppositional ideology of the proletariat, there

also exists the residual ideology of the feudal classes which the bourgeoisie has overthrown. This feudal ideology, therefore, represents a spent force of the past. It does, however, still find its way into the literature of the "Third World" in the works of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Armah.

According to Wolff, then, alternative ideologies may be either residual or emergent (p. 53). The former are formed in the past while the latter is the expression of new groups outside of the dominant group. Alternative ideologies may also be said to be oppositional to the dominant ideology or to coexist with it. This distinction is of paramount importance when considering the alternative ideologies which are found in the neo-colonial "Third World". The conditions under which alternative ideologies either persist or come into being is therefore a matter of intense historical investigation and the extent of penetration by the dominant ideology cannot simply be assumed. It therefore remains for us to trace the history of class forces in what has come to be known as the "Third World" since it is only in this way that the rise of certain ideologies in this sector can be understood.

1.2 Neo-Colonialism

Much of the "Third World" experienced direct colonialism and this had the effect of the overthrow of feudal relations and the institution of capitalist ones. With the passage of time, however, freedom for the countries of the 'Third World' became accepted by all except die-hard racialists. Concomitant with this surge to independence there were efforts by the imperialists to

grant only token political freedom while the cords of attachment to the "mother country" were to remain as strong as ever. This arrangement was to give the appearance of nationhood but left sovereignty firmly in the hands of the metropolitan power. A certain amount of token aid was pumped into the country by the colonial power to mislead the colonised with the impression that something was being done for them. The purpose here was to divert the nascent demand for fundamental change involving more positive independence into nothing more than a program envisaging popular welfare. The intention was to use the emergent new state as puppet mechanism to ensure the continued subjugation of the progressive classes spawned by capitalism. The mechanics of this process were simple.

In the dynamics of national revolution there were normally two local elements: the moderates of the professional and aristocratic classes and the representatives of the mass movement which was more proletarian in orientation. The moderates sought only a share in government since they doubted their own skill to govern. As a result they were prepared to remain under the sway of the metropolitan bourgeoisie and to receive economic aid in return for their acquiesence. The so-called extremists on the other demanded total independence and considered that the interests of the indigenous masses could only be served by local leaders unattached to the leaders of the colonial power.

Having learned from experience that the greater and more bitter their resistance to "extremist" demands for independence the more powerful they become, the colonialist powers began to respond more positively to the signs of nationalist stirrings in

their territories. The understanding dawned that in the absence of a bitter struggle, there was a chance of negotiation with the more moderate leaders who could be tempted to show their followers that the masters were being reasonable and it was out this moment that the national bourgeoisie was induced to assume a compradore status. The colonial power, experienced in the ways of diplomacy, curbed the efforts of the extremists by ostentatiously polishing the silver platter on which independence was to be handed over.

The end result was that though the outward form of colonialism changed, the economies of the newly "independent" states remained firmly in the hands of the imperialists. The national bourgeoisie accepted managerial positions in a set of economic relations which saw the continued exploitation of the land and labour of the indigenous working people by the metropolitan capitalists.

This then was the situation that faced the "Third World" intellectuals when they decided to set pen to paper. They were forced either consciously or unconsciously to side with the oppressors or the oppressed. The way in which this identification occurred is be no means simple as will be illustrated by the various works that will be considered in this study.

The neocolonial position which confronts the intellectual has led to sophisticated theoretical responses and I will consider the responses of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chidi Amuta in detail to show how a response to imperialism has shaped "Third World" theoretical critical literary thought.

2. Ngugi's[1] and Amuta's[2] views of realism, cultural imperialism and the role of the writer.

2.1 Realism

In attempting to discuss the relationship between fiction and politico-literary strategy I will consider mainly the work of Ngugi and Amuta since I consider their concepts to be central to the issue. Both correctly identify the historical situation in the "Third World" as neo-colonialism and see literature as playing an active role in reversing this position. As such, literature becomes part of a political strategy for the attainment of true independence.

The type of literature which they see as being able to fulfil this role is one which reflects, as accurately as possible, the real conditions pertaining in the neo-colonies. Class-stratification must be reflected and the role of the indigenous bourgeoisie in the machinations of international imperialism must be exposed. Also, the actual conditions of the life of the masses, in comparison to that of the ruling elite and the foreign beneficiaries of neo-colonialism, must be shown. In this way, the masses will be motivated to struggle against their oppression and class-consciousness, heightened by this realistic literature, will increase their chance of success.

It can be seen that central to Ngugi's and Amuta's concept of literature as part of a political strategy of liberation is the notion of realism. The mode of realism can be further subdivided

into various categories and I will discuss these at a later stage in the thesis.

2.2 Ngugi's concept of "Cultural Imperialism"

Before going on to discuss cultural imperialism as such, which arises from the neo-colonial condition of the "Third World", Ngugi carefully shows the relationship between literature (or culture in general), politics, economics and history (Ngugi, Writers in Politics pp. 3-33). It is essential to do this, for the mechanism by which cultural imperialism functions will be incomprehensible without a thorough understanding of this relationship. Ngugi holds that literature is based on the conscious acts of people in society and that writing implies a social relationship, in that one writes about somebody and for somebody (p. 5). Furthermore, embodied in works of literature are the tensions, contradictions and conflicts at the heart of a community's being. These stem from the way in which the community wrestles with its environment to produce the material necessities of life. What is clear from such a materialist approach to literature is that literature does not exist on some ethereal, metaphysical plane but is intimately linked to the struggle for survival.

In its reflection of this struggle, there is not just a mechanistic reflection of social reality but also an attempt to shape attitudes with which we approach that struggle with nature, within the community and within our souls. Literature, furthermore, is conditioned by historical and social forces and

pressures. This is so since it does not transcend economics, politics, class and race; rather it is the product of those social and historical forces. Literature takes sides in a situation of conflict and is always partisan -- no matter what is claimed by its makers.

Writers are members of a class, race and nation and this influences their attitudes to all their activities which are also class-governed. They also attempt to make us view not only a certain kind of reality but also to shape our attitudes to that reality in the interests of a certain class, race or nation. They do this by utilising forces other than a simple mimesis and that are linked to our emotions and feelings. Ngugi thus correctly feels that writing not only creates a version of reality but also shapes an attitude to that version (p. 7). Writing therefore not only reflects a community's collective reality but also makes us see how a community has defined itself historically and how it defines the world in relation to itself.

Now the basis of all community is the land and the soil. Ngugi agrees entirely with Marx that it is through the labour processes that this land and soil is transformed to produce the necessities of life (p. 7). As has previously been pointed out, in the labour process itself, (wo)man enters into specific forms of cooperation with others. S/he thereby establishes social relations which are called the relations of production. These relations of production shape the social environment. Within it, different groups stand in differing positions with respect to the labour process. This basically economic structure in turn shapes a political structure which is used to keep the existing relations

of production in place.

Now culture both expresses the economic and political processes and cements the economic and political structure. It takes the form of a legal system, religious system, language and literature, songs and dance and all other intellectual, moral and ideological propositions particular to a society. It embodies all the values, aesthetic and moral qualities which members of a community consider important in their contact with one another and with the universe. It is also the basis of a community's world-view, of their identity as a people and their collective and individual self-image.

Changes in the economic sphere introduce concomitant changes in the political and cultural sphere. This implies a change in self-image and value. However, the relation is a dialectical one of mutual influence since self-image and value also influence culture, politics and economics. Also, there are survivals from the past that persist in the present.

Historical investigation reveals that there has been uneven development globally in the economic and consequently political spheres. Furthermore, social organisation has not always ensured the equal distribution of goods produced. This has resulted in a class structure forming and the dominant class always owns the means of production and has greater access to the social product. This allows it to control the intellectual and ideological forces such as education, language and literature as well as the world-outlook of that society. When we, therefore, talk of the culture of a society, we are normally talking about the culture of the dominant class.

As Wolff has pointed out, however, the culture of the exploited exists simultaneously with this dominant culture (The Social Production of Art p. 53) . It is for this reason that Ngugi agrees with Lenin's formulation that within one nation you have two or more 'national cultures' in competition with each other (Writers in Politics p. 48).

With the advent of the colonial period, Europe was characterised by the capitalist mode of production while societies of the colonies were at different levels of the productive process. With the subjugation of the colonies their labour and material resources were used for the development of Europe and this brutal exploitation had consequences in the economic, political, cultural and literary fields.

To make economic and political control more complete and less expensive than naked aggression, control is exercised in the cultural sphere so that a people's values, their world-outlook, self-image and self-definition can be controlled. Slaves must be made to accept to being slaves because they think they can be nothing else. Since cultural resistance breeds political resistance, to thoroughly subjugate a nation, according to Ngugi, you must subjugate its culture (p. 12).

Cultural imperialism, then, is part of a thorough system of economic exploitation and political oppression. As a cultural phenomenon it finds expression in literature as well. In this respect, literature is particularly effective since it functions through the emotions and causes the colonial subject to view him/herself through the eyes of the intellectuals in the West. According to Ngugi, western literature falls into three broad

categories (p.15). This literature ranges from the best works, which still view the European condition as universal, through overtly racist works such as those by Haggard, to the "liberal" sort that attempts to suggest that a final reconciliation between the races is possible only with the effacement of the identity of the "Third World" subject. Bombarded with this sort of literature, the colonial subject develops a negative self-image and has no faith in himself or his people as agents of change. He considers that the best he can do is to imbibe the values of the European bourgeoisie.

Colonial subjects of the latter category are often the main beneficiaries of "flag-independence". They become the indigenous overseers of the interest of the international bourgeoisie in the continued exploitation of the colonial masses. They invariably set up weak capitalist structures which ensure their domestic pre-eminence -- but foreign dependence.

Being petty-bourgeois in orientation, these intellectuals are extremely uncomfortable with the masses and they produce a literature that reflects this discomfort. To this end, there must be no positive hero from the lower classes and the mass of the people must never be portrayed as initiators. The perspective of struggle against the international bourgeoisie and its local allies is entirely denigrated.

This neo-colonialist bourgeoisie is then the main agent of cultural imperialism and it ensures the perpetuation of decadent western bourgeois values. Having painted this ghastly picture of cultural imperialism, Ngugĩ then attempts to point to a way out. It is essential for us to have a notion of the concept of cultural

imperialism and the advocated way out for us to understand the politico-literary strategies which Ngugi himself uses in his fiction writing.

Basically, Ngugi sees that for a people to be free they must regain control of their land and the products of their labour (p. 26). The anti-colonialist struggle is therefore firstly an economic and political struggle.

When the disaffected section of the indigenous petty-bourgeoisie first approaches this anti-colonial struggle, they tend to use racial nationalism. Armah's book Two Thousand Seasons illustrates this point well. Racial nationalism is initially accepted by the masses since in the early phase of the struggle, privilege and exploitation take place along race lines. However, this racial ideology serves to blind the masses at a later stage when they find it difficult to perceive the oppressor who has the same skin-colour as themselves. This tendency is reinforced by the elite's use of a "militant" nationalist culture which stresses common origins and blurs their differences from the common mass. Under neo-colonialism, however, the objective conditions are created for the exposure of the exploitative role of the compradors despite racial mystification.

Given the role of cultural imperialism and the "militant" national culture, it is clear that the liberation struggle must be waged on the cultural front as well. The aim must be to create a culture that is diametrically opposed to that of the ruling class of the oppressor nations. Then too, as Ngugi's own practice indicates, it must be directed against the indigenous exploiter as well. The purpose of the progressive culture must be to

recreate the colonised subject as an agent of change. To this end, Ngugi suggests certain concrete measures (p. 30).

Firstly, he insists that indigenous literature (including works from the diaspora, in the case of Africa) must be read in schools. One might think that he misses the point since some indigenous literature is reactionary (as in Armah's case) and revolutionary works have been produced in the metropoles. What is needed, first and foremost seems to be progressive literature. It must, however, be borne in mind that at this juncture it is perhaps more important for the colonised to realise that they can produce and indeed have produced a literature.

Secondly, Ngugi insists on the reading of literature that deals with historical situations that are common to the "Third World". Here anything that rejects oppressive socio-economic systems and the dwarfing of the creative potential of (wo)man is important. In this regard he recommends anti-imperialist literature from the "Third World" and socialist countries as well as any other anti-imperialist, anti-bourgeois, pro-people literature from the imperialist countries.

Thirdly, he suggests that a tradition of literary criticism must be developed that, while not overlooking formal standards, views literature from the point of view of the struggling masses and endorses anything that is positive, revolutionary and humanistic and rejects the opposite. The work of Chidi Amuta, which is discussed later, is a pertinent example of such critical thinking.

Ngugi then goes on to outline the role of the writer in politics. Before going on to discuss this issue in detail, I wish

to deal with his contentious recommendation that the "Third World" writer should use the national languages in his/her work. He makes this recommendation partly on the basis of the fact that the colonial language has been used to express the values of the ruling classes of the metropole. I think that he overlooks the fact that the colonial language does not necessarily have to carry the values of these ruling classes. Ngugi's own Petals of Blood was, after all, written in English. Furthermore, indigenous languages can be abused to carry a reactionary message. Here one simply needs to remember that vernacular is used in Bantu education literature in South Africa. However, Ngugi's point that the national languages are more accessible to the worker-peasant masses is a point to be considered, and a writer using a colonial language should insist that his work be translated into the national languages. There are, however, economic constraints in this respect.

2.3 Ngugi's view of the role of the writer in politics

Ngugi not only analyses the phenomena of neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism, but also goes on to prescribe the role of the writer in this situation. He sees a basic similarity between the poet and the politician in that they have the same subject and object for their respective activities (p. 71). By this he means that they are both concerned with human beings and human relationships. Imaginative literature is about the moral significance of values and the quality of human life. Therefore, both literature and politics deal with real human beings as

products and makers of history.

Furthermore, Ngugi points out that there is no area of our lives that is unaffected by the way in which society is organised (p. 71). The class in power controls not only the productive forces but cultural development as well. Politics and culture are therefore intimately interwoven and the writer plays a political role even when this is inadvertent.

Ngugi holds that the way power is organised in society affects writers and their writings in three ways :

1. The writer is a product of history, time and place. S/He belongs to a class and is a participant in class-struggle. This is so whether the writing is controlled or not and even when a neutral stance is adopted.

2. The writer's subject matter is history; that is, s/he shows the process of (wo)man acting on nature and changing both it and her/himself. Reflection of this process also automatically shows the changing relations of power with respect to the production process. Politics is therefore part and parcel of literary territory.

3. Expanding on the second point, it is held that imaginative writing as a reflection (even if distorted) of society, must show class-formation, conflicts and contradiction. This is especially so when a realist tradition is followed (p. 72).

Given the interrelation between literature and politics, it should come as no surprise that the writer and the politician are often the same person. In Africa, we could cite Leopold Senghor and Agostino Neto as examples. Furthermore, the writer's subject

matter often places him/her on the wrong side of ruling cliques and this often results in banning and exile. Ngugi's own experience is a case in point here. "Third World" writers who have attempted to avoid political commitment have often rendered themselves irrelevant. In any case, literature tends to automatically reflect the atmosphere of the time. This is clearly seen in the case of as unpolitical a writer as Jane Austen who still presented an accurate reflection of the leisured, propertied classes of her day despite her attempts to side-step major issues.

