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CULTURAL RETRIEVAL AND REVOLUTIONARY
DIDACTICISM IN SELECTED NOVELS
BY AYI KWEI ARMAH AND NGUGI WA THIONG'O

PRESENTED BY:

MALIKÀ BOUHADIBA

SUPERVISED BY:

PR. M'HAMED BENSEMMANE

BOARD OF EXAMINERS:

PR. BADRA LAHOUEL

PR. M'HAMED BENSEMMANE

PR. YAMINA DERAMCHIA

DR. HOCINE MAOUI

DR. YAZID BENDJEDDOU

DR. RACHIDA YACINE

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To My Mother
and
In Loving Memory of My Father

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ABSTRACT

Cultural Retrieval and Revolutionary Didacticism in Selected novels by Ayi Kwei Armah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o

This thesis seeks to trace the cultural retrieval motifs and the revolutionary didacticism of Armah's and Ngugi's novels of the 1970s and 1980s. It also attempts to demonstrate the neo-Negritudinist dimension and Afrocentric orientation of the selected novels, with the purpose of justifying the contention, held in the thesis, that their writers have been working towards a new Black Aesthetics. It, besides, argues that these two writers are campaigning for a 'return to the source', in their novels, to face up to neo-colonialism and more particularly to cultural depersonalisation.

The choice of the novels has been done on the basis of their representation of their writers' *weltanschauung* and their cultural and revolutionary commitments. The thesis focuses on the major ideological (Fanon, Cabral, Baraka) and literary (Sartre, Camus, Wright) influences that the novels have absorbed. It demonstrates the convergences and divergences between Armah's and Ngugi's novels and the works on which they have been patterned. The critical framework of the thesis is a combination of the socio-historical and the cultural formalist critical approaches.

the cultural matrix of Armah's *Fragments* and its impact on cultural retrieval. It particularly takes into account the novel's existentialist dimension. It, besides, argues that Armah has preserved the aesthetic quality of the novel through his use of allegorical didacticism.

Chapter Two focuses on Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?*. It highlights its Fanonist, Existentialist and Negritudinist dimension. A comparative study is drawn between Armah's novel and Sartre's *Nausea*, Camus' *The Outsider* and Wright's *Native Son*, with which it shares common literary and ideological features.

Chapter Three is devoted to the study of Armah's novel *Two Thousand Seasons*. There is a focus on Armah's Afrocentric position. The major contention held in this chapter is that Armah's cultural and racial retrieval has a cathartic function. The other argument held in this chapter is that Armah's obsession with Black consciousness, as witnessed in his racialist discourse, has entailed a lack of concern for aestheticism.

Chapter Four studies the 'return to the source' motif in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* and demonstrates the neo-Negritudinist dimension of the novel. It pays special attention to Ngugi's use of grotesque realism and archetypal patterns of both Greek and Gikuyu culture.

Chapter Five explores Ngugi's use of orature and Mau Mau historiography in *Matigari*. It, further, focuses on Ngugi's use of magical realism and hybrid narrative techniques, oral African and Western modernist. It, besides, argues that Ngugi uses Mau Mau and Christianity for revolutionary didactic purposes. It also argues that Ngugi's authorial intrusions to voice his ideological message tarnish an aesthetically appealing novel.

On the whole, the thesis attempts to highlight the impact of the two writers' didacticism on the aesthetic achievement of their novels. It argues that these writers have become more outspoken about their ideological credentials than hitherto, as a consequence of their overconcern with Black Nationalism and revolutionary change.

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INTRODUCTION

The African novels of the 1970s and 1980s were particularly marked by their writers' ideological commitments. They expressed their concern for progressive humanism and cultural authenticity. This was notably the case of Armah's and Ngugi's novels, which are going to be considered in this thesis. These writers have used their craft to denounce the scourges that bedevilled their societies, social injustice, political opportunism and repressive regimes. They have often said that the origin of the moral and social ills that hampered the development of their societies had their origins in the neo-colonial bondage of their countries. Neo-colonialism, had, thus, become an outstanding feature of African fiction of the late 1970s and more particularly that of the 1980s. This is specifically the case in Armah's and Ngugi's novels, where a violent revolutionary action is the proposed solution to put an end to this state of affairs. The contention held in this thesis is that since their countrymen have been facing the threat of neo-colonialism, these writers have felt the need to work towards a cultural retrieval, in an attempt to enhance their people's cultural nationalism and foster their revolutionary consciousness.

These writers' commitment to proletarian humanism, more pronounced in the case of Ngugi,¹ gathered strength with the increase of destitution and social injustice in their respective countries. Their literary works, which expressed their disillusionment and protest against the *status quo* had a functional dimension. Their protest was also expressed through individual actions; Ngugi resigned from

his lectureship in Nairobi University, because of the repressive handling of the students' strike in 1969,² Armah resigned from his job at Ghana Television,³ and Soyinka got involved in revolutionary activism.⁴ Their literary output, particularly that of the 1970s and 1980s, was strongly impregnated with their progressive ideologies. Hence, revolutionary didacticism was the major characteristic of their works. This thesis seeks to trace cultural and revolutionary didacticism in Armah's and Ngugi's later novels, and attempts to explore their implications on their aesthetic achievements. Are not, indeed, these progressive writers in danger of compromising their artistic talents as a consequence of their unwavering pursuit of promoting revolutionary change and cultural regeneration? This important issue will be addressed here. Indeed Armah and Ngugi have experimented with different forms and modes of writing. This shows that ideological positions can be expressed while formal requirements can still be attended to. Yet, they often give precedence to didacticism over aestheticism. This, however, does not mean that their works should be dismissed on aesthetic grounds. Following the socialist realist tradition, they have used their craft to campaign for revolutionary change.

Their cultural nationalism was mostly expressed so as to challenge Western cultural neo-colonialism. As Ashcroft *et al.* observe: 'culture plays a role in neo-colonial hegemonic formation of the day-to-day experience of [post-colonial] societies'⁵ Accordingly, the literature produced by these writers lays a strong emphasis on the necessity for the retrieval of traditional culture to counteract cultural depersonalisation. Through their works, African writers worked towards cultural retrieval by using their traditional lore. This was the case of Ngugi, Armah, Soyinka and Achebe, to name but a few. Ngugi and other cultural nationalists such as Chinweizu, one of the pioneers⁶ of the call for the decolonisation of African literature,⁷ also called for the 'decolonisation of the African mind'⁸ As Ngugi has observed: the 'study of oral tradition [] would be important both in rehabilitating [their] minds, but also in helping African writers

to innovate and break away from the European mainstream⁹ He has, further, called for the use of indigenous language as part of this scheme at cultural decolonization. In *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (1998), he maintains that there is a ‘great need, especially in Africa, for artists and intellectuals to return to the languages of the people’¹⁰ He, for instance, deems that by writing in Western languages, African writers are enriching these languages. He states: ‘The post-colonial state and intellectual do the opposite of Prometheus: they often steal whatever fire there is to add to the abundance of fires in the West [í] to enrich the languages of Europe’¹¹

Being oriented towards a cultural decolonisation, these writers’ fictional works bore the stamp of post-colonial discourse. Their celebration of the ‘politics of difference’ was also meant to oppose the Western cultural hegemonic discourse. It was, hence, an attempt at repositioning African aesthetics in the centre of world literary scholarship. As Bill Ashcroft *et al.* rightly observe: ‘the study of national traditions is the first and most vital stage of the process of rejecting the claims of the centre to exclusivity’¹² The concern for the centre versus periphery dialectics was more pronounced in the theoretical studies of Ngugi and Chinweizu. Ngugi’s and Armah’s attempt to produce an African-centred literature, which became more evident through their later works, was motivated by a concern for ‘moving the centre’ and ‘setting records right with the imperial power by ‘writing back’ This is made clear by Ngugi who asserts in *Homecoming* (1972), that the African writer ‘tried to answer by asserting in the books he wrote that Africa had a culture as good as any’¹³ In the 1970s and 1980s, the African writers have, as Ashcroft *et al.* put it, ‘through an appropriation of the power invested in writing [í] take[n] hold of the marginality imposed on [them] and ma[de] hybridity and syncreticity the source of literary and cultural

redefinition¹⁴ This cultural redefinition is particularly noticeable in these writers' nativist discourse, and the 'return to the source' motifs of their works.

The cultural discourse of alterity became more pronounced in the 1980s, when the emphasis was on the Afrocentric perspective of African aesthetics, following Molefi Asante's numerous publications on the issue. This is evident, in Armah's Afrocentric concern for historical reconstruction, in *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and the *Healers* (1978). Armah's last two novels, *Osiris Rising* (1995) and *Kmt: In the House of Life. An Epistemic Novel* (2002) bear the stamp of his strong Afrocentric positions. Adhering to this trend, Ngugi and Armah have evolved towards the writing of a fiction that celebrates black consciousness and that focuses on the dialectic of 'Black vs White, Self vs Other'. Their works, hence, belong to the tradition of 'Manichean Aesthetics'¹⁵

Though this concept was applied by Abdul JanMohamed to the colonial African novels, it can similarly be applied to the post-independence ones, since these novels often deal with the colonial era, for instance the Mau Mau insurrection in Ngugi's novels. As JanMohamed observes, 'the colonial world is a Manichean world'¹⁶ and 'the absolute negation of the very being of the colonized people breeds a counter negation'¹⁷ The most telling example of this 'counter negation' is certainly, the Negritudist literature with its counter-discourse based on binaries, e.g., Black vs. White, intuition vs. emotion. JanMohamed, following Fanon's example, insists on the Manichean thinking of the colonizers. He remarks that 'the colonial mentality is dominated by a Manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, self and other, subject and object'. These concepts are reversed in the colonial and post-colonial literary works that notably deal with neo-colonialism, e.g., Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* (1982) and *Matigari* (1987). They are also used in the works that uphold Black consciousness, such as Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972) and *Two Thousand*

Seasons. An important aspect of this counter-negotiation cultural strategy is these writers' return to the source.

Armah's return to the source is apparent in his use of Akan mythology, and in the Garveyite 'Back to Africa' motif embodied in *Fragments* (1970), *Why Are We So Blest?* and *Osiris Rising* (1995). In Ngugi's case, it is evident in his extensive use of Gikuyu orature, and in his linguistic nativism, as in *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)* (1977), *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari*, and *Wizard of the Crow* (2006).¹⁸ His use of his native language has been motivated both by a concern about cultural decolonisation and revolutionary didacticism. To make this didacticism more effective, Ngugi has taken the decision to write in a language understood by the grassroots. Ngugi's use of popular culture has also been motivated by a desire to subvert the official cultural policies that are Western-oriented. In his book *Detained*, he makes it clear that he uses the Gikuyu language and folk culture for subversive purposes. For instance, he points out that he deliberately used his native language to write *Devil on the Cross*, since it was one of the major causes of his imprisonment.¹⁹ In *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams*, he points to the African artists' counter-discursive strategies to those of the governing classes stating that: 'the artist and the state became not only rivals in articulating the laws, moral or formal, that regulate life in society, but also rivals in determining the manner and circumstances of their delivery.'²⁰ In *Homecoming*, Ngugi defines the blueprints of the 'national culture' that he expects the African artist to propound, specifically, a culture with socialistic foundations. As he puts it, he wants them to 'create a revolutionary culture'²¹ that is 'born of a people's collective labour.'²² He, besides, expects this culture to have a Pan-African, Pan-Negroid, and a Third Worldist dimension. Ngugi's endorsement of Pan-Negroism²³ is clearly stated in his proclamation: 'We want to build a socialist black power.'²⁴ Ngugi's attempt to rehabilitate his own culture appears in the function of the traditional story teller that he assumes, and the use of folklore:

myths, legends, riddles and proverbs. In *Devil on the Cross*, he points to the rehabilitation of traditional cultural values as a solution to Kenya's social ills. The return to the source motif of the novel is symbolized by Wariinga's return from the city to Ilmorog, a rural area, and her adoption of the peasants' behavioural norms.

The influence of the African oral tradition is striking in the 1970s novels. It appears in their writers' enactment of traditional myths and customs, such as the Ogun myth in *Season of Anomy* (1973) and the Theng'eta Brewery in *Petals of Blood* (1977). Traditional oral culture is also a feature of the novels which, like Armah's *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*, bear the stamp of Western literary influence. In *Fragments*, cultural retrieval appears in the use of Akan names, Akwaaba, Awo, Igya,²⁵ as titles to the chapters of the novel and in the extensive use of Akan mythology. These features, a testimony to the 'Africanness' of Armah's novel, have been overlooked by Larson, who contends that 'there are few 'Africanisms' in it.²⁶ The modernist technical achievement of the novel has contributed to Larson's failure to discern the cultural matrix of the novel, and its cultural revival motif. In *Fragments*, the purpose of this revival is therapeutic. The rehabilitation of traditional culture is meant to cure the Ghanaians of their immorality. Like their forebears of the Negritude movement, the African writers' attempt at indigenising their novels was also meant to cure the African intellectuals of the inferiority complex they had towards their culture and their colour. The Negro nationalism that colours their novels is a hint to the influence of the Negritude ideology.

Negritude which lost momentum in the 1960s and was considered by some people as 'only fit for the museum of literature'²⁷ reappeared in a slightly different form²⁸, i.e., as neo-Negritude, in some novels of the 1970s. The major similarities between Negritude and neo-Negritude, is the celebration of 'Black Beauty', the denigration of the Whites and the romanticism of traditional

communal life. These aspects are noticeable in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, and in Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* and *Two Thousand Seasons*. In these novels, Armah expresses his anti-white feelings openly. This made Bernth Lindfors condemn *Two Thousand Seasons* on xenophobic charges,²⁹ and consider it as being 'Negritude reborn'.³⁰ Like the Negritudinist poets, Armah dramatizes, in *Why Are We So Blest?* the Black and White relationship as based on the exploitation of the former by the latter. The Negritudinist stance adopted by Armah in this novel appears in his recurring appraisal of whatever is black, and his detraction of whatever is white. This Manichean thinking is taken a step further in *Two Thousand Seasons*, which conveys a strong 'racialist' rhetoric. Whereas, in these novels Armah has revived the Negritude of the first phase, the 'anti-racist-racism', in *Fragments*, he expresses a milder Negritudinist stance.

The first critics who pioneered a new active engagement in cultural matters and identified the influence of Negritude in the novels of Ngugi, Armah and Soyinka are Eustace Palmer and Dan Izevbaye. In his 'Negritude Rediscovered, A Reading of the Recent Novels of Armah, Ngugi and Soyinka',³¹ Palmer highlights the Negritudinist touch in Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and Soyinka's *Season of Anomy*. He notes that this touch appears in the 'emphasis on the communalistic organization of traditional African society and the dignity of blackness'.³² In his 'Soyinka's Black Orpheus',³³ Dan Izevbaye explores Soyinka's use of the myth of Orpheus in his novels, particularly in *Season of Anomy*. Yet neither of these two critics has pointed out that a new cultural renaissance was taking place through the 1970s African novel.

Whereas the cultural renaissance of the 1930s was engineered by the francophone writers, that of the 1970s was promoted by anglophone writers. Makerere University (Uganda) and *Transition*, a cultural nationalist journal published in Kampala,³⁴ fostered the African writers' new cultural nationalism. The literature of the Ugandan writer Okot p'Bitek was a major factor in the

upsurge of this nationalism. In his book *Africa's Cultural Revolution* (1973), Ngũgĩ calls for the indigenisation of all forms of art, music, dance and school syllabuses.³⁵ His *Song of Lawino* (1966), a satire of the Africans' apeman-ship of the Westerners, points towards a resurrection of traditional culture to put an end to the process of the Africans' depersonalisation. Like Ngũgĩ, Ngugi and Armah call for the resurrection of the traditional African values. But, whereas Ngũgĩ's concept of revolution is merely cultural, theirs is both cultural and social. One of their goals was the set up of an egalitarian socio-economic system.

A major event which contributed to the upsurge of cultural nationalism among African writers was the Pan-African Cultural Festival, held in Algiers in 1969.³⁶ The terms 'cultural renaissance', 'Africanité', 'cultural rehabilitation', 'authenticity', 'the revival of African values',³⁷ recurred in the speeches of the participants. The symposium of the festival called for a cultural revolution to put an end to cultural neo-colonialism, and called on African writers to engage in the 'new combat for the authenticity and development of the African values'.³⁸ The African writers' concern for a cultural renaissance was forcefully expressed in the manifesto of the *Union of Writers of the African Peoples*,³⁹ whose progressive dimension is clearly indicated by this title. In their declaration the writers expressed the 'need to accelerate the pace of self-apprehension of the African peoples [and] the search for a progressive direction for reshaping [their] society and determining [their] existence'.⁴⁰ They defined their aims, the major of which was: 'the full retrieval of the African past in the quest for a contemporary self-apprehension and design for the future'.⁴¹ This ideological framework conforms to what Ali Mazrui has called 'Cultural Engineering'. In his *Cultural Engineering and Nation-Building in Africa* (1972), he defines it as 'the deliberate manipulation of cultural factors for purposes reflecting human habits in the direction of new and perhaps constructive endeavour'.⁴² These endeavours are those of the revolution that Armah and Ngugi expected to promote to put an end to the social disparities

maintained under the existing regimes of their countries. Like Cabral, they viewed culture as a revolutionary weapon.

Cabral, who was aware that culture enhanced nationalism and strengthened anti-colonial resistance, called for his people's "return to the source" during their struggle for independence.⁴³ Like him, Fanon considered a "return to the source" as essential to the colonial struggle. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he states: "The colonised man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope."⁴⁴ Amah's and Ngugi's "return to the source" has this revolutionary dimension. Still, both Fanon and Cabral considered "a return to the source" as important in a colonial situation, but superfluous in an independent one. Fanon noted that the "desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one's own people."⁴⁵ Cabral remarked that "the attempt at a 'return to the source' of the indigenous *petite* bourgeoisie 'is nothing more than an attempt to find short term benefits -- knowingly or unknowingly a kind of political opportunism'."⁴⁶ He sees the intellectuals' attempt at "a return to the source" as the result of a "frustration complex."⁴⁷ For him "the question of a 'return to the source' or a 'cultural renaissance' does not arise and could not arise for the masses of these people, for it is they who are the repository of the culture and at the same time the only social sector who can preserve and build it and make history."⁴⁸

The intellectuals who are more prone to "spiritual alienation" on account of their Western education, which cuts them off from the roots of their indigenous culture, attempt "a return to the source." As Aimé Césaire observed, a "return to the source" is, "attempted whenever a community is in a crisis."⁴⁹ Amah and Ngugi, have also attempted to revive their traditional culture to cure their people from the alienation brought about by their modern industrial life. This concern for cultural retrieval, as a consequence of the alienation caused by the materialism of

society, conforms to what Fritz Stern called the ideology of ‘cultural despair and national redemption’⁵⁰ This ideology calls for a cultural renaissance and a moral regeneration to counteract the immorality of modern life. As Stern observes, it is when they are ‘spiritually alienated’⁵¹ that people adopt ‘cultural despair’⁵² Armah and Ngugi inherited the ideology of ‘cultural despair’ from the Negritudists, who, like the Existentialists, espoused it as a result of their existential alienation. This experience is re-enacted in Armah’s *Fragments*. Baako feels alienated because of the materialism and corruption of his society, and turns, out of despair, to his traditional culture, which he attempts to revive in his film scripts, to bring about revolutionary change.

Armah’s ideological development has impinged on his literary production. His literary career has been marked by three phases of varying ideological and literary concerns. During each of these phases, Armah has adopted a distinct role, and a characteristic literary mode. The first phase was that of the moralist writer, as it shows from his first novel, *The Beautiful Are Not Yet Born*. There, he denounces his people’s immoral behaviour, through the literary techniques of symbolism. The second phase was that of the revolutionary reformer. This role is noticeable in *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?* where he introduces his new concern for a revolutionary violence. In these novels, he makes use of Modernist literary techniques. The third phase was that of the cultural revivalist. *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* mark out this phase and bear the stamp of the romanticism of the epic genre.

Armah proved his literary distinction in his first novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, a widely acclaimed work for its aesthetic standard. In this novel, and even more so, in *Fragments*, his mastery of technique and style is striking. However, though Armah numbers among the prominent African writers, he has been in large measures boycotted by critics.⁵³ The first critical work that was wholly devoted to him was Fraser’s *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* (1980),

which was published more than a decade after the publication of his first novel. The critics' resistance to Armah's works is seen by Fraser as being part and parcel of the cultural dislocation which they portray.⁵⁴ He remarks that Armah is never a comfortable author to read, and an attentive response to his work is likely to raise qualms in the most hardened breast,⁵⁵ since he accuses Africa of 'self-betrayal' and Europe of 'downright oppression'.⁵⁶ Derek Wright, on the other hand, considers Armah as 'one of the most provocative and versatile of post-war wave of anglophone West African novelists'.⁵⁷

The African scholars' reluctance to grant Armah's novels critical attention has also been motivated by their resentment of the gloomy picture he draws of their countries. The overpowering sense of despair and meaninglessness that pervades his novels is disturbing for these critics, and more particularly for the Ghanaians. This is the case of Ama Ata Aidoo who condemns the nauseating scenes and the filth that Armah depicts, in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.⁵⁸ She maintains that Armah's picture of Ghana is false. Achebe, who calls Armah 'an alienated writer',⁵⁹ considers his first novel as 'a sick book'.⁶⁰ He, however, does not so much blame Armah for depicting the sickness of Ghana, but for using patterns of the existentialist literature to depict it. He says: 'Ultimately the novel failed to convince me. And this was because Armah insists that this story is happening in Ghana and not in some existentialist no man's land'.⁶¹ Ironically enough, it is on the very grounds that Armah is attacked by Achebe and Awoonor, i.e., the modernist aspect of his novels, that he is praised by the Western critics, e.g., Gerald Moore.⁶² There has, however, been a changed attitude of the Western and the African critics towards Armah's later works, notably *Why Are We So Blest?* and *Two Thousand Seasons*. The Western critics condemned them on account of their anti-white prejudices, whereas the African critics, Chinweizu and his associates, hailed them for their cultural and Negro nationalist stance.

Like Armah's, Ngugi's literary development has been marked by three different phases, each one signalled a new ideological orientation. His early works, *Weep Not Child* (1964) and *The River Between* (1965), though dealing with the colonial history of his country, and its dramatic repercussion on both the private and communal conditions, bear a romantic touch, since they focus on the major protagonists' love affairs. Written at a time when Ngugi was engrossed with the Western literary tradition, and under the influence of D.H. Lawrence and Joseph Conrad, which he himself acknowledged,⁶³ they are patterned on the stylistic and formal samples of this tradition. This is particularly the case in *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). This novel, which is a testimony to Ngugi's mastery of formal and stylistic devices, heralds his ideological and literary evolution towards revolutionary didactic writing. Though it focuses on individualities and the psychological make up of the characters, it denounces, through plot features, the betrayal of nationalist ideals on the morrows of Kenya's independence. It, further, denounces the enrichment, at the expense of the masses, of those who sided with the settlers during the Emergency, i.e., the 'loyalists'. This is, for instance, expressed through Gikonyo's remark about those who did not engage in the Mau Mau struggle being the ones who 'taste the fruits of independence, [who] ride in long cars and change them daily'.⁶⁴ The betrayal of nationalist ideals was a dominant thematic concern in the works of Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969) and Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1965). In these works, the authors denounce the socio-economic disparities, the corruption and political opportunism that prevailed in their societies in the 1960s.

These are the major motifs of Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* which signalled his concern for the socialist ethics.⁶⁵ This novel also encompasses Ngugi's concern for Mau Mau historiography. The Mau Mau motif became an outstanding feature of his subsequent works, e.g., *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) and

Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want).⁶⁶ The concern for the rewriting of the Mau Mau episode, which was often given heroic dimensions, had a twofold purpose, a revisionist purpose since Ngugi opposed both the Westerners and the ruling *élite*'s accounts of the event, and a revolutionary purpose for it was meant to remind the masses of the revolutionary ideals of the struggle. It was by the same token meant to point to that episode of Kenyan history as a model of revolutionary activism to fight injustice and oppression in post-independence Kenya. This is the case in *Matigari*, where a Mau Mau veteran comes back to initiate the masses' revolutionary activism.

Ngugi's use of Mau Mau for revolutionary didactic purposes is, again, noticeable in his plays, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), co-authored with Micere Githae Mugo, and *Maitu Njugira (Mother, Sing For Me)* (1986). In the former, whose writing was also motivated by a desire to pay tribute to this 'Martyr' of the Mau Mau struggle, Ngugi and Mugo dramatize the events from a Marxist perspective. The revolutionary didacticism of the play lies in its hints to the relevance of the Mau Mau resistance to post-independence Kenya. In the preface of the play, the writers point to their concern for the 'continued determination [of the Kenyan peasants and workers] to resist exploitation, oppression and new forms of enslavement'.⁶⁷ Ngugi's use of Kenya's history for a revolutionary didactic purpose is even more manifest in *Mother, Sing For Me*, a play which was similarly performed by peasants and workers. Though the play revolves round colonial exploitation in the 1920s and 1930s, it is meant to bring to light the analogy between colonial and post-colonial exploitation in Kenya. Again, through this play Ngugi attempted, in a Brechtian fashion, to arouse the audience's revolutionary consciousness, a fact which accounted for its banning. Beside expressing Ngugi's revolutionary didacticism, the play also expresses his concern for cultural retrieval, evident, for instance, through his extensive use of traditional songs. This play also expresses Ngugi's linguistic Pan-African

concern, apparent in his incorporation of songs in different ethnic languages into the narrative.

Ngugi's cultural nationalism was prompted by a concern for the plight of the grassroots. It was given full expression in *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, performed by peasants and workers in Kamiriithu improvised theatre. The propensity of the play to contribute to the awakening of working class revolutionary consciousness was sensed as a danger by the authorities, consequently, it was banned and Ngugi imprisoned. This didacticism was more pronounced in his subsequent works. *Petals of Blood*, for instance, was written in a socialist realist vein, with its focus on the education of his audience in the Marxist-Leninist ethics. Ngugi's Marxist orientation is again, quite striking in *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, which also bear a strong influence of Fanonism. Fanon's ideological precepts are evidenced throughout Ngugi's literary output, fictional and non-fictional alike. It is, particularly, in the latter works that echoes of Fanon's rhetoric recur as a leitmotif.

Fanon was considered as the godfather of the African revolutionary intellectuals, and more particularly of the African writers in the sixties. His being, then, a living example of the rebel⁶⁸ who turned a revolutionary activist, notably through his adherence to the Algerian revolutionary movement, accounted for his widespread recognition among the African intellectuals. Fanon's influence on the latter developed further after the publication of his three major works, *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* (1959) and *The Wretched of the Earth*. These works dealt with issues that were of prime concern to these intellectuals. Among the issues that preoccupied them and that Fanon addressed in his works were: racism, colonial alienation, revolutionary *praxis* and neo-colonialism. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon has attempted to apply the Marxist ideological framework of revolutionary change to the African situation, albeit in a fashioned gown. This work has appealed to the progressive African intellectuals, and more particularly to African writers, because Fanon provided

them with a sample of revolutionary activism. This book has become the manifesto of the African progressive writers, chief among whom Ngugi and Armah figure.⁶⁹ The extent of this influence on Armah is best apparent in his essay: "Power and Principle. Fanon: The Awakener"⁷⁰ where he remarks: "without understanding him we'll never get where we need to go. We may move without him, but only blindly, wasting energy"⁷¹ Like Ngugi,⁷² Armah has emphasized the importance of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961),⁷³ for African intellectuals, and more particularly writers. He states: "The book is remarkable for the way it brings together all our problems, hopes, aspirations, inadequacies and the ways we can overcome them"⁷⁴

Ngugi fell back on Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* as a source of inspiration when he chose the issue of neo-colonialism as a major motif in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*. Ngugi's adoption of Fanonism appears in his delineation of the bourgeoisie, the intellectual and the leader. He depicts the bourgeoisie as parasitical, the intellectual as an opportunist, and the leader as a betrayer of the nationalist principles he championed before independence. Fanon's influence also appears in his endorsement of the principle of revolutionary counter-violence. This is, for instance, hinted at in *A Grain of Wheat*, through Kihika's remark justifying the Mau Mau guerrilla's use of violence: "We are not murderers í We only hit back"⁷⁵ Yet, at times, Ngugi distances himself from his "spiritual father" This is the case through his dramatization of revolutionary praxis,⁷⁶ and Black consciousness. Ngugi's late novels embody features of the Negritude ideology. This is apparent, for instance, in *Petals of Blood*, in Karega's remark: "down with whites í up with í Black Power,"⁷⁷ or again in the lawyer's statement: "the path of manliness and black redemption í ."⁷⁸ Fanon, on the other hand, has expressed his opposition to "Negritude" in an unequivocal way in *Black Skin White Masks*, where he states that Negritude "makes the black man renounce the present and the future in the name of a mystical past"⁷⁹ He

particularly opposed it because he deemed that it encouraged the Negro's narcissistic complacency, and thus led to an egocentric attitude that hindered his social awareness.⁸⁰ Again, whereas Ngugi believes in Pan-Negroism, Fanon does not.⁸¹ Ngugi insists on 'the solidarity and unity of blackness'⁸² Fanon perceived a unity of the oppressed rather on a Third-World scale.⁸³

The critical reception of Ngugi's literary oeuvre was quite impressive in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Among the books that granted special attention to Ngugi's use of orature was Odun Balogun's: *Ngugi and African Postcolonial Narrative: The Novel as Oral Narrative in Multigenre Performance* (1997).⁸⁴ This book deals with Ngugi's aesthetic and ideological development with a particular focus on *Matigari*. It explores its oral narrative structure, its mythic dimension, and the different genres it encompasses, hence the term 'multigenre' of the title. Similarly, James Ogude's book *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation* (1999),⁸⁵ grants Ngugi's use of 'popular forms' a great importance. But its focus is mostly on the historiographical and the allegorical dimensions of Ngugi's works. Ogude sees Ngugi's historical reconstruction as an attempt 'to salvage the history of the subaltern from the ruins of colonial plunder'⁸⁶ Oduge who was Ngugi's student,⁸⁷ provides an insightful study of Ngugi's nationalist and gender discourses. Another insightful study of Ngugi's novels is Simon Gikandi's *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o* (2000),⁸⁸ the work of an 'insider'. This 'insider' status has its drawbacks; the most difficult one to overcome is certainly that of subjectivity. Gikandi, himself remarks: 'I have found it difficult to repress or transcend the insider's knowledge that is the common referent Ngugi and I share'⁸⁹ Besides, the danger of being subjective also lies in the ideological influence Ngugi has had on Gikandi's generation. Gikandi points out that their notion of the major concepts encompassed in Ngugi's literary works, notably, cultural nationalism, Mau Mau and Kenya's neo-colonial bondage 'has been overdetermined by Ngugi's discourse'⁹⁰ In fact, Ngugi's prolific production of essays on these issues, could

but have had a lasting influence on progressive Kenyan intellectuals, starting with Ngugi's own students. His imprisonment for his writings has certainly contributed to the appeal his works have for this category of Kenyans.⁹¹

Ngugi's works have, on the other hand, been harshly criticized by some Western critics. This is the case of Glenn Barron and William Slaymaker. In his essay: 'Demystifying Ngugi's Mind'⁹² Barron analyses Ngugi's works from a Eurocentric perspective, and insists on Ngugi's borrowing from the Western Tradition. Barron severely denounces Ngugi's nativist discourse and linguistic nationalism. In a more moderate style, William Slaymaker maintains that Ngugi 'excessive[ly] reli[es] on Eurocentric theoretical discourses'⁹³ and that his discourses are 'hybridized beta discourses [i.e.] bastardized versions of Eurocentred ideologies and Kenyan nativist nationalism'⁹⁴ In the main, as these examples show, the major difference between Western and African critics often lies in their stance to aestheticism and to the perspective, Afrocentric or Eurocentric, from which African works should be approached critically. This is notably the case as regards Armah's novels, which bear a strong modernist influence.⁹⁵ This influence is evident in his most Africanized novels, such as *Two Thousand Seasons*.

Though the influence of Western literature on the African novels of the 1970s is marked, some African critics, notably Chinweizu *et al.*,⁹⁶ strongly refute its existence. And so do some African writers who oppose the critical approach of tracing the Western influence in their works. Armah, for instance, forcefully condemns this approach. He is more particularly hostile to the critics who point out his own indebtedness to Western writers. He does so in his 'Larsony or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction'⁹⁷ where he attacks Larson for pointing out, in his *The Emergence of African Fiction* (1971), the influence of James Joyce on him. He, further, denies that he is indebted to the Existentialists, saying: 'A white South African woman has suggested influences from the French Existentialists, and I've

heard that hunch echoed by African pseudo-scholars⁹⁸ No matter how hard Armah attempts to make his case about his non-indebtedness to the existentialist literature, he cannot convince the most naive critic about it. The impact of this literature is striking in his early novels, more particularly in *Fragments* and *Why We Are So Blest?* The outstanding resemblance of *Fragments* to Sartre's *Nausea* (1938) and of *Why Are So We Blest?* to Camus's *The Outsider* (1942) cannot be fortuitous. Armah cannot pretend, as he does as regards James Joyce's influence, that if ever Sartre and Camus influenced him, they did so on occult wavelengths⁹⁹

Without being the work of a 'Larsonist', a term coined by Armah to refer to the critics who concern themselves with the influence of Western literature on African works, this study will focus on such an influence. This is, however, not done with the purpose of belittling the originality of African fiction, but it is done with the intention of demonstrating the impact of the syncretism of stylistic devices and genres on the outcome of the fictional works. Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* and *Two Thousand Seasons* and Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* have been selected to demonstrate that these writers' political and racial commitments have been achieved at the expense of their commitment to art.¹⁰⁰ In comparison with these novels, Armah's *Fragments* and, to a lesser degree, Ngugi's *Matigari*, are more aesthetically pleasing. The critical framework of the thesis is based on both the socio-cultural and the formalist approaches. It is in line with Iyasere's 'cultural formalism'¹⁰¹ Yet, it departs from it in its concern for the historical matrix of the novels. Their historical framework is often checked up against the real events of the historical period described in the texts. Further, there is a keen interest in both the literary and the ideological influences that the writers have been exposed to.

Chapter ONE deals with Armah's *Fragments*. It examines Armah's commitment to social reform and cultural revival. It explores the cultural matrix of the novel, documents the Akan mythology and traces its features in the novel. It

demonstrates how Armah uses the concepts of the *‘cargo cult’* and *‘matrilinearity’*. It, further, focuses on the issue of corruption in Ghana and its dramatization in the novel. The chapter pays special attention to Armah’s indebtedness to the ideologies of Existentialism and Modernism. A comparative study of *Fragments* with Sartre’s *Nausea* is attempted to highlight Armah’s borrowing from Existentialist literature. There is, also, a focus on the narrative structure of the novel and the techniques Armah has borrowed from Modernist literature. This chapter explores Armah’s use of allegorical didacticism and argues that the aesthetic quality of the novel is maintained on account of Armah’s hidden commitment.

Chapter TWO is devoted to Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?* It explores the influence of Fanonism, Existentialism, the Absurd and Negritude on the novel. It demonstrates Armah endorsement of Fanon’s theory of the psychoexistential alienation of the Negro as expressed in *Black Skin White Masks*. It explores the Existentialist dimension of the novel and draws a parallel with Sartre’s *Nausea* and Wright’s *Native Son*. It also explores the influence of Camus’ *The Outsider* on the novel. The Chapter, further, focuses on the issues of slavery and racism. It, particularly, insists on Armah’s Negritudinist stance and traces the features of Negritude in the novel. Its major argument is that the more Negro nationalist the African writers have become, the less concerned they are with aestheticism.

Chapter THREE focuses on Armah’s novel *Two Thousand Seasons*. It argues that Armah’s attempt at cultural retrieval and racial redemption has therapeutic ends both on the private and communal level. It, further, argues that Armah’s African-centered historiography and racial retrieval are indicative of his Afrocentric allegiances, and attempts to demonstrate this new direction in Armah’s literary and ideological development. The Chapter also focuses on Armah’s Manichean racialist discourse to demonstrate that Armah has evolved towards propagandist writing on account of his strong Black Nationalism, and to

sustain the argument of the thesis that ideological commitment has entailed an aesthetic impoverishment of African fiction.

Chapter FOUR is devoted to both Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*. It studies the 'return to the source' motif of the novel and demonstrates its neo-Negritudist dimension. The chapter, further, deals with its Bakhtinian Carnavalesque dimension. It also focuses on Ngugi's use of grotesque realism, and discusses the issue of realism versus myth. It, besides, studies the mythic and archetypal features of the novel. It, further, assesses Ngugi's blending of traditional oral and Western written narrative techniques and points out the clash between the two traditions. The chapter argues that despite his call for the decolonization of African literature, Ngugi continues to use the Western literary tradition.

Chapter FIVE, which is a study of Ngugi's *Matigari*, focuses on the use of Mau Mau and Christianity as revolutionary motifs. It casts light on Ngugi's ideological stance to the two concepts and how it is translated aesthetically. The contention made in this Chapter is that Ngugi has attempted to reconcile Marxist ideology with Christian mythology to express his revolutionary didacticism. There is, besides, an attempt at evaluating Ngugi's use of magical realism for revolutionary didactic ends. It, further, focuses on Ngugi's blending of narrative techniques from orature and modernist literature in an attempt to demonstrate that though Ngugi campaigns for a decolonized African literature, his late works are still grounded, though to a lesser extent than his earlier ones, in the mainstream of Western literary tradition. The major argument held in this chapter is that Ngugi's authorial intrusions to express his ideological credentials give the novel a polemical dimension that mars what would have been an aesthetically elaborated novel.

NOTES

¹ Whereas Ngugi was, and still is a dedicated Marxist, Armah has rejected Marxism as being Eurocentric and racist. See his 'Masks and Marx. The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis', *Présence Africaine*, 3rd Quarterly 1984, N° 131, 35-65. Still the two writers can be considered as progressive on account of their campaign for revolutionary change in favour of the downtrodden. Besides, they both call for an egalitarian system based on traditional communalism.

² See G.D. Killam, *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1980), p. 3, and Ngugi wa Thiongø interviewed by Peter Darling, *Sunday Nation* (Nairobi, March 16, 1969), 15-16.

³ He worked there as a scriptwriter in 1964, but had to resign because he disagreed with those in charge of the programs and who found his scripts too daring and provocative. See Robert Frazer's book: *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1980), p. 8. This experience is dramatized in *Fragments* through the plight of Baako.

⁴ His memoir *The Man Died* (1972) gives a full account of his imprisonment in 1967 related to his revolutionary activism.

⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 180.

⁶ See his essay 'Towards a Liberated African culture', *East Africa Journal* Vol 9, N° 9 (September 1972), 20-26. This call for the decolonisation of African Literature was initially called for by Eldred Durosimi Jones in his: 'The Decolonization of African literature', in *The Writer in Modern Africa*, edited by Per Watsberg (Uppsala, 1967), 71-77.

⁷ Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*. (London: K.P.I. Ltd., 1980). See also the Introduction of Chinweizu's Anthology: *Voices from the Twentieth-century: Griots and Towncriers* (Faber and Faber Ltd., 1988), p. XIX.

⁸ Chinweizu's book entitled: *Decolonising the African Mind* (1987), condemns 'Euromodernist' African literary works and calls for an Afrocentric literature. It was published the same year as Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind* (1987).

⁹ Ngugi wa Thiongø, *Homecoming. Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 16.

¹⁰ Ngugi wa Thiongø, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 103.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

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- ¹² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, op. cit., p. 16.
- ¹³ Ngugi wa Thiongø, *Homecoming*, op. cit., p. 11.
- ¹⁴ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, op. cit., p. 78.
- ¹⁵ Abdul R. JanMohamed *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983).
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- ¹⁸ It was first published in Gikuyu under the title: Murogi wa Kagogo in 2004.
- ¹⁹ Ngugi wa Thiongø, "On Writing in Gikuyu" *Research in African Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (1985), 151-156, p.153.
- ²⁰ Ngugi wa Thiongø, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa*, op. cit., p. 37.
- ²¹ Ngugi wa thiongø, *Homecoming*, op. cit., p. 19.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ²³ Ngugi has most probably come under the influence of the Black Movements of the late sixties early seventies, when he lived in the states in 1970. Armah was, likely, influenced by them when he sojourned in America from 1968 to 1970.
- ²⁴ Ngugi wa thiongø, *Homecoming*, op. cit., p. XIX.
- ²⁵ These words respectively mean: "welcome", "Moon" and "fire".
- ²⁶ Charles. R. Larson: *The Emergence of African Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1971), p. 258.
- ²⁷ Quoted in Irele Abiola's *The African Experience in Literature and ideology*, (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. 84.
- ²⁸ This form of Negritude was more in line with the cultural agenda of African Socialism and more particularly, Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, i.e., "family hood", which called for the retrieval of traditional culture and the resurrection of the communal way of life.
- ²⁹ See Bernth Lindfors, "Armah's Histories" *African Literature Today*, N° 11 (1980), 85-96, pp. 90, 94.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- ³¹ Eustace Palmer, "Negritude Rediscovered, A Reading of the Recent Novels of Armah, Ngugi and Soyinka" *Fiction Review*, Vol 8, N° 1, (1981), 1-11.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ³³ Dan Izevbaye, "Soyinka's Black Orpheus" in Bernth Lindfors and Ulla Schild (eds.) *Neo-African Literature and Culture. Essays in Memory of Janheinz Jahn*, (Wiesbaden: B. Heymann, 1976), 147-157.
- ³⁴ This journal, which was launched in 1961 by Rajat Neogy, played a major role in propagating cultural nationalism. Its concern for cultural renaissance appears in

its first issue which defined African culture. See *Transition*, Vol. 1, N° 1, (1961), p. 2.

³⁵ Okot p'Bitek, *Africa's Cultural Revolution* (Nairobi: Macmillan Books for Africa, 1973), p. 102.

³⁶ The Symposium of the First Pan-African Cultural Festival was held in Algiers from July 21st to August 1st 1969. See "The Pan-African Cultural Manifesto", *Présence Africaine*, N° 71, 3rd Quarterly, (1969), 123-132.

³⁷ Macquet, Jacques, Bungener, Pierre, Cissolo Sekene, *African Culture: Algiers Symposium, July 21st - August 1st, 1969. The Pan-African Cultural Festival*, Algiers: Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion, 1969, p. 20.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³⁹ See Wole Soyinka, *Declaration of African Writers, Research in African Literature*, Vol. 6, N° 1 (Spring 1975), 58-59.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴² Al Amin Mazrui, *Cultural Engineering and Nation Building in East Africa* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. XV.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Translated by Constance Farrington. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), p. 187.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴⁶ Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source. Selected Speeches*. Edited by Africa Information Service (New York and London: Monthly Press, 1973), p. 63.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴⁹ Aimé Césaire, Speech Given at the International Congress of Black Writers and Artists held in Paris in 1956. *Présence Africaine*, N° 8-9-10 (June- November, 1956), p. 193.

⁵⁰ See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (California, University of California Press, 1961), p. XX.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. XVI.

⁵² The ideology of "cultural despair" was propounded by the German cultural critics, Lagarde, Laugbehn and Moeller Van Den Bruck, in mid-19th century. It came to birth as a consequence of the decadence of their societies and their despair at witnessing it. Its proponents indicted modernity and denounced the materialism of the capitalist society.

⁵³ Not until the 1990s has there been a new interest in Armah's works, starting with the publication of Derek Wright's *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah* (1992). The regained interest in Armah's works was also motivated by his new artistic production in the mid 1990s, with the publication of *Osiris Rising* (1995).

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- ⁵⁴ Robert Frazer: *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1980), p.XII.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., p. XI.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., p. XI.
- ⁵⁷ Derek Wright, *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), p. 1.
- ⁵⁸ Ama Ata Aidoo, "No Saviours" in *African Writers on African Writing*, edited by G.D. Killam, London: Heinemann, 1973, 14-18.
- ⁵⁹ Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1975), p. 26.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 25.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., p. 25.
- ⁶² Gerald Moore, *Twelve African Writers* (London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1980), p. 251.
- ⁶³ See Cosmos Pieterse and Dennis Duerden, *African Writers Talking* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1972).
- ⁶⁴ Ngugi wa Thiongø, *A Grain of Wheat*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1967), p. 60.
- ⁶⁵ It was written, while he was at Leeds University, where he got acquainted with radical teachers and students. For a detailed study of this influence on Ngugi's ideological make up, see Carol Sicherman's essay: "The Leeds-Makere Connection and Ngugi's intellectual development", *Ufahamu*, Vol. XXIII, N°1, (Winter 1995), 3-20.
- ⁶⁶ This play, which was co-authored with Ngugi wa Mirii, was performed in 1977, but not published until 1980.
- ⁶⁷ Ngugi wa Thiongø and Micere Mugo, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (London : Heinemann, 1976), p. VIII.
- ⁶⁸ Fanon rebelled first against his middle-class family background and second against the French administration. He resigned from his job as psychiatrist in Blida-Joinville, in protest against the conditions of the patients, whose cure he deemed futile in a society fraught with evil on account of the colonial repression of the natives.
- ⁶⁹ Whereas Ngugi's novels bear a strong influence of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Armah's though having touches of this influence, e.g., the passivity of intellectuals as regards revolutionary activism (Solo in *Why Are We So Blest?*), the idleness of the bourgeoisie (Brempong in *Fragments*), they bear the influence of Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*.
- ⁷⁰ Ayi kwei Armah, "Power and Principle. Fanon: The Awakener", *Negro Digest*, Vol. 18 (1969), 4-9, 29-43.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷² See Ngugi's *Homecoming*, p. 53, and *Writing Against Neo-colonialism*, (Middlesex: Vita Books, 1986), p. 8.

⁷³ This is the date of the French edition: *Les Damnés de la Terre*, published by François Maspéro. The English translation was published by Macgibbon & Kee in 1965.

⁷⁴ Ayi kwei Armah, "Power and Principle." Fanon: *The Awakener* op. cit. p. 39.

⁷⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 216.

⁷⁶ Unlike Fanon, Ngugi considers the proletariat as a revolutionary force.

⁷⁷ Ngugi, *Petals of Blood*, (London: Heinemann, 1977), p. 170.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁷⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, Translated by Charles Lam Markmann (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1967), p. 16.

⁸⁰ By the time he wrote *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon had come to concede that Negritude had a validity on the personal level for the disalienation of the colonized Black man

⁸¹ See the *Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 174.

⁸² Ngugi, *Petals of Blood*, op. cit., p. 198.

⁸³ This view has been endorsed and defended by Ngugi in *Moving the Centre. The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993).

⁸⁴ Odun. F. Balogun, *Ngugi and African Postcolonial Narrative: The Novel as Oral Narrative in Multigenre Performance* (Quebec: World Heritage Press, 1997).

⁸⁵ James Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation* (London: Pluto, 1999).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸⁷ See the Acknowledgements of Ogude's book: *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*, op. cit.

⁸⁸ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000)

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. IX.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹¹ Gikandi, however, disagrees with Ngugi on certain pivotal issues, e.g., linguistic nationalism.

⁹² Glenn Barron, "Demystifying Ngugi's Mind" available at: qcpages.qc.edu/ENGLISH/postcol/articles/Africa/barron.html

⁹³ William Slaymaker, "The Disaffections of Postcolonial Affiliations. Critical Communities and Linguistic Liberation of Ngugi wa Thiong'o" *Symploke*, Volume 7, Number 1-2, (1999), 188-196, p. 189.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁹⁵ In his book *"An African Focus": A Study of Ayi Kwei Armah's Narrative Africanization* (1998). Lief Lorentzo has failed to notice the modernist dimension of *Why Are We So Blest?* He contends that this novel is the starting point of

Armah's move away from Modernism. He, further, maintains that Armah, starting with *Why Are So Blest?*, has moved towards the use of an African narrative style. He has, however, overlooked the "africanisms" that are encompassed in *Fragments*, as it will be demonstrated in this study.

⁹⁶ See Chinweizu, Onwuchukwa Jemie and Madubuike, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, op. cit.

⁹⁷ Ayi Kwei Armah, "Larsony or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction", *Positive Review*, Vol.1, (ILE. IFE, 1978), 11-14.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 356.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 356.

¹⁰⁰ It should be reckoned, however, that granted the conditions under which these novels were written one cannot expect "art-for-art's sake" pieces of work. Still, the pamphleteering dimension of Ngugi's novels, or the racialist discourse of Armah's second and third novels, may be disturbing for their readers.

¹⁰¹ Solomon, Ogbede, Iyasere, "Cultural Formalism and the Criticism of Modern African Literature", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1976) 322-330.

CHAPTER ONE

ARMAH'S *FRAGMENTS*: CULTURAL REGENERATION, EXISTENTIALISM AND ALLEGORICAL DIDACTICISM

Fragments illustrates Armah's concern for both aestheticism and didacticism. The novel operates through a stylised and fragmented structure. Its didacticism appears in his attempt to raise his Ghanaian audience's sense of responsibility. This chapter aims at studying how Armah expresses his revolutionary commitment through allegory and through other formal devices such as a play on contrast in the characterization, and a particular emphasis on the dramatic experience of his major protagonist. It further sheds light on the existentialist dimension of the novel and demonstrates Armah's indebtedness to Sartre, by tracing the similarities of *Fragments* with Sartre's *Nausea*. Besides, it enhances the major differences between the two novels to bring out Armah's own existentialist approach in the African post-independence context.

This chapter, further, focuses on the modernist narrative mode of the novel and argues that Armah's masterly command of the modernist stream-of-consciousness technique marks this novel out as the most aesthetically elaborated of his oeuvre. The literariness of *Fragments* is also maintained through allegorical symbolism. The originality of this novel also resides in Armah's successful blending of two diametrically opposed world views and philosophies, African and Western. The former appears in the recreation of the traditional Akan philosophy of life epitomized through the outlook of Naana, the blind grandmother, who is the custodian of traditional culture. The latter appears in the existentialist ethics epitomized by Baako's attitude to modern life. Through his major protagonist, Armah attempts to bridge the gap between the two philosophies of life. In fact, through this character's cultural creativity, i.e., his scripts, Armah attempts to reconcile modernity with traditionalism. The existentialist philosophy helps Baako, and by extension Armah who shares with him biographical characteristics,¹ understand his existential alienation and "cultural despair" to borrow Fritz Stern's concept.² The Akan philosophy of life which he inherits from his grandmother helps him find an anchor to his feeling of cultural non-belonging, and to his "double consciousness."³ The cultural retrieval task Baako has set himself has a cathartic function in that it is meant as a cure to his existential and social alienation, and that of the Ghanaian intellectuals. Baako suffers from the latter form of alienation mostly because he is, like the Man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, a non-conformist, as he does not comply with the common practice of corruption.

This chapter also aims at demonstrating Armah's concern for cultural regeneration, mostly by focussing on his dramatization of Akan customs and traditions, e.g., matrilineal kinship and the "cargo cult" mentality. In this novel, Armah suggests that a "return to the source" is essential to salvage his people from the immoral life they have been leading, and to cure them from the greed for

material goods. The interdependent issues of the diagnosis of cultural disintegration and the proposal for cultural revival are of major importance in *Fragments*. Armah shows how traditional culture has been rejected as a consequence of the encroachment of modernity and the development of people's strivings for material acquisitions, at the expense of spiritual values. He points to the resurrection of traditional culture as a means of saving his people from moral degeneration, and cultural depersonalisation. Like the Negritude writers, he works for the rehabilitation of traditional values. This cultural nationalism is endorsed by Naana who insists on the performance of traditional rituals. She epitomises traditional Akan morality and culture. In the main, *Fragments* illustrates Armah's preoccupation with the idea of a cultural regeneration.

This preoccupation has structural implications in the text. It appears in the Akan naming of the chapters. Armah's contribution to the revival of his culture is done, here, through an indigenisation of his work by means of language. The use of Akan myths and customs, notably the Mame Water myth and the outdoor ceremony, show Armah's concern for the retrieval of traditional culture. Another instance of this pressure towards cultural rehabilitation appears in the adoption of the matrilineal system of the traditional Akan society. This is noticeable in the use of female characters, Naana and Juana, as the dominant minds in the novel. The fictional plot repeatedly hinges on some of the customary laws of this system, such as making the wife's kin take precedence over the husband's in supervising ceremonies. Hence, the novel embodies a strong cultural didacticism.

Fragments is an aesthetically appealing novel, mostly on account of Armah's successful handling of modernist techniques. Cecil Abrahams considers it as 'a magnificent study of a deep African problem'⁴ Its critics have, however, mostly been concerned with the thematic repertoire of the novel. This is the case of Robert Fraser,⁵ Ejiet Komolo⁶, Edward Lobb,⁷ and Ron Rassner.⁸ Joe Lurie, on

the other hand, studies the formal characteristics of the novel, and provides a thorough treatment of the symbolism of the novel.⁹ The existentialist dimension of the novel has been broached by Shelby Steele, in his article "Existentialism in the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah"¹⁰ He, however, merely records some of the existentialist characteristics of the novel. He does not assess the extent of the influence of the philosophy of Existentialism on Armah. Neither does he note the literary importance of the existentialist writer to whom Armah is indebted, namely, Jean-Paul Sartre.¹¹ Unlike Steele, Tommie Lee Jackson has provided a detailed study of the existentialist dimension of the novel in her *The Existential Fiction of Ayi Kwei Armah, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre*.¹² She, however, is careful not to point out any direct influence from these French existentialist writers on Armah.

In this thesis, however, Armah's indebtedness to the French existentialist writers is demonstrated to prove the point that his novel is a syncretic work, and that it is all to his credit to have managed to give Existentialism an African touch. As Ode Ogede remarks in his review of Tommie Lee's book on the influence of Existentialism on Armah, "The project of tracking literary affinities is a most arduous undertaking that has been recognized as such by writers and their critics alike through the ages"¹³ Yet, Ogede considers those who point out Armah's indebtedness to Sartre, Camus, and Fanon as foolish.¹⁴ He notes: "Many have been foolhardy enough to level charges about what they consider to be the direct influence on Armah of such writers as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Frantz Fanon, and others"¹⁵ This seems to be a nativist response, which negates the European literary pattern, even if it is so glaringly evident.¹⁶ This response is suggested by Odege's praising Jackson's work who, as he puts it: "urges the reader to see each of the writers as a very gifted artist"¹⁷ In fact, Armah is a gifted writer and to shed light on his borrowing from Universal literary patterns is by no means an attempt at putting into question his artistic merits.

The existentialist dimension of the novel and its formal and stylistic elaboration account much for the aesthetic quality of *Fragments*. Martin Tucker, however, provides a harsh criticism of its formal quality. He remarks: ‘I think that the novel fails its promise -- the first novel promised more than *Fragments*’¹⁸ Similarly, Margaret Castagno remarks: ‘In some ways, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) is a better novel than *Fragments*’¹⁹ and she goes on to justify her preference for Armah’s first novel stating: ‘The preference for *The Beautiful Ones* requires some explanation. First, it is successfully cast in the traditional novel form, with the story presented from the man's point of view, with other characters introduced only as they impinge on his dilemma. *Fragments* is more experimental.’²⁰ Yet she admits that this novel has some ‘superbly successful’²¹ chapters. Conversely to Tucker and Castagno, Gerald Moore values the aesthetic achievement of *Fragments* better than that of its predecessor. He observes that ‘it will eventually establish itself as superior to *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* in quality, profundity, and originality’²² *Fragments* is, indeed, more stylistically elaborated than Armah’s first novel.

The two novels, however, share some common characteristics. Like *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments* deals with the socio-economic anarchy of post-independence Ghana, the political depravity of the Nkrumah regime, and the consequences of this state of affairs on the individual’s personal experiences. The other major similarity of the two novels lies in their characterisation. The characters of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* have their counterparts in *Fragments*. The Man in the former has Baako as a counterpart in the latter. They both experience existential alienation. ‘The Teacher’ resembles Ocran, Baako’s teacher. Like him, he is a man of high integrity. The corrupt bourgeois man, Koomson has a counterpart in Brempong. They both seek self-aggrandisement. Still, despite their striking similarities, the two novels bear some major differences. Though Armah deals with existential

alienation in both novels, his focus is different in each novel. Whereas, in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, he lays the emphasis on the social aspect of this alienation, in *Fragments*, he stresses its psychological implications. He shows how this alienation leads to mental degeneration. Another difference between the two novels lies in the tone of their ending notes. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* ends on a pessimistic note, nothing has changed after the coup. The Man witnesses a policeman taking a bribe. *Fragments*, on the other hand, ends on a hidden optimism. Armah hints that there is hope for better morrows. This hope is expressed in the song that Juana hears coming from the cathedral, when she visits Baako in the asylum. The song says:

Et expecto
resurrectionem mortuorum
et vitam venturi saeculi. (p. 193) ²³

(=resurrection of the dead, and life in the coming age \emptyset).

This hope in a second coming, which will be accompanied with the millennium, is, again, expressed at the close of the novel. Naana is ready to die. Her death, according to the native philosophy of the =circular way \emptyset (p. 3), will be followed by a rebirth. As Naana puts it: =every one who goes returns \emptyset (p. 3). Hence, Naana's despair at the end of the novel, is mixed with hope. She is not sad at her approaching death since she knows that she will join her ancestors in the world of plenty, and that she may be a cargo-bearer on her homecoming. The overall mood of the novel, despair mixed with hope is summed up in the paragraph that reads:

Over the wall the murmur from the cathedral swelled into a sung phrase that sounded at that distance like one inexorably rising cry, first pure, impossible longing, then the fearful pain of impending disappointment, understood, open sounds of hope continuing in the face of every despair, and a long note of calm at the end. (p. 193)

Besides the difference in their ending notes, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments* are different in that the latter illustrates Armah's new preoccupation with the cultural matrix and with form. The former is noticeable in the introduction of the motif of cultural regeneration, and the latter in Armah's experimentation with structure, through the use of modernist literary techniques such as the stream-of-consciousness.

The story of *Fragments* is about Baako, a 'been-to who comes back home from America, where he has spent five years. He fails to bring the 'cargo' consumer goods, for instance a car. This disappoints his family, especially his mother, Efua, and his sister, Araba, who have been looking forward to his return to benefit from the luxury goods he is expected to bring. They blame him for having failed to fulfil their wishes. Baako has sympathy only from his grandmother, Naana, who unlike the other members of his family is concerned about his safety. It is this concern that makes her insist on performing a proper farewell ritual before his departure. She pours enough wine on the floor for the spirits to get their blessings, and ensure their protection for him while he is away. Baako undergoes humiliation in his professional circle, as a consequence of his inability to bring the 'cargo'. He is looked down upon for not behaving like a 'been-to. He does not wear European suits, and does not possess a car, the common denominators of the 'been-tos. Consequently, Baako is isolated both at home and at work. To overcome the overpowering feeling of loneliness that his isolation entails, Baako seeks refuge in his love affair with Juana, a Puerto-Rican psychiatrist. This relationship brings him a temporary relief that is soon replaced by a despair caused by a strong feeling of guilt. Baako feels guilty for having failed to rise to his family's expectations, and for not adopting the behavioural norms of the Ghanaian *élite*, e.g., seeking self-aggrandizement. The psychological

torment that this feeling causes him and the different pressures put on his frail nerves, bring about his mental collapse. Thus, Baako's mind breaks into 'fragments', hence the link with the title of the novel.

The title symbolises not only the fragmentation of Baako's mind, but that of Naana as well. Like Baako, she can no longer understand what is going on around her. She confesses this by saying: "What have I to wait for, a traveller lingering in a wayside place where things enter uncalled for and break into thirty separate bits the peace of my mind?" (p. 196). The title of the novel refers on a larger scale to the fragmentation and collapse of the Akan traditional culture. This is expressed through Naana's statement: "The larger meaning which lent sense to every small thing and every momentary happening years and years ago has shattered into a thousand and thirty useless pieces" (p. 196). The Fragments of the title, further, represent the fragmentary form of the novel. This is a form that has been induced by the stream-of-consciousness literary technique that Armah adopts. The use of this technique reflects Armah's borrowing from the modernist writers. The pre-eminence of James Joyce as a major exponent of the stream-of-consciousness technique, caused Larson to claim him as an influence on Armah's novel. In his book, *The Emergence of African Fiction* (1972), Charles Larson assumes that Armah is indebted to Joyce as far as the structure of *Fragments* is concerned. Armah rejects this assumption in his article, "Larson or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction" where he affirms that he has "never read even a single work by Joyce. Nothing at all, not even a fragment"²⁴ He claims entire originality for his work, saying: "the organizing idea for *Fragments* ... grew out of a conversation with [my] elder brother concerning the quality of life at home"²⁵

Armah may deny having borrowed from Joyce, but he can hardly deny borrowing the literary techniques of Western modernist literature. There is abundant evidence of this borrowing in *Fragments*. Most of the features of this

novel: montage, the use of different minds as reflectors, and the use of interior monologue are characteristics of Western modernist literature. Armah's borrowing from the Western literary tradition in his first two novels is so great that some critics, e.g., Daniele Stewart, consider him as the most Westernised among the African writers.²⁶

The modernist dimension of the novel appears in its characteristic structural devices and narrative techniques, e.g., the omniscient author-narrator and the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique, and in its existentialist mood. The former appears in the use of the third person 'point of view' as is the case in Chapter 4. The latter is used in the chapters where Armah uses Naana, Juana and Baako as 'reflectors'. This technique has been used by the Western modernist writers to render reality through a character's consciousness. Accordingly, its focal point is man's psyche; herein lays its link with psychology from which the phrase has been borrowed.²⁷ Robert Humphrey²⁸ and Jeremy Hawthorn²⁹ contend that the phrase 'stream-of-consciousness' was originally used by William James. Christopher Heywood, on the other hand, points out that it was 'originally coined by George Henry Lewes',³⁰ and later championed by William James who was, according to him, an admirer of Lewes.

The 'stream-of-consciousness' technique was used in the early Twentieth Century literary works of William Faulkner, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. A major characteristic of this technique is 'interior monologue', which is used to convey the character's spontaneous thoughts and feelings. Another device in this technique is montage,³¹ a device that permits a shift in time and space and a representation of random episodes and images. The use of 'montage' is used in the 'stream-of-consciousness' fiction to reflect the discontinuity of man's thought processes. Man's consciousness goes, at times, from one thought to another with no logical link between them. This shift in thoughts is often caused by

reminiscences, a fact which accounts for the shift in time from the present to the past, caused by external happenings of which a person suddenly becomes conscious: an incident, a person or an object. This consciousness interrupts the ongoing set of thoughts and leads to another one. Man's consciousness is, thus, a series of fragments of random thoughts. The 'stream-of-consciousness' technique is used to reproduce the fragmentary consciousness of Man. In other words, as a result of the novelist's attempt to record accurately Man's mental process, which lacks pattern and order, the novel has a fragmentary structure and lacks time linearity. The 'stream-of-consciousness' technique was commonly used by the modernist writers, e.g., James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

These writers broke with the realist and naturalist literary traditions by rejecting the conventional narrative pattern of their fiction. They experimented with form, using a fragmentary structure, time stratification and digression in narration. They were greatly concerned with the aesthetic standard of the literary work, hence their attention to form. Their novels are characterised by their hero's alienation. He or she is often lonely, unable to indulge in social relations with his or her fellows. Consequently, the modernist hero is often overcome by *angst* and prone to neurosis. This emphasis on the subjective aspect of their characters' experience had exposed them to a harsh criticism mainly from Marxist scholars, such as Georg Lukacs. They were blamed for busying themselves with the exploration of Man's inner self, when it was his outer self, his social reality, the reality of a society in turmoil after The First World War that needed to be probed to be improved. The modernist writers have been accused of fleeing reality and adopting neurotic and escapist attitudes. Although this was their way of protesting against the established order, it was, however, deemed negative, notably by Lukacs who observed:

Protest expressed by this flight into psychopathology is an abstract gesture ... It is a gesture moreover, that is destined to lead nowhere; it is an escape into nothingness. Thus the propagators of this ideology are mistaken in thinking that such a protest could be fruitful in Literature.³²

Lukacs assumed that their literary mode destroys art. He maintained: "We see that modernism leads not only to the destruction of traditional literary forms. It leads to the destruction of literature as such."³³ And he goes on to say: "We have here a practical demonstration that - as Benjamin showed in another context - modernism means not the enrichment, but the negation of art."³⁴ But James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for instance, points another way. It shows that the modernist writers have enriched art by enriching the structure and form of their works.

Like the modernist writers, whose techniques he has borrowed, Armah is preoccupied with form in *Fragments*. The aspects of modernist literature that appear in this novel are: capital signals, indented writing, and the reproduction of material from other literary sources. Capital signals are used in the names of the streets, e.g., AVENUE DE SUFFREN (p. 51), and restaurants: LES TROIS SOLEILS (p. 40). Indented writing is used, for instance, in the presentation of Akosua's poem (p. 112). An example of the reproduction of material from other sources is the song "So many days I ask myself" (p. 73). The modernist influence is, further, apparent in Armah's handling of the time factor. There are shifts forward and backward in time mostly because of the use of the "stream-of-consciousness" technique.

The major difference between Armah and the modernist writers lies in his concern for the predicament of the working class. Hawthorn maintains that the modernist writers have "cultivated a disregard of the proletarian class interest."³⁵ The other issue over which Armah and the modernist writers are at odds is that of culture. In *Fragments*, Armah is preoccupied with the rehabilitation of his

traditional culture and its preservation. In the modernist novels, there is, on the other hand, a hatred of culture³⁶ Hence, though Armah's novel meets with some criteria of the modernist novel, it cannot be classified within the category of modernist literature, since it differs from the latter in its ideological preoccupation and subject-matter. In the main, *Fragments* may be considered a synthesis of Realism and Modernism.

Unlike the other African Anglophone writers, Armah came under the French rather than the English literary tradition. Though his indebtedness to French literature is obvious in his early writings, Yunga Teghen fails to notice it. He contends that many of Armah's works appear to be devoid of any French-backed theories and ... show little or no connection with Francophone writing³⁷ The influence of Camus is striking in *Why Are We So Blest?* and so is that of Sartre in *Fragments*. The Sartrean influence is both literary and philosophical. *Fragments* shares common literary features with Sartre's *Nausea*, and fits the intellectual paradigms of Existentialism, e.g., hopelessness and a pessimistic view of life.

Existentialist pessimism pervades the novel. The feelings of hopelessness, and nothingness are overpowering. Juana finds her life meaningless. Armah writes: "She searched herself for something that might make sense, but there was nothing she could believe in, nothing that wouldn't just be high flight of the individual alone, escaping the touch of life around him. That way she knew there was annihilation" (pp. 190-191). This desire to flee reality is a symptom of existential alienation, the major motif of existentialist writing. In *Fragments*, the influence of Existentialism is noticeable in Baako's use of writing as self-therapy. Like the existentialist heroes, Baako finds temporary relief from his psychological torment in self-expression. The episode where he feverishly spills out his thoughts about the cargo cult, on paper (pp. 156-157), is a case in point. After finishing his

writing, Baako experiences a relaxing feeling: he could not stop writing till he had caught the fugitive thought and put it down, and then he relaxed thankfully on the bed ...ø(p. 158).

The use of writing to flee reality and the painful awareness of its futility is, again, expressed in the statement: ÆA fractured thought crossed his mind. The urge to trap it before it disappeared made him forget the general pain in his bodyø (p. 156). Similarly to the adepts of Existentialism, Baako records his thoughts haphazardly. He attempts to record them before reason intervenes to classify them in a logical sequence. This technique expresses the existentialist paradigm that ÆExistenceø i.e., anxiety, precedes ÆEssenceø i.e., thought. The existentialist principle of the individualø freedom of choice is adopted in *Fragments*. Ocran advises Baako to choose what he wants to do regardless of other peopleø judgements (pp. 191-192). The basic thesis of Existentialism which maintains that Man creates his essence through his act is reproduced in *Fragments* in the inscription that Baako notices on a wall in Paris. It reads:

TOUT HOMME CREE SANS LE SAVOIR
 COMME IL RESPIRE
 MAIS LøARTISTE SE SENT CREER
 SON ACT ENGAGE TOUT SON ETRE
 SA PEINE BIEN AIMEE LE FORTIFIE (p. 51).³⁸

This idea of the artist creating his essence through his act is one of the motifs of Sartreø novel *Nausea*, which has served as a literary model to Armah.

Nausea, published as *La Nausée* in 1938, is a novel where Sartre has put the theories of Existentialism in practice. It explores the relationship that exists between Manø consciousness of himself and that of the world around him. Its main theme is Manø existential alienation, an alienation characterised by a feeling of nothingness caused by an acute awareness of the absurdity of life. Sartreø protagonist experiences this kind of alienation, of which nausea is a physical

symptom, a fact that explains the choice of the title of the novel. The story of *Nausea* revolves round the life of Antoine Roquentin, a solitary intellectual who comes to Bouville, a fictional town in France, to write a study of Mr Robellon, a nobleman of the late eighteenth century. Roquentin gives up this task when he becomes conscious of the superfluity and meaninglessness of life. Reflecting on daily events, he realises that life is 'contingent' and that it has no ordered pattern. Through different personal experiences, he discovers that objects, a piece of paper, a glass, have acquired an existence of their own. This makes him feel deprived of his freedom, and brings him spiritual torment, *angst*, and physical discomfort, nausea. Roquentin finds temporary psychological relief when he listens to a song entitled 'Some of These Days', composed by a Jew and sung by a Black woman.³⁹ The song makes him realise that unlike life, art has an ordered pattern and an everlasting value, and that it is ideal since it transcends existence. Roquentin, who thinks that the singer and the composer have justified their existence through their art, comes to the conclusion that art is the only remedy to Man's existential alienation. He decides to write a novel to redeem himself from his 'sinful' existence and to acquire the 'essence' he lacks.

This attempt to acquire an 'essence' through art is made by Armand's protagonist in *Fragments*. Baako writes film scripts. Structurally, Sartre's *Nausea* and Armand's *Fragments* have much in common. In both novels, indented writing is used, e.g., the songs. In *Nausea* the rhythm of the song is:

Some of these days
You'll miss me honey!⁴⁰

In *Fragments*, it is echoed in:

If you didn't love me dear
Why didn't you let me know? (p. 93)

In both novels, the stream of consciousness technique is used, and in both, there is a mixture of different modes: realism, surrealism and modernism. Realism appears in both writers' detailed descriptions of setting and action. They, for instance, provide the names of streets. Modernism is apparent in the use of the stream-of-consciousness technique. The two writers record the thoughts of their protagonists, and reproduced their inner dialogues. Surrealism is noticeable in the reproduction of material from other literary sources. In *Nausea*, Sartre reproduces some passages from Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*. In *Fragments*, Armah reproduces the statement of Dr Aggrey⁴¹: 'I am a brand plucked from the fire'⁴² slightly modifying it, using the term 'burning' (p. 147) instead of 'fire'.

Besides these similarities in technique and structure, *Nausea* and *Fragments* have protagonists who share character traits and predicaments. Similarly to Roquentin, Baako is alienated from his society and is assailed by a loneliness that causes him a great psychological torment. Like him, he is often overcome by nausea, and keeps a diary in which he records his thoughts and feelings to avoid psychic degeneration. Again, like Roquentin, Baako gets moral support from his girl friend, and relies on her to save him from neurosis. Their girl-friends experience the same feeling of nothingness as them, but they are less vulnerable. On thematic grounds, the similarity between Sartre's novel and Armah's lies in their condemnation of the bourgeoisie. Roquentin despises the bourgeoisie for their ill-faith. He maintains that their moral values, which he finds hypocritical, have been established by them to mask the emptiness of their existence. Similarly, Baako scorns the bourgeoisie of his country. He remarks that they attempt to make up for the emptiness of their lives by an 'outward show of power' (p. 62), particularly, by displaying their luxurious material acquisitions. In the main, the major thematic similarity between *Nausea* and *Fragments* is existential alienation.

Though these two novels bear major similarities, they also bear sharp discrepancies. The two novels, firstly, differ in their structural pattern. *Nausea* has the form of a diary, whereas *Fragments* has the structure of a novel. Besides, the former is divided into blocks according to time sequence, using the days of the week or the time of the day as headings to these blocks. The latter is divided into sections that form its numbered chapters. The two novels, further, differ in their use of language. The language used by Sartre in *Nausea* is relatively less complex and abstract than the language used by Armah in *Fragments*. Armah's language in chapter One and Thirteen, and that of Baako's scripts is densely packed with symbolic themes.

Most importantly, the two novels differ in their protagonists' attitudes to certain issues. Their attitude to the past is an important point of difference. Roquentin thinks that the past does not exist, and that it is irrelevant to the present. This is his reason for giving up his research on Robellon. Baako, on the other hand, lays emphasis on the importance of the past and its relevance to the present. He wants to recreate the past in his script, *The Root Again*. Roquentin and Baako differ in their attitude to art. The former considers works of art as ideal since they transcend existence, i.e., reality. His concern is for their aesthetic value. The latter, on the other hand, wants art to be rooted in reality, and to be functional. Thus, the one is for *art-for-art's sake*⁴³, whereas the other is for committed art. Moreover, Roquentin and Baako's attitude to existence is different. Roquentin rejects existence, which he considers as sinful. He wants to write a novel that will make people ashamed of their existence. Baako, on the other hand, works for the betterment of existence. He wants to teach people how to improve their life.