The writer should not only reflect the world accurately, but should also develop a positive attitude to social and political issues. His/her attempt to grasp reality must also show a appreciation of the need to change it. To this end s/he must identify the classes struggling for change and those opposing it. Basically, whether s/he does this or not will depend on which side s/he takes in the class struggle.

"Third World" writers occupy a world that is marked by the struggle of progressive classes for change. This is because of the glaring discrepancies in the distribution of wealth that has occurred in the neo-colonies. This has produced a dramatic confrontation that forces the writer to be political even when s/he aims at merely recording. The class struggle is so intense that it automatically enters the writer's work. The writer aligned to the bourgeoisie, however, never moves beyond the racial struggle for national liberation and never sees the struggle as part of the world-wide anti-imperialist quest. Armah's perspective illustrates this.

For the writer to develop a revolutionary perspective, s/he

must be aware of the economic basis of the struggle and this gives the cultural struggle a different form, changing it from a simple question of authenticity to a question of the class content of indigenous values. The patriotic writer must join the worker-peasant alliance if the parasitism of foreign and local exploiters is to be ended and the former colonies are to truly free.

Such a writer must never lose the perspective of the struggle as being between imperialism and capitalism on the one hand and national liberation and socialism on the other. S/He must also see the contradiction stemming from the different levels of development in urban and rural areas and must expose the attempts of the neo-colonialist elites to involve entire nationalities in their internecine struggles over their respective share of the cake. Also, s/he must not allow narrow nationalism to blind him/her to the more basic contradictions that link the masses of the "Third World" to the class struggles in the rest of the world.

When this blinding occurs, the writer retreats into individualism, mysticism and formalism. This often results from a fear of facing the socialist alternative. In Africa, in particular, such writers (here we could consider the writing of Armah and Soyinka) make a cult of Blackness, Africanness and Negritude. Claims are also made that there is something special about the idealised African past. As an alternative to this, such a writer retreats into Nihilism which only perpetuates the neo-colonialist <u>status quo</u>. The truly revolutionary writer will, according to Ngugi, also reject every effort to restrict the struggle for freedom on the basis of an abstract humanism (p. 76). This is a correct assessment since true humanism can only come

about when cannibalistic economic relations are ended.

In conclusion, the "Third World" writer must recognise the global nature of the struggle and must negate his/her bourgeois roots and develop true creative links with the masses in alliance with all socialistic forces of the world. In the words of Ngugi, "He must write with the vibrations and tremors of the struggles of all the working people of Africa, America, Asia and Europe behind him" (p. 80). His parting advice to writers is that they should be anchored in the struggles of the masses and not be mesmerised by bribes from the bourgeoisie whose wealth is achieved at the cost of misery, degradation and death of the peoples of the world. Such a writer will make an important political contribution to the burying of imperialism.

Now Ngugi's views resemble those of the western European critics who tried to characterise revolutionary literature systematically. I will particularly refer to the work of Ernst Fischer to illustrate the point that there is no unbridgeable gap between the writers of the neo-colonies and the revolutionary writers of Europe.

3. Fischer's[3] view of the development of the aesthetic

According to Fischer, "Art is almost as old as man. It is a form of work, and work is an activity peculiar to man" (Ernst Fischer, The necessity of Art p. 15) We need not go into the very interesting theoretical foundation of this statement except to stress that work is seen here as a conscious transformation of nature. Confronted with nature, (wo)man is the only being with the propensity to consciously transform it to meet his/her needs. In order to achieve this mastery over nature, (wo)man fashions tools. These are instruments which s/he either finds in nature or transforms from nature and they facilitate his/her ability for further transformation.

At the time that tools were developed, work changed into a conscious, collective action and language, as a means of communication to facilitate this action, came into being. As a system of signs collectively held, language was of immense importance to early (wo)man. It had an organising function within the working group or collective because the signs meant the same to all its members. At this level, however, language -- though artifact -- cannot yet be spoken of as art.

The collective working process, however, requires a coordinating working rhythm. It is order to achieve this, that the first art-form -- the chant -- arises. Here the chanted sounds provide a uniform rhythm for the collective and also serve as command signals that arouse the collective to action. In this sense then, the chant, as art-form, enhances (wo)man's power over

other (wo)men and the ability to transform nature. Hence, it is directly linked to work and is indeed a form of work.

More important, though, art was also brought to function as a magic tool which served people in their mastering of nature. It was considered that the future could be achieved by prefiguring it in representation. Thus the slain beast on the cave-wall was considered to anticipate the event (i.e. the slaying) and to facilitate its coming into being. This built up the hunters' sense of security and superiority over their prey. In a direct sense it assisted (wo)man in the mastery of nature.

As society develops from primitive communalism to one split into classes, the function of art develops further. The initial splitting of the collective into classes produces a fragmentation of experience and this leads to the alienation of the individual. Here the role of art becomes the freeing of the individual from anxieties produced by fragmented individuality and the restoration to man of his lost sense of unity with the collective.

With the advent of the fully developed capitalist society, however, such a simple equation of personal interest with the interest of the collective is not easily achieved. Unable then simply to reassert a lost sense of unity, art fragments into a proliferation of schools which either protest the loss of unity, attempt to escape the problem or try to find new paths to the restoration of that unity.

One of the first major schools of the capitalist period is Romanticism. This is essentially a passionate and contradictory protest against the harsh prose of business and profit that characterises the bourgeois world.

The Romantic attitude is characterised as belonging to the petty-bourgeoisie that was hopeful of sharing in the general enrichment of capitalist accumulation, yet feared being crushed in the process. The Romantic thus turned his/her eyes to the new times but simultaneously looked back to the "good old days" of pre-capitalism.

The Romantic yearning for the past is closely linked to the concept of "folk art". In attempting to capture the lost unity of the past, the Romantics idealise "the people" whom they posit as a community transcending class divisions and possessing a "folk-soul" which creates folk-art. Much "Third World" writing, especially in Africa, could be considered in these terms.

However, since folk art draws upon the experience of the peasantry as a class which is decimated by increasing industrialisation in the bourgeois world, it cannot serve as a buttress against the loss of unity which the capitalist world brings with it. Instead, the entire historical process of economic development undermines the peasantry, so that Romanticism becomes "one of the artist's possible reactions to a reality which he cannot affirm" (The Necessity of Art p.67). It is, in effect, a blind-alley.

Alongside Romanticism, we have the "art for art's sake" movement. Initially a protest against the tendency of capitalism to turn all art into a saleable commodity, the movement is essentially a refusal to produce for the bourgeois market. However, whereas Romantics could appeal to the ever diminishing "people", "art for art's sake" remains an isolated protest against bourgeois relations and thus its proponents tend to retreat from

society and to glorify an elite rather than the common mass. Art of this sort, therefore, leads to an increasing sense of alienation rather than the desired sense of the restoration of unity.

The twin schools of Impressionism in fine-art and Naturalism in literature both arise as a reaction to attempts by the Academy to posit outworn classical forms as the only acceptable art forms. Arising out of a social formation transcended by the modern world, these outworn classical forms reduce artists to superficial mediocrity. Impressionism and Naturalism were, therefore, initially vigorous and progressive. However, intense attention to detail made it impossible for them to capture a sense of the whole of reality and again, art could no longer recover the lost unity of the community. Indeed, it was an attempt by artists of these schools to bridge the gap between part and the whole that led them to embrace symbolism and mysticism. The latter is born out of the attempt in part to find a mysterious whole that might give meaning to life lying behind and beyond fragmented social realities. One is reminded of the work of Soyinka and Armah in this respect.

The impossibility of such a project inevitably leads to Nihilism. Since all these constructs are nothing more than arbitrary artifacts that cannot serve as convincing metaphysical bases for the re-establishment of the "wholeness of Being", the artist is logically forced into a position of doubting all value <u>per se</u>. In the face of this meaningless, the conclusion must be that there is no sense at all in life itself.

While this emphatic "No" to value might at first sight seem radical (since the philistine values of bourgeois society are

rejected), the resultant demoralisation and immobilisation of the spirit, in most cases leads to an acquiescence to the status quo. Alongside this strand ending in Nihilism, the most significant artists and writers under capitalism developed the Romantic revolt of the lonely "I" into a vehement criticism of the society as a whole. Such a critique naturally prescribes a realism that is ruthlessly critical. For this reason one cannot see an exclusivity between Romanticism and realism. In fact, Romanticism can be viewed as the early phase of critical realism.

Basically, realism is characterised by a stubborn clinging to the idea of an objective reality. This objective reality cannot be posited as independent of our consciousness, but it is held to be readily apprehensible and accessible to human intellect. The realist artist therefore need have no recourse to a mystical unifying construct to guarantee our being, and the inevitable failure of these mystical constructs does not land one in Nihilism.

Up to this point we have traced the development of art from its inception up to the late capitalist period. The individuals of this period were then faced with a situation in which they either accepted the meaninglessness of life and alienation as given or else could cling to the idea of reality as a means of preserving their sanity. The problem with the second approach is that the reality of the late capitalist and indeed the neocolonialist world is so horrific that a fall into the abyss of Nihilism might yet result. It was, therefore, essential that a new perspective on reality be found if humankind were not to be doomed to a sense of ultimate futility and meaninglessness. Out

of this historical moment, the aesthetic of "socialist realism" as an anti-nihilist, anti-alienist endeavour was born.

The work of Ngugi and Ousmane exhibits the penetration of this aesthetic into the "third world" and this shows its vitality despite the later collapse of the Soviet Union and its allies which prescribed socialist realism as their official aesthetic.

Nigerian critic Chidi Amuta also views literature from a Marxist perspective in his attempt to formulate a theory that was appropriate for the "Third World". He posits a series of categories that are specifically relevant to literature emanating from this part of the world and comes close to formulating a theory of literature that meets the requirements stipulated by Ngugi.

4. Amuta's theory of African Literature

4.1 Amuta's Categories

Amuta is intent upon fashioning a theory of literary criticism which will provide insight into and explain the social resonance and aesthetic integrity of literary works as art objects which contain certain experiences, assume specific forms and articulate specific viewpoints due to their objective socio-historical determination. To this end he posits his categories of the national question, the class question and a post-Marxist dialectical theory. Amuta's main focus is on Africa, but much of what he says is applicable to the rest of the "Third World" with its colonial and neo-colonial experience.

4.1.1 The National Question

Amuta points to the fact that due to the colonial heritage, emergent states in Africa brought together diverse ethno-nationalities into unified political entities (The Theory of African Literature p.62). Also, due to the absence of a consolidated bourgeoisie, a context was created in which national liberation, redefinition and assertion took precedence over the class question. Following from this fact, there exists a conflict between ancient ethnic values and loyalties and the wider nationalist imperative. This results from the submission of diverse ethnic groups to common political and economic

institutions. Contradictions stemming from this position manifest themselves in literature.

National consciousness in Africa stemmed from a racial perspective and progressed to a continental one before it assumed its present national character. The continental imperative, stressed by bourgeois scholars, tends to overlook peculiarities of specific national-states. For the Marxist critic, however, the national question, as a facet of the relationship between history and literature, must be approached by attention to national specificity.

Although literature may sometimes develop independently of the general development of society in certain instances, national history and the national social experience have preoccupied the themes and ideological concerns of the African writer. This is because as Alex La Guma acknowledges, " the anti-imperialist struggle involves that of national liberation, a struggle for the consolidation of a cultural community, for a national economy" (Quoted in Amuta, The Theory of African Literature p.63).

The writer's conception of national culture has often differed from that of the ruling elite. This is clearly evidenced by Soyinka's exposure of the ideological bankruptcy of the power elite that attempted to explain the Biafran war in terms of the vacuous notions of "national unity" and territorial integrity rather than on the basis of class contradictions. His experience led Soyinka to define a nation as a group with a common ideology. This echoes Lenin's view that England consisted of two nations, that is, a bourgeois and a proletarian one.

Ruling classes in Africa tend to use a more convenient notion

of the nation rather than this ideologically defined one and they become obsessed with revivalism of decadent myths, dances and other cultural practices of pre-colonial society. This is a reactionary view of culture since it is ahistorical and non-dynamic. Writers like Chinua Achebe who endorse this view have been rewarded by their governing elites. The experience of nation-state formation in Africa is, however, a complex one and this complexity has been reflected in the works of African writers.

Firstly, after the initial articulation of pan-African consciousness, there is a specific use of ethnic myths to come to terms with the imperatives of nation-statehood. The specificity of the ethnic myths negate the romantic image of the African past that is dominant in Senghorian Negritude. There is also an essentially materialist approach to history with blame for the past being placed firmly on the kings and their attendants. Armah's Two Thousand Seasons is an example here.

Characteristic of this literature is the view that when historically changed conditions necessitate a new consciousness, the literary imagination invokes beliefs, symbols and values from a preceding level of consciousness and ethos in order to authenticate and validate new realities. Soyinka's A Dance of Forests is a good example here.

The second way of dealing with the national question took the form of using specific events of the national history for fictive elaboration. There is normally a painstaking reconstruction of the historical event to negate the false versions of existing colonial history. Mofolo's Chaka illustrates this type.

Sometimes, however, the neo-colonial history is reconstructed from a different ideological perspective. Thus, in Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, a revolutionary rewriting of the event occurs to produce a new truth transcending neo-colonial propositions. Concentration on specific historical events could also take the form of an acceptance of the uncomfortable facts of the national experience. Here a painful process of self-interrogation is initiated.

The third approach to the national question is instituted where political independence followed an armed struggle. Here national literature and the nationalist armed struggle constitute an organic unity and the literature is born of actual involvement in the struggle. Neto's poetry is the best example here and the emphasis here is not on preserving elements of the past but on the release of the future by overcoming impediments to its birth, in the present. This literature aims at overcoming fear, ignorance, passivity, tribalism as well as the reactionary armed force of the coloniser.

In works produced in the later post-colonial period, situations carry an unmistakeable national stamp. The reader can recognise the situation as belonging to his own national world. The national specificity of the writer's referent is no longer camouflaged and national consciousness is dominant in the ideology of the text in that the writer's socio-political commitment is defined primarily within the national context.

The increasing national focus has not precluded a pan-Africanist identification. This stems from the sense that all Africa's nation-states are subjected to the same forces of

international imperialism. The national and the continental experiences are therefore seen as dialectically interrelated and the investigation of the specifics of the national situation is seen as a contribution to the continental perspective. Given the common neo-colonial experience, this is perhaps justified but more recently, national fiction tends to be more overtly aware of the structural composition of the new societies and this brings us to the class question.

4.1.2 The Class Question

Class considerations are occasioned by the radical class stratification in modern African society. In the urban areas, the national bourgeoisie consisting basically of the industrial barons, big bureaucrats and the top brass of the army rule on behalf of their masters in the metropolitan capitals of the West. They inhabit the exclusive suburbs.