Humanism is yet another issue about which the two protagonists are at odds. Roquentin rejects humanism, since he considers it as an ineffective remedy to Man's alienation.⁴⁴ Baako adopts it and undertakes a humanitarian task when he

attempts to arouse the masses' awareness of their socio-political predicament. This is a task that Fanon expected the African intellectual to assume. On the whole, these ideological differences between the two protagonists indicate Armah's departure from the Sartrean Existentialism of *Being and Nothingness* that *Nausea* embodies. They, besides, bear witness to the influence of Fanonism. This scheme of ideas had its roots in Sartre's existentialist philosophy, but departed from its inertia and aestheticism, since it insisted on action. Again, whereas Sartre⁴⁵ overlooks the impact of social reality on Man's consciousness and holds him responsible for his own alienation, Fanon considers Man's social conditions as the major cause of his alienation. This Fanonian vision of man's alienation is adopted by Armah. Like Fanon, he sees Man's existential alienation as a consequence of historical and social determinism. He lays the emphasis on the social causes of Baako's alienation. He suggests that Baako undergoes alienation, not because of some flaws inherent in his own personality, but because of the defects of his society, notably, greed and corruption.

This deterministic view of alienation has a Marxist connotation. In fact, the alienation Baako experiences both at home and in his office can be explained in terms of the Marxist concept of estrangement. At home, he experiences alienation through exploitation, by his own family. His home is, thus, a microcosm of capitalist exploitation. Both his mother and sister exploit him by collecting the harvest of his toil, a case of capitalist expropriation. Baako confesses to Juana that his family has 'real demands' (p. 102). His mother expects him to finance the building of the house she has started before his return. In his work circle, he experiences two forms of alienation that can be defined in Marxist terms as: alienation through 'commodity fetishism' and class alienation. As regards the former, Marx maintains that the worker, in a capitalist economy, experiences alienation because his product appears alien to him, once it is finished. The films made out of Baako's scripts seem alien to him, since, through

censorship, they undergo some modifications. Baako experiences class alienation in his work, because he is rejected by his middle class colleagues. Though his professional status entitles him to belong to their class, they make him an outcast because he refuses to conform to the behavioural norms of the middle class, e.g., to dress luxuriously and drive expensive cars. Besides, he is exploited at his work. He is compelled to do an energy-consuming task, to write scripts, whereas his colleagues do relaxing jobs, and spend most of their time travelling (p.132). Another force that contributes to Baako's social alienation is his Western education. It makes him feel estranged from the illiterate masses he wants to educate. In presenting Baako along these lines, Armah emphasises the socio-economic and historical forces leading to existential alienation. In the main, the novel explores a moral drama, framed in ideas taken partly from Sartre, partly from Marx and partly from Fanon. Nevertheless, Armah's individuality as a literary artist is stamped on the novel, through his adaptation of the existentialist ethics to an African-centred world-view.

Besides its existentialist dimension, *Fragments* has a strong symbolic dimension. This dimension has been granted special attention by Joe Lurie, in his *Fragments Between the Loved Ones and the Community*. But his treatment of the symbolism of the novel is, at times, exaggerated. This is the case when he attempts to find a symbolic explanation to some events that seem to be realistic ones, since they often occur in one's daily life. Take as an instance the explanation he gives of the two ducks in the pond in Paris, which he regards as anticipating Baako's madness. He writes: "The momentary violence of the duck's departure prefigures Baako's insanity, his separation from Juana who remains in the water in a society that has little to give"⁴⁶ The incident might simply have been witnessed by Armah himself, while in Paris. The other incident that Lurie sees as symbolic of Baako's madness is that of the killing of the rabid dog. This, again, might have been an incident that Armah witnessed, since in 1967, when Armah

started writing his novel, there were many rabid dogs in Ghana.⁴⁷ It seems that Lurie, bearing in mind Armah's extensive use of symbolism in his first novel, has taken it for granted that all the incidents of the novel have symbolic connotations.

But some of the outstanding symbolic events of the novel have been disregarded by Lurie. This is the case of the boy's predicament, in Chapter 6, which symbolises Baako's. The boy who sings for the fishermen, offering them a piece of their traditional culture, is silenced by them because they reject that culture since it goes counter to their material strivings. Baako who was appalled at the ill-treatment of the boy remarks: "that boy, he was giving them something they did not have" (p. 129). Like the boy, Baako is silenced by the "big shots" of Ghana, who do not want him to remind them of their traditional culture, since its principles are antithetical with their self-interests. They silence him by rejecting his scripts, which have a cultural bias. Again, like the boy who does not bring any fish from his trip, Baako does not bring the cargo. Another symbolic event that has been overlooked by the critics of the novel is the destruction of the television set. This event symbolises the shattering of Baako's vision of a better future for the masses. Baako has expected the television to contribute to the awakening of the masses' revolutionary consciousness, through didactic films made out of his scripts.

These scripts express Baako's commitment to social reform allegorically. Their intended didacticism seems, however, hampered by the extensive use of abstract symbolism. The message of the films made out of them will most certainly be as incomprehensible for the masses it is aimed at, as would be an impressionist painting or a surrealist poem. In the script entitled "The Roots" which illustrates the slavery era, the White men are symbolically referred to as: "LINEAR. SHARP-EDGED PILLARS" (p. 146), and the Blacks as: "VAGUE FLUID FORMS ... CIRCULAR" (p. 146). In the other script, "The Brand" which

dramatises the plight of the masses in modern Ghanaian society, different geometrical forms are used to symbolise different groups of people. There is a circle and a square. The circle represents the masses and the square the *élite*. The circle is weak and dark. Its darkness symbolises the misery in which the common people live. The square is strong and white. Its whiteness represents the comfort and welfare of the middle class. The square is above the circle. Its inhabitants have reached it by using the shoulders of their countrymen from the circle. This may be seen as symbolising the exploitation of the masses by the bourgeoisie. Among the climbers, there is the hero who attempts to fool the masses, whose shoulders he is using as steps, by claiming that his march upwards towards the square is an attempt to achieve their liberation. This is an indirect reference to the Ghanaian rulers who attempted, on the morrows of independence, to deceive the masses by telling them that they were working for their welfare, while they were busy with self-aggrandisement projects. Once he has reached the square, the hero has changed his objectives and has given up his role of *Osagyefo*, i.e., saviour. This symbolically refers to Nkrumah's betrayal of his people. Like the hero, he gradually changed his principles and his attitude towards them.

In this script, Baako points to different people's attitudes to the existing socio-economic order. He uses different persons to represent different groups. There is the old man who refuses to serve as a step to those who are climbing towards the square, and therefore he lies flat. He represents the traditionalist elders who refuse to conform to the new order. He is, like Naana, gifted with foresight. He knows that once the hero reaches the top, a high social position and belongs to the middle class, he will never come down to join the masses. The second protagonist of the script is the middle-aged man who sees the solution to the existing situation in the encouragement of mass-climbing towards the square and the destruction of the circle, i.e., the poor class. The third actor is the weeping old woman who is ignored by all. She warns about the extermination of the poor, i.e.,

the circle, by the rich, i.e., the square. She represents the Naanas, those who stand for traditional culture, and who campaign for the return of communalism.

The fourth actor of Baako's script is the angry woman. She occasionally wakes up from the lethargy into which she has fallen through despair, to call for the destruction of the square. This woman represents the common people who often are submissive to their fate, but who, at times, become aware of the necessity to act against their exploiters. The fifth actor is the thinker, i.e., the intellectual, who is rebellious in theory, but idle in practice. This man represents the revolutionary intellectual who preaches revolutionary action but remains passive. He adopts the Marxist view of the internal contradictions of capitalism. He believes that the square will be defeated by its own forces. The two choruses of the script, the circle and the square, represent respectively, the working class and the middle class. The people of the circle are in a state of despondency because of their destitution, and those of the square are in a state of buoyancy because of their opulence. On the whole, this script expresses Armah's revolutionary didacticism.

The other script, *The Root*, expresses Armah's cultural didacticism. It is a re-enactment of the slave trade. Armah attempts to recreate the slave trade episode to remind his people of their forebears' misfortune at the hands of the Whites. This is mostly done with the purpose of reviving their hatred of the Whites and developing their mistrust of the latter. Through his recreation of the past, Armah seems to suggest that lessons can be learnt from it, mostly from past bitter experiences. In the main, in this script, whose title is quite significant, Armah prompts his people to look for their roots. Through the script, he makes Baako carry out the task of cultural retrieval, as he, himself, does in his later novels.

A formal aspect of the novel which underscores the importance of this task is the time sequence. It is often cyclic to reproduce the traditional African conception of time. This conception is expressed through Naana's statement: 'EACH THING that goes returns ...' (p. 1), and her reference to the sun that goes 'down times unending toward the night only to come again from the opposite way' (p. 1). K.H. Petersen associates the cyclic pattern of time in the novel with the African world view, and he associates the linear time sequence with the Western one. He notes: 'This mechanical arrangement of chapters into two time sequences coincides with the two major - and opposing - world views in the book, which could be described as the traditional African and the modern Western outlook respectively'⁴⁸

The time sequence in *Fragments* is not steady. It varies according to the development of action. At moments of drama, a quick action is described slowly, at length. Accordingly, there is a difference between 'narrated' and 'narrating'⁴⁹ time. In other words, the time of the narration is not equal to the time an event takes to occur, from start to finish. This is illustrated in the time sequence of the incident on the jetty, when Skido rushes with his truck towards the jetty to get a place on the ferry, and falls into the sea. The time the incident takes to occur is not proportional to that used by the writer to describe it. Skido's accident probably took a few seconds to occur. Armah, however, makes the reader take a longer time to experience it. He describes the event in two pages, a relatively long reading time for such a quick action. The pace of the movement of time differs from one action to another within the same episode. This is the case in Chapter 6, where the slow pace of time is matched with the rhythm of the narrative, when the author's lens is focused on the protagonists in the sea, but becomes quicker when the focus is on the fishermen bringing their canoe to the shore. Another instance of the slow time movement is the episode where Baako is at the airport in France. There, Armah describes all the customs formalities that Baako goes through, and

provides a detailed description of the setting. In the main, the difference between *narrated* and *narrating* time often arises out of the minutely detailed description of the incidents.

The structure of the novel is complex. The chapters appear as non-related fragments, especially the first three ones. The link between them becomes clearer as the novel takes shape by Chapter Four. The plot centres round two antagonistic forces, the forces of good and evil, representing respectively, uprightness and immorality, e.g., corruption. Some critics have pointed out the juxtaposition of contrasts in the novel. Charles Nnolim gives, as an instance, Baako and Brempong's welcome at the airport. Edward Lobb sees the juxtaposition in *opposed images ... (isolation/contact, fragmentation/order, blindness/sight)*⁵⁰ Yet no critic has pinpointed how the tension between positive and negative actions of the novel is reflected in the fragmentary structure of the novel.

Most chapters of the novel embody two events, one of which is violent, and around which the action centres. In Chapter 2, the violent incident is the killing of the dog and the peaceful incident is the women's baptism in the sea. In Chapter 4, the violent event is Bukari's fight in the bar, and the opposite event is Araba's childbirth. In Chapter 5, the violent incident is Boateng's clash with the American writer, the peaceful event is Baako's first meeting with Juana, whom he visits for a psychiatric check-up. The violent incident in Chapter 6 is the brutal mistreatment of the child by the fisherman. It is juxtaposed with the event of Baako's and Juana's peaceful rest by the seaside. In Chapter 8, the violent event is the two men's fight over the T.V. set, its peaceful parallel is Baako's relief after burning his scripts. The violent incident of Chapter 9 is Baako's victimisation by those who attempted to capture him, to take him to an asylum. The opposite incident is Baako's recording of his thoughts on the *cargo cult*. These paired events form a symmetrical design running through the text.

This symmetry reappears in the characterization of the novel. There are antithetically paired types of protagonists who can be classified as positive or negative characters according to their moral or immoral behaviour. In Chapter 1, the positive character is Naana. She wants to perform a proper farewell ritual for Baako. Her negative counterpart is Foli, Baako's uncle, who wants to cheat the spirits. He pours a small quantity of schnapps on the floor for them, and keeps the remainder for himself. In Chapter 2, the positive character is the little child, who attempts to save his dog's life. His opposite is the man who kills the dog. Baako is the positive protagonist of Chapter 3. He is an honest citizen, since he does not use his professional status to enrich himself, as it is commonly the case. Brempong is his negative counterpart. He is a corrupt person who practises nepotism. The positive character of Chapter 4 is Ocran, a man of high integrity, whereas the negative person is the Principal Secretary who indulges in corrupt practices.

In Chapter 5, Boateng is the positive character. He is victim of the unscrupulous Akosua Russell, who is his negative counterpart. She exploits young artists by using their works for her own profit. The positive character in Chapter 6 is the child who attempts through his song to remind the fishermen of their culture. His negative counterpart is the fisherman who beats him, a symbolic attempt to reject the cultural values that the child proposes. In Chapter 8, there is, again, an encounter between Baako, the positive character, and Brompeng, the negative one. The latter goes past Baako in his Mercedes, a fruit of his corruption, and does not stop for him, though he waves to him. In Chapter 11, Naana represents the positive person. She cares for Araba's child's safety. She wants the outdoor ceremony to be held in accordance with the customary laws so that the child's life would be saved. The negative person is Efua, whose greed for material gain is apparent in the way she extracts money from her guests, during the outdoor ceremony.

These two kinds of characters represent the two classes in Ghanaian society, the rich and the poor class. The antagonism between the positive and the negative characters in the novel represents the conflict that exists between these two social classes. The wealthy class is represented by the negative characters whose material welfare has been achieved through unscrupulous means. The poor class is represented by the positive characters whose integrity is an impediment to the improvement of their social status. Besides representing the oppressed class, the positive characters, who are endowed with a high morality, serve the main motifs of the novel. Baako exemplifies the existential alienation motif and that of the social reformation. Naana is an agent of the cultural regeneration motif, and Juana is that of racial retrieval. She serves the motif of historical reconstruction, since she is the offspring of a slave, slavery being an important aspect of this motif.

Baako, the major protagonist of the novel, is an anti-hero. Unlike the classical hero archetype, for example, Ulysses in Homer's *The Odyssey*, he comes out defeated from his struggle with the external forces that confront him. These are presented as the forces of a capitalist society. Baako's downfall is, in fact, anticipated by the reader from the opening chapters of the novel. The cold welcome he receives at the airport, noticeable first in the attitude of the customs officer who makes ironical remarks about the scarcity of his belongings (p. 56), gives a clue about the hardships Baako is to encounter for being the odd-one-out. Unlike most *been-tos*, a type illustrated by Brempong, he does not bring home as many Western consumer goods as expected by his relatives. Baako's possessions at his return amount to a guitar, a symbol of the foreign culture he has acquired, some books and a type writer, the symbols of his intellectual status.

Baako's downfall is partly due to his failure to realise, before coming back home, how materialistic his society has become. He has failed to realise that

what matters most to his people is not his knowledge, since it is abstract for them, but the concrete evidence of his being a *been-to*, for example the ownership of an imported car. Baako's return without the *cargo* is disgraceful for his family. But they regain hope, for they expect him to get a job and improve their standard of living. His family expects him to use his position to enrich himself and to increase their wealth, a common practice among the high-ranked civil servants. Baako is aware of this, since he tells Juana that the *been-to* is *supposed* to get rich, mainly at the expense of the community (p. 103). Baako refuses to adopt this attitude, since it goes against his principles. Thus, he finds himself in a dilemma. He is torn between loyalty to his country and loyalty to his family. He is, however, not as Martin Tucker sees him: *torn* between the values of the old and the new.⁵¹ It is rather Naana who is torn between these values.

In fact, Baako has scant knowledge of the traditional values. He confesses to Naana that he does not understand the *outdoor* ceremony (p. 97). This is meant as a statement about the intellectual and cultural alienation of the *been-to*. Baako's attitude toward his traditional culture is ambiguous. He, for instance, opposes the practice of the *outdoor* ceremony. He asks Araba to *give up* the stupid outdoor ceremony (p. 86). This bears witness to his rejection of traditional customs. Yet his willingness to use components of his traditional culture like myths, legends and images, in his scripts, indicates his keenness to revive it. Kofi Anyidoho defines this attempt at retrieving traditional cultural patterns in art as the *sankofa* principle, which is related to *the* mythological figure of *Sankofa*: ancient proverbial Akan bird, constantly reaching back into the past even as it flies sky-bound into a future of great expectations, mindful always that an incautious leap into the future could easily lead to a sudden collapse of dreams.⁵² Baako's attempt at reviving his traditional culture also appears in his use of the traditional dress, the *batakari* (p. 182). The purpose of this act is twofold. Firstly, it asserts the African identity which he had lost while in America.

Secondly, it is a protest against the 'been-to' stereotype and his habit of wearing suits, the conventional Western dress.

As the story unfolds, the reader witnesses Baako's gradual development from an optimistic character, confident in his ability to bring about social changes by educating the masses, to a disillusioned person whose despair verges on nihilism. At his return home, Baako has wanted to make up for the emptiness that surrounds him by a total dedication to his task of social reformer. But his experience at Ghanavision, where any attempt towards social progress is stifled, has made him realise the absurdity of his choice. His idleness after he quits Ghanavision makes his psychological torment even greater. The feeling of emptiness that this situation generates in him, together with his awareness of having been a failure, make him sink in the whirlpool of nothingness. Like the 'intellectual hero', he 'blames himself of his own futility'⁵³ His feeling of guilt precipitates his neurosis.

Baako gets moral support from Juana, whose presence gives him enough courage to cope with the situation. Her absence, on the other hand, sharpens his feelings of loneliness and insecurity. Baako reaches the climax of his neurosis and is admitted to a mental hospital, when she is away. In the asylum, Baako, who lives in retrospect the events of his experience since his coming back to Ghana, achieves an understanding of the causes of his downfall. He comes to realise that these have been: his inability to bring the 'cargo' and his non-conformity to the 'been-to' behavioural pattern. He, thus, comes to the conclusion that opportunist people, who like Brempong adopt the 'cargo' mentality, are right. He acknowledges having been a fool for rejecting the current state of affairs, and for having clung to his moral principles, at a time when morality is associated with insanity. As Kofi Owusu remarks in *Fragments*, there is a 'functional definition of madness as 'anti-social' conduct'⁵⁴

Baako's recognition that the cargo mentality is the right behavioural norm is considered by Rosemarie Colmer as indicative of his insanity. She remarks: 'That he is insane, not sanely visionary, and this point is made clear by his insistence on his own fault and the correctness of the cargo mentality. This is insanity'⁵⁵ But Baako appears as perfectly sane. He has come to understand his people's mentality more profoundly and has come to the conclusion that honesty does not pay off in an unscrupulously society. Baako who has learnt, through his bitter experience, that any attempt at salvation is doomed to failure and that immorality is the key to social success, will most probably renounce his role of 'Osagyefo' when he leaves the hospital. Colmer, on the other hand, suggests that he will 'live to write the truth again'⁵⁶ In the main through Baako's predicament, his victimisation because of his integrity, Armah attempts to denounce the immorality of his society. He often uses him as a mouthpiece to indict the behavioural norms of the Ghanaian *élite*.

The other character that Armah often uses as a mouthpiece is Naana. She is a major protagonist, since two chapters are devoted to her, and she opens and closes the novel. Being the custodian of native culture, she is a key figure of the cultural motif of the novel. Naana is blind, but she is gifted with foresight. She foresees Baako's downfall well before his coming back home. In Chapter 1, she refers to Araba's and Efua's dream of material goods which 'will load [Baako's] spirit down' (p. 2). Naana also foresees the death of Araba's child. Again, she is, unlike her people, clairvoyant about the destructive forces of modern society. Armah symbolically suggests that it is not Naana who is blind, but her people. Naana herself suggests this: 'If I see a thing which all around me think they do not see, why will I in my foolishness shout against the strength of their unseeing eyes?' (p. 2).

Naana is at odds with her relatives on matters of principles. The traditional moral principles she adopts, and which she wants them to follow, go counter to their materialistic strivings. Consequently, she is rejected by them. But her rejection is by implication a rejection of their traditional culture. Like Naana, this culture is considered as a burden to be done away with. Naana is made a fool of for conforming to the principles of a culture which, in her relatives' view, has become out of place. Yet she does not give in to their attacks, neither does she renounce her principles. In fact, the greater their offences, e.g., Foli's violation of the libation customary rule, the more tenaciously she clings to her traditional culture. On the whole, Naana has an impressive personality. Her humane attitude towards Araba's child, and her compassion for Baako win her the reader's sympathy.

Martin Tucker, on the other hand, sees Naana as a negative character. He remarks: "The grandmother's faith in *Fragments* is not convincing. The book begins and ends with her; she is a completely passive character. Watching the downfall of the hero, her grandson, she does not offer an alternative."⁵⁷ Contrary to Tucker's assumption, Naana's faith is strong. Her strong faith in her traditional lore is justified by her many attempts to be the preserver of this lore. Witness her insistence on Baako's having a proper farewell ritual, and her earnest concern for the performance of the "outdooring ceremony" in accordance with traditional customary laws. Besides, Naana is not a passive character out of personal choice. She is compelled to assume a passive role by her relatives. She is not given any chance to have a say in matters related to household management. For instance, she is not consulted about the date of the "outdooring ceremony" a decision which, according to traditional custom, should be hers, on account of her status of elder. Again, Tucker expects Naana to save Baako. This is hardly within her powers since she is, herself, in a similar plight. Similarly to Baako, she is

marginalised, and like him, she experiences a strong feeling of alienation. This accounts for her readiness to die at the close of the novel.

Through Naana's predicament, Armah attempts to show that social alienation is the lot of all those who adopt the principle of integrity, be they intellectuals, like Baako, or illiterate, like Naana. The latter's integrity shows in her disapproval of Efuah's dishonest attempt to make of 'the outdoor ceremony' an occasion of personal profit. In the main Naana epitomises the moral values of traditional life. Armah uses her character to give his Ghanaian readers lessons in morality. Through her character, he suggests that the remedy to the immorality of modern Ghanaian life is to be found in the traditional life, the 'Way' as he calls it. Hence, Armah calls for a cultural retrieval, through Naana, who serves the 'return-to the source' motif of the novel.

This motif is also served by Juana, whose coming to Africa can be interpreted as a dramatization of Marcus Garvey's 'Back-to-Africa' campaign.⁵⁸ Like Naana and Baako, Juana is overwhelmed by a sense of alienation. She does not feel at home in her new country of adoption. She is, at times, made to feel a stranger, as it is the case of the attitude of the nurse towards her (p. 13). Juana, who has come to Ghana to escape the loneliness and frustration that the failure of her marriage has engendered in her, is faced with an even more frustrating experience there. She has expected to achieve moral relief through her job, by devoting her efforts to the resolution of other people's emotional problems. But the hardships she encounters both in her professional and social life intensify her spiritual torment and her disillusionment. Her efforts to salvage people prove to be in vain, since the harshness of their society impedes their cure. Juana realises that it is their environment that has to be changed. Here, Armah makes her endorse Fanon's views about alienation and psychic disorders. Fanon who explores the

psychological problems of the colonised people in *Black Skin White Masks*, puts forward the thesis that it is not the patient that has to be cured but his society.

Juana gradually becomes aware of the hopelessness of the situation. Some incidents like the killing of the dog (p. 19), or Skidoø's death (p. 137), or again the destitution she sees in the countryside during her tour with Baako, make her realise that salvation is a difficult achievement in that country. She realises that it is even more so if the task is carried out in soloø Juana confesses this to Ocran, saying: "Salvation is an empty thing when you're aloneø (p. 194). However, though Juana is aware of this, she is willing to go on with her task as the saviour of the victims of modern Ghanaian society. Her return to Ghana is a testimony to this willingness. Thus, unlike Baako, she is not a defeatist. She does not renounce her role of "Osagyefoø She is less emotionally vulnerable than her lover, and has a stronger personality.

Like Juana, most female characters of the novel are endowed with a strong personality. They are determined to play an important role in their family or professional circle, and they have a strong will to achieve their goals. This is the case of Efua, Araba and Akosua. These women often have a domineering attitude towards their male companions. Efua makes Foli fulfil her requirements. Likewise, Araba has a strong hold on her husband, Kwesi, whom she compels to do whatever she requires. Note his resignation to her will about the "outdooring ceremonyø Akosua's patronising attitude towards men is apparent in the way she treats Boateng (p. 111). These women are also characterised by their eloquence. They are shrewd and know how to appeal to their audience to achieve their ends, mainly material gains. This is the case of Efua who, through her witty diplomacy, has made her guests contribute big donations during the "outdooring ceremonyø Similarly, Akosua knows how to persuade young writers to entrust her with their

works for publication. She advertises their works to publishers and gets some profits in return on the transactions.

These women are often ready to use any weapon available to them to satisfy their material greed. Among these materialist women, the only one who morally changes for the better, in the course of plot development, is Efua. Towards the close of the novel, she changes, from a greedy unscrupulous woman to a highly moral person. For instance, during her trip with Baako to her unfinished house, she admits having sinned by expecting her son to use his professional status to improve her social standard. In other words, she expresses remorse for having attempted to make her son use corrupt practises as a means to enrich himself and his family, and begs him for forgiveness. Hence, at the end of the novel, Efua comes to be associated with the group of morally positive characters, Baako and Ocran. By making Efua spiritually change for the better, Armah suggests that there is a possibility to redeem modern Ghanaian society of the spiritual decadence it undergoes. Thus, unlike *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments* ends on the hope of an eventual cure of the Ghanaians from material greed and corruption. So, whereas in his first novel Armah considered getting his society rid of corruption a hopeless case, in his subsequent novel, he regained faith in his ability to do so. In the main, through his morally positive characters, Armah attempts to drive a message home to his Ghanaian audience.

Though Ocran, Baako's ex-teacher, makes a brief appearance, he is a major character. He serves the motif of the impotence of the revolutionary artist, an impotence caused by the prevailing corruption. Ocran resembles Soyinka's Kola in *The Interpreters*. Like him, he is repelled by the corruption he sees around him, but cannot do anything to curtail it. Consequently, he takes refuge in art. Being deprived of the opportunity to voice his discontent openly, Ocran uses an artistic medium, moulding, to express his allegiances and feelings, in a discreet

way. The frustrating feelings that the awareness of his country's social conditions engenders in him are expressed in the faces he moulds. Ocran is a person who is greatly concerned about his moral principles. Though he knows high-ranked civil servants, he does not use his connections, as is the common practice, to get a better job. He indulges in nepotism only once, to help Baako, and he feels self-repulsion for doing it.

Unlike Ocran, Brempong is presented as an immoral character. He is a stereotype of the successful 'been-to' by the standards of the Ghanaian 'cargo' mentality. He comes back home with a lot of Western luxury goods, he owns cars and wears woollen suits, in accordance with the 'been-to' pattern. Brempong is one of those opportunist intellectuals who use their professional status to enrich themselves. His Mercedes-Benz is a testimony to his corruption, for being a civil servant, he could certainly not afford this expensive car through legal gain. He represents the 'comprador bourgeoisie' since he assumes the role of an intermediary between the Westerners and his fellows. This role appears in his attempts to export his country's wealth in exchange for luxury goods from European countries. On the whole, Brempong epitomises the Ghanaian corrupt middle class.

The victims of this class, the common masses, are epitomised by Skido. He is one of the many people for whom 'OBRA YE KO' 'LIFE IS WAR' (p. 24). Skido is a martyr of this war. He dies in an attempt to save his cargo, which was his means of subsistence. Fearing a financial loss, which would be entailed if the food he was transporting decomposed through long storage in his lorry, he rushes towards the jetty in an attempt to secure a place on the ferry. But he ends up in the sea. Skido's death symbolises the sacrifice that should be performed to the modern money mongers. In the main, despite the important role he is given by Armah, i.e., to represent the exploited masses, Skido is a mere stereotype. He is

not a fully developed individual. This is also the case of Brempong and Kwesi. Armah's characterisation, in their respect, is less elaborated in comparison with that of the major protagonists, Baako, Naana and Juana. These are, to borrow Forster's phraseology, 'round characters'. Armah probes their social life and their psychological being. He portrays their 'inner life [and] its essential traits and conflicts ... in organic connection with social and historical factors'.⁵⁹ Thus, Armah represents the 'complete human personality'⁶⁰ of these characters, a feature which is according to Lukacs, a basic characteristic of realist literature. The realistic dimension of the novel also lies in that Armah has succeeded in rendering, notably through the case of Baako and Naana, their feelings and their mood in a convincing way. As Margaret Castagno remarks in relation to Baako and The Man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*: 'Mr. Armah has drawn memorable portraits of two of them. The reader hears the sounds of their loneliness, tastes the bitterness of their frustrations, and feels the vibrations of their fear and mental pain'.⁶¹

Thematically, *Fragments* expresses Armah's major concern for cultural regeneration. This appears in the Akan naming of the chapters and the recreation of traditional customs. As Armah has pointed out, the Akan words have 'meanings [that] contain the key organising ideas of their respective chapters'.⁶² Larson has provided the meanings of some of these Akan words.⁶³ He, however, has not demonstrated how the meanings of the titles apply to the central ideas of the chapters. The title of Chapter 1, 'Naana', refers to Baako's grandmother who is the dominant mind in it. In Akan, 'Nana' means either grandmother or grandfather.⁶⁴ The emphasis in Armah's novel is, however, on the grandmother theme. Armah writes 'Naana' with double 'a'. 'Naa' is an Akan word which means: 'a great female ancestor'.⁶⁵ This applies to Naana, who is about to become an ancestor, at the close of the novel. The title of Chapter 2, 'Edin', is explained by Armah in his article: 'Larsony or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction'. He states that it

has everything to do with identity, Africanness and blackness⁶⁶ This meaning applies to the protagonist of this chapter, Juana, who has come on a pilgrimage to Africa, the cradle of her ancestors, in quest of her identity. Chapter 3 has the Akan name *akwaaba*⁶⁷ which is the name given by the Ghanaians to a wooden statuette that symbolises the Moon Mother goddess⁶⁸ This statuette is associated with beauty and fertility.⁶⁹ It is at times given by a priest to barren women so that they bear children⁷⁰ In *Fragments*, there is a direct reference to *akwaaba* dolls^ø (p. 66). Baako can be considered as the *akwaaba* doll, since his presence is considered as having helped in making Araba's childbirth safe, after she has had several miscarriages. Araba tells Baako: the child too. You gave him to me [í] if you had not come back yourself, I would have lost this baby also^ø(p. 85). Chantal Zabus, on the other hand, provides welcome^ø as the meaning of *akwaaba* This may be associated with the fact that the word *Welcome*⁷¹ is used in this chapter which focuses on Baako's homecoming.

The title of Chapter 4, the Akan word *awo*^ø means birth⁷² and is associated with Monday. In her book, *The Akan of Ghana*, Meyerowitz notes that *Kra*^ø the life-giving power⁷³ is dispensed by Akragya, a female deity, *awo* (Moon), on Monday⁷⁴ In Armah's novel, *awo* refers to the birth of Araba's child, born on a Monday. A clue about the child's being born on a Monday is provided in the passage where Efua and Araba are discussing the outdoor ceremony (p. 87). The discussion is held on a Wednesday (p. 88), and Efua says: This is the third day since our little stranger chose to come...^ø (p. 87). R. S. Rattray provides a different meaning of the word *awo* stating:

Awo I was informed, is the name of a person^ø (Awo in Brong dialect means just you^ø). Many independent informants state she was a hermaphrodite, and was the first human being ever killed. She was sacrificed to *asase yaa* (Mother Earth) to make her fruitful.⁷⁵

This meaning of *ɔ*Awoø similarly applies to Arabaø's child, who has been sacrificed by his relatives to make the *ɔ*outdooring ceremony fruitful. The title of Chapter 5, *ɔ*Osagyefoø which means the *ɔ*redeemerø refers to Baako, who is expected by his family to be their redeemer. They want him to save them from poverty. The title of Chapter 6, *ɔ*Gyefoø⁷⁶ comes from the Akan word *ɔ*Ogyefoø which means *ɔ*rescuerø⁷⁷ The rescuer in this chapter is Juana. She attempts to rescue Baako and her other patients from sinking into the whirlpool of insanity. Juanaø's concern for peopleø's salvation is hinted at in the passage that reads: *ɔ*The meaning of her life remained in her defeated attempts to purify her environment, right down the final, futile decision to try to salvage discrete individuals in the general carnageø (p. 123).

The Akan word *ɔ*Igyaø the title of Chapter 7, has the root *ɔ*gyaø which means fire.⁷⁸ But nowhere in this chapter is there a reference to fire. There are, however, many references to water, e.g., *ɔ*streamø (p. 131), *ɔ*riverø (p. 134), *ɔ*waterø (p. 135). Whereas in the next chapter entitled *ɔ*Nsuø meaning *ɔ*waterø⁷⁹ there is no reference to water, but there is a reference to fire, Baako is burning his scripts. In these two chapters, there is a tension between the symbol and the thing symbolised. Thus, in Chapter 7, fire is symbolised by its opposite in nature, water, whereas, in Chapter 8, water is symbolised by fire. This tension between symbols represents the tension that Baako undergoes, as a consequence of conflicting loyalties. The loyalty to his principles is antithetical to that to his family. The title of Chapter 9, *ɔ*Damø which means *ɔ*madnessø⁸⁰ represents Baakoø's psychic state which has entailed his admission to a mental hospital. Chapter 10 bears the name of Baakoø's mother, *ɔ*Efuaø since it centres round her activities. In Akan, *ɔ*Afuaø is *ɔ*the name of a woman born on a Fridayø⁸¹ The title of Chapter 11, *ɔ*Iwuø may be associated with the Akan word *ɔ*Owuø which means *ɔ*deathø⁸² It marks the death of Arabaø's child. The title of Chapter 12, *ɔ*Obraø means *ɔ*ethical life, conduct, moral lifeø⁸³ It applies to Baako, whose moral behaviour and integrity are pointed

out in this chapter. Naana is again used as a title in Chapter 13. Baako's grandmother returns as the dominant mind. Thus the novel opens and closes on chapters that bear the same title.

This is deliberately done to show the cyclic reconstruction of history. It, therefore, suggests that life goes through a continual process of a re-beginning. Naana's death is a step towards a new life, that of a spirit. This cyclic view of death and life, i.e., life leading to death and death leading to a new life, can be associated with the Christian principle of the resurrection. It can, however, also be associated with the traditional Ghanaian concept of life in which he present is in constant creative interface with the past, but always with expectations of future harvests as their essential driving force⁸⁴. This concept is also based on the belief in the homecoming of the spirits. The dead are believed to return after their death to live among the living as spirits. It is this latter interpretation of the cyclic movement of life that Armah has attempted to dramatise by focusing on Naana in the closing chapter. This is made clear through Naana's statement: "Death. That was the frightening thing, the final sound. Now I see in it another birth ..."(p. 200). It is again apparent in the last sentences of the novel. Naana who is ready to die says to the spirits: "Take me. I am ready. You are the end. The beginning. You who have no end. I am coming"(p. 201). By making the novel end on features of traditional African culture, the belief in spirits and in the cyclic movement of life and death, Armah shows where his concerns lie. He highlights the importance of traditional culture, and indirectly points to cultural retrieval as a solution to his people's moral degradation. This is a concern he shares with Ama Ata Aidoo, who through her play *Anowa* (1970), shows how Kofi Ako, Anowa's husband, is ready to use slaves in his greed for more material gain. Anowa, however, refuses his proposition because she finds the idea of making a human being a slave repulsive. Like Armah's Aidoo's attempt at cultural retrieval shows in her use of traditional cultural heritage, e.g., folktales, legends and proverbs.

In *Fragments*, Armah's attempt at cultural regeneration appears in his recreation of some Akan customs, such as the libation poured to the ancestors, performed during Baako's farewell party, and the "outdooring" ceremony. The former custom is performed to ensure the blessings of the ancestors, whose spirits are believed to be hovering over the living's heads. John. T. Evans refers to this custom saying: "The older people never drink without pouring out a few drops of palm-wine on the ground for the spirits of the departed [who] are supposed to be able to influence their living descendants for good or evil"⁸⁵ This belief is reproduced in Armah's novel. After pouring some schnapps on the floor for the spirits, Naana says: "Nanamon, drink to your thirst, and go with the young one. Protect him well, and bring him back, to us, to you" (p. 8). Another Akan custom reproduced in *Fragments* is the "outdooring" ceremony. This ceremony is celebrated on the eighth day of a child's birth.⁸⁶ It is held on the occasion of his being taken "out-of-doors"⁸⁷ for the first time, and it is by the same token a naming celebration. Madeline Manoukian describes it in the following terms: "On the eighth day, the Ntetea rite (Ashante name) is held: the father or someone else of his ntoro then names the child ... After this the child may for the first time be properly dressed and go out by day, carried on its mother's back"⁸⁸

This ceremony is an event of a major importance for the Akans. It marks the end of the transitional period, between the birth and the eighth day of the child's life, during which the child's soul is believed to be wandering between the world of the spirits and that of the living. Rattray refers to this period stating: "When a child is born in this world, a ghost-mother mourns the loss of her child in the Samandou (spirit world). Further developments are awaited for eight days after his birth"⁸⁹ During these eight days the child's survival is at stake, for he is considered to be still in the clutches of the spirits, who are believed to have sent him to the world of the living but may call him back at any time during the eight days. Manoukian explains this saying: "For the first eight days after birth, the

child is regarded as a ghost child who may return to the land of spirits ...⁹⁰ If the child dies during the eight first days of his life, he is believed to be some wandering ghost.⁹¹ Similar pieces of information are provided by Naana in Armah's novel. She says about Araba's child: 'the child is a traveller between the world of the spirits and the one of heavy flesh' (p. 97). She also says: 'a quick child like this is only a disturbed spirit come to take a brief look and go back home' (p. 97). In accordance with the Akan customary practice, the husband, Kwesi, brings gifts to his wife, and the child is taken out of doors.

Another aspect of the Akan traditional culture that Armah recreates in his novel, is matrilinearity. It appears in the importance given to his female characters, e.g., Naana and Juana to whom whole chapters are devoted. It is also apparent in the importance given to the maternal uncle, Baako who is Araba's child uncle. In most societies which adopt a matrilineal system, the mother's brother plays a significant role in her family. In the matrilineal system of kinship, descent follows the mother's line. Bronislaw Malinowski refers to a basic principle of this system, which is the 'Mother's Right'.⁹² He contends that it 'rules that a child is bodily related and morally beholden by kinship to its mother and to her only'.⁹³ In most matrilineal societies, kinship ties are not only with the mother but also with her kin. The latter often interfere in her family's affairs. Levi-Strauss refers to this when he defines matrilineal descent as: 'the authority of the woman's father or brother extended to the brother-in-law's village'.⁹⁴ It is, often, the woman's brother who plays an important role in the management of her household. He supports her family economically and he is often responsible for her children's upbringing. This role of the maternal uncle is summed up by Max Gluckman: 'A man is socially reproduced, so to speak, not in his own son, but in his nephew by his sister. He is responsible for his sister's well being and his nephew inherits property and position'.⁹⁵

The mother's brother has a great authority over his sister's children. His authority is, in some cases, so great that he is considered by his nephews as their father. Gluckman provides the example of the Barotse who call their maternal uncle their 'male-mother'⁹⁶ The real father is, on the other hand, considered by his own children as a stranger or an 'outsider'.⁹⁷ This is so because he plays a secondary role in his own house. His children's indifference towards him is also a consequence of the weak relationship he has with his wife. The latter has no emotional ties with him and considers him as a mere partner for begetting children. The husband's role in his household, however, varies according to whether the couple lives in a 'matrilocal' residence, with the wife's family, or in a 'patrilocal' residence, with the husband's family. In the former case, the husband's authority is minimal, and in the latter case it is relatively important. The first case is noticeable in Armah's novel. Kwesi lives with his wife in her mother's house. This is an important feature of the Akan matrilineal system.

This system has its origin in Akan mythology, which is female-oriented. Predominance is given to female deities. The Akan originally believed that the Moon was their 'Mother-Goddess'⁹⁸ and that the woman was her representative on earth. The latter had the duty to rule her clan on account of her spiritual kinship with a deity. This ruling status of the Akan woman is referred to by Meyerowitz who observes: 'From earliest times, the queen mother ruled her state, assisted by a council of head women from other clans and sub-clans'⁹⁹ Similarly to the queen mother who ruled at the level of her clan, the other Akan women ruled at the level of their household. They were, thus, the heads of their families. This status involved both social and economic tasks. It was the wife's responsibility to provide for the basic requirements of her dependants.

The children were considered as being her property rather than her husband's, since as W.E. Abraham points out: 'It was the woman who gave birth

to the child in a visible way¹⁰⁰ This justifies the children's subsequent belonging to their mother's clan or sub-clan. Accordingly, lineage followed the maternal line. Meyerowitz writes: "Owing to the fact that through the centuries it has been only the maternal ancestors who mattered, the succession and inheritance has remained strictly in the female line, the children belonging to the abusua of their mother"¹⁰¹ The children were considered as belonging not only to their mother but to her relatives as well. They had strong ties with the latter who often participated in the management of their mother's household. The wife's kin, especially her mother and brother, were given priority over the husband's in supervising the celebrations of traditional rituals. The maternal uncle was often appointed head of ceremonies. In this connection, Meyerowitz provides the instance of the ceremony which was held to honour a child who had proved his courage by killing an animal, and during which the mother's brother provides the child with his first weapon.

This customary law of the Akan matrilineal society is observed in *Fragments*, where the maternal uncle, Baako, is given the honour of leading the "outdooing ceremony" He is made "Master of Ceremonies" Another aspect of the Akan matrilineal system that appears in Armah's novel is the paternal role expected from the maternal uncle. Baako is Araba's child's tutor. Naana points to this when she says to Baako: "Kwesi is the father. I have heard. But the child is yours to look after" (p. 98). The other noticeable characteristic of the matrilineal system in *Fragments* is the strong emotional relationship between brother and sister. Evidence of this relationship between Baako and Araba is provided in the passage that reads: "[Araba] made him sit on the bed beside her with both hands in hers, and she stroked his skin gently over and over again, seeming to get an extraordinary amount of pleasure just from doing that" (p. 85) The reproduction of the ancient matrilineal system of Akan society¹⁰² bears witness to Armah's concern for the return to the "Way" i.e., traditional communal life. The matrilineal

system, thus, represents traditional life since it was the prevailing system in the bygone ages when native culture was predominant. Yet, whereas this system can be associated with traditional life, the patrilineal system, towards which the Akan society has developed with its development towards modernity, can be associated with modern life.¹⁰³ In the main, Armah's rejection of the patrilineal system might signify his repudiation of the modern society for which this system stands.

This society is repudiated by Armah because he considers it as the main cause of the stifling of his native culture and the development of his people's moral turpitude. He portrays this turpitude through some of his characters' behaviour. He particularly insists on their strivings to amass wealth by any means available to them to fulfil the requirements of their modern society. He shows that in this society, a man's worth is assessed according to his material acquisitions. The more luxury goods a man displays, the greater his worth is in his people's eyes, and the more respect he is entitled to. This is illustrated through the case of Brempong. The display of luxury goods is particularly expected from the 'been-to' who is supposed to bring home cars, electrical equipment and other modern equipments. Armah likens this mentality to that of the Melanesian 'cargo-cult'¹⁰⁴

This mentality is based on the belief that the dead would return to their kin with a 'cargo' of material goods, hence the name 'cargo-cult'. These cults were originally performed in the islands of Melanesia, Fiji, New Guinea, New Hebrides and New Caledonia. They were religious cults whose basic principles had been derived from both the traditional native religion and Christianity. From the former, the belief in the return of the ancestors was taken, and from the latter, the belief in the coming of the 'millennium' which is believed to follow the Second Coming of Christ. Yet though these cults had strong religious overtones, their main concern was not spiritual but economic. These cults had their roots in the millenarian movements on whose pattern they developed.

The millenarian movements occurred as a consequence of the White men's presence on the islands. They were caused by a situation of dissatisfaction with existing social relations and of yearnings for a happier life.¹⁰⁵ The natives considered the cargo that was shipped to the White men as their property. They believed it was sent to them by their ancestors. These movements were triggered off by a man who claimed having had a vision and who prophesied the coming of the ancestors or some other liberating power [who would be] bringing all the goods the people desire[d], and ushering in a reign of eternal bliss.¹⁰⁶ The natives would then celebrate the coming of the event and build storehouses, jetties and so on to receive the goods known as 'cargo' in the local pidgin English. Often also they abandon their gardens, kill off their livestock, eat their food, and throw away their money.¹⁰⁷

All these aspects of the Melanesian millenarian movements are present in Armah's novel. Among the aspects of these movements that Ron Rassner traces in *Fragments*¹⁰⁸ are: the yearning of the oppressed people for a better social life, and their conflict with the well-off. He illustrates this with the example of the T.V set. He also points to the rejection of the traditional customs, e.g., that of the 'outdooring ceremony', as an aspect of the millenarian movements. Another aspect of these movements he notes in Armah's novel is the emergence of the new man,¹⁰⁹ e.g., the *élite* or the 'been-to'. It is to the 'been-to' that Armah applies the 'cargo' mentality. Like the ancestors of the 'cargo-cult', the 'been-to' in Armah's novel, is expected to assume the task of cargo-carrier. His trip out of his country is considered as a death rite. Armah writes: 'At any rate it is clearly understood that the been-to has chosen, been awarded, a certain kind of death' (p. 157). Like the dead ancestors of the Melanesian cult who are supposed to live after death in a world of plenty, the 'been-to' lives in the Western world where goods are plentiful, after he quits his people. And like them, he is expected to bring his kin their share of goods.

The Melanesian 'cargo-cult' is re-enacted through Brempong. He brings the 'cargo' when he returns home: two cars, a freezer and other Western goods. Likewise the resurrected ancestor of the cargo myth, Brempong is expected by his kin to be their 'Osagyefo', their saviour, the one who redeems them from their present social status and to bring forth a period of material welfare. His return, similarly to that of the 'Messiah' of the 'cargo-cult' is celebrated with mirth. He is welcomed at the airport by a singing crowd whose behaviour parallels that of the Melanesians when celebrating the cults. Guenter Lewy observes that these cults 'are accompanied by widespread hysterical behaviour -- twitching, gesticulating, use of gibberish, trances, fantasies and wild dancing ...'¹¹⁰ This frenzy and excitement that the prospect of the cargo carrier's homecoming generates in the people is particularly noticeable in the behaviour of Brempong's sister. Armah writes: 'The fat woman shifted her bulk in a little grotesque dance, her kente blouse flapping its elephant-ear sleeves in a whirl of color, her teeth flashing and her blubbery buttocks quivering as she turned and turned in the center around her returned brother' (p. 56).

Another characteristic of the Melanesian 'cargo cult' present in *Fragments* is the squandering of wealth when celebrating the coming of the cargo-carrier. This appears in the waste of the Champagne with which Brempong's feet are bathed by his sister.¹¹¹ This squandering of wealth is practised by Baako's colleague, the 'nexus' as well. Like the Melanesians, who used to get rid of the remainder of their wealth when the coming of the 'cargo' was announced, he scatters his money and expects the coming of wealth through the 'nexus', in other words, through a connection, most probably a relative who will sponsor him. This 'nexus' ideology illustrates the native custom which requires an individual to share his wealth with his kin. This is a characteristic of both African and Melanesian cultures.

Armah has made use of the 'cargo-cult' mentality not only to illustrate his people's greed for material goods, but to make a statement about his country's socio-political plight. Here again, Armah has recourse to symbolism to express his political commitment, a commitment whose target is social reform through the overthrow of the system that practises 'dependent capitalism' in the name of socialism. An aspect of this system that Armah denounces is neo-colonialism. He uses the 'cargo-cult' as a metaphor for the Ghanaian, and by extension African, neo-colonial situation. The cargo-carrier, the 'been-to', is for Armah, 'Not a maker, but an intermediary' (p. 157). He, thus represents the 'comprador bourgeoisie' whose role is that of an intermediary between their ex-masters and their people. Armah hints at this role when he writes: 'It is presumably a great enough thing for a man to rise to be an intermediary between the other men and the gods' (p. 157). The term 'gods' here refers to the foreign bourgeoisie, whose ally the native bourgeoisie is. Like the cargo carrier, the native bourgeoisie brings the cargo by importing foreign goods. It is, thus, not the 'maker' of the goods it consumes.¹¹² This dramatization of the native bourgeoisie is clearly patterned on Fanon's conception of the latter as expressed in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Like Fanon, Armah points out that bribery, nepotism and the exploitation of public funds for personal conveniences are the major means that this class uses to amass wealth.

These corrupt practices were widespread in Ghana under Nkrumah's rule. Corruption has been an impediment to Ghana's development ever since its independence, as it has been the case in most African countries. This phenomenon had, however, not arisen as a consequence of the natives' coming to power. Evidence of the existence of corruption could be traced in the colonial era, and even further back into the pre-colonial era, when bribery took the form of the giving and taking of gifts. Yet it was in post-independence Ghana that corruption went out of control. It was so entrenched in people's mentality, and its practice

was so widespread that different attempts to eradicate it had failed. A number of anti-corruption commissions were set up to curtail its practice but had achieved little success.

The African *élite* had often been denounced for practising and encouraging corruption. Their involvement in it was mainly conditioned by their strivings to amass more wealth to warrant their comfort. Victoria Brittain observes: ‘As in all neo-colonial African economies, it is literally impossible for the Westernized *élite* to maintain the life-style they inherited from the colonialists without corruption’¹¹³ It is, however, the politicians, members of this *élite*, who are often responsible for the existing corruption in their countries. Le Vine points to their responsibility stating: ‘In sum, the ‘new men’ because of their background, their outlook, and the manner in which they rose to power, became at once a fertile field for the cultivation of political corruption and willing accomplices in that cultivation’¹¹⁴ These ‘new men’ i.e., the politicians, often condemn the practice of corruption publicly, but indulge in it privately. This contradictory attitude towards corruption has weakened any attempt at wiping out this social scourge. As Robert. E. Dowse remarks the ‘fight against corruption [is] to be of little avail [since] the corrupters [are] themselves high priests of anti-corruption’¹¹⁵

This was the case of Nkrumah who declared himself an opponent of corruption well before his appointment as a party leader. He pointed out the dangers of corruption in 1951, when he made the following statement: ‘Bribery and corruption, both moral and factual, have eaten into the whole fabric of our society and they must be stamped out if we are to achieve any progress’¹¹⁶ Another instance of Nkrumah’s condemnation of corruption is his declaration, in 1955: ‘I have never ceased to condemn bribery and corruption and I have warned that anybody, no matter his rank and office in the Party, who shall be found

indulging in these vices, shall be immediately exposed and punished¹¹⁷ He, also, publicly denounced the adepts of corruption in his Dawn Broadcasts (1961).¹¹⁸ Nkrumah's attitude to the practice of corruption when he was a party leader prior to Ghana's independence had changed when he became head of state. Though he had often declared in public his opposition to the practice of corruption, he was himself using corrupt means to acquire wealth. Evidence of his involvement in corrupt practices was produced by the Apaloo Commission.¹¹⁹ This commission had found out that:

Dr Nkrumah's assets in cash and in kind apparently totalled £2,300,000 and had been derived mostly from bribes from contractors and takings from the Treasury through contingency votes of £2,000,000 annually ... and that he had given away £110,000 of public money to friends, associates and members of his family.¹²⁰

Yet Nkrumah was not the only Ghanaian high official who indulged in corruption. His ministers and top officials did as well.

These corrupt leaders are indirectly satirised by Armah in *Fragments*. He gives the names of some of them to his upright characters. Here again, Armah expresses his political commitment, through an indictment of the ruling *élite*, in an oblique way. Though he uses the names of these ministers, he does not depict them in a recognisable way. He does not, for instance, attribute to the characters that represent them the same functions, or the same vices as theirs. Armah associates these people, whom he resents, with the characters towards whom he is most sympathetic, e.g., Baako, Boateng, Ocran. Baako is the surname of the Ghanaian Minister of Defence during Nkrumah's rule.¹²¹ Mr Kofi Baako was second only to Dr Nkrumah in the last months of the C.C.P rule¹²² Boateng,¹²³ the writer whose book has remained unpublished for years in *Fragments*, is the surname of Kwaku Boateng, the Minister of Interior from 1962 to 1964,¹²⁴ who later became Minister of Education.¹²⁵ These two ministers had been charged with

involvement in corruption during the Nkrumah rule.¹²⁶ Ocran, Baako's ex-teacher in the novel, is the surname of Major General A. Ocran. He was a commander of the Ghana Army and N.L.C. member.¹²⁷ He belonged to the military regime that took over after Nkrumah's deposition. By using the name of a member of this regime, the one that followed Nkrumah's, Armah indirectly points out that his denunciation concerns not only Nkrumah's regime but the regime that had overthrown it as well. This hints at the fact that the overall situation in Ghana had not changed during the rule of the second regime.

Armah's condemnation of the corrupt Ghanaian leaders is clearly expressed through Ocran who remarks: "Nothing works in this country. What can you expect? The place is run by the so-called *élite* of pompous asses trained to do nothing. Nothing works" (p. 81). And again Ocran says: "I hate these stupid Ghanaian big shots. They know things don't work, but they're happy to sit on top of the mess all the same" (p. 84). Armah often ridicules the politicians. He, for instance, refers to the Special Commissioner Kukumfi who has been building a house for years, but has not been able to finish it, because whenever he sees a new design in Europe or America, he attempts to copy it. Armah's ridiculing the *élite* is, again, apparent in the satirical description of the way they are dressed during the "outdooing ceremony" in woollen suits in such a warm weather that the use of a fan is required (p. 181). Another instance of Armah's ridiculing these people is the name given to the man from the Ministry of External Affairs: "Charles Winston Churchill Kwesi" (p. 111).

The Ghanaian politicians and the top civil servants are the target of Armah's onslaught, not only because of their immorality but because of their incompetence as well. An instance of this incompetence referred to in the novel is that of the engineers' inability to repair a broken machine (p. 132). Armah condemns the politicians for the socio-economic mess they have made of their

country. He refers to the existing economic mismanagement in Ghana. He gives the example of the building of a dual carriage way in an unsuitable place: "A road that used to be wide and free to drive along had recently been made an awkward trap because someone at the City Council had decided it should be turned into a dual carriage way" (p. 13). The prevailing economic anarchy in Ghana is also hinted at through the example of the schools whose buildings are started but left unfinished, and again, through the example of the lights, in public offices that are left on overnight (p. 60). The event of the distribution of the T.V. sets is yet another instance of this anarchy whose consequences are not born by its engineers, but by the masses.

This predicament of the masses is of particular concern for Armah, whose revolutionary didacticism is apparent in the task that Baako sets himself, namely, to write scripts for popular films to arouse the masses' awareness of their socio-economic plight. Through Baako's scripts, Armah shows his concern for teaching the masses revolutionary activism. He seems to favour Sembene's approach, i.e., popular education through cinematographic art. He justifies his preference for this means of social education through Baako who contends that films reach the masses more easily than literature. Philip Whyte, however, notes: "educated in the USA, Armah is so impregnated by film techniques that these have become, as it were, naturalized; in other words, they function with a freedom and spontaneity which has little to do with the need to communicate with a large native audience"¹²⁸ Whyte who considers Armah's use of cinematic techniques as part of the formal elaboration of the novel, observes: "At times, film techniques are used in a purely functional manner; for example, to permit a smooth transition between scenes [í] At other moments, film techniques are used to underline the dramatic and symbolic importance of key episodes"¹²⁹ Still the contents of the scripts indicate that Armah's prime motive in using cinematic techniques is didactic, and aimed at eliciting revolutionary response.

This revolutionary didacticism is paralleled with cultural didacticism which is apparent in his attempt to reconstruct his people's past so that they get lessons in morality.¹³⁰ An episode of the Ghanaian past that Armah is obsessed with, and which he recreates in *Fragments* is the slavery era. This obsession is common to most, if not all, Ghanaian writers. It is the case of Ama Ata Aidoo, as evident in her play *Anowa* and of Kofi Awoonor, as it appears in his *Comes the Voyager at Last* (1992). As Anyidoho observes 'Given [the slavery] history, it is understandable that the slave fort should become a constant factor in Ghana's national consciousness'¹³¹ This is also expressed by Armah, through Baako's remark: 'Slavery is a central part of [Ghana's] culture' (p. 147). The theme of slavery is outstanding in all of Armah's novels. Anyidoho considers them as the most comprehensive in their treatment of the slavery motif. He notes: 'Of this generation of Ghanaian writers, it is doubtless, in the works of Ayi Kwei Armah [í] that we find the most penetrating diagnosis of the historic and contemporary consequences of the slave trade on African people world-wide'¹³²

In *Fragments*, there are numerous direct and indirect references to slavery. Armah refers Christiansborg,¹³³ the slave Castle (pp. 16, 30). Baako tells Asante-Smith that his script is on 'slavery' (p. 146). An instance of the indirect references to slavery is the following passage: 'People with their eyes deliberately closed against the knowledge that their own useless lives were part of a slow dissolution of their peoples, doomed to an extinction started long ago' (p. 31). Armah's recurrent reference to African-Americans (pp. 9, 58), and Juana's Puerto-Rican origin, is another indirect reference to the slavery theme. Slavery is at times referred to allegorically as in Akosua's poem (p. 112). The marriage of the princess with a White man symbolises the native chiefs' cooperation with the foreigners, during the slave trade era. A direct reference to the chiefs' collaboration is made through the script of Akosua's play: 'There was a white man [í] the enslaver, helped by a bloated African chieftain and his trinklet-

wearing court of parasites (p. 132). Another reference to the chiefs' participation in the sale of their own people to the White men is made through Naana who says that the elders 'split their own seed and raised half against half, part selling part to the hard-eyed buyers from beyond the horizon' (p. 199). Another indirect reference to slavery is noticeable in the episode where Baako and Juana are on the beach. They witness a fisherman canoe coming to the shore. The sight of the canoe carrying some Black men arouses fear in Baako. It reminds him of his people's ordeal during the slave trade. The canoe here can be paralleled with the slave traders' ship and the ropes the men pull with the chains that tied the slaves.

The theme of slavery is also referred to in connection with the film and the play that are made out of Akosua's poem. The film features some aspects of slavery as practised during the slave-trade era, and the play represents modern slavery i.e., neo-colonial bondage. Another modern analogy of slavery in the novel is related to the African artist who, as Boateng puts, is 'sold' (p. 115), probably to foreign publishing houses. In the main, Armah's recreation of the slavery episode has a revolutionary didactic end. He reconstructs the past to make it serve as a lesson for the improvement of the future. He seems convinced that the knowledge of their past history will particularly help his people avoid the trap of the colonialism in which they forebears fell, and which now threatens them under the disguised form of neo-colonialism.

To counteract and undermine the cultural impact of this new form of colonialism, Armah works towards the renaissance of his traditional culture. This task is noticeable in his exploitation of the different components, myths, legends, idioms, of this culture in his novels. Armah's concern for the revival of the traditional African culture through art is also apparent in Baako's readiness to use popular lore, images and myths, in his scripts. Yet, though Armah favours the use of folklore in literature, he resents those who make use of this folklore merely to

appeal to a Western audience in search of the exotic. This appears in Baako's resentment, which echoes Armah's, of the Akosua-type intellectuals¹³⁴ who use folklore in their works to attract foreign publishers.

Armah also denounces the intellectuals' passivity and their unproductive work. This particularly appears in his onslaught against the producers of Ghanaian television, whom he remarks spend their time travelling instead of producing films. This was mostly aimed at Kofi Awoonor who was the director of Ghana Television at the time. In this connection, Cecil Abrahams states: "What is true, however, is that the criticism that Armah directs against the post-independence Ghanaian government of Kwame Nkrumah included Kofi Awoonor who directed Ghana Television and who had Armah under employ [] Armah resigned in disgust."¹³⁵ Armah's condemnation of the *élite* is even stronger in his essay on African Socialism where he states:

It is not every age or every continent which can boast of fiery revolutionaries who have never ventured into the smelling distance of a revolution, of freedom fighters whose suits are made in Paris and whose hair-raising campaigns are fought and won in the scented beds of posh hotels.¹³⁶

In *Fragments*, the intellectuals are depicted as despicable people who adopt an attitude of superiority towards the masses. Among the latter, those that Armah resents the most are those who think that the masses are pagans or "devils in a burning hell" (p. 148), and who think that they are superior to them because they have acquired a Western education. This kind of attitude towards one's people and their culture is one of the factors that have conditioned Armah's will to revive his native culture. Armah attempts to recreate his people's traditional past to show

them that it had its own value and that there is, as Achebe puts it, "nothing disgraceful"¹³⁷ about it.

Still, despite its overall aesthetic quality, *Armah's Fragments*, is not devoid of any weaknesses. A major weakness lies in the author's presentation of some incidents or actions that are improbable in the Ghanaian society. This is the case of Baako's family's attempt to take him to an asylum. One would rather expect such traditionalist people as Baako's relatives to take him to a healer, especially if one bears in mind that Efua used to consult a healer when she was worried about her son's return, and there is a reference, in Chapter Two, to the resurgence of healers. Besides, Efua who belongs to a low social class, gets VIPs as guests during the outdoor ceremony. Again, Naana has an "intellectual physiognomy" that is quite out of step. She has a political consciousness that hardly fits her character – that of an old woman whose mind is confused by what is going on around her. There is, for instance, her reference to the slave trade and the comparison she draws between it and the modern era - an era when people's yearning for material goods has made them sacrifice their own people as did the native chiefs during the slave-trade period. Another instance of Naana's unlikely political awareness is her statement about her people's consumption of goods they did not produce (p. 199). This statement is reminiscent of Fanon's about the bourgeoisie being a consumer and not a producer.

Another weakness in the novel's characterization relates to the development of the character of Efua. The weakness lies in the fact that the reader is not shown how she has developed from a very materialistic woman, notice her behaviour during the outdoor ceremony when she was keen on making the best profits possible out of the occasion, to a spiritual woman. Again, it is quite unconvincing that Efua, who has been looking forward to her son's return for years to benefit from the "cargo" and the privileges that his professional status

would bring forth, would not only forgive her son for failing to fulfil her wishes, but would herself beg him for forgiveness. Margaret Castagno, in the same vein, considers Juana as the least convincing character. She observes: "Without binoculars and amplifiers, Juana could not have seen or heard all the detailed and fragmented sights and conversations de-scribed. Her intense responses to them are unbelievable, and she therefore becomes a foil for the author rather than a credible human being"¹³⁸ But, on the whole, if *Fragments* bears some weaknesses, it still stands as an aesthetically accomplished novel. Armah's successful combination of two different styles, Western modernist and African traditionalist narrative pattern, and his mastery of language and plot organisation, make the novel a major aesthetic achievement.

The aesthetic quality of *Fragments* has also been preserved through Armah's adoption of allegorical didacticism. He indirectly expresses his commitment through the exposition and description of facts rather than through blunt statements. His ideological stance forms part of the hidden material of the text. This is the case in Baako's scripts which are an indictment of the ruling *élite*. The incidents of the T.V. sets, Skido's death, the dog's killing and Baako's capture symbolically represent, respectively, economic inequity, socio-economic anarchy, and political repression. Yet one wonders whether the novel will fulfil its functional role, being, as it is, aesthetically elaborated. The complex structure of the novel and its symbolic language, especially that of the scripts, are undoubtedly too abstract to be intelligible to the masses that the author expects to reach. Armah's awareness of this failure to communicate with the recipient of his revolutionary message, partly accounts for the changes he brought to his stylistic performances in his later novels. In these novels, his socio-political commitment and his cultural nationalism are expressed overtly. The first premises of this journey towards propagandist writing are apparent in his third novel, *Why Are We So Blest?*, the focus of the next chapter.

NOTES

¹ Cecil Abrahams points out that like Baako, Armah returned home from America without the cargo that was expected by his family. She also maintains that Armah told her that she was regarded as insane by his relatives for wanting to be an artist and not a materialistic politician. See her "Review: Perspectives on Africa" *Canadian Journal of African Studies* Vol. 11, No. 2. (1977), 355-359, p. 357.

² See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (California: University of California Press), 1961.

³ W.E.B. Dubois referred to the divided self of the American Black man in his *The Souls of Black Folk*. First Published in 1903.

⁴ Cecil Abrahams, "Review: Perspectives on Africa" op. cit., p. 358.

⁵ Robert Frazer, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980).

⁶ Ejiet Komolo, "Ayi Kwei Armah's Cargo Mentality: A Critical Review of *Fragments, Dhana* (Nairobi, Kenya), Vol.4, Pt.2 (1974), 88-90.

⁷ Edward Lobb, "Armah's *Fragments* and the Vision of the whole" *Ariel*, Vol.10, Pt.1, (1979), 25-38.

⁸ Ron Rassner, "Fragments: The Cargo Mentality" *Ba Shiru*, Vol.5, Pt. 2 (1974), 55-64.

⁹ Joe Lurie, "Fragments: Between the Loved Ones and the Community" *Ba Shiru*, Vol.5, Pt.1 (1973), 31-41.

¹⁰ Shelby Steele, "Existentialism in the Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah" *Obsidian*, Vol.3, Pt.1 (1977), 5-13.

¹¹ The importance of this French writer and philosopher to Armah is twofold. Firstly, because he provides him with a literary model that helps him depict the general mood of despair that overwhelms the Ghanaian intelligentsia. Secondly, because he supported the Negritude movement, the movement that worked towards the cultural rehabilitation of the Negro values. This rehabilitation has become Armah's prime concern.

¹² Tommie Lee. Jackson, *The Existential Fiction of Ayi Kwei Armah, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997).

¹³ Ode Ogede, Review of *The Existential Fiction of Ayi Kwei Armah, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre*, by Tommie L. Jackson, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (2000), 178-179, p. 178

¹⁴ Amazingly enough, Ogede overlooks the fact that Armah himself has acknowledged the influence of Fanon on him and most African writers. See his essay, "Fanon the awakener," *Negro Digest*, Vol. 18 (1969), 4-9 and 29-43.

¹⁵ Ode Ogede, Review of *The Existential Fiction of Ayi Kwei Armah*, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre, by Tommie L. Jackson, op. cit., p. 178.

¹⁶ In fact, there is nothing disgraceful in acknowledging the Western literary sources of African works, because these sources form part of cultural patterns that have been imposed on African writers through the Western education they have been exposed to.

¹⁷ Ode Ogede, Review of *The Existential Fiction of Ayi Kwei Armah*, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre, by Tommie L. Jackson, op. cit., p. 179.

¹⁸ Martin Tucker, "Tragedy of a Been-to: *Fragments* by Ayi Kwei Armah," *The New Republic* (Jan 31, 1970), 24-26, p. 26.

¹⁹ Margaret Castagno, "Review: *Fragments* by Ayi Kwei Armah," *African Arts*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Autumn, 1972), 84-85, p. 84.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

²¹ Ibid., p. 84.

²² Gerald Moore, "Armah's Second Novel," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (August 1974), 69-71, p. 69.

²³ All page references in the text are to Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, reset edition (London, 1983).

²⁴ Ayi Kwei Armah, "Larsony or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction," *Positive Review*, (ILE IFE), Vol.1 (1978), 11-14, p. 12.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁶ Daniele Stewart, "L'Être et le Monde dans les Premiers Romans d'Ayi Kwei Armah," *Présence Africaine*, No. 85, 1st Quarterly (Paris, 1973), 192-208 p. 208.

²⁷ In his article, "Stream-of-Consciousness: Technique or Genre," Robert Humphrey points out that the phrase was originally used in psychology. See *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 30, (Oct. 1951), 434-437, p. 434.

²⁸ See Humphrey's book, *Stream-of-Consciousness in the modern novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), p. 1.

²⁹ See Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel: An Introduction* (London: A Hodder Arnold Publication, 1985), p. 44.

³⁰ Christopher Heywood, "D.H. Lawrence's 'Blood-consciousness' and the work of Xavier Bichat and Marshall Hall," *Etudes Anglaises*, Vol.32, No. 4, (1979), p. 413.

³¹ It is a device that has been borrowed from the cinematographic art. In this art, "montage" is the device whereby a number of scenes and images with no logical sequence are presented concurrently.

³² Georg Lukacs, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, (Translated from German by John and Necke Mander) (London: Merlin Press, 1963), p. 29.

³³ Ibid., p. 45.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

³⁵ Jeremy Hawthorn, *Narrative: From Malory to Motion Pictures*, Narrative (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), p. 142.

³⁶ Enrich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (translated by William. R. Trask) (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 551.

³⁷ Yunga Teghen, 'The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah by Robert Fraser', *Présence Africaine*, No. 123, 3rd Quarterly (Paris, 1982), 226-228, p. 227.

³⁸ A literal translation of this inscription is as follows: 'Every man creates without knowing it, as he breathes. But the artist feels that he is created. His act involves his whole being, his loved labour strengthens him'.

³⁹ This is an evidence of Sartre's concern for the racial issue in France, where anti-semitic and anti-Negro racism was widespread.

⁴⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, Translated from French by Robert Baldick. Harmondsworth, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965), p. 38.

⁴¹ Dr Aggrey was an African, born in 1875, who lived in America for twenty years before settling in Ghana where he had assumed the task of headmaster of Achimota Secondary School. See Edwin. W. Smith, *Aggrey of Africa. A study in Black and White*, (Manchester: Ayer Co Pub, First published 1929), p. 2.

⁴² Edwin. W. Smith, *Aggrey of Africa. A study in Black and White*, op. cit., p. 2

⁴³ One has to bear in mind that this attitude towards art endorsed by Roquentin is that of Sartre in his pre-Marxist era. It is only after embracing Marxism, and being involved in the French Resistance that Sartre had revised his views about the function of art. From then on, Sartre had campaigned for engagement in literature. His views on committed literature are summed up in his book: *Qu'Est-ce-Que La Littérature?* (1948)

⁴⁴ Sartre later came to associate Existentialism with Humanism and proclaimed that 'L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme'.

⁴⁵ This refers to the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness*, rather than to the Sartre *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. In the latter work, Sartre has blended Existentialism with Marxism.

⁴⁶ Joe Lurie, 'Fragments: Between the Loved Ones and the Community', op. cit., pp. 36-37.

⁴⁷ See, *West Africa*, (May 4, 1968), p. 527.

⁴⁸ K. H. Petersen, 'Loss and Frustration: An Analysis of A. K. Armah's *Fragments*', Kunapipi, Vol.1, (1979), 53-54.

⁴⁹ Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel*, op. cit., p. 123.

⁵⁰ E. Lobb, 'Armah's *Fragments* and the Vision of the Whole', op. cit., p. 33.

⁵¹ Martin Tucker, 'Tragedy of a Been-to: *Fragments* by Ayi Kwei Armah', op. cit., p. 26.

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- ⁵² Kofi Anyidoho 'National Identity and the Language of Metaphor', *FonTomFrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film*, edited by Kofi Anyidoho and James Gibbs (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 2000), 1-22, p. 5.
- ⁵³ Victor Brombert, *The Intellectual Hero. Studies in the French Literature 1880-1955* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 19.
- ⁵⁴ Kofi Owusu, 'Armah's F-R-A-G-M-E-N-T-S: Madness as Artistic Paradigm', *Callaloo*, N° 35 (Spring 1988), 361-370, p. 363.
- ⁵⁵ Rosemarie Colmer, 'The human and the Divine: *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*', *Kunapipi*, Vol.2, Pt. 2, (1980), 77-90, p. 83.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- ⁵⁷ Martin Tucker, 'Tragedy of a Been-to: *Fragments* by Ayi Kwei Armah', *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- ⁵⁸ This return to 'Mother Africa' motif is again, dramatized in Armah's *Osiris Rising*, where an African-American comes to Africa on a self-discovery trip. This motif is also central to Awoonor's novel *Comes the Voyager at Last*, which is sub-titled: 'A Tale of Return to Africa' (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992).
- ⁵⁹ Georg Lukacs, *Studies in Contemporary Realism*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ⁶¹ Margaret Castagno, Review: *Fragments* by Ayi Kwei Armah, *African Arts*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Autumn, 1972), 84-85, p. 85.
- ⁶² Armah, 'Larson or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction', *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- ⁶³ See Charles. R. Larson, *The Emergence of African Fiction*. (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1971).
- ⁶⁴ J. B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944), p. 203.
- ⁶⁵ Kofi Antubam, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1963), p. 32.
- ⁶⁶ Armah, 'Larson or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction', *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- ⁶⁷ Larson translates it as 'Welcome', *The Emergence of African Fiction*, *op. cit.*, p. 271.
- ⁶⁸ E. L. Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana. Their Ancient beliefs*, (London: 1958), p. 130.
- ⁶⁹ Kofi Antubam, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
- ⁷⁰ E. L. Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana*, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
- ⁷¹ Chantal Zabus, *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone novel*. Second enlarged edition (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2007), p. 165.
- ⁷² J.B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, *op. cit.*, p. 200
- ⁷³ E.L., Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana. Their Ancient beliefs*, *op.cit.*, p. 46.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

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- ⁷⁵ R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in the Ashanti*. (London: Oxford University Press, First Published 1927), p. 135.
- ⁷⁶ Chantal Zabus gives ɛreceiverɔ as the meaning of the Akan word ɛgyefoɔ See her book *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone novel*, op. cit., p. 165.
- ⁷⁷ Rattray translates the sentence: ɛOgyefo gye meɔ as: ɛRescuer save meɔ in his book: *Akan-Ashanti: Folktales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, First Published 1930), p. 22.
- ⁷⁸ J.B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, op. cit., p. 202
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 202.
- ⁸⁰ Charles Larson, *The Emergence of African Fiction*, op. cit., p. 274.
- ⁸¹ J.B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, op. cit., p. 198.
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 205.
- ⁸³ Ibid., 204.
- ⁸⁴ Kofi Anyidoho ɛNational Identity and the Language of Metaphorɔ *FonTomFrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film*, op.cit., pp. 4-5.
- ⁸⁵ J. T. Evans, ɛThe Akan Doctrine of Godɔ in *African Ideas of God*, edited by Edwin. W. Smith (London: First Published 1950) 241-259, p. 243.
- ⁸⁶ R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in the Ashanti*, op. cit., p. 62.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 59.
- ⁸⁸ Madeline Manoukian, *The Akan and Ga-Adangme People* (London: International African Institute. First Published 1950), p. 51.
- ⁸⁹ Rattray, *Religion and Art in the Ashanti*, op. cit., p. 59.
- ⁹⁰ Madeline Manoukian, *The Akan and Ga-Adangme*, op. cit., p. 51.
- ⁹¹ Rattray, *Religion and Art in the Ashanti*, op. cit., p. 59.
- ⁹² Bronislaw Malinowsky has probably borrowed this term from Bachofen. It is the title of Bachofen's book: *Das Mutterrecht*, which means: ɛMother's Rightɔ See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, no. 1, p. 775.
- ⁹³ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Crime and Customs in Savage Society* (London: Kegan Paul Trench Trubner, First Published 1926), p. 75.
- ⁹⁴ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Edited, with introduction, by Rodney Needham. (Translated by James Harle Bell, Rodney Needham), (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p.116.
- ⁹⁵ Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, (Oxford: Blackwell, First Published 1955), p. 67.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 62.
- ⁹⁷ Bronislaw Malinowsky, *The Sexual Life of the Savages of North-Western Melanesia*, (London: Routledge and Sons, First Published 1929), p. 4.
- ⁹⁸ E.L. Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana*, op. cit., p. 23.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁰⁰ William. Emmanuel Abraham, *The Mind of Africa*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962), p. 69.