Below them is the urban petty-bourgeoisie which consists of the middle level intelligentsia, the small bureaucrats and the middle level officers of the security forces. They execute the decisions of the bourgeoisie without understanding in whose favour those decisions are made. They occupy the not-so-reserved suburbs and are what Soyinka called "privileged slaves who prop up the marble palaces of today's tyrants" (Quoted in Chidi Amuta, <u>The Theory of African Literature</u> p. 68).

At the bottom of the social ladder is the vast army of humanity consisting of the proletariat and the lumpen-proletariat who occupy the urban slums and hovels. They sweat for the leisure

of the "deciders" and the "executioners" and their condition is very similar to that of the rural poor. The rural areas are not undifferentiated and stratification is based on inequalities of the past where the feudal lords and their proxies always lived better than the peasants. The urban elite still recruits these feudal remnants in the form of councillors and traditional rulers and this is the basis of control in the country-side.

This radical stratification finds a reflection in the literature and the culture of the modern states. The writer is a member of a class and creates his/her work out of the experiences made available to him by the material conditions and the world-view of the class to which he belongs. S/he always anticipates his/her audience as the class out of which his/her consciousness and communicative competence derive. This is important, for different classes crave different kinds of literature because of their different experiences to which they are subjected and which shape their aesthetic response. Difference in literary taste parallels the class stratification outlined above but there is great solidarity between the literature and culture of the urban and rural poor. This is so because they occupy a similar position of opposition to the lackeys of imperialism. Also, they dominate demographically and this tends to reduce the culture of the urban elite to a minority status.

The question thus arises as to whether one can talk of a national culture in a society riven by class and ethnic antagonisms. Basically two lines of interpretation arise here. The first views national culture as pluralistic while the second holds that national culture must be defined by the patriotic ideal

of the socialist perspective. This is so because it originates in the social classes which enjoy democratic dominance and are also the custodians of the authentic national literature and culture.

On the basis of this Amuta makes a distinction between African literature in general and the literature of the African people (p. 71). The latter will consist of the literature of the African masses together with those of the elite who have betrayed their classes of origin. In this instance, their work will always contain the bitter truth of imperialist exploitation and be antagonistic to anti-patriotic sentiments.

Literature that is truly African (or "Third World" for that matter) embodies the ideology of the working classes. Ngugi's Petals of Blood and Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood are good examples here. They objectify the polarisations in society and spell out the writer's alignment. They no longer view (wo)man as simply "African"' but as either exploiter or exploited and together with other anti-imperialist forms of culture, they form the literature of the African people in that they are centred on the majority and espouse their cause.

4.1.3 A Post-Marxist Theory

Given Amuta's rigorous Marxist analysis of African society, and his denigration of Armah's attempt to consider Marxism as a foreign ideology, one must wonder at his need to posit a post-Marxist theory. One appreciates the need to apply the classical tenets of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete African conditions; yet, in attempting to characterise those conditions, Amuta mistakenly attributes a uniqueness to African society.

Amuta holds that the contact between Africa and Western imperialism has unleashed a plethora of socio-historical conditions that defy the linear logic of Marxism (p. 72). He does not seem to realise that Lenin made positive contributions to Marxism that took the form mainly of an analysis of just that deformation of capitalism that is imperialism. On the basis of his analysis, he came to realise that the national liberation struggles in the colonies formed part of the confrontation between socialism and capitalism. It is precisely this that allows Ngugi to realise that the African independence struggle is linked not only to other anti-imperialist struggles but also to the worker struggles in the capitalist metropolises and the socialist world.

Further, Amuta feels that the coexistence of industrial capitalist relations with survivals of feudalism in Africa make it peculiar (p. 72). One wonders how this is supposed to differ from conditions in Russia before the 1917 Revolution and on the basis of which Lenin proposed a worker-peasant alliance.

Again, when Amuta bases African peculiarity on the fact that the identity of interest between the urban poor and the peasantry has not yet led to class consciousness, he shows serious theoretical limitations (p. 72). Lack of awareness of identity of interest between these sections does not imply a shortcoming in Marxist-Leninist theory, but merely that conscious elements have to create this class consciousness out of the objective common interest. At no time did Marxists claim it would come about automatically.

When he mentions the incidence of maniacal dictators, Amuta seems to overlook the fact that Marx analyzed this phenomenon

under the concept of "Bonapartism" which foresaw the seizure of power by individuals using the armed forces to gain ascendency in situations where there was a relative equilibrium in the balance of class forces. This phenomenon was, therefore, clearly not beyond Marx's experience.

With respect to military regimes that have attempted revolutionary transformations, Amuta overlooks the fact that Lenin anticipated that former colonies could pass to socialist orientation on the basis of aid they would receive from the world socialist system. In all cases which he cites, with the exception of Libya (a very complex case), the military regimes received ideological and material aid from the socialist-bloc. How crucial this assistance was, is proved by the fact that they all collapsed when the Soviet Union was forced to withdraw aid due to its own internal difficulties.

On the issue of the African vanguard containing an odd mixture of peasants, students, women's groups and the urban poor, with the urban workers constituting an incoherent minority, I wonder if Amuta is aware of the composition of the Russian vanguard that set out to complete the socialist revolution with a working class that was largely decimated by economic dislocation. Further, in those places in Africa that came closest to following up their national liberation struggle with an attempt to build socialism, it was precisely that incoherent urban proletariat which they sought to consolidate both numerically and organisationally. Angola is the case in point here and its leadership was firmly attached to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

Finally, when it comes to the reservations of the New Left,

both Lenin and Mao Tse-Tung were able to foresee the such a situation would arise out of imperialism's use of super-profits gained from the exploitation of the colonies to make adaptations (like the welfare state) that would amount to the bribing of their own working classes and cause ideological deviations precisely of the nature of the New Left objection. It was for this reason that Mao held that the major contradiction of this epoch lay between the neo-colonies and imperialism and he came to this conclusion on the basis of his Marxism-Leninism.

I, thus, cannot agree with Amuta when he claims that the examples he mentions point to reservations which have their basis in the theoretical limitations of Marxism. That there is no need for African literature to transcend Marxism-Leninism for it to give a total picture of African reality is proved by works like Petals of Blood, God's Bits of Wood and Ngugi's theoretical writings.

Further, as to Marxism-Leninism placing Western man at the helm and forefront of human history, Lenin himself held that the Soviet worker had temporarily taken the lead in the world revolution, but that he had no doubt that this worker would eventually be superseded by other fractions of the international working class. It seems to me that Amuta was misled by a residual petty-bourgeois nationalist sentiment to arrive at conclusions not justified by the objective facts. When he attempts to separate Historical Materialism from Marxism (p. 74), one really must object since this was a central concept in Marx's thought and any elasticity attributed to it must be an attribute of Marxian thought as a whole.

I would, therefore, not agree with his project for a post-Marxist theory and in fact his "dialectical theory" is not at all inconsistent with Marxist tenets.

4.1.4 The Dialectical Theory

Amuta sees the strongest handicap of formalist theories to lie in the fact that they polarise literature from socio-historical processes (p. 77). The dialectical approach seeks to correct this and it is especially important in the case of African literature because of its transparent socio-historical determination. In order to characterise the interrelationship between literature and its socio-historical determinants, Amuta characterises the three primary categories of history, the mediating subject and the literary event (p. 80).

4.1.4.1 History

Amuta defines history as the complex of material forces and objective conditions that shapes social experience and in this way forms the raw material of literature (p. 80). He rightly claims that history is knowable and the fact that he mistakes this knowability as being determined by its consisting of real people and events does not affect his argument. (In fact, the knowability of history depends on the procedures of scientific investigation and as such it is a process resulting from human activity.)

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African literature develops according to the historical challenges facing African society and it is characterised by a

reactive stance to slavery, colonialism, imperialism, etc. The attempt to see this strong link to history as a negative phenomenon is to indulge in abstract formalism.

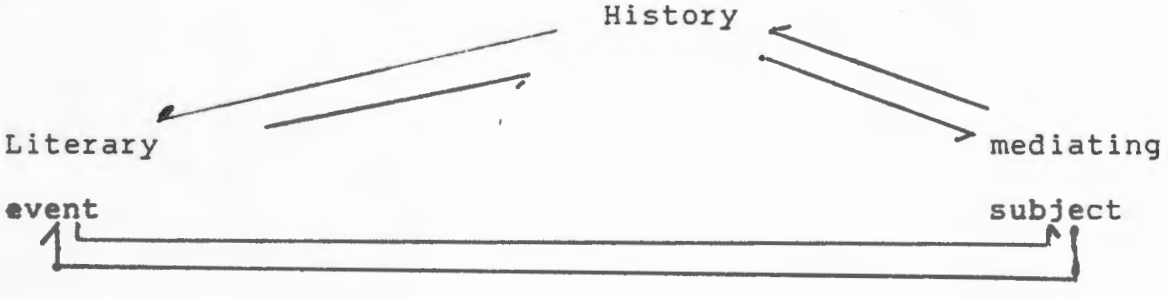
4.1.4.2 The Mediating Subject

The author as a mediating subject is pointed to in order to reject the notion of the work of art as simply mirroring reality. The author is involved in an active transposition of the empirical reality into a fictive reality and he does this according to the laws of imaginative projection which involve his biography and the ideology stemming from it.

The writer as a mediating subject must, therefore, be placed within his specific socio-economic context. To do otherwise would be to treat the art-work as unmediated and this overlooks the human factor in the creation of literature.

4.1.4.3 The Literary Event

This is seen as the product which results from the attempt of the mediating subject to derive form from his socio-historical experience. History thus informs the literary artefact and is revealed in and through it. The dialectical relationship between the three primary categories can be represented as follows :



The mediating subject derives experience from history and in turn makes history through changing himself and others by means of his creative work. The work itself is an active producer of meaning from which we can both know history and the mediating subject's participation in it.

To fully appreciate an art-work, we need to analyze its form and content, but the context in which it was produced is also of importance. Content, form, and context are, therefore, secondary categories for the total understanding of a specific work. (The primary categories being History, the mediating subject and the art-work itself.)

4.1.4.4 Context

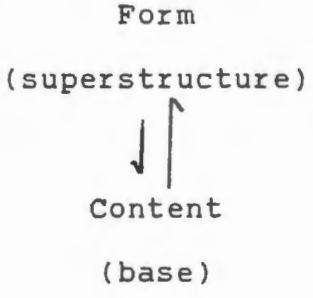
This involves the totality of the work's historical environment and its major component is the philosophical and aesthetic tradition in which it was created. In the context of African literature, this means seeing the work in its situation within the ideological framework of the African experiences of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

The decisive context for cultural practice in neo-colonialist Africa is capitalist imperialism. This is because imperialism has penetrated every facet of life in Africa. This context places two antagonistic sets of propositions before the mediating subject : that is, imperialism and anti-imperialism. The antagonism takes the form of the contradiction between art-for-arts sake and utilitarian, engaged literature that rejects bourgeois individualism and stresses anti-imperialist solidarity. If the

writer is aiming at true African literature (as already discussed), s/he must adopt an anti-imperialist commitment which rejects leadership of the comprador bourgeoisie and has as its main thrust the transfer of the means of production into the hands of the African masses in order to end economic and cultural dependence. It can thus be seen that Amuta's dialectical theory does not stray far from traditional Marxism. Within this specific context, specific forms and contents can be devised and evaluated.

4.1.4.5 Content and Form

Amuta rejects the Aristotelian notion that content and form are in harmonious relation. Like the Marxists, he holds that content takes precedence over form but that they are also in dialectical interrelationship (p. 86). Literature is in the superstructure, but the relation between content and form in literature corresponds to that between the base and the superstructure. Form provides the base of content with a legitimising superstructure in the following way :



This relationship occurs within the actual superstructure and is only an analogy. The model does not, therefore, fall prey to Tony

Bennett's objection to a similar model by Eagleton that holds content to be the actual base (Outside Literature, p. 45)

Content and form cannot naturally be separated and their separation only occurs in the theoretical propositions of the critic. Furthermore, Amuta correctly sees that content is not history itself. Rather, history is represented by the category of context of which content is merely a semantic appropriation by which the mediating subject attempts to turn context into a sensually graspable reality. Content is thus not reducible to context and thus to history. This further frees Amuta's model from possible objections by Bennett. Content assumes a precise form which we perceive through our senses. Any content automatically embodies a form, or we could not know it. There is no content devoid of form and vice versa.

Socio-historical reality (context) is appropriated by content and is itself patterned by showing various groups relating to each other in specific ways. Thus, the realisation of that content in form will bear the stamp of the originally appropriated context. This stresses the precedence of content over form and when the dialectical relationship between the two is borne in mind, we are in exactly the position of Marxist literary theory.

Context, content and form are, therefore, relevant in examining a work in its apparent autonomy. Context is the ever present halo around the work which serves as a repository of reference as to whether the work achieves its particular historical intention or not. This provides an evaluative context for the work within Amuta's dialectical theory of literary criticism, and it allows us to see clearly the relationship

between history and fiction within the context of the use of literature as a political strategy.

We have, up to now, being using the terms "progressive" and "reactionary" very loosely. In the following chapter, I will attempt to set out a basis for the scientific use of these terms.

5. Historical Materialism as an evaluative basis for Literature

In order to decide whether a particular literary representation is reactionary or progressive, we need to examine the Marxist conception of history which can be summarised in the term Historical Materialism. This conception of history can be held to be scientific since it is based on the undisputed empirical fact that (wo)man needs to satisfy certain basis material needs if s/he is to survive.

Now it was noted that (wo)men do not, and indeed cannot, exist in isolation from each other. In order to produce their means of life they necessarily enter into relations of production. Within these relations they are interdependent and employ the forces of production available to society to produce the goods necessary to satisfy their material needs. Their labour itself is regarded as a force of production.

Now in the course of development, these forces have increased from simple techniques with stone implements to those of modern industrial society with an advanced science and technology and automated production-lines tended by skilled workforces. As the forces of production have increased there have been concomitant changes in the relations of production.

There are therefore two fundamental and interrelated factors that determine the character of every society : the forces it possesses for producing the means of life and the way people are organised in utilising these forces. The two main forces are therefore the forces of production and the relations of production. These two factors taken together determine the mode

of production of a society.

Now according to Marx, " With the acquisition of new productive faculties, men change their mode of production and with the mode of production all the economic relations which are merely the necessary relations of this particular mode of production" (The Poverty of Philosophy p.181). On the basis of empirical investigation and scientific prognostication, Marx identified the following modes of production that would encompass all human history. They were said to include primitive communalism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and communism. One epoch would supersede another when the extant relations of production could no longer accommodate the forces of production.

Marx outlined this process further in his Critique of Political Economy :

> At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes a period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. (p.12)

In this connection, Engels wrote in similar vein :

> the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions ought to be sought, not in the minds of men in their increasing insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the mode of production and exchange; they are to be sought not in the philosophy but in the economics of the epoch concerned. The growing realisation that existing social institutions are irrational and unjust, that reason has become nonsense and good deeds a scourge is only a sign that changes have been taking place quietly in the methods of production and forms of economic exchange with which the social order, adapted to previous economic conditions, is no longer in accord. This also involves that the means through which the abuses that have been revealed can be gotten rid of must likewise be present in more or less developed form, in the altered conditions of production. These means are not to be invented by the mind, but discovered by the mind in the existing facts of production. (Anti-Duhring p.292)

The earliest mode of production, the one within which (wo)man emerged from the animal world, endured for most of humankind's history, and is still, today, extant in several primitive societies. Production relations were simple egalitarian ones which has led people to refer to this mode of production as "primitive communism". Though we may speak in hindsight of

"communal ownership", the actual concept of ownership would have been foreign in such a society. The land was simply there to be used and the animals to be captured. The only division of labour was one based on sex with the men doing the hunting and fishing while the women attended to food-gathering.

The relations of production prevailing within this mode of production were not conducive to rapid technological development or brilliant invention. With a lack of division of labour, nobody was freed from the immediate task of obtaining the means of existence in order to specialise in thinking up innovations. On the other hand, there were no vested interests to deliberately retard development. The result was a slow, but irresistible development in the forces of production. Finally, hunting and food-gathering were replaced by agriculture and cattle-breeding as the main method of obtaining food.

The primitive mode of production was destroyed as people developed their skills and entered into a growing division of labour. One group would, for instance, engage in cattle-rearing while another would produce handicrafts and so people, by exchanging their products also changed their relationships. To facilitate this process of exchange, the concept of private property arose in that the product was now seen as belonging to a particular individual.

Once private property has arisen, the way is opened for differences of wealth between individuals. However, before a fully-fledged class society could develop, a certain prerequisite had to be met, that is, the forces of production had to have been raised to the point at which individuals could produce a surplus.

A surplus is produced at the point where production exceeds the level required for sustaining only the producer. Exploitation of the labour of others rests on the question of control of this surplus. It occurs when a producing class is permitted to keep only a part of the wealth that its labour has created. The remainder is appropriated by an exploiting class. This is equally true whether the exploiters are slave-owners, feudal lords or capitalists. Slavery arose when the victorious tribe conceived of the idea that it was more profitable to exploit the labour of captives rather than summarily killing them. This was initially highly successful since the surplus produced could be used to support the nascent arts and science of the society. It should be borne in mind that the intellectual advances of ancient Greek society was based on the surplus created by its slaves. Despite initial advances, however, slavery broke down since the method of appropriation offered little incentive for the slave to improve his technique and thus raise production. As a consequence, the society stagnated and a new form of organisation called feudalism was instituted.

After the destruction of the central slave-owning power, owners of estates began to replace their slaves with serfs and free peasants. Serfs had more crushing obligations to the landowner, and fewer privileges, but in most respects the two groups were similar. The lord levied payments in cash as a kind of rent. He would also levy payments in kind -- they had to hand over a certain amount of agricultural produce. Serfs were also compelled to perform forced labour -- there were days that had to be put aside by the serf for working on the land reserved by the

landlord for his own use. Harsh as this might seem, the new relations of production had the advantage of giving the exploited a modicum of interest in the amount of goods produced and this encouraged technological advancement.

Feudal relations of production eventually became, in turn, an outmoded form of social organisation restricting the forces of production. With the constant discovery of previously unknown countries and with an ever increasing and more accessible area for trade, production came to be more and more not for immediate consumption but to sell on the open market ,in short, commodity production was born. The feudal lords, hitherto the organisers of production, whose wealth was largely tied up in land, and whose way of life was to live off the produce of the manor, were unable to meet the challenge of the new conditions. It was increasingly the rich merchant class that benefitted from the growth in trade. In addition to trading profits, they found the way to profit much more by financing piracy, by slave trading, by money lending and by cashing in on the wealth of colonial robbery.

In the course of time, after a number of technical advances in agriculture had dispossessed great numbers of peasants from the land, the capitalists were able to invest some of their accumulated capital in manufacturing. They were thus able to exploit the newly-formed proletariat. Thus the capitalist was enabled to become the overlord of production, but only after breaking the power of the feudal noble class who were, naturally, unwilling to give up their political power without a struggle.

Capitalism is the mode of production within which labour-power itself becomes a commodity. People's ability to work is

purchased in the market by the capitalist who owns the means of production and employs the worker to use them. Capitalist exploitation consists of the fact that the value of the worker's wages is less than the value of the product he creates. A profit is therefore made at the expense of the worker. The total profits of a capitalist society are the measure of exploitation of the working class.

Today, capitalist relations of production have become outmoded and are blocking further technological progress. This fact manifests itself in many ways. Machinery and other productive forces are not utilised to the limits of their potentiality. The unreasonable situation has come about that although there exists a great need for homes, schools, hospitals and so on, men stand unemployed and machines idle because the capitalist "economic situation" decrees that they cannot be used profitably.

Modern social production which involves the majority of the population has come into conflict with the private ownership of the means of production. A small wealthy minority controlling the nation's economy in its own narrow interest stifles the productive forces of society. The way to solve this contradiction is to take into social ownership the means of production so that they can be used not simply to produce a profit, but to also solve existing social problems. This is socialism which destroys capitalist production relations.

Further refinement of the forces of production under socialism creates an abundance of wealth that allows for the remuneration of the workers according to need rather than

according to work performed. When this occurs, the phase of communism is ushered in and this phase can be likened to primitive communalism with all the technological advances of modern humankind.

Marx thus sees history as a progression from lower forms of social organisation to more advanced ones which utilise the refinement of the productive forces to create a society free from want or exploitation. This provides a basis for the more scientific use of the terms of "progressive" and "reactionary". Any literary interpretation which assists the forward march of history is progressive while an interpretation which results in the opposite is reactionary. This is, however, basically a political judgement and literary analysis must still be undertaken to illustrate how literary techniques are harnessed in order for the work to achieve its political intent. In the second half of this thesis such literary analysis will be undertaken.

Given the apparent scientific basis of the Marxist-Leninist view of history, one must wonder at the collapse of the socialist states of the Soviet Union and its eastern European allies. Marxists have attempted to explain this in various ways and I find the two following explanations to be convincing.

Firstly, given an all-powerful bureaucracy that had a monopoly on interpretation of what was or was not in fact happening within the socialist states, it is clear that any desired results could be claimed for policies employed even when this was not the case. In such a position, no prescribed modification of theory occurred and incorrect policies continued to be implemented even when they did not achieve the desired

results. The gap between what was actually happening and what was claimed thus increased and the collapse of the affected states was inevitable. What happened here was that the link between theory and practice had been severed and the subsequent collapse stresses the absolute necessity of the maintenance of this vital link.

Secondly, a possible explanation is found in the fact that an unfavourable balance of class-forces internationally made it impossible for the world socialist system to remain inviolable in the face of a resurgent imperialism strengthened by the reinforcement it drew from intensified exploitation of the "Third World". This view is bolstered by the historical precedent set by the restoration of monarchies in England and France when a resurgent feudalism, utilising peasant reserves, was temporarily able to re-emerge after being displaced by bourgeois-democratic revolutions. Significantly, this restoration did not signal the end of bourgeois democracy in the world. Consequently, far from despairing at the unfavourable turn of events. present-day Marxists still seek to utilise their theory to consolidate the remains of the world socialist system and to regain lost territory. This somewhat lengthy digression has been undertaken to ensure that we can characterise works as progressive or reactionary on a more or less scientific basis. I regard this as essential to my project given the looseness with which these terms are bandied by literary critics.

6. Variants of Realism

Most "Third World" writers use some variant of realism in their literary interpretation of the history of their societies. The variants, however, cover a wide spectrum of stylistic response and may take the form of either critical, socialist, magical or mythical realism.

The critical realists exhibit an intense awareness of the terrible conditions pertaining in their colonial and neo-colonial societies. They see their task as being first and foremost the exposure of these conditions and the technique of realism is particularly apt in this regard. The aim seems to be to directly expose the lie that colonialism brings enlightenment and civilisation to the "benighted" colonial state. The fate of Okonkwo in Achebe's Things fall Apart stresses the fact that colonialism destabilises a vibrant society and emasculates those forces which give it its vitality.

The indictment does not, however, end with colonial society. The "flag-independence" of neo-colonialism only benefits the compradore bourgeois stratum while the conditions of the general masses in fact deteriorate even further. Armah's The Beautyful One's are not yet Born is a chilling portrayal of the blessings brought to the former colony by such "flag independence".

The chief thrust of the critical realist novel is precisely its criticism of existing conditions. In exposing the conditions of the general mass under colonialism and neo-colonialism, works of this nature play a fairly progressive role. They can, however,

show no way out of the conditions of degradation and oppression. As a consequence, works of this nature tend to induce despair and a lack of faith in ever reversing the situation. Where solutions are projected, the author, lacking a truly revolutionary perspective, hankers after the outworn relations of pre-colonialism. Armah's Two Thousand Seasons is the example of such a vain hope.

It is on the point of bringing about change that the socialist realist novel is superior to the critical realist one. The socialist realist author has the perspective of a socialist society arising out of the contradiction-fraught capitalist one.

Ngugi's Petals of Blood and Ousmane's Gods Bits of Wood are excellent examples of socialist realist novels. The writers are both Marxists and, as such, they accept Historical Materialism as their basic perspective. They thus accept the theory of history as being the record of the supersession of one stage of society by a higher one on the basis of the resolution of the contradictions present in the previous stage. Thus, slave-society supersedes primitive communalism, feudalism supersedes slavery, capitalism supersedes feudalism, socialism supersedes capitalism and finally communism supersedes socialism. History is thus seen as a progression of society through given stages until a classless society is achieved. Class-struggle is the motive force of this progression and it ceases when classes no longer exist.

Though this theory remains an hypothesis, it was the result of intense study in the fields of philosophy and political economy as well as an application of the nineteenth-century conventions for the procedures of historical verification and prognostication.

It cannot, therefore, simply be rejected as theoretical fantasy. For this reason, I feel that there is much truth in Lukács' claim that, "Socialist realism is in a position both to portray the totality of society in its immediacy and to reveal its pattern of development" (The Meaning of Contemporary Realism p.18).

It must also be stressed that for the socialist realist author, humankind creates its own future. Although for the Marxist, history progresses according to fixed laws of development, it is only through the actions of people that these laws come into play. The view of (wo)man as a passive victim of fate is totally absent here. Rather, characters in a socialist realist work become conscious of their position in society, gain an awareness of the contradictions raging in society at that juncture and actively set about resolving them. Through their actions, then, they usher in a new phase of history and in so doing create both their future and themselves.

Unlike the critical realist then, the works of the socialist realist anticipate the future and indicate the latent forces which could bring about a new society. Though these works are filled with degradation and suffering, the prognostication of a better future give a characteristic note of optimism to them.

Magical realist fiction has developed into a popular genre most particularly in the works of Latin American authors. It can briefly be defined as a literary convention the fuses "myth" with "reality". Gerald Martin, in his book Journeys through the Labyrinth : Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century, correctly warns that the term has been used as an ideological stratagem to collapse many different kinds of writing and many

different political perspectives into a single concept that has escapist overtones and which seeks to posit Latin America as an "exotic other" (p.224). However, in much Latin American writing from the sixties onwards, there is a mixture of fantasy and real elements. The mixture is created in such a way that the two are perfectly fused structurally, but, at the same time, they remain analytically separable. History and myth are made to overlap, accrete and to illuminate each other in what Timothy Brennan calls a "carnivalesque of pluralism" that stresses the relativity of all world-views (Salman Rushdie and the Third World p.61). Born of the Latin American story-telling tradition in which the oral tradition is central, magical realism is an attempt to capture the world-view of a "superstitious" community that regards the magical event as everyday fact. Myths, legends and beliefs are part of the everyday life of the community and the writer's attempt to capture this produces a poetic transposition of reality in which the legendary and the larger-than-life are privileged. This allows for an all-encompassing representation of the fictional world that is precluded by the conventions of traditional realism. Although there is always a rational explanation for the magical event, such an explanation is usually understated. As a consequence, the predominant impression of any historical event is how it is perceived and interpreted by the community itself. History is thus presented as a lived experience and it is in fact rewritten from the perspective of the indigenous community.

The myth-making tendency of popular history is stressed and the "reality" of the imagined is foregrounded. This has the salubrious effect of challenging the conventional assumptions of

reality by which European rationalism attempts to universalise itself. The alien is familiarised while there is a simultaneous defamiliarisation of the common-sense assumptions of the West. This is particularly well illustrated by Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude in which false-teeth and ice are viewed as magical occurrences, whereas flying-carpets hold no mysteries. Such an approach also allows for the representation of a total reality that is less exclusive than that prescribed by traditional realism. Careful reading always, however, allows for a common sense explanation and therefore empiricality is not seriously challenged.

The one common aspect of this diverse body of literature that employs magical realism can thus be seen as the foregrounding of the relation between lived experience and the official recording of history. However, we must bear in mind Martin's afore-mentioned warning that the strategies employed and the perspective utilised have often differed very radically. In this thesis, I will confine myself to the strategies and perspectives of Gabriel Marquez in One Hundred Years of Solitude and attempt to show that for from problematising the ability to capture historical reality, the technique can be used to approach that reality more closely. Here fantasy is never simply an embellishment but is used to rediscover reality, and in this work there is at least as much encoded material relating to social psychology, political economy and the history of ideas as is found in any socialist realist text.

The fourth category of realism which I wish to characterise for the purpose of this thesis is "mythical realism". This is not

to be confused with magical realism in that the myth utilised is not a community based belief but rather the postulation of a mythical idealised past. The past is contrasted with the present and it is held that all present problems result from a change from the "traditional" way of life. Armah's Two Thousand Seasons illustrates this category well.

7. Hayden White and the narrativisation of History

Before embarking on an analysis of specific "Third World" novels, it is important for us to establish the link between the representation of reality and narrativity. For the following theoretical perspectives, I am indebted to the work of Hayden White.[3] Though White would hardly describe himself as a Marxist, his notion of the narrativisation of history is useful provided that we bear in mind that the form the narrative takes is determined by the ideological outlook of the narrator. White himself does not make this connection and as a consequence his thought could lead us dangerously close to a relativism in which "anything goes". It is the purpose of this thesis, however, to insist very firmly on the link between the nature of the narrative and the class-outlook of the narrator.

White holds that the nature of narrative raises the question of the nature of culture and the nature of humanity itself. According to him, relation in the form of narrative is so natural that it only becomes problematic in a situation such as that prevailing in contemporary Western culture where it is programmatically refused. In all other cases, it is simply present like life itself -- international, transhistorical and transcultural ("The value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" p.5).

Narrativity provides a solution to the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, of fashioning human experience into assimilable structures of meaning that are generally human

rather than culture-specific. Thought patterns of another culture may be incomprehensible but stories emanating in another culture are easy to understand. Thus according to Roland Barthes, "narrativity is translatable without fundamental damage" ("Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" in Image, Music, Text p.79). This is clearly not the case with a lyric poem or a philosophical discourse.