¹⁰¹ E. L. Meyerowitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 29.

¹⁰² The Akan society has evolved from a matrilineal to a patrilineal system, after the introduction of the *ntoro* ' cult in the fourteenth century. This was a cult which emphasised the male lineage, and which gave a great importance to the husband. See E. L. Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana*, pp. 98-99. See also Amadiume, I. *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture*, op. cit., pp. 74-76.

¹⁰³ It is worth noting that though it has the aspect of a patrilineal society, the man is the head of the household and is responsible for his dependents' economic requirements; the modern Akan society has retained some features of the matrilineal system.

¹⁰⁴ The definition and description of the Melanesian cargo cults and mentality that Armah provides resembles in many respects the ones that Worsley presents in his book: *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1956). Worsley points to the natives' scattering of their wealth and livestock (p. 11), and so does Armah. Again, Worsley refers to Lleweni Ruve (p. 30), and Armah does too (*Fragments*, p. 160).

¹⁰⁵ Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, op. cit., p. 243.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Ron Rassner, *Fragments: The Cargo Mentality*, op. cit., p. 58.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹¹⁰ Guenter Lewy, *Religion and Revolution*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 229.

¹¹¹ This is supposed to be, in Van Gennep's terms, a *rite of passage*. It is a *rite of incorporation* since Brempong re-enters his society. See Arnold Van Gennep's book, *The Rites of Passage* (Translated by Monika. B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 2004, First Published 1960), p. 24.

¹¹² This is reminiscent of Fanon's remark, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, about the Third World bourgeoisie, about its idleness and its role as an intermediary of the neo-colonial powers.

¹¹³ Victoria Brittain, *Ghana's Precarious Revolution*, *New Left Review* No. 140 (July-August 1983), 50-61, p. 51.

¹¹⁴ Le Vine, *Corruption in Ghana*, *Transition* (Accra), No. 47 (Jan-March 1975), 48-60, p. 47.

¹¹⁵ Robert. E. Dowse, *Modernization in Ghana and the USSR: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge and Paul Keegan, 1969), p. 39.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹¹⁷ Quoted by Kwesi Armah in his book: *Africa's Golden Road*, (London: 1965), p. 106.

¹¹⁸ See Robert. E. Dowse, *Modernization in Ghana and the USSR: A Comparative Study*, op. cit., p. 54.

¹¹⁹ The Apallo Commission was set up in March 1966 to investigate into Nkrumah's personal assets. See Keesing's *Contemporary Archives*, (June 4-11, 1966), p. 21438.

¹²⁰ See Keesing's *Contemporary Archives*, (Feb. 11-28, 1967), p. 21876.

¹²¹ The name 'Baako' also refers to the predicament of Armah's protagonist, since it means 'one'. See, Danquah's *The Akan Doctrine of God*, op. cit., p. 200. Baako's name thus refers to his 'uniqueness' since he is the odd-one-out, and to his loneliness. Rassner points out that 'Baako Onipa' the full name of the protagonist, means: 'one man' in Twi. See his essay 'Fragments: The Cargo Mentality', op. cit., p. 55.

¹²² See *West Africa*, (May 4, 1968), p. 527.

¹²³ The name 'Boateng' may also refer to the young Ghanaian writer, Yaw Boateng, whose first novel, *The Return* was published in 1977.

¹²⁴ See *West Africa*, (October 21, 1977), p. 1373.

¹²⁵ See *African Digest*, 12, no. 1, (covering events to July 17, 1964), p. 13.

¹²⁶ *West Africa*, (December 9, 1967), p. 1591. See as well, Keesing's *Contemporary Archives*, (February 11-18, 1967), p. 21876.

¹²⁷ *West Africa*, (December 9, 1967), p. 1591.

¹²⁸ Philip Whyte 'The Thematic and Formal importance of the cinema in Ayi Kwei Armah's Writings', *FonTomFrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film*, op. cit., 189-208, p. 194.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹³⁰ He carries this task further in his two late novels, *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and *The Healers* (1979).

¹³¹ Kofi Anyidoho 'National Identity and the Language of Metaphor', *FonTomFrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film*, op. cit., p. 14.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹³³ Christiansborg Castle was used by the Danish for their slave trade. It has been used as the seat of government, since Ghana's independence.

¹³⁴ Larson contends that Akosua Russell represents the Ghanaian writer, Efu Sutherland, and that Asante Smith represents Koofi Awoonor. See *The Emergence of African Fiction*, op. cit., p. 273.

¹³⁵ Cecil Abrahams A Review of Kofi Awoonor, *The Breast of the Earth, A Survey of the History, Culture and Literature of Africa South of the Sahara, Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1977), 143-145.

¹³⁶ Armah, 'African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific', op. cit., p. 28.



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¹³⁷ Achebe *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (London, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.,1975), p. 44.

¹³⁸ Margaret Castagno, Review: *Fragments* by Ayi Kwei Armah, p. 84.

CHAPTER TWO

REVOLUTIONARY COMMITMENT AND BLACK NATIONALISM IN ARMAH'S *WHY ARE WE SO BLEST?*

Armah's revolutionary commitment and Black Nationalism are more overtly expressed in *Why Are We So Blest?* than in *Fragments*. Unlike the latter, the former has a strong polemical dimension. It illustrates the argument held in this thesis that the African writers' preoccupation with their political and racial allegiances made them overlook the pitfalls of committed literature, notably authorial intrusions and propagandist writing. In this novel, Armah dramatizes the neo-colonial bondage of African countries and the betrayal of the African revolution by its leaders. He also criticises the fake socialism practised by a number of African countries after their independence. He, further, takes to task the Whites' racist stand towards the Blacks and seems to call for an 'anti-racist racism' similar to that of the Negritude ideology.

The aim of this chapter is to cast light on Armah's Negritudist attitude. It argues that Armah has evolved towards propagandist writing on account of his black nationalism. It, further, argues that Armah's obsession with black consciousness has resulted in strongly voiced anti-white feelings which give the novel a racialist dimension. The focal themes of slavery and anti-black racism are indicative of Armah's motives in writing the novel and its vindictive dimension. The novel seems to be, following Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* pattern, therapeutic, in that it attempts to work towards the disalienation of the Blacks by making them aware how alienated they are. This is the case of Modin who gradually grows aware that he is being alienated from his culture and people. The influence of Fanon's book whose purpose is to show the Negro on his way to disalienation¹ is quite striking in this novel. This chapter will highlight Fanon's influence on Armah and will lay a special stress on Armah's divergence from Fanon as regards Negro Nationalism. The chapter will also bring out the existentialist dimension of the novel. There will, further, be a special focus on the influence of Camus's philosophy of the Absurd and how it is interwoven in the fabrics of the novel. Camus's literary influence will also be demonstrated through a comparative study of *The Outsider* and *Why Are We So Blest?* This chapter also argues that though *Why Are We So Blest?* is, as *Fragments*, structurally and stylistically well elaborated, it is flawed by its author's racial fanaticism.

In *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah seems to have taken up from where he left off in *Fragments*. The two novels share common thematic concerns, i.e., existentialist alienation, neo-colonialism and slavery, and similar structural devices, notably the modernist stream-of-consciousness device and a fragmented narration. Like Baako, the protagonists of this novel, Solo and Modin, are assailed by loneliness and overcome by *angst*. They are prone to psychic disorders, they entertain nihilistic ideas, and they have a propensity for self-destruction. They all use writing for a cathartic purpose. They record their innermost thoughts and

feelings in their notebooks, in an attempt to escape neurosis. This attempt proves to be unsuccessful in the case of Baako and Solo who end up in hospitals. These two characters have common personality traits. They are both guilt ridden, defeatist, with frequent relapses into neurosis. Like Baako, Solo feels unable to find his way back into the stream (p. 11).² Yet, though *Why Are We So Blest?* shares common concerns with *Fragments*, it departs from it in its greater focus on racial issues. Armah focuses on the black and white relationship, which he portrays as one of domination by the latter on the former. He observes that the Blacks are 'the wretched' whereas the Whites are the 'blessed' and he takes it upon himself to reverse the situation on the personal plane, through Modin and Aimée's relationship. The white woman is dependent on the black man in their private life. He, however, insists on the 'destruction' of the black by the white man towards the close of the novel, when Modin is tortured to death by French soldiers.

The novel has a strong racist dimension which has contributed to its condemnation by some critics. This is the case of James Booth who considers it as 'malignant fiction'.³ He notes that 'it is malignant fiction of a particularly complex one, since on one level it comprises an *analysis* of the malignant fiction of racism, while at the same time it erects on a deeper level just such a fiction itself'.⁴ He, besides, makes it plain that he considers the novel as racist stating: '*Why Are We So Blest?* is not only an analysis of the psychological effects of racism, it is itself a racist book'.⁵ This is, again, pointed out by Adewale Maja-Pearce who maintains that the novel is 'just another sick book' because 'it is a profoundly racist book',⁶ and she goes on justifying her statement by saying that 'Armah's racism takes the form of an obsessive hatred of white women'.⁷ Pearce's 'sensitizing' reaction to Armah's novel is, however, so negative that she proclaims that most of the literary works that came out of Africa are 'downright bad' and she condemns James Booth for praising Armah's novelistic potential saying: 'considering Mr Armah's

opinion of white women, isn't there something base in Mr. Booth, himself white, calling him 'a novelist of genius'?⁹ Unlike Pearce, Booth reckons that the novel has an aesthetic appeal. He remarks: 'in many ways the novel represents a triumph in its subtle interweaving of realism and symbol'¹⁰ Similarly, Richard. K. Priebe praises the novel's aesthetic achievements, saying: 'Anyone who has read the book carefully knows it is a well-crafted piece of fiction' and he adds that the use of language is 'stunningly brilliant'.¹¹ Yet, Booth finds fault with the novel's thematic framework. He observes: 'As a universal myth of race-relations it is deceptive'.¹² Derek Wright, who also objects to Armah's racist stance, observes: 'The subsequent overemphasis on the personal wickedness of Western educators takes the novel out of the complex historical actuality and into the magical realms of conspiracy theory and racial diabolism'.¹³ He, further, considers that it 'anticipates the virulent racism of *Two Thousand Seasons*'.¹⁴

Whereas White critics have considered *Why Are We So Blest?* as flawed by its writer's racist tone, most of their Black counterparts have acclaimed it as a major achievement. Edward Lobb praises it and takes Armah's plea against the charge of 'racist' levelled at him by some Western critics. He remarks: 'Armah has predictably been attacked as a racist. Such a criticism I think is beside the point. Armah is not making a racial generalization, but cultural one, and the distinction is critical'.¹⁵ Again, Kairri T.H. Cheatwood provides a positive appraisal of the novel calling it a 'Black masterwork'.¹⁶ Cheatwood, a black American, who found his Negro Nationalism echoed by Modin, hails Armah as a soul 'Brother'.¹⁷ His sympathy for Armah is so great that he honours him the title of 'Frantz Fanon of African creative literature'.¹⁸ He remarks that had Fanon written novels, he would have written like Armah. Cheatwood, however, overlooks the fact that Fanon had condemned racial fanaticism. He considered the Negritudist writers' celebration of racial pride as being of little avail to the Negro's struggle to achieve recognition by the Whites.¹⁹ Among the other Black

critics who view the novel positively is Dubem Okafor who observes: "The theme is an emotionally delicate one and, in a less accomplished writer, could have degenerated into sentimental stridency, but Armah manages most of the time to strike a balance"²⁰ He, however, reckons that this balance is at times "precarious"²¹

The title of the novel, "Why Are We So Blest?" occurs in the text as that of an article written on Thanksgiving in a newspaper. This article is about how America has evolved towards material wealth. The writer of the article observes that this wealth marks the superiority of the Americans who are "blest" i.e., blessed, "fortunate" (p. 99), over the underprivileged. In this article the difference between the First and the Third world is paralleled with that which exists between the Divine and the Human, the sacred and the profane (p. 98). It implies that America has reached a heavenly state. Modin, the Black protagonist of the novel, replies to Mike, the white character who was reading the article, that this is a short-sighted vision of the American reality. He maintains that it overlooks the predicament of the underprivileged and the oppressed class in America, notably the Blacks and the Americans of Indian origin. Mike considers Modin and the African intellectual as being among the "blest" (p. 100). Whereas the title of the article applies to the American privileged class, the title of the novel applies to the African *élite*, and more particularly to the intellectual class. This class is dramatized through the predicament of the two major protagonists, Solo and Modin, two intellectuals whose lives take a parallel course and get together towards the close of the novel, which is, henceforth, composed of two stories.

The first story traces Solo's disillusionment with revolutionary practice in an African country. After completing his higher studies in Portugal, he returns to Africa, full of revolutionary idealism. His main goal is to fight the Westerners' racial prejudices against the Africans. His awareness of racial segregation is

sharpened after his girl-friend, a Portuguese girl, refuses his engagement ring. Out of spite, Solo decides to settle in Afrasia, a country that shelters different revolutionary movements. There, he enrolls with the Bureau that represents his people's anti-colonial struggle. But his ideals gradually fade away as he notices that the members of the movement perpetuate the oppression they are supposed to fight and that the Afrasian revolution is taking a turn that contradicts the principles it initially stood for. Solo, then, decides to use his writing as an ideological weapon to fight the exploitation of the Africans by their brethren, and to raise the masses' political consciousness. But this task is impeded by the lack of democracy that exists in Afrasia. He ends up working as a translator for a magazine, *Jeune Nation*. The frustrating feelings that this state of affairs begets in him make him sink in a depressive state which leads him to hospital. After leaving hospital, he feels relieved from his anguish, but he is soon overtaken by a psychological torment that grows sharper with the growth of the frustrations he daily experiences. Solo meets Modin, an African who comes to Afrasia with the same idealism as he himself once did. He warns him about the reality of the socio-political situation in Afrasia, to spare him the psychological pains he has experienced. But his attempt to save Modin fails and the latter dies on his way to join the revolutionary fighters.

The second story of the novel revolves round Modin's predicament. Modin, a Ghanaian, goes to America for higher studies, with a grant from an American institution. There, he gradually becomes conscious of the racial discrimination of the Blacks, and of his cultural alienation. He considers the white men as responsible for this alienation. To protest against their manipulation of his existence, he rejects the grant provided by Mr Oppenhardt. He takes various little jobs to support himself financially. During his stay in America, Modin has many white mistresses. He has Mrs Jefferson, the wife of his professor as a mistress. Her husband discovers the affair and takes revenge on Modin by stabbing him.

After recovering from his injury, Modin gives up his studies in order to join the Congherian revolutionary movement in Afrasia. He goes with his girl-friend, Aimée, a pseudo-liberal white woman to Laccryville, Afrasia's capital city. But the members of the movement they wanted to join do not accept them within their ranks. They then decide to cross the Sahara to join the battlefield.

Modin and Aimée are hitchhiking when a group of French soldiers pass by, do not stop for Modin, but stop for Aimée and offer her a lift. Feeling offended Modin refuses to get into the car. This refusal aroused the wrath of the French men who decide to take revenge on him. They torture him and let him die in the desert. They also take revenge on Aimée for having an affair with a Black man by raping her. In the main, in both stories of the novel the issue of racial segregation is an outstanding one. Both stories revolve round the difficulty of having interracial love relationships. By making the two protagonists' attempts to have a love affair with white women fail, Armah attempts to drive the message home to his black readers about the risks of indulging in such affairs. By making Modin's love affair with a white woman end so tragically, Armah tries to show it as a suicidal act.

The places that form the setting of the novel, though having fictional names are easily recognisable. Afrasia stands for Algeria, Kanza, for Kenya and Congheria for Angola. Armah seems to have deliberately made the settings recognisable to the reader, by making puns of the real names of these African countries. Again, to make the settings more easily identified, he refers to the customs and traditions of the people who live in these countries. There is for instance, a reference to the religion of the Afrasians, Islam. The beggars ask the blessing of Allah on Solo's head (p. 17). Besides, the Afrasian women, like the Algerian ones, wear a veil (p. 241). The Afrasians eat 'couscous' (p. 242), the national dish of Algeria. Moreover, the currency in Afrasia is the Dinar (p. 17), as

it is the case in Algeria. Another hint about Afrasia being Algeria is given by Solo who refers to the route he has followed to reach Afrasia. He says that he rode with a young engineer from Casablanca to the border (p 45), i.e., the Moroccan-Algerian border. Again, the Botanist says: "us the bicots (p. 240). The derogatory term "bicot has often been used by the French to abuse the Arabs, and more particularly the Maghrebins.

One more clue about Afrasia being Algeria is that its streets were renamed after its independence. This was the case in the early years of Algeria's independence. The streets which had French names were renamed after Algerian martyrs of the independence war and after some Third World revolutionaries, e.g., Che Guevara. In the novel, the reader is informed that a street is being renamed after Frantz Fanon, as it was the case in Algiers. Again, Afrasia, like Algeria, sheltered revolutionary movements after its independence, and its capital city, Laccryville, like Algiers, is hilly and has many white buildings (p. 47). Besides, the topography of Laccryville corresponds to that of Algiers. Armah writes: "down the road from the post-office, there is the main harbour gate (p. 16). This is the case in Algiers, and so is the case as regards the underpass near the university to which Armah refers (p. 16). Some other clues about Laccryville representing Algiers are: the Hotel d'Angleterre (p. 247) the Quasbah (p. 258), and "Dar El Baida (p. 247).

Similarly, Armah provides many clues to help the reader identify Kanza as being Kenya. The term Mzee (p. 37) is used by the Kenyans to honour old men because of their wisdom. The name Nyambura (p. 37) is a common female first name in Kenya. There is a reference to the "kiama (p. 37), a traditional Kenyan political institution. Besides, Pakansa, the head of state of Kanza, resembles Kenyatta. Like him he is old (p. 145) and has fought for his country (p. 39). Again, like him he has travelled to the white man's land (p. 40) and has been

imprisoned by the Whites (p. 41). In the main, by providing all these clues about the people and the countries he dramatizes, Armah attempts to help his readers identify the targets of his onslaughts. But, amazingly enough, he maintains, in his authorial statement, "any resemblance to real persons is coincidental"²² This seems to have been motivated both by a fear of censorship²³ and a desire to suggest its commonness to other African leaders.

The structure of the novel is complex. Its complexity lies in the lack of chronological sequence of the different sections of the novel. This is due to the flash back technique that Armah uses. The novel is made up of thirty unnumbered sections that bear the names of the major protagonists, Solo, Modin and Aimée, and that centre round their plight. The first three chapters are devoted to these three characters respectively. This cycle is, however, not maintained throughout the novel. At times, two consecutive chapters bear the name of the same character. The size of the chapters and the number of chapters devoted to every character vary according to the importance given by the writer to the character. The longest chapters are devoted to Solo, who is the narrator. The biggest number of chapters, thirteen is, on the other hand, devoted to Modin, since he epitomizes the main themes of the novel, i.e., revolutionary commitment and Negro Nationalism. The shortest and the fewest chapters are devoted to Aimée, who plays a secondary role. In the main, Armah devotes more space to his black characters as he is primarily concerned with the predicament of his brethren.

The episodic dimension of narrative structure also accounts for its complexity. Some events are announced but details about their occurrence are delayed to a later stage. The incident of Aimée's rape is a case in point. There is a reference to it in Chapter Twenty Eight, but its causes are not disclosed till Chapter Thirty. This modernist technique of indirect provision of information which is meant to sustain suspense is used in Chapter Two, where Solo is reading

and disclosing the content of Modin's and Aimée's notebooks, but the reader is not informed of this fact till Chapter Twenty Eight. Modin's experience is re-enacted according to its description in his notebook, as a post-mortem. Suspense is also maintained when Armah keeps his characters anonymous, when he first introduces them, e.g., in Chapter Three, or when he introduces them and keeps their role in the plot secret for a while. This is the case for Naita and Mr Oppenhardt. They are referred to in Chapter Two, but their role in the protagonist's life is not indicated until we get to Chapter Eight. Hence, the events Armah describes require piecing together before we have an overall idea of the main plot. The stream-of-consciousness narrative technique that Armah uses accounts for the fragmented form of the novel. Cheatwood, on the other hand considers the form of the novel as representing life.²⁴ He maintains that experience is, as in real life, understood when viewed in retrospect. Besides the flashback technique (p. 55), the other modernist techniques that Armah uses are interior monologue (p. 11), capital writing (pp. 160-161) and the diary form (pp. 221-226).

The modernist influence also appears in the use of the cyclic time sequence. The cyclic occurrence of chapters devoted to different characters also accounts for the breaks in time linearity. For instance, at the beginning of some chapters, the writer takes up where he has left off two or three chapters back. This shift forward and backward in time is done with the purpose of bringing the two plots of the novel to the same stage of development. The modernist influence, further, appears in the abstract and, at times, obscure symbolism of the novel. A case in point is Solo's statement: "Perhaps I am the spume, a little speck of fugitive water sent into the air by huge waves in their crashing against hard obstacles" (p. 11). This kind of obscure image is used when Armah deals with the personal fate of his characters to show how confused their minds are as a consequence of their existential alienation. Their *angst* also accounts for some of

the surrealist imagery used in their interior monologue. Armah also uses the surrealist technique of the description of dreams, madness and hallucinations. This is the case in Chapter One. Solo has nightmares (p. 18) and goes to a hospital for psychic problems (p. 20). Armah has been taken to task by some of his fellow scholars for his overconcern with 'angst' and existential alienation, as it was the case of Achebe who maintained: 'I was not trying to put Armah down. I was simply hoping he would not distort the talent which I thought I saw by his imitating the style and bias of some other people, imposing on his art what I have called the 'foreign metaphor' ²⁵

Symbolism is less obscure when Armah deals with the fate of the community, such as the oppression of the African masses and their exploitation by their ruling class. This is clearly meant to serve the revolutionary didacticism of the novel. For instance, through the image of the lorry that Solo draws, Armah attempts to drive home his message about the revolutionary betrayal of the African leaders and the necessity for revolutionary change. The picture shows a truck going up a hill with the villains, i.e., the corrupt people, on board. The truck is pushed by the 'militants' who are destroyed during the operation. Solo points out that the image 'represents society' (p. 27). This image applies both to the colonial and the post-colonial situation of African countries. In the former case, the truck represents the country, and the summit towards which it is pushed represents Independence. In this case, the destroyed 'militants' stand for the martyrs who died for their country's independence. In the latter case, the truck represents the middle class, and the 'militants' who are pushing it represent the working class. The exploitation of the working class by the middle class appears in the fact that some people are comfortably on board the truck, whereas some others are painfully pushing it forward. Another example of this didactic symbolism features in the analogy Armah draws of Modin, and by extension that of the revolutionary African intellectual, with Prometheus. In the Greek

mythology, Prometheus attempts to save humanity, by stealing fire from Zeus and taking it to the Humans. Like him, Modin rebels against the ðblessedø the *élite* to which he belongs, and joins those of a lower social status, the masses, whom he plans to help improve their social conditions. Modin has, to borrow Cabralø phraseology, ðcommitted a class suicideø This allegorical didacticism is matched with a more direct didacticism when Armah intrudes to express his credentials through a more straightforward style.

The style of the novel varies from one episode to another. It is simple when the protagonistø external experience is described and complex when his stream-of-consciousness is reported. This is the case in the episodes where the protagonists speculate about existential alienation, using an existentialist rhetoric. A case in point is Soloø interior monologue about Modinø alienation:

He, plucked from the damned, turned into whatever it is the Anglo-Saxons call their *assimilados*, the line of his growth bent, his soul grown into some new freak, something lonely, needing playthings to punctuate an unbearable loneliness, chose, a lonely child, what among the arsenal of consumable things attracted him most, and found in it destruction. (p. 207)

Another example of the use of such abstract language is Soloø reflection: ðIf there were a way for those with the guts and the desire to end our destruction to contain aloneness long enough to find souls to travel with, not to embrace destroyers!ø (p. 209). Here, Armah is being ironical about the African intellectuals and their obsession with their alienation.

Irony is an outstanding feature of Armahø style. Ironical remarks abound in this novel. They are mostly made about the Whites, as it is the case for Aimée, and the African *élite*, especially those who have a superiority complex towards their brethren, such as Manuel. Armahø irony about the so-called revolutionary

attitude of the white pseudo-liberals of Aimée's type appears in his remark about her wanting not a 'bourgeois' hotel but a 'revolutionary' one (p. 60). His irony about the Manuel type of Africans is noticeable in Solo's remark that 'Jorge Manuel has already the gift of carrying himself with the self-conscious dignity of African leader' (p. 51). Armah is even more sarcastic in the statement where he refers to Manuel's use of French words such as 'Equality' and he remarks that Manuel uses these words 'about whose truth the French have long since grown cynical' (p. 52). This satirical portrayal of the African leaders and intellectuals has Fanonian echoes.

Fanon's influence on this novel is striking and has been pointed out by most critics of the novel. Robert Fraser, for instance, refers to Armah's adoption of Fanon's concept of neo-colonialism, and points out that this is inherent in Armah's contention that the intellectuals are destroyers of their own people.²⁶ Edward Lobb, on the other hand, observes that Armah adopts Fanon's ideology of the colonised and the bourgeoisie.²⁷ The influence of Fanon on Armah is greater in this novel than it is in his previous ones, as it appears from his use of both *The Wretched of the Earth*, and *Black Skin White Masks* as reference books. Though he was acquainted with the Algerian society, he has had recourse to *The Wretched of the Earth* where the workings of this society are expertly analysed. The influence of this book shows in Armah's concern for neo-colonial bondage, revolutionary violence, revolutionary betrayal and intellectual passivity. Armah has, on the other hand, used Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* as a reference book to portray the psychological state of his black characters when confronted to a white presence. In this book, Fanon is mainly concerned with the black man's existential alienation. He expects to contribute to the Negro's disalienation by curing him from the psychic disorders brought by his colonial experience. Fanon writes: 'What I want to do is help the black man free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment'²⁸

In this book, Fanon analyses the effects of the Negro's alienation and its consequent neurosis. Fanon sees the major cause of the Negro's neurotic behaviour in the inferiority complex that is instilled in him by his white masters. He remarks that many of the psychological disturbances the Negro experiences are a consequence of his constant desire to validate himself in the eyes of 'The Other'²⁹ the other being both the white man and his black fellow. Fanon considers that much of the Negro's psychic unrest is caused by his own attempt to be a white man's 'zombie'. He argues that the black man strives to come as close to the white man as possible, and that he attempts to get integrated into the white man's world to rid himself of his inferiority complex. Fanon, further, observes that the black man's awareness that he will never be fully admitted to this world, no matter how socially successful he is, makes this aspiration all the more painful and his psychological torment even greater. Fanon points out that the first attempt to get closer to the white man is usually to get a white partner. Fanon, further, points out that the 'myth' of the black man's sexual potency is particularly entrenched in white women's mentality.³⁰ He further suggests that the appeal the black man has for the white women is resented by the white men, who feel their virility threatened, and who often take revenge on the black man by castrating him whenever they get the opportunity to do so. This is re-enacted by Armah in *Why Are We So Blest?*³¹ On the whole, like Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*, Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* has a cathartic function. Both writers attempted to help their black fellows regain their self-respect, a task the Negritudist writers undertook at first. Yet, Fanon did not endorse the Negritude ideology. He opposed its romanticism, narcissism and racial chauvinism, as when he proclaimed: 'I as a man of color I do not have the right to seek to know in what respect my race is superior or inferior to another race'³² He, further, says: 'My life should not be devoted to drawing up the balance sheet of Negro values'³³ and 'I as a man of color I do not have to seek ways of stamping down the pride of my former

master³⁴ Though Armah has similarly condemned Negritude in his essays, its ideology informs his novels. This ambivalence is pointed out by Ode Ogede who notes: "In "Battle for the Mind of Africa", Armah still persisted in his outright condemnation of Negritude even though in between this time [all of his works] can be shown together to substantially resemble Senghor's work in tone, intention and achievement³⁵

In *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah's Negritudist stance mostly appears in the delineation of his white characters, through whom he attempts to make the white man appear as vile. Aimée, who epitomises the white race, is monstrous; she is violent, unscrupulous, selfish and hypocritical. The latter aspect of her character is illustrated through her ambivalent attitude to the Blacks. She claims to be a sympathiser of the Blacks' cause, but she calls Solo a "nigger" and a "black bastard" (p.270). Another issue over which Armah and Fanon are at odds is that of the past of the black race. Whereas the former sees the need to celebrate it, the latter condemns its celebration. Fanon's opposition to the spirit of Negritude appears in the following statement: "In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival of an unjustly unrecognised Negro civilisation"³⁶ The importance Armah gives to the past appears in his invocation of slavery (p. 77). Armah's recreation of the past is, however, not done with the intention of exalting it as did the first generation of the Negritude writers, but to remind his people of their past mistakes. This is an indirect warning about their liability to reiterate the same mistakes. Despite the differences between Armah and Fanon on such an important issue, the ideological influence of the latter on *Why Are We So Blest?* is not to be undermined. Fanon's influence partly accounts for the existentialist stamp of the novel, since his ideological framework, notably as expressed *Black Skin White Masks*, was shaped by the existentialist currents.

Though the existentialist influence on the novel, as on *Fragments*, is quite striking, some African critics, have following the example of Armah himself, denied it. This is the case of Ode Ogede who observes: ‘some critics were so blind to Armah’s relationship to the African tradition that they read his novels as an extension of the writings of the existentialist authors such as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Kafka’³⁷ As it will be demonstrated this influence is glaring in the mood, style and thematic concerns of the novel. It is, for instance, noticeable in the protagonist’s personal experience. Like the existentialist hero, they are unable to indulge in social relations and are, therefore, overwhelmed by loneliness. Solo says that there is ‘no contact’ (p. 11). Another existentialist feature appears in the recurring references to the absurdity and futility of life. Solo remarks: ‘at the end of each effort there is only futility’ (p. 13). The emptiness of life is referred to through terms like ‘barren’ (p. 84), and ‘hopelessness’ (p. 85). The existentialist dimension of the novel appears from the very first lines of the novel. Solo says that he has become ‘a ghost, wandering about the face of the earth, moving with a freedom [he has] not chosen’ (p. 11). This is a reference to the existentialist ethics of freedom of choice. He feels he is like a ‘ghost’ since he has been deprived of the freedom to choose. He remarks that even the pace of his ‘walk is never something [he is] free to choose’ (p. 15). Like the existentialist hero, Solo is aware that to acquire the essence he lacks, a fact due to his deprivation of freedom of choice, he should ‘do the work of his life. Like Sartre’s Roquentin, he wants to achieve an ‘essence’ by writing a book.

Solo resembles Roquentin in many respects. Like him, he is in a state of total ‘despair’ (p. 55) and experiences ‘fever and nausea’ (p. 55), a nausea caused by *angst*. Again, like Roquentin, Solo does not know how to overcome his personal crisis. Both Roquentin and Solo are aware of the worthlessness of their existence. Modin experiences such a feeling as well. He says: ‘for the last four days a sense of utter futility has been wearying me’ (p. 235). Like Solo and

Roquentin, Modin experiences *angst* and is subject to nausea (p. 103). But his response to the existential alienation he undergoes is different from theirs. He attempts to react against the forces that have contributed to his plight. In the main, Modin and Solo represent, as Shelby Steele puts it, the external and the internal dimensions of 'existential entrapment'. She remarks: 'The story of Modin, the character who carries dramatic action, dramatizes the destructive power of the external reality while the story of Solo illustrates the paralysing effect of internal emptiness'.³⁸ Whereas Solo resembles Roquentin, Modin resembles Meursault, the protagonist of Camus' *The Outsider*.

Camus' influence on Armah's novel is both ideological and literary.³⁹ Camus' influence, further appears in the reference to the myth of Sisyphus (p. 185). Aimée compares her sexual life to Sisyphus' ordeal. This refers to the myth of Sisyphus, the hero of the Greek mythology who is compelled to roll a huge rock up a hill as a punishment for cheating death. But when he nears the summit, the rock rolls down, and he goes down to start rolling it up again. He, besides, has to do this for eternity. Camus maintains that despite the hardships of his ordeal, Sisyphus is happy for he has escaped death. In Camus' view Sisyphus' predicament illustrates the experience of the 'Absurd'. The philosophy of the 'Absurd', which rests on the assumption that life is absurd, was propounded by Camus in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). The omnipresence of death during the Second World War had made Camus and many of his contemporaries, for instance Sartre, experience the 'Absurd'. This experience results from one's 'consciousness of inevitable death',⁴⁰ and consequently of the futility of one's effort to cling to life. Camus, however, condemns any attempt to resolve this dilemma through suicide.⁴¹ Still, though Camus points out that life is absurd, he contends that it is worth living. This was one of the major differences between Camus and Sartre. They also differed in their response to nihilism. Sartre considered self-annihilation or nihilism as possible solutions to resolve the

personal crisis that modern life generates in man, whereas Camus opposed nihilism.⁴² They, further, disagreed as regards revolutionary violence.⁴³

The philosophy of the *l'Absurde* informs Armah's novel. Armah hints at the inevitability of death through the title of the book that Solo reads: *He Who Must Die* (p. 18). The title of the book foreshadows Modin's death. The *l'Absurde* is experienced by Modin, who is constantly aware of his approaching death (p. 31). The influence of Camus's philosophical thoughts is particularly evident in Modin's remarks: "The real question is not whether to commit suicide but how best to invest my inevitable destruction. Since death is all-pervasive, the fear of death loses some of its sense (p. 31). Still, Modin, and by extension Armah, departs from Camus in that he chooses revolutionary engagement as a solution to the experience of the *l'Absurde*. Camus considered revolutionary violence as murderous, and yet he did not oppose revolt against all forms of oppression.⁴⁴ Modin has, however, chosen revolutionary engagement out of a self-destructive urge on account of his experience of existential alienation. He remarks:

What is the meaning of my manic pushes to the point of danger but a search for self-annihilation? I know suicide is childish, but why go looking for it by different paths? The suicidal impulse is well hidden [í] I have wanted to destroy myself, but so well hidden has the desire for suicide been, its temptations have always looked like extreme pleasure offered, taken, tasted (p. 158).

Camus's influence on Armah's novel is not only philosophical but literary, since there are obvious parallels between *Why Are We So Blest?* and *The Outsider*,⁴⁵ whose story revolves round the fate of Meursault, a French clerk, who kills an Arab, in Algeria, and is sentenced to death. Meursault breaks the rules of the conventional moral code by not showing signs of emotion at his mother's funeral. He does not cry, neither does he want to see his mother's body. Besides, he drinks white coffee, a taboo for someone bereaved, in the French mentality of

the time. Moreover, he goes to the beach the next day, and he goes to see a comical film with Marie, an ex-colleague. Meursault is condemned by his fellows because he does not play the game⁴⁶ i.e., the game of moral pretence, and he refuses to lie⁴⁷. This behaviour accounts for his being an 'outsider'. He also considers himself as an 'outsider' since he feels alien to the world around him. His mother's death sets him thinking about morality. This entails his awareness of the absurdity of life.

Camus's *The Outsider* and Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* have common characteristics. They have a similar mood; despair is pervasive in both novels. They also have similar characters' plights and a similar concern for 'La Condition Humaine'. Besides, both novels are autobiographical.⁴⁸ Camus, like Meursault, was a clerk in Algiers.⁴⁹ Armah, like Modin, studied in America⁵⁰ and like Solo, he worked in Algiers. The two novels have scenes taking place in Algiers, and they both have a racial dimension. In Camus's novel the racial division is between the French and the Arabs, in Armah's it is between the Blacks and the Whites. Again, in both novels violence is used by one race against the other. In *The Outsider*, Raymond beats the Arab woman and Meursault kills her brother. In *Why Are We So Blest?*, Mr Jefferson stabs Modin and the French soldiers torture him to death. In both novels, the motives of violence are race-conditioned. Meursault's shooting of four more bullets into the Arab's inert corpse is but the expression of racial hatred, and so is Mr Jefferson's infliction of a severe punishment on Modin, whom he stabs several times.

The protagonists of Armah's novel, Solo and Modin, resemble Meursault to a certain extent. Like him, they both experience existential alienation and, like him, they are not involved in social relations. Meursault feels an outsider in his society, Modin feels an outsider in America. Like Meursault, Solo is guilt-ridden. Both Meursault and Solo are ambitious when they are students, and they become

despondent and indifferent to the fate of their society after finishing studies. Meursault's lack of ambition appears in his refusal to be promoted to a better job in Paris and Solo's appears in his decision to be a mere translator. Modin resembles Meursault in that he is aware of his 'inevitable destruction' (p. 31). Meursault thinks that since death is inevitable, dying now or in twenty years makes no difference. Modin holds a similar view. He remarks that 'since death is all-pervasive, the fear of death loses some of its sense' (p. 31). Another similarity between Meursault and Modin is that they both have no emotional ties with their girl-friends, Marie and Aimée respectively. Yet Meursault and Modin, differ in some respects. They, for instance, react differently to their experience of the 'Absurd'. Meursault, '*L'homme absurde*' par excellence, is committed life. Though he realises that his past life was 'absurd', he is ready to live it all over again. Modin, who knows that his death is inevitable and imminent, attempts to hasten its occurrence by going to the Congherian battlefield. This act, as Manuel and Ngulo point out, is suicidal. Suicide is, however, a solution that Camus rejects. Again, unlike Meursault, Modin is not an 'absurd' hero, since he is unhappy, whereas according to Camus, '*L'homme absurde*' is happy, as is Sisyphus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

Besides their difference as regards the reaction to the experience of the 'Absurd', Camus and Armah also differ in their attitude to the function of art. Whereas Camus favours the 'art-for-art's sake' position, noticeable in his detachment in his novel, Armah privileges openly committed literature, as it appears from his intrusions with polemical statements. This is particularly the case when he tackles racial issues. A case in point is Modin's criticism of the Thanksgiving article which maintains that the Americans are the 'blest'. He tells Mike: 'Everyone who can write a whole article on Thanksgiving and leave out the mass murder of the so-called Indians is a street-corner hustler, nothing better' (p. 99), and he adds: 'America may have been a paradise when the Indians ran it, but

its shambles now. What the European riff-raff of your great ancestors brought with them was the European genius for destroying everything in an exaggerated form (p. 100). Through his two major protagonists Armah expresses his hatred of the Whites and expects the African artist to be committed to the destruction of the destroyers (p. 231), and to express his hatred of the latter as he himself does in *Why Are We So Blest?*. Camus, on the other hand, expects a compromising attitude. He says: "No great work of genius has ever been founded on hatred or contempt. In some corner of his heart, at some moment of history, the real creator always ends up reconciling"⁵¹

Besides Camus, Armah seems to have come under the influence of Existentialism via Richard Wright, one of the first Negro-American protest writers to achieve world-wide recognition. Wright's novel, *The Outsider* (1953) was considered as the first American existentialist novel. Wright's Existentialism was, as Edward Margolies points out "not an intellectually learned process [] but rather the lived experiences of his growing years"⁵² Wright, however, also came under the influence of the existentialist ideology through his direct contact with two of its outstanding proponents, notably Sartre and Camus whom he befriended, while in his self-imposed exile in Paris. His novel *Native Son* (1940), which deals with the Blacks' existentialist alienation in American society, seems to have influenced Armah.⁵³ Wright's novel revolves round the story of Bigger Thomas, an uneducated Negro whose frustrations lead him to criminality. He becomes the driver of Mr Dalton, a rich White liberal. The latter's daughter and her boyfriend, two communists, attempt to remove the racial barriers between them and Bigger by treating him as an equal, much to his annoyance. The first day of his employment, he drives Mary back home and helps her to her room because she is drunk. Fearing to be accused of attempting to rape her, he puts a pillow on her face to prevent her from answering her mother's calls. He, thus, inadvertently kills her. This event marks the beginning of a cycle of violent acts that Bigger

perpetuates in revolt against his fate. He, thus kills his girl-friend, Bessie, whom he suspects of being about to betray him to the police. He also attempts to make Jan, who treated him nicely, bear responsibility for Mary's death. He is chased up by the police, tried and sentenced to death.

The similarity between Wright's novel and Armah's lies in that they both make statements about the plight of the Negro in a white society. Modin, like Bigger, experiences existential alienation as a consequence of racial segregation. Both novels are protest novels and they both express their writers' Negro Nationalism. Both writers deal with the white liberals and their attitude to the Blacks. In Wright's novel, these are: Jan, Mary and Max, the communists. In Armah's novel, they are represented by Aimée. Again, both writers refer to the era of slavery. In Wright's novel, Max, Bigger's lawyer, traces the origin of the Blacks' plight in the slavery episode. In Armah's novel, Modin does so. In both novels, there is an emphasis on the myth of the black man's virility and his high potential of emotional response. The liberal women of the two novels, Mary and Aimée, are very rich and they rebel against their wealthy family background, by sympathising with the oppressed. Yet, unlike Aimée's, Mary's feelings towards the Blacks are sincere. Another major difference between the two novels lies in the solution to the black and white issue provided by the two writers. Whereas Wright preaches reconciliation between the two races, Armah calls for a division. Wright shows that there can be friendship between the two races through Bigger's attitude towards Max, at the close of the novel. Armah emphasizes the fact that this is impossible, through the example of Solo's and Sylvia's relationship. On the whole, the existentialist influence is so strong on Armah's novel that it cannot be overlooked. It is particularly evidenced in the delineation of his characters.

The major protagonist, Solo, develops, like Baako in *Fragments*, from an optimist, confident in his ability to bring about revolutionary change, to a

pessimist one, convinced of the futility of any such attempt. Whereas in *Fragments* we are made to witness Baako's gradual disillusionment, in *Why Are We So Blessed?*, we are informed of it. When Solo is first introduced, he is in a state of complete despondency, and it is through his reminiscences that we come to learn the causes of his despair. The major cause is his failure to participate effectively in the revolutionary movement he joined. He realizes that the revolutionary ideals he cherished have been crushed by the "pseudo-revolutionaries" of the Manuel type. The other cause of Solo's despair is the failure of his love-affair with Sylvia. This makes him realize the futility of his attempt at reconciling the black and the white race. Solo's idealism is at its peak when he is a student. He entertains ideas about his Promethean mission. He confesses that he was in the grip of "the consuming hope that there were things in the world [he] could change" (p. 55). His first goal at the time was to bridge the gap between the white and the black race. He confesses: "the thing I hoped to hold was love, the attraction of one person to his opposite, the power that brings the white to the black and leads them all to open to each other areas of themselves which they have long kept hidden from everybody else" (p. 12). This idealism started to fade away after he experienced racial discrimination from his girl-friend. To forget this frustrating experience, and to take revenge on the white men for colonizing his country, he joins his people's revolutionary struggle. But he soon withdraws.

Solo is a defeatist, since he gives up revolutionary praxis quite easily. Though he maintains that he has withdrawn because the revolution was being betrayed, he seems to have done so out of cowardice. He, himself, once acknowledges that he is a coward: "The thought of her pushes up things I have buried-incapacitating knowledge that ultimately is only an excuse for my cowardice" (p. 229). Solo's cowardice is also apparent in his attempt at self-destruction. Being unable to stand up to his enemies he destroys himself. This

masochist dimension is hinted at through his statement: "I cannot reach what needs to be destroyed. I shall return all my energies against myself" (p. 231). In the main, Solo has a weak personality and is well-aware of this. Comparing himself to the other revolutionaries who are still active in the battlefield, he says: "their entrails have an iron toughness mine do not have" (p. 13). The weakness of Solo's personality mainly comes from his lack of self-confidence, and he is aware of this. He reckons: "I, who have so little confidence left" (p. 14). This is generated by a constant feeling of insecurity, a feeling which is accompanied by a sense of guilt.

Solo is a guilt-ridden character. He blames himself for the negative things that happen to him and those that happen to the people around him. For instance, he blames himself for his inability to write about the truths he sees, although he knows that it is the Afrasian rulers who, through the imposed censorship, prevent him from expressing these truths. He says: "I seldom have enough blame left over to shower onto anyone else" (p. 14). His self-blame for others' misfortune is particularly strong when he encounters beggars. Solo feels "as if somehow [he] were responsible for their having been reduced to their state, or at least for their remaining in this condition" (p. 17). He resembles the "leftist colonizer" who is overcome by a guilty conscience. Albert Memmi observes about the latter's plight: "The leftist colonizer's role cannot long be sustained; it is unlivable. He cannot help suffering from guilt and anguish and also, eventually, bad faith. He is always on the fringe of temptation and shame, and in the final analysis, guilty"⁵⁴ Solo also feels guilty for Modin's death and regrets not having helped him in a more positive way. This sense of guilt is in part the cause of much of the anguish that Solo experiences. Solo is a neurotic who has schizophrenic tendencies. He himself acknowledges that he has a divided self. He says: "My voice was weak coming from a self-divided, confused" (p. 230). Solo's split personality is noticeable in the controversial attitude he has towards the Whites. This attitude, a mixture of both hatred and love,⁵⁵ is hinted at when he vows that he wished he

could attain the healing simplicity of hatreds unmixed with love (p. 231). This ambivalence has been pointed out by both Fanon and Albert Memmi. The latter acknowledges that he has personally experienced such mixed feelings. He notes: "How could [the colonized] hate the colonizers and yet admire them so passionately? (I too felt this admiration in spite of myself)"⁵⁶

Solo's attitude towards social privileges is, similarly, ambivalent. Though at times, he voices his protest against the *élites*' acquisition of privileges, at other times, he expresses secret strivings for these privileges. He, for instance, reckons that the attraction of the white world has made him "wish for a deafness against the cries of [his] own doomed people" (p. 68). Solo's condemnation of social privileges is not sincere since he benefits from them on account of his status, a member of the intellectual *élite*. His attitude is similar to that of the anti-colonialist Westerner whose predicament Albert Memmi highlights stating: "He participates in and benefits from those privileges which he half-heartedly denounces [í] How can he go about freeing himself of this halo of prestige which crowns him and at which he would like to take offence?"⁵⁷ Solo is aware of his hypocritical attitude to social privileges. This is particularly the case when he compares himself to the downtrodden: "I split my personality in two putting the stronger half in the beggar's place and making it judge the weaker, which is left as me. Whenever I do this the hypocrisy of my life, its lack of truth, and the distance between the things I once believed and the way I live now, comes to me all over again" (p. 20). On the whole, Solo resembles the very *élite* he condemns, since like them he preaches certain principles, e.g., social justice, but acts in a way that contradicts them. Thus, Solo's revolutionary convictions are not strong enough to make him commit "a class suicide" as Modin does. The two characters' attitude to revolutionary praxis, the one passive, the other active, is meant to epitomize the different categories of the African intellectuals.

Modin, the second major character, is like Solo in a state of despondency. His despair is mostly caused by his awareness of his alienation through education. He sees higher education as a weapon used by the Whites to bring about his spiritual death. This view of the alienation of the Blacks through education seems to be an echo of Sartre's expressed in the preface of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*:

The European *élite* undertook to manufacture a native *élite*. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with red-hot iron, with the principles of Western culture; they stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, white-washed.⁵⁸

Armah himself was, like Modin, a brilliant adolescent picked out to benefit from a scholarship to further his studies in the United States. Modin's despair intensifies when he becomes conscious that he is bearing a hand in his own destruction by furthering his studies in the United States. He, however, feels that he has not been involved through his own will, in the plot for his destruction, through education, by the Whites. He says: "I am supposed to get myself destroyed out of my own free seeming choice" (p. 31). Modin points out that the white man corrupts him and develops his potential for self-destruction by initiating him to his world's rejoicings. In other words, by making his material world appeal to him and by encouraging his strivings for material acquisitions, the white man makes him dependent on him and alienates him from his people. Modin realizes that through his pursuit to be the white man's shadow, he will contribute to his own destruction.

Modin's protest against the fate that the white man has mapped out for him, i.e., to be an *évolué* who will serve him once he goes back home, is firstly expressed through his giving up his studies. He is aware that this act will deprive

him of the privileges to which he is entitled when he returns home, e.g., ‘a bungalow, car, salary allowances’ (p. 224). He believes that privilege is part of the White man’s plot to destroy him by alienating him from the masses. To avoid this kind of destruction and to reverse this scheme against the white men, Modin chooses revolutionary praxis, so that he becomes the destroyer instead of the destroyed. Though he insists on the fact that his revolutionary commitment has altruistic motives, i.e., to save ‘the wretched of the earth’, his behaviour indicates that he joins the ‘*maquis*’ not out of revolutionary conviction, but out of personal despair. He, for instance, finds it difficult to express the reasons that have made him take the decision to join the struggle, when is asked to fill in the form of membership to the Congherian movement. His desire to go back to Lacrryville when he is with Aimée on their way to the battlefield (p. 280) indicates his lack of revolutionary fervour. Clearly, no truly committed revolutionary would turn back once he decides to join a revolution. Modin has obviously decided to join the struggle to resolve a personal crisis. He becomes increasingly aware that he lacks the courage of ‘true’ revolutionaries, and that he is a coward. On his way to the battle field, he reflects about his cowardice: ‘Then a contrary thought worsened my confusion: my beginning to think like this ó isn’t it an indication that a mind grown cowardly has started making excuses already’ (p. 235). He also remembers that Aimée has often called him ‘a coward’ (p. 280).

Like Solo, Modin has a weak personality; he easily succumbs to the demands of Mrs Jefferson and Aimée. He, also, easily uses tranquilizers when he is upset (p. 103). His psychological weakness is symbolized by his physical appearance; he is frail and often falls ill. He often relapses in neurosis as a consequence of his inability to resolve his internal dilemmas, notably the one related to his social role. There is a contradiction between what he is compelled to be, ‘a factor’, and what he would like to be, ‘Prometheus’ or ‘Osagyefo’, i.e., the common people’s saviour. Modin is an ‘*angst*-ridden’ person on account of his

conflicting impulses. This appears in the *spleen* that is contained in the comments his notebook, where such terms as ‘self-annihilation’, ‘despair’ and ‘loneliness’ recur. Yet, much of the anxiety Modin experiences comes from his being over conscious of his racial segregation. His obsession with racism verges on paranoia, since he considers all the white people’s attitudes towards him as being racist. This is the case when he believes that the white doctor who is in charge of him ‘dislikes’ him (p. 154). The only white person he trusts is Aimée his girl-friend, whom Solo considers as an untrustworthy person.

Aimée, whose name means ‘the loved one’ is ironically quite repulsive. She herself confesses that ‘she [has] always been told she was bad’ (p. 213) and that she was considered as a ‘monster’ (p. 213). Her readiness for destruction is often pointed out. Solo remarks that she gives: ‘a strong impression of a destructive wilderness’ (p. 62) and that there is ‘so much destructiveness caught in everything she did, the way she moved, the tenor of her being’ (p. 149). An Afro-American student warns Modin about her destructive propensity saying: ‘Blue eyes gon eat you, brother, blue eyes gon eat you dead’ (p. 200). Aimée’s destructive impulses are, for instance, apparent in her liking for weapons and war. Modin says that ‘when they went and brought their guns, Aimée’s depression lifted at once’ (p. 243). She wants to leave her country because she considers that ‘there is no fire anywhere’ (p. 143). Her destructive potential is symbolized by her surname, Reitsch, has a fascist connotation as it seems to be a pun of the Hitlerian ‘Reich’. As Derek Wright remarks Armah ‘surrounds Aimée with a rhetoric of ‘white devilry’ so that she is imagined as an engine of destruction or demonic contraption rather than a human being’⁵⁹

Aimée, like Modin, has a physical appearance that does not fit her gender, featuring a masculine physical stature. Solo says that she has an ‘awkward angularity’ (p. 57), and that she is ‘big in a tall, bony way’ (p. 62). She has manly

manners as well, as when she salutes the members of the Congherian Bureau when she first meets them. This contradiction between her gender and her masculine appearance represents the duality between what she is, a "racist" and what she pretends to be, a "liberal" Aimée's concealed desire to maintain the Blacks in an inferior position in comparison to the Whites appears in her fantasies of a colonial master-servant relation, like that of Mensahib and Mwangi (p. 186). This indicates that she is not sincere about the motives of her choices, such as having a black man as a boyfriend, or supporting liberation movements. Her decision to boycott the easy life that her bourgeois origin has offered her and to live with the "wretched" has not been taken out of compassion for the latter but out of selfishness. She has wanted to change her life style which was becoming a bore. Aimée has also decided to join the revolutionary movement out of a desire for adventure, and not out of political convictions. She is shrewd and knows how to conceal her false revolutionary commitment. Her duplicity appears in her attempt to deceive the members of the Congherian movement by writing a revolutionary manifesto with slogans, which she knows will appeal to them.

Still, it is only towards the close of the novel that her true racist nature is unveiled. She drops her "liberal" mask when she confronts Solo, after Modin's death, and calls him a "black bastard" and "Nigger" (p. 270). Moreover, she indirectly acknowledges that she came to Africa not to join a revolutionary movement, but merely out of curiosity when she says: "What would I look like telling people I didn't cross the Sahara after all í" (p. 283). The only time Aimée appears sincere about her feelings is when she objects to the condition of the Afrasian women, whose exploitation she notices when she visits the kitchen of the farm. She tells the manager who thinks that the kitchen is the right place for women "that no one is made for the kitchen" (p. 243). Aimée represents the white "pseudo-liberals" Her depiction as a despicable person; she is hypocritical, unscrupulous and selfish indicates Armah's resentment at these people. In the

main, Aimée's destructive power over Modin symbolizes Europe's destructiveness of Africa.

Whereas Aimée epitomizes all the vices, Naita, Modin's Black girl-friend is endowed with admirable qualities. She is beautiful, affectionate and strong-willed. Naita's character seems to have been added to fit in Armah's Manichean logic. Unlike her male counterpart, Modin and Solo, she does not yield to the white man's attempt to depersonalise her. Naita imposes her 'African Personality' by adopting her people's customs. She does her hair in an African traditional style: 'She had hair like Ewurama's, not braided but combed without any parting' (p. 108). Unlike Solo and Modin, who once believed in the existence of a sincere relation between Blacks and Whites, Naita thinks that there is 'nothing like friendship' (p. 123) between the two races. Naita is perspicacious in that she foresees Modin's destruction by the Whites. In the main, Naita epitomizes the Blacks' 'anti-racist-racism' as it appears from her use of scornful terms to refer to the Whites. She calls them 'crooks' (p. 110) and 'crackers' (p. 121). Her scorn is particularly bitter for white women; she calls Mrs Jefferson 'white bitch' (p. 134). She attempts to save Modin from the white women clutches, by warning him about their 'perfidy'. She, further, attempts to help him preserve his cultural identity and racial pride. On the whole Naita stands for African culture.

The character, who on the other hand, represents the culturally alienated African is Manuel, the Head of the Congherian Bureau. Following in his father's footsteps, he gets a white girl-friend, and he behaves like a 'black-white man'. His alienation from African culture is also noticeable in his inability to master his own language, Kilanga. Solo says that he speaks 'in his poor settler-type Kilanga' (p. 251). Besides, Manuel speaks more frequently in a foreign language than in his native one. Clearly, by rejecting his native language, he rejects his African culture. Again, being a mulatto (p. 51), he prefers to be associated with white culture.

Manuel represents the first generation of corrupt politicians. His character epitomizes the infancy of the African bourgeoisie. He represents those who on the eve of independence worked towards the institutionalisation of social privileges for the *élite*, and who laboured for the achievement of their personal prestige to warrant a place in the leadership on the morrows of their independence. Manuel, who has had the opportunity to witness how socially rewarding the status of a politician is in Afrasia, and elsewhere in Africa, prepares himself for this task. Solo points to his potential to become a leader saying: "He has already the gift of carrying himself with the self-conscious dignity of an African leader" (p. 51).

Manuel, who is keen on achieving a social status similar to that of the corrupt African leaders, takes the latter as a model of behaviour. He attempts to follow in their footsteps faithfully. One behavioural norm for achieving self-aggrandizement adopted by these politicians and imitated by Manuel is to preach certain principles but act in a way that contradicts them. He, for instance condemns Modin's association with a White woman saying that: "an African in love with a European is a pure slave" (p. 255). But he, himself, has a White woman as a mistress. This ambivalence is denounced in Armah's essay on African Socialism, in relation to Senghor, about whom Armah remarks: "Thus, while at the level of the dream he wrote poetry swooningly extolling the beauty of black womanhood, in his real life he was settling down to the practical business of wooing and marrying a Frenchwoman"⁶⁰ He goes on to emphasize the fact that it is not specific to Senghor stating: "In this capacity to talk black and live white he is not alone: it is apparently a universal trait among bourgeois leaders intent on maintaining the illusion that they are national and revolutionary leaders"⁶¹ Armah insists on the hypocrisy of these leaders stating "generally the leadership is recruited from the middle class. They are the products of Victorian educational systems which may not succeed in their aim of making people ascetic saints, but are guaranteed to turn out moralizing hypocrites"⁶² This hypocrisy is highlighted

through Manuel's case. He preaches equality and justice using the slogan 'ABSOLUTE EQUALITY' (p. 52), but he adopts inequality and exploitation as behavioural norms in his work relations with Ngulo. Manuel also adopts the corrupt politicians' taste for luxurious acquisition. He has an expensive car and a sumptuous office. Like these politicians, he adopts an attitude of superiority towards his fellows. Manuel's superiority complex appears in his attitude towards the Congherian masses that he calls 'rough, uncultivated people' (p. 252). He sees them as fit only for harsh tasks, like fighting in the battlefield.

This is indicative of his adoption of the stereotype of the intellectuals as the 'blest' on account of their education and the privileges it entails. He equates education with leadership and assumes that the target of every intellectual is to secure a place within the ranks of the leadership. Manuel is the stereotype of the opportunist intellectual whom Armah defines as a 'would-be *bon vivants*, opportunists with a sharp eye out for the main chance, young men very much on the make, subscribing to an ethic that has everything to do with consumption and notoriously little to do with production of any sort'⁶³ He reiterates this view in his essay: 'A Mystification: African Independence Revalued'⁶⁴ stating: 'Since the African *élite* has no real ascertainable function beyond its identity and its privileges (it's a fact that nobody expects this class to do anything more demanding than to *be* been-tos, etc, and to consume an intricate heap of privileges'⁶⁵ This is obviously an echo of Fanon's view of the *élite* and the bourgeoisie as parasitical. Fanon notes: the 'same know-all, smart, wily intellectuals [í] spoilt children of yesterday's colonialism'⁶⁶ Manuel is not only opportunist, parasitical, but selfish, in that he excludes the others from sharing his privileged position. The first thing he tells Modin when he learns that he wants to join the movement is that 'there are no positions in the leadership' (p. 250). This gives a clue about Manuel's own motives in getting higher education. Clearly, his

target is to be among the leadership and to benefit from the social privileges that this status confers.

Manuel believes that the intellectual is exempt from revolutionary praxis. He tells Modin: "the battlefield is not a place for intellectuals" (p. 252) and "you, an intellectual, would be out of place there" (p. 252). He considers that revolutionary activism should be undertaken by the masses and the intellectuals should be spared the risks to assume leading roles. Manuel, thus, encourages the intellectuals' passivity. His character is plainly used by Armah to denounce the intellectuals' lack of revolutionary activism and their ambiguous revolutionary commitment, since they preach revolutionary ideals but behave in a contradictory way. This is reminiscent of Fanon's view of the native *élite*: "On the specific question of [revolutionary] violence, the *élite* are ambiguous. They are violent in their words and reformist in their attitudes. When the nationalist political leaders say something, they make it clear that they do not really *think* it."⁶⁷ Armah similarly denounces the hypocrisy of the African leaders, who preach socialism but adopt capitalism. Armah's onslaught on the latter is particularly acute in his essay on African Socialism, where he maintains: "On their part, the nationalist leaders preach African socialism without feeling any compulsion to become ideopraxis. Everywhere and always, the word is faster than the deed."⁶⁸ In the main, Manuel's character epitomizes revolutionary betrayal. Armah shows how the would-be leader is primarily concerned with self-embezzlement and with the digging the gap between him and the masses well before the attainment of independence. This gap is dramatized in the novel in the marked difference that exists between Manuel's office, luxuriously furnished, and Ngulo's, kept plain.

Ngulo epitomizes the working class exploitation. His exploitation by Manuel is pointed out by Solo who remarks: "Ngulo serve[s] while Jorge Manuel consume[s] the credit and the sweetness" (pp. 51-52). Class differences between

Manuel and Ngulo are also symbolized by their being on different floors; Manuel in the upper, Ngulo in the lower one. Through the case of these two protagonists Armah re-enacts the colonial scheme of colour-based class division, i.e., the whiter the skin, the more opportunities for education and social promotion. Manuel who is lighter than Ngulo is more educate and well-to-do. Solo emphasizes the colour factor in the class difference between Manuel and Ngulo saying: "the lighter brother drank spirits upstairs with suave travellers while down below the black one licked the tasteless backs of stamps" (p. 51). Solo also points out that this class difference would be maintained after Congheria's independence. He says: "division [í] would exist even when the last of the Portuguese had left Congheria" (p. 51).

Ngulo is used as a stereotype, representing the common people, of an average educational standard, hard working and submissive. He never questions Manuel's feigned revolutionary commitment, or his right to privilege. He appears naïve, but, as Solo remarks, his naivety is "calculated" (p. 249). He, for instance, feigns naivety about the betrayal of the Congherian revolution which is carried out in the Bureau. His cynical remark: "yes lies" (p. 249) about the propaganda of their rival party implies that theirs is no different. Ngulo is shrewd and diplomatic. He behaves as a faithful subordinate since he knows that this flatters the ego of Manuel who is thirsty for power. Moreover, he is perspicacious about the kind of intellectuals that Modin and Aimée are. He says to Manuel: "Don't try to tell them the truth. They take their ideas more seriously than your facts" (p. 252). Though semi-educated, Ngulo is more practical and efficient than Manuel. The latter often relies on him, as when he asks him about his opinion on the "résumés" of Modin and Aimée (p. 254). Ngulo is, unlike Manuel, a nationalist. His nationalism appears in his reply to Solo's remark about Modin being an African: "Tell me what does it mean for him to be an African if he does not know that the Europeans have been trying to wipe us off the earth these many centuries?" (p. 254). Ngulo's

character highlights the differences in patriotic engagement between the intellectual *élite* and the common people.

On the whole, the characterization is not as successfully handled in *Why Are We So Blest?* as it is in Armah's earlier works. Most characters in this novel are shadowy figures. None of them has the human dimension of, say, Naana in *Fragments*, or The Man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Yet, though Armah probes the psychology of his main protagonists, he does not bring out their human dimension in a convincing way. They tend to be stereotypes, and this is more particularly the case of his white characters. Mrs Jefferson and Aimée are sketchy caricatures of the conventional white woman stereotype, Ngulo and Manuel are similarly mere class types. Armah is more preoccupied with their social dimension than with their psychological make up. He uses them mostly to flesh out his thematic concerns.

These concerns are class differences, neo-colonial bondage, the betrayal of revolutionary ideals, slavery and racism. Armah denounces class differences in newly independent Africa and praises traditional African communalism, which he expects to be reinstated. This is expressed through Solo: "The best that is absent from this heavy, mediocre world would be its mark: community. In place of isolate bodies, greedy to consume more privileges to set us above, apart from others, there would be community: sustenance, suffering, endurance, relief, danger ó all shared" (p. 114). This concern for communalism is again expressed in Modin's notebook: "The revolutionary ideal is an actual, working egalitarian society. What existed before European invasion" (p. 222). Armah's adoption of such an ideal is more forcefully expressed in his subsequent novels, notably in *Two Thousand Seasons*. However, whereas in *Why Are We So Blest?* he adopts the view that traditional society was classless and that class differences are a legacy of colonialism, in his subsequent novel, he portrays pre-colonial Africa as a

class society. The view of a traditional classless society was often held by African leaders, e.g., Nkrumah and Nyerere. Some African writers held an opposing view and portrayed pre-colonial society as class stratified. This is the case of Ousmane Sembène in his *Bound to Violence* (1968) and Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), who both show that the hierarchy were socially well-to-do in comparison with the rest of their society. Achebe's shows that traditional Ibo society was materialistic and competitive. Okonkwo, for instance, endeavours to increase his wealth and to get more titles, for a man's worth is evaluated according to the number of titles he holds. Such a mentality has certainly led to the formation of classes in traditional Africa.

The root of the class problem in independent Africa is, according to Armah, to be found in the selective educational scheme that the colonial administration set up for the Africans. In fact, by selecting some natives on account of their ethnic affiliations and by providing them with better educational opportunities than the remainder of their fellows, the colonial administration worked towards the creation of a native bourgeoisie. As a result of this scheme, class differences were ethno-based after independence, and in some cases led to civil wars. This was the case of the Biafran war in Nigeria in 1966.⁶⁹ Besides the creation of a native middle class, the target of the higher education some selected natives were granted during the colonial era was neo-colonial bondage. These educated Africans were prepared to assume a role in the leadership of their future independent country, and to become the allies of their neo-colonial masters.

This neo-colonial scheme is dramatized in *Why Are We So Blest?*. Armah suggests that the African students who receive grants to further their studies abroad are trained to become neo-colonial agents when they return to their independent country. Modin is particularly aware that he is prepared for this task and that the bait is the grant he received for studying in America. He remarks:

‘What a farce, scholarships! That blood money never went to any of us for his intelligence. It was always payment for obedience’ (p. 160). He, besides, considers ‘scholarship holders’ as ‘the privileged servants of white empire’ (p. 161). He, further, compares them, including himself, to the slave-dealers: ‘factors then, factors now’ (p. 161). Modin remarks that like the slave-dealers they sell their people to the Westerners, and considers the scholarships as the ‘factors’ pay (p. 161). He maintains that education ‘is all a system for hiding [the intellectuals]’ factorship from the victims [they] make’ (p. 223). Solo also considers the intellectuals as servants of their neo-colonial masters. He says that the ‘*évolué* [is] turned into an eater of crumbs in the house of slavery’ (p. 84). He reiterates this view stating: ‘the residue awarded us from the dining tables of our people’s destroyers’ (p. 84). This image of the African eating the Whiteman’s leftovers illustrates Africa’s neo-colonial bondage. As in *Fragments*, Armah draws an analogy between neo-colonialism and slavery. He suggests that the neo-colonial situation is a re-enactment of the slavery era, under a new form, and that it is widespread in Africa. He, further, insists on neo-colonial bondage to denounce the betrayal of the African revolutionary struggles after independence.

This betrayal is dramatized through the case of Algeria and Kenya. Armah focuses on these two countries since they witnessed the harshest revolutionary struggles in the continent. He emphasizes the paucity of the ex-freedom fighters to make the point that revolutionary ideals have been renounced after independence. In Afrasia, the children of the martyrs are beggar (p. 16), and in Kanza, the peasants live in destitution. Armah suggests that the Algerian revolution was betrayed by its leaders through the example of the one-legged ex-militant, who states that it is definitely not the militants who won: ‘‘It is not the militants!’’ he said with explosive emphasis. ‘I know it is not the militatnts’ (p. 26). And out of despair, he sets out to find out, in a book, who won in the case of the French Revolution. Like Abdulla, Ngugi’s one-legged ex-Mau Mau fighter in

Petals of Blood, the handicapped militant seems to have some regrets about having lost a leg for ideals that are being betrayed. He says: "all the best ones died. And many of those left are cripples, worse off than I am. But who has gained?" (p. 26). The answer is suggested through the question, i.e., those who did not fight are the ones who are enjoying "the fruits" of independence. This is made clear through the case of the Botanist, who was studying in France during the African revolution, but is holding a top position after independence. The Botanist confesses that his studies were sponsored by his father. Yet, granted the socio-economic conditions of the natives at that time, none of them could afford to pay for higher studies. Armah seems to suggest that his father was an ally of the colonisers, a fact which justifies his wealth. Through the example of the Botanist, Armah implies that the ex-allies of the colonial administration have been the first ones to pick the fruits of independence.

Armah's disillusionment with the turn of the Algerian revolution took after independence is expressed by Solo, who says: "I reached the place of my dreams. I found pain not fulfilment. The arrangements made for fighting privilege were themselves structures of privilege" (p. 114). Armah considers that the Algerian leaders also betrayed the socialist revolution they attempted to undertake after their independence. Solo remarks: "There is a revolutionary conscience so clever it has space for the beggar and the newly rich, for cannon fodder and the briefcase-carrying traveler" (p. 115). This view of the Algerian socialist system as a fake one is reiterated by Solo who says that Africa is "no place of sharing. No sharing" (p. 114). In the main, Armah's portrayal of newly independent Algeria is negative. He portrays it as a place where the "hard won" independent is messed up, and where economic anarchy prevails.⁷⁰

Armah's disillusionment with socialist practice in post-independence Africa was first motivated by Nkrumah's rule, during which corruption and self-

embezzlement were the order of the day. In *Why Are We So Blest?*, Armah also denounces Nkrumah's regime. To highlight the president's extravagance, he gives the example of the presidential residence, Christianborg Castle, which, he remarks, had been renovated at the cost of two and a half million pounds to make it fit for the President to move in (p. 76). Here, Armah is satirical about the African leaders' bourgeois leanings. He implies that they are more bourgeois than those who have initiated them to the bourgeois lifestyle. He remarks that whereas the British governor was contented with the residence as it was, the African president was not and he spent a fortune from public money to make it sumptuous. Armah not only blames the African leaders for betraying the revolution, but he blames the revolutionary intellectuals, whose commitment, he thinks, is not sincere. He remarks that they often have selfish reasons for joining revolutionary movements; either to resolve a personal crisis as it is Modin's and Solo's case, or to achieve self-aggrandizement as it is the case of Manuel. Armah observes that since they belong to the middle-class and benefit from social privileges, the African intellectuals cannot promote revolutionary change. He remarks, through Modin, that they are incapable of creating a real, workable *maji*, i.e., a progressive revolution.

Armah, particularly, condemns the intellectuals who pretend to be socialists, like Manuel, but are in pursuit of power and social privilege. He also condemns those like Solo who condemn the former but resembles them since they share oppression fruit (p. 83), i.e., enjoy these privileges. He also condemns Solo-type individuals for their political passivity. He refers to them as 'the useless people, the uninvolved' (p. 252). In the main, Armah has a petty view of the African intellectual. He doubts the truthfulness of their revolutionary commitment and blames them for the failure of revolutionary praxis in Africa. His contempt for them notably appears in his reference to them as 'factors' (p. 161). One can note thus that the condemnation of all the African intellectuals is excessive and seems

to be motivated by a revengeful spirit. Armah seems to be engaged in feuds with the Ghanaian *élite*, notably with Kofi Awoonor. His satirical onslaught on the latter and Efua Sutherland in *Fragments* is indicative of his resentment of the Ghanaian intellectuals. Armah suggests that genuine revolutionary activism is to be expected neither from the Solo-type nor from the Modin-type. The former category of intellectuals are too obsessed with their *angst* to have any energy left for revolutionary activism. Solo remarks: "We are easy to recognize. Our personalities are battlefields on which our subjective demands meet the harsher demands of life and time" (p. 14). The latter category is eager to adopt revolutionary activism in a suicidal urge.

Though Armah is strongly influenced by Fanon, he does consider the intellectual as an agent of revolutionary change. In *the Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon considers the progressive intellectuals as having a role in revolutionary praxis. Armah has, however, come to adopt the Fanonian pattern of the revolutionary intellectual by the time he wrote *Two Thousand Seasons*. In this novel he has revised his view of the African intellectual's revolutionary commitment. He considers that the intellectual has a role in the revolutionary struggle, as it is the case of the "Initiates". In *Why Are We So Blest?* his call for revolutionary engagement is clearly expressed through Solo, who proclaims: "In my people's world, revolution would be the only art, revolutionaries the only creators. All else is part of Africa's destruction" (p. 230). Armah insists on the betrayal of revolutionary ideals through Solo who observes: "At times I just sat and thought of [] all the slogans and the dreams of equality and justice dissolved in my imagination into an endless procession of masters and servants, men who would remain managers and workers even in moments when they were engaged in fighting some third oppressor" (p. 52). In the main, in *Why Are We So Blest?*, Armah denounces the betrayal of revolutionary ideals by both the African leaders and intellectuals, whom he compares to the slave-dealers.

The slavery theme is not only used to draw an analogy with neo-colonial bondage, but to denounce the Whites' inhuman treatment of the Africans. The re-enactment of the slave-trade episode through the guide's tale also has a cathartic function for Armah, who attempts to get over the trauma of the memory of his forebears' misfortune. As it appears from his protagonist's experience, in *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*, the memory of the slave-trade is frightening for Armah, as it legitimately is for most Ghanaians, a fact which accounts for the predominance of this theme in Ghanaian literature, notably in the works of Ama Ata Aidoo and Kofi Awoonor. The latter has pointed out the reasons of such a preoccupation with the slavery era stating: 'I believe there is a great psychic shadow over Africa, and it has much to do with our guilt and denial of our role in the slave trade. We too are blameworthy in what was essentially one of the most heinous crimes in human history'⁷¹ Armah similarly denounces the role of the native chiefs and other local intermediaries in the slave-trade in his novels, notably in *Two thousand Seasons*. In *Why Are We So Blest?* he insists on the role of the 'factors' in their people's misfortune. The emotional impact of the slave trade memory is dramatized in *Fragments*, through the case of Baako who is frightened by the sight of a ship. In *Why Are We So Blest?*, Modin experiences fright when the guide tells him and the other pupils about the ordeal of the slaves: 'they were kept for weeks, sometimes months, till the ships came, and then they were taken out for loading' (p. 77). Similarly, Richard Wright records, in *Black Power*, the strong emotions that the sight of the Ghanainan Castles generated in him and insists on the ordeal of the slaves stating: 'hundreds of thousands of black men, women and children had been marched, shackled and chained, down to the waiting ships to be carted across the ocean to be slaves in the New World'⁷² Armah attempts to remind the Blacks of the traumatic experience their forebears had undergone to fuel their hatred of the Whites and to warn them about the dangers of any post-independence alliance with them. Besides, the analogy of

slavery with neo-colonialism, another analogy of slavery Armah draws is that of love partnership between Blacks and Whites. He remarks through Solo: ‘an African in love with a European is a slave’ (p. 255). He reiterates this view saying: ‘why does the body lock [the Blacks] in such slavery?’ (p. 230). The reference to Slavery seems also to be motivated by a desire to reverse racial stereotyping, i.e., instead of the Black man being ‘heathen’ it is the White man who appears so. This negative image of the Whites is particularly reinforced through the character of Aimée, which symbolizes the White man’s ‘lust’. In fact, all the White characters, unlike their Black counterparts, are portrayed as mischievous.

This Manichean logic is indicative of Armah’s Negritudist ideological stance which is noticeable throughout the novel. Like the Negritude writers Armah adopts ‘anti-racist-racism’ insofar as he is concerned with the rehabilitation of the traditional African values, and laments the misfortune of his race, notably its slavery ordeal. The Negritudist view that all that is ‘Black is beautiful’ and what is white is ugly, best illustrated through Senghor’s poem ‘New York’⁷³ is reproduced through the portrayal of Naita and Aimée. The former is beautiful and well-shaped (p. 122), even ‘her movements were beautiful’ (p. 108). The latter, on the other hand, has an ugly figure for a woman since she is masculine. Armah often uses the term ‘ugly’ to refer to the whites. Nyambura finds Pakansa’s white woman ugly. She says: ‘No matter how kind you wanted to be, you could not call that woman beautiful’ (p. 38). She, besides refers to her as ‘ugly foreign ears’ (p. 38). Another Negritudist paradigm of ‘black Beauty’ that Armah insists on are the teeth. Whereas his Black characters have nice teeth, e.g., Naita, their white counterparts have ugly teeth. The Boston girl has ‘teeth half made of dentist’s metal’ (p. 227). Aimée, however, is an exception for she has ‘beautiful teeth for an American’ (p. 257). This implies that beautiful teeth are not a characteristic of the Whites but of the Blacks.

Still, though Armah has used the paradigms of Negritude, he is more of a race fanatic than the proponents of this ideology. Unlike Senghor, for instance, he rejects the idea of any reconciliation of the two races. In this respect Dan Izevbaye remarks that “in spite of echoes of [Senghor’s] ideas in *Why Are We So Blest?*, we do not find in Senghor “the racial confrontation which forms the basis of Armah’s novel.”⁷⁴ Armah’s racial exclusivism is mostly expressed through Naita who insists that friendship between Blacks and Whites is impossible. Naita tells Modin: “You thinks white folks can be your friends [í] There’s nothing like friendship possible between us and them. You get involved with them, you’re just dumb, that’s all. They’ll mess you up” (p. 123). Again, Modin observes: “Silly fool, I tried reconciliation” (p. 162). Besides, by making Aimée’s relationship with Modin, and that of Sylvia with Solo, fail, Armah indicates his disbelief in the possibility of any sincere love relationship between Blacks and Whites. Besides, by making the liberals appear so treacherous, through the example of Aimée, he requests his people not to trust them, and not to rely on their help. He, on the other hand, suggests, through Naita’s help to Modin, that the Blacks should expect help only from their brethren. This is also suggested through Modin’s willingness to join the Congherian battlefield. He is a Ghanaian who wants to fight with the Congherians to free their country. This indicates Armah’s sympathy with the idea of Pan-Africanism.

Armah considers that Blacks can find love and brotherhood only within the context of Pan-Negroism. His expressed belief in Black Nationalism and racial separation bears witness to a greater influence of Amiri Baraka’s ideological stance than that of the Negritude adepts of the 1920s, e.g., Senghor, Césaire and Léon Damas. The influence of Baraka also shows in Armah’s adoption of the Black Aesthetic ideology. Larry Neal, one of the proponents of the Blacks Arts Movement defines its paradigms as follows:

Black Art is the Aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept [1] The motive behind the Black aesthetic is the destruction of the white thing, the destruction of white ideas, and white ways of looking at the world [1] the Euro-American cultural sensibility [1] anti-human in nature, has, until recently, dominated the psyches of most Black artists and intellectuals; it must be destroyed before the Black creative artist can have a meaningful role in the transformation of society.⁷⁵

Echoing Baraka's "manifesto" of "Black Art,"⁷⁶ Amah writes: "To be a writer at a time like this, coming from such a people, such deep destruction, the most criminal. Only one issue is worth our time: how to end the oppression of the African, to kill the European beasts of prey, to remake ourselves, the elected servants of Europe and America. Outside that, all is useless" (p. 230). And he adds: "In this wreckage there is no creative art outside the destruction of the destroyers" (p. 231). On the whole Amah's attitude to the Whites is a "reversed racism"

Racism, based on the assumption that the Aryan race, i.e., the White race, is superior to the other races was fashioned by the ethnographer, Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau in the 19th century.⁷⁷ In his *The Inequality of the Human Races* (1853-1855), he assumes that the White race "originally possessed the monopoly of beauty, intelligence, and strength. By its union with other varieties, hybrids were created, which were beautiful without strength, strong without intelligence, or, if intelligent, both weak and ugly"⁷⁸ The inferiority of the other races, notably the Black one, was justified on the grounds of their assumed "biological deficiencies" e.g., a low I.Q. This thesis known as "Biological racism" had been put forward when the "abolitionists" protested against slavery in the 1930s. In this respect, William. J. Wilson remarks that the "increased pressure against slavery created the need for a philosophy of exploitation such as biological

racism⁷⁹ Racism has also been one of the driving forces of colonial conquest. As Albert Memmi remarks "All the efforts of the colonialist are directed towards maintaining this social immobility, and racism is the surest weapon for this aim [í] Racism appears then, not as an incidental detail, but as a consubstantial part of colonialism. It is the highest expression of the colonial system and one of the most significant features of the colonialist⁸⁰ Anti-Black racism became particularly widespread in America after the abolition of slavery and the liberation of the slaves. Racist attacks against the Blacks were performed by the Klu Klux Klan in Southern America, after the introduction of the Jim Crow Law (1900), which segregated the Blacks in public services. The resurgence of anti-Black racism in the 1960s led to the Civil Rights movements and riots.⁸¹ The impacts of this turbulent period have been witnessed by Armah⁸² and are reproduced in his novels. As Derek Wright observes: "The polemics of such novels are best seen against the general backcloth of the 1960s Black radicalism that interpreted American race oppression as a species of internal colonization⁸³

Anti-Black racism is dramatized in *Why Are We So Blest?* through the French men's attitude towards Modin. He does not stop for him when he hitch-hikes, but stops for Aimée who is a few yards away. Veiled racism is epitomized in Mr Oppenhardt's attitude to Modin. Through indirect statements, he points out to Modin that intelligence is alien to Black people. He insists on Modin's being exceptionally intelligent for an African. He says to Modin: "You talk as if all Africans are as intelligent as you" (p. 127). Armah satirically refers to the Whites' assumption that they are a biologically superior race through the Thanksgiving article. The writer of the article, a White man, boasts about: "the Greek athlete, effortlessly perfect" (p. 98) who is removed from "the awkward stumblings of unblest humans (p. 98), and considers "that distance that marks off the pedigreed race horse from labouring hybrids [as] grace." (p. 98). Armah insists on the Whites' assumption of their racial superiority and counters this assumption by

discrediting the Whites, whom he portrays as the devil of the place. His anti-White feelings are expressed through most of his Black characters, Solo, Naita and Modin. The latter is called 'racist' by Aimée (p. 280) on account of his anti-White attitude.

Armah's 'reversed racism' appears in his reversing racial stereotypes. He gives the Whites some of the negative attributes they themselves gave to the Blacks to justify their inferiority, namely, unintelligence and dirtiness. He attributes lack of intelligence to the old men of the committee. He writes: '[Modin] tried to see the old men as highly intelligent beings, but it was impossible' (p. 120). Armah's reversed racism is particularly noticeable in the totally negative image he draws of the Whites. They are, for instance, associated with death: 'remove the fear of death, i.e., the fear of white people, agents of death' (p. 221). Ngulo says that Aimée is 'pale as death' (p. 255), and Solo refers to Manuel's mistress as the 'cadaverous white-haired woman' (p. 229). This association of the colour white with death is reminiscent of Amiri Baraka's poem 'Black Art' where he says:

The fair are fair
 and deathly white.⁸⁴

The Whites are also referred to as the 'race of destroyers' (p. 149). They are, besides, considered as sub-human Nyambura tells Pakansa: 'There would be no reason for me to talk to a European as to a human being' (p. 37), and Solo remarks about Aimée and Manuel's mistress: 'I have never seen humans look so predatory' (p. 269).

Armah's anti-White feelings are so strong that he rejects anything that has a link with them. He, for instance, opposes Marxism which, he considers as 'whitest of philosophies' (p. 163). His opposition to Marxism is even stronger in his essay 'Marx and Masks' where he points out that Marxism is based on 'racist'

assumptions: "Marxism, in its approach to the non-Western majority of the world's peoples, is demonstrably racist ó racist in a prejudiced, determined, dishonest and unintelligent fashion" ⁸⁵ In *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah appears as a racial fanatic who wants to fuel his people's hatred for the whites. He does so, for instance, when he expresses the view that the Whites can only feel hate for the Blacks. He maintains that a White woman's love for a Black man is "but hate smilingly embraced by the hated" (p. 208). He, further, likens the Black-White love relationship to slavery, stating: "an African in love with a European is a pure slave. Not a Man accidentally enslaved. A pure slave, with the heart of a slave, with the spirit of a slave" (p. 255). Armah's racist propaganda is apparent in such polemical terms as "fascist" (p. 97), "murderers" (209) "beasts of prey" (pp. 230, 269) used to refer to the Whites. In the main, Armah appears as a man blinded by hatred, a hatred that accounts for the propagandist aspect of the novel. Polemical passages abound in the novel. Some cases in point are the following one:

Easier to let white females absorb the loving impulse, use the accumulated energy within our black selves to do work of importance to their white selves. Of what other use have Africa's tremendous energies been these many centuries but to serve the lusts of whites? Sucked out men, should our bodies survive our murdered souls, we float between the blessed and the damned, attached to none but our specific murderers, caught in their deep-hating embrace. Ah Africa (pp. 207-208).

And: "The only people who survive here are white, and they have accepted themselves as mere bodies, killed the spirit in them, or put it at the service of insatiable bodies" (p. 159).

On the whole, *Why Are We So Blest?* is less appealing than *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* or *Fragments*, where Armah is less outspoken about his credentials. It is flawed by Armah's overconcern with the expression of his



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commitments, both political and racial. This novel confirms the argument held in this work that African literature of the 1970s was aesthetically impaired by its writers' strong revolutionary commitment and Black Nationalism. This is even more evident through Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, with its strong anti-white outlook, as it will be demonstrated in the next Chapter.

NOTES

¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, op. cit., p. 184.

² All page references in the text are to Ayi Kwei Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1974).

³ James Booth borrows this phrase from Achebe and points out that the latter considered racism as "malignant fiction". See his essay: "Why Are We So Blest? and the limits of Metaphor" *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. XV, Number 1, (August 1980), 50-64, p. 50.

⁴ James Booth, "Why Are We So Blest? and the limits of Metaphor" op. cit., p. 50.

⁵ Ibid., p. 51.

⁶ Adewale Maja-Pearce, "Just another Sick Book" *Okike*, Vol. 23 (1983), 133-136, p. 133.

⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

⁸ Ibid., p. 135.

⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁰ James Booth, "Why Are We So Blest? and the Limits of Metaphor" op. cit., p. 55.

¹¹ Richard. K. Priebe, "Literature, Community, and Violence: Reading African Literature in the West, Post-9/11" *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 36, N°2 (Summer 2005), 46-58, p. 51.

¹² Ibid., p. 63.

¹³ Derek Wright, "Requiems for Revolutions: Race and Sex archetype in two African Novels" *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 35, N°1 (1989), 55-68, p. 66.

¹⁴ Derek Wright, "African-American Tensions in Black Writing of the 1960s" *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 19, N° 4 (June 1989), 442-458, p. 453.

¹⁵ Edward Lobb, "Personal and Political Fate in Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?*" *World Literature Written in English*, (1980), Vol. 19, p. 10.

¹⁶ Kiarri T.H, Cheatwood, "Why Are We So Blest?" *Black World*, (1974), Vol. 23, 85-90, p.87.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, op. cit., p. 132.

²⁰ Dubem Okafor, *Cycle of Doom: Selected Essays and Discourse and Society* (Lulu.com, 2005), p. 258.

²¹ Ibid., p. 258.

²² This is hardly credible since, Armah deliberately mentions the name, for instance, of one of those who were in charge of the selection of students to award them grants to study in the United States, namely, Jefferson. Mr. E. Jefferson Murphy, was Director of the African Office of the African-American Institute at the time. See Bernth Lindfors, *African textualities: texts, pre-texts, and contexts of African Literature* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1997), p. 52.

²³ When Armah published his novel he was living in Tanzania. (See Bernth Lindfors, "Armah's Histories," *African Literature Today*, N^o 11, 84-96, p. 96). The Tanzanian authorities would certainly have not appreciated the indictment of the leadership of two outstanding African revolutionary countries.

²⁴ Kiarri T.H, Cheatwood, *Why Are We So Blest?* op. cit., p. 86.

²⁵ J.O. J. Nwachukwu-Agbada "An Interview with Chinua Achebe" in Bernth Lindfors (editor), *Conversations with Chinua Achebe*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 130-140, p. 135.

²⁶ Robert Frazer, "The American Background of Why Are We So Blest?," *African Literature Today*, 9 (1978), 39- 46.

²⁷ Edward Lobb, "Personal and Political Fate in Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?*" op. cit., p. 14.

²⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, p. 30.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 211.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 158.

³¹ However, whereas Fanon does not endorse the "myth" of the Negro sexual potency, Armah does, as it appears from his treatment of it in his novel.

³² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, op. cit., p. 228.

³³ Ibid., p. 229

³⁴ Ibid., p. 228.

³⁵ Ode S. Ogede , "Review: Negritude and Africa: Armah's Account by *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 4. (Nov., 1993), 792-801, p. 792.

³⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, op. cit., p. 226.

³⁷ Ode. S. Ogede, "Review: Negritude and Africa: Armah's account," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 4. (November, 1993), 792-801, p. 794.

³⁸ Shelby Steele, "Existentialism in the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah," *Obsidian*, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 5-13, p. 6.

³⁹ The use of Camus' name in the novel is a hint to this influence. There is an "ex-Camus" farm in Afrasia.

⁴⁰ Philip Thody, *Albert Camus: A Study of his Works* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961), p. 50.

⁴¹ Being an atheist, Camus does not believe in an after-world. He finds death meaningless since he believes that it leads nowhere.

⁴² See Germaine Brée, *Albert Camus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 209.

⁴³ Camus's condemnation of revolutionary violence in *The Rebel* triggered off a polemical debate with Sartre and other French left-wing scholars.

⁴⁴ Camus expresses his views on revolt and revolution in *L'Homme révolté* (*The Rebel*) (1951). There he maintains that rebellion against social injustice is legitimate but not at the expense of human life. In other words, he opposes violence and bloodshed which result in the death of other human beings. He opposes revolutionary action in the name of life, for he considers life as sacred. Again, it is because of such a view of life that he opposed the Death Penalty.

⁴⁵ The title of the novel has been translated, in the American edition, as *The Stranger*.

⁴⁶ Albert Camus, *The Outsider*, (Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd, 1983), p. 118.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁴⁸ Among the autobiographical elements in *Why Are We So Blest?*, there is Modin's friendship with rich American liberals. Armah, like Modin, was taken on a trip by the parents of his wealthy white friend. See Bernth Lindfors, *African textualities: texts, pre-texts, and contexts of African Literature*, op. cit., p. 64.

⁴⁹ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Albert Camus* (New York: Penguin, 1970), p. 18.

⁵⁰ Like Modin, Armah has been selected, on account of his distinctive performances, to benefit from a scholarship in America. See Bernth Lindfors, *African textualities: texts, pre-texts, and contexts of African Literature*, op. cit., p. 54.

⁵¹ Quoted in Germaine Brée, *Albert Camus*, op. cit., p. 239.

⁵² Edward Margolies, *The Art of Richard Wright*, (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1969), p. 6.

⁵³ The influence of Wright on Armah seems to have been motivated by his shared concern for the ideologies of Black consciousness and Pan-Africanism. Armah's interest in Wright is understandably motivated by the latter's concern for Ghanaian society and his analysis of the nationalist movement under Nkrumah leadership in his other major work, *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (1954). This book, which recounts Wright's trip to Ghana, could not have failed to appeal to Armah on account of its concern for slavery. Wright describes his personal emotion-laden experience while visiting the slave-trade castle. A similar experience is portrayed by Armah in *Why Are We So Blest?*, through the case of Modin's visit to the Castle. Still, Armah, differs from Wright in that he upholds traditional culture, whereas Wright is critical of it, since he considers it as a hindrance to modern progress.

⁵⁴ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (New York: The Orion Press, Inc., 1965.), p. 148.

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- ⁵⁵ This mixed feeling towards the Whites is again, a testimony to Fanon's influence. It is referred to in *Black Skin White Masks*, pp. 51, 81.
- ⁵⁶ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, op. cit., p. X.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 20.
- ⁵⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 7.
- ⁵⁹ Derek Wright, 'Requiem for Revolutions: Race and Sex archetype in two African Novels' op. cit., p. 67.
- ⁶⁰ Ayi Kwei Armah, 'African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?' *Présence Africaine*, N° 64 (1967), 6-30, p. 19.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., p. 20.
- ⁶² Ibid., p. 16.
- ⁶³ Ayi Kwei Armah, 'African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?', op. cit., p. 15.
- ⁶⁴ Ayi Kwei Armah, 'A Mystification: African Independence Revalued' *Pan-African Journal*, Pt. Two, Vol. 2 (1969), 141-151.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 146.
- ⁶⁶ See Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 37.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 46.
- ⁶⁸ Ayi Kwei Armah, 'African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?', op. cit., p. 28.
- ⁶⁹ Kenya similarly suffered from conflicts due to class differences based on ethnicity. It was on the brink of a civil war in the late 1960s when the Kikuyu, Jomo Kenyatta's tribe, which monopolized top official jobs and was the most prosperous, came under attack by the Luo, after the assassination of Tom Mboya in 1969.
- ⁷⁰ Armah does not take into consideration the disastrous economic conditions of the country that were inherited from the French administration, and the deliberate OAS sabotage of different vital economic and social infrastructures.
- ⁷¹ Quoted in Howard W. French, 'On Slavery, Africans Say the Guilt Is Theirs, Too' *New York Times*, 27 December 1994.
- ⁷² Richard Wright, *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 40.
- ⁷³ Leopold Sedar Senghor, 'A New York' *Ethiopiennes* (1956).
- ⁷⁴ Dan Izevbye, 'Reality in the African Novel: Its theory and Practice' *Présence Africaine*, Vol. 139 (3rd Quarterly 1986), p. 129.
- ⁷⁵ Larry Neal, 'The Black Arts Movement' *The Drama Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Summer, 1968), 29-39, pp. 29-30
- ⁷⁶ The term 'Black Art' was coined by Baraka who outlined its paradigms in his poem entitled 'Black Art' See Larry Neal, 'The Black Arts Movement' op. cit., p. 31.
- ⁷⁷ The origin of racism has, however, been traced earlier. George. M. Fredrickson maintains that it appeared in a 'prototypical form' in the fourteenth and fifteenth

centuries. See his *Racism: A short History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 6.

⁷⁸ Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau, *An Essay On the Inequality of the Human Races (1853–1855)* (New York: Putnam's Sons, First Published 1915), p. 209.

⁷⁹ William J. Wilson, *Power, Racism and Privilege* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), p. 80.

⁸⁰ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, op. cit., p. 74.

⁸¹ There were recurrent riots in the mid-sixties; the Harlem Riots in 1964, the Watts Riots in 1965 and the Detroit Riots in 1967.

⁸² Armah who settled in the United States in 1968 has certainly witnessed the aftermaths of the Detroit Riots of 1967.

⁸³ Derek Wright, "African-American Tensions in Black Writing of the 1960s" op. cit., p. 449.

⁸⁴ See Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement" op. cit., p. 31.

⁸⁵ Ayi Kwei Armah, "Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis" op. cit., p. 41.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURAL AND RACIAL RETRIEVAL AS CATHARSIS IN ARMAH'S *TWO THOUSAND SEASONS*

In *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah resumes with great zeal the task of racial redemption in Africa that he started in *Why Are We So Blest?* He, however, goes a step further in his onslaughts on the white civilization by making his race-oriented discourse more straightforward. The overall impression one may get is that of a psychotic response of a person writing out of bitterness and who seems to find therapeutic relief in formulating spiteful remarks and producing a degraded image of the white race, while revaluing the image of Black Africa.

The major contention held in this chapter is that Armah, like the Negritudinalists, and the existentialists who influenced the latter, uses his writing for a cathartic purpose, i.e., as an antidote to his existential alienation. Throughout the novel Armah's style betrays a *malaise* akin to *spleen*. One more contention held in this chapter is that Armah uses the motif of slavery for

in the personal and the communal level. Indeed, he
sacrifice-trade episode to get psychological relief, both
through an exteriorisation of an obsessive nightmare, and through the satisfaction
of carrying out the duty of remembrance. It is, by the same token, an attempt at
making his fellow blacks work towards their own disalienation, both racial and
existential. In doing so he seems to follow in the footsteps of Fanon, who
undertook such an enterprise in *Black Skin White Masks*. Yet, Armah is, unlike
Fanon, obsessed with the race issue. His racialist rhetoric reveals a revengeful
dimension. Throughout the novel Armah pours scorn on the white race,
including the Arab race which he purposefully considers as belonging to this
category. Armah attempts to rekindle his people's hatred towards the two races, by
suggesting that they are the engineers of his people's degradation, both past and
present. He often reminds his people of the necessity of historical remembrance
to achieve racial disalienation.

This disalienation, he contends, should be achieved through two major
tasks. First, there should be a cultural retrieval, mostly through a revival of
traditional culture. There should also be a historical reconstruction, a task he,
himself, undertakes in this novel. He puts forward the thesis that historical
awareness is necessary for advancement. In other words, a knowledge of the past
is a prerequisite to future advancement. In so doing, he adopts Achebe's famous
adage about learning "where the rain began to beat [them]" in order to progress
unhampered towards both self and national realisation. He, further, makes it
clear that the remembrance of the "holocaust" is the duty of the "survivors" both
as an homage to the memory of the victims of the slave trade, and as an attempt
to keep their memory alive. In his preface, Armah makes it plain that the records
of that span of the black people's history should be undertaken by the black
intellectuals whom, he calls the "rememberers" or the "utterers". He expects the
latter to record it from an African perspective. As it shows from Armah's
motivations, expressed in his preface, the novel is clearly set in the Afrocentric
tradition.²

aims at demonstrating Armah's Afrocentric both thematically and stylistically. Thematically, the two major Afrocentric paradigms that the novel encompasses are its concern for 'consciousness' and an African-centred historiography. Stylistically, the epic dimension of the novel and the use of the *griot* story-telling device are a testimony to Armah's endorsement of Afrocentric aesthetics as propounded and practised in the late 1960s under the banner of the 'New Black Renaissance'. In fact, the influence of the Black Nationalist movements in the U.S., which Armah witnessed when he settled there, is evidenced throughout the novel, and Armah's 'anti-racist racism' gives the novel a neo-Negritudist touch.

The assumption held here is that Armah's endorsement of the Diopian thesis of the black origin of the Egyptian civilisation may entitle *Two thousand Seasons*, to the label of Afrocentric aesthetics. Though Ouologuem's novel, *Bound to violence*,³ which shares some common motifs with Armah's novel had been published prior to Armah's novel, it does not fall within this category, since its writer's approach to his material is not as 'narcissistic' as Armah's. This narcissism first appears in Armah's portrayal of his people, except those who collaborated with the white men, as endowed with many virtues, e.g., courage, hospitality, altruism. He, on the other hand, endows the white characters with the most repulsive vices. This makes the novel fall within the range of Manichean allegory, which JanMohamed attributes to 'colonialist literature'⁴ and which he maintains is:

the colonialist cognitive framework and colonialist literary representation [which] is a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object.⁵

ns intelligence and emotion and rationality and
itude ideology, aspects of which can be traceable in
Two Thousand Seasons. JanMohamed, further, remarks that the power relations
underlying this model set in motion such strong currents that even the writer who
is reluctant to acknowledge it and who may indeed be highly critical of
imperialist exploitation is drawn into its vortex⁶ This seems to be the case of
Armah, who adopts a strongly Manichean discourse.

Armah's racist discourse certainly accounts for the scarcity of critical
attention to the novel. It may have also accounted for its lack of appeal to the
publishers, who, quite understandably did not want to indulge in a risky
enterprise by publishing it. Armah, himself pointed to his ordeal while having
the novel serialized in African newspapers. He notes: "The Editor of the
Tanzanian *Daily News* told me [that] he feared he could be accused of using the
Government newspaper to foment anti-white hostility if he serialized my novel⁷
The Editor of the Ghanaian *Daily Graphic* stopped serializing it after a few
attempts, and according to Armah, he asked him to censor parts of the novel, but
the author refused.⁸ The novel did not arouse public concern when serialized
even in Armah's own country.⁹ Such an indifference shown by Armah's own
people, despite the fact that it dealt with their history and that they were its
targeted audience, was quite puzzling. One can but speculate on the major causes
of this indifference. They can either be psychologically or religiously motivated.
Plainly, the psychological response may be that the novel touches a sore spot in
the Ghanaian historical consciousness. In fact, no Ghanaian or any Black person
for that matter could read any material dealing with the slave-trade and not feel
justifiably offended. Still, the religiously motivated response had certainly been,
a none too legitimate reaction to Armah's onslaught on the Islamic religion.

Amazingly enough, Robert Frazer justifies the lack of concern for the
novel on aesthetic grounds, mostly with regards to its formal aspect. He remarks
that the underlying cause [is] a deep anxiety and puzzlement as to the novel's
form¹⁰ This seems to be an underestimation of the ideological implications of

c. Frazer, however reckons that the novel has a further aspect of Frazer's reading of the novel that is radically opposed in the present chapter is that of his considering it as free from self-centered individualities, and the *angst* that pervades Armah's two preceding novels. He even takes to task Kofi Awoonor for considering Armah and Olougem as writers imprisoned in *angst* and frustration¹² and considers this view as *critical short-sightedness*¹³ Quite oddly, Frazer has failed to notice the numerous passages where Armah expresses his *spleen*, and the existentialist dimension of the novel. He makes his negation of this aspect of the novel plain stating that it: *owes nothing to the modern existentialist mode of writing*¹⁴

There will be, in this chapter, an attempt at demonstrating the techniques of existentialist writing that Armah uses. One major contention held here is that Armah's writing of *Two Thousand Seasons* has, as that of *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*, a therapeutic purpose, just like existentialist literature. Yet, in *Two Thousand Seasons*, the therapy is extended as a group therapy. Armah's concern is both self and racial redemption. The origin of Armah's motivation to work for racial redemption and cultural retrieval, through the revival of the *Way*, can be traced in his preceding novel, through the predicament of Modin. To overcome his guilt for being among the *Blest*, the latter decides to join a revolutionary movement. This is an autobiographical hint, since Armah expressed a desire to follow such a path after giving up his studies in the U.S in the early sixties. In one of his articles about his autobiography, he notes: *By the beginning of my final year I decided, if possible, to work with the liberation movements in Southern Africa*¹⁵ It was most probably, out of such a revolutionary urge that he settled in Algiers, which sheltered African revolutionary movements in the late sixties. As he points out in the same article, the murder of Patrice Lumumba was shattering for him. Through Modin, his autobiographical character, Armah hints to the psychological torment that he underwent on account of his growing realisation of the ambiguity between his revolutionary ideals and his passivity. Indeed, Armah seems to have been shaken

t: "Every onlooker is either a coward or a traitor"¹⁶

ity can allegedly be considered as the major cause behind Armah's nervous breakdown. In this connection Armah remarks: "It is an understatement to say I had a nervous breakdown; it was my entire being, body and soul, that had broken down"¹⁷.

The resulting psychological unease of his divided self, overshadows most of his early works, including *Two Thousand Seasons*. This is particularly evidenced in Armah's use of a psychotic, almost hallucinatory rhetoric, as it will be demonstrated in this chapter. In fact, as Armah, himself, reckons he has turned to writing out of spite to achieve a sense of personal usefulness. He notes "In the end [I] made the inescapable decision: I would revert to writing, not indeed as the most desired creative option, but as the least parasitic option open to me"¹⁸

An assumption held here is that Armah attempts to delve into "communal consciousness" and celebrate it to achieve a sense of belonging that he lacked in his country at the time he wrote his early novels. His suffering from, to borrow Fanon's expression, "intellectual alienation"¹⁹ is clearly evident in Baako's predicament in *Fragments*. Armah's concern for cultural retrieval is not only reflected through the major message of *Two Thousand Seasons*, but through the structural and formal aspect of the novel. His first step towards the recovery of the "way" is through his use of orature, notably through the use of the *griot* narrative device, and in the cyclic narrative structure of the novel. Matching his expressed will to rebel against white presence, and white culture, his use of the traditional narrative technique is also meant as a rebellion against Western conventional novel form. Yet, as it will be demonstrated the novel bears technical features of the Western existentialist novel.

Starting from the premise that it is the material of a fictional work that dictates the critical approach to use for its scrutiny, it would be legitimate to say that *Two Thousand Seasons* would be best approached from a psychoanalytic

advance of Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* as a
er also aims at demonstrating where Armah's novel
from Fanon with particular focus on Fanon's book. Still, since Armah's novel
has an epic dimension there is room for the justification of a historicist critical
approach. The focus in this chapter will, however, be more on the first
alternative, since Armah's representation of history has a strong mythic, if not
phantasmal dimension.

Most critics of *Two Thousand Seasons* have considered it as a
historical novel. This is questionable if one judges it by the standards of the
historical novel as defined by Lukacs in his book *The Historical Novel* (1962).²⁰
The most important one being 'historical authenticity'²¹ Armah's glorification of
his major protagonists, Isanusi and the 'initiates', by giving them an extra heroic
dimension, bears witness to his biased dramatization of history, e.g., in his
description of the slaves' rebellion. As Lukacs remarks: the epic 'always seeks
to create the impression of life as it is normally as a whole'²² Armah's novel,
however, has an allegorical dimension since its narrative structure is grounded,
to a certain extent, in 'orature'. This is partly why the novel has no conventional
plot development and has an episodic story. Its epic dimension also accounts for
such structural devices.

This dimension, however, also accounts for its appeal for certain critics,
for instance, Frazer remarks: 'This source of inspiration, part recorded history,
part myth, has an appealing epic shape' (p. 70). Izevbaye contends that Armah's
novel is 'his contribution to the debate on black aesthetics'²³ It is, however,
more than a 'contribution to a debate', it is the putting into practice the
paradigms of black aesthetics. Izevbaye finds the novel appealing since he
observes: 'the result is artistic pleasure, rather than pain, an experience of beauty
which every hearer and every beholder should find in Armah's peepshow into
Africa's past and present'²⁴ Izevbaye's far-fetched conclusion lies in his
considering the novel as being Armah's Pan-African 'testament' stating: '*Two
Thousand Seasons* is manifestly intended as 'Africa's Bible' because of the

ortation and Pan-African manner in which it draws over the continent²⁵

Two Thousand Seasons has been hailed by black critics, particularly those of the Diaspora. This is the case of Clifton Washington who considers it as ‘a unique literary African work’²⁶ and as ‘a delight for any reader who is prepared to face the challenge of this creative African literary masterpiece’²⁷ He praises the novel for preaching the destruction of the whites stating that the people portrayed by Armah are ‘the African people who know that the white cancer is divisive, destructive and amoral. They are those among us who know that the destruction of the Aryan world is the only vocation of the way’.²⁸ One may wonder if Washington has been influenced by *Two Thousand Seasons*, for he uses the same racist rhetoric as Armah. In the main, the novel has been preached or condemned on the grounds of its racist, if not racist, dimension.

Soyinka, who reckons that ‘There is a gleefulness, a reckless ascendancy of the vengeance motif’²⁹ in the passages where the Arabs are debased, however, does not consider Armah’s novel as ‘a racist tract’³⁰ He maintains that ‘its central theme is far too positive and dedicated and its ferocious onslaught on alien contamination soon falls into place as a preparatory exercise for the liberation of the mind.’³¹ Palmer agrees with Soyinka and maintains that ‘the work is rescued from a destructive, negative racism by the positive nature of its message’.³² Echoing Soyinka, Chidi Amuta also refutes the racist dimension of the novel stating: ‘*Two Thousand Seasons* is neither a racist pamphlet nor a manual for the red-eyed terrorist. It is a serious and thoughtful statement on the author’s consciousness of his people’s past’³³ Bai Kisogie, similarly maintains that the novel is not ‘a racist tract’³⁴ He goes even, further, in his praise of the novel by claiming that ‘the work remains a passionate often beautiful testament of socio-racial faith’³⁵

The racist dimension of the novel is also denied by Abioseh, M. Porter,³⁶ who points out that Armah’s onslaughts target not only the whites, but his fellow

at the critics, who have condemned Armah's novel to notice the use of satire, which, according to him, accounts for the historical distortions in the novel.³⁷ He further observes that Armah's novel, just like Oluogbe's *Bound to Violence*, has been 'subject to inaccurate interpretations'.³⁸ Among the critics who, on the other hand, condemned the novel because of its racist rhetoric, there are Bernth Lindfors,³⁹ and Derek Wright.⁴⁰ The former also finds fault with Armah's historical reconstruction, which he notes is 'cartoon history of Africa'. The latter finds fault with its formal aspects, particularly its prose which he says 'too often collapses into a lustreless demagogic jargon'.⁴¹ Likewise, Soyinka finds fault with Armah's prose style, which he observes, 'appears unequal to the task of capturing action and rendering it totally convincing'.⁴² Isidore Okpewho, in his turn, criticizes the tone of the novel which he remarks is: 'nasty and for the most part downright intemperate'.⁴³ Still, he appreciates the mythic and epic dimension of the novel. He maintains that it 'fulfils one of the fundamental functions of myth, which is to transmute reality into fancy through the medium of symbolism'.⁴⁴ He, besides, observes that: 'perhaps no recent work better demonstrates this urge to review the old mythic tradition and furnish new hopes than Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*'.⁴⁵ Okpewho classifies *Two Thousand Seasons*, in the category of the mythic novels belonging to what he considers to be 'tradition revised'.⁴⁶

The attempt to bring the novel within the oral tradition first shows in its title. The term 'seasons' is taken from the traditional linguistic register. The title of the novel refers to the span of historical time that the novel encompasses, i.e., from the Arab 'invasion' to the European one. The period is associated with Anoa's prophecy of 'two thousand seasons of destruction' (p. 13). Yet, whereas the first thousand years represented total destruction and were nightmarish, the second thousand years had a positive dimension in that they were the herald of a revolutionary awakening. They were, besides, devoted to finding the way. In the main, the difference between the first and the second thousand years is pointed

tion: "Two thousand seasons: a thousand dry, a thousand noa insists that the first thousand seasons are so destructive to the extent of making the victims numb, i.e., they showed a resignation to their fateful predicament as slaves. She warns against the passivity of the latter saying: "a thousand you will spend descending into abysses that would stop your heart and break your mind merely to contemplate" (p. 16). The awakening in the second thousand years is pointed out through Anoa's remark: "One thousand seasons with the deepest of the destroyers' holes behind [í] we people of the way again, reach the lip and leave our destroyers forever behind" (p. 16). And to give credit to Anoa's prophecy and to prove it true, the narrator remarks: "the two thousand years of destruction, were already upon us" (p. 38). This is evidently an attempt from Armah to uphold traditional culture.

Armah's attempt at cultural retrieval also shows in his use of the traditional linguistic register, which is by the same token a rejection of the Western one and its conceptual framework. As in traditional communal language, time passing is associated with the rhythm of the seasons. The term season is most likely meant to stand for year, since it is often associated with age, as in: "the thirty-fourth season of Brafo's life" (p. 5). It is, however, at times used to stand for month, as it is the case when the narrator refers to Koranche's slow development during his childhood: "he walked in his thirteenth season" (p. 66), or "then in his tenth season he suddenly spurned the milk of recent mothers" (p. 66). This contradiction in the span of time that the term "season" refers to, year or month, does not seem to have been intended to confuse the reader, since there are other indications, e.g., "walk" breast feeding, that can help the reader evaluate the span of time in accordance with social practices or natural cycles.

The story is recounted by the narrator-protagonist, who assumes the role of *griot*. It revolves round the resistance of a group of slaves against their captors. After being shipped and heading towards the New World, a group of youngsters, "the initiates" who were initiated to the knowledge of the 'way' by an old man, Isanusi, stage a rebellion on board, and free the remaining captives.

the revolutionary consciousness of the other freed
to realize the necessity of rebellion to end the slave trade.

They, subsequently, go in search of Isanusi in his hideouts in the forest, to plan
new attacks on both their white captors and the black *zombis*.

They carry on their resistance movement by targeting the castle from
where the slaves were shipped. After ensuring the alliance of Kamuzu, the king's
rival, they succeed to enter the castle under the disguise of a local chief,
represented by Isanusi, and his cohorts, *the initiates*. They propose a deal to the
white men: to barter arms against slaves. They ask for arms under the pretence
that they will use them to capture more slaves. Isanusi who pretends to be
intransigent in his deal, succeeds in deceiving the whites who provide him with
arms. At once, he and his followers use them against the whites and their
askaris. They, then, attempt to liberate the captive slaves, both in the castle and
on the ships. Kumuzu, who has joined them just to secure a leading position in
the castle, plans to betray them but they outwit him and leave the castle before he
puts his plan into action. They, then, head towards the other ships to free the
other captives.

One of the rebels who has left the group informs the king Koranche
about Isanusi's whereabouts. Koranche, who has always feared Isanusi's
revenge, has promised a ransom to whoever will kill Isanusi. In a duel-like
fashion, Isanusi struggles with Bofo, who plans to kill him but ends up being
killed. Then, the group of rebels is *infiltrated* by a spy, Fosu, who pretends to
side with them because his whole family has disappeared. He traps the group
which comes under attack by the whites. Isanusi dies, but in a dignified way,
after ensuring the escape of his two companions, at his own risk. To take revenge
on Isanusi's death, the rebels go back to the castle and capture Koranche, whom
they oblige to confess his betrayal of his people and his contribution to the slave
trade, before killing him. Prince Benum, asks the whites for assistance to quell
the rebellion. The latter, hence, come to settle down, and bring their religious

natives. In the face of the increasing presence of the
they will carry on fighting.

The narrator, who belongs to this group of rebels, insists that the major fight is against alienation and suggests that the retrieval of the way is the only therapy to cure the minds and souls of those who have succumbed to the gleam of the white material wealth, and traded, as he puts it, their souls and their people in pursuit of material acquisition. Through such remarks, he indirectly hints to the analogy between the slave traders and the modern middle class and ruling class. The novel ends with the anticipatory prospect of the new struggle for racial redemption, the beginning of the healing era that followed the second thousand seasons of destruction prophesied by Anoa, as being those of cultural path finding. Hence, the novel ends with the narrator's voice of wisdom. He undertakes the task of moraliser by synthesizing the moral of the whole adventure and by reminding his black audience of the prophecy of Anoa and to make them aware that lessons should be learnt from the past. Hence, the novel ends with the same pattern it starts with, that of the narrator's rhetoric about the necessity to revive the way and use it as a shield against foreign cultural onslaughts. This is the therapy that Anoa prescribed as an antidote to the two thousand years of physical and mental destructions saying: "Return to the way, the way of reciprocity" (p. 16). The narrator echoes it at the close of the novel saying: "Why were they so blind to this, that in the triumph of destruction's whiteness the destruction of destruction is the only vocation of the way?" (p. 203). He, again, says: "What are we if we see nothing beyond the present, hear nothing from the ages of our flowing, and in all our existence can utter no necessary preparation of the future way?" (204).

The importance Armah grants to cultural retrieval, notably through a revival of the way is first indicated by his devoting the first chapter to it. The chapter itself is entitled "The Way". The definite article is purposefully used to point out that it is the only direction to his people's salvation. This is insistently recalled through the phrase: "our way, the way" (pp. 11, 31, 39) Though Armah

does not provide any straightforward definition of the way. It provides some indications to infer its meaning from the context. The general idea that comes out of the context is that the way refers to traditional culture. It is also associated with traditional religion. The narrator, who denigrates both the Islamic and the Christian religions, says that they are not our way (p. 3). The way is besides often associated with communalism, which is defined as interconnectedness and reciprocity. The narrator says: Reciprocity. Not merely taking, not merely offering. Giving, but only to those from whom we receive in equal measure. Receiving, but only from those to whom we give in reciprocal measure. How easy, how just, the way (p. 17). To emphasize the return to traditional communal life, the narrator remarks: our vocation goes against all unconnectedness. It is a call to create the way. (p. 8).

Armah does not provide a clear-cut definition of the way from the outset, but he gives clues about its meaning here and there. The way refers to the social behavioural norms of traditional society, since it is considered as guidance (p. 18). It also dictates socio-political ethics since it is not ambiguous about the work of experts and the place of caretakers (p. 35). Besides, ruling positions are dictated by it, and are not positions generally sought after by self-seekers [they are] conferred on people who had proved their worth with no red-eyed straining to push themselves into haughty situations (p. 35). Clearly, here Armah praises the way and insists on its being free of individualistic ambitions and corrupt practices. He also insists on its being egalitarian when he says: how just the way (p. 17), and he points to its relevance to communal wellbeing: the manner prescribed by the way is that each participant an equal working together with all others for the welfare of the whole (p. 37).

Armah often insists on the fact that the way is in sharp opposition to the imported values of the invaders. He points out that the way is not only egalitarian but democratic, and that it is not repressive. When Dovi, one of the rebels, wanted to leave the group and go back home, the narrator remarks: we did not try to keep him away from his desire [] Our way is not a road for

is not the road of coercion (p. 183). This lack of emphasis in the episode where some freed slaves wanted to return home: "into whatever illusions they were fated to walk, we could only talk gently to them of what we knew, then bid them good journeys" (p. 191). The frequent remarks about what the way is and what it is not seem to be a narrative strategy to make Armah's targeted audience not lose sight of the focal message of the novel, which is the return to "the way". Armah often suggests that this "return to the source" is the only solution to the ills that bedevil their society. He maintains: "The only worthwhile liberation, the rediscovery of our way" (p. 129), and he insists on the urgency of the agenda: "But memory flies faster than the utterer's tongue and it is time to heed the quiet call, the call to return" (p. 27). Armah suggests that a return to the "way" is a prerequisite for both self and social redemption: "the working together of minds connected, souls connected, travelling along that one way, our way, the way" (p. 134).

This therapeutic dimension of the "return to the source" is an echo of the negritude ideological precepts. It is apparent in Isanusi's legacy before his death, when he warned the "initiates": "See the disease, and understand it well" (p. 201), and "against the disease, Isanusi saw the cure: the hope of the way [í] that healing creativity" (p. 202). He maintains that the way warrants communal cohesion and social "health", since people of the way do not need "any healer's art" (p. 202). This message is none too clear as in the following passage: "let the weary consent to slavery. We, remainder of the slaughter of our people, our minds made up not to weary of seeking the way again, not to tire searching for the way even after losing it, we would move again" (p. 38).

Whereas in Armah's novel, the grassroots are advocating and working for the return to "the way", Amílcar Cabral, whose influence on Armah is quite striking, does not consider it as a mass strategy. In fact Cabral maintains that the "return to the source" is alien to the masses since they are not culturally alienated. He notes: "*the masses retain their identity*, separate and distinct from that of the colonial power."⁴⁷ Cabral considers the intellectual elite, to which Armah

of the return to the source strategy. He defines this
nial, by the petite bourgeoisie, of the pretended
supremacy of the culture of the dominant power over that of the dominated
people with which it must identify itself⁴⁸

In an attempt to put into practice his call for the retrieval of the way
and more particularly, orature, Armah has used the *griot* narrative device. The
attempt to Africanize his novel is also apparent in its cyclic narrative structure.
The novel opens and ends on the same pattern. The prologue and the voice of the
last chapter of the novel, are likewise pieces of lament, and both forcefully
express the message of the novel. Yet, unlike the prologue, the voice ends on
an optimistic note, i.e., a hopeful achievement of the recovery of the way.
Again, since the author's basic concern is historical construction; there is a
greater use of summary i.e., telling rather than scene i.e., showing as defined
by Phylis Bentley.⁴⁹ Consequently, dialogues are scarce and short, the first
dialogue occurs on page 51.

The narrative flow is again jerky and follows the whims of the narrator
and by extension those of the author. This is apparent in the paragraph shaping.
Some paragraphs are very long as, for example on page 27, others are very short
as on page 48. The former are used when the narrator recounts some historical
events or when he provides a minute detailed description of some places. The
latter often seem to be the narrator's and by the same token Armah's expressing
his reflections loudly. A case in point is: "Who was it prophesying? And what
was it she said to pierce our comfort, the ease of ages?" (p. 12). Another example
is: "our fears are not of motion" (p. 5). The pace of the narrative is uneven. At
times the narrator takes his task almost leisurely, providing the slightest detail as
when he says "Another: Tano and his people moved from land [í] Another: In
the slow drought [í] Another time there was flooding" (p. 6). He seems
unconcerned about the reaction of his audience who may find such an
overstretched description tedious to read and may be keen to proceed with the
rest of the story. This is probably a narrative strategy used by Armah to reflect

ic, two thousand years. In other words, since the
of a long period; he should take all his time to make
his audience realize that their people's misfortune lasted long.

The length of the novel, two hundred and six pages, has probably been another narrative strategy to match the two thousand years of this epic. Still, when the protagonists' actions are recounted, the pace of the narrative becomes brisk and is reflected through a sequence of short paragraphs. This is the case on page 48, where there are three consecutive short paragraphs, about four lines long. Their shortness illustrates the urgency of action. These paragraphs start consecutively as follows: "Surrounded by the work of death we halted again for counsel. [í] Turning left we moved. [í] We fled them, fled their inhospitable land" (p. 48). These narrative strategies are purposefully used by Armah to conform to the techniques of the *griot* tradition.

The *griot* narrative device is first apparent in the prologue where the narrator directly addresses the audience: "You hearers" (p. XI). The narrator makes it clear that he is undertaking the *griot* task of transmitting historical memory when he says: "We go to find our audience, open our mouths to pass on what we have heard" (p. XI). The *griot* technique of associating the audience to the story telling appears from the very first line of the novel: "We are not a people of yesterday" (p. 1). To maintain the novel in the *griot* tradition, Armah makes his narrator punctuate his story by addresses to the reader and by making him a participant in the telling of the story, as when he says: "You do not understand how the destroyers turned earth to desert?" (p. 7). A case in point of the association of the reader in the story telling is the narrator's remark: "Let us then make haste" (p. 64). Another example is the narrator's remark after listing a series of names: "why break our ears with all the names, all the choices?" (p. 92). He makes the reader a participant in the action when he says: "ask the destroyed. They alone can tell you" (p. 126), or: "See the footsteps they have left over all the world" (p. 6).

makes the reader an element in the action when he present on the ship that carried the slaves, by asking him about who asked a question: "Was it Mokili?" (p. 134). This is most probably not due to a memory slip. *Griots* are usually "poet-historians" who are supposed to master their art, and who often make remarks about how well they are carrying on their task. Clearly, on no account would a *griot* worthy of the name let his audience doubt his memory skills. Among the *griot* narrative techniques that Armah uses is that of the *griot* making remarks about the devices he uses to recount his story. This is the case when he says: "Let sleep and death again give us an image" (p. 28), and "of the askaris' deaths nothing is left that needs saying here" (p. 142). The narrator often appeals to the senses of the audience to catch their interest in the story, as when he says: "Hear this for the sound of it" (p. 34), or "See the footsteps" (p.6), or again: "What need is there to spoil time with further laughter in the description of the noblemen's clothes we wore that day?" (p. 163).

The narrative devices of the *griot* tradition that are most evident in the novel are the lament and dirge technique. This is particularly the case in the prologue, e.g., "Hau, people headed after the setting sun" (p. XI), or "Woe the headwater needing to give [í] Woe the link from spring to stream" (p. XI), or again: "Woe the race, too generous in the giving of itself [í] Woe the flowing water, people hustling to our death" (pp. XII-XIII). The stylistic oral performance also shows in the shortness of some sentences, such as: "Night came. We rested" (p. 56), "To return" (p. 6), "The white destroyers came" (p. 80). These short sentences are part of the narrative strategies to make the reader sense the seriousness of the situation.

Still, Armah fails to conform to the *griot's* narrative performance through his language, which appears pedantic and Westernized, and which lacks the rhythmic, or poetic dimension of the *griot's* language. This language is often poetic and punctuated with songs and riddles and proverbs. All these aspects are scarce in Armah's novel. Presumably, one may say that this is a testimony to

ing oral material, and hence may be put down to his traditional oral culture. Another aspect of orature that Armah makes use of is that of the anonymous naming of the characters. Mbiti points to this narrative technique stating: "An entire story may often be told from beginning to end without personal names, using only the pronouns and common nouns [í] the dramatis personae remain anonymous in order that they can apply to anyone"⁵⁰ Sometimes, Armah provides a list of names of characters involved in the action, who are often mentioned only once, as if the reader is acquainted with them. This narrative technique is most probably meant to make the audience feel they are taking part in the action. Yet, Armah departs from the pattern of oral literature as defined by Mbiti, through the number of protagonists involved in the tale. Mbiti notes that they should not exceed ten characters.⁵¹ Armah's novel is peopled with so many characters that the reader may be confused.

Armah's oral narrative strategy has been viewed negatively by some critics and positively by others. Derek Wright considers it as a "pseudo-oral narrative [í] a simulated exercise, a literary affectation"⁵² He, further, points to its difference from the genuine oral literature narrative structure stating that: "There are, therefore, some significant departures from story-telling traditions"⁵³ He, further, suggests that its being in written form and in English marks its difference from orature. He remarks: "*Two Thousand Seasons* is the kind of novel that a *griot* would have written if he had access to literary form"⁵⁴ He, besides maintains that "Armah strains to reproduce an illusion of orality"⁵⁵ His strongest criticism of Armah's narrative structure refers to the use of complex rhetorical statements: "The attempt frequently overreaches itself, however, and produces a lugubrious, almost self-parodying rhetoric which is at home in neither the oral nor the literary form"⁵⁶ Eustace Palmer, on the other hand contends that Armah's is making good use of orature. He notes that "the language of *Two Thousand Seasons* is deliberately given an African flavour"⁵⁷ He goes so far as to claim that Armah's novel is among the most linguistically Africanized novels:

Arma in *The Voice*, Arma makes a much more
than another African novelist to impart an African flavour to
the language he employs.⁵⁸ As it will be demonstrated Arma's novel is more
within the Western than the traditional African linguistic register.

Arma's evaluation of time according to natural cycles, seasons, is also
an attempt to keep the narrative within the oral tradition. Evidently, since
African traditional society was agrarian, time measurement followed the seasons'
cycles. In fact, as the narrator remarks, people's life was regulated by the
different seasons. He maintains: "our migrations were but an echo to the
alternation of drought and rain" (p.6). The cyclic dimension of time is, again,
reflected in the cyclic structure of the novel. Chapter five, for instance, describes
events that took place before those related in Chapter Four. It starts thus: "All
this was before the time when we of our age began our initiations" (p. 85), and
the narrator goes on recounting the initiation proceedings. Still, at other times,
time is linear. This appears in the transition from Chapter Two to Chapter three,
where the narrative follows the historical events as they successively occurred.
Chapter Two ends on a reference to the second arrival of the Arabs, and Chapter
Three starts with the recounting of this second invasion.

Since the novel has an epic dimension, the narrative tense should
logically be the past tense. Yet there are some shifts from the past to the present
tense. This again is a narrative strategy meant to suggest that the situation is still
prevailing, i.e., that of the blacks subjugation by the whites, in a neo-colonial
context this time. This is the case when the narrator says: "this is our destiny:
however in our blind anxiety we may we may think to fly" (p. 157), or: "This has
been no useless explosion of rage" (p. 157). In the main, the dualistic aspect of
narrative time, past and present, cyclic and linear, is paralleled a dualism in style,
traditional oral and naturalistic, and in the linguistic register, oral simple and
modernist complex.

appears in the minute detailed description of the novel, being a historical chronicle, such detailed descriptions are quite logical. The detailed descriptions are similarly used in certain situations to heighten their dramatic propensity, and effect, as when the narrator gives the slightest detail about the stamping of the slaves:

The tall slave-driver pushed the burning iron against the captive's chest where the oil had been smeared and held it there for a moment. The tortured man yelled with pain, once. Smoke rose sharply from the oily flesh, then the iron rod was snatched back. Where its end had touched the captive's skin there was now raw exposed flesh. The skin had come off in two pieces each as long as a finger and half as broad. (p. 118)

Such a detailed description is certainly meant to arouse the reader's revulsion and to make Armah's targeted audience, his fellow blacks, aware of the intensity of the suffering of their forebears, at the hands of the whites. At other times, the minute detailed description is meant to make the audience visualize the situation as if it is watching a feature film. This is the case in the following passage:

All of us had come: Pili and Ndlela, Suma and Kwesi [í] We climbed up the tall alari trunks. Where at the top the branches grew slenderest we leaned on them and made them bend till they brought us to other branches high above the ground. A hundred and thirty branches bent separately with the succeeding weight of each of us (p. 94).

The influence of cinematic techniques is particularly noticeable in the scene that describes the physical confrontation of the antagonists, i.e., the captives and their captors. This is also evidenced in the rebellion of the women of the *sharem* (p. 23), and in the sequence that portrays Isanusi's duel with Bofo (p. 188). These cinematic techniques bear witness to the modernist dimension of the novel. This dimension also appears in its existentialist stamp.

style appears more particularly in the frequent use of narrator's, and by the same token, Armah's, *angst*, and spleen. This is the case in the following statements: ÷when with no warning save five brief uncomprehended, easily forgotten fragments, twin voices rose from one breast prophesying pain (p. 12), or : ÷those not yet visibly broken into fragments, they are zombies, death inspired vessels, voided of our soul (p. 7). Evidently, the phrase ÷broken into fragments is meant to refer to existential alienation and its subsequent shattering of the self. The emphasis on the fragmentation of the personality of those exposed to alien culture appears in the frequent use of a lexis that relates to division, e.g., ÷schisms (pp. 9, 26, 27), ÷twin (p. 26, 131). The existentialist mood of the novel is reflected in phrases that relate to anxiety and despair, soul emptiness, and madness, e.g., ÷sickly anxiety (p. 150).

The recurrence of the term ÷anxiety in the novel, seems to reflect Armah's own anxiety and despair. The existentialist mood, expressing despair is quite striking in the following statements: ÷the torpid forgetfulness brought to them by drugs alternates with a waking existence of catatonic despair (p. 27), or ÷his plunge back into the destructive loneliness of his soul (p. 89). The existentialist nihilistic urge is often pointed as it shows from the use of such terms as ÷destruction, ÷extinction (p. XI), ÷annihilation (p. 9). Among the other features of existentialist literature is ÷suicide, as in Camus's *The Outsider*. Armah writes: ÷led them first into madness then to pre-emptive suicide (p. 32). The frequent reference to madness is again another major feature of existentialist literature that is quite evident in this novel. Armah often insists that madness is the consequence of loneliness, e.g., ÷when loneliness bringer of madness (p. 9). It is worth quoting the different instances where Armah refers to madness and other related lexis to point out how pervading the atmosphere of lunacy is in this novel. ÷It maddens the ear (p. 13), ÷demented (p. 28), ÷religious madness (p. 29) ÷maddening abundance (p. 49), ÷allow fear to madden you (p. 76), ÷Isanusi had gone mad (p. 84), ÷run abruptly mad (p.86), ÷declared insane ó salutary

triumphø (p. 128), ðthe folly of our stateø (p. 163).
ness can metaphorically represent the state of the
protagonists who witnessed, or experienced the atrocity and the drama of
slavery. Granted its importance in Armahø earlier novels, particularly,
Fragments, it is, however, a testimony to Armahø own obsession with it, on
account of his personal drama, i.e., his nervous breakdown.

The other features of existentialist literature that the novel encompasses
relate to the division of the self, e.g., ðisolated selves. Splitø (p. 8), or
ðfragmented unconnected selfø (p. 130). There are frequent references to the
division between soul and spirit and the emptiness of the soul. Some telling
examples are: ðsoul deathø (p. 28), ðdead spiritø (p. 32, 67), ðsoulless bodiesø (p.
43), ðinfirm selvesø (p. 63), ðvoided of his soulø (p. 92). This insistence on soul
pathology also forms part of Armahø major healing purpose. He insists on the
disease to suggest the urgency of the healing task. This is part of the Afrocentric
concern for the decolonisation of the African mind.⁵⁹ This task is clearly
expressed through the following remarks: ðtrapped now in our smallest self, that
is our vocation: to find our larger, our healing self, we the black peopleø (p. 9).
This Pan-Negroism is yet again one major feature of Afrocentric literature.

Besides the reference to madness and the divided self, the other major
aspect of existentialist writing that Armah refers to is death. There is an
overpowering sense of death throughout the novel, as the narrative is punctuated
with a terminology related to it, e.g., ðburialø (p. XI), ðcadaverousø (p. XIII),
ðmurderedø (pp. XV, 3). The term ðdeathø itself recurs almost on every single
page. It is often used to refer, not to physical death, but to the spiritual one. It is,
however, often used to symbolically refer to the whites and their culture, e.g.,
ðthe white deathly peopleø (p. XV).

Still, whereas the existentialist literature is preoccupied with the fate of
the individual, Armah is concerned with that of the community, but he attempts
to apply the paradigms of existentialist literature since he deals with existentialist

gain, since he has drawn inspiration from Negritude, existentialist tradition, he has, thus, not escaped the influence of existentialist writing. Moreover, since his earlier novels were written in the existentialist vein, it seems that Armah has some difficulties in renouncing this style. However, at times, Armah attributes the existentialist paradigms to separate individuals, who experience *angst*. This is the case of Koranche who broods over his misfortune when Idawa rejected his offer: "The rejection [í] pushed his spirit into a comfortless hole in which, alone with himself, he searched in vain for ways to run from his inner emptiness" (p. 71). Existentialist *angst* is also experienced by Isanusi when he was compelled to exile: "He walked through the night, a fugitive from realities he was still reluctant to understand, from questions he was impotent to answer" (p. 101). Existentialist alienation is also dramatized through the case of Juma, the rebelled askari, who is, after his rebellion, torn between two worlds, that of the white men, and that of the rebel "initiates" who represent traditional culture: "All this time, he was prey to the sickly anxiety that rises against the will when it is harried between contradictory voices" (p. 150). On the whole, Armah's novel is a hybridity of narrative techniques, Western modernist and African traditional. But, the modernist dimension of the novel seems to outdo its traditional oral one.

Similarly, in the linguistic register, the use of the modernist terms outweighs that of the traditional oral ones. To render the traditional dimension of narrative style and speech pattern, Armah uses expressions such as "Movers of the mind" (p. 5). This expression refers to the *griots*, the memory keepers, whose mission is pointed out as being news spreading: "their news was of communities we would have forgotten without them, roots to ours but gone from waking sight. Their news was of communities too far off for us immediately to remember" (p. 5). Another expression that brings language in the register of traditional oral performance relates to the measurement of distance with reference to daily practical life, e.g., hunting. The narrator says: "down the river less than an arrow's flying distance from our home" (p. 78). Another example is: "farther

river Su Tsen a morning walk from the waterfall (p. 187). There are, however, other means of distance measurement such as 'the length of twenty adults' (p. 187). This reproduction of traditional speech pattern is, again, evident in the following statement: 'Five is the number of our remembrance' (p. 137), meaning: 'I remember there were Five of them'. Such a statement indirectly points to the narrator and by extension the *griots*' enjoying a good memory. The metaphorical dimension of traditional speech pattern is reproduced through such statements as: 'the others heard calls from home' (p. 178), meaning they were keen on returning home, or 'two groups older than ourselves' (p. 186), meaning two generations older.

The scarcity of examples of traditional speech pattern is a testimony to Armah's difficulty in indigenizing the novel linguistically. Armah has not managed, as successfully as did Tutuola, Okara or Achebe, to reproduce the native speech pattern in a more convincing way. He has, on the other hand, as it also shows from his earlier novels, a linguistic and stylistic dexterity in English, that is unmatched save by Soyinka's. Indeed, without venturing too far as to claim that Soyinka has influenced Armah stylistically, one cannot fail to notice the similarities in style complexity and language obscurity. The following passage is a telling example: 'But that a new thing would interfere, that an external force would add its overwhelming weight to the puny tearing efforts of the ostentatious cripples, to the attritive attempts of the askaris, those whose fulfilment lay in our abasement, that the seers and the hearers did not know till Anoa spoke' (p. 6).

Language sophistication appears in such terms as 'discombobulation' (p.31), or 'opprobrium' (p. 10), shards (p. 1), 'paltriness' (p. 1). The density of language and the far-fetched use of English are clearly in contradiction with the *griot* linguistic competence. Another contradiction lies in the use of modern concepts by the narrator, who is supposed to belong to a traditional society. His background and intellectual make up, make the use of a modern linguistic register unconvincing. Such expressions as 'seen and taken note' (p. 34) are odd

Among the outstanding modern terminology that the author uses are: 'grotesque' (p. 81), 'buffoon spirit' (p. 171), 'a black copy' (p. 173), 'factory' (p. 99), 'pacted' (p. 173), 'diplomacy' (p. 172) and 'stratagem' (p. 157). Such terms were certainly not in use in a traditional African society. These terms betray Armah's intrusions, and the reader who is acquainted with his earlier novels cannot fail to recognize Armah's mastery of stylistic devices and his language manipulation. The latter aspect appears in the overstretched sentences, with a sequence of adjectives, e.g., 'incestuous, unproductive, parasitic gathering' (p. 8), and on page 181.

At the lexical level, the choice of words often reflects the drama of the situation. Hence, there are frequent emotionally-laden terms such as 'our burial' (p. XI), 'carnage' (p. XVI), 'holocaust' (pp. 12, 38), 'a shameful rage' (p. 54). Armah's lexical choice is deliberately meant to be provocative, as it is evident in the use of insulting terms, more particularly when he refers to the Arabs. He says that their names are 'filthy' (p. 24), they are 'cripples' (p. 11), 'beggars' (p. 19), and they bear shameful illness, i.e., 'Hassan the Syphilitic' (p. 21). The Westerners are not spared Armah's insulting language; for instance, Kamuzu's white wife is 'white like leprosy' (p. 169). The use of these and other bolder terms (p. 23), are a testimony to Armah's uncontrolled rage and hatred. His hatred is also betrayed by the use of such terms as 'heinous' (pp. 18, 54). In fact, the term hatred itself often recurs (pp. 87, 176, 199).

Besides this provocative and emotionally charged language, Armah makes use of excremental language, as he did in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, to assail the senses of his readers, notably, his fellows, and to make them recoil at the moral turpitude that prevailed at the time of the slave-trade, and in the post-independence era. Throughout the novel he indirectly points out the analogy of the situation, past and present, slavery and neo-colonialism. The excremental language is often related to physical reactions to symbolically hint to men being the cause of the filth that prevails. The outstanding terms are: 'vomited' (pp. 27, 29, 31, 198), 'spat' (pp. 28, 110), 'defecating' (pp. 29, 44),

126). Some other terms refer to filth, e.g., "dirt" (p. 126), "filth" (p. 198), "stinking" (p. 64). The most repulsive, however, which are meant to make the reader recoil in disgust are: "thick-lying pus" (p. 158), "death excremental pus" (p. XII). The most disgusting description is that of the quarrel of one slave with the slave-driver John: "we saw him [í] bring up all the bile and dead blood from within his body into his mouth, and this mixture he vomited forcefully into the slave-driver's now captive mouth" (p. 131). In the main, excremental language seems to have been used to symbolically recall the physical filth that the slaves experienced during the "the middle-passage"

The violence of Armah's language is paralleled by the use of a terminology that relates to violence, which is, again, meant to reproduce the atmosphere of the slave-trade era. Some instances of such a terminology are: "brutal ferocity" (p. 38), "aggressive initiative" (p. 45), "butchered" (p. XV), "tore them limb from limb" (p. 54), "slaughter" (p. 88). Armah seems to justify such violence by pointing to its origin in the hatred that overcame the protagonists: "These men were filled with an overpowering hate. It seemed if they continued alive at all was solely to express that violence" (p. 47). This, however, seems to apply to him, since his verbal violence appears to come out of a bottled up hatred towards the whites. His revengeful animated spirit is betrayed by his frequent use of the term "revenge" and "vengeance" (pp. 27, 37, 62, 158). Violence is also symbolically referred to through the mention of wild ferocious and rapacious animals: "vultures" (p. 43), "Hyenas" (p. 15), "leopard" (p. 35), "lion" (p. 14).

Armah's bitterness is also apparent in his sarcastic remarks, which are often directed at those who collaborated with the slave-dealers, most specifically the local chiefs and kings. This is the case when a healer ironically tells Koranche's father that his son will either be "a fool among fools [í] or he will be a sage" (p. 67). Another instance relates to the king's death from "overeating" (p. 69), which symbolically refers to the greed of the ruling elite, past and present. Armah points to the fatness of king Koranche, which made him a

the rulers: "the king was fat. All men laughed secretly
the example shows, Armah describes physical deformity to
symbolize moral infirmity. Koranche is fat but spiritually shallow, he is mentally
weak and morally depraved.

Symbolism is scarce in this novel, despite the fact that Armah uses the *griot* narrative style, which is known for being quite metaphorical. The outstanding symbolism is the water symbolism. This seems to relate to the major motif of the novel, slavery, and more particularly the middle-passage and its association with the sea. The importance granted to this symbolism, first shows in the opening of the novel: "springwater flowing" (p. XI). Water is associated with life, fertility, regeneration, hence the recurrent reference to spring, and specifically with the "wayo" People of the "wayo" are referred to as not being "of dead stagnant waters" (p. 5). Clearly, the term "stagnant" suggests that these people were not socially passive, but active, in motion like flowing water. This dynamism of traditional people is again pointed out by the narrator who says: "Reasons and promptings of our own have urged much movement on us ó expected, peaceful, repeated motion" (p. 5). Such a justification of the worth of traditional life has Afrocentric implications, since it is meant to counteract the "Orientalist" stereotypical discourse about the Africans being "uncivilized." The phrase "of our own" is clearly meant as self-assertion. Water and its related terminology are symbolically associated not only with traditional life and culture, but also with race. This appears in the narrator's lament: "Woe the race [í] Woe the headwaters [í] Woe the flowing water" (pp. XII-XIII). Water is associated with traditional customs, such the initiations, and that is why it is valued, e.g. as it shows from the opening paragraph of Chapter Four: "from seeing the waters of Anoa ó water suspended bubbling at the tip of the fountain, water falling like long translucent threads [í] water patiently rising [í] But the last of our open initiations took us to the coastland. There we saw in the same water we thought we knew so well a different beauty" (p. 75). This fascination with water is expressed even in relation to its sound which is found musical: "we

Anoa's waters, from hearing their thirty different
ing of beauty in water we had yet to see, no sound of
its music we had not yet heard (p. 75). This is supposed to suggest that life was
peaceful and leisurely.

In opposition to this 'apocalyptic' symbolism Armah uses 'demonic'
symbolism which relates to the drama of the situation. This is the case when he
refers to the 'bloody red' clothes of king Koranche (p. 92), which symbolically
anticipate his murder by Abena (p. 196). This binary opposition of symbolism,
positive when it relates to traditional life and culture, and negative when it
relates to modern life or Western culture is meant to show where Armah's
sympathies lie. This dual aspect of the narrative, positive when it relates to the
victims of oppression and negative when it relates to their oppressors, is
reproduced through Anoa's dual voices, when she uttered the prophecy:

She spoke in two voices -- twin, but clearly discernible
one from the other. The first, a harassed voice shrieking
itself to hoarseness, uttered a terrifying catalogue of death
ó deaths of the body, deaths of the spirit; deaths of
nations, the threatened death of our people. [í] From the
same prophetic throat came the second voice. It was
calmer [í] this voice gave calm causes, indicated effects,
and never tired of iterating the hope at the issue of all
disasters: the rediscovery and following again of our way,
the way. (pp. 15-16)

Symbolism also relates to neo-colonialism which is likened to slavery.
The enrichment of the native collaborators in the slave trade, and by connotation,
the counterparts in the neo-colonial bondage, is symbolically referred to through
a detailed description of Koranche's accumulated material wealth (p. 197). The
middle class enrichment at the expense of the masses is metaphorically
represented through looting of Koranche's property after his death: 'the parasites
scooped frantic armfuls and ran trembling haste to hide their stolen goods at
home' (p. 197). A major symbolic event is the murder of Koranche by Abena,

and the rebels who fight for the recovery of the way led by a woman has a quite symbolic significance. It is meant to highlight the courage of the women who belonged to the traditional community. Such courage is also pointed out through the rebellion of the women of the *harem*, and in Abena's defiance of the King twice. First she spat on him, when he trapped them and handed them over to the slave dealers (p. 110), and second when she humiliated him before killing him. The humiliation the initiates experienced on the ship symbolically anticipates that of King Koranche at the hands of Abena who compelled him to confess his slave-driver role in public.

In archetypal symbolism, Abena represents 'Mother Africa' since she epitomizes whatever is authentically African, and she is a custodian of traditional lore. She also represents Isanusi's feminine counterpart, or his 'anima' Jung notes that 'the anima is not always merely the feminine aspect of the individual man. It has an archetypal aspect of the eternal feminine'.⁶⁰ He further, points out that the 'anima' can be a siren or wood nymph [í] who infatuates young men and suck the life out of them.⁶¹ This is the case of Idawa, who infatuates Koranche. According to Jung's definition, the 'anima' can be a 'goddess' or a 'demonic woman'.⁶² Abena has these character features. She is loving and altruistic with Isanusi and the initiates but she is demonic with Koranche. This dualistic aspect of her personality is enhanced in the episode of Koranche's end at her hands: 'She took Koranche's hand like a loving mother' (p. 196), before compelling him to confess his crimes and shooting him.

Whereas traditional life represents in archetypal symbolism the 'apocalyptic' the modern life represents the 'demonic'.⁶³ The apocalyptic symbolism, as Frye notes 'presents the infinitely desirable'.⁶⁴ Armah who yearns for the 'return to the source' uses such a symbolism whenever he refers to traditional life. He, particularly, relies on 'pastoral imagery'.⁶⁵ This shows from his description of Anoa, the town, a beauty that it shares with its sake name, Anoa, the prophetess, as a paradisiacal place: 'those who saw you first, Anoa?

ar to the falling, so far they in the end seduce the
ard, whence the return to the sourceø (p. 56). The
beauty of the scenery is again, minutely described on page 75.

Demonic imagery is, on the other hand, associated with those who are the target of Armahø's satire, the white men and their native ñlackeysø. For instance, homosexuality and incest, which are classified by Frye as part of ñdemonic imageryø⁶⁶ are attributed respectively to the Arab protagonists, and the King, Korancheø's father (p. 66). This imagery belongs to the ñironic modeø⁶⁷ and it is used in Armahø's novel for satirical purposes. The other major archetypal pattern of the novel that makes it range within the category of romance is its plot structure. As Frye notes: ñthe quest-mythø is divided into four stages: ñthe *agon* or conflict [í] the *pathos* or death, often the mutual death of the hero and monster [í] the disappearance of the hero [í] the reappearance and recognition of the heroø⁶⁸ The *agon* is the one that opposes the ñinitiatesø to Koranche and his allies. The dual death is that of the two major antagonists, Isanusi and Koranche. The rebirth of the hero is symbolically represented by Abenaø and the other initiatesø taking over Isanusiø's role as custodian of traditional culture, and revolutionary leader.