Narrative is thus a metacode. It is a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted. It arises between our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience in language. It ceaselessly substitutes meaning for a straightforward copy of events recounted. Refusal of narrative therefore indicates a refusal of meaning itself.

Historians, however, do not have to report their truths about the real world in narrative form. They could choose non-narrative or anti-narrative forms of representation. This is a refusal to tell the story of the past with a fixed beginning, middle and end. These historians do not impose the form of what we normally associate with story-telling. They narrate but do not narrativise. The difference between narrating and narrativising is the difference between looking out on the world and reporting or making the world speak for itself as a story.

Narrative is regarded as a manner of speaking that is characterised by a certain number of exclusions and restrictive conditions. This is not the case with mere narrating. Certain pronouns and tenses applicable to discourse are not used in narrative. This is purely a distinction on the basis of a

linguistic order of criteria, but it does show that the objectivity of narrative rests on the absence of a narrator -- no one speaks. The events seem to tell themselves, for example, " He went to town."

The problem arises when this is done in historical discourse where real events are made to speak for themselves. These events can unproblematically serve as referents of a discourse but not as tellers of narrative. There is an artificiality in the notion that real events can tell their own story. The problem arises with the distinction between real and imaginary events. While "mythic" narrative is under no obligation to keep the two orders apart, narrative does become a problem when we wish to give to real events the form of a story.

Behind the gratification provided by entertaining the fantasy that real events are properly represented when they can be shown to have the coherence of a story is the psychological impulse not only to narrate but to give events the aspect of narrativity. In historiography, the desire for the imaginary must contest with the imperatives of the real or the actual. We can best see this when we consider non-narrative representations of history.

Modern historians characterise three kinds of historical representation. They regard the first two as having imperfect historicity on the basis of imperfect narrativity. The first two are annals and chronicles while the third is regarded as proper history. In the last case there is not only narrativity but also the judicious handling of evidence and respect for the chronological sequence of events in working out what is cause and what is effect. Narrativity gives to history an order of meaning

that transcends what it possesses as a mere record of sequential events.

Annals list events. They are not presented as telling a story. The chronicle, on the other hand, aspires to tell a story but never reaches closure. The story presented is always unfinished. Without the telling of reality in the form of a story, it never attains the status of history no matter how conscientiously the other criteria for the investigation are followed. Where there is no narrative, there is no history. Without analysis, history is trivial, and without narration, it is incomplete. Narrative purports to give insight into the nature of real events and dispels blindness with respect to reality. There is a purely conventional relationship between historiography and narration and the very distinction between real and imaginary events presupposes a notion of reality in which "the true" is identified with "the real" only in so far as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity.

In medieval annals there is an apparent refusal to transform vertical events into linear progressions. There is a failure to see the story waiting to be told. This is based on a peculiar notion of reality. There is no central subject, no beginning, middle and end, no identifiable narrative voice. All events are extreme and selected on the basis of their liminal nature. The connection between basic needs and the conditions for their possible satisfaction are not explicitly commented on. Social events are apparently as incomprehensible as natural events. They merely seem to have occurred and their importance stems only from the fact that they have been recorded. One has no idea who

recorded them and when. There are too many loose ends and there is certainly no plot. This frustrates the modern reader's expectations of a story to go with his/her desire for specific information.

In the annal, the regularity of the calendar signals "realism" and the intention to deal with real rather than imaginary events. The expression in chronological time is to convey the subject matter as it is expressed by human beings. There are, however, no low or high points. It is endless and there are no gaps. It does not conclude but simply terminates. There is a suggestion of a continuum ad infinitum. There is no story and hence no conclusion. This is so since there is no central subject about which a story could be told.

There is, however, a structure of relationships between the events by which they are identified as part of an integral whole. This is illustrated by the fact that events are related according to the years in which they occur. The meaning of the events lies in their registration in a kind of list. There is little concern about gaps or lack of causal connections since fullness and continuity is guaranteed by the presence of all the years in the list.

We, however, feel that important events are excluded and base this judgement on our perspective of subsequent events of world historical significance. This significance, on closer examination, turns out only to refer to a particular society. It is, therefore, culturally specific rather than universal.

It is the impulse to rank events with respect to the significance to our particular culture that allows for the

narrative representation of real events. It is more universalistic simply to record everything as it occurs.

Now every narrative, no matter how full-seeming, is constructed on the basis of the exclusion of certain events. It depends on the notion of reality that authorises the construction of a narrative account of reality in which continuity rather than discontinuity governs the articulation of the discourse.

In the annal form, there is minimal concern with the social system which is the only means by which we can have distinguishing markers by which we could rank the importance of events. Forces of destruction and violence occupy the forefront of the recorder's mind. He deals in qualities rather than agents. Things happen to people, they don't do things. There is no representation of human agency. Actions appear to be of the same order as natural events and are as incomprehensible to the recorder.

The annal does exhibit some continuity and coherence in that there is the dominant theme of need and scarcity and the imminence of death. There is, however, no social centre to locate the events with respect to one another and nothing to give them ethical or moral significance. There can thus be no ranking and no narrative. What is lacking is not only narrative but also a political-social order. It is the state which first presents the subject matter that is not only adapted to the prose of history but which also involves the production of such history in the very progress of its own being.

The existence of a political constitution itself is not understandable without a knowledge of the past. Also, it is only when there is a conscious experiencing subject that we can have

objective history. Following Hegel, White says this subject is the state (p. 16). He sees the reality which lends itself to narrative representation to be the conflict between desire and law. Where their is no law, there is neither a subject nor the kind of event that lends itself to narrative representation. This is a hypothesis which allows us to imagine how both historicity and narrativity are possible. In annals, the question of human law does not arise as everything is seen merely as divine will. It is therefore only necessary to record what happens in the year of the lord. Historicality and narrativity presuppose the existence of a legal system against or on behalf of which the typical agents of narrative account militate.

Narrativity thus seems to be linked to authority. The more historically conscious the writer is the more the question of the social system and the law which sustains it, the authority of that law and its justification, legitimacy and threats to the law occupy his mind. This constitutes the legal subject and the kind of consciousness that feels the need to represent reality as history which is only conceivable in terms of the interest of the law, legality and legitimacy. Every historical narrative, therefore, has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralise the events which it treats. Where there is ambivalence about the legal system, any attempt at closure is lacking. Thus narrativity must be seen as the function of moralising reality, that is to identify with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine.

In the annal there is a refusal to narrate despite the fact that the elements for narration are there. The annalist lacks the

capacity to endow events with the same kind of propositionality that is implicit in his representation of the sequence of dates. He lacks the capacity to endow substitute meanings for one another in a semantic chain that would turn the sequence into a narrative. He makes all events belong to the same order and this is on the basis of a metaphysical principle which translates difference into similarity. This principle is the subject of the Lord. This subject does not exist in time and consequently narrativity is made impossible.

The chronicle has a subject in time. This gives it greater comprehensiveness, allows for the organisation of its materials and gives it greater narrative coherence. However, the preservation of the organising principle of chronology precludes closure and makes it something less than history. It is not yet a well-made story. It throws on the reader the burden of retrospectively reflecting on the linkages between the account and its ending. The discourse of the chronicle is, however, self-consciously fashioned discourse. This increases its historical narrativity but decreases it "objectivity".

The impulse to write a narrative of conflict is in some way connected with a desire to represent an authority whose legitimacy hinges upon the establishment of facts of a specifically historical order. There is the positing of a witness on whom the authority of the account is based. This is so because there is a contest and thus a need to narrativise, to apparently make the facts tell their own story. The lack of closure must, however, be ascribed to the lack of a moral principle by which the narrator could decide whether the outcome of events was just or unjust.

There is no sense of justice, only of force.

Historical events are not, however recorded, in their original order of occurrence; for, unless there are two possible versions, the historian does not have to take upon himself the task of giving a true account of what really happened. Thus, the authority of the historical account is reality itself. It endows reality with form and imposes on its processes the formal coherency that only stories possess.

History is thus the discourse of the real. It makes the real the object of desire by giving it the coherence of a story. It displays to us a formal coherence that we ourselves lack. It presents us with a world that has closure. It shows us that there was a plot all along and this plot is presented as found and not constructed by mere narrative technique.

The demand for closure is a demand for moral meaning. The account is given the force of a moral judgement. Authority is based on superior foresight and there is an invocation of a moral standard that is used as the basis to distinguish between those real events which are necessary for inclusion and those which are not. Events are held to be real in so far as they belong to a moral order of existence and they derive their meaning from placement in that order. It is in so far as they are conducive or otherwise to the social order that they are included as being real. Also, it is only the moral authority that allows the narration to come to an end. Narrativity is thus only present where there is a moralising impulse.

Now this creates a tension between the presence of this narrativity and the claim that history is an objective science.

It is the fiction of a world speaking itself that is necessary for the establishment of the moral authority without which the notion of a specifically social reality is unthinkable. We can thus never narrativise without moralising. It is this final point which this rather lengthy digression into the work of Hayden White has sought to establish and I will utilise this point in the examination of the works of some "Third World" writers.

8. Ngugi and the Narrativisation of Kenyan History

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will concentrate on Petals of Blood by Ngugi wa Thiong'o. There will be an examination of the attempt by Ngugi to give a Marxist interpretation to the narrativisation of Kenyan history. This attempt by Ngugi is done with the intent of exposing the condition of neo-colonialism in the country and to attempt to identify those forces which could signal a change in the status quo.

The ensuing discussion will centre on three basic points of focus. Firstly, I will stress the novel's concern with Kenyan history. Secondly, I will examine how Ngugi's approach to this history is from a Marxist perspective which influences the way in which it is narrativised. In this regard, it will be necessary to stress White's link between a rendition of the past and the act of narrativisation that was established in the previous chapter. Thirdly, there will be a consideration of the success or failure of Ngugi's attempt and a consideration of the reasons for flaws which are revealed by a literary analysis of the text.

8.2 Theoretical Perspectives

In the ensuing discussion, I will utilise several theoretical perspectives that have been established in the foregoing theoretical section of the thesis. Basing myself on the work of Hayden White, I hold that there is an intimate link between the recording of history and the function of narrativity. Like White,

I feel that one does not narrativise in any unspecified manner, but that one's rendition of the past is always linked to one's moral purpose. We must note that whereas White was basically considering the modus operandi of the professional historian, his arguments can be applied to authors who concern themselves with history, provided that it is borne in mind that whereas the former narrativises actual events and historical characters, the latter often utilises fictitious occurrences and personages.

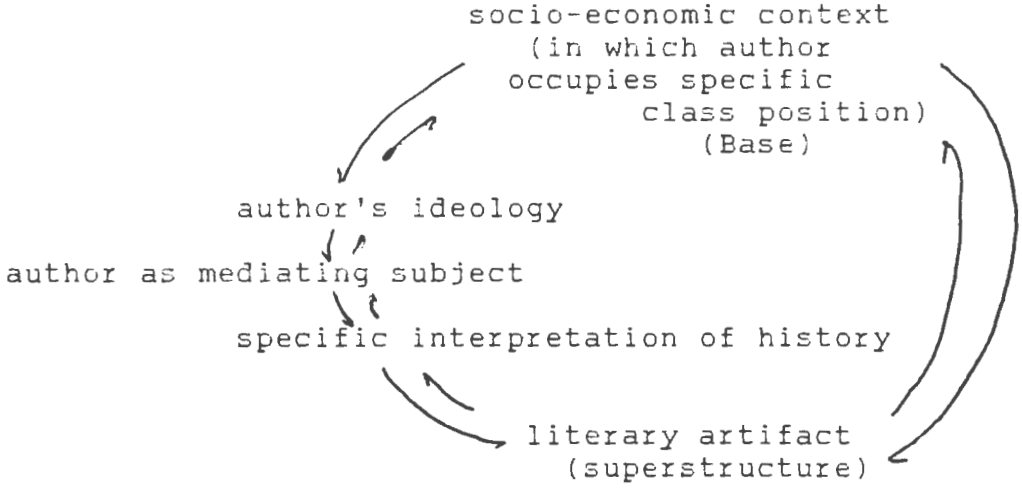
The second theoretical proposition which is essential for the ensuing discussion is the fact that one's moral purpose is dependent on one's ideological perspective. If following Raymond Williams one defines ideology as "the general process of the production of meanings and ideas" (Quoted in Emmaneul Ngara, Art and Ideology in the African Novel P.20), the link between moral purpose (as an idea) and ideology is self-evident. From this it must follow that the way in which a particular author narrativises the past is firmly determined by his/her ideological position. Carrying this to its logical conclusion, one must see that the ideological perspective of the author will lead to a specific interpretation of history.

The third theoretical proposition that has already been established is the fact one's ideology is determined mainly by one's class position. This is implicit in Marx's claim the "social being determines social consciousness" (Quoted in Ngara p.20).

Lastly, one's class position is determined by one's relation to the means of production and this relation is governed by one's position in a specific set of socio-economic relations or

historical context. This, too, has been previously established.

The above propositions allow us to modify Amuta's dialectical model of the relationship between socio-economic context and the literary artifact in the following manner:



We have already seen that there is nothing in Amuta's model that contradicts Marxist perspectives despite his characterising of it as a "post-Marxist" one. I intend using this theory for a reading of the novel, Petals of Blood, as I think it provides a fruitful theoretical basis for situating the work within its socio-economic context. The reading of the novel will thus not only attempt to assess it as a Marxist narrativisation of history, but will itself be a Marxist interpretation of the literary artifact.

8.3 Discussion of Petals of Blood in terms of Amuta's Dialectical Model

Before going on to a discussion of the literary event itself, I find it necessary to consider the Kenyan context out of which it arises. Also, a consideration of Ngugi's class-position within that context together with his ideological perspective and the resultant interpretation of the Kenyan context is essential. This enables an understanding of the forces which shape the literary work and provides clues to both the strengths and inadequacies in

the representation of history found within it.

8.3.1 The Kenyan Context

Modern Kenya is characterised by a condition of neo-colonialism in which "flag-independence" has signalled little more than a change in the strategy of control by international imperialism. Direct rule has been replaced by a rule by proxy in which the national bourgeoisie has been induced to accept a comprador status. This stratum controls the political machinery, but economically they only function as junior partners in multi-national concerns in the interest of which they legislate.

Capitalist relations have replaced pre-capitalist peasant ones as the dominant structure within the national economy, and this has led to rapid proletarianisation of the peasantry and the swelling of the ranks of the working-class and the unemployed. The fall in the living standards of the majority of Kenyans together with an increase in the strength of organised labour has led to a maturing of anti-imperialist, socialist perspectives. This particular context has had a major influence in the shaping of Ngugi's ideological perspectives.

8.3.2 Ngugi's Class-position and Ideology

Ngugi is an intellectual of peasant origin. Not being in any direct relation to the means of production, intellectuals have their class-position determined largely by positions they adopt with respect to the world of ideas and ideological conflict. Ideology thus becomes the prior aspect of the dialectical relation

between itself and class-position. This is well-illustrated by Ngugi's case.