The archetypal symbolism of romance is also featured in the physical descriptions of some protagonists. Whereas those who uphold these ideals are portrayed positively, those who hamper them are portrayed negatively. The latter case applies to Koranche, whose physical deformity symbolizes not only his mental atrophy, but the incompatibility of his person and his position as a ruler. Frye remarks: ñMutilation or physical handicap, which combines themes of *sparagmos* and ritual death, is often the price of unusual wisdom or powerø⁶⁹ Another feature of romance epitomized in Armahø's novel is that of ñthe victory of fertility over waste landø⁷⁰ In Armahø's prologue, the opposition between ñfertilityø and ñwaste landø is metaphorically referred to as that between ñspringwaterø and the desertø (p. XI). Armah insists on the threat of the desert, which symbolizes the whites, to the spring, which represents the black race: ñit is

veø (p. XII), meaning the black race is generous, ÷it
absorbø (XII), meaning the whites are greedy. He
also associates the desert with ÷deathø and spring with ÷regenerationø. As regards
the former, he says: ÷The desert was made desert, turned barren by people whose
spirit is itself the seed of deathø (p. 6). The victory of fertilityø over the desert is
pointed out at the close of the novel, in the very last paragraph: ÷the confluence
of all the waters of life flowing to overwhelm the ashen desertø's blight! What an
utterance of the coming together of all the people of our way, the coming
together of all people of the wayø (p. 206). This is clearly meant as an optimistic
note about the achievement of pan-Negroism. The idealization of traditional
community brings the novel closer to romance than naturalism or myth, two
other modes clearly apparent in the novel. According to Frye, romance occupies
a median position between myth and naturalism: ÷Myth then, is one extreme of
literary design, naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of
romanceø⁷¹ In Armahø's novel, there is an interplay of the three modes.

The characterization of the novel belongs to different ÷mythoiø or
modes, romance, comedy and irony. As in romance, ÷every typical character [í]
tends to have his moral opposite confronting himø⁷² This is the case of Isanusi
and his immoral rival Koranche, the ÷initiatesø and the slave dealers. The comic
type that Armah uses is that of the ÷buffoonø⁷³ which is associated with
Korancheø's family (p. 66), a deliberate satirical portrayal of the ruling elite, past
and present. This is the case when Koranche compares himself to ordinary
people: ÷Words invaded his head: ÷they give more than they receive. I, the King,
I only know how to take. They are full vessels overflowing. I am empty. In place
of a bottom I have a hole.ø (p. 73).

The importance that Armah grants to symbolism forms part of the
design of the novel as a mythic one. As Okpewho notes, *Two Thousand Seasons*
is a ÷mythical novel [that] fulfils one of the fundamental functions of myth,
which is to transmute reality into fancy through the medium of symbolismø⁷⁴
The use of ÷mythopoeic designsø⁷⁵ in the novel first appears in the title of the

nsø The span of time has mythic implications, and the cyclic structure of historical time. Armah has heavily relied on myth, not only as part of his cultural retrieval task, as it appears from the use of Anoa's legend, but to manipulate plot and narrative according to his set agenda, i.e., racial redemption. As Frye notes: "In terms of narrative, myth is the imitation of actions near or at conceivable limits of desire"⁷⁶

The archetypal motif that is outstanding in the novel is that of the hero's quest journey, the hero being a collective hero, i.e., "the initiates". According to Joseph Campbell, the hero's journey or "monomyth" is a universal pattern which is part of the "collective unconscious". Similarly Jung maintains that the archetypes which are expressed through "myth or fables"⁷⁷ are found in the folklore of all cultures, including the "so-called" primitive ones: "primitive tribal lore treats of archetypes"⁷⁸. The different steps of the "monomyth" that the initiates go through are: "the call to adventure", "the separation", "the initiation", "the crossing of the return threshold"⁷⁹. "The call to adventure" is symbolized by Anoa's prophecy, since motivated by this prophecy, the "initiates" started their journey: "Now the sound of Anoa's prophecy rang clearly in our ears. We were ready to go. Of the journey ahead we knew nothing" (p. 39). This lack of knowledge about what lies ahead of their adventure is also part of the monomyth since, the purpose of the hero's journey is "self-discovery", in the case of the initiates the purpose is the search for communal identity.

The second step of the monomyth, "the separation", is dramatized when the "initiates" leave their homeland in search of the "way" "when movement was about the desire for something to be found at the destination, not fear of destruction at the point of departure. We would move again" (pp. 38-39). Following Campbell's pattern, they encounter "a protective figure" and advisor, i.e., Isanusi who was their spiritual leader. The third step of Campbell's monomyth is initiation. The "initiates" as their name points out, go through an initiation rite: the "dance of love" (p. 85). The fourth step, "the slaying of the dragon", i.e., the battle with the demonic character, is represented by the

captors. The fifth step of Campbell's monograph: threshold is represented by their return. The chapter that deals with their return is entitled "The Return" (p. 148).

Another example of the conformity to Campbell's pattern of monomyth is the hero's realization, after his return, that the world is not perfect. This is dramatized through the remarks of the narrator who is himself a member of the group of "initiates" about their growing realization that they are outnumbered by their antagonists. Yet despite their despair at witnessing a greater degradation and depravity than the one that prevailed before they left, they make the resolve to continue fighting to right the wrongs. The narrator remarks: "But understanding is a bare beginning only. Around us everything shouts louder than despair, and our spirits in their rising must push against the heavy solidity brought against us by the people of stone" (p. 202). He also remarks about the risks the challenges they will face: "Dangers there will be in the newness of this discovery, dangers like the headiness of too quick, abundant faith from those sold to despair; the pull of old habits from destruction's empire" (p. 205). He, further, laments the damages saying: "But still, in the present what a scene of disintegration, what a bloody desolation the whites have stretched over this land! [í] what a scene of carnage the white destroyers have brought here, what a destruction of bodies, what a death of souls!" He, however, juxtapose this despair by a hopeful anticipation of the forthcoming victory of the "way": "Against this what a vision of creation yet unknown, higher, much more profound than all erstwhile creation" (p. 206). Still, though Armah's pattern of the hero's quest fits Campbell's, it also fits that of African orature, which is defined by Mbiti as the "testing purpose" i.e., the testing of the "endurance"⁸⁰ of the hero of the tale. In the main, Armah's use of archetypes give the novel an extra mythical dimension, and brings it closer to the tradition of "orature"

The archetypal characterization that the novel embodies relates to the protagonists who benefit from Armah's sympathy, e.g., Isanusi, Anoa and Abena. The former represents in Jungian archetypes the "wise old man" Anoa

Abena stands for the "mother figure" Isanusi also represents. This is particularly noticeable in the episode of the arms deal with the slave traders. He outwits the white men, pretending to test the arms, he turns their guns against them. (pp. 164-165). Isanusi is the custodian of the "way" and he transmits his knowledge of it to the initiates. Armah's sympathy for Isanusi shows in his endowment with the most admirable qualities. He is eloquent (p. 101), he is courageous, despite his old age he insists on fighting Bofo on his own (p. 188). He is an altruist, he exposes himself to danger to save his companions (p. 194). He is honest, he does not want to lie to his fellows when the King asked him to deceive them (p. 101). He has preferred to live as an outcast (p. 73), rather than barter his integrity. He is respectful; he does not want to trouble the "initiates" with tales about his loneliness (p. 104).

In the main, Isanusi represents "wisdom" he is the initiates' advisor, and that is why they first start to look for him after their liberation (p. 152). Isanusi is considered by the initiates' spiritual leader: "His teaching tended to matters of the soul. Isanusi spoke to us of the need to persevere even in the present triumph of the white destroyers' road" (p. 174). He is also considered as their revolutionary leader. He involves in the rebellion which he has masterminded (p. 194). The conditions of his death, however, remain a mystery (p. 194). This metaphorically suggests that he is not dead, since his spirit has been inherited by the "initiates". Among the latter, Abena has inherited Isanusi's status as a leader, since she is the one who kills Koranche.

Most black women, are positively delineated, e.g., Abena, Anoa and Idawa. This is specifically the case as regards their physical appearance, since they are all beautiful women. They are, besides, endowed with moral values. Abena, more than any of the other women has a near-perfect personality. She is competent in everything she undertakes. For instance, she is a good dancer: "The dancer most known for her grace and skill in our time this was Abena" (p. 91). She is also wise and perspicacious, for she was the only one who had sensed the king's treachery, when he invited the "initiates" with the concealed intention of

06). As shown from this example, another positive quality is altruism. She has a tendency to sacrifice her welfare for that of the group. She is, besides faithful in her friendship engagements: "She seemed to suffer keenly from a greed for our company" (p. 108). She is, moreover, helpful, for example when her companions had some difficulties getting rid of the "trinkets" i.e., the slave shackles, she rushed to help them free themselves (p. 109).

Another aspect of Abena's personality is respectfulness. She, for instance, apologizes for awakening people in the middle of the night to make them witness Koranche's confessions of his crime: "To begin she asked forgiveness for the suddenness of their awakening [at] night" (p. 196). She is, besides, courageous, as she is always in the forefront of the battle. She is the first one to ask Juma, the rebel "askari" to teach them how to use guns: "But we can't wait to learn about guns" (p. 144). She is the first to venture to Isanusi's hidden place (p. 154). Her revolutionary fervour is often highlighted. She has a leading role in the preparation of the rebellion (p. 152), and she is keen to proceed with the putting into practice of their guerrilla plans: "those first days of the long wait Abena's patience was endless [í] Abena went about the work of preparation, completed, repeated, perfected every detail" (p. 175).

Abena is the custodian of traditional culture in that she preserves the authenticity of customs, as when she asked the musicians to play "drums alone" (p. 107), i.e., traditional musical instruments. She preserves the values of traditional life, e.g., communal engagement at all costs. For instance, when they were trapped the "initiates" they told her that she could have saved herself, since she did not want to come, and she replied: "Saved myself apart from all of us? [í] There is no self to save apart from all of us" (p. 111). This remark is clearly meant by Armah to highlight the importance of communal commitment, an important feature of traditional life. In the main, Abena epitomizes the two major motifs of the novel, revolutionary commitment and cultural retrieval.

l motif is also epitomized by Anoa, the prophetess. The conventional sense of the term, since she does not take part in the events of the story. Her role in the story is spiritual rather than physical. It is central, though brief, since her prophecies are the starting point of the unfolding of the drama. A detailed description of her background and traits of character is provided, when she is introduced, to justify her status of prophetess. The narrator attempts to convince his audience, and by the same token the readers, of her visionary potential, by insisting on her inborn faculties: "At the time she spoke she was not of an age to have gained wisdom from experience [í] an intensity of hearing, a clarity of vision and a sharpness of feeling marked her character even in childhoodø (p. 14). The elders were impressed by her inborn knowledge of the "wayø "That such a knowledge of our way should have reached one so young with help from no older mentor, that the child Anoa could of herself have caught floating intimations of the way [í] that was a wonderø (p. 15). The magic that surrounded her personality owed her the reverence of other people, despite her young age: "thoughts seized her, and young as she was her seriousness itself imposed a silence around her no matter where she wasø (p. 14).

On account of her wisdom, visions, and peopleø's deference, Anoa represents, in archetypal patterns, the "goddessø She also stands for the "hunterø archetype. She has hunting skills (p. 14). She is however, not a violent person and she preaches non-violence. Part of her philosophy of violence is the use of it only for defensive purposes: "she, further discomfited her teachers by reminding them aggressive hunting was against our way, that the proper use of hunting skills should be for halting the aged lion seeking human preyø (p. 14). Through this emphasis on her lack of violent drives, Armah attempts to elevate her to keep her within the archetype of the "goddessø He also attempts to bring her the sympathy of the reader. Her "goddessø status is also highlighted through her ability to reach peopleø's souls: "Anoa seemed to have moved from peak to peak, so light it had no need of mentors to reach the hilltops of the soulø (p. 15).

...odian of the *way*, she is, like Abena, sketched
physical appearance: "She was slender as a fawn stalk,
and supple. From her forehead to her feet her body was of a deep, even
blackness [í] Her grace was easy in the dance" (p. 15). Her "goddess"
archetypal pattern is also indirectly pointed out by the course of her life, which,
unlike that of "earthly" women, was not shaped by rituals, like marriage, child-
bearing and family caring: "At the time of her training, when it was thought she
too could be led into choosing mother chores, she foresaw the intended
separation, spurned it and asked to be trained with her brothers in the hunt" (p.
14). This is again reiterated through the following passage: "In her twenty-fifth
season there were askers for her in marriage. Anoa knew her soul was shaped for
other things. It was not that she was scornful of the wife's, of the mother's life.
Her ears heard other voices, other thoughts visited her spirit" (p. 15). Besides,
she has chosen to become "a fundi" (p. 15). This is an expression in Jungian
archetypal terms of her "animus" i.e., the masculine aspect of a woman's
personality.

Through Anoa's example, Armah suggests as he does through Abena
who killed Koranche, and through the example of the women of the *harem* who
instigated the rebellion against their oppressors, that women are at the vanguard
of revolutionary change. This is most clearly expressed in the episode of the
rebellion of the women of the *harem*, referred to as "liberating women" (p. 25).
However, whereas women are praised for their courage, men, particularly those
who passively endure oppression, or are collaborators of the oppressors are
ridiculed. This is the case of the chief askari who is challenged by his
grandmother, who pointed out to him that the women of the *harem* were more
courageous than him and that they have undertaken a task that should have been
his. (p. 25) This praise of the women of the *way* is by extension an appraisal of
traditional culture.

Anoa, Idawa, is a woman who cares for the way positively delineated. She enjoys both physical and spiritual beauty. In fact, her physical beauty is by far the most striking:

She has a beauty needing no counterpointing blemish to make its wonder clear. The best moulded face may lead the admiring eye in the end down to pair of lumpen legs [í] Idawa had a beauty with no such disappointment in it [í] From the hair on her head to the last of her toes there was nothing wasted in her shaping. (p. 70).

To emphasize her physical beauty, the narrator lengthily describes her perfect figure (p. 70). She is the archetypal temptress: Men my crave closeness to such physical beauty and still be forgiven (p. 70). The king, Koranche, himself succumbed to her beauty, and experienced despair at her recoiling. Her physical beauty is unmatched save her spiritual one. The narrator remarks: But Idawa's surface beauty, perfect as it was, was nothing beside her other, profounder beauties: the beauty of the heart [í] and the beauty of her mind (p. 70). Besides beauty, Idawa has wittiness. This best evidenced in the way she outdid Koranche, as regards the choice partner. To avoid being chosen by Koranche as a wife at the ritual dance, she gets married one week before the scheduled performance of the ceremony. Moreover, she is daring, in that she is the one who proposes to Ngubane, a skilful farmer. This choice indicates Idawa's modesty; she favours the simple life of a farmer to the more comfortable one of a king. This choice also implies her preference for traditional lifestyle, which is also evident in her choice of Isanusi as a companion, despite his old age. Her observance of traditional custom, for instance lies in her choosing her husband, as it is done during the ritual dance of love: the dance of love is a dance of choice also, it has always been the custom at this festival that the growing women of the age, if they are already of a mind to do so, choose the growing men they wish to share their lives with (p. 90). Koranche, on the other hand, reverses this practice, and plans to choose Idawa as a wife. He also changes the paths of the dance according to his whims (p. 91). This clearly suggests that the ruling elite is culturally alienated. Another quality of Idawa is

does not fear Koranche and defies him, even after he
e was Idawa, a woman [í] of the heedless courage
to articulate her vision in the rejection of the kingø(p. 71).

To the group of upright characters, Isanusi, Abena, Anoa, Idawa, belong the ñinitiatesø, the collective protagonist, who share the same concern for the observance of traditional customs and the retrieval of the ñwayø. They, besides, share the same spiritual values: courage, integrity, altruism. Their antagonists, who represent the demonic characters are: Koranche and Kamuzu. The former has all the vices, greed, treachery, despotism, jealousy and cowardice. As it has already been pointed out, his moral ugliness is paralleled by his physical one. His slow physical and mental development (p. 66), is diametrically opposed by his swiftness in greed. He is awkward and lacks manual skills (p. 68). His jealousy is expressed when he burns the masks of the other carvers because he is unable to match their competence (p. 68). He also kills Idawaø's husband out of jealousy, and plans to kill, out of the same urge, Beyin, by hiding a snake in his mat (p. 69). He does not hesitate to get the help of ñpoisonersø(p. 70) to achieve his vile designs. He is a ñvindictive manø(p. 102), and is ready to use any means to take revenge on his rivals. He is extremely superstitious, for instance, he believes that Isanusi has used ñsorcery to plague many of his nightsø(p. 185).

Besides, all these vices, Koranche is neurotic and suffers from self-persecution, as his recurrent nightmares indicate (p. 185). He is, further, depersonalized and suffers from an inferiority complex: ñthe king was true to his lost self; there was not one thought of our own paths to reciprocity on his mindø (p. 106). The phrase ñpath to reciprocity ñrefers to traditional culture. His inferiority complex towards the whites shows in his abnegation when he first received them, and ñgreeted them with affectionø(p. 100). The satirical portrayal of Koranche is meant to ridicule the native chiefs who collaborated in the slave trade, and the post-independence ruling class. The negative features of this class, greed, self-seeking profits, self-aggrandizement, power-thirst are epitomized through, Kamuzu, the other demonic character. Like Koranche, he is a slave

vindictive man. He joins the rebels to take revenge on his allies, who deprived him of the profits of the slave-trade (p. 160). Again, like him he betrays the initiates by planning to get rid of them to take Koranche's throne: "[his] greed and vanity turned to treachery" (p. 171). He is self-deceived and is keen on being praised (p. 170), to lure him the initiates exploited this weakness: "What spurious praise names did we not invent to lull Kamuzu's buffoon spirit" (p. 171). Like Koranche, he is considered by the narrator as clownish.

The other protagonists, Juma, Sobo, and Dovi have minor roles, and are used just to serve plot development. Juma, for instance, plays the role of arm instructor to the initiates (p. 147). Sobo is the one who masterminded and triggered off the slaves' rebellion on the ship (p. 131). Sobo, like the other protagonists who observe the way is courageous and physically strong. When he was injured, he "seemed to have no feeling left in his body, no fear of pain holding back his mind" (p. 139). Dovi serves plot arrangements in that he is the one who, unwillingly though, discloses the refuge of Isanusi and the initiates to Koranche. Dovi, however, has, unlike the rest of the group, a weak personality. He leaves the group out of a selfish urge to join his family (p. 183). He also serves Armah's motif of greed motivated betrayal, since his family informed Koranche of his return to gain the king's favours. Through this event, Armah attempts to emphasize the widespread yearning for material comfort, which is sought even at the cost of one's kin's safety. On the whole, Armah's characterization is sketchy, since he is preoccupied with content rather than form. Since his novel is an epic of historical reconstruction, there is a greater reliance on events than on protagonists. Moreover, since Armah uses the collective hero type, i.e., "the initiates" there is less emphasis on individualities. The use of the collective protagonist is, again, an attempt at cultural retrieval, since it epitomizes traditional communal life.

This attempt at cultural retrieval also shows in Armah's reproduction of some traditional customs, e.g., "the dance of love" during which women choose

Another traditional custom reproduced in the novel, is the invocation of the ancestors when in danger: "Ancestors this death is so new. We cannot join you. We cannot even be wandering ghost (p. 127). The traditional belief in the assistance of the spirit of the ancestors when invoked is expressed through Isanusi's remark: "But the ancestors help us if we become dependent on him for our success" (p. 160). This also expresses the traditional belief that the ancestors warrant the safety of those who observe traditional customs. The observance of traditional customs is manifested in the practice of "worksongs" when the liberated slaves carry out loads of gun powder to a secure place after fire broke out on the ship. Among the protagonists who observe traditional customs are: Isanusi and Idawa. The latter, for instance, observes the traditional custom of providing guests with the "water of welcome" (p. 155), even in the forest when the "initiates" came to visit Isanusi. Armah's concern for cultural retrieval also appears in his dramatization of the communalism of traditional life, e.g., all decisions are collectively taken (p. 159), and all property is shared (p. 151). His praise of communal engagement is expressed through such statements as: "Such individual action can find no sense until there is again that higher connectedness that links each agent to the group. Then the single person is no cut-off thing but an extension of the living group, the single will but a piece of the group's active will, each mind a part of a larger common mind" (p. 134)

This concern for a return to traditional communalism has been associated by most critics, for example Bernth Lindfors⁸¹ and Derek Wright,⁸² with Armah's being in Tanzania at the time he wrote the novel. On the other hand, Dan Izevbaye, who points out that *Two Thousand Seasons* is "a work which urges the return to true socialism on the part of all Africans, now that Armah is living in Tanzania"⁸³ also maintains that Armah disagrees with Nyerere's "Ujamaa" indirectly acknowledging that his being in Tanzania does not mean the endorsement of its socio-political values. In fact, what Armah

tional communalism as it was practised in the pre-

The rehabilitation of traditional customs also appears in Armah's dramatization and praise of matriarchy, a major feature of Akan traditional society. He maintains that 'the rule of women' came as a consequence of the males' impotence and rivalry: 'It was not any violence from females that cracked the rule of fathers. It was the fathers themselves who, splitting in their headlong greed for power into seven warring factions' (p. 9). He praises the rule of women, which he says, was not only non-violent, but 'easy', 'natural' (p. 10), and 'fertile' (p. 26). Being in praise of women, particularly those of the 'way', Armah's discourse has a feminist dimension. He attributes women's oppression by males to imported values from the culture of the Arab settlers. He denounces women's oppression thus: 'Overwhelmed, the women in their astonishment accepted the place of childbearing bodies, in their soul wondering why the ability to do such necessary work should bring as its reward such vindictive slavery at the hands of men' (p. 60). He emphasizes what he considers as the harsh treatment imposed by the Arabs on their women as well: 'their women first [] they turn into slaves to do their work' (p. 176).

Armah's obsession with slavery is evident throughout his earlier novels, yet it is in this novel that it is of central concern. It is a focal feature of the historical matrix of the novel. Armah dramatizes the horrors of the slaves' ordeal both for historical awareness purposes and most probably to justify his onslaughts on its practitioners, both the Arabs and the Westerners. Armah's description of the middle passage seems to have been inspired by Equiano's book, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, (1789).⁸⁴ There Equiano recounts his capture, at the age of eleven,⁸⁵ and his life as a slave in Africa and then in the New World. He describes the horrors of the slaves' predicament during the middle passage as follows:

the ship, which was so crowded that each
had not enough room to turn himself, almost
suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that
the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of
loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the
slaves, of which many died [í] The shrieks of the
women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole
scene of horror almost unconceivable.⁸⁶

As Equiano points out, kidnapping was a strategy used by the native slave
dealers to bring more slaves to the whites. The latter were sold and resold inland
till they reached the coastal areas, where they were shipped for their middle
passage journey.

Armah reproduces the same pattern, one of the escaped slaves recounts:
we were caught and sold. Our buyers, whites who came from the desert [í]
forced us along unknown paths and strange rivers till we reached the sea. There
we were sold to other whites (p. 147). He similarly reproduces the slave dealers'
practice of trading goods and drinks for slaves (pp. 81, 100). Another practice
Armah reproduces is that of not chaining children taken as slaves. Equiano
writes: from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters.⁸⁷ In Armah's novel
children are free to go around the ship, and are used as informants, because of
their mobility (p. 125). Again, like Equiano, Armah describes the horrors of the
middle passage: overcrowded ships (p. 126), lack of space and irrespirable air,
stench and filth (p. 126), and outbreaks of diseases (pp. 127, 130), the flogging
of the slaves (p. 127). The following passage is the most vivid description of the
slaves' inhuman treatment: [they were] breathing motionless air [and were]
immersed in the dirt of successive days and nights [...] Dirt then was their
surrounding. The air itself had turned to liquid filth. Each body lay immobile in
its own refuse (p. 126).

Another aspect of the predicament of the slaves described by Equiano
and dramatized by Armah, is that of the suicidal attempts of the slaves out of
despair. Equiano points out that some slaves attempted to throw themselves into
the sea preferring death to such a life of misery.⁸⁸ Armah similarly writes:

themselves if they found a way (p. 125). Again, like
 that the slave traders cared for the slaves' lives only
 out of concern for profit making. Equiano remarks: 'Is not enough that we are
 torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must
 every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice?'⁸⁹ Armah echoes it
 through the narrator: 'Even the white destroyers in their greed grew alarmed for
 our health' (p. 126), and 'each passing day brought a multiplicity of deaths:
 human loss to us, loss of gain to the white destroyers' (p. 130), and 'when the
 ship was sinking, the chief trader feared for 'the loss of what he chose to call his
 goods & [the] captive selves & and so of his sole worship: profit' (p. 136). As it
 appears from such similarities, Armah's dramatization of slavery is, broadly
 speaking, faithful to the accounts of a victim and witness of the horrors of the
 middle passage. Still, to these factual events, Armah has added some fictitious
 ones, e.g., the rebellion of the slaves on board of the ships, and their waging a
 war against the slave traders and their collaborators. In the main, Armah's
 dramatization of the slave-trade and the horrors of the middle passage has a
 cathartic purpose, both on the personal and the communal level. It has, by the
 same token, a didactic purpose, since it is meant to teach his black readers about
 their racial history. It, thus, conforms to the Afrocentric historiography
 paradigm. This racial retrieval task also forms part of Armah's set priorities.

Among these priorities, cultural retrieval is one that Armah sets for
 himself and for other writers and intellectuals. This is clearly expressed in the
 passage: 'Creation calls the utterer to reach again the larger circle. That
 communication must be the beginning of destruction's destruction, the
 preparation of creation's work [í] Our vocation goes against all
 unconnectedness. It is a call to create the way again' (p. 8). The endorsement of
 Cabral's theory of cultural retrieval, as expressed in *Return To The Source*, is
 noticeable throughout the novel. He even uses the phrase 'return to the source'
 (p. 56). The influence of Cabral on Armah is outstanding in his essay: 'Masks
 and Marx'⁹⁰ where he refers to Cabral and Fanon as 'Africa's most intelligent

and theorists⁹¹ In this essay written more than a
Seasons, Armah reiterates his concern for cultural
retrieval stating: "In discussing philosophy and values I am merely doing my
work as an African artist: examining my people's values and pointing out, when
I can, to our way⁹²."

In line with Fanon and more specifically Cabral, Armah preaches a
"return to the source" as a therapy to the cultural alienation of the African elite.
He indirectly points out the origin of this conception in Cabral's theoretical
framework. He maintains that Cabral agrees with Fanon that this elite is ill and
"he names the cure as re-Africanisation⁹³ Armah, further points out that the
African writers, who like him, are concerned with cultural retrieval target an
African audience.⁹⁴ In *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah insists on the urgency of
the task of cultural retrieval on the part of the writers stating: "It is time to heed
the quiet call, the call to return" (p. 27). Still, Armah's call for "the return to the
source" is not only for cathartic purposes, i.e., cultural disalienation, but for
socio-economic ones, for as he points out the recovery of the way leads to a
"better life" (p. 171). Despite the fact that Armah evokes the past as a means to
an end, i.e., for future orientation, he nonetheless depicts the era when "the way"
prevailed as a paradise on earth.

This traditional society which maintained "the way" is undoubtedly
romanticized. Armah idealizes the pre-colonial past as did the proponents of the
Negritude. Bernth Lindfors condemns this stating: "In place of a usable historical
myth, *Two Thousand Seasons*, overschematizes the past, creating the dangerous
lie that Frantz Fanon used to call "mystification."⁹⁵ On the other hand, Bai
Kasogie, who overlooks the idealization of "the way" i.e., traditional communal
life, does not consider Armah's attempt to retrieve the past as "nostalgic or
sentimental⁹⁶ Again, Armah, who preaches Pan-Africanism, overlooks the fact
that the Pan-African cultural Manifesto of 1969,⁹⁷ which called for "a return to
the source," condemned the idealization of the African past: "But this looking
back or constant reference to the living sources of Africanity must avoid a

evocation of the past⁹⁸ Similarly, Kofi Awoonor
the past. He maintains: 'Those who are asking for a
pure and pristine cultural journey into the past are dreamers who must wake
up'⁹⁹ He even, reckons that he wrongly undertook such an enterprise in his
novel *This Earth, My Brother* (1975), stating: 'I saw the traditional society
almost stupidly as a golden age, a beautiful and sinless kind of world. I no longer
have that perception. I am aware that corruption is an essential aspect of the
human condition, and I am aware that the suffering comes out of that
condition'¹⁰⁰

The Negritudist dimension of the novel appears not only in the appraisal of traditional life, but in the delineation of the black women, and black culture. It is also apparent in the preaching of pan-Africanism and pan-Negroism. Lindfors considers Armah's preaching of 'the way' and the 'destruction' of the whites as a 'philosophy of paranoia, an anti-racist racism' or in short, negritude reborn.¹⁰¹ In fact, the neo-Negritudist dimension of the novel is striking. Like the Negritude poets, Armah celebrates the physical beauty of African women, Abena, Anoa, Idawa and Azania. The latter is 'beautiful like a walking dream' (p. 22). He particularly emphasizes the intensity of their 'blackness', which epitomizes the Senghorian slogan 'Black is Beautiful'. Indeed, in a Negritudist fashion, Armah praises all that is black. He, for instance, says that the 'predators died that beautiful night of blackness' (p. 21), and that Idawa's colour 'must have come uninterfered with from night's own blackness' (p. 70). Using a Manichean rhetoric, Armah describes all that is black positively and all that white negatively. This binary opposition first shows in his portrayal of white women as ugly. This is the case of Bentum's wife who is 'a dry, white woman more than half deaf, blind in one eye, with a body so dead' (p. 91). A similar negative portrayal is that of the governor's white wife: 'a woman remembered by those who had the frightening misfortune of seeing her as something white like leprosy triumphant' (p. 169).

feature of the novel relates to the blacks' excellence as a traditional dancer and so is Idawa. The whites are, on the other hand, portrayed as lacking such a competence: 'there no dancing at the white men's celebration, no singing, no expression from the soul' (p. 107). In granting the whites these negative aspects and emphasizing their lack of emotional response, Armah is endorsing the Senghorian motto: 'Emotion is Negro as Reason is Greek'. Senghor has, however, been taken to task, for instance by Taban Lo Liyong,¹⁰² for endorsing the Westerners' stereotypical discourse, e.g., 'primitiveness', 'lack of intelligence', and the 'dirtiness' of the Negro.

Yet, in most Negritude writings, these stereotypes are in turn associated with the whites. This is the case in Armah's novel, where reversed stereotypes are frequently used. The stereotype of the 'barbarity of the the black man is attributed by Armah to the white men: 'These white men are not just pests [í] They are dangerous animals, they are destroyers, they are killers' (p. 97). Using the same technique, he endows the white characters with stupidity, e.g., when they are outwitted by Isanusi during the arms deal, hence by deduction, the black man is more intelligent than the white man who sees him as stupid. He also calls the whites: 'ignorant destroyers' (p. 140). He, however, also attributes the whites' positive stereotypes about the blacks, such as physical endurance. For instance, Sobo was 'potent as some irresistible natural force' (p. 131). Armah also emphasizes the blacks' physical force in the episodes where the protagonists, who have his sympathy, fight their rivals, e.g., Isanusi (pp. 188-189), or the 'initiates' (p. 131). He, on the other hand, attributes negative stereotypes to the protagonists he condemns, e.g., Koranche. A case in point is his satirical description of their inferiority complex and their 'boy' mentality, i.e., their readiness to please their white 'masters': '[he] bent his pride to show the staring white destroyers that constant reassuring smile of humility, bent to follow death's white messengers like an overfaithful dog' (p. 129).

the Tarzan stereotype, i.e., the African is seen as a primitive, and who befriends animals. Yet, Armah does not endorse the notion of associating wild animals with savagery. He uses the stereotype with the purpose of correcting this wrong vision, by showing that the animals form part of the setting of the African's traditional life. This is the case through Anoa's instructions that the lion and the hyena (pp. 14, 15) should not be killed, but frightened to prevent them from harming people. The duiker is considered as the best of animals, attacking none, knowing ways to keep attackers distant (p. 57). Armah seems to suggest that the Africans have respect for wild life, and by extension of nature. In opposition, he insists on the white's lack of respect for animals: "Leopard they want dead for their hides. As for [the] gazelles, they would kill them to use their heads for decoration" (p. 82). Besides, to point out that animal life is part and parcel of traditional outlook, Armah recurrently uses reference to animals in the lexical register of the griot narrator, and the elders. Some telling examples are: "if we learn like dogs" (p. 30), "then like a python lie lazy" (p. 32), "the elders from the leopard clan" (p. 35), "with craven shrewdness of a hyena" (p. 36), "hunted like a famished lion" (p. 35), "They found the yellow of a fowl's eye" (p. 65).

Besides its Negritudinist dimension, the novel has an Afrocentric one. This is first apparent from its historical reconstruction concern, its writer's commitment to correct the history of Africa.¹⁰³ The outstanding feature of Afrocentric historiography that Armah endorses and reproduces in his novel is the Diopian thesis of the Egyptian origin of Black civilization, and the Universal one. Though Armah does not make a direct reference to Egypt, one could easily infer it from his description of the setting. He, for instance, says: "close to it [the desert] we brought a fecundity unimagined there now in the glare of all the present barrenness, eternal in its aspect" (p. 6). This Afrocentric belief of the precedence of Black civilization over the Western one is also expressed through the following statements: "Do they ask how many single seasons we have flowed from our beginnings till now? We shall point them to the proper beginning of

We are not a people of yesterday (p. 1). The concern is announced in the prologue: "to pass on truths of our origins" (p. XI). The Afrocentric paradigm of "psychological location" through racial awareness, is clearly stated in such statements: "Whiteness indeed they have known; of our blackness they have yet to learn" (p. XVI).

The major paradigms of Afrocentricity that the novel encompasses, besides, historical reconstruction and awareness, are: the "agency of Africa" i.e., "Africa as subject rather than object [i.e.] Africa as active rather than passive [i.e.] Africa as cause rather than effect"¹⁰⁴ and "the defence of African cultural elements"¹⁰⁵ The first paradigm is noticeable in Armah's defence of traditional customs. The second paradigm is dramatized, for example, through the motion of the "initiates" from country to country, propagating the philosophy of "the way" (pp. 45-58). Another major Afrocentric paradigm endorsed in Armah's novel is the one that relates to "psychological location"¹⁰⁶, e.g., the racial disalienation of the Blacks. This paradigm appears in the novel's "healing" purpose. The term "healing" itself recurs e.g., "[they] sought a healing reinsertion" (p. 27), "healing creativity" (p. 202), and "to begin the work of healing" (p. 9). As it has been demonstrated the return to the "way" is prescribed by Armah as a cure to intellectual, cultural and racial alienation. His concern with racial disalienation, which he sees as a collective need, what Fanon calls "collective catharsis"¹⁰⁷ and a collective task, is expressed through his statement: "connected thought, connected action: that is the beginning of our journey back to our self" (p. 134). The Afrocentric paradigm of "psychological location" is, again, noticeable in Armah's obsession throughout the novel with the "soul" of his people.

This concern for the disalienation of the Black man is also grounded in Fanon's theory as propounded in *Black Skin White Masks*. In fact, Fanon's influence on *Two Thousand Seasons*, and on Armah's preceding novels is quite striking. Armah's admiration for Fanon is clearly expressed in his essays: "Masks and Marx" and "Fanon the Awakener"¹⁰⁸ Armah's anti-Arab feelings seem to have their origin in Fanon's description of the North Africans as

but speculate on this matter, since, Armah lived in to his being a victim of racist behaviours in *Why Are We So Blest?*, his autobiographical novel. Again, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon points to the missionaries' attempt to remind the masses that long before the advent of European colonialism, the African empires were disrupted by Arab invasion [í] Arab imperialism is commonly spoken of and the cultural imperialism of Islam is condemned.¹¹⁰ This is exactly the task that Armah has undertaken in *Two Thousand Seasons*.

The influence of Fanon's seminal work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, shows in Armah's delineation of the ruling class, as a 'merchant bourgeoisie' that is primarily concerned with self-aggrandizement. This is the case of Koranche and Kamuzu, to whom Fanon's following description, applies: 'The nationalist bourgeoisie [í] make their own fortunes to set up a national system of exploitation' (p. 132). As already pointed out Armah's description of the ruling elite applies to traditional society and by analogy to the post-independence one. Fanon insists on the 'intermediary'¹¹¹ role of the national bourgeoisie, a view which is endorsed by Armah, who attributes it to the traditional ruling class, e.g., Koranche's, in his slave-driver role. This role was, however, in fact played by some native chiefs during the slave-trade.

This intermediary role is again emphasized through the example of Kamuzu who 'pacted with the parasites he ate with to contact the white destroyers and indicate his willingness to enter a partnership in trade with them' (p. 172). Through such an example, Armah makes allusions to the 'intermediary' role of the independent African elite in its neo-colonial bondage. This allusion is apparent in Armah's use of the term 'leaders' (p. 175). It is hardly concealed in Isanusi's statement: [the whites want] to eternalize our slavery through using our leaders in a cleverer kind of oppression, harder to see as slavery, slavery disguised as freedom itself. The whites want a long oppression of us' (p. 104). The 'parasitical' role of the bourgeoisie, as pointed out by Fanon, is emphasized throughout the novel, where the term 'parasites' recurs. Like Fanon, Armah

is bourgeoisie: "it was parasites, not creators, who
55).

The other major feature of Fanon's theories that Armah endorses and dramatizes in this novel is that of the "cathartic function" of violence, or violence as a "cleansing force". Fanon maintains that "the colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence"¹¹² Fanon also remarks that: "the native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions"¹¹³ This is dramatized by Armah through the rebellion of the *harem* and that of the slaves on the ship. Fanon's statement that colonialism is "violence in its natural state, and [that] it will only yield when confronted with greater violence"¹¹⁴ is echoed in Armah's novel through the following statement: "Against the death brought by whiteness only the greatest connecting force will prevail" (p. 134), and "destruction's destruction" (pp. 149, 150). Armah's endorsement of violence as a defensive strategy, is again, expressed in the following passage: "It is our destiny not to flee the predators' thrust [] but to turn against the predators advancing, turn against the destroyers [] turning every stratagem of the destroyers against themselves, destroy them. That is our destiny to end destruction" (p. 157).

As it shows from the aforementioned examples, the influence of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is quite important. Yet, since Armah is primarily concerned with racial consciousness, the influence of *Black Skin White Masks* is more striking. It first appears in Armah's purpose, which is like Fanon's, the racial disalienation of the blacks. Fanon expresses it thus: "I propose nothing short of the liberation of the man of colour from himself"¹¹⁵ He reiterates this concern stating: "This book, it is hoped, will be a mirror with a progressive infrastructure, in which it will be possible to discern the Negro on the road to disalienation"¹¹⁶ Similarly to Fanon, Armah emphasizes the "psychoexistential complex"¹¹⁷ of blacks, which is put by Fanon on the account of the "juxtaposition" of the black and the white race. Linked to this complex, is the inferiority complex of some blacks, who for instance keep the "slave mentality" and regard the white men as their natural masters. In connection, Fanon notes:

unconscious of there exists something that makes
masters¹¹⁸ Fanon emphasizes this inferiority complex
stating that "The Negro [is] enslaved by his inferiority"¹¹⁹ This inferiority
complex is dramatized in Armah's novel through the example of the "parasitic
elders" who sacrificed their dignity to please their white masters: "fidelity to
those who spat on them. It was a quality that preserved them among their white
masters" (pp. 28-29).

The inferiority complex also shows in some blacks' attempt to whiten
themselves, physically or spiritually, at all costs, what Fanon terms
"hallucinatory whitening" (p. 100). Its purpose is according to Fanon, to "throw
off the burden of [the] corporeal malediction"¹²⁰ Armah points out that this
inferiority complex is made up for by the blacks' attempt to acquire the whites'
material goods. This is summed up by Idawa who says that these blacks need:
"the white destroyers' shiny things to bring a feeling of worth into their lives,
uttered their deep-rooted inferiority of soul, and called them lacking in the
essence of humanity [if] they must crave things to eke out their beings, things to
fill holes in their spirits" (p. 202).

This seems to echo Fanon's remark that "when it encounters resistance
from the other, self-consciousness undergoes the experience of *desire* of the first
milestone on the road that leads to the dignity of the spirit"¹²¹ "resistance" here
refers to the whites' rejection of the blacks on account of their colour. Fanon,
himself acknowledges that he has experienced this self-contempt and hatred of
his blackness: "My blackness was there, dark and unarguable. And it tormented
me, pursued me, disturbed me, angered me"¹²² Yet, Fanon seems to have
managed not to let himself trapped in the cycle of self-hatred and the hatred of
the whites since he preaches reconciliation. By doing so, he attempts to point out
that racial alienation could be overcome.

Another feature of Fanon's theory of the Blacks' racial alienation
reproduced by Armah is that of the black man taking revenge on his own people,

their physical appearance, the reminder of his use of the "askari zombie leader" who kills his grandmother for reminding him where he belongs (p. 26). Their depersonalisation is expressed through the narrator who remarks: "unable to turn human again, their souls forever set against us their people, their spirits far, irretrievably far from the way, with every breadth travelling farther" (p. 32). Their rejection of their people, and their culture is, according to Armah's narrator, "the destroyers" triumph [that] already whitens all love with hate" (p. 199), and he goes on highlighting this love/hate binary: "to go back physically among our captured people, take love within the limits permitted by hate, to create new life physically in the pallid glare of hate" (p. 199).

The sadistic urge of some Blacks against their brethren, which is to borrow Fanon's phrase an "externaliz[ation] of their neurosis,"¹²³ is highlighted by Fanon who maintains: "the attitude of the black man toward the white, or towards his own race, often duplicates almost completely a constellation of delirium, frequently bordering on the region of the pathological"¹²⁴ and that "affect is exacerbated in the Negro, he is full of rage because he feels small"¹²⁵ The externalized violence of the Black on his own people is dramatized in Armah's novel through the example of John the "slave-driver" who is "not a black man and not a white man" (p. 117), and who is "a servant to the white man. But thinks he is one of them" (p. 118). He unleashes his violence on the captives with a sadistic drive. For instance, he rejoices before starting the marking of the slaves: "with an infinite satisfaction, he examines the end of the rods in his hand and placed them carefully in the hottest parts of the fires" (p. 117). He, further, seems to enjoy the privilege of his lighter skin. The superiority complex, towards those with darker skins, is also an echo of Fanon's view on the matter. He points out that the Antilleans are offended when they are mistaken for Africans, since they are whiter and therefore "more civilized" (p. 26). He also points out that the superiority complex of the "coloureds" particularly applies to the Antillean women, who refuse to have men partners who are darker than

iority is for white men.¹²⁶ This is again, dramatized
the case of the white governor's "coloured" concubine
who has "a body part black, part white, inhabited by a soul frantic in its denial of
the portion that [is] of us" (p. 169)

Another aspect of Armah's novel that is in line with the issues tackled
by Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks*, is its Negritudist dimension. Fanon who,
in this book expresses his disapproval of the Negritude ideology and its adept
narcissistic stance, notes that the latter "reclaim their negritude" by willing to be
"typically Negro[s]"¹²⁷ Armah adopts this stance by emphasizing the blackness
of the protagonists he sketches positively, i.e, Abena and Idawa. Another
stereotype that Fanon analyses in his book,¹²⁸ and Armah dramatizes in his novel
is that of the sexual potency of the Blacks (pp.22, 23, 169), which is allegedly
superior to the Whites. Armah seems to adopt this stance, wanting to extend this
superiority of Blacks to all domains.

Yet despite the strong influence of Fanon on Armah, as these examples
show, Armah does not endorse Fanon's negative attitude to Negritude. He also
differs from him in his endorsement of Pan-Negroism. Fanon who deems that the
latter is a utopia, points to its unlikeliness stating: "the truth is that the Negro race
has been scattered, that it can no longer claim unity"¹²⁹ He insists on the
diversity of the Negro race by maintaining that: "There is not merely one Negro,
there are Negroes"¹³⁰ which implies that their different social backgrounds, e.g.,
that of the American and the African Blacks, can hamper such unitary ideals.
Fanon reiterates this view in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he states:

Negroism therefore finds its first limitation in the
phenomena which take account of the formation of the
historical character of men. Negro and African-Negro
culture broke up into different entities because the men
who wished to incarnate these cultures realized that every
culture is first and foremost national.¹³¹

maintains that there is a unity of the Black race
people are one people we know (p. 3).

Another major difference between Fanon and Armah lies in their attitude to racism. Whereas Fanon wholly condemns it, Armah endorses it. His racist onslaughts on both the Westerners and the Arabs abound in the novel. Fanon condemns racist people, whether Blacks or Whites stating that the Black man who preaches racial hatred for the whites is 'miserable'¹³². He also maintains that 'colour prejudice' is indeed an imbecility and an iniquity that must be eliminated¹³³. Besides, whereas Fanon preaches reconciliation between the two races in *Black Skin White Masks*, Armah advocates separation. Fanon states: 'our purpose is to make possible healthy encounter between the black and the white'¹³⁴ and he foresees a 'monument' at whose top he 'can already see a white and a black man *hand in hand*'.¹³⁵ Armah, on the other hand, finds friendly relationships between the Blacks and Whites as 'unnatural friendships' (p. 106).

One more issue on which Fanon and Armah are at odds is the one related to historical reconstruction and the rehabilitation of the past. Whereas Armah, in an Afrocentric fashion, celebrates the pre-colonial era, Fanon maintains that: 'the discovery of the existence of a Negro civilization in the fifteenth century confers no patent humanity on me'¹³⁶ and 'In no way should I derive my basic purpose from the past of the peoples of color'¹³⁷ and again: 'I am not a prisoner of history'¹³⁸. Further, whereas Armah's focal issue is slavery, and the denunciation of its practitioners, Fanon protests against such a concern: 'I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors'¹³⁹ and: 'I am not going to the contemporary white man to answer for the slave-ships of the seventeenth century?'¹⁴⁰ and again: 'Have I no other purpose no other purpose on earth, then, but to avenge the Negro of the seventeenth century?'¹⁴¹. One may be inclined to think that this is a posthumous address to Armah, whose purpose in *Two Thousand Seasons* is just that. Fanon goes even further in his denunciation of the Blacks' obsession with slavery, which is Armah's case, and the use of that historical incident as a 'weapon' of division between the two races stating: 'I

the duty to claim reparation for the domestication of
1, unlike Armah, Fanon preaches Universalism, and
insists on the respect of "the basic values that constitute the human world"¹⁴³

These values are adopted by Armah, as it is evident throughout the novel. Some instances of his scathing attacks on the whites are: "These white men are not just pests [í] they are dangerous animals" (p. 97). Bentum's wife is "a white ghost" (p. 120). They are greedy and avarious (p. 137). They are soulless: "a people of dead stone [who] have in place of a soul [í] finds its solidest expression in the places of heavy stone they have built here" (p. 160). Still, as already pointed out, Armah's most virulent attacks target the Arabs whom he calls "beggars" (p. 18), "ostentatious cripples" (p. 19), "mediocre" men (p. 40). He considers them as "syphilitic" (p. 21), and as having "souls a healthy dog would have vomited out of his body" (p. 29).

Armah's scorn for white people's values is taken to extremes when he assaults their most sacred values, i.e., their religious values. Armah spares neither the Islamic nor the Christian religion. The former he considers as "enslaving" (pp 23, 27, 36), and likens it to madness (pp. 27, 29) and contends that it is based on hate (p. 42). He also considers it as "fables" (p. 37). He similarly considers Christianity as "fables" (p. 96) and as enslaving: "this other religion for slaves" (p. 200). He, further, pretends that it is "idiotic" (p. 62), and "childish" (p. 195). Clearly, through such verbal vehemence, Armah preaches hatred for the whites, and as Fanon rightly puts it "fervour is the weapon of the impotent."¹⁴⁴ In pouring his scorn on both the Arabs and the Westerners, Armah attempts to externalize his neurosis. Armah seems, to borrow Fanon's phraseology to suffer from "pathological racial obsession"¹⁴⁵

To take Fanon's pattern, Armah's neurotic behaviour shows in his sadistic verbal attacks on the Whites, and more particularly in his inherent in his enjoyment of the violence of the events he portrays, as apparent in such expressions as : "the beautiful music of revolt" (p. 31) "we overpowered them

r vulture criesø (p. 45). "Seven shots cracked the
shotsø (p. 176). This rejoicing at the other people's
death is also expressed when referring to the death of the Arabs during the *harem*
rebellion: "[they] died that beautiful night of blacknessø (p. 21). His sadistic urge
also appears in his preaching violence, as already demonstrated. Such calls to
violence as "destroy themø (p. 157), "destructionø destructionø (p. 150), are
indicative of Armah's revengeful spirit, which blinds him to the contradiction in
his stance, as when he applies the characteristic of his own stance to his
"enemiesø i.e., the whites. This is the case when he says: "we thought we had
forever left the white abomination: violence in its pure state, hatred unmixedø (p.
87). Armah's hatred seems to be just that. For him the call to "the wayø, no
matter how much tainted with hatred, is love (p. 199), and "away from the way
all this stunted love is hate wearing disguisesø (p. 200).

This Manichean rhetoric, "blackø is "loveø and "whiteø is "hateø is in
contradiction with all the violence and hatred that stems from the behaviour of
his black characters. He, however, attempts to negate such hatred among his
favoured protagonists, against all odds. The narrator, for instance, pointing to
Isanusi's instruction to destroy their enemies, says: "This has been no useless
explosion of rage animating us, hurling us singly into the brief, senseless acts of
momentary, particular revengeø (pp. 157-158). Again, in an attempt to defend his
protagonists, and by deduction himself, from the charges of racial hatred and
advocating violence, he maintains, towards the close of the novel, that they "do
not utter praise of armsø (p. 205). Taking into consideration all the incitation to
racial hatred and violence throughout the novel, this seems "bad faithø on
Armah's part.

Armah is so emotionally involved that he frequently intrudes upon the
narrative. This is notably the case when there are references to cultural identity.
Authorial intrusions occur from the very first page, where Armah holds an
Afrocentric discourse about his racial origins: "The air is poisoned with truncated
tales about our originsø (p. 1). Armah also intrudes to insist on the fragmentation

people, e.g., "There have been so many mutilated witnesses to our impotence" (p. 30). His intrusions are particularly evident in the passages where he praises traditional culture, and praises his people. These passages are punctuated with emphatic "Yes" (p. 29) and "No" (p. 61). This is also the case when he warns about the consequences of giving up the "way": "Monstrous the barrenness of people when outside the lonely cut off self there is no connection with the whole [í] against all this blood itself is impotent if it flows away from connectedness, away from our single way, the way" (p. 133). Another instance is: "Away from our way, the way, it is but stupid dross, the trap of death made spuriously enticing with thefts from the way of life itself" (p. 200). This is also the case in his direct address to his people: "What are we if we see nothing beyond the present, hear nothing from the ages of our flowing, and in all our existence can utter no necessary preparation of the future way?" (p. 204). Armah's intrusions, which betray his resentment of those who collaborated with the "invaders", are evident in his sarcastic remarks about the native leaders, and their denunciation: "Our chiefs, our leaders, they have bellies and they have tongues. Minds they do not have" (p. 146), and "No one sold us but our chiefs and their hangers-on" (p. 146). Similarly, his onslaughts on the Arabs and the Westerners betray his presence.

Armah's major purpose in writing the novel in offensive terms regarding on the Whites and the native rulers is to manifest his unrestrained fervour for the Black race, and this shows an evident lack of objectivity on his part. Being so preoccupied with expressing his message, the return to the "way" and denouncing those who betrayed it, he has run into some inconsistencies in his dramatization of events. Among these unconvincing events, for instance, there is that of the rebellion of the "soft-voiced one". The physical strength that Armah endows him with is quite unbelievable, granted the fact that he was dying, on account of the dire conditions of the slaves' captivity. Armah himself insists on the physical weakness of the slaves during their stay on the ships: "The soft-voiced one's wasted body, however, had acquired an extraordinary strength. It

something immeasurably hard, say rock, say iron,
and one will (p. 131).

This is also the case of Sobo's physical strength when he attempts to steal the keys of the slaves' fetters from the slave dealer. Sobo who is seriously injured continues to fight forcefully: "Flesh was blasted off Sobo's right thigh and the skin on his back was scorched [í] But Sobo, he seemed to have no feeling left in his body, no fear of pain holding back his mind (p. 139). These descriptions seem to express Armah's phantasmal, Hollywood like fights. The most striking scene, bearing such a feature, is, however, that of the slaves' rebellion on the ship:

There was not one of us, victims of that ship, who with our hands did not strain to reach those five to take vengeance for so much suffering in their greed [í] One white destroyer was thrown into the water with not one of his limbs: these followed after. Another had his left thigh stretched away from the right till the bones between them cracked [í] The third was strangled by so many pulling hands his neck turned longer than a chicken's. (p. 142)

Another instance that arouses the reader's suspicion as to its credibility is the case of the building of the canoes: "in the art of carving made fourteen new canoes. Five were ordinary fishing canoes [í] The remainder, nine long, deep canoes with thirty strong oars (p. 150). Similarly, the confection of Isanusi's "royal" outfits is unbelievable, on account of the material conditions of those who made them. Such unconvincing situations stem from Armah's attempt to idealize the protagonists who uphold the "way", by portraying them as heroic, strong-willed, industrious, perseverant, altruist and generous.

In describing them positively and their antagonists negatively, Armah has indulged in a subjectivity which mirrors his emotional involvement. His novel reflects a phase of acute resentment of the Western world, and tends to reveal the extent of his aggressive reaction to the trauma of enslavement suffered by the Black race. The closing paragraphs of the novel, however, show a

that seems to be conditioned by a self-satisfaction at an arduous task. It is reminiscent of the relief of the person who exorcizes a nightmarish traumatic experience. This relief seems also to have been motivated by the satisfaction of having paid a debt to the victims of the slave trade by paying tribute to their memory. Thus, Armah's catharsis seems to have been partially achieved. Still, what Armah should have learnt from Fanon, the awakener, as he himself calls him, is that he should not attempt to accomplish self and racial validation at the expense of other people's denigration, abuse and dehumanization. As Fanon points out quoting Baruk: "Release from hate will be accomplished only if mankind learns to renounce the scapegoat complex"¹⁴⁶

Armah's hopeful note at the close of the novel, an anticipation of cultural disalienation and Pan-Negroism, whose premises are visible, suggests collective catharsis is on the way of being achieved. Armah insists that racial redemption can only be achieved through a collective will to do so: "There is no beauty but in relationships. Nothing cut off by itself is beautiful [] The group that knows this and works knowing this, that group itself is a work of beauty, creation's work" (p. 206). This is also expressed in the very last statement of the novel: "What an utterance of the coming together of all the people of our way, the coming together of all people of the way" (p. 206). Armah suggests that the task of racial redemption should be sustained, and that is probably why he undertakes such a task in his next novel, *The Healers*, whose therapeutic purpose is first indicated by its title. This concern for Black consciousness, racial and cultural retrieval, is echoed in Ngugi's later works, which likewise have a neo-Negritude dimension. This aspect is explored in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, the focus of the next Chapter.

NOTES

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- ¹ Armah uses this term on pages 12 and 38. The term 'black holocaust' has become quite fashionable among the Afrocentric scholars, e.g., Chinweizu.
- ² Though the novel was written prior to Molefi Asante's book *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1980), where he defines its paradigms, it conforms to some of the paradigms of this ideology, e.g., the historiographical one. Afrocentricity is grounded, to a certain extent, in Negritude and Pan-Africanism, and more particularly in the Black Nationalist movements of the late sixties. In fact, Afrocentricity can be considered as a form of neo-Negritude, which forms part of the ideological framework of Armah's novel.
- ³ Oulouguem has been taken to task by many African writers and critics for providing a negative picture of the Black Africans in his novel. As Robert Frazer remarks Armah's *Two thousand Seasons* has probably been written as a response to Oulouguem's novel, to provide a positive picture of his people.
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- ⁵ Ibid., p. 63.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 63.
- ⁷ See Armah's essay: 'Larsony or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction' *Positive Review*, ILE IFE, Vol. 1, 11-14, p. 13.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 13.
- ⁹ See Robert Frazer, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1980), p. 63.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 64.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 72.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 80.
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 80.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 70.
- ¹⁵ Ayi Kwei Armah, 'One Writer's Education' *West Africa*, No. 354826 (August 1985), 1752-1753, p. 1752.
- ¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 161.
- ¹⁷ Ayi Kwei Armah, 'One Writer's Education' op. cit., p. 1753.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1753
- ¹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, op. cit., p. 224.
- ²⁰ Lukacs praises Scott's novels for achieving historical authenticity.
- ²¹ Georg Lukacs, *The Historical Novel* (London: Merlin Press Ltd., 1962), p. 50.
- ²² Ibid., p. 46.

- i Armah and the ðI ö of the Beholderø in : Bruce King and Koraire Ögungbessan (eds) *A Celebration of Black and African Writing* , Oxford Press University (London: 1975), 232-244, p. 232.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p. 243.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 242.
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- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 24.
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- ³³ Chidi Amuta, 'Ayi Kwei Armah, History, and öthe Wayö: the Importance of *Two Thousand Seasons*, *Komparatistische Hefte* (Formerly Mainzer), 3 (1981) 79-86, p. 85.
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- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 75.
- ³⁶ Abiose, M. Porter, 'Beyond Self-Deprecation and Racism: Versions of African History in *Bound to Violence* and *Two Thousand Seasons*', *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1. (September 1989), 3-14.
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- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 12.
- ³⁹ Bernth Lindfors, 'Armahø historiesø *African Literature Today*, N° 11 (1980), 89-92.
- ⁴⁰ Derek Wright, 'Orality in the African Historical Novel: Yambo Ouologuemø *Bound to Violence* and Ayi Kwei Armahø *Two Thousand Seasons*ø *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol 23, N° 1 (1988), 91-101.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 98.
- ⁴² Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, op. cit., p. 114.
- ⁴³ Isidore Okpewho, 'Myth and Modern Fiction: Armahø *Two Thousand Seasons*ø *African Literature Today*, N° 13 (1983), 1-23, p. 5.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 14.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 3.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 3.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 64.
- ⁴⁸ Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral*, edited by Africa Information Service, Monthly Review Press (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 63.
- ⁴⁹ Phylis Bentley, 'Summary and Sceneø in *The Theory of the Novel* edited by Philip Stevick (London: Free Press 1967), 47-55.
- ⁵⁰ John Mbiti, 'African Oral Literatureø *First World Festival of Negro Arts*, Dakar, April 1-24, 1966, *Présence Africaine*, N° (1968), 245-268, p. 257.

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⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 97.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

⁵⁷ Eustace Palmer, *The Growth of the African Novel*, op. cit., p. 222.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 222.

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CHAPTER FOUR

NGUGI'S *DEVIL ON THE CROSS* : REVOLUTIONARY PRAXIS, NEO-NEGRITUDE AND CULTURAL DECOLONIZATION

Ngugi's concern for cultural decolonisation developed further by the time he wrote *Devil on the Cross*, since he became more convinced of the importance of the cultural revolution for the promotion of the socio-economic revolution. This appears in the greater emphasis on the cultural matrix in this novel, in comparison with *Petals of Blood*. In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi advocates a return to the source as a first step towards cultural decolonisation, which he sees, in line with Cabral's views as a prerequisite for revolutionary praxis. Ngugi applies Cabral's theory, which deals with the colonial situation, to the neo-colonial context, i.e., a cultural revolution is necessary to the struggle against the neo-colonial presence.

The aim of this chapter is to explore Ngugi's use of orature in an attempt to demonstrate how his shift to an oral performance resulted in a lack of concern for novelistic conventions. There will be an attempt at demonstrating the hybrid formal characteristics of the novel. There will, hence, be a focus on Ngugi's use of grotesque realism, and Bakhtinian Carnavalesque laughter. There will, further, be an attempt at exploiting the clash between realism and myth that the novel embodies. This Chapter also aims at casting light on Ngugi's revolutionary didacticism and its impact on the aesthetic quality of the novel. It argues that Ngugi imposes his ideology on the material of the novel to serve his revolutionary didacticism. There will, moreover, be an attempt at demonstrating Ngugi's Black Nationalism and the neo-Negritudinist dimension of the novel. There will, further, be a concern for Ngugi's translation of his agenda of cultural decolonization into practice through both form and content.

Such an enterprise is first evident in his use of his native language, Gikuyu, as a medium of writing and his blending features of orature to bring the novel into the African aesthetic tradition. This is done out of a nativist urge to rebel against the Euromodernist tradition. The novel, hence, fits in with the tradition of 'liberationist aesthetics'¹ as Homi Bhabha puts it. The use of Gikuyu was, however, also motivated by personal and political urges. Ngugi, who was imprisoned, for his revolutionary activism, and more particularly for attempting to arouse the revolutionary consciousness of the grassroots, has in a revengeful spirit decided to write in a language understood by the grassroots. He has repeatedly pointed this out,² as when he wrote: 'I decided that I was going to write in that very language which was the basis of my coming into prison'³

Devil on the Cross can be considered as a landmark in Ngugi's literary career, since it was his first attempt at writing a novel in his native language and at experimenting with formal devices through his use of 'orature'⁴ The style of the novel, particularly, its oral literature components and speech pattern were

influenced by his co-prisoners' performances. In *Detained*, Ngugi acknowledges his indebtedness to his co-detainees stating: [they] taught me a lot of Gikuyu vocabulary, proverbs, riddles and songs.⁵ He also informs us that one of the guards and other prisoners use riddles quite frequently, and so the novel is replete with riddles. *Devil on the Cross* is of particular significance not only in Ngugi's artistic development but in his revolutionary commitments. As Ngugi himself pointed out,⁶ the writing of the novel had a twofold purpose, psychological and political, i.e., to lighten the psychological burden of the conditions of detention and to denounce those who were responsible for his detention. The very conditions in which it was written, on toilet paper in prison, and those which motivated Ngugi's writing it account for both its form and content.⁷ As regards the former, Ngugi's use of allegory was motivated by a concern about censorship, and his use of satire was meant to pay back the Kenyan rulers for imprisoning him.

Ngugi was detained for attempting to awaken the revolutionary conscience of the peasants, through the staging of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, with peasant actors in Kamiriithu. As he remarked his detention was justified on ethnic and political grounds: "He was a Gikuyu. He was a leftist. He was a communist. But worse, he was a Gikuyu and he wrote about peasants and workers."⁸ In *Detained*, Ngugi points out that his detention was meant to deter him from arousing the masses revolutionary consciousness and to silence him, it was meant to teach him a lesson in submission, silence and obedience.⁹ He makes it clear that he was a victim of repression because of his Marxist commitments. Since, he was imprisoned for his ideological commitments, notably his Marxist leanings, and his engagement towards the revolutionary awakening of the masses, he resolutely chose to write a novel that reflected such a commitment, hence the revolutionary didactic dimension of the novel.

In this novel, as in his preceding ones, Ngugi attempts to recreate for his fellows the history of their country to help them learn lessons in revolutionary activism, and to show them where the roots of their socio-economic hardships lie, namely, in the advent of neo-colonialism. As in *Petals of Blood* and *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, Ngugi reiterates his major concern with Kenya's neo-colonial bondage and its denunciation. As in these two works, he particularly denounces its consequences on the plight of the grassroots, and points to violent revolutionary activism as the only solution to put an end to the neo-colonialist and capitalist exploitation of the masses. Again, as in *Petals of Blood*, he satirizes the Kenyan ruling class and the 'comprador' bourgeoisie. Yet, in *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi's satirical onslaughts on the latter are more scathing and his advocacy of revolutionary change more pressing. As in *Petals of Blood*, he advocates a proletarian revolution and a return to traditional communalism.

Devil on the Cross departs from Ngugi's earlier novels in that the major dramatis persona is a woman. Ngugi who has always taken the plight of oppressed women, both on the individual and the professional plane, moves a step further in his gender politics by entrusting women with the leadership of revolutionary praxis. Ngugi has decided to speak on behalf of the 'subaltern', as Spivak would put it. He has taken the plea of the women, because they are doubly exploited, as women and as workers. Since his major concern is oppression and exploitation, he has found in the plight of Kenyan woman as valuable material for the expression of his ideological concerns. In *Detained*, Ngugi justifies his motivation in choosing a heroine, rather than a hero, stating: 'Because the women are the most exploited and oppressed section of the entire working class. I would create a picture of a strong determined woman with a will to resist and to struggle against the conditions of her present being'¹⁰ The choice of a heroine may also have been motivated by personal reasons. Being in detention in a male-only reduced space, Ngugi needed the company of a female character for a psychological balance.

Besides, the photograph of his daughter, Njooki,¹¹ born while he was in detention, which kept him company, had probably influenced his choice of a heroine rather than a hero.

Whereas *Devil on the Cross* has like *Petals of Blood* a Marxian dimension, in that Ngugi insists on class differences and proletarian revolutionary uprising, Joseph Gugler contends that Ngugi has “shifted from a class analysis to a neo-colonialist perspective.”¹² He writes: “In distinct contrast, *Devil on the Cross* embraces unreservedly the neo-colonialism thesis.”¹³ He contends that the causes of what he considers to be Ngugi’s “shift in analysis”¹⁴ and “changed stance”¹⁵ as being Ngugi’s intention “to address a different public,” his “personal experiences” and the influence of “new intellectual developments.”¹⁶ Indeed, there may be a greater emphasis on the neo-colonial motif in *Devil on the Cross*, but there is no shift from class analysis, since both novels deal with class differences and proletarian revolution. In fact, the class analysis is taken a stage further in comparison with *Petals of Blood*, since Ngugi views the class conflict from an international perspective. The neo-colonial masters are involved in the class stratification process in the country. Ngugi makes this clear when he makes the Westerners preside over the ceremony of the “thieves’ contest. What Gugler overlooks is that Ngugi tackles the issue of neo-colonialism because he considers it as the basic cause of the impoverishment of the masses, through the “looting” of the country’s wealth. Hence, Ngugi insists on neo-colonialism as being the basis of capitalist exploitation. He considers the encouragement of class division as a neo-colonialist strategy. This is suggested through the case of the criteria imposed by the Western guests for the participation in the thieves’ competition, e.g., the most ruthless exploitation of the masses. The neo-colonial capitalist exploitation is, for instance denounced by Mwireri wa Mukirai who refuses “the theft of foreign thieves and robbers who come to [his] country and build lairs [there] helped by some of [them]” (p. 166). Amazingly enough, whereas Ngugi’s novels

from *Petals of Blood*¹⁷ to *Matigari* are a testimony to Ngugi's consistent Marxist allegiances, some critics contend, as does Gugler, that there is a shift away from his earlier materialist discourse. This is the case of Anders Breidlid in his essay: "Ngugi's *Matigari*, a Non Materialist Discourse and Post-Modernism."¹⁸ Yet, unlike Gugler he considers *Devil on the Cross* as having a Marxist perspective. Among the critics who have explored the Marxist dimension of the novel is Balogun who considers it "is an exceptionally well written proletarian novel"¹⁹

Devil on the Cross is a hybrid compound of different genres. In *Detained*, Ngugi acknowledges this stylistic hybridity stating: "I would use any and everything I had learnt about the craft of fiction – allegory, parable, satire, narrative, description, reminiscence, flash-back, interior monologue, stream of consciousness, dialogue, drama, provided it came naturally in the development of character, theme, story"²⁰ This is, however, not the case in some passages of the novel, since the reader senses Ngugi's deliberate manipulation of these genres. On account of its hybrid characteristics, as regards genre, *Devil on the Cross* has been challenging to critics as to its classification in any given literary tradition. As Simon Gikandi remarks: "If critics now seem confused about the place of *Devil on the Cross* in Ngugi's oeuvre [] it is simply because the genealogy of the novel is schizophrenic"²¹ This schizophrenic dimension resides in its having a "double identity"²² since the writer borrows from two different traditions, the Gikuyu oral and the Western written one. Unlike most critics of the novel, particularly African, who considered the oral components of the novel as being borrowed from Gikuyu orature, Gikandi sees them as belonging to other sources, notably, "biblical narratives and contemporary urban stories"²³ He hence, considers the novel as a "modern tale"²⁴ Still, though Gikandi points out that in "many cases [in the novel] there appears to be an important affinity between Gikuyu oral culture and the narratives of the Old Testament"²⁵ He, however, does not probe the causes of these affinities. It is evident that Ngugi has a difficulty in

parting with his Christian education, whose influence is striking in all his fictional works.

Unlike Gikandi, Patrick Williams considers Ngugi's attempt at experimenting with the novel genre, by exposing it to the constraints of an oral narrative genre, successful. He, for instance, maintains: "we could argue that in *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, Ngugi is managing simultaneously to be faithful to the truth of his own inherited culture and to that of the imported literary genre"²⁶ Like most critics of the novel, Williams considers that it represents a shift in Ngugi's *oeuvre*, yet he does not identify it. He remarks: "*Devil on the Cross* represents a significant shift, with all kinds of boundaries blurred or transgresses. One example is the boundary between novelistic realism and what lies beyond: fantasy, the supernatural, magic realism, the hyper-real, Bakhtinian grotesque realism"²⁷ Yet, Williams does demonstrate how these genres are represented in the novel. As regards grotesque realism, he simply mentions the fact that there are "frequent appearances of grotesque or obscene bodies and bodily references"²⁸ without illustrating his argument through examples from the novel. In the main, the only critic who had no problem situating the novel in a definite literary genre is Balogun who classifies it as a realist novel, despite its fairy-tale dimension and its strong mythic components. He notes:

The distinguishing characteristic of the novel as a literary genre is its realism, its emphasis on verisimilitude in matters of theme, characterization, language, temporal and geographical setting. *Devil on the Cross*, however, stretches the norms of verisimilitude with the license of a hagiography. In almost all its aspects, the novel is by and large fabulous, based as it is on prophetic revelations, mysterious voices, dreams, miraculous escapes from death, coincidences, parables and the fairy-tale concept of the cave feast. The paradox, however, is that in spite of all these elements of the romantic, *Devil on the Cross* is a

solidly realistic novel [í] fantasy in the novel is only a gateway to realism²⁹

The other aspect of the novel which has aroused controversial critical reception is Ngugi's gender politics as expressed through Wariinga's tribulations. Florence Stratton considers Ngugi's endeavour as a 'commitment to gender reform'³⁰ but she takes Ngugi to task for subjecting his gender politics to his class analysis.³¹ She writes: 'Ngugi subordinates gender (as well as other social distinctions) to class'³² She, further, reproaches Ngugi for sexism stating that: 'Ngugi deviates into sexism because his class dialectics leaves no room for the female other'³³ Among the arguments she puts forward to defend her thesis is that, for instance, Ngugi defines secretaries 'from an exclusively male perspective'³⁴ She particularly objects to Ngugi's attempt at giving Wariinga 'masculine' attributes, notably through her mechanical engineer job, and her use of arms, to give her a heroic dimension. She maintains: 'From his class perspective òa strong determined womanö is to all intents and purposes a man'³⁵ A point that Stratton misses is that Ngugi makes Wariinga invade a male dominated professional domain to make his point about women's harassment by their male workmates even when their femininity is bracketed, Wariinga wears overalls, and their professional skills are proven. Through Wariinga's harassment, Ngugi suggests that sexism is all-pervading in Kenyan society. He point out this aspect in an interview saying: 'sexism [is] part of our national past-time'³⁶

Stratton, however, considers that Ngugi has been 'partly successful' in his attempt 'to dismantle the gender codes'³⁷ In the main, Stratton's reading of Ngugi's novel seems to have been influenced by a strong feminist allegiance, which made her overlook the fact that Ngugi's novel is primarily concerned with the denunciation of capitalist and neo-colonialist exploitation. Unlike Stratton, Jennifer Evans values Ngugi's gender politics as expressed in *Devil on the Cross*. She considers Ngugi's 'female images [as] not reactionary or static'³⁸ Unlike

Stratton, Evans views Ngugi's portrayal of women like Wariinga and Wanja positively, and in the service of Kenyan women, for as she puts it: "their portrayal constitutes an eloquent plea that women have a right to respect and equality"³⁹

The major plot of the novel revolves round a contest to choose the shrewdest "thief" among the middle class, i.e., the most ruthless in the exploitation of the masses and illegal business activities.⁴⁰ Parallel to this plot there is the story of Wariinga's predicament at the hands of one of the representatives of the class of "thieves". Evidently, Ngugi uses these two plots to emphasize class differences in Kenya, and to show that the misfortune of the grassroots is a consequence of the middle class exploitation of the latter.

The title of the novel, "Devil on the Cross", is satirical in that it reverses the biblical motif of Christ crucifixion. Ngugi corrupts one of the central Christian principles for a twofold purpose: Firstly, to denounce the hypocrisy of the Christian teachings about redemption and salvation, and to denounce the use of religion in the service of the oppressor; the "thieves", who represent the capitalist class, use biblical parables to boast about their mischief and to pretend that they have a strong religious faith. Secondly, to express the Marxist atheistic view of religion. A dominant feature of this view that Ngugi reproduces in this novel, as he did in *Petals of Blood* and *Matigari*, is that of the use of religion by the capitalist class as an "opium of the people" to sustain the exploitation of the masses. Ngugi's perversion of the Christian motif of the cross for revolutionary didactic purposes is clearly expressed through the description of Wariinga's nightmare. She sees ragged people crucifying the Devil, namely the white man. To make the identification of the latter unequivocal, Ngugi points to his skin colour: "red" (p. 13) and to his European type. In Wariinga's dream "Instead of Jesus on the Cross, she would see the Devil, with skin as white as that of a fat European she once saw near the *Rift Valley Sports Club*" (p. 139). Ngugi's

satirical reference to the white as the Devil is repeatedly used in his writings, starting with *A Grain of Wheat* where Mugo confesses to Mumbi: When I was young, I saw the white man, I did not know who he was or where he came from. Now I know that a Mzungu is not a man ó always remember that ó he is a devil ó devil⁴¹ Being a Christian at heart, despite his repeated affirmation of his renunciation of the Christian faith, Ngugi associates ñbadø with ñevilø and hence considers the white man whom he says ñbuilds hell for the people on Earthø (p. 13), as the Devil. Grounded in this assumption of the exploiter of the masses as the devil, Ngugi makes it plain that the label also applies to the native bourgeoisie, whom he considers as ñthe imperialist watchdogs and the children of the Devilø (p. 196).

Since Ngugi targeted an audience of peasants and workers, he chose the traditional oral narrative style. This was, besides, an attempt at decolonising his writings by rebelling against the western ñbourgeoisø novel genre. He, himself points out the contradiction between this genre and the audience he expects to get his revolutionary message through to: ñHow could I take a form so specifically bourgeois in its origins, authorship and consumption, for such a reconnection with the populace ridden with [í] problemsø⁴² And he goes on to claim that the African novel is of African origin: ñThe African novel as an extended narrative in written form had antecedents in African oral literatureø⁴³ Hence, in an attempt to indigenize the novel, Ngugi has made an extensive use of African traditional oral literature. In this literature, myths are often used to explain supernatural and religious phenomena. They are, for instance, used to explain the creation of the universe and of man. Courlander notes that through myths the African ñbridges back to the very dream morning of creationø⁴⁴ This is the case of the Kikuyu legend of Gikuyu and Moombi, which explains how they were created by Mogai, ñthe Divider of the Universeø⁴⁵

Besides myths, animal tales are important features of African oral literature. In these tales, the animals are personified, and the hero is the trickster, a small animal which outwits the physically bigger ones. Different regions in Africa have different animals as tricksters in their fables. In Kenya, it is the skirrel,⁴⁶ in Nigeria, it is tortoise, whereas in Ghana it is a spider, called Ananse. The latter is, however, more than a trickster, he is as Courlander observes ‘a culture hero’⁴⁷ Most of the animal tales have a didactic function. They are meant to give moral lessons to their audience, mostly composed of children. They are generally recounted at night, since it is taboo, in most African countries, to tell stories during the day. Melville J. Herkovits explains the reasons of this restriction, saying: ‘it is felt [by Africans] that the spirits of the dead will wreak vengeance on the teller’⁴⁸ The story-teller has an important role in transmitting African oral literature. He is a reciter, improviser and actor, as John S. Mbiti observes: ‘a good story-teller will even sandwich jokes between parts of a story’⁴⁹ The story-teller should particularly know how to sustain the interest of his audience and make it interfere in the performance of the narrative. He makes them participate in the songs that punctuate his narrative.

Songs, riddles and proverbs also are important components of traditional oral literature.⁵⁰ The songs are of customary usage: they are used in everyday speech, in happy occasions, romance, marriages, and unhappy ones, funerals. They are used when at war and when at work, to lament, to praise or to condemn. The riddles are often used as a form of entertainment and to test the intelligence of children and develop it. They are, however, also used by adult in a competitive way to prove their wittiness. This is also the case of proverbs, who are particularly used by elders and peasants, often for satirical purposes. Proverbs are used to praise or to denounce, to encourage or discourage, to point out values or vices. As Janheinzø remarks a proverb ‘expresses something, whether wisdom, triviality or nonsense, in an imaginative, pithy, witty or euphonious way’⁵¹ Poetry is also a

dominant feature of African oral literature. In the royal courts, poets were engaged to entertain the king and to praise him. Among the praise poets were the *griots*. Ruth Finnegan identifies the *griots* of Senegambia, as ‘poets belonging to a special low caste in society’⁵² The *griots* denounced and condemned socio-political mischief. The *griot* has a counterpart in East Africa in the *Nyatiti* singer. Finnegan notes that this singer’s primary function is to lament,⁵³ and that he is ‘called on to praise friends or relatives, to recount his personal experiences, to exalt kindness, hospitality, or courage, and to comment on current affairs’⁵⁴ He is, hence, both a story-teller and a praise-singer.⁵⁵

This is also the major characteristic of the *Gicaandi Player* used in *Devil on the Cross*. The *Gicaandi*⁵⁶ performance is, as Njogu, Kimani points out, a ‘competitive, yet cooperative, riddle-like dialogue poem and poetic exchange [which is] a test of wits, problem posing, and problem solving’⁵⁷ The major characteristic of this oral performance is that it is done in a ‘duet’⁵⁸ This is the case of the improvised singing in a duet of Muturi and Wangari. The narrator, himself a *Gicaandi Player*, remarks about their performances: ‘the two sang with voices that blended together beautifully, like a mixture of perfume oil of the same kind [í] Muturi and Wangari finished their duet together, like experts’ (p. 47). This union also symbolizes their unison in purpose, they both uphold traditional culture, but above all they campaign for revolutionary activism. This is the case through their subversive song:

Kenya does not belong to you, imperialists!
Kenya does not belong to you, imperialists!
Pack up your bags and go!
The owner of the homestead is on his way! (p. 47).

By singing this song, which was used during the pre-independence struggle, when discussing the contemporary Kenyan socio-economic situation, Muturi, indirectly

hints the similarities between colonial and neo-colonial exploitation and suggests that revolutionary praxis should be inspired by the Mau Mau struggle.

Another aspect of the *Gicaandi Players*'s narrative technique that features in *Devil on the Cross* is the competing use of riddles and songs by the members of the audience. This appears in Wangari's challenging the other listeners in the *Matatu*. She tells Gatuiria: "That is another riddle, and you must solve that one too, so that we can all hear the answer. Take a forfeit from me too" (p. 57). The one who, besides Wangari, uses traditional story-telling devices is Muturi, who, for instance, reproaches Mwaura his interruption of the singing process: "What! Have you cut the thread?" (p. 47). He often improvises songs to comment on the issues raised in the ongoing conversation as when he sings:

Famine has increased in our land,
 But it has been given other names,
 So that the people should not discover
 Where all the food has been hidden. (p. 50)

Among the narrative devices that Ngugi uses to keep the novel within the oral tradition is that of the repetitive use of proverbs. He particularly uses those that are relevant to his major motifs. This is the case of the proverb that relates to cultural depersonalisation and which reads: "A borrowed necklace may cause one to lose one's own" (pp. 22, 32). This is also the case of the proverb that relates to revolutionary change which reads: "change, for the seeds in the gourd are not all of one kind" (p.20).⁵⁹ Another case in point is: "he whose stomach is upset is the one that goes to the forest" (p. 164). Here, the allusion is to the Mau Mau fighters, some of whom joined the movement because of their destitution.

As the narrative unfolds, there are shifts in point of view. The narrator is, at times, a "dramatized" narrator,⁶⁰ that is a narrator who refers to himself as "I" as when he says: "I asked them: How can we cover up pits in our courtyard..." (p.

7). He is, at other times, a first person reflector, he reflects his own thoughts and experiences, for instance, he remarks: -I, even I, Prophet of justice, felt this burden weigh heavily upon meø (p. 7). From Chapter 2 to 9, he is a third person reflector. At the beginning of Chapter 10, he becomes a -dramatizedø narrator -observerø He says: -But I too was present at Nakuru. I saw with my eyes and heard with my earsø (p. 215). Occasionally, the narrator becomes a -self-conscious narratorø Wayne Booth defines this narrator as the one who is -aware of [himself] as a writer and narrator or observerø⁶¹ Ngugiø narrator is aware of his role as narrator. He makes remarks on the difficulties of his narrating task, for instance he remarks: -Where shall I pick up the broken thread of my narrative?ø (p. 215). These narrative techniques are, however, also common in traditional African story telling, e.g., the *griot* style, where the narrator attracts his audienceø attention to how he is managing his narrative task. Through such a technique, Ngugi also attempts to shake off his audience of listeners⁶² to make them aware that though it has a fairy tale dimension the novel is grounded in reality. This narrative technique of addressing the reader is indicative of the dialogical dimension of traditional story-telling. Ngugi first used in *A Grain of Wheat*: -Most of us from Thabai first saw him [í] You remember the Wednesday í ø⁶³ He also used in *Petals of Blood*, as in: -You should anyway hear Abdulla sing of itø (p. 264).

The language of the narrator changes according to the point of views he adopts. There is a difference in his language when he is dramatized and adopts the first person point of view, as in Chapter 1, and when he adopts the third person point of view. In the first case, his language is allegorical and relatively abstract: -Could it be that I am seeing phantoms without substance, or that I am hearing the echoes of silence? Who am I -- the mouth that ate itself?ø (p. 8). In the second case, it is documentary. The difference between -non-dramaticø and -dramaticø language⁶⁴ is particularly noticeable when the speeches of the -thievesø are

reproduced. The difference lies in the use of slang expressions: ‘you would laugh until you pissed yourself’ (p. 109), and ‘sugar girls’ (p. 100).

Ngugi’s presence is felt not only through the ‘non-dramatic’ language, the language the narrator uses when he summarizes a situation, but through the ‘dramatic’ language, the language of characters as well. This presence shows in the similarity of these two languages. The language Wariinga uses when she recounts the story of Kareendi’s pregnancy (p. 17) is similar in tone and style to the one the narrator uses to recount her story (p. 10). There is, however, a difference between ‘dramatic’ and ‘non-dramatic’ language when Mwaura speaks. His language is punctuated with lyrics and parables:

You maiden, if I should beg,
 Don’t say you’ll get pregnant. (p. 33)

The recurrence of proverbs in his speech also contributes to the rhythmic dimension of his language, as when he says: ‘Don’t simply contrast the gleam of the bodywork. Beauty is not food ... I’d rather keep this old model. A stone hardened by age is never washed away by the rains. A borrowed necklace may cause one to lose one’s own’ (p. 32)

The rhythmic dimension of the narrative is also maintained through the frequent use of songs. The shifts in time sequence also account for the rhythmic tone of the novel. The tone is slowed down and then speeded to maintain the interest of the audience and to keep up the suspense. This is, for instance, the case when there is an inequality between narrated and narrating time as in the scene where the two ‘thieves’ defy each other with guns (p. 124). The reading time is of a few seconds, for an event that probably lasts longer. The narrator says that ‘for a minute or so nobody coughed or sneezed’ (p. 124). Whereas in this case, the narrating time is shorter than the narrated time, in other cases, it is longer. This is

the case when the narrator provides a minute detailed description of the spatial and temporal setting, as in Chapter 3. There, about two pages are used to narrate Wariinga's attempt to get a seat on a *matatu*.

Though Ngugi has attempted to indigenize the novel, by using a narrative technique, the *Gicaandi Playero*, that belonged to traditional oral culture, he uses Western modernist techniques, e.g., stream-of-consciousness, interior monologues and flashbacks. The stream-of-consciousness technique is mostly used to reflect the thoughts of Wariinga, Gatuiria and Mwaura when they are in critical situations. A case in point relating to the latter is his interior monologue: "Am I really going to end up dying, bleating like a sheep? [í] what will eventually become of me, Robin Mwaura?" (p. 34). The use of flashback occurs in the episode where Wariinga reflects about the roots of her misfortune, and recalls her teenage experience of childbirth and the socio-economic hardships that followed her delivery. The Western literary influence also appears in the use of the naturalist style, e.g., the low language (pp. 122, 168), and the detailed description, particularly that of the setting as in the following passage: "I got out at the bus stop outside the *National Archives building*, near the White Rose drycleaners. I walked down Tom Mboya Street and past the Koonja mosque. I crossed the Jevangee Gardens, past the Garden Hotel, and I stopped at the corner of Harry Thuku and University streets, facing the Central Police Station" (p. 14). Through such a realistic description of the setting, Ngugi makes it plain for his Kenyan audience that the novel is about contemporary Kenya and not about a phantasmal country as the fairy-tale dimension of the novel might suggest. In the main, the influence of the Western literary tradition, both in form and content, e.g., the Faustian theme, shows that Ngugi has still not achieved, at the personal level, the cultural decolonisation he preaches, through his narrator and Gatuiria. The "break away from the European literary mainstream"⁶⁵ he calls for in *Homecoming*, is, in his case, only partly achieved.

Ngugi's shift from one tradition to the other is considered by Gikandi as being 'self-conscious'.⁶⁶ This is, however, questionable, for as it appears from all his novels, this shift seems to be involuntary, a reflex-response disclosing pre-determined Western cultural education, both biblical and literary. The overuse of biblical mythology, imagery and verses, e.g., in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* are a testimony to the deeply anchored Christian ethics in Ngugi's ideological make-up, which is, in fact, the case of most Kenyans. Ngugi's attachment to both Christianity and Western literary tradition are betrayed through his novels despite his repeated call for the intellectuals to distance themselves from these two traditions to achieve a cultural decolonisation. He, himself, endeavours to do so through his use of orature, e.g., songs, proverbs and riddles. Still, one should not belittle the hardships of the challenging task that Ngugi undertakes by transposing oral cultural patterns into a Western modernist shape. Gikandi bears witness to the uncomfortable position of the writer as regards this issue, stating: 'His deepest anxiety – what kind of form would a novel in Gikuyu take? – arose because he had spent a good deal of time mastering the European novel and he did not know how to let go of what he had mastered'.⁶⁷ Among the Western motifs that Gikandi points to are John Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress*, a parody which reproduced through the protagonists' journey in the *Matatu*⁶⁸ and the Faustian theme.⁶⁹ Lovesey, on the other hand, considers Ngugi's use of Bunyan's work as motivated by a concern for the patterns with which his readership is already acquainted. He notes: 'Ngugi uses biblical narrative and Bunyanesque allegory to respond to his implied readers' horizon of expectation. Ngugi realised his rural Kenyan audience would be familiar with John Bunyan's work and the Bible, so chose forms which were themselves inscribed in the minds of his readers'.⁷⁰

Since the novel was written in prison, Ngugi who feared repression had resorted to allegorical writing to denounce the ruling *élite's* corruption,

embezzlement and neo-colonial servitude. As John MacQueen observes, allegory is linked with satire.⁷¹ It is a symbolic narrative device which relates to the difference between the explicit and the implicit meaning of language. The language of allegory, like that of a metaphor, says one thing but means another. Allegory has a mythic dimension, in that its hero goes through a quest journey. Angus Fletcher notes that its hero battles in a psychomania⁷² and that he is possessed by a daemon: the protagonist will act as if possessed [...] He will act part way between the human and divine spheres, touching on both.⁷³ In Ngugi's novel, Wariinga behaves as if possessed by a daemon when she shoots The Rich Old Man and the two thieves. Her daemonic possession is, again, apparent in her having nightmares and hearing a voice. Like the allegorical protagonist, Wariinga goes through a quest journey out of which she comes victorious. She recovers her identity and confidence in herself after attending the Devil's feast. Her allegorical dimension also shows in her being a Faustian type.

This type, which is often found in modernist literature, has been inspired by Goethe's *Faust* (1808). There, the protagonist in despair of becoming a spirit gives his soul to the Devil, Mephistopheles. The Faustian character of modernist literature is, to borrow Yung's phraseology, a shadow archetype. He is possessed by the evil side of his personality. Like Faust, Wariinga is in despair and she attempts to commit suicide, and like him, she hears the voice of the Devil, has a discussion with him, and gets a proposition to exchange her soul for favours. However, unlike Faust, she refuses the Devil's proposition. Ngugi has altered the Faustian type, by making Wariinga reject the Devil's proposition. Whereas the Devil has a negative impact on the development of Faust who becomes demonic, he has a positive one on Wariinga's. He attempts to make her recover her self-confidence, by praising her physical beauty: The blackness of your skin is smoother and more tender than the most expensive perfume oils (p. 192).⁷⁴ After her conversation with the Devil, Wariinga becomes a positive person. The Devil,

further, helps her understand how the exploitation of the working class works, and he arouses her revolutionary consciousness. He says:

Every Sunday the workers will be read sermons that will instruct them that the system of milking human sweat, human blood and human brains - the system of robbery of human labour power and human skills - is ordained by God, and that it has something to do with the salvation of their souls. (p. 188)

Ngugi alters the Faustian type to suit his ideological message. He suggests that the working class does not barter its moral integrity for property, as Wariinga does not exchange her soul for riches, but fights for its rights. The revolutionary role Ngugi expects the working class to adopt is represented by the shooting of three rich men by Wariinga. Thus Wariinga who starts as a Faustian type develops into a revolutionary type. The Faustian type is applied to Ndingøuri as well. But unlike in Wariinga's case, Ngugi does not alter it. Like Faust, Ndingøuri gives his soul to the Devil and becomes a demonic person. Here, again, Ngugi uses the Faustian type for ideological purposes. He suggests that private property corrupts people's morality and that the neo-colonialism 'master' is the 'Devil' to whom the Kenyan middle class has 'sold its soul' i.e., its nation. He, further, suggests that the local agents of neo-colonialism should be revenged on by the common people, as is the case for Ndingøuri. Accordingly, the Faustian type is used to serve the revolutionary didacticism of the novel.

This use of allegory for didactic purposes also shows in the oratorio that Gatiuria composes. It is composed of five movements, symbolizing the different phases of Kenyan Contemporary history. The 'First Movement' of the oratorio (p. 227) recreates through different musical sounds the Kenyan communal life before the coming of the Westerners. The cultural and economic functions of different age groups and sexes are represented:

Dancing	Our women	Clearing the forests
Asking riddles	Our men	Clearing the bush
Telling stories	Our children	Digging (p. 227).

The 'Second Movement' describes the beginning of 'imperialism' (p. 228), the slavery era and the early native resistance by 'Waiyaki, Koitalel, Me Kitilili' (p. 228). The 'Third Movement' describes the colonial advent, the coming of the settlers, the 'mission civilisatrice', the religious conversion of the natives. It represents the 'Foreigners', 'Priests', 'Educators', 'Administrators' and 'Armed soldiers' (p. 229). The 'Fourth Movement' represents the slavery era: the 'Voices of people picking tea', 'coffee' and 'cotton' (p. 229). Though the slavery era is introduced in the 'Second Movement', it is reintroduced in the fourth one. Its presence in the 'Second Movement' is justified since it fits the chronology of the Kenyan historical development, but it is not in the 'Fourth Movement'. The allusion made through such a repetition of the slavery motif is meant to suggest that neo-colonialism refashioned slavery, through the abusive exploitation of the masses' labour. By emphasising the slavery era, whose memory is emotionally disturbing for his people, Ngugi attempts to rekindle his fellow's hatred for the White men. The 'Fifth Movement' represents the Mau Mau episode. There are 'Voices of Mau Mau', 'Voices of revolution', and 'Voices of revolutionary unity of workers and peasants' (p. 230). The fact that the oratorio ends on a revolutionary episode of Kenya's history indicates Ngugi's attempt at revolutionary didacticism through the recreation of the Kenyan history. By reminding his Kenyan audience, workers and peasants of the Mau Mau episode, he expects to make them adopt the same revolutionary fervour to fight neo-colonialism. The revolutionary didactic dimension of the oratorio shows in its last sentence: 'Voices of revolutionary unity of workers and peasants' (p. 230).

The mythic dimension of the novel appears in its archetypal plot, motifs, symbolism and figures. The archetypal plot revolves round the conflict between

the divine and the demonic, the good and the evil, the heroes and the villains. It is epitomized in the conflict between the heroes, Wariinga, Wangari and Muturi and the villains, the thieves. It is specifically represented in the attack of the downtrodden on the thieves. The dominant archetypal motif of the novel is the quest-myth. Both Wariinga and Gatuiria are in quest of their true selves, more particularly their cultural identity. The quest pattern is, thus, associated to the cultural matrix of the novel. Their journey to Ilmorog represents the archetypal journey, which helps them discover their true selves. The journey is a form of exile, which, according to Joseph Campbell brings the hero to the Self in all⁷⁵ In the case of Wariinga, the journey, and more particularly the Thieves Feast made her reconcile her divided self, and hence recover her full personality. In the case of Gatuiria, they helped him find the tune of the oratorio he dreamed of composing. In terms of archetypal figures, Wariinga represents the mother archetype, on account of her maternal behaviour and beauty. This archetype is also represented by Wangari, who on account of her age stands for the grandmother. The mother archetype is, according to Jung, represented by the personal mother and grandmother.⁷⁶ The qualities associated with this archetype are: the maternal solicitude and sympathy ... the wisdom and spiritual exaltation.⁷⁷ Muturi is a Christ figure, he is the saviour or redeemer. Like Christ, he encounters a lot of hardships during his mission, and he ends badly, Christ is crucified, and Muturi is imprisoned. His promethean role lies in his engineering the workers' revolt. The promethean figure serves the motif of revolutionary praxis. Mwaura and the thieves fit the archetypal figure of the Machiavellian villain[s].⁷⁸

The archetypal Apocalyptic symbolism is, for instance, apparent in the burning down of the Cave, which represents the dwellings of the capitalist class, since it is the venue of their meeting. Fire is an archetypal symbol of cleansing. By burning the cave, the grassroots attempted to get rid of the

⌘Machiavellian villains⌘ Archetypal apocalyptic and demonic symbolism is also apparent in the naming of the districts where the two antagonistic classes live, Golden Heights, i.e., the residential area, and New Jerusalem, i.e., the slums. Here biblical archetypes are reversed. Whereas in Biblical mythology, Jerusalem is the ⌘desired⌘ land, and is, therefore, part of the apocalyptic world, in the novel, New Jerusalem represents the ⌘undesirable⌘, i.e., the demonic world. As these examples show, Ngugi uses archetypal symbolism to express his revolutionary commitment through allegory.

The use of symbolism for revolutionary didactic purposes also appears in the case of the game of the Hunter and the Hunted played by The Rich Old Man and Wariinga (p. 144), significantly belonging to two different classes, during which the latter fired almost killing the former. This act is meant to suggest that the hunted, i.e., the oppressed should, get rid of the hunter, the i.e., oppressed, only through violence. Another symbolic event that relates to class warfare is that of Mukiraii's near ejection from the *matatu* (p. 37). This implies that the working class, symbolically represented by this popular means of transport, should overthrow the capitalist class, represented by Mukiraii. The legend of the ogre and the peasant (p. 62) is yet another symbolic representation of capitalist exploitation and revolutionary praxis. Another example of symbolism used for didactic purposes is that of Wariinga being saved by Muturi and the student leader, both revolutionary activists. This suggests that the working class, represented by Wariinga, will be saved from destitution and exploitation by workers and students involved in revolutionary praxis.

Besides allegory, Ngugi makes an extensive use of mythopoeic motifs and imagery. He has borrowed from three different mythologies: Biblical, Greek and Gikuyu to express the major motifs of the novel allegorically. Biblical allegories are the most frequently used. They first appear in the title of the novel,

Christ's crucifixion, though in an altered form for satirical purposes, i.e., the Devil, not Christ is on the Cross. Biblical reversed allegories are also used through the case of Satan having angels: 'Devil's Angels' (p. 68). The latter allegorically represent the capitalist class. This is meant clear in the threatening card that Wariinga receives from her landlord's 'henchmen': 'We are the Devil's Angels: Private Businessmen' (p. 10). Besides, being satirical onslaughts on the middle class, these reversed allegories are also meant to denounce the hypocrisy of the Christian religion, and to point to Ngugi's disaffection with this religion.

Yet, some allegories conform to biblical ones, this is the case of Paradise and Hell. The biblical concept of Paradise being in the heights and Hell in the depths is allegorically represented through the dwellings of the 'thieves' and the cave. They live in a residential area called Golden Heights. The name symbolically refers to the welfare of these people and the 'luxurious' life they lead. The cave, which is in depth, symbolizes Hell. The cave becomes the 'Inferno' for the 'thieves' when they are attacked by the workers and peasants. The Golden Height dwellers' experience of the 'Inferno' is symbolically expressed in the sentence that refers to the weather, which anticipates the attack: 'The rays of the setting sun fell on Ilmorog's Golden Heights like flames reflected in the shiny steel of swords and spears' (p. 201). This symbolically refers to the grassroots' revolution against the middle class that Ngugi expects to materialize in Kenya.

Ngugi has made use of Greek mythology to make up allegories that serve both the revolutionary and the cultural didacticism of the novel. The use of the Orphic allegory for cultural didacticism is apparent through Gaturia's plight. His Orphic dimension shows in his musical skills, he is a 'composer' (p. 59). Gaturia's quest is for inspiration from traditional sources to compose the oratorio. The orphic visit to the underworld is represented by his visit to the cave. The quest

has proved successful, since he ends up composing the oratorio, a task he could not manage to achieve despite his many attempts prior to the cave experience. Gaturia is keen on composing an oratorio which expresses Kenya's history by means of traditional instruments. The use of these instruments is an attempt at cultural retrieval. Ironically enough, Ngugi makes use of Western mythology to express the theme of cultural decolonization. The allegory of the oratorio serves the cultural didacticism of the novel.

Kikuyu mythology is used to make up allegories of the modern Kenyan socio-political life, notably class exploitation. The legend of the young girl and the ogre, recounted by Gaturia (p. 62), has been inspired by the Agikuyu tale of 'The Girl and the Ogre'⁷⁹ though it differs from it in many respects. The Agikuyu tale tells the story of how an ogre, under the physical appearance of a handsome man attracts the attention of six girls during a dance and invites them to his home. On their way, the girls who notice his back mouth return home, leaving him with one girl. He locks her up in his house and goes to call his fellow ogres to feast on her. She manages to escape with the help of a 'living skull'. The Ogre legend that Gaturia tells is that of a young girl who chooses, contrary to traditional custom, a man not from her area as a husband. On their way to his home, he transforms himself into an ogre and eats her. The moral Ngugi intends the Kenyan reader to draw here is that foreigners, i.e., the neo-colonial masters are like ogres, they 'eat' people, i.e., they impoverish them.

In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi combines two narrative genres, realism and myth, which are difficult to reconcile. As Northrop Frye observes: 'The presence of mythical structure in realist fiction, however, poses certain technical problems for making it plausible, and the devices used in solving these problems may be given the general name of *displacement*'⁸⁰ Realism and myth are theoretically incompatible, since the former aims at the description of the real, whereas the

latter aims at that of the ideal. In medieval philosophy, however, the concept of realism referred to the ideal.⁸¹ The nineteenth century realists called for the objective reflection of reality. Their call was an outcome of their dissatisfaction with the untruthful, ideal picture of life depicted by the romanticists. Realism was, thus, antithetical with romanticism. Lewes, however, argues that it is an anti-thesis of idealism.⁸² Though, the realists opposed the mythic and symbolic dimension of romantic literature, their own literature had mythic and symbolic components. Arguably, all literature that takes human nature as its subject-matter is bound to have myths and symbols as these are aspects of the cultural life of the people it portrays. As Carl Jung observes they are part of the collective unconscious. Even naturalist literature, which according to its proponents should be scientifically objective, has a mythic and a symbolic dimension, e.g., Zola's *Germinale*. In all realist literature there is an interaction of realism and idealism. This is particularly the case in the socialist realist literature whose utopian vision of the future gives it a romanticist dimension. The interaction of realism and myth is particularly striking in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*. The use of traditional oral literature Western allegories and satire account for much of the mythic dimension of the novel. Satire, being an exaggeration of facts, is false, and since myth is by definition that which is untrue or false, satire is myth. Frye considers it as Mythos of Winter.⁸³ The satiric and phantasmal dimension of the novel bring it closer to Bakhtinian carnivalesque and grotesque realism.

Mikhail Bakhtin, who put forward the theory of carnival, belonged to a society that repressed freedom of speech and imposed censorship on its writers. Intellectual and ideological repression is a common feature of his society and Ngugi's. This is probably why, Ngugi found his thesis of the carnivalesque and grotesque realism appealing. Another feature Bakhtin and Ngugi share is that of cultural resistance and popular engagement. Bakhtin demonstrated his thesis of carnivalesque laughter, through his study of folk culture in Rabelais's literary

works.⁸⁴ He maintains that during the carnival, which was a celebration of season transition, in market places, in the Middle ages, the masses unveiled their cultural difference from the official cultural policy, through laughter and humour. As Renate Lachmann, puts it, ‘Carnival is Culture as counter-culture’⁸⁵ The Carnival was to a certain extent, a time during which popular cultural and social dissent was expressed through laughter, since the socio-political norms were put aside during the festival, and people were enjoying a freedom from social restrictions. As Bakhtin notes: ‘A boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture’⁸⁶

During carnival festivities, the populace also use self-mockery as a humorous device to unveil their own weaknesses, but their mockery particularly targets their rulers and church leaders. Carnavalesque laughter is subversive since it questions the official conventions and it indirectly points to a revolutionary change. Class differences are bracketed during the festival, as Bakhtin observes:

The suspension of all hierarchical precedence during carnival time was of particular significance. Rank was especially evident during official feasts; everyone was expected to appear in the full regalia of his calling... and to take the place corresponding to his position. It was a consecration of inequality. On the contrary, all were considered equal during carnival.⁸⁷

Language barriers are similarly removed and as Bakhtin remarks: ‘Carnival familiarity [is] reflected in speech patterns’⁸⁸ Hence, the participants in the carnival, feel free to parody the officials through humorous manifestations. They particularly satirize the physical appearance of the ruling class. The grassroots achieve a certain triumph over their monarchy in that they lower their status through mockery and they transgress the boundaries of the fear they daily experience under their rule. As Bakhtin observes: ‘festive folk laughter presents

an element of victory not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts⁸⁹

The major concept of grotesque realism is the *Material bodily principle* which is, according to Bakhtin *contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed*⁹⁰ Bakhtin, further, notes that: *the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egoistic form, severed from other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people.*⁹¹ The concern for bodily representation is the major feature of Bakhtin's theory of grotesque realism, which is linked to carnivalesque laughter. Physical manifestations, such as natural body cycles, eating and drinking and body refuses, are highlighted in grotesque realism. This genre relies on folk language and specifically, scatological images. It is also characterized by its death, birth and rebirth imagery and the grotesque bodily descriptions. The major purpose of grotesque realism is to degrade in order to usher in renewal. As Bakhtin remarks:

To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one.⁹²

The bodily parts that grotesque realism focuses on are the belly, the mouth, the nose among the other organs that relate to the external world. Among the other characteristics of this realism there is: the ugliness and deformation of the body and the devil archetype. Bakhtin notes: *in the parodical legends and the fabliaux the devil is the gay ambivalent figure expressing the unofficial point of view, the material bodily stratum. There is nothing terrifying or alien in him*⁹³

In *Devil on the Cross*, grotesque realism appears in Ngugi's attempt to debase the middle class. It is first evident in the physical description of the thieves. Ngugi insists on their physical deformity which symbolically refers to their moral depravity. The other major paradigm of grotesque realism that the novel encompasses is a concern for the lower stratum of the body and the organs that relate to the outside world, e.g., the mouth. Ngugi often focuses on the description of the mouths of the thieves since he compares them to ogres and men-eaters. For instance, Kihaahu has a long mouth. His mouth was shaped like the beak of the kingstock: long, thin and sharp (p. 108). Ngugi also focuses on the mouth of the thieves since his protagonists, e.g., Wariinga and Gatuiria concentrate on it for they are baffled by the competitors' tales about how they cheated the masses. One of the thieves describes in a disgusting way his greed for illegally acquired property saying: 'I picked one fruit after another. The sweet juice would spill out of the corners of my mouth before I learned to eat more discreetly' (p. 116). The focus on the thieves' mouths and the verbal diarrhoea that spills out of it are meant to suggest that the members of the middle class not only rob the grassroots but boast about their robbery and ridicule their victims. Muturi remarks that the thieves are congregated in one den to parade their full bellies and to pour scorn on us (p. 158).

Since the novel is a parable of the businessmen's exploitation of the masses and their consumption of the nation's wealth, there is an emphasis on their being overfed, a state which is symbolized by their protruding bellies. Throughout the novel, Ngugi insists on the description of their bellies. He, for instance, remarks: 'their bellies began to swell' (p. 14) and that Gitutu had a belly that protruded so far that it would have touched the ground had it not been supported by the braces that held up his trousers (p. 99). Similarly, Nguunji had a belly that hung over his belt, big and arrogant (p. 176). Protruding bellies not only symbolize over-consumption of stolen wealth, but are physical

characteristics of those who belong to the middle class. This aspect is satirically exploited by Ngugi, who points out that it is a condition *sine qua none* to take part in the thieves' competition. The master of ceremonies remarks that the second rule of the contest is that 'no one without a big belly and fat cheeks should bother to come up here to waste our time' (p. 96). He further remarks: 'Who could possibly argue the size of a man's belly and cheeks is not the true measure of his wealth' (p. 96). Ngugi emphasizes these physical requirements in his portrayal of the master of ceremonies who 'had a well-fed body: his cheeks were round, like two melons' (p. 87). Ngugi's emphasis on grotesque physical appearance also shows in the case of Kahuria whose eyes 'were like two electric bulbs hanging from a tall, thin eucalyptus tree' (p. 94). Nguunji's eyes are similarly compared to 'electric bulbs' (p. 176).

Ngugi insists on the thieves' over-eating activity both symbolically and realistically. The former refers to their greed for material acquisition, and the latter refers to their food consumption, which is meant to bring to light the contrast with the masses' starvation, and to emphasize the disparity between their opulence and the masses' destitution. Over-consumption of food is acknowledged by one of the thieves who remarks:

When I wake up in the morning, I swallow a few eggs on top of a piece of bread and butter and a glass of milk to chase them down. At ten o'clock or thereabouts I manage to put away a couple of pounds of cooked mutton. At twelve I attack four pounds of beef (*fillet steak*) dipped in wine and then nicely roasted over charcoal, and I wash the beef down with a cool beer, one bottle. At six, I nibble at a piece of chicken, just to have something in the belly as a base for whisky, pending supper proper in the evening. (p. 100)

Ngugi's satirical denunciation of this aspect of middle class life style is more acute when he informs us that this thief's father 'died of the disease of overeating'

(p. 102). As in grotesque literature, there is in Ngugi's novel an emphasis on 'eating' and 'drinking' (p. 89).

The grotesque reference to bodily refuse is noticeable in such statements as 'like a beetle in rain-soaked dung' (p. 33), or 'suffocated by the stench of shit and urine' (p. 43), or again, 'full of brackish water, shit and urine' (p. 130). Some other examples of these repulsive body manifestations, which are often associated with the well-off are: 'the wound of a rich man never produces pus. The fart of a rich man never smells' (pp. 65-66). The grotesque realist purpose to degrade is particularly noticeable in the naming of the thieves, e.g., 'Rottenborough Groundflesh Shitland' (p. 99). This attempt to degrade is also apparent in some plot features, e.g., when the thieves escape from the cave after the mob's attack. They were 'like two spiders with eggs, while their buttocks were lashed by their pursuers with sticks. By the time they reached their cars, they were panting and the sweat of pain and fatigue and fear fell to the ground in drops like rain during heavy pourdown' (p. 207). Through this example, Ngugi suggests that the roles have been reversed since they are ridiculed by those whom they wanted to ridicule and they were the ones who sweated instead of the masses. Throughout their boastful tales, they referred to the sweat of the masses, i.e., their labour, that served their own comfortable life. Again, they were the ones who experienced fear instead of the common people.

The other major feature of grotesque realism that is evident in Ngugi's novel is the concern for life, death and rebirth or regeneration. There are frequent references to the binary life/death, for instance, to Mwaura's remark about his attitude to his customers being: 'one of honey and one of bitters' (p. 48), Muturi sarcastically replies: 'of life and death?' (p. 48). Again, through Muturi, Ngugi focuses on the debate about life and death. He writes: 'Life is the circulation of the blood; death is blood clogged in the veins. Life is the heart beating; death is the

heart stilled. We know that a baby in his mother's womb will not be still-born when it plays inside her and moves about (pp. 80-81). This reference to pregnancy is, yet, another component of grotesque realist literature that features in Ngugi's novel.⁹⁴ Pregnancy is associated with the 'rebirth' motif of grotesque realist literature. Ngugi symbolically refers to pregnancy as a prelude to change when he writes: 'our country is pregnant. What will it give birth to, God only knows' (pp. 45-46).

The life versus death struggle is symbolized by Wariinga's predicament. She attempts to cross the threshold between the two when she attempts to commit suicide twice. But she is saved on both occasions to carry on her 'earthly duty'. Through her example, she overcomes death through her resolution not to attempt to take her life again, Ngugi suggests that to live and fight back should triumph over despair and passivity among the downtrodden. Wariinga expresses her new attitude to life and death by stating: 'I could see this wonder for myself and never try to take my own life again on account of this vile class of men who are determined to oppress the whole land!' (p. 183). She was born again, after the experience in the cave. The thieves' tales have first depressed her then enlightened her and but resulted in her conclusion that life is worth living to achieve her new set agenda, i.e., to fight those who were responsible for her exploitation and misfortune, e.g., The Rich Old Man.

Irony is used at two levels in this novel: directly from the narrator, Ngugi's mouthpiece, or indirectly through the protagonists, whom he ridicules by making them say or do stupid things. This is the case of Mukiraii who proclaims that there should be 'unity among those of us who seek to build true native capitalism, free from foreign ideologies'. He does not seem to be aware of the contradiction in his statement, for capitalism is indeed a 'foreign ideology'. Another contradiction in Mukiraii's concepts is confusion of democracy with free

public property grabbing. He says: 'I personally believe in the democratic principle that states that he who is able to grab should be allowed to grab. You allow me to grab and I allow you to grab' (p. 80). This is, however, also meant to denounce the double language of the ruling *élite*. Another example of the shallowness of the middle class people's thinking is that of the Master of ceremonies who tells his audience that native culture has to do with European dress style and jewellery (p. 125). Ngugi's sarcasm targets this class by making them betray their lack of dignity as when the Master of ceremonies tells the European delegates: 'Distinguished guests, we are your slaves' (p. 174).

As in *Petals of Blood* and *Matigari*, Ngugi's characterization⁹⁵ is composed mostly of 'flat' rather than 'round' characters. His characters are 'types' or 'caricatures' that represent the different classes. As James Ogude notes Ngugi seems 'more interested in the story and audience's emotional involvement with the story rather than with character delineation'⁹⁶ Ngugi is, however, more attentive to the psychological development of his heroine, in comparison with *Petals of Blood*. The character of Wariinga, the heroine, serves Ngugi's two major concerns in this novel, cultural decolonisation and revolutionary praxis. The former relates to her development from a culturally alienated person, ashamed of her colour and traditional culture to a person who becomes proud of them. She, for instance, adopts the Kikuyu dress style (p. 242). The latter relates to her rebellion against those who exploited her, by killing The Rich Old Man and two 'thieves'. Her concern for revolutionary activism is expressed through her remark that she should be ready for 'the struggles ahead' (p. 242). Her revolutionary fervour is, however, less acute than that of Wangari, the ex-Mau Mau fighter, who is significantly 'named after one of the daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi'⁹⁷. She is the one who initiates the rebellion against the class of 'thieves' by fetching the police to arrest them, and the one who often sang revolutionary songs. Ngugi has used her character for a threefold purpose: to uphold traditional culture, since she

is a custodian of this culture, to denounce the deprivation of the Mau Mau veterans, she walks barefooted and cannot afford the *matatu* fare, and to suggest that ex-Mau Mau fighters are among the vanguard of revolutionary uprising, as it is the case of Matigari in Ngugi's next novel.

Through the plight of both Wangari and Wariinga, and more specifically through the latter's, Ngugi unveils his gender politics. Though he has always shown a certain sympathy for his women characters and a compassion for their plight, since they represent a doubly exploited strata of Kenyan society, it is in *Devil on the Cross* that his gender politics is fully expressed. This is first evidenced in his choosing a heroine and making her develop positively from a weak to a strong-willed person who succeeds in putting an end to her exploitation by her male counterparts. As Gikandi remarks, towards the close of the novel, Warringa, whose name means 'a woman in chains',⁹⁸ appears as 'a woman who has broken the chains of patriarchy and rejected the temptations of Satan'.⁹⁹ Through Wariinga's predicament, Ngugi is being didactic, in that he is sending a clear message to the Kenyan women inciting them to rebel against their exploitation, both social and economic. He gives them a lesson on how to rebel against patriarchal subordination. In this novel, Ngugi seems to have attempted to correct the negative image of women that he portrayed in *Petals of Blood*, through the case of Wanja, which suggests that the fate of the downtrodden Kenyan women is prostitution. This sexist view, though it may have been grounded in reality, is abandoned in favour of a positively oriented liberationist gender perspective.¹⁰⁰

The importance Ngugi grants to Kenyan women has its roots in his admiration of their vital role in the Mau Mau struggle, one of his prime concerns. This admiration appears in his drawing sympathetic sketches of the woman who represent the ex-Mau Mau women. This is the case for Niyakinyua in *Petals of*

Blood and Wangari in *Devil on the Cross*. Ngugi insists on their courage, their repulsion at the betrayal of nationalist ideals and their determination to continue their resistance against the new oppressors to bring about socio-economic justice. To suggest that this female resistance tradition should be taken as a model by young Kenyan women, he makes his working class female characters inherit the rebellious spirit of their elders, as it is the case of Wanja in *Petals of Blood* and Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross*. Ngugi makes this plain in *Detained* where he remarks that: "Wariinga will be the fictional reflection of this heroine [Mary Muthoni Nyanjuri] of Kenyan history"¹⁰¹ Again, to do justice to the ex-Mau Mau women for their revolutionary activism during the independence struggle, and to hint to the importance of their role in the post-independence resistance movement, Ngugi gives a major role to the characters who represent them. On the whole his delineation of working class women is positive, since he often dramatizes their evolution towards a better life, of their own making. In *Detained* he refers to his heroine's success in defeating those who were responsible for her oppression saying: "Wariinga heroine of toil í there she walks haughtily carrying her freedom in her handsí ø"¹⁰² Hence, the character of Wariinga, like that of Wangari, is used to serve the revolutionary praxis motif of the novel.

This is also the case of the character of Muturi, who is, besides, used as a mouthpiece to express Ngugi's Marxist credentials. Fitting the Marxist pattern of the proletariat as the vanguard in the class struggle, --- has a leading role in the revolutionary awakening of the masses. He, for instance, arouses the revolutionary consciousness of Wariinga and his fellow workers. This is all too clear in his proclamation: "We who are gathered here now belong to one clan: the clan of workersø (p. 208). He makes his audience aware of their economic exploitation, when he tells them that the thievesø bellies "fatten by the fruit of [their] sweat and bloodø (p. 208). He explains to them, through simple examples, how their exploitation operates saying: "We build houses; others occupy them; and we, the

builders, are left out in the rain. We make clothes; others take them, and dress well; and we the tailors go naked. We grow food; others eat it; and we, the farmers, sleep with our stomachs growling through the night. [í] We build good schools; other people's children find places in them, and ours go looking for food in rubbish heaps and dustbins (p. 208). As these examples show, Ngugi enhances socio-economic injustice, through Muturi, to appeal to the masses' rebellious senses.

Adopting the Fanonist pattern of the 'cleansing' revolutionary violence Ngugi makes Muturi campaign for a violent uprising. This appears in his remark about the gun he gives to Wariinga, which he considers as 'an invitation to the workers' feast' (p. 211). His propensity for revolutionary violence also appears in his admiration for the gun. He tells Wariinga: 'See how beautifully it gleams! This is the product of a worker's hands! [í] But now look at the product of a worker's hands back in his own hands' (p. 211). Since, Muturi has a pivotal position in Ngugi's revolutionary praxis pattern; he is endowed, as is Karega in *Petals of Blood*, with admirable qualities, e.g., courage and altruism. He is determined to carry on the struggle against the masses' exploiters at all costs. When he is warned by Wariinga and Gatuiria that the police came to arrest him, he replies: 'But I will not run away. We shall not run away. For us workers, there's no turning back.' (p. 205).

The character whose personality is in stark opposition to Muturi's as regards revolutionary commitment is Gatuiria. His cowardice, for instance he runs away from the cave when the masses attack the thieves (p. 153), betrays his fear of repression. Gatuiria represents the Kenyan progressive group who feel compassion for the masses' plight but lack revolutionary activism, mostly out of fear of government reprisal. Ngugi makes this clear when he makes Muturi tell Gatuiria: 'We must struggle and fight against the culture of fear' (p. 205).

Through Gatuiria's cowardly behaviour, Ngugi indirectly indicts, not only the Kenyan intellectuals, but his colleagues at Nairobi University, for not taking a clear-cut stand for the emancipation of the masses, as he himself did through the Kamiriithu theatre. Ngugi's criticism of the latter's passivity and his inviting them to take part in revolutionary praxis is made clear through Muturi's remark: "These brave students have shown which side education should serve. My friends, you should come and join us too. Bring your education to us, don't turn your backs on the people. That's the only way" (p. 205). Gatuiria who is "shaken by Muturi's call to arms" (p. 205) starts questioning his position and that of the intellectuals in general: "We, the intellectuals [í] are we on the side of the workers and peasants or the side of the exploiters?" (p. 205). The character of Gatuiria is used to serve the revolutionary didacticism of the novel in that it highlights the contradiction in the position of the progressive Kenyan intellectuals, between their ideological stand and their non-involvement in revolutionary activism. This contradiction is expressed by Gatuiria, who wonders: "are we like the hyena which tried to walk along two different roads at the same time?" (p. 205).

Through the example of Mwaura,¹⁰³ whose name means "one who makes off with other people's things, a thief",¹⁰⁴ Ngugi suggests that greed and profit seeking is not exclusive to the middle class only. Mwaura represents the opportunism of those who belong to the working class but want, at all costs, to jump higher on the class ladder. This is also the case of Wariinga's uncle who "believed that he who walked with the rich might himself become rich [í] so he did not mind that they ordered him about [í] and sent him on errands like those pre-colonial servants" (p. 142). Mwaura is a money-worshipper, for him "Independence is not tales about the past but the sound of money in one's pocket" (p. 37). Mwaura himself confesses that for him hypocrisy is used as a means to an end, in matters of financial gains. He, even, proclaims that he is ready to renounce his religious faith if need be: "The first law of the hyena states: Don't be choosy;

eat what is available. If I find myself among members of the Akurinu sect, I become one of them [í] when I am with Muslims, I embrace Islam; when I am among pagans, I too become paganø (p. 47). Adopting such a philosophy of life, Mwaura becomes a member of the Devilø Angels, the thugs that businessmen hire to threaten their rivals and victims (p. 194). To emphasize the meanness of this category of money-mongers, Ngugi, through the Voice, denounces Mwauraø background as a Mau Mau traitor. He was trading Mau Mau followers for the ridiculous sum of five shillingsø (p. 194). Hence, Mwauraø character is also used to denounce Mau Mau loyalists. Ngugiø denunciation of the Mwaura type and the middle class, is mostly done through a satirical portrayal of the latter as being the embodiment of the most condemnable vices, e.g., treachery, greed and hypocrisy. To enhance their malicious character, he juxtaposes their immorality and corruption, e.g., that of the Rich Old Man, Boss Kihara, and the thievesø with the morality and integrity of the poor class, epitomized in Wangari and Muturi.

Throughout the novel, Ngugi emphasizes the binary opposition between goodø and evilø and subjects it to his class analysis. This concern for morality has made Kathleen Greenfield contend that Ngugi is a moralistø. She maintains: *Devil on the Cross* is, like all of Ngugiø works fundamentally concerned with moral choicesø¹⁰⁵ and that Ngugi remains a moralist, if not a specifically Christian moralistø¹⁰⁶ Still, Ngugi does not seem to be concerned for morality for its own sake, but to make it serve his revolutionary didacticism. In other words, he denounces the immorality of the ruling class and church dignitaries, to incite the grassroots to revolutionary activism, primarily for economic reasons and secondly for moral ones. This intention is made clear through Mwauraø parable about the rich man buying the heart of the poor man to cheat him of reward in the after world. He says:

Let us consider a land peopled with rich and poor citizens. A rich man may indulge in all sorts of wickedness, but when he is about to die, he goes to a hospital and he buys the heart of a poor and upright person. So the rich man goes to Heaven because of the righteousness of the poor, and the poor man goes to Hell because of the wickedness of the rich (p. 50).

Ngugi emphasizes this preying of the rich on the poor through the improvised song, purposefully by the two protagonists who epitomize revolutionary activism, namely, Wangari and Muturi, which is as follows:

Two bourgeois women
Ate the flesh of the children of the poor.
They could not see the humanity of the children
Because their hearts were empty. (p. 51)

Muturi, further, emphasizes the binary opposition of 'good' and 'evil' from a Marxist perspective, when he remarks that 'clan of parasites' snatch the fruits of the labour of the 'clan of producers' (p. 53). He, besides, views the concept of Heaven and Hell not in biblical terms, but from a socio-economic perspective. He says that Heaven and Hell 'both exist, and there is a difference between them, just as there is a difference between good and evil' (p. 53), and he links them to class warfare saying: 'Our lives are a battlefield on which is fought a continuous war between the forces that are pledged to confirm [their] humanity and those determined to dismantle it' (p. 53). To emphasize the two classes opposition and their contradictory notions of 'good' and 'evil' he remarks: 'In the hands of the producer the sword of fire has the capacity to do good. And in the hands of the parasite the sword of fire has the capacity to do evil' (p. 54). The first part of this statement is evidently an echo of Fanon's view of violence as a liberating force of the oppressed, endorsed by Ngugi in most of his novels, notably in *Petals of Blood* and *Matigari*.

This pattern of binary opposition is also related to the economic difference between the neo-colonial master and his allies, through Mweriri's remark: "there are two types of human being in every country: the manager and the managed, the one who grabs and the one who hopes for leftovers, the man who gives and the man who waits to receive" (p. 79). This evidently refers to neo-colonial bondage and the parasitic role of the native bourgeoisie, and it echoes Fanon's views on the issue. The Fanonian thesis of the idleness of the bourgeoisie is more explicit in Mwireri's statement: "Some are born lazy; others are born diligent. There are those who are VIPs by nature, natural managers of wealth, and others who are trash, natural destroyers of wealth [] Some people know how to organize themselves; others can never take care of themselves" (p. 79). This is, again, an echo of Fanon's view of the dependency of the native bourgeoisie on the metropolitan one.¹⁰⁷ Mwireri, who himself belongs to the bourgeoisie is nationalistic in that he opposes neo-colonial presence (p. 166), but he does so out of a personal urge, i.e., to seek more profit by denying the foreigners their share in the "looting" of the masses. He proudly boasts: "It's we who have proved that we can beat foreign thieves and robbers when it comes to grabbing money and property (p. 80). Ngugi emphasizes the class gap through another binary, related to the dwellings of those who belonged to the two classes. The wealthy class lives in the residential area of Golden Heights whereas the grassroots live slums in New Jerusalem, Njeruca, which is the area where "the wretched of Kenya live" (p. 130).

Binary oppositions abound in the novel and are often related to the life versus death dialectics. They seem to have their origin in the *angst* that Ngugi experienced during his detention, which made him question what was right and what was wrong and the value of life since he felt that his was threatened. Among the outstanding binaries of the novel there is the one that relates to Kareendi's bafflement about values and her decision not to make any difference between:

To straighten and to bend
To swallow and to spit out,
To ascend and to descend,
To go and to return (p. 25).

And

The crooked and the upright,
The foolish and the wise,
Darkness and light,
Laughter and tears,
Hell and Heaven,
Satan's kingdom and God's (p. 25).

Through the example of Kareendi, who after experiencing injustice, from both her boss and partner, takes the decision to reconcile these opposites, Ngugi suggests that the Christian teachings of religious uprightness are of no avail in a society where as Wanja puts in *Petals of Blood*: there is 'only one law. You eat somebody or you are eaten' (p. 291). Again, to demonstrate, in a Marxian way, the deterministic role of milieu on people's lives, Ngugi shows how Kareendi, the fictitious character Wariinga uses to recount her story, like Guthera in *Matigari*, tries hard to stick to her religious righteousness, but fails since the economic forces that operate in the milieu overwhelm her. This is, however, the case of Wariinga before the feast, which triggered off her resistance to all forms of exploitations. Through the example of Wariinga who develops, out of spite, from a religious devout to a revolutionary activist who has renounced the biblical teaching of submission for reward in the hereafter, Ngugi suggests to the Kenyan working class that revolutionary praxis, not religious fervour will help them change their fate for the better.

Ngugi's use of Christian religion, albeit in an altered or reversed form, to serve his revolutionary didacticism can be traced in his earlier novels. In *A Grain of Wheat*, through Kihika, Ngugi exploits the biblical ethics of self sacrifice for revolutionary ends, notably as regards allegiance to the Mau Mau movement. Kihika says: 'I am a Christ. Everybody who takes the Oath of Unity to change

things in Kenya is a Christ¹⁰⁸ This, however, is also an allusion to post-colonial Kenya, since as he puts it in his note at the start of the novel it deals with real problems (sometimes too painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet who now see all they fought for being put on one side)¹⁰⁹ This use of religion as a means to justify revolutionary activism is, again, apparent in *Petals of Blood*. through, Munira's burning of Wanja's brothel, both out of a religious concern of moral ethics and out of a concern for the destruction of capitalist exploitation, represented by Wanja and her middle class clients.

Though, in *Devil on the Cross*, as in *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi's indictment of the Christian religion is strong, his use of biblical motifs and symbolism betrays an ambivalence between intention and achievement. In other words, by emphasizing biblical patterns, though with the purpose to serve his class analysis, Ngugi who expects to denounce Christianity as a means for the grassroots exploitation, may achieve the reversed effect, i.e., the reinforcement of his readers' attachment to these biblical motifs. As Mphande Lupenga observes:

Although it can be argued that, in order to expose Christianity's role as a tool to pacify the masses in capitalist exploitation, a revolutionary can appropriate and use Christianity to undermine itself, there is ambiguity as to how far this re-appropriation can go without running the danger of re-affirmation.¹¹⁰

Ngugi's ambivalent attitude to the Christian religion also appears in his considering it as an imperialist weapon but using it as an ethical reference. Mphande Lupenga rightly observes: "But for the Marxist Ngugi, there is an inherent problem in the long run with a counter-discourse infused with terms and names from Christianity: after the revolution what do you do with Christianity and its trappings?"¹¹¹ Lupenga goes on reproaching Ngugi his use of Christianity instead of his traditional religion as a reference: "But the question remains: why use Christianity? Can Gikuyu religion not perform the same function?"¹¹² The

answer certainly lies in the Christian education Ngugi and his Kenyan audience had. Whereas Lupenga's questioning of Ngugi's use of the Christian religion seems legitimate since it is contradictory with his nativist discourse, his query: "Why does the Marxist Ngugi let the Gikuyu culture die?"¹³ is out of place, for he negates Ngugi's endeavour at cultural retrieval and his return to the source.

Ngugi sees the necessity of a return to the past to get lessons in progressive humanitarianism and to recover one's identity. His concern for cultural retrieval is more openly expressed in this novel than it is in *Petals of Blood*. It is apparent in Wariinga's and Gatuiria's "return to the source". The former adopts the traditional dress custom and hair style. The latter attempts to indigenize his spoken language and works towards a cultural retrieval through his music. In this novel, Ngugi introduces his call for the use of African "orature" in arts. He writes: "You who wish to compose music in praise of your country, look for roots and themes in true stories!" (p. 67). He, further, illustrates his view that it is the artist's task to work towards the retrieval of his traditional culture through Gatuiria. He, further, illustrates the view that the University has an important role to play in achieving a cultural renaissance, by making Gatuiria a research student in a department of African studies. Ngugi justifies his concern for a cultural renaissance when he writes: "Our stories, our riddles, our songs, our customs, our traditions, everything about our national heritage has been lost to us" (p. 59). And adds: "Who can play the Gicaandi for us today and read and interpret the verses written on the gourd" (p. 59). To fill this gap, he took upon himself to be a *Gicaandi Player* in *Devil on the Cross*. He makes a great use of traditional oral literature in an attempt to salvage it. Ngugi's attempt to retrieve his traditional culture is meant to fight "cultural imperialism". He indirectly hints to this when he makes Gatuiria say: "our culture has been dominated by the Western imperialist cultures" (p. 58). This attempt to work towards a cultural retrieval to fight cultural imperialism is similar to that of the Negritude poets.

The Negritudinist dimension of the novel is particularly noticeable in Ngugi's portrayal of Wariinga's physical appearance. He insists on the beauty of her negroness. The narrator calls her 'black beauty' (p. 218), and the Voice of the Devil says to her:

The blackness of your skin is smoother and more tender than the most expensive perfume oils. Your dark eyes are brighter than the stars at night. Your cheeks are like two fruits riper than the blackberry. And your hair is so black and soft and smooth that all men fell like sheltering from the sun in its shade. (p. 192)

This reference to her hair as being 'smooth, soft and black' (p. 242), is recurring, and seems to be an attempt from Ngugi at persuading young Kenyan women that their natural hair is beautiful and does not need to be straightened by iron combs, as Wariinga, used to do.

The Negritude touch is again perceptible in Ngugi's attempt to debase the White men. Wangari says that a European judge had 'a skin that was red like a pig's. His nose was peeling, like a lizard's body' (p. 43). This touch is more striking in Mwireri's remark: 'You foreigners will have to go back home and rape your own mothers' (p. 168). The Negritude poets often used the metaphor of the 'rape' of Africa by Westerners, and referred to Africa as 'mother' Césaire, for instance, remarked: 'Africa, my mother, bleeds'¹¹⁴ Yet though Ngugi's novel has some features of Negritude, Ngugi does not endorse the Senghorian Negritude. He does not celebrate blackness out of a narcissist impulse, nor does he celebrate traditional culture out of nostalgia. In fact, he has condemned Senghor's Negritude, which he considers as motivated by 'a rather envious admiration of the cultural and technological achievements of Europe'¹¹⁵ Unlike Senghor, Ngugi does not depict his people as Saints. This shows from his portrayal of the 'thieves'

Ngugi's black consciousness has a neo-Negritudinist aspect. Kofi Awoonor has pointed out the difference between the Negritude and the Neo-Negritude writers, though he does not use the term Neo-Negritude. "While they [Senghorian Negritude writers] are interested in the past for the sake of glorifying the past, I think our concern is for an interest in the past, while illuminate the present, so we are not going to be locked in the past"¹¹⁶ In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi insists that the past is important "only as a living lesson to the present"¹¹⁷ As he expresses through Karega, in *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi hopes "for a vision of the future rooted in a critical awareness of the past"¹¹⁸ This view echoes Fanon's: "I will not make myself the man of any past. I do not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and my future"¹¹⁹ Fanon reiterates his opposition in *The Wretched of the Earth* : "I admit that all the proofs of a wonderful Shongai civilization will not change the fact that today the Shongai are under-fed and illiterate, thrown between sky and water with empty heads and empty eyes"¹²⁰ This view is, again, echoed in *Petals of Blood*: "[they] talk endlessly about Africa's past glories, Africa's great feudal cultures, as if it is enough to have this knowledge to cure one day's pang of hunger, to quench an hour's thirst or to clothe a naked child"¹²¹

Ngugi's "black consciousness" has a cathartic and a progressive function. Its purpose is to fight neo-colonialism, both cultural and socio-political. It combats cultural neo-colonialism by helping the Kenyans reject Western apemanship and recover their cultural identity, and it combats political neo-colonialism and the capitalist system it promotes by celebrating traditional communalism. On account of its progressive dimension, Ngugi's "black consciousness" is closer to the brand that developed in the New World, by Césaire, for instance. His admiration of the West Indian brand of "black aesthetics" is apparent in the appeal that George Lamming's novel *In the Castle of my Skin* (1954),¹²² has for him. The major motifs of this novel reflect Ngugi's

main concerns, the quest for a cultural and racial identity and the set up of an egalitarian socio-economic order through a peasant revolution.

Besides Lamming, Ngũgĩ is a major influence on Ngugi as regards black consciousness. The Negritude stamp of Ngũgĩ's works is particularly noticeable in his *Song of Lawino* (1967). The protagonist, Lawino, like the Negritude poets, describes her cultural heritage with pride. Lawino is like Mother Africa whose virtues the Negritude writers celebrated. Ngũgĩ portrays Lawino as virtuous. In a Negritude manner, he denounces the vices of Europe and praises the virtues of Africa. Europe and Africa are represented respectively by Ocol and Lawino. The former adopts Western culture and the latter adopts African culture. Like the Negritude poets, Ngũgĩ describes the Black woman as beautiful, and her skin as beautiful and smooth. However, unlike Senghor, Ngũgĩ's black consciousness is not an anti-racist racism, to borrow Sartre's phrase. Its aim is to rid his fellows of their complexes about their colour and culture, and to make them stop aping the Westerners. As Ngugi himself observes, Ngũgĩ's cultural retrieval is different in motif and context. He notes that whereas Senghor's cultural renaissance was a response to colonialism and occurred during the colonial era, Ngũgĩ's was a response to neo-colonialism and was an attempt to wipe out the colonial impact on the African cultural values.¹²³

Though Ngugi agrees with Ngũgĩ's call for a cultural revolution, he views this revolution differently. His concept of culture differs from Ngũgĩ's. The latter sees culture merely in terms of art and artistic creativity, whereas Ngugi sees it as having a socio-economic dimension. He notes: "Culture in its broadest sense is a way of life fashioned with [people's] total environment."¹²⁴ Ngugi, further, contends that "a people's cultural values are derived from [their] way of life and will change as that way of life is altered, modified, or developed through the ages."¹²⁵

Part of Ngugi's cultural decolonisation scheme is his attempt, in a Fanonian way, to make his Kenyan readers aware of the necessity to remove their 'white mask' to reveal their 'black skin'. In other words, through Wariinga's example, she recovered her pride in her black colour, he attempts to drive home the message that there is nothing shameful about their dark skin. He suggests that the therapy of their colour inferiority complex is a personal endeavour, that requires a re-engagement in their cultural tradition. Through Wariinga's case he demonstrates that the recovery of pride in one's culture is one way of overcoming such a complex. Before the Devil's feast, Wariinga used to hate her 'blackness' and she was torturing herself physically to whiten her complexion (p. 11). Though this behavioural characteristic may have been common to some Kenyan women, and henceforth, Ngugi got inspiration from reality, it seems to have also been inspired by Fanon's description of this phenomenon in his *Black Skin White Masks*. Fanon who clinically analyses this aspect of the Antillean women observes: 'The race must be whitened; every woman in Martinique knows this, says this, repeats it'¹²⁶ The influence of Fanon is also expressed through the statement: 'It is whiteness that tells us what blackness is' (p. 132). Fanon notes: 'For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man'¹²⁷

Through his narrator, Ngugi suggests that Wariinga's complex about her colour is the root of her misconception of the paradigms of beauty. She equates beauty with whiteness and adopts the paradigms of 'white beauty' to test her own physical appearance. This colour complex is analysed by Fanon who remarks that 'the goal of the [Negro's] behaviour will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for the Other alone can give him worth'¹²⁸ Wariinga considers herself as ugly, for she fails to fit the white's paradigms. This is also the case because she equates blackness with ugliness. Again, as Fanon observes in the Negro's 'collective unconscious, black = ugliness'¹²⁹ These stereotypes, Fanon remarks,

are anchored in the collective unconscious of both Blacks and Whites, and it is the latter who make the former internalize them. As he puts it: "The collective unconscious [is] the result of what I shall call the unreflected imposition of a culture"¹³⁰ and "Through the collective unconscious [the Negro] has taken over all the archetypes belonging to the European"¹³¹ To make his point about how deeply embedded the white stereotypes are in Wariinga's mentality and that of the women she represents, Ngugi remarks, through his narrator: "But she could never appreciate the sheer splendour of her body. She yearned to change herself, in covetous pursuit of the beauty of other selves. Often she failed to dress in harmony with her body. She rushed to copy the ways in which other women dressed" (p. 11). To enhance her misjudgements about her appearance, the narrator insists on the features that formed her beauty, stating that "her body was a feast for the eyes" (p. 11). This Negritudist description of Wariinga's physical beauty is again echoed by the "Voice" which evidently represents Ngugi's (p. 192).

Ngugi makes it clear that the complex about colour is not typical of the feminine gent, but is widespread, particularly among the middle class men. They, for instance, rush to register their children in a nursery whose black principal has been changed to a white one (p. 112). Again, one of the businessmen boasts about his thriving business of skin-lightening creams (p. 169). Ngugi also denounces the complex of these middle class people about their traditional culture and native language. This is the case of Nguunji who is proud when his wife "praise[s] him in English" (p. 180). This is also the case of Gitutu wa Gataanguru who is ashamed whenever his children speak English in public (p. 121). The example of Gaturia's father, the Rich Old Man, who is ashamed because his son does research on his traditional culture (pp. 134-135) is yet another example to the cultural depersonalisation of the middle class.

These examples are used to justify Ngugi's call, mostly through Gatuiria, for a cultural decolonisation. The latter says: 'Cultural imperialism is mother to the slavery of the mind and the body' (p. 58) and he goes on to lament the loss of the genuine native language and literature: 'Where are our national languages now? Where are the books written in the alphabets of our national languages? Where is our own literature now? Where is the wisdom and knowledge of our fathers now? Where is the philosophy of our fathers now?' (p. 58). This is clearly an expression of Ngugi's concern for Afrocentricity.

The Afrocentric dimension of the novel appears in Wariinga's and Gatuiria's attempt at 'decolonising their minds' and their 'return to the source'. The Afrocentric discourse of cultural resistance is noticeable in Gatuiria's remark:

Cultural imperialism is mother to the slavery of the mind and the body. It is cultural imperialism that gives birth to the mental blindness and deafness that persuades people to allow foreigners to tell them what to do in their own country. (p. 58)

This is recognisably Ngugi's rhetoric of cultural nationalism as expressed in his non-fictional works, e.g., *Decolonising the Mind*. Through Gatuiria, Ngugi also expresses the Afrocentric concern for historiography, i.e., the corrective reconstruction of African history by rewriting it from an African-centered perspective. Gatuiria remarks: 'It is a tragedy that there is nowhere we can go to learn the history of our country. A child without parents to counsel him ó what is to prevent him from mistaking foreign shit for a delicious national dish?' (p. 59). Here, the denunciation of the teaching of Eurocentric historiography, is plain, as is that of the authorities who encourage it, for as Ngugi suggests, through his mouthpiece, it is prevalent. This is made clearer through Gatuiria's statement about the professor of history who 'only knows European history' (p. 61). Significantly, Ngugi chooses Gatuiria, who lived fifteen years in America (p.

133), the place where the Afrocentric ideology developed through the Black Movements, to express his Afrocentric credentials.

Gatuiria's remarks about cultural and literary barrenness echo Taban Lo Liyong's in 1964,¹³² and epitomize Ngugi's and Lo Liyong's plea for an Afrocentric orientation of the English Department of Nairobi University.¹³³ An allusion to their endeavour is Gatuiria's remark: "That's why some people at the university, students and teachers are now attempting to unearth the roots of our culture" (p. 59), and he goes on to specify that the "roots of Kenyan national culture can be sought only in the traditions of all the nationalities of Kenya" (p. 59). Clearly, here, the voice of Ngugi is recognizable, for this view is repeatedly expressed in his non-fictional works. This statement about the university teachers contributing to cultural decolonisation seems like a personal testimony and a reminder by Ngugi of his own cultural activism which landed him in jail. The reference to the multi-ethnic contribution to the process of cultural decolonisation sounds like a plea against the charges of ethnic chauvinism, which were issued by the governing class to justify the banning of his plays and his imprisonment. Ngugi has often pointed out that he was accused during the Kamiriithu experience of encouraging ethnic division. The accusation of "Kikuyu-centrism" was also directed at him by his colleagues at Nairobi University.¹³⁴ This is most probably, one of the reasons why he used multi-ethnic songs and proverbs in *Mother Sing For Me*.

In *Devil on the Cross* Ngugi also targets his fellow writers for he suggests that literature is a cultural artefact which carries a people's memory. The old man from Bahati, whom Gatuiria visits to collect folktales says: "All stories are about human beings. Did they ever teach you that literature is a nation's treasure? Literature is the honey of a nation's soul [] a nation that has cast away its literature is a nation that has sold its soul and has been left a mere shell" (p. 62).

Ngugi, thus expects the Kenyan writers, and by extension the African ones, to shoulder the responsibility of the cultural retrieval task, and he does so in *Devil on the Cross*.

In the main, through the example of Gatuiria, Ngugi expresses his concern for the intellectual *élite*'s role in the process of cultural decolonisation. Gatuiria's attempt at a 'return to the source', particularly evident in his endeavour to use his native language, is meant as a message to the Kenyan Westernized intelligentsia about the necessity to free themselves from the shackles of Western culture. As Mazrui remarks: 'All educated Africans to a man (to a woman) are still cultural captives of the West'¹³⁵ Still Mazrui reckons that some are more attached to Western cultures than others: 'We vary in degrees of bondage but not in the actual state of being enslaved'¹³⁶

Through the example of Mwireri, Ngugi denounces the hypocrisy of the middle class who pretend to be cultural nationalist. He speaks to his fellows in English, e.g., when he addresses Gatuiria in the *Matatu* (p. 61), but he 'can't stand European names [So] he dropped his name John (p. 77). This ambivalent attitude to traditional culture is meant to denounce that of the ruling class. As Ingrid Bjorkman notes: 'Officially the Kenyan authorities encourage indigenous culture. In reality, however, they repress it because the traditional values it encompasses prevent the population from adapting to the government's Western-inspired development strategy'¹³⁷ This is, again, emphasized by one of her interviewees who says: 'There are two cultures in Kenya: the foreign one of the minority which is the rulers' culture, and the indigenous one of the majority which is the culture of the peasants and workers. Culture is class-based'¹³⁸ The ruling *élite*'s attitude to traditional culture, is again, satirically portrayed through that of the Master of Ceremonies who proclaims:

We must develop our culture, and you know very well that it is the way women dress and the kind of jewellery they wear that indicates the heights of our culture has reached. So when you come back, have ready your necklaces, earrings, rings and brooches, so that we can impress our foreign guests and show them that we too are on the way to modern civilization. (p. 125)

This is a sarcastic authorial intrusion to show how deformed is their idea of what culture is, and that they equate aping the white men's behavioural norms is a sign of civilization.

To point out the ambivalence in the cultural politics of the middle class, Ngugi makes the Master of ceremony, who takes the plea of the Western life style and Christianity; practise the traditional custom of pouring saliva to ask for blessings. He tells his audience, which includes Westerners, 'let's shower saliva on our breasts by asking God to pour blessings on our proceedings' (p. 87) However, whereas in the traditional custom, blessings are expected from their ancestors' spirits, here the speaker expects them from God. This is meant to show the alienation of this class from its traditional customs, and to suggest that Christianity has failed to wipe out these customs, which were deemed barbaric by the promoters of Christianity in Africa. Through such an example, Ngugi satirizes the practice of the Christian religion. The satirical onslaught also shows in the perversion of the biblical pattern of righteousness, since the 'thieves' who lack such a characteristics expect Heavenly blessings for their mischief. As Balogun points out 'Ngugi employs biblical elements for stylistic effects of parody and satire.'¹³⁹

Neo-colonialism is the major motif of the novel. Ngugi attempts to demonstrate to his Kenyan fellows how entrenched it is in their country, both through his characters, e.g., Muturi or the 'thieves' or through examples from their daily life. Ngugi's explanation of the neo-colonial strategies appears in his

remark, through the man who saves Wariinga, about the existence of neo-colonial bondage all over Africa: "These countries are finding it difficult to stave off poverty for the simple reason that they have taken it upon themselves to learn how to run their economies from American experts" (p. 15). Through Wangari's tribulations, e.g., her trial by a white judge (p. 43), when in search of a job, Ngugi denounces neo-colonial presence. She recounts her ordeal, saying: "I entered a hotel [í] There, at the tables, sat no one but Europeans. I went into an office. I found a European there. He told me that there were no jobs. I told him I did not mind dusting the shoes of these whites, numerous as locusts" (p. 42). Ngugi relates the origin of the neo-colonialism through the parables of the master of ceremonies in his opening address (p. 82). He explains the different strategies of neo-colonialism through the thieves' accounts of their deals with their neo-colonial masters. He particularly denounces neo-colonial domination through the leader of the International Organization of Thieves and Robbers which emphasizes the intermediary role of the local bourgeoisie telling them: "[you] are the watchdogs who guard our investments" (p. 88). This parasitic role of the national bourgeoisie in its neo-colonial bondage is also pointed out by the white man who tells them: "I will add to the crumbs that you have been gathering from my table" (p. 83). Throughout the novel, there is a repetitive reference to the bourgeoisie's collecting their white masters' remains, e.g., they "pick up a few leftovers" (p. 142).

This dramatization of the local middle class as intermediary and parasitic echoes Fanon's theory on Neo-colonialism as propounded in the *Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon's influence also appears in Ngugi's considering the peasantry as a revolutionary agent. This is epitomized in the character of Wangari. Again, like Fanon, Ngugi considers the *lumpenproletariat* as having an important role in revolutionary praxis. For instance, Muturi went "around Njeruca [to] awaken [í] the workers and the unemployed" (p. 157), and among those who attacked the "thieves" there were children (p. 201), "many had rags for clothes. Many more

had no shoesø (p. 202). The Fanonist influence also appears in Ngugiø campaigning for revolutionary violence, mostly through Muturi who calls for an armed struggle against the massesø exploiters (p. 205). This is, again, hinted at through the placards that the protesters carried: *“THE BEEHIVE IN WHICH WE WILL ROLL THIEVES AND ROBBERS DOWN THE SLOPES OF THE HILL OF DEATH HAS ALREADY BEEN BUILT BY THE WORKERSø* (p. 203). Still, Ngugi diverges from Fanonø theory of revolutionary praxis in that he attributes a leading role to the proletariat (p. 203), whereas Fanon attributes it to the peasantry and belittles the revolutionary propensity of the proletariat.¹⁴⁰ Ngugiø emphasis on the proletariatø revolutionary potential and its leading role bears witness to his being under a greater Marxist influence.