Schooling in the elite institutions of Alliance High School (the Siriana of Petals of Blood) and Makerere University should have prepared Ngugi for the role of the intellectual who provides ideological support for the neocolonialist elites. However, an intense awareness of the grim realities of neocolonial Kenya together with contact with radicals at Leeds University, where he later studied, led to his intellectual conversion to Marxism and orientation to the interests of the working class. This radicalisation was later reinforced by contact with writers in the Soviet Union. Petals of Blood was, in fact, completed in the Soviet Union where Ngugi was a guest of the Union of Soviet Writers.

After embracing Marxism, Ngugi's view of history changed to become consistent with his adopted ideological position. He now viewed Kenyan history as a reflection of the struggles of the workers and peasants to regain control of the means of production (especially the land) and the products of their labour. This change in perspective explains the change in the way in which he narrativises Kenyan history. Whereas cultural aspects had been emphasised in the earlier novels, Petals of Blood shows the intimate link between cultural and economic considerations and, in fact, greater emphasis is placed on the latter.

8.3.3 The Resultant Interpretation of the Kenyan Context

In line with the Marxist interpretation of history, the

representation of Kenyan history in Petals of Blood shows a progression which results from the contradictions in the economic sphere centering on the questions of control of the land and other means of production. Ngugi identifies four major stages through which Kenyan society passes in the modern era.

Firstly, there is the stage of colonialism which is seen as economic imperialism aimed at the alienation of the land and labour of the indigenous people in order to gain control of the products of their labour. This is followed by the period of resistance to colonialism in which the masses struggle to regain control over their land and labour. The cultural aspect too is not ignored and Nyakinyua articulates the Kenyan peasants' desire to "sing their own song".

Although Abdullah is made to display nascent worker-consciousness, Ngugi astutely points out that the lack of an organised revolutionary subjective element (the Marxist party) led to the initial liberation struggle being seen in purely racial terms with no consideration of the class interests of the various strata which participated in it.

As a consequence, "independence" from foreign rule merely results in the usurpation of power by the parasitic national bourgeoisie which assists international imperialism in its modified form of control of Kenyan land and labour. This is done through the inducement of comprador status on the indigenous bourgeoisie. The period of neo-colonialism, however, carries within it the seeds of its own destruction, in that it consolidates the proletariat and so ensures the rise of anti-imperialist forces which can guarantee total liberation.

This then is the broad historical perspective which shapes Petals of Blood and it is now incumbent on us to see how literary techniques are harnessed to achieve this Marxist representation of the history of Kenya.

8.3.4 The Literary event as Marxist Narrativisation

Acceptance of the Marxist ideological perspective has also led Ngugi to accept the literary aesthetic which this perspective tends to champion. This is the aesthetic of Socialist Realism. There is, however, no necessary connection between this aesthetic and the ideological perspective. Certain Marxists, most notably Garcia Marquez, have adopted different literary strategies, but, as I will show later, they achieve the same political ends. Ngugi, however, finds the techniques of realism particularly effective for his attempt to capture the harsh reality of neo-colonialism.

Realist codes and conventions comprise the interaction between setting, character, plot and point of view. With the socialist realist aesthetic, these separate components are themselves stamped with the traces of the ideological orientation of the author. In the case of Petals of Blood this is clearly seen with respect to setting and character.

8.3.4.1 Setting

The novel is set in the village of Ilmorog which becomes a microcosm of post-colonial Kenya. Life in the village passes

through two distinct phases characterised by differences in the dominant mode of production. Here, thus, Ngugi's Marxist perspective is evident.

The first phase is characterised by the partially successful resistance to colonialism and the restitution of peasant relations. There is, however, no simple return to the past, as the village has to live with the legacy of colonial conquest. Impoverishment of the land due to overstocking, which followed the alienation of the land for white settlement, results in increasingly diminishing harvests. Also, capitalist relations have been established in the cities and the relatively impoverished village has to relate to this. A direct consequence is that the youth, especially the males, migrate to the more productive areas in search of work and increased opportunity. This implies a disruption of the rhythms of village life and introduces a sub-theme of sterility which reaches its highest expression in Wanja's inability to conceive, drought which ravages Ilmorog, and the flower with "petals of blood" that cannot reproduce itself.

Restitution of peasant relations is thus concomitant with important new developments. The movement of history is thus seen as spiral rather than circular and this is entirely consistent with the Marxist perspective of historical advance. A similar spiral development is evident in the repetition of strikes at Siriana. Although all the strikes result in the expulsion of an important protagonist, the nature of the strikes and the reasons which motivate them differ in each case.

The drought is an important symbol in that it functions not

only as part of the sterility sub-theme, but is also used to illustrate the subjection of the peasant way of life to the whims of nature. Given favourable rains, peasant life is painted in idyllic colours. Humans are shown as existing in harmony with themselves and nature; and both humanity and the countryside blossom with fruitful existence.

The fruitfulness of the traditional way of life reaches its climax with the Thengeth'a drinking which follows the circumcision ceremony. Traditional customs are meaningfully celebrated and harmony reigns in the community. Significantly, it is Nyakinyua, symbol of the traditional past, who leads the celebration.

The traditional way of life is, however, entirely dependent on favourable weather conditions. When these are not forthcoming, use must be made of the technological and scientific advances that spring from a different mode of production and way of life. The sophisticated irrigation-system which the village needs to overcome the effects of the drought can only be delivered by the forces of capitalism and it is to these that the villagers must ultimately appeal.

Ilmorog enters its second phase with the triumph of capitalist relations that follows the fateful march to the city. This phase is marked by the rapid alienation of the peasantry from the land symbolised by Nyakinyua's loss of her ancestral lands to the bank. The actual mechanism through which this is accomplished is accurately traced by Ngugi as he shows the inability of small peasant production to compete with capitalist agriculture that is backed by scientific methods and the vast resources of capital.

The peasants' incomprehension of the new economic relations

is well captured in their inability to understand how the bank, which is not a government, is able to dispossess them of their lands. Even the few, such as Wanja and Abdullah, who have sufficient resources and initiative to start capitalist enterprises, cannot compete for long against the national bourgeoisie who have greater resources at their disposal and are backed by the political power of fellow bourgeoisie.

The ascendency of a thin stratum of bourgeoisie and the widespread destitution of the masses are the only fruits of capitalist advancement. Abdullah's descent from a minor petty-bourgeoisie to a petty-trader living on the brink of destitution accurately captures the fall in the living standards which the "blessings" of capitalism imply of the general mass. In his analysis of the implications of this "advancement", Ngugi shows a thorough understanding of economic theory. The laws of the capitalist system are, however, not exposed in dull text-book fashion but through a literary artifact having protagonists with whom the reader is able to identify and sympathise. The educative effect of the propaganda is thus enhanced and this is entirely in keeping with the politico-literary agenda of the author.

The picture is not, however, entirely bleak. As Marx pointed out, capitalism carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. By proletarianising the peasantry, this system consolidates the working class and it is this class which is best able to realise the class nature to oppression and, due to its sense of organisation, can confront the bosses successfully. Karega's experiences in his travels around Kenya and his eventual entry into trade unionism points to Ngugi's awareness of this

fact.

The Kenyan workers become aware of the fact that there is no difference between a foreign and an indigenous exploiter and their desire to confront capital as a whole leads them to adopt an anti-imperialist stance. It is this heightened awareness of the mechanism of neo-colonialist exploitation, together with the growing strength of organised labour, that allows Karega to adopt an optimistic attitude towards the future despite his present incarceration.

From his portrayal of the setting of Ilmorog, we can clearly see how Ngugi's ideological orientation shapes his rendition of social context. With respect to character, too, the effect of his Marxism is evident.

8.3.4.2 Character

According to Marx, every member of society is a member of a particular class. This is so since all stand in a particular relation to the means of production. In The Communist Manifesto, Marx identified the major classes of capitalist society as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The former owns the means of production while the latter has nothing to sell but its labour power. Midway between the two major classes, the petty-bourgeoisie is to be found. This class vacillates between the other two in that they are both owners of the means of production and perform their own labour. The peasantry, which labours on its own land and with its own tools, falls squarely into this category. Finally there is the lumpen-proletariat which neither

owns the means of production nor is able to find gainful employment.

Utilising these theoretical propositions, Ngugi bases his characterisation in Petals of Blood on the notions of class-types and class-ideologies. All the characters bear the stamp of a particular class in which their biographies place them. Ngugi is, however, aware that class-positions may change due to changes in relations to the means of production. This is followed by a concomitant change in ideological outlook.

Munira is representative of the bourgeois intellectual stratum that cannot quite rid itself of the goal of national salvation which vague notions of cultural nationalism induce him to accept. Given his class origin, he cannot fully identify with the masses. At the same time, he cannot accept the ruthless exploitation practised by men like his father. This places him in a position of total alienation and he is painfully aware of being left out of things. His vaguely held nationalism leads him to accept a teaching post in a rural area and in this way he hopes to contribute to the national effort. However, when Karega confronts him with the reality of neo-colonialism and the actions necessary to reverse the situation, he resorts to religious mysticism as an escape from a truly revolutionary commitment. One could perhaps see a parallel between this and the sort of ideological acrobatics engaged in by intellectuals like Soyinka, although the comparison is perhaps too unfair to the latter.

Karega is also an intellectual, but his class origin is more definitely proletarian. Further, his experiences as a worker and petty-trader, which follow his expulsion from Siriana, shape his

ideology very differently from that of Munira. His quest for knowledge that will make sense of the confused neo-colonial reality is one of the most moving instances of the novel. Under the influence of the insightful (if compromised) lawyer, he comes to discard inadequate cultural nationalism and gravitates towards a Marxist perspective. This allows him to understand the betrayal of the masses by the nationalist bourgeoisie and how it is possible for exploiters to have the same skin-colour and cultural background as himself. His optimism about the future contrasts vividly with the ideological cul-de-sac in which Munira lands.

Abdullah is interesting in that he is the son of a petty-bourgeois shop-keeper. He becomes part of the industrial proletariat when he is employed in a factory. Though he admires the leadership of the Land and Freedom Army, his aspirations extend beyond the simple repossession of the land. He clearly sees that the issue of exploitation will only be resolved when workers have control over the products of their labour. This intuitive knowledge is not, however, backed by a coherent theoretical perspective. Consequently, he cannot cope with the situation when the apparent victory in the struggle fails to deliver the promised liberation. Having sufficient resources to engage in capitalist enterprise, he initially accepts bourgeois ethics, and the difference between this and his original worker orientation is stressed by the shock with which he realises that Karega and he would have been in different camps had his business ventures succeeded. Being only a minor entrepreneur, he is inevitably expropriated by the bigger capitalists and his reduction to near destitution reduces him to a cynicism

characteristic of declasse elements. The development of Abdullah's character powerfully refutes the claims of some critics that writers employing a Marxist perspective inevitably produce characters that are one-dimensional reductions.

The representation of Wanja also indicates Ngugi's awareness of the intricacies of the individual psyche. Forced to earn her living as a prostitute, Wanja accepts the morality of an individual struggle for survival. Using her sexuality as a weapon, she exploits her victims both for financial gain and for the gratification which her sense of power gives her. She is at this stage a rather sympathetically drawn member of the lumpen-proletariat. On rejecting the sterile sexuality of a "paid woman", she returns to her peasant roots and accepts the peasant orientation of merging with nature. As was shown earlier, it is a fools paradise and though she blossoms into full humanity with her relationship with Karega, the way of life is inevitably unsustainable.

When she is bankrupted by having to redeem her ancestral land, she is faced with the choice of either joining the proletariat or accepting the "dog-eat-dog" ethic of bourgeois society. Her position accurately mirrors that which confronted talented Kenyans on the attainment of independence. Like most of her counterparts, she chooses the latter alternative and develops into a society woman. It is this betrayal of the masses which leads to Karega's final rejection of her, and this is the logical outcome of diametrically opposed ideological positions.

Nyakinyua, as a consistent peasant, is the symbol of tradition and the past. It is she who reintroduces the

traditional practice of Thengeth'a drinking that brings about temporary harmony in the community. Almost fulfilling the role of a griot, she is the custodian of the history of the village and is able to relate the past as if she had experienced it directly. As the representative of the past, she is, however, unable to fulfil the role of leading the community under the new economic dispensation and it is fitting that the it is the loss of her ancestral land that signals the triumph of capitalist relations in Ilmorog.

Representatives of the national bourgeoisie are astutely chosen in that the entire spectrum of the possible responses of this class to neo-colonialism is shown. Wa Reira is the typical nationalist politician who degenerates into a parasitic official preying on and entirely divorced from the masses. His ideology of cultural nationalism also degenerates from an initially progressive sentiment into a means whereby he attempts to blur the class-distinctions between himself and the masses in order to continue his exploitation of them and to get them to defend his economic interests. Further, it remains a useful tool in his competition with the international bourgeoisie with whom he is simultaneously in alliance.

Chui initially represents the cultural nationalist at his best. His vigorous opposition to the patronage of foreigners and his ability to compete with the settlers on equal terms make him the darling of the pre-independence petty-bourgeoisie. When later faced with the reality of the inability of his class to consolidate itself independently of the international bourgeoisie, he accepts the ideology of Western European liberalism and imposes

it more ruthlessly than his colonial predecessors.

Kimeria, on the other hand, is a consistent collaborator -- both under conditions of colonialism and neo-colonialism. It is fitting that such a compromised character should be the seducer of Wanja, and his refusal to be known by his patronymic is an indication of where his interests lie.

Ngugi indicts this stratum not only for the betrayal of the masses and the ruthless exploitation of the people whose cause they allegedly championed, but also shows how they are responsible for the perversion of the indigenous culture and the ideals of the revolution. Firstly, the tea-drinking at the behest of the K.C.O. is aimed at securing sectarian interests and as such contradicts the goals of nation-building. It is such a travesty of the Oath of Unity of the Mau-Mau that even the basically uncommitted Munira is shocked. Then, too, the dream-inducing Thengeth'a is perverted into an opiate that drugs the masses and degrades them while ravenous capitalists continue to draw super-profits from the sale of an adulterated version of the original.

The most telling indictment of this stratum is the perversion of the ideal of Pan-Africanism which was possibly the most revolutionary component of cultural nationalism. Given the unity of the masses of the continent, there is a possibility of confronting international imperialism successfully and redressing the economic legacy of colonialism. This was the dream of Nkrumah and his disciples. The national bourgeoisie is empowered to make the ideal a reality in that it is able to create the infrastructure that could bring about the physical unification of the vast continent. However, due to the alliance with

international imperialism, unifying constructions such as the Trans-Africa Highway become instruments not for the consolidation of unity, but simply for the more efficient exploitation of the indigenous peoples and their resources.

8.3.4.3 Control of the narrative structure (plot) and narrative point of view

Although Ngugi's treatment of setting and character is particularly effective for a Marxist rendition of Kenyan History, his treatment of narrative structure and point of view is somewhat less successful. A closer examination of these reveal flaws which mar an otherwise brilliant artifact.