This influence is evident throughout the novel. Capitalist exploitation is often purposefully referred to through Muturi, the worker, as when he says: *“There are two kinds of man: he who lives by his own sweat and he who lives by the sweat of othersø* (p. 57). The Marxist notion of the cheap sale of labour is echoed in the remark: *“Now let me see whether capital will yield profit without being watered with the sweat of the worker, or buying cheap the labour of the peasant and workerø* (p. 84). The Marxist influence is also apparent in Ngugiø endorsement of the concept of religion as *“the opium of the peopleø* to hamper their consciousness of their exploitation. This is expressed through the parable of the peasant and the ogre. The latter was singing *“hymns that exhorted the peasant to endure his lot on Earth with fortitude, for he would later find his rest in Heavenø* (p. 62). This Marxist concept of religion is, again, expressed through the Voice which says that capitalist exploitation *“is ordained by Godø* (p. 188), and that *“the intellectual and spiritual and cultural brain-washing poisons will make the workers believe, literally, that to obey the [capitalist] class is to obey God, and that to anger or oppose their overlords is to anger and oppose Godø* (p. 189). Through the Voice, Ngugi likens religion to slavery: *“people will continue going*

to church or to the mosque every week to listen to the catechism of slaveryø (p. 191). The other Marxist concept epitomized in the novel is that of culture as -false consciousnessø and of the predominance of the culture of the dominant class: -[children] will sing only those songs and hymns and read only that literature that glorify the system of drinking blood and eating human flesh [í] people will be shown films and will be entertained by concerts and plays, but all these diversions will glorify the deeds, traditions and culture of the drinkers of blood and the eaters of human fleshø (p. 189). This is, however, also a statement about how cultural neo-colonialism operates.

Through the example of Gitutu, Ngugi suggests that among the strategies of neo-colonialism, to warrant its hold on the countryø's political and economic life, was the encouragement of the Mau Mau -loyalistsø to become businessmen. The European who granted Gitutu loans to make his business more fruitful was -in charge of loans to promising African businessmen to create a stable African middle classø (p. 140). Gitutu got loan facilities because he was a loyalist, he -used to convict and sentence Mau Mau adherents to deathø (p. 106), and he was the son of a Mau Mau -loyalistø. His father -was one of the elders who were used by the colonialists in the purges of the Mau Mau followersø (p. 101). He became a rich landowner, mostly because the white administration rewarded him for his -loyaltyø during the Emergency. Through the example of Gitutu and his father, Ngugi emphasizes the continuation of the collaboration of the Mau Mau traitors and their masters from colonial to neo-colonial times. This is, again, made plain through the narratorø's remark about Wariingaø's uncle who -was one of those who have served the whites faithfully to save their own skins. After Independence, these same people became heirs to the whites, especially when it came to land and businessø (p. 142).

The reward of the Mau Mau traitors is, further, pointed out through the master of ceremonies' remark addressed to the white delegates: "You have come back to see what we have done with the talents you bequeathed to us in grateful recognition of the services we rendered you in suppressing those of our people who used to call themselves freedom fighters" (p. 174). Throughout the novel, Ngugi insists on the wealth of the Mau Mau "loyalists" and parallels it with the destitution of the Mau Mau fighters, to suggest that after independence the former were rewarded at the expense of the latter. He makes this plain through Mwaura's reply to Wangari who tells him that she fought for independence and now she is poor: "These days the land rewards not those who clear it but those who came after it has been cleared" (p. 37). Ngugi, further emphasizes the deprivation of the ex-Mau Mau fighters through Wangari's case, she has no shoes (p. 35) and she cannot afford the *matatu* fare. This is done with the purpose of awakening these people to the reality of their situation, since not only are the traitors benefiting from the wealth of the country, but they are vilifying them. He does so through the example of Nditika who makes fun of their plight saying to his audience: "You'll laugh too when I tell you that most of the labourers who dig up the grass on my farms are the very people who once took up blunt swords and home-made guns, claiming they were fighting for freedom!" (p. 177). He, further, humiliates the Mau Mau fighters by telling them that their struggle was a nightmare. Like Kenyatta, he preaches the "forget and forgive" policy saying: "Let's all forget the past. All that business of fighting for freedom was just a bad dream, a meaningless nightmare" (p. 177). This indirect reference to Kenyatta suggests that Ngugi holds both leaders, Moi and Kenyatta, as responsible for the destitution of the Mau Mau fighters and the enrichment of the "loyalists".

In such instances, authorial interventions are quite striking, as in Muturi's remark: "when we were fighting for independence [] there was the organization of home guards and imperialists, and there was the organization of patriots under

Mau Mauø (p. 39). In *Detained*, Ngugi refers to Mau Mau fighters as patriots.¹⁴¹ In fact, it is when dealing with issues that are of prime concern to him, e.g., Mau Mau, neo-colonialism, capitalist exploitation cultural decolonisation that Ngugi's presence is betrayed by intrusions with personal remarks. A case in point is the remark about not yielding to despair, which seems to be a reminder to himself when the dire conditions of detention weighed down on his psychological state: -We must never despair. Despair is the one sin that cannot be forgiven. It is the sin for which we would never be forgiven by the nation and generations to comeø (p. 27). Ngugi's intrusions are easily discernible since they often are echoes of the rhetoric he holds in his essays. This is the case when Gatuiria says: -our culture has been dominated by the Western imperialist cultures. That is what we call English *cultural imperialism*ø (p. 58). In this case authorial intrusion is also betrayed by the emphasis on the last two words. Ngugi's cultural commitment is mostly expressed through Gatuiria, whereas his Marxist allegiances are expressed through Muturi. An example of the first case is Gatuiria's comment on the intellectuals' alienation on account of their Western education: -The kind of education bequeathed to us by the whites has clipped the wings of our abilities, leaving us limping like wounded birdsø (p. 63). Ngugi's intrusion also appears in Ngugi's Marxist rhetoric expressed through Muturi: -You rob us of the produce of our own handsø (p. 80). Ngugi's presence is specifically outstanding through the Voice. This is the case in the following passage which refers to capitalist exploitation: -Kimeendeeri will show them only two worlds, that of the eater and that of the eaten. So the workers will never learn the existence of a third world, the world of the revolutionary overthrow of the system of eating and being eatenø (p. 188). This is also the case in the Voice's remark:

Oh, it becomes violence only when a poor man demands the return of his eye or his tooth. What about when the Kimeendeeris poke out the poor man's eyes with sticks, or lacerate him with whips? What about when they knock a

worker's tooth out with a rifle butt? Isn't that violence? (p. 191)

It is mostly in such instances that the novel takes the form of polemical pamphleteering, and can, hence, be aesthetically downgraded. Still, in comparison with *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi's intrusions to voice his ideological commitments are less frequent. In the main, *Devil on the Cross* has a greater aesthetic appeal than its predecessor, mostly on account of Ngugi's successful handling of allegorical and mythical patterns from both African orature and Western literary tradition. This experimental enterprise is reiterated in *Matigari*, the case study of the next Chapter.

NOTES

¹ Homi. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 2004), p. 29

² This is also expressed in his essay: "On Writing in Gikuyu", *Research in African Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (1985), 151-156, p. 153.

³ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "The Tension Between National and Imperialist Culture", *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 24, No. 1. (1984), 3-9, pp. 6-7.

⁴ Ngugi has carried out such an attempt in his preceding plays, *I Will Mary When I Want* and *Mother Sing For Me*.

⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained*, op. cit., p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷ The major themes and actions of the novel have been inspired by the tales of his co-prisoners. For instance, the contest between the "thieves" to acquire the crown, and their boastful descriptions of their style of life were inspired by the stories of the millionaire who was imprisoned with Ngugi. See *Detained*, p. 9.

⁸ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained*, op. cit., p. XXII.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. XI.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹ In *Detained*, Ngugi remarks that she was named by the peasant women of Limuru and nicknamed by his co-prisoners as "the post office baby", p. 12

¹² Joseph Gugler, "How Ngugi wa Thiong'o Shifted from Class Analysis to a Neo-colonialist Perspective", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 32, N^o. 2 (June 1994) 329-339.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁷ The premises of Ngugi's Marxist allegiances are apparent in *A Grain of Wheat*, and are given fuller expression in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. *Petals of Blood*, however, remains the landmark of Ngugi's radicalism.

¹⁸ Anders Breidlid, Ngugi's *Matigari*, a Non Materialist Discourse and Post-Modernism, *Quodlibet: The Australian Journal of Trans-national Writing*, Vol.1, (February 2005), 1-13.

¹⁹ Odun F. Balogun, "Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*: The Novel as Hagiography of a Marxist", *Ufahamu*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (1988), 76-92, p. 90.

²⁰ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained*, op. cit., p.8.

²¹ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), p. 210.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 210.

²³ Ibid., p. 212.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 212.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 213.

²⁶ Patrick Williams, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1999), p. 137.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 111.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 113.

²⁹ Odun F. Balogun, "Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*: The Novel as Hagiography of a Marxist" op. cit., p. 87.

³⁰ Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 158.

³¹ Ibid., p. 160.

³² Ibid., p. 160.

³³ Ibid., p. 163.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 162.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

³⁶ Anita Shreve, "Petals of Blood" *Viva* (Nairobi 7 July 1977), Vol.3, N°. 6, 35-36, p. 35.

³⁷ Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, op. cit., p. 175.

³⁸ Jennifer Evans, "Mother Africa and the Heroic Whore : Female Images in *Petals of Blood*" in *Contemporary African literature*, edited by Hal Wylie, Eileen Julien, Russell J. Linnemann (Three Continents Press, Inc., 1983) 57-65, p. 57.

³⁹ Jennifer Evans, "Women and Resistance in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*", *African Literature Today*, N°. 15 (1987), p. 135.

⁴⁰ This plot has been inspired by a real event about a coffee theft by two M.Ps. See Ngugi's *Detained*, p. 10.

⁴¹ Ngugi wa thiong'o, *A Grain of Wheat*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1967), p. 160.

⁴² Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind. The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), p. 68.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁴ Harold Courlander, *A Treasury of Afro-American Folklore* (New York, Crown Publishers. Inc., 1976), p. 1

⁴⁵ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya. The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (London: First Published by Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd., 1938), p. 3.

⁴⁶ Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 344.

⁴⁷ Courlander, *A Treasury of Afro-American Folklore* op. cit., p. 135.

⁴⁸ Melville. J. Herkovits, "Negro Folklore in *Cultures and Societies of Africa*, edited by Simon Ottenberg and Phoebe Vestal Ottenberg (editors) (New York, Random House, 1960), 443- 457, p. 453.

⁴⁹ John .S. Mbiti, *Akamba Stories* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 12.

⁵⁰ These aspects of traditional oral culture have been embedded in most African novels. This is notably the case of Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drunkard*, Okara's *The Voice*, and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and *Arrow of God*.

⁵¹ Janheinz, Jahn, *A History of Neo-African Literature: Writing in Two Continents* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1968), p. 58.

⁵² Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*, op.cit., p. 96.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 99.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

⁵⁵ The griot narrative technique has been used by Ngũgĩ in his *Song of Lawino*, which has inspired Ngugi both as regards form and content. The former shows in the song narrative technique in *Devil on the Cross*, the latter appears in the denunciation of his fellows "apemanship" of the Whites.

⁵⁶ The *Gicaandi* also refers to the musical instrument that the performer uses. See Njogu, Kimani, "Gicandi and the Reemergence of Suppressed Words" *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 43, N^o. 2 (Summer 1999), 54 -71, p. 60.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁹ This proverb is also used on pages 52, 79, 110.

⁶⁰ Wayne. C. Booth, "Distance and Point of view, an Essay in Classification" in *The Theory of the Novel* edited by Philip Stevick (London: Free Press 1967), 87-107, p. 96.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 96.

⁶² The novel was recounted in public places, e.g., bars, and transports, e.g., taxis and *Matatus*. Ngugi has targeted an "aural audience" See: Muchugu Kiiru, "Oral Features in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*", *The Nairobi Journal of Literature* (3 March 2005), p. 34.

⁶³ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *A Grain of Wheat*, p. 155.

⁶⁴ See Selden. L. Whitcomb, *The Study of a Novel* (Boston: De Heath and Co. Publishers. First published 1905), p. 15

⁶⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming*, op. cit., p. 16.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 213.

⁶⁷ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o*, op. cit., p. 210.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 216.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 210.

⁷⁰ Olivier Lovesey, "the Post-colonial crisis of representation" and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Religious Allegory in Jamie S. Scott (editor), *"I and the Birds Began*

to Sing". *Religion and Literature in Post-colonial Cultures*, (Atlanta,1993), 181-189, p. 183.

⁷¹ John MacQueen, *Allegory*, (The Critical Idiom), (London:Routledge, 1970), p. 68.

⁷² Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (London: Cornell University, 1964), p. 64.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁷⁴ Ngugi, *Devil on the Cross* (London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1982). All page references are to this edition.

⁷⁵ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, (Second Edition) (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 386.

⁷⁶ Carl Jung and Richard Francis Carrington Hull, *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 14

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷⁸ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*, op. cit., p. 216.

⁷⁹ See Ngumbu Njururi *Agikuyu Folk Tales*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 4.

⁸⁰ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*, op. cit., p. 136.

⁸¹ Gregory L., Lucente, *The Narrative of Realism and Myth: Verga, Lawrence, Faulkner, Pavese* (First Edition) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 1.

⁸² George Henry Lewes, "Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction," *Westminster Review*, 70 (October 1858), 488-518, p. 493.

⁸³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*, op. cit., p. 223.

⁸⁴ See, Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*. (Translated by Helene Iswolsky) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1984.

⁸⁵ Renate Lachmann, "Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture," *Culture Critique*, N^o. 11 (Winter 1988-1989) 115-152.

⁸⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, op. cit., p. 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹⁴ The reference to pregnancy, may, however, also have been motivated by Ngugi's wife's pregnancy at the time he was jailed.

⁹⁵ For a detailed study of characterization in *Devil on the Cross*, see my unpublished Magister Thesis, *Revolutionary Didacticism in Ngugi's late novels: A Study of Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross*. Oran University, 1998.

⁹⁶James Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*, (Pluto Press 1999), p. 97.

⁹⁷Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o*, op.cit., p. 216.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 216.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁰⁰ Still, as Spivak notes, the attempt to subvert patriarchal patterns and discourses does put an end to sexism. See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty *Can the Subaltern Speak?* in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 271-6313.

¹⁰¹ Ngugi, *Detained*, p. 11.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁰³ Mwaura's name has probably been inspired by that of Ngugi Mwaura, sales director with a motor company (Ngugi's *Detained* p. 75). Yet, unlike the ruthless Mwaura of the novel, the latter was involved with peasants in the reform of Kamiriithu centre.

¹⁰⁴ Simon Gkandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, op. cit., p. 216.

¹⁰⁵ Kathleen Greenfield, *Murdering the Sleep of Dictators: Corruption, Betrayal and the Call to Revolution in the World of Ngugi* in Charles Cantapulo (editor), *The World of Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1995), 27-43, p. 37.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁰⁷ See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁰⁸ Ngugi, *A Grain of Wheat*, op. cit., p. 83.

¹⁰⁹ See Ngugi's note at the opening of the novel.

¹¹⁰ Mphande, Lupenga, *Ngugi and the world of Christianity: a dialectic* *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 39, N^o.5, (2004), p. 357.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.357.

¹¹² Ibid., p.359.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 367.

¹¹⁴ See Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of A Return to My Native Land* (1939).

¹¹⁵ Okot p'Bitek, *Africa's Cultural Revolution*, Introduction by Ngugi (Nairobi: Macmillan Books for Africa, 1973), p. IX.

¹¹⁶ Kofi Awoonor in Karen. L., Morell, (editor), *In Person: Achebe, Awoonor and Soyinka at the University of Washington*. Seattle: Institute for Comparative and Foreign Area Studies. University of Washington, 1975, p. 148.

¹¹⁷ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood*, op. cit., p. 323.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 198.

¹¹⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, op. cit., p. 226.

¹²⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 168.

¹²¹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood*, op. cit., p. 301.

¹²² Ngugi devotes to this novel a chapter in *Homecoming*, and he acknowledges the influence of Lamming in his *Decolonising the Mind*, p. 76.

¹²³ Okot p̄Bitek, *Africa's Cultural Revolution*, Introduction by Ngugi (Nairobi: Macmillan Books for Africa, 1973), p. X.

¹²⁴ Ngugi wa Thionḡo, *Homecoming*, op. cit., p. 4.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

¹²⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, op. cit., p. 47

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 154.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 192.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 191.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 191.

¹³² Taban Lo Liyong, "Can We Correct Literary Barrenness in East Africa?", *East African Journal*, Vol. 2, N° 8 (1965), 5-13.

¹³³ Three lecturers, Ngugi wa Thionḡo, Taban Lo Liyong and Henry Owuor-Anymba called for the abolition of the English Department and its replacement by an African-centered Department of African Studies. See Ngugi's Appendix in *Homecoming*, p. 145.

¹³⁴ See, Ngugi Wa Thionḡo *Detained*, op.cit., XXI.

¹³⁵ Al Amin Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated class* (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 13.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

¹³⁷ Ingrid Bjorkman, "Mother, Sing for Me" People's Theatre in Kenya, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p. 48.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

¹³⁹ Ogunjimi, Bayo, "Language, Oral Tradition and Social Vision in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*", *Ufahamu*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1984), 56-70, p. 62.

¹⁴⁰ Fanon's concept concerns the proletariat in a colonial situation which he considers as the "most pampered by the colonial regime". See *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 86.

¹⁴¹ Ngugi, *Detained*, op. cit., p. 66.

CHAPTER FIVE

NGUGI'S *MATIGARI* : ORATURE, MAU MAU AND CHRISTIANITY AS REVOLUTIONARY MOTIFS

As in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, revolutionary didacticism and cultural revival are Ngugi's major concerns in *Matigari*. The aim of this Chapter is to demonstrate that Ngugi has had recourse to Christian mythology to express his revolutionary didacticism to appeal to the Kenyan grassroots' religious fervour since the latter are quite devout, and Christian teachings and practices are part and parcel of their everyday life. The contention in this Chapter is that Ngugi has attempted to reconcile Marxist ideology with Christian mythology to drive home his revolutionary message.

This Chapter also aims at demonstrating how Ngugi's revolutionary didacticism operates through the blending of the revolutionary principles of Marxism, Christianity and Mau Mau. This Chapter, further, aims at evaluating Ngugi's experimenting with magical realism and how fit it is to his revolutionary didacticism.

It also aims at demonstrating that despite all his claims for Afrocentricity, and for moving away from the mainstream of Western literary tradition, this novel is yet another example of Ngugi's still being under the influence of this tradition. Despite the fact that Ngugi maintains that *Matigari* was his most personal attempt at experimenting with oral narrative techniques, it is, however, less in line with the oral tradition than is *Devil on the Cross*, despite the fact that it takes at times the *Gicandi Player's* narrative style.

One more contention made in this Chapter is that, despite its being written in Gikuyu first, as is the case of *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* bears greater resemblance to *Petals of Blood* than to the latter. The similarities are quite oddly in the linguistic register. Speech patterns are closer to those used in *Petals of Blood*. This, however, can partly be put down to translation loss to the target language. Despite the fact that the novel was not, unlike *Devil on the Cross*, translated into English by Ngugi himself, the style is at times quite recognizable as being Ngugi's. The major variations between the two versions of the novel are quite interestingly pointed out by Simon Gikandi in his "The Epistemology of Translation: Ngugi, *Matigari* and the Politics of Language"¹ There, he notes that differences are related to the title of the novel, the image on the cover of the novel, and he remarks that this has bearings on the reception of the novel stating that "the two texts function in a political situation where English is more powerful than Gikuyu"² He also draws attention to the ambiguity related to the existence of the English version writing: "a novel which (in translation) implicitly claims the European identity its original sought to suppress"³ Yet, it is in its Gikuyu version that *Matigari* was sensed as a real danger by the Kenyan authorities who banned it. As Ngugi has often stated he has been imprisoned, following the success of *Ngaahieka Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)* among the masses, for writing in the language of these masses.

Ngugi has maintained that *Matigari* was one of his most personal narratives in the sense that in writing it [he] was trying to experiment with oral narrative forms.⁴ This implies that it is a step forward from a similar attempt he made in *Devil on the Cross*, and henceforth a new genre. But the overall impression that this novel gives does not seem to be much at variance with Ngugi's previous fictional works. In fact as the reader proceeds through the narrative flow, he often gets the impression of 'déjà vu'. This is the case because many components of plot, character plight and rhetoric have their counterparts in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*. As Abdulrazak Gurnah rightly observes, the readers of *Matigari* will read it with recognition as if they are over familiar terrain.⁵ This replica aspect of the novel may account for the critics' lukewarm reception of it.

The assumption held in this Chapter is that the lack of novelty of *Matigari* can be related to Ngugi's circumstances at the time he wrote it. In fact, the bearings of a writer's circumstances on his literary output cannot be overlooked. As Said remarks: 'No production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances.'⁶ Ngugi, himself has pointed out that the writing of *Matigari* was his way of coping with the harsh conditions of exile and to make a connection with Kenya.⁷ As Gikandi observes, Ngugi's exilic condition accounts for the shape of the novel. He writes:

Indeed, if *Matigari* had not been written in exile, it could not have taken the form it did, not simply because the author's alienation from his country made him nostalgic for the oral tales of his childhood, but because in exile, Ngugi was able to free himself from the anxieties of the European novel and its conventions, which were also anxieties about history and nation, realism and language.⁸

Ngugi has drawn much inspiration from his childhood recollections. For instance, *Matigari's* encounter with the old woman whom he asks about his home and family is

reminiscent of Ngugi's childhood experience when he returned home from school and found out that his whole village had been destroyed by the colonial forces. In *Detained*, Ngugi describes the scene as follows: 'I walked up the ridge not knowing whither I was headed until I met a solitary old woman. Go to Kamiriithu, she told me'⁹ Ngugi, further, points out that the recurrence of the homecoming motif in his novels is anchored in this traumatic experience. He notes: 'Many critics have noted the dominance of the theme of return in my novels [í .] But none has known the origins of the emotion behind the theme. It is deeply rooted in my return to Kamiriithu in 1955'¹⁰

Though *Matigari*, like *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* has among its major motifs, neo-colonialism, class differences and social injustice, it has an additional motif that seems to be the new focus of Ngugi's denunciation of the scourges under Moi's regime, namely, the lack of democracy. To justify his concern for democratic principles Ngugi maintains: 'In a dictatorship, questions of truth and justice are paramount precisely because these two are the first to disappear in such an environment.'¹¹ This shift towards a greater concern for democratic principles, can partly be explained by Ngugi's status as an exile, and by the stamping of human rights under Moi's regime, at the time Ngugi wrote his novel. There are many references in *Matigari* to political repression, such that of the students who are detained without trial.¹² This situation has been denounced by Kenyan intellectuals and by international organisations, e.g., Maina Kenyatti, one of the Kenyan intellectuals persecuted under Moi's regime who records the 'countless' fringes of human rights in Kenya. Similarly, in his article 'Fuelling the Struggle'¹³ Mazrui, another victim of repression, denounces the lack of democracy in Kenya, in the 1980s, and refers to the resistance of its victims, as 'the Second Liberation Struggle' He goes even further, in stating that Kenya could be in the vanguard of the democratic struggle in Africa.

As in *Devil on the Cross*, in *Matigari*, Ngugi makes an extensive use of biblical mythology. Unlike Maugham Brown who sees the use of this mythology as a rehabilitation of the Christian religion, I consider it as an attempt to appeal to the religious allegiances of the masses. My contention is that, after his onslaughts on the Christian religion in *Petals_of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi has come to realize that his revolutionary didacticism could be impaired by a mental resistance of the masses to whom his message is addressed, and who are considered by Ngugi as the major agents of revolutionary change in Kenya. Being deeply Christian at heart, these people could but resist Ngugi's appeals on account of his onslaughts on the Christian religion. An instance of such a counter-effect, or rather a resistance to Ngugi's discourse against Christianity is best illustrated through the incident of the old man who threatened him with his stick and accused him of blasphemy, during his speech about his renouncing the Christian religion.¹⁴ Again since a language is a carrier of a world view and since Ngugi uses Kikuyu to write *Matigari*, he had to take into account the Kenyan grassroots mentality in all its facets, incorporating both traditional myth and Christian mythology. In his essays, Ngugi often points to the importance of the representation of people's worldview in his fictional works, as when he states: "I believe that if the novel is to be meaningful, it must reflect the totality of the forces affecting the lives of the people"¹⁵

Another contention made in this chapter is that Ngugi's use of biblical mythology has a twofold purpose. Firstly, it is an attempt at reconciling Marxism with Christianity since both have a relevance to his revolutionary didacticism. Secondly, it is an indirect attempt at acknowledging the revolutionary propensity of the Church in Kenya in the 1980s, since some church leaders such as Rev. David Gitari were in the vanguard of revolutionary political opposition for they denounced social injustice under Moi's regime. Hence the assumption made in this chapter that Ngugi uses Christian mythology as a means to an end.

As regards Ngugi's use of the Christian religion in the novel, David Maughan Brown contends that it is 'a new departure'¹⁶ and that it hints to Ngugi's finding a 'possible usefulness of Christ to his project'¹⁷ Yet, he does not explain how this is the case. He merely points out the aspects of Christian mythology that the novel embodies. In the main, Brown's assessment of Ngugi's use of Christian principles seems to be religiously biased. He, for instance, considers Ngugi's onslaught on the Christian religion in his previous novel, e.g., *Devil on the Cross*, as 'savage'¹⁸ Again, he considers *Matigari* as a novel that has 'positive values by reference to its Christian teachings'¹⁹ However, what Brown fails to see is that the Christian principles encompassed in the novel, e.g., the resurrection, sacrifice and redemption, are used as metaphors for the Mau Mau motif of the novel. They are grafted onto the Kikuyu legends of sacrifice for a nation's salvation. This is clearly indicated in *Matigari's* denial that he is Christ resurrected, and his metaphorical reference to Kenyan nationalism as being the 'God within' his people.

The biblical saviour motif has already been used as a metaphor for revolutionary activism in *A Grain of Wheat*. This metaphor is first expressed through the title of the novel. The Christian motif of martyrdom is clearly expressed through Kihika who says: 'in Kenya we want a death. Kenya is Christ'²⁰ In *Matigari*, martyrdom is symbolized through Guthera's and Matigari's death. They die so that the revolutionary spirit they embodied be transmitted to younger generations, e.g., that of Muriuki, as it is suggested at the close of the novel through the image of the latter carrying arms. Matigari's spirit is hence, resurrected through that of the child. In the river, Matigari and Guthera's blood flows to water other 'grain[s] of wheat' Yet, the Mau Mau spirit rather than the Christian one is outstanding in Ngugi's novel. In the *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau* (1960), the Secretary of State for the Colonies, maintains that Mau Mau fighters were not devout Christians.²¹

Unlike Maugham Brown who considers *Matigari* as strongly indebted to Christian mythology, Simon Gikandi, an ‘insider’, maintains that *Matigari* ‘draws heavily upon Kenyan popular culture’²² and that it has been inspired by the legend of the return of Mau Mau which it ‘transforms into a political force.’²³ Besides, he points to the origin of the term ‘*Matigari*’, which he maintains was used in the early 1960s in Kenya to refer to Mau Mau,²⁴ and more particularly to the Mau Mau generals who were opposed to Kenyatta’s rule. Among the latter was General Stanley Mathenge, who left Kenya and settled in Ethiopia after independence, on a self-imposed exile to protest against the betrayal of the independence war ideals, and whose homecoming was predicted by a popular legend. Gikandi remarks that according to this legend Mathenge ‘was unhappy with the turn of events in Kenya and was waiting for an opportune time to return and restore the reign of Justice and truth’²⁵ The correspondences are quite evident here with Ngugi’s protagonist, same background and same aim, hence some critics identified Ngugi’s character with Mathenge. This is the case of Lovesey, but most critics consider *Matigari* as representing Dedan Kimathi. Lovesey maintains: ‘*Matigari* fuses the promise of the second coming of Christ with the myth of Mathenge’s return’²⁶

In fact, *Matigari* represents many ex-Mau Mau fighters, whose fate he shares, and not just Mathenge or Kimathi. The implication of truly nationalist Mau Mau fighters is indirectly hinted at by *Matigari* himself who uses the plural form: ‘*Matigaris*’. The contention held here is that he represents Maina Kinyatti as well.²⁷ The latter was, like *Matigari*, seeking the truth. He was in search of the historical truth of the Mau Mau struggle, by attempting to record the ex-Mau Mau accounts of the struggle. Similarly, Ngugi uses history for subversive purposes, as the title of one of his chapters in *Moving the Centre* indicates: ‘In Moi’s Kenya, History is Subversive’. Clearly, in *Matigari*, Ngugi attempts to rewrite or reinterpret history to challenge Moi’s regime. For, under this regime, as under that of Kenyatta, writing on Mau Mau was banned, and those who attempted to record the history of Mau Mau

were detained, as was Kinyatti. Indeed Ngugi attempts to rewrite history, or rather to interpret it as a counter-discourse to the state's version of historical events. As Gikandi maintains: "Ngugi makes the search for a deep hermeneutics of history one of the primary themes of the novel"²⁸

Following a chronological order, Ngugi takes up the thread of his narrative in *Devil on the Cross* where he left off in *Petals of Blood*. This seems to be the case again in *Matigari*, a novel where the prophesied return of the Mau Mau rebels, or "patriots" as Ngugi prefers to call them, takes place. Though stylistically this novel slightly differs from its precursors, since besides its being a synthesis of both the socialist realism of *Petals of Blood* and the allegorical realism of *Devil on the Cross*, it incorporates a new stylistic device in the form of magical realism. The blending of these diverse literary styles is an attempt on Ngugi's part to give more attention to the aesthetic components of the novel since, in his earlier novels; he has often been indicted for privileging content at the expense of form. Yet, despite this attempt some critics found the novel lacking in aesthetic quality. This is the case of Abdulrazak Gurnah who considers it as "a tract of resistance"²⁹ It is also the case of Peter Nazareth who remarks, in his review of the novel: "Sometimes it seems that Ngugi's desire to fight neo-colonialism leads to aesthetic flaws"³⁰ Gikandi, however, points out that some critics found fault with Ngugi's expression of his ideological ends. He maintains: "Whatever the utilitarian motives behind the use of 'popular discourse', some readers may feel that the simpler narrative line in *Matigari* has resulted in the impoverishment of Ngugi's ideological intentions."³¹ On the other hand, Frank Burnes, is among the critics who draw a positive assessment of the novel. He maintains that it is "both a great story and a powerful metaphor for what is needed in African politics today"³² Yet, he concedes that it is in some places an "anti-neo-colonial tract"³³

Lovesey contends that *Matigari* is not a post-neo-colonial allegory³⁴ But, by embodying myth as a major aesthetic component, *Matigari* can certainly be classified within the Jamesian category of National Allegory for as Jameson argues All third world texts are necessarily [] allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what [he] will call *national allegories*³⁵ Jameson, further, maintains that this is the case particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel³⁶ This is the case of Ngugi's *Matigari*, which despite the fact that its narrative is partly from traditional oral culture, remains western-oriented both through its style and mode.

The Marxist rhetoric that the novel encompasses is yet another piece evidence of Ngugi's difficulty in parting with European culture. Not only is this rhetoric in contradiction with his call for the use of an Afrocentric culture, since such a culture is closer to traditional communalism than it is to Marxist Scientific socialism, but it is also intellectually remote from the illiterate peasants and workers whom he considers as his target audience. As Molefi Asante maintains in his book *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*,³⁷ Marxism's Eurocentric foundation makes it antagonistic to [the Africans'] worldview³⁸ Yet, despite this ambivalence in Ngugi's ideological principles, surprisingly, Asante considers him as being on the path to Afrocentricity³⁹ on account of his use of his native language. On the other hand, Lupenga Mphande takes Ngugi to task for having an ambivalent attitude to Eurocentric aesthetic theories, stating: If Ngugi insists that African writers should write in their native tongues, why does he draw his aesthetic principles from the European languages he condemns?⁴⁰ Similarly, Slaymaker draws attention to Ngugi's ambivalence in relation to Eurocentrism stating: The puzzles of his aesthetic practice mainly lie in the hybridized beta discourses of his literary theoretical and political and cultural essays which are bastardized versions of Eurocentred ideologies and Kenyan nativist nationalism⁴¹ Yet, he seems to put this on Ngugi's education in a Western language stating: As a Third World writer, flush with First World

rhetoric, it has been hard for Ngugi to escape formulating Kenyan culture in a foreign language, a strategy he has rejected in *Decolonizing the Mind* and *Moving the Centre*.⁴²

The Western influence is apparent in *Matigari* in certain aspects that are reminiscent of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a novel about totalitarianism during the Stalinist era. Among the features that have parallels in Ngugi's novel is that of the commandments that differ from those prescribed in the Bible. This is the case of the commandment proclaimed by a student who says: "This is the first commandment: You shall not mention the name of truth and justice in vain" (p. 62).⁴³ Among the major Western literary influences that *Matigari* embodies is that of Scott. The latter has appealed to Ngugi since, like him, he endeavours to dramatize revolutionary conflict, and like him he accords history and historical legends a great importance, in his fictional works. Like Scott's Ngugi's major protagonist's physical and personality traits, e.g., heroism, are inspired by historical figures. In the case of *Matigari*, the major ones are Kimathi and Mathenge. Again, like Scott, Ngugi's style is a hybrid compound of historical realism and romance.

Lovesey contends that Ngugi combines "Mau Mau aesthetics and a type of Gikuyu post-modernism".⁴⁴ This latter expression, would certainly be opposed by Ngugi, since it has a Eurocentric dimension, whereas Ngugi considers his novel as belonging to the African oral tradition. Similarly Lewis Nkosi considers it as "an oral narrative performance".⁴⁵ In fact, due to Ngugi's blending of so many narrative genres, oral/written, Gikuyu Gicandi Player/ Western magical realist, *Matigari* has been classified by different critics in different narrative registers. Steven Tobias classifies it among postcolonial fiction. He remarks:

Matigari can be considered a definitive postcolonial novel, as it sets a traditional Gikuyu folktale in the context of an unnamed contemporary African country. Ngugi liberally blends his re-telling of that tale with Western cultural and

religious ideas. Most notably, he integrates many stories from the Bible, particularly those dealing with the life of Christ, into his version of this traditional African narrative.⁴⁶

In his work: *Ngugi and African Postcolonial Narrative: The Novel as Oral Narrative in Multigenre Performance* (1997),⁴⁷ Odun Balogun considers *Matigari* as a 'multigenre performance', and he demonstrates how it combines different genres and narrative structures. Among the genres he identifies are: traditional oral mythology, hagiography, post-modernism and realism. He, however, gives precedence to the realist dimension of the novel. This has raised some dissent among other critics including Gikandi, who says:

While I agree with F.O. Balogun's claim that the novel mixes genres and methods, I reject his desire to privilege its realism. One can, for example, claim that the unnamed nation in the novel is the object of any kind of patriotic love of affiliation [í] it is now represented as an alien and alienating object, inscrutable, obstructive, and repressive.⁴⁸

He also identifies 'the different fictional genres that Ngugi has deployed [as being] the language of Christian deliverance and apocalypse, the American Western, and the urban tale'.⁴⁹ He, further contends that *Matigari* is 'a work now considered to be Ngugi's most successful attempt to transform the nature of the novel in Africa'.⁵⁰ Similarly, Odun Balogun considers *Matigari* as a landmark in African literature, on account of its 'new realism'.⁵¹ He notes: '*Matigari* is one important novel of the late twentieth century which emphatically denies the verities of the old realism at the same time that it establishes unambiguously new norms for the new realism'.⁵²

The story of the novel has been mostly inspired by a Gikuyu fable. In his note to the English edition, Ngugi point out that the story has been 'based partly on an oral story about a man looking for a cure for an illness [í] who undertakes a

journey of search (p. VII). Again in his book, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (1998),⁵³ he points out that his sister used to tell his children such a story. Yet, though Ngugi maintains that the story of the novel was inspired by Gikuyu folklore, it has some features that are reminiscent of Western films. This is the case of the story of Rip Van Winkle. Ngugi himself makes a direct reference to this story and draws the parallel between this protagonist's predicament and Matigari's (p.118).

Through the dedication of the novel, Ngugi points to where his priorities are. He, besides, indirectly sends a message to the literary critics of the novel indicating where it belongs as far as literary tradition is concerned. Through the dedication, he suggests that the novel is anchored in the Afrocentric tradition of orature. From the outset, Ngugi states that the core of the story is African and is based on a Gikuyu oral story with a quest motif (p. VII). Ngugi attempts to give the novel an oral narrative pattern by starting it in a *Gicaandi Player* fashion, with instructions to the reader/listener. To keep the story in the oral tradition, like the fairy tale, and the oral story on which it is based, Ngugi gives the reader liberty to choose the time and the place of its occurrence. The *Gicaandi Player*'s narrative pattern is primarily evident through the narrator's addressing the reader through such statements as: "So say yes, and I'll tell you a story!" (p. 3). The language of the *Gicaandi Player* is rhythmic. This appears in Ngugi's novel, not only in the recurrence of songs in the narrative, but also in the poetic language used by the narrator, as when he says: "He looked for truth and justice in the grass and in the bushes. He searched among the thorns, in the shrubs, the ditches and the molehills, and in birds' nests" (p. 86).

Yet, in the English edition, the traditional narrative style seems to be put aside as the novel proceeds, since the narration develops along the lines of a Western modernist style. However, there are occasional attempts to bring the novel back into the orature mainstream, for instance through the punctuation of the narrative flow by

songs and riddles (p. 96). The modernist dimension of the novel, in its English version, outweighs its African oral one, and amazingly enough, some critics, mostly African ones, following Ngugi's instructions have classified *Matigari* in the oral narrative tradition. But, *Matigari* seems more like a combination of genres as it is of styles, modernist, naturalist, socialist realist and magical realist.

Though there is no doubt that the setting of the novel is post-independence Kenya, Ngugi attempts to make it universal by informing the reader that the country is imaginary and anonymous. Here, Ngugi indirectly points to the relevance of the situation to other African and Third World countries, where neo-colonialism, socio-economic injustice and political repression prevail. He, again, indicates the relevance of the message of the novel, which is that revolutionary violence is the only means to fight oppression and repression and achieve communalism and democracy, to these countries. The universality of the novel intended by Ngugi is hinted at from the outset when the narrator points out that Matigari "looked across the river, as he had often done over many years [] in the four corners of the globe" (p. 3). Yet it is clear that the novel primarily addresses itself to an African situation. Ngugi makes this plain in an interview stating: "In relation not just to Kenya, but to Africa as a whole, *Matigari* is saying that neo-colonialism must end because it cannot possibly develop or find its true liberation while neo-colonialism holds sway; and a very important aspect of neo-colonialism is, of course, democratic repression"⁵⁴

Again, though Ngugi points out in his note to the reader that the novel is based on a fairy tale, he inserts in the fabrics of the story some references to real events or he dramatizes some events that occurred in Kenya during the reign of both Kenyatta and Moi. This is done to insist that things did not change after Kenyatta's reign. Among the real events mentioned in the novel, some refer to Ngugi's own experience in his country. This is the case for the "teacher who had been arrested and accused of teaching Marxism" (p. 54). The well-known episode

of Kenyatta's boasting about the wealth he has accumulated after independence, and denigrating Bidald Kaggia for not having done the same is dramatized in the novel through the Minister of justice remarks: "Look at me. I have a seven-storeyed house here. I have three swimming-pools [í] I have also got saunas modelled on those in Finland! The house is decorated with marble, from Italy." (pp. 102-103). Another fictional event patterned on a real one is that of "parrotology", the official ideology, with its songs of praise of the regime. It is an echo of the Nyayoism, the ideology propounded by Moi to tighten his hold on his proponents.

Some real events are directly referred to give the novel verisimilitude. This is the case of the events mentioned in the news bulletin of the official radio, e.g., the South African ANC struggle for freedom (p. 70), the Guerrilla struggle in El Salvador (p. 151), the loan granted to Kenya by the I.M.F. Bank (p. 132), and the "military facilities" (p. 132) that the Kenyan regime gave to the USA (p. 132). Yet, not all pieces of news provided by the official radio, satirically named as "The Voice of Truth", were based on real ones. Some were fictional, and among these, there was one piece of news that was fictional at the time the novel was written and which proved prophetic in the fact announced that some years after the novel's publication, was that of the USA and Russia's talk about disarmament. Ngugi has added a note to point out the anticipation to the occurrence of the "Reykjavik" meeting in his novel (p. 151). This prophetic aspect of the novel is highlighted by Ngugi in his Note to the English Edition, where he refers to another event in the novel as being "prophetic", which is that of Kenyans' gathering to witness the "miracle" of Christ's Second Coming (p. VII), which occurred in 1988, whereas the novel was published in 1986.

However, nowhere in the novel does Ngugi provide a precise date about the time of the occurrence of his fictional story. This is done intentionally for a twofold purpose. Firstly, to comply with the rules of the fairy-tale dimension of the novel, and

the conventions of the magical realist novel. Secondly, to suggest that it may have occurred at any time since Kenya's independence. As it has already been pointed it is also a way of suggesting that Kenyatta's and Moi's regimes were alike. The indefiniteness of time is, for instance, expressed when Matigari refers to how long the independence struggle lasted. He remarks: "One year. Ten years. So many years" (p. 98). In reality the Mau Mau struggle lasted seven years. By suggesting that it lasted for a longer time than it actually did, Ngugi also suggests that it has not ended with independence.

The timelessness of the historical matrix of the novel, which gives it an epic dimension is expressed through Matigari's statement: "I was there at the time of the Portuguese, at the time of the Arabs, and at the time of the British" (p. 45). The imprecise time reference is also expressed through the student's account about the strike and how they were repressed: "When did we part? Was it only yesterday evening? Or was it the day before? Anyway, it does not matter. Yesterday, the day before, years ago, it has been the same story" (p. 90). From this last remark the reader may infer that the student's strikes often occur in Kenya, and this is the case in reality.⁵⁵ There are, however, some clues in the novel that indicate that the events of the novel occurred during Kenyatta's reign. This is the case, for instance, of the main street named after the ruler "His Excellency Ole Excellence" (p. 148).

The story of Matigari has a quest motif. It revolves around the plight of Matigari, an ex-Mau Mau fighter, whose name means "the patriot who was spared by the bullets". He comes out of the forest some years after Kenya's independence, with the resolve to recover his house and family, symbolising respectively his nation and his people, through peaceful means. He, thus, buries his arms, an AK 47 rifle, a sword and a gun, under the *Mugumo* tree, a sacred tree in Kikuyu mythology, and wears a "belt of peace". He then starts his journey asking different people where to find peace and justice in his country. To his amazement, he gradually realizes that the

situation has not changed much since he left and that the ideals he fought for were betrayed, since the offspring of the Loyalists were enjoying the fruits of independence with their ex-Masters. This is the case of John Boy Junior and the son of settler Williams.

The first people who attempt to help him in his search for his home are Muriuki, a destitute child, and Guthera, a prostitute. After many ordeals, Matigari reaches his house to find out that it is inhabited by John Boy. The latter beats him when he attempts to enter the house and summons the police. Matigari is taken to prison, from which he escapes with the help of Muriuki and Guthera. Matigari, then resumes his quest and goes to people from different walks of life, asking the same repetitive question about where to find truth and justice. He first goes to a rural area, where a woman suggests to him to go the learned ones. He, then, goes to a student, a teacher, and a priest, who each in turn send him to the other. All fail to provide him with an appropriate answer and betraying a fear of repression. Finally, following the advice of the priest, he goes to the Minister of Truth and Justice. After challenging the latter in public with embarrassing questions about the socio-economic oppression of the masses, Matigari is tried and sent to a mental hospital. Once again, he escapes with the help of the child and the prostitute. He then gets rid of his peace belt, thus renouncing his passive resistance, and vows to recover his arms to undertake a violent insurrection against the people's exploiters. He steals the Mercedes of the Minister's wife and heads towards John Boy's house, which he sets on fire.

The masses who come to witness the event engage in a riot, burning down the properties of the well-off people in the area. Matigari, miraculously escapes the fire and goes with Muriuki and Guthera to get the buried arms. Both Guthera and Matigari are wounded by the soldiers who chase them. Matigari carries the woman till they reach the river, where they both probably drown. The novel closes on an enigmatic note as regards the fate of Matigari. Even the soldiers who chase him

wonder whether if he is dead or alive, since darkness and heavy rain prevents them from chasing him any further. Muruiki reaches the *Mugumo* tree, takes the buried arms and puts them around his waist and shoulders. This last picture in the novel is clearly meant to suggest that another 'Mau Mau' struggle against the new rulers and their neo-colonialist partners is instigated by the new generation of the downtrodden.

In the first part of the novel, the plot is well knit; the incidents are skilfully woven into the narrative structure as it develops towards its climax: e.g., the confrontation between Matigari and his arch enemy John Boy which culminates with Matigari's being thrown in jail. Up to this point plot development is quite convincing, but this part ends with a plot disruption when Matigari escapes from Jail. There is an unpredictability of action that hampers the realistic dimension of the plot. This is also the case when some unrealistic events are deliberately used to serve plot developments according to the goals that Ngugi has set himself, i.e., revolutionary didacticism. This is the case of the prisoners who have food and beer (p. 55), candles and matches (p. 56), knives (p. 64). Food and beer here are used to serve Ngugi's biblical motif, since this episode where Matigari shares food with the prisoners is deliberately made to make the correspondences with Christ's last supper quite evident. It is thus one aspect of plot that serves Ngugi's message of the Saviour as revolutionary.

Again, Matigari's escape from prison, which at this stage is not explained in order to create suspense and to exploit Matigari's archetypal dimension, probably to present him as a Christ figure, by implying that he has magical powers, can be attributed to the magical realist dimension of the novel. Matigari's 'miraculous escape' which is later explained as being engineered by Guthera who stole the keys from the prison warden, was purposefully presented as magical to make Matigari take mythical dimensions. Ngugi indirectly points to this when he makes the narrator remark: 'From that night [he] became a legend' (p. 66). This mythic dimension of the

hero has, according to Ngugi, been neglected by some critics⁵⁶ He has pointed out their misreading saying:

This is an important dimension of the novel and so far, of the critics I have read, few have seen this aspect. They have been treating Matigari as though he were a highly individualized character inhabiting a specific historical period -- perhaps because they have been conditioned by the realism of the previous novels to expect realistic characters ó instead of seeing his character as more the representative type you might find in a myth.⁵⁷

In Part Two, the plot follows the same pattern of actions revolving around Matigari's quest for truth and Justice and the climactic action is the confrontation between Matigari and the Minister of Justice and, as in Part One, it ends with Matigari being arrested, but this time he is taken to a mental hospital. The two parts end on the same question about the identity of Matigari: "But who was Matigari?" (p. 127). Through this recurring question the narrator seems to be testing the reader's comprehension of the message of the novel. It is asked in the second part just after pointing out that Matigari has succeeded in arousing the masses' revolutionary consciousness, since they vowed to take up the students' revolutionary song: "Victory belongs to the people" (p. 127), and the song about Matigari's heroism. Here, Ngugi seems to appeal to the reader's clairvoyance to resolve the riddle about who Matigari is. Still, in this part, the revolutionary role of Matigari and his human dimension are emphasized to direct the reader towards the conclusion that Matigari is a revolutionary in the Marxian rather than the biblical sense. This is made clearer at the start of the Third Part, where Matigari tramples the "belt of peace" and expresses Ngugi's message of fanonist revolutionary violence through the statement: "*Justice for the oppressed comes from a sharpened spear*" (p. 131).

In the Third Part, again, there are some plot arrangements that disrupt the reader's aesthetic distance, in that they make him aware of the author's deliberate

manipulation of plot development. This manipulation is done to suit Ngugi's didacticism. Among such cases, there is, for instance, the event of the Mercedes car found in the wilderness, at the very time when Matigari and his allies, Guthera and Muriuki, are in need of a means of transport to go to the *Mugumo* tree to unbury the arms, and to Boy's house to expel him from it. The Minister's wife's Mercedes was as Muriuki rightly remarks: "a ticket to heaven!" (p. 149), since it could help them deceive the police who were actively looking for them with checkpoints all over the place. To such a coincidence is added one that may arouse the reader's suspicion and disbelief as to its credibility, and it is that the Mercedes was not that of any Minister's wife, but that of the Minister of Truth and Justice. The latter was responsible for Matigari being thrown into a mental hospital. Hence, through plot arrangements Ngugi has given his protagonist the opportunity to take revenge on the Minister of Truth and Justice. One more coincidence that is hardly credible⁵⁸ is that of the photo of the minister's wife that drops from her handbag at the time when Guthera is trying hard to remember who she is, to give her a clue about her identity. In the main, *Matigari* is similar to *Petals of Blood* in the use of thriller plot components. For example, Matigari's stealing the Mercedes of the Minister's wife and his being chased by the police smack of Hollywood detective films.

As regards structure, Ngugi often uses modernist techniques, e.g., the fragmentary form. For instance, the chapters are often very short. They seem more like sections than chapters. The division into these sections, or fragments, is at times unnecessary since there is a direct continuation of the last action of the preceding section. This is the case, for instance in the move from section one to two, on page 5. The structure of the novel can also be seen as having implications with the major motif of the novel, the Christian religion and the Marxist-Fanonist praxis. The three parts of the novel can symbolize the biblical concepts of Trinity, as it can symbolize the three major agents of revolutionary change, the workers, the women and the younger generation of the destitute, the latter two forming the *lumpenproletariat*. By

devoting the first part to Ngaruro wa Kiriro, whose name it bears, Ngugi implies that the workers should be at the forefront of the revolutionary struggle for social change. The title of this first part –Wipe Your Tears Away– symbolically heralds some better morrows that could put an end to socio-economic oppression. At the beginning of this part, the workers plan to go on strike, which means that they have acquired a revolutionary consciousness, and that they only need to transform it into *praxis*.

The second part of the novel, entitled *Macaria ma na Kihooto*, meaning 'Seeker of Truth and Justice', relates Matigari's search for these values in different places where the populace can be found, but he ends up finding opposite values, i.e., vices such as lies and injustice, through his meeting with the Minister. The fact that this part ends on Matigari being thrown in a mental hospital has again, biblical connotations, since like Christ whom he resembles in popular consciousness, he is taken to be mentally ill for questioning the *status quo*. The centrality of this part in plot development resides in the fact that it is a turning point in the hero's personality change, since Matigari takes the resolution to give up his passive resistance for a more dynamic and violent activism. Through this part Ngugi seems to justify the resort to revolutionary action. The third and last part is named: *Guthera na Muriuki*, meaning the pure and the resurrected. Here again, the title has biblical connotations, though in a reversed biblical fashion. Guthera the prostitute is the –pure– woman. Muriuki is the resurrected one, but not Christ resurrected but a Mau Mau fighter resurrected. In this part, the transmission of revolutionary fervour and of the arms from Matigari to Muriuki, makes Ngugi's message clear about the need to pass on the torch from Mau Mau fighters to a younger generation, that of the sons of the ex-Mau Mau fighters.

The phantasmal dimension of the novel and its mythopoeia bring it closer to romance than to realism. At best, the novel could be classified in the magical realist tradition. Magical realism is a literary genre that has often appealed to Third World

writers who have attempted to describe the realities of their countries through the use of the fantastic, the burlesque, or the comic. As Homi Bhabha remarks: "Magical realism" after the Latin American Boom, becomes the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world. Amidst these exorbitant images of the nation-space in its transnational dimension there are those who have not yet found their nation: amongst them the Palestinians and the Black South Africans.⁵⁹ Hence, it is a genre that is used to dramatize oppression and homelessness, and to make a plea for the building of a nation. Consequently, it is while in search for a truly democratic Kenyan nation that Ngugi has come to adopt it in his later novels.⁶⁰ The phrase was first coined by Franz Roh, a German art critic in the mid-1920s. It was used to describe the new experimentations with forms in visual art that signalled post-expressionism. Its adaptation to literary art started in the 1930s, and it gained fame in the 1940s and 50s in Latin American fiction. Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), is considered as the magical realist "par excellence". It has been a major source of inspiration not only for Western writers, but for African ones as well.

As regards African literature, despite the fact that some of its aspects appeared in the works of Amos Tutuola, e.g., *The Palm-Wine Drunkard* (1952) and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), it is rather associated with the works of the young Nigerian writer Ben Okri,⁶¹ more particularly in his novel *The Famished Road* (1991). This style draws heavily on mythology, both native and universal. In the case of Ngugi, it relies on both Kikuyu and biblical mythology. One major feature of magical realism is spatial and temporal shifts from the real to the supernatural. The major time pattern reflected in magical realist fiction is, on account of these shifts from one temporal stage to the other, often cyclic. This is pattern is drawn through cyclic recurrence of certain events.

Magical realism often reflects the "collective unconscious" to use Jungian phraseology, of the people depicted in the novel. In other words, it mirrors the dreams, day dreams, or fantasies that are entertained by the common people. Henceforth, it makes an extensive use of folklore. It, consequently, becomes the genre that is most fit for the representation of the populace's world view. This is, particularly, why it has appealed to Ngugi, who has endeavoured to present Kenyan reality from the standpoint of the peasants and workers and who has set himself the task of writing according to the paradigm of African orature, as a means to uphold it.⁶²

The blending of two narrative styles: Magic and realism, the former from indigenous orature and the latter from Western written tradition, results into a culturally hybridized genre that reflects the postmodernist dimension of Ngugi's novel, a dimension that is in line with Ngugi's ideological concern for post colonialism. The two aesthetic theories share much in common, though motivated by different preoccupations as demonstrated by Tiffin who remarks:

A number of strategies, such as the move away from realist representation, the refusal of closure, the exposure of the politics of metaphor, the interrogation of forms, the rehabilitation of allegory and the attach on binary structuration of concept and language, are characteristics of both the generally postcolonial and the European postmodern, but they are energised by different theoretical assumptions and by vastly different political motivations.⁶³

The political motivations that made Ngugi adopt Magical realism as a narrative style also reside in its being a style that fits his revolutionary didacticism. It is a style that has traditionally been used, e.g., by Latin American writers for subversive purposes. As Brenda Cooper remarks: "Magical realism strives, with greater or lesser success, to capture the paradox of the unity of opposites; it contests polarities such as history versus magic, the pre-colonial past versus the post-

industrial present and life versus death.⁶⁴ Among the features of magical realist literature that the novel embodies is the magic that surrounds the characters of Matigari. He seems to be protected by some supernatural powers. This is the case, for instance, when the children of Trampville start stoning him, for they fear for their safety and small property. He miraculously remains unharmed. As the narrator remarks: *he seemed to be protected by a powerful charm, because not a single stone touched him* (p. 17). This magical protection is again at work when he is arrested and sent to prison. There, the warders fail to search him and this has been interpreted by his inmates as a manifestation of magic or a sign of his magical powers. One of them asks Matigari: *Who are you? Because I have never heard of anyone ever being allowed to carry food or beer into the cell. I have been to prison countless times, and I swear that there's never been a time when they don't give us a thorough search* (p. 57). Then he interprets the magic that surrounds Matigari as a clue about his identity, that of Christ, for he remarks: *Tell us the word! Give us the good tidings!* (p. 57). The magical powers that surround him extend their protection to those who accompany him, as it is the case for the people who are arrested at the same time as he is, since they, as well, are not searched by the warders and they keep their knives and other properties (p. 64). It is as if Matigari has hypnotized the prison warders.

Magic is also at work when the soldiers are chasing Matigari and Guthera. Whereas she gets shot, he remains unharmed despite the fact that gun fire is coming from all around them. Here again, the narrator remarks: *Matigari seemed to be protected by some magical power, for the bullets did not hit him* It was as if on reaching him they turned into water (p. 173). The fact that he was spared by the bullets suggests that he had, like Christ, some supernatural powers. It, however, also justifies his name which means: *the patriot who survived the bullets* Here, the implication is clear: as he was spared by the bullets during the liberation war, he is likewise spared by the bullets during the new war against neo-colonialism, socio-economic injustice and political repression.

Another element of magical realism that is apparent in the novel is that of the physical transformation of Matigari. He is a middle-aged man but at times his facial features turn into those of a young one. Once, Ngaruro and Miriuki witness this transformation while Matigari was talking to them: “[they] looked at each other, wordlessly asking the same question. What had happened to the man’s wrinkles?” (p. 20). This also occurs when Miriuki and Guthera are with him: “All the creases on his face had gone and youth had once again returned to him” (p. 43). Another trait of his personality that has a magical dimension is his ability to appear in places at times when people are talking about him. This telepathic propensity is at work, for instance, when Matigari suddenly appears when a person is telling another about her wish to see him there and then saying: “I’d be happy if I could see him with my own eyes, this very minute, so that I can shake his hand” (p. 73). This again occurs when two women, in a different place, are exchanging information about Matigari’s exploit when he saved Guthera and “just then Matigari stopped on the other side of the road and greeted them” (p. 77). Another instance of Matigari’s sudden appearance when people are talking about him is that of the man who suddenly turns to find that he is facing him: “Matigari just arrived, only to find a man speaking and pointing a finger in his direction” (p.82). Again, Magic is at work to help Matigari find his way to the places where dwell the people he is in search of, such as the student’s and the teacher’s house. Through such examples, Ngugi suggests that Matigari has, like Christ, miraculous powers, as for instance self-transposition. He suddenly finds himself facing the student who has locked himself in his study. When he saw Matigari, “he trembled so much that the book he was holding fell on the floor” (p. 89). This is also the case of the teacher who was at home and “when he saw Matigari, he felt suddenly weak” (p. 91).

There are, however, in the novel some other characteristics of magical realism that do not relate to Matigari’s character or personality. There are, for instance, some coincidences of occurrences such as that of the answer provided to

one of the workers' questions about their fate if the factory closes, by the juke box song: "That's your problem" (p. 25). This may be considered as pure chance if such coincidences were not to be repeated. Thus, there is the case of one of the prisoners who tells his mates that "Only Gabriel the angel of God can get you out of here. Amen" (p. 65). Just then, Guthera and Muriuki come to release them. These coincidences also serve plot development and help Ngugi to bring the threads of the story together, and the archetypal characterization of his protagonist, i.e., the Christ figure pattern. It, however, also reflects the Kenyan people's sensibility and mentality, for they often spread rumours about Christ's Second Coming and other related miracles. Magic and miracles are strongly embedded in their folklore and more particularly in their folktales.

Hence, Ngugi attempts to fuse two genres, Western magical realism and African orature. The use of the latter reflects Ngugi's attempt at cultural retrieval. This is done with the purpose of rehabilitating his native culture in his people's eyes and in those of the Westerners who denigrated it. It is also meant as an attempt at "decolonizing the mind" of his fellow countrymen. As it has already been pointed out Ngugi's major concern for the rehabilitation of African orature in this novel is first evidenced in his dedication "to all those who research and write on orature". The major components of orature that the novel encompasses are: the Gikuyu fairy-tale, the recurrence of oral story-telling style and that of the songs that cut the narrative flow and which give the story a rhythmic dimension. African orature also shows in the Gikuyu and Kiswahili terminology that is purposefully embedded into the English version of the novel. Another major component of African oral culture that often recurs in the novel is the use of the Gikuyu proverbs and the repetition of certain stock phrases. As regards story-telling, besides the fact that the story of the novel is told by a narrator who adopts the stance of a *Gicaandi Player*, directly addressing the readers (p. IX), there are other stories told by the protagonists in similar fashion. This story-within-story technique has already been used by Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat*

and *Devil on the Cross*. This technique reflects the traditional speech pattern of the Kenyans. Thus, when one is relating her story; another one may interrupt her, at any moment, to relate her own story on the same subject.

The story-telling pattern is used by Matigari whenever he embarks on recounting the story of his struggle with settler Williams, who refers to the colonial power in general. He recounts it to Ngaruro and Muriuki (pp. 20-21), to Guthera (p. 38), to John Boy (p. 46). He also tells it to the prisoners (pp. 57-58), and to the Minister of Justice (p. 114). This repetitive dimension is part of the orature scheme of story-telling. It is also done to enhance the revolutionary didacticism of the novel. Thus, through the repetitive recounting of this painful episode of the Kenya's past, Ngugi attempts to keep its memory alive in his Kenyans readers' psyche and to highlight the betrayal of the independence war ideals. Ngugi attempts to make his Kenyan audience realize that things have not changed after independence, and that a new war needs to be waged against their new oppressors. Traditional story-telling style devices are also used by Guthera when she recounts her own life-story. Like the *Gicaandi Player* she starts by addressing the audience: "First let me tell you a story. Long ago there was a virgin. Her mother died at childbirth" (p. 33). Though the story is about her life she keeps using the third person singular referring to herself as "the girl". This is, however, done purposefully by Ngugi to suggest that Guthera's story is that of other Kenyan girls.

Among the other features of story-telling embedded in the narrative is that of riddles and fables. It is, in fact, part of the speech pattern of an elder of peasant origin, as it is the case of Matigari to speak in parables and often use riddles. This is, for instance, the case when he tells Guthera's story to the priest. He says: "tell me the answer to the riddle. Untie this knot for me" (p. 96). Old people often speak in parables, and that is why the Minister of Justice tells him: "If you want to ask a question, then do so in plain language" (p. 113). Yet, this is a sarcastic remark from

the Minister who pretends not to understand Matigari's speech, despite the fact that he was speaking in ordinary language. A case in point concerning Matigari's use of fables is when he relates the story of hare and leopard to illustrate his argument about fear and cowardice. He says: 'leopard once asked hare: My friend, why don't you ever pay me a visit?' (p. 112). Another aspect of orature reflected in the protagonist's speech pattern is that of the recurrent use of proverbs. Matigari, for instance, says: 'I have refused to be like the cooking pot whose sole purpose is to cook and never to eat!' (p. 98). Proverbs are also used by other characters. The priest, for instance, says: 'The sun never stops to let the king go by' (p. 99), and the Minister of Justice says: 'Let him who has ears listen. And he who has not got any should borrow his mother's' (p. 107).

The oral narrative dimension of the novel also appears in the repetition of certain expressions, such as: 'There is no night so long that it does not end in dawn' (p. 11), or '*Justice for the oppressed comes from a sharpened spear*' (p. 131). This expression is emphasized by Ngugi, who puts it in italics, for it carries his major message about the necessity of revolutionary violence to achieve social justice. Most of these expressions serve Ngugi's revolutionary didacticism for they bear his messages to his Kenyan readers. To insist on their importance and to anchor them in the memory of the latter, Ngugi repeats them. This is also the case of the expression which reads: 'Too much fear breeds misery in the land' (pp. 87, 90, 112). Ngugi insists on people's fear that verges on cowardice through Matigari's remark: 'Why do you hide behind a cloak of silence and let yourselves be ruled by fear?' (p. 31). In fact, this insistence on fear is to enhance the lack of democratic practice in his country. This is also expressed through an old woman who tells Matigari: 'Isn't it possible for one to find at least one or two among them who have been freed of fear and can untie the knot and reveal what's hidden?' (p. 88). Ngugi suggests through his mouthpiece that as long as fear reigns there will not be any resistance and therefore there will be no socio-economic changes. Ngugi uses some other expressions

recurrently for a revolutionary didactic purpose, for example: he ‘who-reaps-where-he-never-sowed’ (pp. 46, 75, 97, 98), and: ‘There are two worlds [i.e.] the world of patriots and that of sell-outs’ (p. 152). Through the latter statement Ngugi makes it plain to his Kenyan readers and more particularly the Kenyan intellectuals that there is no other choice than being either a ‘patriot’ or a ‘sell-out’, and that it is up to them to choose their camp, and be on either side of the fence.

The use of orature is also apparent in some of the traditions observed by the characters and more particularly by Matigari, who on account of his age has the status of the custodian of traditional culture. This is the case for the ritual of the libation offered to the spirits before drinking beer. He ‘poured a little of it on the floor in libation’ (p. 57). Another tradition referred to in connection with Matigari is that of the status of ‘father’ that old men are entitled to by the younger generation. The latter should owe them respect on account of their age. This traditional rule is broken by John Boy, and Matigari reminds him of it saying: ‘You’ve dared to raise a whip against your own father’ (p. 48). Through this example, Ngugi seems to suggest that the ruling *élite*, represented by John Boy, is relinquishing its traditional culture, because it is becoming more and more Westernized, and is thus being culturally alienated from the grassroots. It is to put an end to this cultural alienation of the educated *élite* that Ngugi campaigns for cultural retrieval both through his essays and his fiction. An attempt at cultural retrieval in this novel is that of Guthera’s dress pattern. She wore a ‘lasso’ (p. 28), a traditional style. By portraying her, a city woman, wearing a ‘lasso’, Ngugi’s message about the ‘return to the source’ is clear.

Though style, at times, fits the paradigms of traditional oral culture, it is in general more in line with those of Western modernist literature. The modernist dimension of the novel first appears in the technique of the indirect provision of information. This technique is used from the outset. The novel starts with ‘He’, Matigari’s name is not disclosed until page 20. The same technique is applied to the

introduction of the child whom Matigari meets on page 13, but whose name is not revealed till page 19. This is done with the purpose of creating suspense and arousing the reader's interest in the story. Another element of the indirect provision of information used to entertain suspense among those who take part in the story and that of the readers, is related to Matigari's physical appearance. Clues about this appearance are provided occasionally and thriftily. This is done to enhance the magical dimension of his character to uphold the rumours about his being Christ, in his Second Coming. The rumour has it that at times he is a 'dwarf' and at others he is a 'giant' (p. 60).

Another major technique of modernist literature that is used in Ngugi's novel is that of the 'stream-of-consciousness'. This is apparent in the instances when the narrator probes the minds of the protagonist to describe for the reader their innermost feelings. This is, for instance, the case when Ngugi writes: 'The image of the Mercedes flashed across his mind; then that of the two policemen and the dog in the clinic in Had anything really changed between then and now?' (p. 9). Most of the similar attempts at recording the thought and feelings of the protagonists are related to Matigari, as when Ngugi writes: 'Then and now in the past and the present in yesterday and today in What curse befell us? The present and the past in His heart beat in rhythm with his thoughts. He wanted to embrace all the children and take them to his house what very moment' (p. 16). The 'stream of consciousness' technique is used whenever one of the protagonists is in a dilemma, as is the case of the priest when he is challenged by Matigari's questioning, and puzzled as to whether he is Christ in disguise coming to test his faith. When Matigari discloses to him the secret of his escape from prison, he is relieved and Ngugi depicts his mental state: 'the priest felt at peace; a heavy burden had been lifted from his soul. So the prison doors had not really opened mysteriously. So all those tales about Gabriel were mere gossip. Yet one should always keep one's lamp ready just in case' (p. 96).

The modernist style also appears in the introduction in the narrative of pieces of indented writing in capital letters, such as the commercial labels and instructions:

ANGLO-AMERICAN LEATHER AND PLASTIC WORKS
PRIVATE PROPERTY
NO WAY (p. 10).

Or: MATAHA HOTEL, BAR AND RESTAURANT (p. 23).

It also appears in the introduction of pieces of news in italics, e.g., the radio news and announcements to the public (pp 26, 132-133). The modernist style is more particularly apparent in the fragmentary structure of some chapters. As it has already been pointed out some Chapters are very short. The second Chapter of Part two is less than two lines long, and the tenth is 5 lines long. Both Chapters do not require to stand separately from their consecutive Chapters. This unjustified cutting to small size is similarly applied to some paragraphs, as can be seen in the following two-word paragraphs: *Everyone waited* (p. 101), *People applauded* (p. 125). In fact, there often are some paragraphs that take the form of short sentences e.g., *he stopped in his tracks* (p. 17), *It was very hot* (p. 18), and *He stood there shocked* (p. 11). Besides the short chapters and paragraphs, there are also some frequent short sentences, e.g., *He dozed off. His thoughts took flight* (p. 6). Still, most of the short paragraphs and sentences are used to serve the tone of the actions, mostly quick actions, or to raise suspense. This is the case when people are expecting a miracle at John Boy's house:

News editors waited.
Radio Reporters waited.
[í] They waited.
The whole country waited. (p. 158)

The modernist dimension of the novel also shows in its mood. There is a touch of existentialist rhetoric when Guthera attempts to evaluate the causes of her moral degradation. Using the existentialist principle of freedom of choice, she remarks:

most of the things I have been doing so far have not sprung from my being able to choose. I have been wearing blinkers like a horse. Yes, I have never done anything which came from free choice. I've been moved here and there by time and place. Except yesterday when I broke my eleventh commandment. I could have chosen not to do it, but I didn't. I chose to do it freely for an end in which I believed.
 (p. 140)

Needless to point out here that Ngugi is using her as a mouthpiece to denounce sexism in Kenya.

Satire first appears in the naming of the protagonists who represent the middle class, e.g., John Boy. His surname indicates his role which is that of the 'boy', i.e., the servant, of Settler Williams. Ngugi makes this clear through Matigari's remark: 'John Boy, a black man, the settler's servant' (p. 22). John Boy's servitude during the colonial era lied in his being a 'loyalist', i.e., a collaborator, whereas that of John Boy Junior has lied in his being an 'intermediary' to borrow Fanon's term, in the neo-colonial apparatus. Another instance of a satirical reference to Kenya's neo-colonial bondage is that of the label on the uniform of a foreign company's guard, which reads 'Guard Company Property' (p. 10). On the whole, most of Ngugi's satirical remarks about the ruling *élite* come from those who represent it, such as the Minister of Truth and Justice, whose naming is in itself satirical. This is the case when the Minister says: 'No government can allow 0.0001 per cent of the people to disrupt the rights of the other 99.9999 per cent [í] *Even the majority have human rights too!*' (p. 111). Ngugi attempts to ridicule the Minister, who represents the ruling class, and who speaks about human rights for the majority whereas he is among those who deny the majority its basic rights. The Minister is,

again, ridiculed through his own remarks about his status when he says: 'I want all of you to see and know that I am truly the Minister of Truth and Justice. Do you see this suit that I am wearing? You see that I have an inner coat and an outer one. Why do I say this? Because it is a symbol of the two portfolios I carry' (p. 116).

Ngugi's satirical portrayal of the Minister also lies in presenting him as a stupid person, for he reveals the unlawful practices of the regime he represents. He discloses the lack of democracy that prevails when he says about the editor of the 'Daily Parrot': 'Do you know why he always tells the truth? Because he does a lot of secret investigation. What did I tell you? The government has eyes and ears all over' (p. 117). He, further, remarks that on account of this loyalty in singing 'the song of a parrot' he 'might be on the following year's honours list and that [he] would receive decorations such as GKM (The President's Ears) or MMT (Eyes of the State)' (p. 104). The Minister, again, reveals the repressive aspect of the regime when he tells his audience: 'The ears of the government, and the eyes of the government are everywhere: in police and prison cells, in shopping centres, in workplaces, in schools, in churches, in market-places and even in the walls and the very foundations of your house' (p. 105). This is shown as irrefutable evidence of the prevailing lack of democracy. Ngugi is satirical about the regime's boastfulness about democracy whilst not practising it, when he remarks through Matigari: 'All I demand in this land of democracy is Truth and Justice' (p. 114).

Loyalty to the regime and its ideological line is satirically referred to as 'parratology'. The newspaper that mirrors the official ideology is called the 'Daily Parrot' (p. 101). This is undoubtedly an indirect reference to the Kenyan official newspaper *The Daily Nation*. Ngugi's satire about loyalty to the regime also shows in his making a picture of a parrot as the ruling party emblem (p. 100). The intellectuals who side with the regime come under Ngugi's fierce onslaughts. They are ridiculed for being the lackeys of their rulers through the example of the

Professor of the History of Parrotology, the Ph.D. in Parrotology and the Editor of the *Daily Parrot* who hastily stand up to sing verses from the *Songs of a Parrot* (p. 106), in praise of the Minister. Ngugi ironically indicates that this favour is paid back instantly by the Minister who proclaims: 'I have ordered all those loyalist professors and holders of Ph.Ds in Parrotology to be promoted and given permanent professorships' (p. 103). Ngugi also sarcastically refers to their renouncement of their intellectual integrity through the old woman's remark: 'They no longer study the stars. They study the Voice of Truth' (p. 87). Not only does Ngugi portray them as self-centered gain-seekers who are depersonalized, but he also portrays them as cowards. He does so through the teacher who acknowledges being a coward saying: 'Didn't you hear that teachers and lecturers are being detained without trial? Look at me. I have a wife and two children. What will they eat if I am sent to prison? And all for asking too many questions [í] I have since been ordained into the order of cowardice and have joined the ranks of those whose lips are sealed' (p. 92).

Ngugi's satire is also aimed at the religious men and the Christian religion in general. He highlights the priest's hypocrisy when he makes the following remark: 'When the priest heard the news about the escaped madmen, he fell on his knees and frantically began pleading with God í O Lord, you didn't give me a chance to visit those in mental hospital [í] remember, O Lord, that I was preparing to go there tomorrow' (p. 133). He similarly ironically remarks about the bribes given to the Minister: 'Christian Democracy. Honesty' (p. 107). Among the other satirical remarks about the Kenyan regime there are those related to the economic system which is neither socialistic nor capitalistic and which is officially described as 'African Socialism'. The Minister remarks about the foreign company which offered him shares: 'It is ours. It is a national company' (p. 108). In the main, through such ironical remarks, Ngugi attempts to disclose to his Kenyan readers the truths, about their national socio-economic affairs, that are hidden from them. This is a role that he has ascribed to his major character, who is in quest of Truth and Justice. This quest is

both realistic and symbolic. The fairy-tale dimension of the novel brings it closer to myth.

In fact, this mythopoeic dimension of the novel makes it fit for an archetypal critical approach. The paradigms of this critical device as defined by Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, when applied to Ngugi's novel, both as regards imagery and characterization, show that it is closer to romance than to realism. The allegorical framework of the novel and its archetypal symbolism bring it within this mode. As Frye points out "the mode of romance presents an idealized world: in romance heroes are brave, heroines beautiful, villains villainous" (65). In *Matigari*, the idealized world is the world that Matigari attempts to achieve, a kind of perfect communal life devoid of any mischief. The brave hero is Matigari, the beautiful heroine is Guthera and the villains are John Boy and his likes. Another aspect of the mode of romance or "analogy of innocence" as Frye names it, which applies to Ngugi's major protagonist Matigari is the divine figure. As Frye notes: "the divine or spiritual figures are usually parental wise old men with magical powers like Prospero" (66). Matigari is an old man who behaves in a parental way with both Guthera and Muriuki. The latter character also fits in with Frye's definition of the characters of the mode of romance where, "among human figures children are prominent" (67).