Given the ideological nature of Ngugi's concerns, it was essential that he should find a powerful voice that could convincingly convey his theoretical perspectives. At the start of the novel, Ngugi attempts to create the voice of a collective protagonist which he can use as a vehicle for his views. The problem with this strategy is that the collective voice is that of the peasantry of Ilmorog. Ngugi's theoretical perspectives, on the other hand, are those of a well-educated radicalised intellectual. As a consequence, huge gaps appear between the origin of the voice and the content of what is said.

> But Munira stayed on, and after a month we were all whispering - was he a little crazed - and he not so old? Was he a carrier of evil? - especially when he started holding classes under the acacia bush near the place rumoured to be

> the grave of the legendary Ndemi, whose spirit once kept watch over Ilmorog Country before imperialism came and changed the scheme of things. (Petals of Blood p.6)

The first part of the passage quoted is perhaps consistent with the outlook of the peasantry. The mistrust of strangers and the emphasis on superstitious belief are consistent with this stratum. However, when notions of imperialism are introduced to stress the force which lay behind the settler invasion, the sense of incongruity becomes ludicrous. Faced with this sort of contradiction within the community voice, it is clear that another vehicle has to found to carry the author's ideological perspectives.

At this point, Ngugi makes the unfortunate choice of having Munira's consciousness as the vehicle for revelation of developments. The choice is perhaps understandable given the similarity between Munira's biography and that of the early part of the author's life. Unfortunately, Munira's consciousness is allowed to dominate at least three-quarters of the novel. As a consequence, the weaker ideological perspective which Munira conveys is most powerfully represented.

When the contradiction between the views of Munira and that of the author make it impossible to continue in this manner, Ngugi attempts to shift the narrative point of view to Karega. This is logical, since Karega is a proletarianised intellectual and can thus convincingly convey the ideas of his radicalised intellectual creator. However, this shift is made too late in the novel to effectively offset Munira's dominance. Furthermore, Karega is not

drawn powerfully enough to fulfil this narrative function. His experiences are reported rather than lived and the huge theoretical concepts which he is forced to handle lead to extensive passages of philosophising unrelated to dramatic action and beyond the strength of the character.

Abdullah is also tried as the locus for the authorial perspective. Here the difficulties encountered parallel those of the community voice in that the largely unschooled worker is forced to think and speak in a manner inconsistent with his biography.

Flaws of this nature could condemn a novelistic project to failure and it is testimony to the other strengths of the work (symbolism, character, setting, ideological orientation, etc) that allow for a measure of success.

The plot of Petals of Blood starts as a "whodunit" and develops into the story of the development of Ilmorog which is centred on the fates of the four major protagonists. Because these protagonists are sympathetically drawn, a great deal of human interest is created in the resolution of their fates. Part of Ngugi's agenda is an indictment of patriarchal, capitalist relations. As prostitution is the most telling indictment of these relations, there is a need to portray Wanja's descent into whoredom powerfully. Ngugi does this successfully, but this very success creates attendant gender-related problems. Since this is perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of the novel, I wish to consider it carefully.

The portrayal of the heroine as whore has lead feminists to condemn the novel on the grounds that it is a sexist insult to

women. I hold that the portrayal of Wanja as whore was essential to the plot for the reasons I outlined above. Further, to claim that Ngugi is insensitive to the plight of women simply does not square with the facts. He has on numerous occasions indicated his sympathy with "doubly oppressed" women. On the other hand, it must be conceded that to have the most powerful woman in the novel represented as a whore does inevitably create problems.

Ngugi makes a conscious attempt to counteract the perceived insult to women by having Karega (his mouth-piece) point out that we are all, men and women, condemned by capitalism to prostitute ourselves, in that we have no choice but to sell ourselves to the bosses. Further, he goes on to show the inevitability of prostitution when the alternatives are singularly uninviting. The case of an associate of Wanja, who attempts to reform, is relevant here. Faced with employment in domestic service which entails drudging for long hours for very little pay and having to provide sexual service into the bargain, harlotry becomes almost attractive. The picture of a Wambui pushing a wheel-barrow load of stones to earn her daily bread only reinforces this conclusion. I feel that Ngugi should be congratulated for his honesty in this respect. Furthermore, he shows that he is painfully aware of the oppression meted out to women by their fellow oppressed spouses. Mariamu repudiates her marital obligations to Karega's father because he denies her access to the scant rewards which they receive for their common labour.

Added to this obligation to mutual labour for the family coffers, she is forced into domestic drudgery within her own household. Her repudiation of marital ties frees her from an

oppressive husband but it cannot free her from the economic exploitation of her employer. By showing this, Ngugi points to the necessity for oppressed men and women to struggle together to overcome their primary economic exploitation. The secondary contradiction between oppressed men and women has, however, to be resolved if this mutual struggle is to be successful.

This does not mean that Ngugi is entirely guiltless of the charge of sexism. I feel his real problem lies in his inability to portray a revolutionary, proletarian heroine. Munira's sister, Mukami, is the logical soul-mate for Karega. She has all the potential to develop into a proletarian revolutionary at his side. However, Ngugi kills her off in a suicide that is not fully motivated, before she can develop her potential.

Akinyi is a proletarian heroine. She appears briefly on page four of the novel when she sees Karega's arrest and reports it to her fellow workers. She then remains absent for the following three hundred and thirty-nine pages until she is gratuitously appended to the tale of Karega's fate. This is evasion of gender-issues at its worst.

Lastly, Nyakinyua, the second most powerful woman, is only allowed a flitting initiative during the march and this only when the three principal male protagonists have been arrested. Throughout, except for the Thengeth'a drinking episode, her role is largely supportive. Though this is consistent with her symbolic function as representative of the past which, according to Marxist ideology, cannot provide the necessary leadership for present struggles, when she does take the lead, she is unsuccessful in her attempt to free the protagonists. The male

lawyer's intervention is necessary for this. In Ngugi's defence here, it could perhaps be said that this illustrates his greater faith in the intellectual rather than the peasant mass. Nyakinya's failure could be ascribed to this rather than any latent sexism on Ngugi's part.

Another weakness with respect to the plot is that structurally the aspect of indictment is too strong. Consequently, the concluding optimism seems to be merely appended and is therefore unconvincing. I feel that the problem stems from the fact that Ngugi vacillates between being a critical realist and a socialist realist. The former seeks merely to indict capitalism while the latter, not ignoring this aspect, also attempts to show the way out. It is done by identifying and highlighting the forces which can bring a new society into existence. It is on the basis of the highlighting of these forces that the socialist realist work gets its optimism. Since Ngugi does not do enough to highlight the organised proletariat, his final optimism remains nothing more than a pious wish that is largely unsubstantiated by what precedes it in the novel.

8.4 Inconsistencies in Ngugi's Ideology as the cause of the weaknesses within the Novel :

The above-mentioned inconsistencies in Petals of Blood can perhaps be traced to the ambivalence of Ngugi's position in Kenyan society. While an intellectual conversion to Marxism is not a particularly difficult process, the adoption of a consistent Marxist position is also dependent on the subject's ability to

become actively involved in the struggles of the masses. While Ngugi has been made to pay for his devotion to the workers, and particularly the peasants, of neo-colonial Kenya, his largely individual effort has not yet had the advantage of being linked to consciously directed, coherent struggle. This has left Ngugi stranded midway between the bourgeoisie whose interest he hopes to frustrate and the people whose interest he hopes to champion. The ambivalence of his position is perhaps best symbolised by his living in a mansion built on traditional lines and using traditional materials. While this shows an identification with indigenous traditions, it is not the same as immersion in the struggles of the masses.

As a result of this ambivalence, there is a resultant absence of a truly consistent worker revolutionary. Karega will undoubtedly develop into one and his immaturity is perhaps justified by the objective conditions in Kenya. However, in the socialist realist aesthetic which Ngugi is attempting to embrace, it is necessary to anticipate the proletarian hero and in this way hasten his coming into being. Here we could consider the example of Bakayoko in Ousmane's Gods Bits of Wood. While no historical counterpart might be found for this character, he symbolises the spirit which lies behind the railway workers' strike and this becomes the justification for the characterisation.

A second aspect of inconsistency in Ngugi's ideological outlook is the fact what while he is an intellectual convert to the cause of the proletariat, he remains emotionally attached to the peasantry from which he springs. As a consequence, he chooses peasant women as his labour heroes. This is problematic since

they, as peasants, are neither at the forefront of the struggle for production nor the struggle for socialism. Ngugi's commitment to the peasantry is further betrayed by his choice of Gikuyu as an alternative to English as the language in which he prefers to write. Kiswahili is the lingua franca of the Kenyan working class with English being the next most utilised language (albeit a poor second). Gikuyu is only one of forty-six indigenous languages spoken in Kenya, and it is largely confined to the peasants of Ngugi's home region.

Another inconsistency in Ngugi's ideological make-up stems from the fact that his intellectual conversion to non-sexism has not resulted in the complete shedding of the male-chauvinism which follows from his being raised in a heavily patriarchal tradition. While the portrayal of Wanja's fate is indeed a telling indictment of patriarchal relations, the residual male-chauvinism is evident in the interpretation of the statue of the bi-sexual freedom-fighter. The symbolic interpretation of the Mau-Mau struggle is not seen as man and woman fused together by common struggle but merely as cooperation in reproduction to produce a child (presumably male) who struggles. This chauvinist reading of the statue is unforgivable given the fact that Ngugi's own mother was arrested for Mau-Mau activities.

8.3.5 Conclusion

On the basis of the foregoing analysis of Petals of Blood, I hold that the novel is a valuable attempt at revolutionary literature. It is an accurate indictment of colonialism, neo-colonialism and international imperialism. There is also a good

appreciation of the role of the comprador bourgeoisie in the creation of neo-colonialist conditions and of the strengths and weaknesses in the various classes which comprise neo-colonial African society. The realistic portrayal of the conditions of the masses in modern Africa is also a stirring battle-cry to revolutionary action. There is also a serious attempt to address gender questions, but this is flawed by the absence of a female revolutionary.

This weakness, together with others which I have pointed to in the course of the essay, stem from the fact that Ngugi has not been able to fully integrate his intellectual conversion to Marxism-Leninism into his psyche. He has not yet attained the position of a truly revolutionary intellectual who fully integrates him/herself into the struggles of the workers and peasants, shares weal and woe with them and, as a consequence, consistently adopts positions which further their interests. While they do flaw the novel, I consider that its internal contradictions do not negate its revolutionary potential entirely and the novel is justifiably regarded as a modern classic by those sympathetic to the cause it champions.

9. Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood as a Marxist Narrativisation

In considering Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood, it is important to bear in mind that the setting is colonial Senegal rather than the neo-colonialist Kenya which Ngugi describes. Though national liberation would therefore seem to be the more urgent concern than Ngugi's socialist programme, Ousmane's life as a true proletarian docker and his experience in trade unionism lead him to concentrate on an event in which the battlelines of the class struggle are very clearly defined. Here I am refering to the 1947-8 strike by workers on the Dakar-Niger railway which forms the content of the novel.

The interplay between nationalist and socialist aspirations is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the novel. Though the strike is undertaken to resolve what is essentially an economic question, the colonial question is never far from the surface. This is particular seen in the reference to the language question which Bakayoko constantly raises to the vexation of the French colonialists. He reminds Dejean that meetings are only conducted in French as a concession to the colonialists' inability to understand the native Oulof and he makes them aware that it is a courtesy that will not be extended indefinitely.

Lahbib sees Dejean as a representative of a class rather than of a nation and indeed the strikers receive assistance not only from fellow Africans but from French workers as well. Nevertheless, Dejean considers that victory in the strike will not only mean a triumph for workers, but one for "negroes" as such.

This draws our attention to the fact that the national struggle and the proletarian one are intimately intertwined in the colony.

The example of Isnard is also pertinent in this respect. When he first arrives in the colony, he is still filled with French liberal humanism and this allows him to assist the Senegalese mother by severing her umbilical cord with his teeth. During his stay in the colony, however, his attitude hardens to match that of the "old hands" and significantly it is he who attempts to bribe Doudou in order to break the solidarity of the Senegalese workers. It thus comes as no surprise that the Senegalese insist on his returning to France along with Dejean before they will consider terminating their strike.

What Ousmane thus presents us with is the structured reality of oppression in which "the people" in general are ranged against "the Vatican" - the name given to the French settlement in Dakar. The workers resistance develops into a national united front under proletarian leadership with the charismatic Bakayoko at the helm and the women playing a significant role.

One of the greatest technical difficulties which Ousmane overcomes is his ability to portray the heroic individual convincingly while never losing sight of the fact that it is "the people" as a whole that is the true protagonist. Bakayoko's influence is all pervasive in the novel although Ousmane keeps him in the wings for about three-quarters of the work. When he is introduced the effect is appropriately climactic. First, there is an evocation of seeds sown which introduces the idea of rebirth. This effect is sustained with the image of a cool breeze announcing the coming change of season (p.170). The symbols are

significant. The seeds of a new harvest are germinating and the winds of change are blowing. The reaction of the natural world signifies a harmony between the social and the natural order of things. In this way Bakayoko's presence comes to be an elemental force in itself.

Though he is greatly depended upon, Bakayoko is not allowed to overshadow the efforts of his colleagues and in particular the women whose march from Thies to Dakar tips the scales in the favour of the workers. The charismatic leader is shown to be dependent on his followers and his power stems directly from their efforts. What we have then, in political terms, is a national united front under proletarian leadership. The Senegalese nationals are united behind the workers in their efforts to combat the effects of foreign control and capitalist oppression.

This does not mean, however, that the entire nation backs the workers. The religious leaders, in particular, play an active role in attempting to undermine the workers' efforts. The Imam constantly chastises the women for their support of the workers and attempts to create the impression that French colonialism is part of Allah's scheme for the advancement of the Senegalese nation (p. 124).

Mabigue's ram, Vendredi, is an important symbol of Islam. It is named after the muslim sabbath, Friday, and grows sleek and fat under the patronage of the foreigners. Then, too, it ravages the meagre supplies of food of the suffering people and this symbolises the actions of the Moslem leadership. It is fitting that Ramatoulaye should kill it in retribution for its thieving but there is another idea which is stressed in this act.

The Muslim religion is notoriously patriarchal and the assault of the ram, the male animal, on the body of Ramatoulaye has all the significance of a sexual battle. The ram tears the clothes from her body, but when she plunges the knife into the throat of the ram, a woman has slaughtered an animal that symbolises male authority, male exploitation, male domination and the arrogance of male sexuality.

Not even all the workers manage to come under the banner of the united front. Sounkare is an aged worker whose active participation in the running of the railroad is cut short by an accident which cripples him. The French authorities find it convenient to retain him as a watchman, a position which places him somewhat above the other workers and isolates him from them. When the strike comes, he finds himself caught between his natural allies and the authorities who win his allegiance because of his gratitude. Consequently, he meets a gruesome fate of being devoured by rats; here Ousmane is pointing to the dangers of finding oneself outside the circle of worker solidarity.

The educated members of the youth also experience difficulty in coming to terms with the situation. Ousmane draws attention to this fact in his consideration of the fates of Beaugosse and Ndeye Touti. Both of them are educated and come to hanker after the way of life of the colonialists. Beaugosse ends up firmly in the camp of the oppressor, and we anticipate the material benefits which this collaboration will bring him. He is but one step away from the collaborationist position of the deputies, and it is therefore not surprising that the more steadfast of the workers regard him as a "sell-out".

Ndeye Touti's education also makes her hanker after the way of life of the colonialists, but her attraction to Bakayoko and the insults of the white men cause her to remain within the fold of "the people". She is even prepared to become Bakayoko's second wife despite her opposition to polygamy. This is indicative of the fact that Ousmane does not see simple solutions in a situation where new norms and values have not fully crystallised to replace the old way of doing things. It is in the child, Ad'jibid'ji, however, that the past and present come closest to reconciliation.

The child is eager to learn the language of the colonialist, but she tempers this with knowledge gained from her interaction with the workers. Thus, she is fluent not only in French but also in the indigenous language, Oulof and has a working knowledge of Bambara. Ousmane is clearly suggesting that the colonised should link knowledge gained from the colonial experience with the indigenous norms to create a fruitful synthesis that will stand the colonised in good stead for the future.

Ousmane is acutely aware that the past cannot be recalled. Niakoro is the representative of the past and she strongly discourages learning the ways and the language of the colonisers. Quite significantly, she is killed by the forces of colonialism and in a beautiful passage, Ousmane indicates that the way of life which she represented cannot be sustained in the new conditions.

> The old mortar in Niakoro's courtyard had been a tree, its roots were still sunk deep in the earth. When the tree was cut down, the stump had been hollowed out to form a mortar,

> and pestles had been made from the branches. Mills, whether they be turned by wind or by water, have a language of their own; and the mortar has another. It vibrates beneath the blows of the woman who holds the pestle, causing the earth around it to tremble .... But now the mortar was silent, and the only sound to be heard was the whispering of the trees. ... And the women could only watch helplessly as fissures ran up from the base of the stump and zigzagged toward the rim. (p.98)

From this it is clear that the entire mode of production of the past is no longer applicable to the changed circumstances. The mortar and pestle which set the rhythm of the old way of life has had its day and new forms of production have replaced it. This becomes pertinently evident when the men regard the railway.

> When the smoke from the trains no longer drifted above the savanna, they realised that an age had ended - an age their elders had told them about, when all of Africa was a garden for food. Now the machine ruled over their lands....They began to understand that the machine was making them a whole new breed of men. (p. 32)

It is this new mode of production that now shapes the men and determines the grounds on which they must struggle. The old agricultural way of life is a thing of the past, and the men have to come to terms with industrial relations.

If the men have to transform themselves significantly, the

metamorphosis which the women undergo is nothing short of remarkable. From being custodians of the family hearth, they join the men's struggle for a better life and when they undertake the march to Dakar, they become the vanguard of the movement as it is this act which turns events in favour of the strikers. Significantly, they are led by the sexually liberated Penda who wears an army belt. That Penda is a prostitute is not clearly established in the text and it seems that it is only malicious gossip that would have her as one. Ousmane clearly wanted to draw a character that least complied to the traditional view of woman as a docile helpmate that could not undertake independent action. This is distinctly echoed in Ngugi's portrayal of Wanja. That Ousmane could not handle the full implications of the liberated woman is evidenced by the fact that he kills Penda off before the resounding success of the strike but this is perhaps understandable given that the patriarchal society has not been fully transformed. Nevertheless, the men's unquestionable authority has been sufficiently challenged and as Lahbib admits to Bakayoko, they will never be able to act again without taking the women into consideration. Significantly, too, Bakayoko, the supreme male, is made to become more considerate to his hitherto absolutely docile wife, Assitan. It is perhaps in the maturing daughter Ab'jibid'ji that the complete proletarian heroine will develop.

It can thus be seen that Ousmane and Ngugi follow similar principles in their narrativisation of history. Though Ngugi is not always successful, both use the socialist realist genre in an attempt to depict the class struggle raging in their respective

societies. Both concentrate on the actions of the oppressed in their attempt to overturn the conditions of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Their commitment to realism is firm and the feature of class struggle and the positive proletarian hero is common. From this it might seem that socialist realism is the automatic choice for "Third world" writers in the attempt to steer their respective countries to true independence. Writers with the same political agenda have, however, utilised different literary strategies. Here I am particularly referring to Gabriel Garcia Marquez who utilises the genre of magical realism to gain similar political ends. The use of magical realism will be the subject of discussion in the following section.

10. The Magical Realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez

In the magical realism employed by Marquez, there is an intimate relationship between the socio-political structure and the characters' actions especially with regard to the way in which they interpret historical events. Marquez captures the lived experience of the community in order to give the reader a version of "history from the inside" that far surpasses anything that Stephen Clingman might have imagined when he posited the concept (The Novels of Nadine Gordimer - History from the Inside pp. 1-20 and pp. 205-225).

One level on which the technique functions is that it allows for the positing of an alternative version of history that becomes an exposure of the manipulation of historical fact by the colonisers. Thus, in One hundred years of Solitude, Aureliano is made to stress the difference between the version of history recounted in his school text-books and that which is related to him by his uncle, Jose Arcadio. Then too, the general amnesia on the question of the massacre of the striking workers is a very effective image for the role which official versions of history play in the removal of the memory of reactionary events from the collective consciousness. The magical technique of amnesia is also very effectively used earlier in the novel to show how colonialism effaced an entire system of values and beliefs. Here a magical event serves to capture the essence of the meaning of colonial subjugation for the colonised.

The official view of the civilising role of colonialism is also very effectively debunked by the portrayal of Jose Buendia as

an ignorant man who has to rediscover the fact that the earth is round and who attempts to mine gold with magnets. Further, the fossilised remains of the Spanish galleon re-emphasises that the achievements of Spain are inappropriate to the Latin American environment and when Castilian traditionalism is parodied by Fernanda's attempt to impose its customs on the wayward family, the role of Spanish culture is effectively denigrated.

Also debunked is the view that peace was brought to a warring countryside from the metropolis. In fact, we are shown how the hitherto peaceful countryside is embroiled in civil war after its contact with the capital. Finally, too, the claim that the centre introduced parliamentary democracy into the countryside is countered by the fact that all that was introduced was the political corruption of vote-rigging and political coercion. There is, however, another level on which the novel is related to history in that it portrays the entire Latin American past in its passage from settlement, through colonialism and neo-colonialism to the advent of socialism.

The initial colonial under-development is reflected in the acute awareness of the backwardness of Macondo in relation to the outside world. With the advent of republicanism upon the arrival of Moscote, the town is linked to the national political system and is caught up in the futile cycle of violence which has characterised many of Latin America's civil wars. Thus, Colonel Aureliano participates in twenty-eight uprisings without success and is forced to bring an end to the conflict.

Both sides in the civil war are shown to be fractions of the elite and thus the distinction between them is blurred. The fight

is no longer about principles but simply about power. The eventual coalition which brings about peace does nothing to alter the socio-economic relations and the participants on both sides are left awaiting their service-pensions.

This is followed by a period of neo-colonialism in which Macondo's "prosperity" is based on the natural fertility of the region rather than any structural economic change. The magic fertility of Jose Arcadio Segundio's livestock captures this idea well.

Having fallen under the domination of North American capitalism, the country remains a source of primary products and the lack of internal industrial development causes the decline which follows the withdrawal of the multi-nationals.

James Higgins suggests that the deluge is a symbol of the market-slumps which are responsible for much of Latin America's economic woes ("Gabriel Garcia Marquez : Cien Anos De Soledad" in Philip Swanson (ed.) Landmarks in Modern Latin American Fiction, p.150). While this is an interesting idea, the natural image is perhaps inappropriate. However, when we remember that the inhabitants think that the company can command the storm, the role of imperialism in these slumps is effectively pointed to. With the emergence of love between Aureliano and Ursula Amaranta, we have the rise of socialist values based on solidarity. These values spell the end of the exploitative oligarchy and hence the birth of the progeny with the pig's tail that ends the line of Buendias. Here, too, I have reservations about Marquez's image and the fact that the proletariat is perceived as a deformity perhaps betrays the ambivalence of the petty-bourgeois

intellectual to that class, despite the protestations of a socialist orientation.

On one level then, the novel presents a panoramic view of Latin American history. It is, however, also the reflection of a particular class -- the oligarchies that rule much of Latin America. This class is implicated in and indeed corrupted by its alliance with imperialism. This is well illustrated by Secundo's festivities which involve the family in one long debauch. Also the egoism of this elite creates the condition of solitude and involves it in narcissistic incestuous relationships. More than the exposure of social conditions, the novel thus manages to capture the mentality of a class and here again it matches anything that socialist realism has achieved.

Having rewritten history from the point of view of the ruling (but subjugated) elite, Marquez goes further by positing an alternative to this rewriting. This alternative takes the form of Aureliano's version which he arrives at on the basis of the deciphering of Melquiades's documents. That his view is based on the scientific working-class perspective is stressed by the fact that he is tutored by his uncle who is a trade union leader. Further, he is the bearer of the working-class values of love and solidarity. His version traces the passage of the country through colonialism and neocolonialism and anticipates his own demise as the last representative of an oligarchy which is rendered obsolete by the advent of socialism. Symbols of magical hurricanes and progeny with pigs' tails are used to capture this last idea.

From the above, it can be seen that rather than being interested in positing a magical reality that can serve the

purpose of an "exotic other" for the Western reader, Marquez is intent on a materialist deconstruction of myths produced by the idealism of the neo-colonial elite and the colonial distortions of history. The author does not posit just any magical reality since every myth has its history and is born of a particular set of socio-economic conditions. It is in the demystifying of the myth that the historically accurate version of reality is attained. According to Marquez, this historically accurate version coincides with the proletarian world-view and by identifying himself, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, with Aureliano's version, he indicates his sympathy for such a socialist reading of Latin American history.

This examination of the work of a major proponent of "magical realism" thus shows how mistaken the Western view of Latin America as the home of irrealism is. Instead of idealising the superstitiously posited magic reality of myth, the author in fact debunks it and arrives at a scientifically grounded historical reality.

11. Conclusion

One is immediately struck by both the similarities and differences between the work of the Latin American, Marquez, and an African proponent of the use of myth, Armah. In the work of both authors, one finds the positing of a mythical reality which serves the purpose of providing an escape from the harsh realities of their continents. In both cases, too, the myths express a longing for pre-capitalist rural relations and serve to counteract the colonialist versions of history that denigrate the indigenous past.

With respect to their attitudes to these mythical realities, however, the two authors display diametrically opposed responses and the basis for this can be found in their differing ideological positions determined by their class orientations.

Armah, as the representative of a group of intellectuals who align with the neo-colonial elite and support it ideologically (despite protestations of opposition), stresses only that aspect of the myth that underpins "militant" nationalism in its contradiction with imperialism. To serve this purpose, a unique African experience is posited on the basis of a mythical past and a uniquely African cosmology. In this way, the myth provides an alternative to derogatory Western versions of history and also serves to cement ties between members of the nation. Armah's attitude to the mythical reality is therefore one which seeks to ensure its continued propagation through idealisation of the past.

As Geoffrey Hunt correctly points out, however, this

seemingly progressive phenomenon in fact plays a reactionary role in that it blinds the oppressed classes to their objective class interests and consequently perpetuates the rule of the neo-colonialist elite who are implicated in the exploitation of the masses by imperialism ("Two African Aesthetics : Wole Soyinka vs Amilcar Cabral" in Georg Gugelberger (ed.) Marxism and African Literature p.83). Whether Armah is fully conscious of this fact is open to question but there is no doubt that Hunt's assessment of the objective effects of this idealisation of myth is accurate.

Marquez's attitude to the mythical reality which he describes is entirely different. He is aware that the myth reflects the consciousness of an exploitative and corrupted oligarchy that seeks to perpetuate its rule in alliance with international imperialism and at the expense of the masses. He sees as central to the myth the fear of industrialisation and the creation of a class-conscious proletariat. Consequently, he sees his political strategy as totally different from the idealisation practised by Armah. His main aim in positing the myth is to ensure its effective demystification and in this way to arrive at a scientific proletarian outlook. His political strategy thus approaches very closely to that of Ngugi and Ousmane rather than Armah even though he employs a literary genre similar to the latter.

We thus have a situation where one "third world" writer (Marquez) employs literary devices similar to another (Armah) but differs sharply with respect to political strategy and effect. On the other hand, we have two writers (Marquez and Ngugi) who concur on political strategy but differ radically in the employment of

literary technique. In an interview with Plinio Mendoza, Marquez admitted that part of the reason for the changing of his literary technique was that he ran the risk of getting his head kicked in if he persisted with socialist realism ("The Fragrance of Guava", p.56). He thus returned to a style which, though undoubtedly very satisfying to a sophisticated reader, is not very effective with the less sophisticated sort of readership that Ngugi and Ousmane sought to reach.

From this it can therefore be seen that one should be very wary of simply positing a category of "Third World Literature" that obfuscates the uniqueness of the various aims and strategies of the writers concerned. This obfuscation arises from the overlooking of the fact that societies in the "Third World" often display national peculiarities based on the unique forms which their contact with colonialism took. Here we could consider the examples of Cuba and India. Furthermore, the newly "independent" states develop a class structure peculiar to their own societies and writers adopting the ideology of different classes often develop different strategies and techniques.

This does not, however, rule out the fact that all these writers produce works in a situation that can be described as post- or neo-colonial. In so far as they are responding to the colonial experience, albeit in vastly different fashions, the concept of "literature of the Third World" does have at least some validity. However, care must always be exercised to take into account the varying aims and objectives and to remember that members of the "third world" often take radically different positions with respect to the global battle against imperialism.

In this study, I have thus shown how writers' ideological inclinations determine their politico-literary strategies. Though it is not the only determinant, class-position is shown to play a major role in the strategy adopted. It is this which shapes the authors' moral purpose and directly affects the way in which history is narrativised. This demystifies the creative act and places it on a firm materialist basis. Politico-literary strategies are also shown to be divided into those that are progressive and those that are reactionary on the basis of historical materialism. In this way I hope I have been able to ground my literary criticism on a basis which counteracts the tendency to view such criticism as a matter of taste which is entirely subjective. I also feel that such criticism is an effective counter to those who would lead us into the labyrinth of textuality which characterises "deconstructionalism". I found the "third world" authors, with their unashamed political orientation, to be most suitable to this project and feel that I have succeeded in attaining my goal to a certain extent. The mode of realism in all its variation can still be a vital means for progressive literature which has a major role to play in reshaping human relations and bringing about a society in which the notions of justice and equality can become more than pious wishes. Constraints of space have prevented me from discussing other works which could have been relevant to my purposes, but I think that those that have been dealt with adequately illustrate the points which I have been seeking to make.

NOTES

1. Throughout this section, I am indebted to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Writers in Politics, pp.3-33; 42-48; 71-81.

2. Close attention was paid to Chidi Amuta, The Theory of African Literature.

3. Here I have concentrated largely on The Necessity of Art.

4. For this section I am indebted to Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in Critical Enquiry, Autumn, 1980. pp. 5-27.

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