Another dimension of Ngugi's protagonist that fits archetypal symbolism is his ability to transcend fire. In Frye's term "Fire is usually a purifying symbol, a world of flame that none but the perfectly chaste can pass" (68). This symbolism of fire as purifying element recurs in Ngugi's fiction. In *Petals of Blood*, for instance, Wanja goes through a baptism through fire, as a rite of passage, and Munira sets her house on fire out of religious fanaticism. The arson is symbolically used as a purifying device. Likewise in *Matigari*, the arson is meant both as a means to destroy physically the exploiters and as a ritual to purify the place. The apocalyptic imagery towards the close of the novel also belongs to the mode of romance. Among the other

archetypal symbolisms that Ngugi's novel embodies and which are identified by Frye's description as belonging to the mode of romance are: nature, animal and water symbolisms. As Frye observes, "the tree of life belongs to the apocalyptic structure"⁶⁹ In Ngugi's novel, "the tree of life" is represented by the *Mugumo* tree, under which Matigari buries his weapons. This tree parallels the "Garden of Eden" in Gikuyu traditional religion.

The animal symbolism in Matigari is similarly that of the mode of romance which is represented by "the pastoral sheep, and lamb [and] horses"⁷⁰ The horse which symbolizes "chivalry"⁷¹ appears at the open and at the close of the novel. The horse that passes by Matigari is riderless and this can symbolically refer to the fact that the country is in need of a chivalrous rider, i.e., a courageous leader to undertake the forthcoming struggle for social change. Similarly, at the end of the novel, Muriuki who inherits Matigari's revolutionary fervour and arms is near the *Mugumo* tree when a similar riderless horse passes by and looks at him for a while.

The water symbolism of the romantic mode is defined by Frye as related to: "fountains and pools, fertilizing rain, and an occasional stream separating a man from a woman and so preserving the chastity of each, like the river of Lethe in Dante"⁷² In *Matigari*, rain prevents the soldiers from carrying on their pursuit of Matigari, Guthera and Muriuki. Both Matigari and Guthera die in the river, where their blood mixes, symbolically referring to their purification by water, before their eventual resurrection under the aspect of a new young revolutionary leader, i.e., Muriuki. Here, Ngugi implies that the task of the post-independence revolution is entrusted to a younger generation. The mixing of their blood, however, also symbolizes the dripping of blood during the Mau Mau oath taking. In this instance, through symbolism, Ngugi reconciles the archetypal with the historical. As Frye argues "the latent apocalyptic or demonic patterns a literary work [] often lift a work of literature out of the category of the merely historical"⁷³

The cyclic pattern of the narrative structure and the occurrence of animal imagery, for example, the horse is also part of the archetypal patterns of the novel. The cyclic pattern reflects the life and nature cycles. Life cycles of birth and death and rebirth are quite evident in Ngugi's novel. When Matigari comes out of the forest, he is born again in a certain sense, since his disappearance was some form of death and his coming to town may be likened to a rebirth. He comes full circle, after his earthly experience, to the starting point, near the *Mugumo* tree, the tree of life. Again, after disappearing in the river, he is reborn, or rather resurrected, as the child Muriuki. The cyclic structural pattern of the novel shows in its similar scenes at the open and at the close of the novel. The two scenes represent the protagonist carrying arms at the *Mugumo* tree. The only difference is that at the end of the novel, Muriuki stands for Matigari, or rather the latter is symbolically resurrected as Muriuki. The title of the third part of the novel points to this resurrection, by identifying Muriuki as "The resurrected". The reference to the resurrection serves both the Christianity motif and the revolutionary didacticism of the novel. As regards the latter, it is an attempt at driving home Ngugi's message that the revolutionary struggle is entrusted to a younger generation.

The structure of the novel similarly fits the structural pattern of romance, which has a "threefold" dimensional aspect. It is divided into three parts, it has three major protagonists, Matigari, Guthera and Muriuki. Besides, the hero achieves his goal on his third attempt. Firstly, he quarrels with John Boy and he is sent to prison. Secondly, he challenges the Minister of Truth and Justice and he is thrown into a mental hospital, and thirdly, he succeeds in destroying John Boy's house, so that as he vowed the latter would not spend another night in that house, which was considered by Matigari as his rightful home. The threefold structure of romance is, again, apparent in the fact that the hero is the third person to uphold the challenge. Frye notes that "the successful hero is the third son or the third to take the quest"⁷⁴ In

Ngugi's novel, *Miriuki* who inherits Matigari's arms is the one who will carry out Matigari's unfinished revolution.

The archetypal dimension of the novel also resides in its quest motif. The goal of Matigari's journey is to fulfil a dream, i.e., to find his family and rebuild his home, symbolically to implement communalism in his country. This is a dream that Ngugi himself entertains. Being in exile when he wrote the novel, the correspondences are quite clear between his dreams and those of his major protagonist. This is certainly why the romantic mode appealed to him. As Frye remarks: "romance is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream"⁷⁵ According to Frye, Jung is quite relevant to the critical study of romance. He maintains: "just as the literary critic finds Freud most suggestive for the theory of comedy, and Jung for the theory of romance"⁷⁶ In Jungian archetypal criticism, Guthe represents the "anima", i.e., the feminine side of the hero's personality.

The adoption of the mode of romance appears not only in the motifs and the symbolism of the novel, but also in its characters delineation. Matigari may be considered as an archetypal character of romance since he "never develops or ages [as he] goes through one adventure after the other"⁷⁷ and he has a messianic dimension. Yet, though Matigari has many characteristics of the romantic hero in pursuit of an ideal he also has those of the tragic hero who "is somewhat between the divine and the "all too human"⁷⁸ Among the archetypal tragic heroes Frye names, Prometheus, Adam and Christ. Matigari has features of these three heroes. He is Prometheus in that he sides with the downtrodden. As Prometheus stole fire to help the humans, for instance, Matigari attempts to help the masses improve their lot. He is Adam, since he is born again at the *Mugumo* tree, the tree of life. He is Christ since he is often likened to the Messiah by the masses.

Still, despite the fact that the overall mythopoeic perspective of the novel brings it closer to romance and more particularly to revolutionary romance, on

account of its revolutionary didacticism, the novel also has some archetypal patterns of tragedy. Matigari is the tragic hero *par excellence*. As Frye observes: "the tragic hero has normally had an extraordinary, often a nearly divine destiny almost within his grasp"⁷⁹ and he points to his being a Christ-figure stating that he "is in any way related or a prototype of Christ"⁸⁰ This is the case of Matigari who is often likened to Christ by the common people he meets. Like the tragic hero, his downfall is inevitable for he is fighting against forces that are more powerful than him, i.e., the ruling *élite* with its hordes of soldiers and policemen. Besides, as in tragedy the novel has a cathartic function. It attempts to cure its protagonists, and by the same token its Kenyan readers from the fear of repression, for example Guthera succeeded in overcoming her fears. The term "fear" often recurs in the novel. Through Matigari, his mouthpiece, Ngugi expresses his view that matters will not change as long as fear reigns in the country and through the example of the student who defies the Minister of Justice, Ngugi suggests that the first step towards revolutionary praxis is to overcome fear.

Besides Matigari, Guthera is also an archetypal character of the mode of tragedy. She fits the paradigms of "the suppliant" Frye defines the latter as being "the character, often female who represents a picture of unmitigated helplessness and destitution [í] suppliant figures are often women threatened with death or rape"⁸¹ Guthera lives in destitution and she faces death-threats more than once. This is the case for instance when the dog was unleashed to threaten her as the narrator remarks: "she was staring death in the face" (p. 30). Again, Frye notes that in the figure of the suppliant "pity and terror are brought to the highest possible pitch of intensity"⁸² This is the case of Guthera in the episode of the policemen threatening her with the fierce dog. In the main, as demonstrated, Ngugi's novel bears archetypal features, symbolism and characterization, of both romance and tragedy. The use of both, though the former outweighs the latter is inherent in the use of the quest motif. As

Frye observes, "romance, tragedy, irony and comedy are all episodes in a total quest-motif"⁸³

Again, thematically, Ngugi's novel has many features of Aristotelean tragedy. The hero sets out on a mission to right the wrongs. Matigari often refers to the need to undertake such a task. As Frye notes: "the act which sets the tragic process going must be primarily a violation of *moral* law, whether human or divine"⁸⁴ This is one of the Christian archetypes related to Christ sacrifice to save his people. Again, as Frye maintains, there is "in tragedy a mimesis of sacrifice"⁸⁵ The sacrificial ethics in Ngugi's novel is re-enacted through the fate of both Matigari and Guthera. The former's readiness to sacrifice himself to save his people shows in his defiance of the police to save Guthera from their clutches. Had it not been for his old age, he would have had a similar fate at their hands. More than once, Matigari, himself, expresses his readiness to die to save the others, as when he says: "I am not afraid of dying for the just cause" (p. 157). Guthera sacrifices herself twice, by yielding to the prison warden and the policeman to help Matigari escape from prison and from the asylum. She represents the "sacrificial lamb" She is slaughtered to satisfy the lust of her oppressors. Yet, her death is not in vain, since she has died for a revolutionary cause. She expresses her resolution to join in the revolutionary praxis out of altruistic motivation when she remarks: "I want to do something to change whatever it is that makes people live like animals, especially us women" (p. 140). Her spilt blood, like that of the Mau Mau oath-takers symbolizes revolutionary sacrifice, and her end drives home Ngugi's message that repression could be defeated only through revolutionary violence. This is symbolically suggested by Muriuki's carrying Matigari's arms.

Again, as in tragedy, Ngugi's novel ends with a catastrophe, the arson, the death of Guthera and probably that of Matigari. However, whereas tragedy ends with a sense of despair at the hero's downfall, and the feeling of "paradise lost" the

paradise that Ngugi's protagonist has attempted to reach seems within reach, since he has triggered off revolutionary activism among the masses to change the status quo. Indeed, though Matigari has not fulfilled his dream of recovering his home and family, in other words, the setting up of communalism, he has succeeded in leaving the legacy of his utopian dream to Muriuki and the other children, a younger generation.

Besides, Greek mythology, Ngugi makes use of the Gikuyu one, for instance, the myth of the creation of Gikuyu and Mumbi, and the fact that the novel starts with the major character standing next to the *Mugumo* tree, the sacred tree in Gikuyu mythology, indicates Ngugi's priorities. Hence, symbolically, Gikuyu motifs take precedence over the Christian ones. Among the symbols of the novel that are linked with revolutionary violence is Matigari's ritual of washing the sword in the river before burying it. Matigari seems to have cleaned it of the remnants of the blood of Settler Williams, i.e., his colonial master, to convince himself that the war has really ended. Again, the whole action of burying arms is done with care. Here, Ngugi seems to suggest that his protagonist might need them again, and not before long. Matigari's counting the bullets (p. 4), also symbolically refers to the possibility of requiring them once again. Matigari undertakes another symbolic baptism by water when he cleans his face and arms just before leaving his hideouts in the forest and heading towards the town. Here, Matigari goes through a rite of passage, what Van Gennep calls a rite of separation,⁸⁶ a transition from the primitive life of the forest to the modern one of the city. The transitional rite of separation is again hinted at through Matigari's reminiscences of the initiation ceremony of circumcision brought about by the cold water of the river. The water also reminds him of the rites undergone by the patriots [who were] ready for the armed struggle to come (p. 4). This again is a symbolic anticipation of the revolutionary activism that Matigari triggers off later on.

Revolutionary symbolism is particularly associated with climatic conditions. There are recurrent references to the climate which symbolically represent the overall atmosphere of the country or the situation described by the narrator. This is the case of the atmosphere in the Hall where the Minister of Justice was having a meeting. The narrator remarks: "The same dull atmosphere which had prevailed in the country the whole day also filled the hall" (p. 101). This atmosphere had an impact on the audience whose "murmuring [] indicated neither happiness nor sadness" (p. 101). Another instance of this climatic symbolism is expressed through Matigari's remark: "how could it be so oppressively hot so early?" (p. 5). The oppression of heat symbolically refers to the oppression and repression that pervades in the country. The whole statement can be interpreted as meaning: "how come so early after independence, oppression has reached such a scale?" Hence, symbolism is often used to serve the revolutionary didacticism of the novel. For instance, the first sign of modern life that Matigari sees when he leaves the forest is a Mercedes-Benz, a symbol of wealth that brings to mind class differences. In fact, in Kenyan mentality, it is associated with the ruling class and other VIPs. This reference to the "luxury" car is a symbolic anticipation of Matigari's ride in the Minister's wife's Mercedes. A reversed symbolism of the Mercedes representing the rich class is the wrecked Mercedes that Muriuki uses as a shelter. Despite the fact that it is ruined, the child is proud of it: "Mine is a Mercedes-Benz", he announced proudly, as if to say that his house was better than all the others" (p. 16).

An event that is both symbolic and anticipating is that of the policemen leading a dog whom Matigari meets when he enters the city. They are the first signs of the existence of a repressive system. They are the first and the last ones he meets. The first scene where "two policemen with [a] dog caught up with him" (p. 8) is reproduced at the end of the novel when policemen and soldiers with dogs chase him and catch up with him. The first scene seems to have been a bad omen of Matigari's tragic end. Among the other scenes that have a symbolic and prophetic dimension is

that of Miriuki's dream (p. 155). He dreams of being in an aeroplane that turns out to be a Mercedes, which turns into a winged house, and two birds that turn into a nude couple. Then he dreams of Matigari and Guthera bleeding profusely. This dream is a mixture of experienced events and prophetic ones. The aeroplane, the Mercedes and the nude couple are flashes from his earlier experience and adventure, when they stole the Minister's Mercedes. In fact, when he was in the Mercedes he saw aeroplanes and wished the Mercedes could have wings and fly. He then remarked that the Mercedes was 'like a ticket to heaven' (p. 145). Symbolically, the 'winged house' could represent Heaven, and the two birds which become naked human beings could stand for angels. The dream then turns into a nightmare with the scene of Matigari and Guthera bleeding. It was a premonitory dream since in fact, Matigari and Guthera end up bleeding in the river.

The most recurring symbol in the novel is that of 'the house', which is occasionally referred to as 'the home', that Matigari has come back to recover to shelter his wives and children, allegorically representing his people in general. The house evidently represents the country and the gathering of his family stands for communalism. Gikandi makes the meaning evident when he points out that 'in the Gikuyu edition, Matigari is looking for 'Nyumba' which is more than a house; it is a homestead, a family and a community'⁸⁷ Ngugi makes this symbolism quite explicit from the outset, when he writes: 'We shall go home together. We shall enter the house together. We shall light the fire together. After all, the struggle was for the house, wasn't it? [] Sharing what little we have [] Joy after all that suffering [] cold [] hunger [] sleepless nights [] fatigue []' (pp. 10-11). Again, when Matigari sees the children of Trampville searching food in rubbish heaps, he exclaims: 'My children!' (p. 11). This is also the case when Matigari says: 'Come my people, one and all, let us enter the house together! Let us share food together, and sing joyfully together!' (p. 51). To represent symbolically the socio-economic system he calls for, namely communalism, Ngugi has relied on his people's oral culture, where

communal life is referred to as 'sharing'. Matigari expresses his dream, and by extension Ngugi's, of setting up a form of communalism saying: 'We would share even the bean which fell to the ground' (p. 16). He also insists on partaking what could be available saying: 'It is not the quantity that counts but the act of sharing whatever we have' (p. 55).

This principle of communal living is put into practice first by the children of Trampville, who have decided that the radio set found in the rubbish becomes 'communal property' (p. 69). Here, Ngugi seems to suggest that the 'social justice' that Matigari is in search of is first to be applied among the 'wretched'. This righteousness and altruism among the poor is in glaring opposition to the immorality and individualism of the rich class represented by John Boy and the Minister of Truth and Justice. This label given to the minister is a reversed symbolism, since he neither represents truth nor justice. He is in a way, usurping Matigari's role and position. For Matigari is the one who fought for independence, and therefore, he is the one who deserves this rewarding position. Again, Matigari who is in search of truth and justice and who attempts to right the wrongs is the one who incarnates truth and justice. In fact, throughout the novel, Ngugi insists on this binary opposition between the poor and the rich, right and wrong, truth and lies, justice and injustice, loyal and traitor, 'patriot' and 'sell out'. This emphasis is purposefully laid to prompt people to revolutionary praxis. Through these distinctions Ngugi makes his Kenyan readers realize the urgency of resistance and of waging a new Mau Mau to right the wrongs. This is particularly made clear through Matigari's remarks:

This world is upside down [í] the robber calls the robbed *robber*. The murderer calls the murdered murderer and the wicked calls the righteous evil. The one uprooting evil is accused of planting evil. The seeker of truth and justice ends up in prisons and detention camps. Yes those who sow good seeds are accused of sowing weeds. (p. 150)

This binary opposition is as well echoed in the teacher's remark: "One truth belongs to the oppressor, the other to the oppressed" (p. 121).

Symbolism is also used for a didactic purpose, for instance, to explain to the peasant Kenyan audience what neo-colonialism is. To make the masses aware of the fact that things have not changed much after independence, Ngugi uses the image of John Boy and William Jr. riding two similar horses. He writes: "Their horses were exactly alike [í] The riders too wore clothes of the same colour. Indeed, the only difference between the two men was their skin colour. Even their postures as they sat in the saddle were exactly the same. The way they held their whips and reins ó no difference. And they spoke in the same manner" (p. 43). Among the symbolic items that illustrate the revolutionary matrix of the novel, which by the same token serve the message of the novel, is that of the pictures of Christ and Marx found in dustbins by an old couple (p. 134). The fact that the posters of these two "revolutionaries" were among the rubbish implies that revolutionary activism or resistance are to be done away with or banned. Besides, the fact that the pictures of the two are found together is an attempt on Ngugi's part to reconcile Christianity and Marxism. It is evident that the two doctrines are at odds on account of the atheistic dimension of Marxism. Ngugi seems to suggest to his Kenyan readers and more particularly the Kenyan peasants, to whom the novel may be read, that they can adopt the Marxist principles of social equity without renouncing their religious credentials. Further, he seems to suggest that both Christ and Marx were revolutionaries in their own terms. The old couple takes them to be the "lunatics" that the police was looking for, i.e., Matigari and his allies. Hence, the term "lunatic" which is used to describe Matigari and his friends who have been admitted to a mental hospital also symbolically refers to revolutionary activists. This is clear from the policeman's remark: "We want the actual madmen - not their photographs!" (p. 134). This is an indirect hint to the revolutionary potential of the two historical figures. It is also an attempt at keeping suspense as to what the real identity of Matigari is. Is he Christ or Marx?

The revolutionary dimension of Ngugi's hero is symbolically hinted at through his attire. He wears a leopard coat (p. 3). Though the coat has supposedly been made an outfit when he was in the forest, it symbolically represents swiftness and violence, the two major characteristics of the leopard. The first aspect of Matigari's personality is hinted at when he has the reflex of attempting to take out a gun, when he sees Guthera endangered by the police dog (p. 30). But he remembers that he has worn a belt of peace, which is made of a tree branch, representing the olive tree stick, a peace symbol. This symbol has been introduced to help Ngugi make his point about the uselessness of passive resistance in a country where injustice and repression prevail. By making Matigari bury his arms and wear this attire, at the opening of the novel, and then throw it and attempt to recover his arms, towards its close, he suggests that revolutionary violence is the only means to bring about changes in his country. Matigari's hat is, yet, another garment that has a symbolic revolutionary value.

One more symbolic imagery that relates to revolutionary praxis is that of the flaming sword (p. 78) that Matigari holds, according to people's rumour. The flame evidently refers to liberation, i.e., the liberation of his people from the neo-colonialism and political repression. It also symbolically represents the struggle for democracy. Besides, the way Matigari is described holding the sword is reminiscent of the American statue of liberty, intended as a symbol of democracy. He stood: with his hand on his hip. On the other, he held a flaming sword (p. 78). This is meant to suggest that he kept the torch of the freedom fire alight and that he is ready to hand it over to a younger generation. Another symbolic reference to Ngugi's message concerning the waging of a new Mau Mau war against the Kenyan regime and its Western allies, carried out by a young generation, is that of the Trampville children calling themselves Matigari ma Njiruungu. Another example of Ngugi's expressing his revolutionary didacticism through symbolism is remark of the old woman who was sweeping rubbish outside her shelter. She told Matigari: Let me

continue sweeping this dirt that has so quickly accumulated in our countryø (p. 88). The term dirt here is a connotation for the corruption and moral turpitude that prevailed. ÆSo quicklyø refers to the early years of independence. The message is quite clear, the country is in need of moral cleansing. Here, again, Ngugi indirectly criticizes the Christian religion. He seems to suggest that despite their religious fervour people are still behaving immorally. In other words, the church failed in its mission, since its teachings are not observed. This is also indicated through the case of the Ministerø's wife, a regular church goer and a zealous religious observer in public but a rule breaker in private, since she is adulterous.

As these examples show, Ngugi uses allegory to serve his revolutionary didacticism, i.e., to enlighten his Kenyan readers about their being cheated by the hypocrisy of their political class. As Gikandi observes: Æallegory helps the author capture social reality in a deeper sense by estranging readers from the banal discourse promoted by the stateø⁸⁸ Yet, Gikandi does not show how this estrangement operates, nor does he demonstrate whether Ngugi succeeds in making his readers reject the official discourse. In fact, Gikandi, being a Kenyan, could have enlightened us about the echoes of the novel and its impact on the Kenyan audience. However, he himself acknowledges that his attempt at evaluating Ngugiø's texts was puzzling: ÆI was confronted with a serious theoretical problem: does an insiderø's knowledge of the conditions in which works are produced help or deter critique?ø⁸⁹

The characterization of the novel is primarily related to its major motifs, Mau Mau and Christianity. These motifs are reconciled through the personality and the predicament of Matigari, the major protagonist. The latter is an ex-Mau Mau fighter who keeps the ideals of the Mau Mau struggle alive and who triggers off a new Mau Mau resistance. His relation to Mau Mau is first indicated through his name which means: Æthe patriots who survived the bulletsø ó the patriots who survived the liberation war, and their political offspringø (p. 20). The thematic connotation of his

name is more important in the Gikuyu edition of the novel than in the English one. As Gikandi points out:

ōMatigari Ma Njiruungiö can be translated as öthe remnants (or leftovers) of the bulletö; moreover, öNjiruungiö has a more specific historical and political connotation since it was a word used, maybe coined, by öMau Mauö guerrillas as a euphemism for bullets. The important point, though, is that the title of the Gikuyu edition does not refer to a character but to an event.⁹⁰

Ngugi uses the plural form of the word, Matigaris, to suggest that his protagonist is not an isolated case, but that there are other ex-Mau Mau fighters who are ready to undertake a second war for a genuine independence. Matigari often refers to himself using the plural form to make this clear, as when he says: ðwe the patriots, we, Matigari ma Njiruungiø (p. 59). Matigari insists on the plural form, again, when he says: ðWhoever dares touch that woman will know who we really are, we, Matigari ma Njiruungiø (p. 76).

Though Matigariø's age and physical appearance are not clearly defined, the reader can form his own idea from the clues that are occasionally provided. In fact, the scant information that Ngugi provides about Matigariø's physical appearance is meant to maintain the mystery that surrounds his character. This mystery is meant to arouse peopleø's suspicion and fuel the rumours about his being Christ resurrected. Thus, at times he appears to the people he meets as middle aged, and at others as a young man. When he is first introduced, he is described as ðmiddle-aged, tall and well-builtø (p. 3). His old age is also indicated through the description of his hair which is ða fine mixture of black and greyø (p. 5). Yet, at other times, he is described as being much older, for instance when the narrator says: ðHis face creased with ageø (p. 17), or again: ðAge crept back on his face; the wrinkles seemed to have increased and deepenedø (p. 29). Another reference to his being quite old is the label ðMzeeø meaning ðold manø used by a guard when addressing him (p. 44). Matigari, himself,

refers to his old age when he remarks: "I am as old as this country" (p. 112). Still, he is, at times described as quite young-looking. This is often the case when he does something daring. A telling example is the narrator's remark: "The courage of truth has once again transformed him. It seemed to have wiped age off his face, making him look extremely youthful" (p. 31). Matigari's youthful appearance is again pointed out in the following statement: "His eyes shone brightly. All the creases on his face had gone, and youth had once again returned to him" (p. 43).

In the main, Matigari is described as quite courageous. Ngugi has endowed him with this attribute mostly because he is an ex-Mau Mau fighter, as a tribute to all the Mau Mau fighters. In fact, Ngugi's pro-Mau Mau allegiances are openly expressed both in his essays and fictional works. Matigari's courage is first publicly witnessed when he challenges the policemen who terrorize Guthera. It is this event that owed him the respect and admiration of the common people, and that amplified the rumours about his personality. These rumours enhanced his courageous opposition to the regime and focused on the tone of his speech. In fact, very often those who related his experiences insisted on the powerfulness of his voice. One of them says: "His voice alone was like thunder and his eyes like fire!" (p. 77). There are often references to the power of his voice in challenging situations. This is the case, for instance, when two policemen attempted to arrest him and he said: "Don't dare you touch me!" (p. 112). His courage is again emphasized in his attitude towards the Minister: "Matigari stood tall, fearless, full of confidence. It was this quality about him that made people fear him. His glance was piercing, and he made one feel as if he were looking into the very depth of one's soul" (p. 123).

Besides courage, philanthropy is another trait of Matigari's personality. This quality shows through his attempts to save people, e.g. Guthera and Miriuki. Like Abdulla (*Petals of Blood*), who saved Joseph, a child found on a garbage heap, Matigari saves Miriuki whom he finds in a garbage yard. This aspect of his

personality also shows in his sharing his food with his co-prisoners. Naivety is yet another aspect of his psychological make-up. He seems naïve when he keeps telling John Boy that the house is his and asks him to give him back its keys (p. 44). His naïve behaviour makes even the people who are closer to him, e.g., Guthera and Miriuki, doubt his sanity. This is the case when he shows them John Boy's house and pretends it is his: 'they were each asking themselves the same question: 'Is this man sane?' (p. 43).

In fact, Matigari is often considered as being crazy, for example, one of the policemen who assault Guthera tells him in Kiswahili: 'You are crazy' (p. 32). Again, when he comes to arrest him at John Boy's house, he remarks: 'Are you crazy or what?' (p. 51). A similar question about his sanity is asked by Robert Williams to John Boy: 'Is he all right?' (p. 44). Indeed, these references to madness are a prelude to Matigari's admission to a mental hospital. This implies that the fate of those who dare question the *status quo* would be internment, as one of the prisoners warns Matigari saying: 'if you continue asking questions of that kind, you will find yourself in a mental hospital or in a pit of everlasting darkness' (p. 61). Matigari's predicament is reminiscent of that of Okara's protagonist in *The Voice*. The latter ends up in an asylum for asking about where to find 'it', i.e., moral probity. Being accused of craziness is one of the characteristics that Matigari shares with Christ. He shares with him some personality traits and predicaments, which make him a Christ figure.

The parallels between Matigari's life and that of Christ are quite evident in certain events, like his attempt at saving Guthera, who may hence represent Mary Magdalene, and his sharing his food and beer. Like Christ he benefits from supernatural protection, since he is unharmed when he is stoned (p. 17). Besides, like Christ, he is a visionary: 'his eyes shining brightly as if he could see far into the future' (p. 19). Moreover, like Christ he has a certain physical endurance. This is

highlighted through Miriuki's remark: "What sort of man is this? I haven't seen him eat or drink anything, and he does not look in the least tired" (p. 41). The event that is the closest parallel to that of Christ's life is that of Matigari's supper with his co-prisoners, which is meant to represent Christ's last supper. One of the prisoners makes the analogy clear when Matigari shares his food with them, by reciting from the Bible the description of Christ's last supper with his disciples (p. 57). As this example indicates, it is not Matigari who pretends to be Christ on his Second Coming, but it is rather the people who meet him who attribute to him Christ's personality. This is the case when one of the prisoners assumes a self-imposed mission to baptize him saying: "the son of God was baptised by John the Baptist. That is why I have taken the liberty of baptising you" (p. 62). Another prisoner asks him about the "sign" of Christ's Second Coming: "How can we identify you? Where is the sign?" (p. 63). It is mostly because there have been rumours about him achieving miracles that people suspect him of being Christ resurrected. One person telling another about the incident with John Boy says that even horses were frightened in his presence: "[they] just reared, neighing in fright" (p. 78). Thus, whatever, Matigari says or does is interpreted as a sign of Christ identity. This seems to annoy Matigari who once answers harshly: "Listen í I don't need anything to prove who I am" (p. 63).

Yet, Matigari often gives clues that plainly express his human dimension and revolutionary propensity, as when he says: "I don't need signs or miracles. My actions will be my trumpet and they shall speak for me" (p. 63). His human dimension further appears in the instances when his courage fails him, and when his weaknesses are revealed as when he feels physical pain when he is stoned: "He felt his bladder and bowels nearly give way as the excruciating pain shot through his body [í] His head reeled. He sank to the ground and lost consciousness" (p. 18). Human weakness betrays him again, when he gets emotional when Guthera proclaims her revolutionary fervour (p. 140).

Apparently Ngugi also wants his Kenyan readers to unravel the riddle about who Matigari is. He keeps overplaying his Kenyan readers' or listeners' emotional response and religious sensibility. He makes the analogies between Matigari's personality and that of Christ quite plain, as when he makes Matigari say: "I invite you all to my house the day after tomorrow. Come to feast and celebrate our homecoming!" (p. 64). This is also the case when he says "Don't rejoice just because you have thrown me in this hell. You will see me again after only three days" (p. 79). The biblical parallel here is Christ's resurrection on the third day.

Yet, despite all these Christ-like features, Matigari's personality traits are totally in opposition to those of Christ. The fact that he adopts violence as a means to an end is in contradiction with Christ's passive resistance. Moreover, from time to time, Matigari makes it clear that his mission is earthly and that therefore he is not Christ resurrected. This is none too clear as in the following passage:

Yes, I will wear a gun around my waist and carry my AK47 over my shoulder; and I shall stand on top of the highest mountain and tell it to all the people: Open your eyes and see what I have seen [í] Let the will of the people be done! Our kingdom come as once decreed by the Iregi revolutionaries: The land belongs to the tiller and not to parasites and foreigners! (p. 63)

His revolutionary mission to achieve social justice is again indirectly hinted at through his being "revealed" i.e., revealed his revolutionary message to Ngaruro, the worker. One character recounts Ngaruro's encounter with Matigari saying: "Matigari had appeared to him [í] he had spoken in parables and proverbs saying: The products of our labour should go back to us who produce the wealth of this country. He said that imperialists and their overseers should pack their bags, because the owners of the country are back" (p. 74)

To make it plain that Matigari is not Christ but a revolutionary leader, he further adds: "What greater message do you want? He said that the products of toil should go to those who toil" (p. 75). This is, further, emphasized through the following statement: "Matigari ma Njiruungi and Ngaruro wa Kiriro talked nearly the whole night about workers í peasants ;;; freedom fighters í revolutionaries í about all the forces committed to building a new tomorrow for all children í Amen" (p. 126). It is quite clear from this last word that Marxism, not Christianity, is Matigari's religion. Matigari, himself, plainly states that he does not belong to the Christian religion when he tells the priest: "No, I don't belong to your religions or churches" (p. 94). Another indirect reference to point out that Matigari is not Christ is the remark: "Do you mean to say he's the One prophesied about? The Son of Man" (p.81). At times Ngugi hints at traditional religion as being the one that Matigari adopts, for instance, when he tells the children of Trampville: "But that God lives more in you children of this land; and therefore if you let the country go to the imperialist enemy and its local watchdogs, it is the same thing as killing that God who is inside you. It is the same thing as stopping Him from resurrecting" (p. 156). This is a clear reference to the revival of traditional communalism. There are, however, other hints to patriotism as being the "religion" that Matigari propagates. Such is the case when he says: "That God will come back only when you want Him to" (p. 156).

Yet, in most cases, there are hints to the religion that Matigari stands for as being related to the peasants, the workers and socio-economic justice. It, thus, has Marxist undertones. This is clear from Ngaruro's answer when he is asked about whether there are any members of Matigari's family in the factory: "And whose family do you think we all are?" (p. 23). Another telling example is the remark of one of the workers who says: "Our God will come back. Yes, the God of us workers will surely come back" (p. 61). Ngugi makes it plain when interviewed about the novel that his character stands for the working class. He states: "The character of Matigari

can be seen first in a general sense as representing the collective worker in history. That is why the novel is in fact not set in any particular country, though it is clearly set in Africa.⁹¹

The Marxist dimension of Matigari's teaching principles are, again, made clear through the following remark: "What greater message do you want? He said that the products of toil should go to those who toil" (p. 75). Matigari, himself, often uses Marxist rhetoric, as when he says that "the worker [demands] the produce of his sweat" (p. 21), and that "the producer must have the power over his produce" (p. 63). It is, however, quite clear that this Marxian rhetoric is Ngugi's and that it is voiced through Matigari, his mouthpiece to achieve his revolutionary didacticism. Yet, it sounds odd in the mouth of Matigari who is of a peasant background. This makes Matigari's intellectual physiognomy unconvincing and it may raise the reader's suspicion as to the realistic dimension of the story. Matigari appears as a more "true-to-life" character when he uses a peasant language as when he says: "the failure of one crop does not deter one from sowing seeds again" (p. 150). Such a statement is indicative of his peasant background and relates to the peasant's daily agricultural activity. This is also the case of his remark: "Should the shepherd and the shepherdess let the wolves and hyenas herd their sheep for them?" (p. 138). Through his discourse, Matigari appears, at times, unconvincing since the reader is not made to witness his development from a peasant to a radical intellectual. His personal development from a non-violent resistant to one who adopts revolution violence is, however, more credible. Having been victimized more than once, he had no other choice than to resort to violence and hence regain his warrior status again.

The character of Matigari is central to the three major motifs of Ngugi's novel: revolutionary violence, Mau Mau and Christianity. In fact, the last two motifs are reconciled. Still, whereas initially he came, like Christ, to spread the message of "Truth and Justice" peacefully, he ends up like a Mau Mau fighter. Again, whereas

people consider him to be Christ, he is convinced of having an earthly revolutionary mission, i.e., to right the wrongs and bring about socio-economic justice through a violent revolution. This makes his character serve Ngugi's Fanonian pattern of revolutionary change. Indeed, not only does Ngugi make him adopt Fanon's revolutionary principles, but he makes him adopt his rhetoric. A typical term of this rhetoric that Matigari often uses is the term 'parasites' (pp. 46, 50, 78), which refers to the middle class. It is, however, no wonder that in such instances Ngugi intrudes upon the narrative through his protagonist, whom he uses as a mouthpiece.

Besides Matigari, the other character who serves the two major motifs of the novel, Christianity and Mau Mau is Guthera. She is related to the Christianity motif by being the daughter of a priest, and a devout Christian in her early life. She is also, through her predicament, a prostitute, and her relationship with Matigari, the Christ-figure, a parallel of Mary Magdalene.⁹² Christian mythology has it that the latter was saved by Christ from prostitution. She is, on the other hand, related to Mau Mau, both by being the offspring of a Mau Mau activist, and by joining Matigari's new Mau Mau struggle. Besides, like the Mau Mau women, she smuggles food to Matigari when he is in prison and she helps him in his struggle. The important role played by women during the Mau Mau insurrection is highlighted by Cora Ann Presley in her book: *Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion, and Social Change in Kenya* (1992), where she maintains that: 'Women were active in every aspect of the movement and performed vital tasks which sustained the struggle,⁹³ and that they 'were very active in the secret oath-taking ceremonies and in the clandestine network that supplied materials to the forest fighters'⁹⁴ In fact, Ngugi has repeatedly praised Mau Mau women in his fictional and non-fictional works. In *Petals of Blood*, he endows Niyakinua with positive values, in *Devil on the Cross*, he does so as regards Wangari, and in *Matigari*, he makes Guthera inherit their revolutionary fervour and courage.

Like Ngugi's heroines in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Guthera is an embodiment of 'Black Beauty'. Not only is she good looking, but she has a perfect figure. She is so well built that her clothes fit her as though she was created in them! (p. 28). Matigari who saves her both from her persecutors and from prostitution calls her 'the beauty of our land' (p. 30). She is an archetypal figure who stands both for the 'empire' and for the 'mother figure'. Matigari who is quite old calls her 'mother' (p. 32). Whereas at times she symbolizes the 'nation', at others she symbolizes the 'land', two pivotal features of Gikuyu patriotism. Guthera also stands for a biblical figure, i.e., Mary Magdalene, one of Christ's disciples. The parallels between the lives and predicament of the two women are quite striking. They have been pointed out by many critics. Magdalene was a prostitute before being saved by Christ, as was Guthera before being saved by Matigari. Again, as Magdalene, she becomes a disciple of her saviour. Guthera became an earnest follower of Matigari. Guthera was a devout Christian before the death of her father, who was killed for helping Mau Mau fighters. Ngugi insists on her religious fervour to show how dire circumstances corrupt the most religiously devoted. She is like Wanja (*Petals of Blood*), a victim of the socio-political corruption that prevails in the country.

Through Guthera's predicament, Ngugi attempts to highlight the hardships that some Kenyan women go through. He portrays them as doubly exploited, firstly, as women and secondly as labourers. Their exploitation is summed up by Miriuki, who remarks: 'They seep the factories, cut grass in the fields, pick tea and coffee and pyrethrum and clean the slime from the smelly drains and gutter' (p. 25). By portraying their oppression,⁹⁵ Ngugi takes a stand against their oppressors, as he has often done in his fictional and non-fictional works. Through Guthera's example, he attempts to be didactic and show the oppressed Kenyan women that they can rebel and change their fate. He makes this plain, through Guthera's remark:

I want to do something to change whatever it is that makes people live like animals, especially us women. What can we as women do to change our lives? Or will we continue to follow the paths carved for us by men? Aren't we in the majority anyway? Let's go! From now on, I want to be among the vanguard. I shall never be left behind again. (p. 140)

The importance that Ngugi gives to women, whom he considers as the core of society is voiced through Matigari who remarks: "Women are the ones who uphold the flame of continuity and change in the homestead" (p. 27). In fact, this is the reason behind Ngugi's always making women among the vanguard of revolutionary movements in his novels. On the whole, like all his female characters, Guthera is used to serve the revolutionary didacticism of the novel. She is, however, a flat character, since Ngugi does not probe her psychological state in depth. Apart from occasional references to her reflections, there is no probing of her psychology to demonstrate how she develops into a revolutionary activist. The reader is told about her resolution to become a rebel, but is not shown how the thought germinates in her mind. Hence, her character is more of a stereotype. In fact, she is used to serve the two major motifs of the novel, i.e., Mau Mau activism and the defect of Christian fervour. She serves the former motif in that she is a victim who paid for her father's Mau Mau activism, and in that she is taking part in the new Mau Mau guerrilla movement instigated by Matigari. She serves the latter motif, in that she shows through her case that religious devotion cannot solve destitution.

In the main, through Guthera's predicament, Ngugi attempts to drive home the point that revolutionary activism and religious allegiances are not antithetical. This message seems to be addressed to the Kenyan common people who are quite devout. The latter are often misled by their rulers' religious propaganda which insists on submissiveness as a Christian principle. To counteract such presumptions, Ngugi demonstrates through Guthera's father, a priest and a Mau Mau activist, that religious

fervour does not hamper patriotism. Her character, again, like Matigari, fits in the fanonist revolutionary pattern. She becomes one of the vanguards of the new resistance. Being a prostitute, she is one of the *Lumpenproletariat*, the class which according to Fanon has a revolutionary propensity.

Like Guthera, Muriuki is a mere stereotype. He is similarly used to sketch Ngugi fanonist type of revolution. Being a delinquent, he figures among the *Lumpenproletariat*. He is a copy of Joseph in *Petals of Blood*. Like the latter, he is in the vanguard of the new revolutionary uprising, and like him, he is entrusted with the weapons of the leader of the resistance movement, to carry on the struggle. Among the other characters that are used purposefully to serve the revolutionary didacticism of the novel, there is Ngaruro, the worker. He makes a brief appearance to serve the plot. Yet, despite his hasty exit, he plays a key role in the revolutionary awakening of his fellow workers. He has charisma and is eloquent and convincing. His impact on his audience is pointed out by one of the characters who remarks: "You know when Ngaruro wa Kiriro addressed the meeting yesterday? Everybody's heart was beating as if they were ready to take up arms there and then" (p. 74). Another aspect of his personality is courage; for instance, he challenges the rulers openly (p. 109). Like Karega, in *Petals of Blood*, he is daring and outspoken about his revolutionary credentials, and hence, he ends up in prison. In the main, though Ngaruro's character is quite important to the plot development, Ngugi makes him appear briefly on the scene in order not to make him overshadow the true hero, namely, Matigari. This seems to have been deliberately done to point out that though the workers are important to fuel the revolution, they are not its leaders. As in *Devil on the Cross*, and unlike in *Petals of Blood*, he confers the leading role, in a Fanonist fashion, to the peasantry. Matigari, the leader, is of peasant origin.

The remaining characters, who are the hero's antagonists, among whom figure John Boy and Williams, are again, just class stereotypes. John Boy is the

typical 'black white man'. He imitates his white counterpart, Williams Jr., in both dress style and behaviour. He has an inferiority complex as regards his race and colour. He openly denigrates his people and culture when he challenges Matigari. He, for instance, says: 'White people are advanced because they respect that word [individual] and therefore honour the *freedom of the individual*' (pp. 48-49). In praising white people's supremacy, John Boy fits in the stereotype of the 'black white man' as sketched by Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks*, and about whom he states in *The Wretched of the Earth*: 'The native intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas, and deep down in his brain you could always find a vigilant sentinel ready to defend the Graeco-Latin pedestal'⁹⁶ John Boy goes on pouring scorn on his fellow blacks saying: 'But you black people? You walk about fettered to your families, clans, nationalities, people, masses' (p. 49). As it shows from such a remark, he does not consider himself to be 'black'. The case of John Boy's inferiority complex, a consequence of his education in a British university, shows that Fanon's thesis about the colonial intellectuals' education that breeds an appeal of the West is still up-to-date. Fanon maintains that: 'the colonialist bourgeoisie, in its narcissistic dialogue, expounded by the members of its universities, had in fact deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men may make: the essential qualities of the West of course'⁹⁷ By applying Fanon's thesis in the dramatization of the character of John Boy, Ngugi suggests, as he does throughout the novel, that nothing has changed after independence, and that neo-colonialism is still entrenched in Kenya. This is made clear through the statement: 'Yesterday it was the imperialist settlers and their servants. Today it is the same. On the plantations, in the factories, it is still the same duo. The imperialist and his servant' (p. 79).

John Boy not only epitomizes the Kenyan intellectuals who have an allegiance to the regime, but he also stands for Kenyatta, with whom he shares a common background. For instance, like Kenyatta, his education abroad was paid for

by members of his community, which expected to reap future benefits. The similitude is none too clear as in Matigari's remark: "The Boy the cost of whose education we all contributed to [] The boy for whom we sang: He shall come back and clean up our cities, our country, and deliver us from slavery? The boy we sent off to study, saying that a child belongs to all, that a nation's beauty was borne in a child, a future patriot?" (p. 48). Similarly to John Boy, Williams Jr. is a class type. He has less importance in the plot development than John Boy. He is used just as a caricature to illustrate neo-colonial presence in Kenya. On the whole, Ngugi's characters are mostly sketched to serve his motifs or to express his message. They are, thus, used purely for a didactic end. Ngugi does not deem it necessary to probe their psychological state.

Neo-colonialism is, as in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, a major feature of Ngugi's novel. It is particularly emphasized through Ngugi's direct references to the Western firms labels, in his description of the setting, e.g., "Barclays Bank, American Life Insurance, British-American Tobacco [] Esso filling station" (p. 14). As in *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi points out that the judiciary system is managed by Westerners (p. 120). Again, as in this novel, Ngugi expresses his will to put an end to the neo-colonial domination of his country. Ngaruro maintains: "Foreign exploiters and their local servants must now pack up their bags and go. The patriots, Matigari ma Njiruungi, are back" (p. 60). This statement is indicative of Ngugi's Fanonian perspective. He considers the national bourgeoisie and the ruling class as playing a secondary role in the management of the country's affairs. As Fanon puts it: "The national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour; it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type"⁹⁸ The Fanonist undertones of Matigari are evident through its rhetoric. The term "parasites" which refers to the national bourgeoisie, often recurs (pp. 46, 50, 78). Its lack of industrial initiative, and its consumer habit, as defined by Fanon is, for instance, echoed in Matigari's remark

about John Boy: "But what do you expect from anybody feeding on the left-overs from the settler's table?" (p. 47). Again, echoing Fanon's views, on "robbery"⁹⁹ and "corruption"¹⁰⁰ Matigari remarks: "Theft and corruption have become the order of the day" (p. 137-38).

Throughout the novel, Ngugi insists on injustice as being prevalent in the country. People are imprisoned without trial, as is the teacher and the student, petty thefts are punished, but not colossal ones. The student is arrested just for inquiring about where to find democracy in the country (p. 54). One peasant is arrested for selling milk without a licence (p. 53), another is arrested for stealing food from a restaurant, and he justifies his deed by saying: "What could I have done? I was famished, my friends" (p. 54). As he does through this example, Ngugi suggests, once again, that poverty is widespread in the country, and he blames the ruling class and the bourgeoisie for maintaining it. The enrichment of this class at the expense of the common people is recurrently pointed out, as is the case through Matigari's remark: "So a handful of people still profited from the suffering of the majority, the sorrow of the many being the joy of the few?" (p. 12). The gap between the two classes is again highlighted through a description of their districts: "They went past some workers' houses. These were many tiny houses crammed together [] Then they came to the place where the rich lived, [] the houses they were driving past were large with huge gardens. There were flowered lawns and green trees everywhere." (pp. 148-149).

Ngugi's insistence on class differences along Marxian lines and the Marxist jargon he often uses to express socio-economic exploitation are indicative of his Marxist leanings, despite the fact that, as in *Devil on the Cross*, he has adopted a Fanonist rather than Marxist revolutionary pattern.¹⁰¹ Ngugi seems to have some difficulties in cutting ties with his Marxist education. He, for instance, considers teaching the Marxist tradition as teaching the truth. A teacher who has been arrested

for teaching Marxism, a clear autobiographical hint, says: 'If I cannot teach the truth, what should I teach, then?' (p. 54). Ngugi's use of the Marxist rhetoric is quite evident in Ngaruro's statement: 'We are only asking for adequate remuneration for our labour. The labour of our hands is all we own. It is our only property. We sell this labour in the labour market' (p. 109).

Ngugi particularly insists on the rulers' persecution of the radical intellectuals. This is clearly expressed through the teacher's fear of the possibility of being found out in the company of one of them. He tells Matigari: 'Are one of those radicals who talk about revolution? I think that it's better that you leave. I don't want your radicalism to rub off on me. Revolution is like leprosy' (p. 91). Ngugi who has paid a dear price for his radicalism, since he was imprisoned, does not miss a single chance to denounce the repression of radical intellectuals in Kenya. He, for instance, writes: 'The teacher and student will be detained without trial. The court cannot allow educated people to mislead the public with Marxist doctrines and communistic teachings' (p. 121). In *Detained*, he maintains that they are considered as 'devils'. He states: 'These agitators suddenly become devils whose removal from society is now portrayed as a divine mission [í] Chain the devils!¹⁰²

Through the example of the teacher, Ngugi portrays, with an ironic touch, the radical intellectuals who give up revolutionary activism as a consequence of their persecution. On the other hand, through the student who defies the Minister, he shows that the real radical intellectuals are the ones who undertake revolutionary activism, no matter what the consequences would be. The student's determination is highlighted through his slogan when he is being arrested: 'Even if you detain us. Victory belongs to the people' (p. 121). Witnessing the student's defiance, the teacher overcomes his fear and takes up the slogan. Clearly, through the teacher's example, Ngugi attempts to send a message to the Kenyan intellectuals who renounce revolutionary activism out of fear of repression. Again, through the example of the

crowd, attending the meeting with the Minister, who took up the revolutionary song: "Even if you kill us. Victory belongs to the people" (p. 122), Ngugi demonstrates that people's fear of oppression has been overcome and suggests that when there is unity among the masses, repression becomes a challenging task for the authorities.

Through the example of the masses' revolutionary uprising, Ngugi pinpoints that Matigari's revolutionary preaching has become fruitful. His adoption of a Fanonist revolutionary praxis is also evident through the example of the children involved in revolutionary activism (p. 154). Again, through the fire started by the mob in the residential districts, Ngugi indicates that revolutionary violence is the only means to set records right with their exploiters. Ngugi's endorsement of Fanon's principle of revolutionary violence is clearly expressed through Matigari's statement: "The enemy can never be driven out by words alone, no matter how sound the argument. Nor can the enemy be driven out by force alone. But words of truth and justice, fully backed by armed power, will certainly drive the enemy out" (p. 138). This shows that Ngugi grants a great importance to revolutionary didacticism through literature.

Ngugi has chosen an ex-Mau Mau fighter as the instigator and leader of revolutionary uprising to send a message to this category of Kenyans about their relevance to revolutionary activism in the country. Through Matigari's case, Ngugi suggests that their mission to liberate the country is still unfinished, since they have achieved a "pseudo-independence". Besides, Ngugi often uses the word Matigari in the plural form to suggest that revolutionary change is not the task of a single person. This is made clear through Matigari's statement: "I'm looking for my people [i.e.] the family of the patriots who survived the war" (p. 38). The reference to revolutionary uprising as being a new Mau Mau struggle is often made. In fact, there are references to it in Ngugi's earlier novels, e.g., *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, and in *Barrel of A Pen*, where Ngugi predicts the return of Mau Mau. He himself points out

to this saying: ‘An article I wrote in 1983, just before I wrote *Matigari*, was entitled ‘Mau Mau is Coming Back (in *Barrel of a Pen*), but what really meant in the novel is that the spirit of Mau Mau is still very much alive in Kenyan society’¹⁰³

This concern for a new Mau Mau, i.e., a revolutionary uprising led by the ex-Mau Mau fighters has its origin in the rumours that often circulate in Kenya, whenever there is social unrest, about the Mau Mau fighters taking arms again to takeover power. This was particularly the case in the 1980s. As Marshall . S. Clough points out in his: *Mau Mau Memoirs: History, Memory and Politics* (1998): ‘In the 1980s, after the death of Kenyatta [í] Mau Mau served some dissenters as a symbol and as an historical rallying point of opposition, though others, particularly intellectuals from outside Central Kenya, saw the use of Mau Mau in this way as nationally divisive’¹⁰⁴

Still, whereas, it appears from the novel that Ngugi uses Mau Mau to prompt revolutionary praxis, in an interview about it, he claims that it is done with the purpose of just learning lessons from this period of Kenyan history: ‘I think many more people are now looking back to that period of the 1950s, not with a view to returning to it, but just in order to learn lessons arising from that period, lessons about the achievement as well as the failures of the Mau Mau intervention in the history of Kenya’¹⁰⁵ He also maintains that ‘Mau Mau is one of the highest aspirations of [his] theme of resistance [and that] Mau Mau is a central theme of present-day Kenyan political debate’¹⁰⁶ And he carries on denouncing the Kenyan regime anti-Mau Mau stance saying: ‘When the debate about Mau Mau became very heated, and almost engulfed the whole of Kenyan society in 1984, President Moi himself banned public debate and discussion on the issue’¹⁰⁷

The rumours about the return of Mau Mau veterans to undertake a new insurrection is echoed in *Matigari* through a worker’s remark: ‘I am talking about the patriots who went away. Listen! They have come back’ (p. 60). This is also the case

in the statement: "Rumour has it that they have come back with flaming swords in their hands [í] To claim the products of our labour" (p. 72). Ngugi makes it plain, through Matigari, that the new mission of these ex-Mau Mau fighters is to establish socio-economic justice. He says: "I shall never stop struggling for all the products of my sweat. I shed blood and I did not shed it in vain. One day the land will return to the tiller, and the wealth of our land to those who produce it. Poverty and sorrow shall be banished from our land!" (p. 124). Ngugi also suggests through the example of Miriuki and the other children who join the revolutionary movement, after being initiated to it by Matigari, that it is the role of the ex-Mau Mau fighters to pave the way and transmit their revolutionary fervour to younger generations. The success of such a task is hinted at in the novel through the case of the children who started calling themselves Matigari (p. 145). Matigari, himself indirectly points out to the success of his mission in gaining more adherents to the movement when he says: "We are the patriots who survived: Matigari ma Njiruungi! And many more of us are being born each day" (p. 124).

To motivate the ex-Mau Mau fighters and press them to take arms again Ngugi emphasizes the fact that for some of them, the struggle was in vain, since they remained in misery, whereas the Loyalists, who betrayed them, were reaping the fruit of independence, as does John Boy. He insists that the worst of all is that the families of those who died in the struggle were in destitution, as it is the case of Muriuki (p. 15), and Guthera whose father was found carrying bullets in his bible" (p. 35). Besides, to prompt the ex-Mau Mau fighters to action, Ngugi emphasizes the Loyalists' pride in having cheated them. The Minister remarks about the gains of the Loyalists: "Yes, we loyalists are the ones in power today. Long live loyalism" [í] Yes, this Boy you see here ó his father was killed by terrorists for obeying and abiding by the law" (p. 102). He goes even further as to proclaim that the Mau Mau struggle was a "nightmare" in their history (p. 118). This is, clearly, a hint to Kenyatta's condemnation of Mau Mau, when there were underground movements

against his rule. In fact, Kenyatta condemned Mau Mau earlier in 1962, when he proclaimed: "We are determined to have independence in peace, and we shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya. We must have no hatred towards one another [í] Mau Mau was a disease which had been eradicated, and must never be remembered again."¹⁰⁸

Ngugi insists on the fact that the Loyalists consider the ex-Mau Mau fighters as "murderers" (p. 123), and "terrorists" (p. 102), to fuel their hatred at their longstanding enemies. Moreover, to counteract what he considers as allegations about the Mau Mau fighters' "barbarity," Ngugi points out that they had a humanitarian propensity. Matigari remarks: "When we were in the forest we never killed any at any cost unless we were hungry and had run out of food. Even when we came across an injured animal, we would mend their broken limbs" (p. 143). As it shows from this example, Ngugi attempts to rehabilitate the image of the Mau Mau fighters. In doing so, he is certainly rehabilitating the memory of his brother who was a Mau Mau activist. Ngugi attempts to counteract the leaders' denigration of the movement by showing through the behaviour of Matigari, that Mau Mau fighters are not blood-thirsty barbaric people, but that they have a humanitarian propensity. This is dramatized, for instance, through Matigari's compassion for the downtrodden, e.g., Miriuki and Guthera whom he saves from their persecutors. He saves Miriuki when he was attacked by a stronger boy who wanted to steal his property, and saves Guthera when she is harassed by the policemen. In the main, Ngugi uses Mau Mau as a revolutionary motif both to remind his Kenyan audience that history can repeat itself, and that as they took arms against the settlers, they can do it again to achieve a genuine independence. Further, he attempts to drive home the message that the young generation could learn revolutionary activism from their elders who took part in the independence struggle.

Besides Mau Mau, Ngugi uses the Christian religion as a major motif. This motif has a twofold purpose. Firstly, it is used to appeal to the Kenyan Christian devout, who form the majority of the population, mostly among the grassroots, Ngugi's targeted audience. Secondly, it is used to highlight the rulers' use of religion to cheat these people and maintain their submissiveness. Clearly, Ngugi views religion from a Marxist perspective, i.e., as 'the opium of the people'. To make the grassroots rebel, against their exploiters, Ngugi emphasizes the religious hypocrisy of the latter. This is the case when he parallels the Minister's wife adulterous behaviour with her broadcasted sermons on conjugal faithfulness as a Christian principle. Ngugi insists on the fact that she does not put into practice the principles she preaches: 'Madame the minister's wife urged all women to take refuge in the safety of the church and stop competing with their husbands in drinking and adultery' (p. 27). Ngugi's denunciation of religious hypocrisy is stronger in *Detained*. There, he records his meeting with a priest who came to his cell and asked him to pray for forgiveness, and to whom he replied: 'Hold it! [í] Who needs your prayers, your Bibles, your leaves of holiness ó all manufactured and packaged in America? Why do you always preach humility and acceptance of sins to the victims of oppression? Why is it that you never preach to the oppressor? Go. Take your Bibles, your prayers í ø (pp. 24-25).

All Through *Matigari*, Ngugi expresses his discontent with Christian teachings. This seems, however, to have escaped the attention of Maughan Brown who contends that Ngugi portrays some positive aspects of Christianity. He remarks: 'But one can hardly fail to recognize the extent to which this novel, unlike its immediate predecessors, identifies many of its positive values by reference to Christian teachings'¹⁰⁹ On the contrary, Ngugi is, at times, as in *Devil on the Cross*, sarcastic about them, and is even blasphemous (pp 53, 97). This is also the case when Ngugi adds his own commandments to the Christian Ten Commandments (pp. 37, 120).

Being aware of his carrying out offences against his fellows' religious allegiances, Ngugi attempts, indirectly, to justify his stand by insisting on his concern for the predicament of the downtrodden. For instance, he illustrates the church leaders and their congregations' lack of humanitarian concern for the plight of the latter through the example of Guthera: "She pleaded with all the other Christians in her church. When they saw her approaching, they fled thinking: 'A terrorist's child'" (p. 36). Again, through her predicament, she gets no help from the Church, Ngugi attempts to make the Kenyan masses realize that they should not expect any help from the Church to relieve them from their substitution. Here, Ngugi is deliberately not acknowledging the contribution of the Kenyan Churches to social welfare. The social role of these Churches is pointed out by Ghalia Sabar-Friedman in her *Church, State and Society in Kenya: From Mediation to Opposition, 1963-1993* (2002).¹¹⁰ Indeed, some Church leaders were among the first to contest social injustice and indulged in political protest. This is the case of Rev. David Gitari, the title of whose book is quite revealing: *Let The Bishop Speak* (1988).¹¹¹

It is probably, the progressive aspect of some Kenyan churches that contributed to Ngugi's attempt to use Christianity as a revolutionary motif. By making his hero a Christ figure, Ngugi, indirectly reckons the importance of the Church for revolutionary activism. He purposefully blurs the line between Matigari's personality as a Christ-figure and as a revolutionary hero to pinpoint to the devout Kenyans that there is no contradiction between revolutionary ideals and religious principles. For instance, when Matigari imitates Christ during his Last Supper, he makes it clear that his revolutionary ideals are of prime concern, and that his second coming is that of the revolutionary saviour, not that of the religious one. He remarks: "And this cup is a testament of the covenant we entered with one another with our blood. Do this to one another until our kingdom comes, through the will of the people!" (p. 57). Evidently, the reference to blood bonding is reminiscent of the Mau Mau oath-takings, and that to "the will of the people" has Marxist connotations.

Besides, through the example of Guthera's father, a priest and a patriot, he points out that there is no incompatibility between religious allegiances and patriotism. He even professes patriotism as a religious duty, as when he remarks: "Hey, you sinners over there! Didn't you hear what the Lord said to you? Go away, you scum of the earth who are even prepared to sell the sovereignty of your country!" (p. 82).

As in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi's overconcern with his didacticism has made him favour content at the expense of form. Aestheticism seems to have had a secondary importance, not a minor one though. This is first evidenced through the twists of plot and character development to serve his revolutionary message. As regards plot manipulation, one can but hint to the so many unconvincing situations that the novel embodies. For instance, Ngugi overdoes the regime's repression by stating that a drunkard has been arrested "simply for being drunk" (p. 55). He also exaggerates the Minister's provocation of the masses, through his boastful remarks about the Loyalists' wealth acquisition and his sarcasms about the freedom fighters' destitution, during his meeting with them. The Minister says: "What about the children of those who took axes and home-made guns, claiming that they were going to fight against the rule of law? Where are they today? Where is the independence that we fought for? That is what they are still shouting at the bottom of the ladder" (p. 103). Another example among the unconvincing situations is that of the posters of Jesus Christ and Karl Marx found in the dustbin by an old couple (p. 134). This is yet another testimony to Ngugi's manipulation of plot to serve his major motifs, Christianity and Marxism. It is, in fact, quite odd that the owner of the posters should throw them away at the same time. It is clear that this event has symbolic connotations. Whether Ngugi attempts to reconcile Christianity and Marxism to show his devout fellow countrymen that there is no contradiction between Christianity and revolutionary ideals is a moot point. Again, by making the old woman remark that the two figures of the posters are "lunatics" (p. 134), Ngugi indirectly points to their common fate as revolutionaries. They were both revolutionaries in their own way,

and both had humanistic leanings. Indeed, through the case of Matigari, the Christ-figure and revolutionary hero, who is often considered as a lunatic, and who is sent to an asylum, Ngugi points to the arduous task of the instigators of revolutionary change, from Christ's endeavour to that of present day revolutionaries, including Ngugi himself who was imprisoned on account of his revolutionary literature and revolutionary didactic theatrical enterprise, e.g., the Kamiriithu staging of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*.

Ngugi's manipulation of his characters to make them serve his major motifs, shows in Matigari's intellectual physiognomy. Though Matigari is of a peasant origin, and is most probably illiterate, on account of his age and the time he spent in the forests, he often indulges in Marxist rhetoric, e.g., p. 46. Another character who lacks credibility on account of his background and intellectual awareness is the deranged old woman whom Matigari encounters in the wilderness. Her analysis of the socio-economic situation of the country is full of wisdom. She says: 'Books are the modern stars. Those who study them are the wise men of today. Why do you think they are being harassed so much?' (p. 87). Evidently, here Ngugi is expressing himself through the old lady. It is, however, mostly through Matigari and Ngaruro, the worker, that Ngugi's intrusions are the most striking. Matigari echoes Ngugi through the use of such terms as: 'colonialists', 'imperialists', 'parasites'. He also echoes Ngugi when he refers to the Iregi revolutionaries whom Ngugi praises in *Detained*.¹¹² Ngaruro, just like Karega in *Petals of Blood*, is Ngugi's mouthpiece to express his Marxist credentials, as it is the case in the following statement: 'Ours is a dispute between labour and capital. But the owners of capital should always remember that even the capital in question comes from the labour of our hands' (p. 109). At times, Ngugi's interference is direct through the narrator, the *Gicaandi Player*. For instance, when the student and the teacher are arrested, he says: '*This was not justice!*', and to make the reader notice the interference, he uses it in italics (p. 122). Another instance of direct authorial intrusion is Ngugi's remark: 'No

government, not even the most repressive, has ever managed to silence the voices of the massesø (p. 127), or again, -Despite the drought in the country, [the rich] homes had enough water for their lawns and shrubs and their swimming-poolsø (p. 149).

Still, at other times, Ngugi seems to express his reflections loudly and recording them. This is particularly the case in situations reminiscent of his own ordeals at the hands of the ruling *élite*, as when he remarks: -Yes, those who sow good seeds are accused of sowing weeds. As for the sell-outs, they are too busy locking up our patriots in goals, or sending them into exile to let outsiders come and bask in the comfort wrought by othersø (p. 150). This remark highlights Ngugiø bitterness at being an exiled and is indicative of the motivation behind the writing of the novel. Clearly, Ngugi attempts to take revenge on those who were responsible for his predicament, namely, the ruling class, by denouncing them and encouraging popular resistance and revolutionary activism. It is, however, in such instances that the readerø aesthetic distance is disrupted, through an awareness of authorial intrusions. As it has been demonstrated, Ngugiø presence is evidenced throughout the novel, and amazingly enough Simon Gikandi has not perceived it. He remarks: -Matigari is perhaps distinguished from Ngugiø prior novels by its complete evacuation of the authoritative narrative voiceø¹¹³

To sum up, though the novel has a certain aesthetic appeal, mostly on account of the use of magical realism and the suspense it upholds, it is, like *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, marred by Ngugiø sermonings. It has, however, served its didactic purpose since it has contributed to the spreading of rumours, in 1987,¹¹⁴ about the return of Mau Mau fighters to wage a new war to establish peace and justice. As Gikandi remarks: -It is important to note that Matigari (the character and the novel) had acquired political agency in the process of being read. It was through the interpretative strategies they applied to the novel, that readers came to determine its political practiceø¹¹⁵ Besides, as Ngugi himself remarks in the Note to the English



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Edition –Matigari the fictional hero of the novel was himself resurrected as a subversive character¹¹⁶ And the Kenyan authorities anecdotic reaction, since they sent the police searching for Matigari, to find out that he was a mere fictional character, is yet another victory of Ngugi over his persecutors, despite the banning of the novel.

NOTES

¹ Simon Gikandi 'The Epistemology of Translation: Ngugi, Matigari and the Politics of Language', *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 22, N°4, (Winter 1991) 161-167.

² Ibid., p. 166.

³ Ibid., p. 166.

⁴ See Ngugi's 'A note on the American edition'.

⁵ Abulrazak Gurnah, 'Matigari: A tract of Resistance', *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 22, N°4 (Winter 1991), 169-172, p. 169.

⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 11

⁷ Ngugi, 'A Note on the American Edition'.

⁸ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), p. 227.

⁹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained*, op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹ Ngugi, 'A Note on the American edition'.

¹² To have a fair idea about the extent of repressive practises under Moi's regime, see Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Publisher), *We Lived To Tell-The Nyayo House Story* (Nairobi 2003). Available at

<<http://kenya.fes-international.de/publications/live2tell.pdf>>.

¹³ Al Amin Mazrui, 'Fuelling the Struggle', *West Africa*, N° 3860, (2-8 September 1991), p. 1450.

¹⁴ See Ngugi wa Thiong'o *Homecoming*, Foreword by Ime Ikiddeh.

¹⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong'o 'The making of a Rebel', *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (June 1980), 20-24, p. 23.

¹⁶ David Maughan Brown, 'Matigari and the Rehabilitation of Religion', *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 22, N°4, (Winter 1991), 173-180, p. 174.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 176.

²⁰ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *A Grain of Wheat, A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 83.

²¹ Secretary of State for the Colonies, *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Colonies*

by *Command of Her Majesty*. May 1960, (London: Her Majesty Stationary Office, 1960), p. 2.

²² Simon Gikandi, "The Epistemology of translation" op. cit., p. 163.

²³ Ibid., p. 163.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 161.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 162.

²⁶ Olivier Lovesey, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Postnation: The Cultural Geographies of Colonial, Neocolonial, and Postnational Space" *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 48, N^o. 1, (Spring 2002), 139-168, p. 156.

²⁷ In *Moving the centre*, Ngugi praises this ex-mau Mau fighter and Kenyan historian, who was jailed by the Moi regime for attempting to write a historical account of the Mau Mau struggle to challenge the official version of it. He particularly expresses his sympathy for his fate, he has lost his eyesight in jail.

²⁸ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, op. cit., p. 235.

²⁹ Adulrazak Gurnah, "Matigari: A tract of Resistance" op.cit., p. 169

³⁰ Peter Nazareth, "Review: Taking Fiction Beyond the Text: *Matigari* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o; Wangi wa Boro" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 11, N^o. 3, (July 1989, 203-205), p. 203.

³¹ Simon Gikandi, "The epistemology of translation" op. cit., p. 165

³² Frank Bures, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *Matigari*, *Tin House Magazine*, Back Issues N^o 11. Available at <http://www.tinhouse.com/mag/back_issues/archive/issues/issue_11/matigari.html>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Olivier Lovesey, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Postnation: The Cultural Geographies of Colonial, Neocolonial, and Postnational Space" *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 48, N^o. 1, (Spring 2002), 139-168, p. 156.

³⁵ Frederic Jameson "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" *Social Text*, N^o 15 (Autumn 1986), 65-88, p. 69.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 69

³⁷ Molefi K. Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1988).

³⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

³⁹ Molefi K. Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987) p. 125.

⁴⁰ Lupende Mphande, "Ideophones and African verse", *Research in African Literature*, Vol. 23, N^o.1, (1992), 117-129, p. 128.

⁴¹ William Slaymaker: "The Disaffections of Postcolonial Affiliations: Critical Communities and the Linguistic Liberation of Ngugi wa Thiong'o." *Sympleke* Vol. 7. N^o. 1-2 (1999) 188-196, p. 189.

⁴² Ibid., p. 190.

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- ⁴³ All page references are to Ngugi Wa Thiongø: *Matigari*, Heinemann African Writers Series, 1987.
- ⁴⁴ Olivier Lovesey, 'Ngugi wa Thiongø's Postnation: The Cultural Geographies of Colonial, Neocolonial, and Postnational Space' op. cit., p. 140.
- ⁴⁵ See backcover of the American Edition of *Matigari*
- ⁴⁶ Stephen Tobias, 'The Poetics of Revolution: Ngugi Wa Thiongø's *Matigari*' *Critique*, Vol. 38, N°3, (1997), 163-176.
- ⁴⁷ F. Odun Balogun: *Ngugi and African Postcolonial Narrative: The Novel as Oral Narrative in Multigenre Performance*. (Quebec: World Heritage, 1997).
- ⁴⁸ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, op. cit., p. 236.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 236.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 210.
- ⁵¹ Odun Balogun considers that both the 'old' and the 'new' realism share common characteristics and have the same target, See his 'Matigari and the Reconceptualization of Realism in the Novel' in *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Charles Cantapulo Trenton: Africa World Press (1995), 349-366, p. 350.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 350.
- ⁵³ Ngugi wa Thiongø, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press 1998), p. 124.
- ⁵⁴ Maya Jaggi, 'Matigari as Myth and History: An Interview' Ngugi interviewed by Maya Jaggi. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 11, N°. 4 (October 1989), 241-251, p. 244.
- ⁵⁵ This is why there are references to students' strikes in Ngugi's novels, e.g., in *Petals of Blood*.
- ⁵⁶ This was said in an interview in 1989, Balogun, reserves a whole chapter to the mythic aspect of the novel in his book: *Ngugi and African Postcolonial Narrative: The Novel as Oral Narrative in Multigenre Performance* (Quebec: World Heritage, 1997).
- ⁵⁷ Maya Jaggi, 'Matigari as Myth and History: An Interview' op. cit., p. 243.
- ⁵⁸ These unrealistic events, may have, however, been deliberately used by Ngugi to make the novel fit the paradigms of magical realism.
- ⁵⁹ Homi Bhabha: *Nation and Narration*, (U.K: Routledge, 1990), p.7.
- ⁶⁰ Ngugi has come to confirm his adoption of magical realism in his newly published novel *Wizard of the Crow* (2006).
- ⁶¹ Ben Okri has gained worldwide recognition and received the Booker Prize for fiction and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Africa, for *The Famished Road*.
- ⁶² Ngugi's dedication of the novel is an indication to his concern for the advocacy of orature.

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- ⁶³ Tiffin, Helen, "Post-Colonialism, postmodernism and the Rehabilitation of Postcolonial History" *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, XXX, 2, (1993), p.172.
- ⁶⁴ Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye*, (U.K: Routledge,1998), p.1
- ⁶⁵ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, op. cit., p. 151.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 151.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 151.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 152.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 152.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 152.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., p. 153.
- ⁷² Ibid., p. 153.
- ⁷³ Ibid., p. 158.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 187.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 186.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 214.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 186.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 207.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 210.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 220.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 217.
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 217.
- ⁸³ Ibid., p. 215.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 210.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 214.
- ⁸⁶ See Arnold Van Genep, *The Rites of Passage*, (Translated by Monika. B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee) (First Published Chicago University Press, 1960), (London: Routledge and Paul Kegan, 2004) , p. 19.
- ⁸⁷ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, op. cit., p. 312
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., op. cit., p. 238 .
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., p. IX.
- ⁹⁰ Simon Gikandi, "The Epistemology of translation" op. cit., p. 165.
- ⁹¹ Maya Jaggi "Matigari as Myth and History: An Interview" op. cit., p. 243 .
- ⁹² Many critics have pointed out that Guthera is meant to represent Mary Magdalene. See Odun Balogun, "Ngugi's Matigari and the Refiguration of the Novel as Genre" in *The World of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, edited by Charles Cantapulo. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1995), p. 191. See also Tuzylina Jita Allan, *Teaching African Literatures in a Global Literary Economy* (New York: Feminist Press, 1997), p. 28.

⁹³ Cora Ann Presley, *Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion, and Social Change in Kenya*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1992), p. 124.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁹⁵ Ngugi's denunciation of the oppression of Kenyan women seems to have its origin in his childhood experience. He witnessed the exploitation of his mother and other women when he was a labourer in a pyrethrum field. See *Detained*, op. cit., p. 107.

⁹⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 36.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁰¹ Unlike Fanon, Ngugi gives a greater importance to the proletariat's role in revolutionary praxis.

¹⁰² Ngugi, *Detained*, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰³ Maya Jaggi 'Matigari as Myth and History: An Interview' op. cit., pp. 243-244.

¹⁰⁴ Marshall . S. Clough: *Mau Mau memoirs: History, Memory and Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Maya Jaggi 'Matigari as Myth and History: An interview' op. cit., p. 244.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 244.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Ghalia Sabar-Friedman: 'The Mau Mau Myth: Kenyan Political Discourse in Search of Democracy' *Cahiers D'Etudes Africaines*, 137, Vol. XXXV, N°. 1 (1995), 101-131, p. 104.

¹⁰⁹ David Maughan Brown, 'Matigari and the Rehabilitation of Religion' op. cit., p. 176

¹¹⁰ Ghalia Sabar-Friedman, *Church, State and Society in Kenya: From Mediation to Opposition, 1963-1993* (Routledge, U.K., 2002).

¹¹¹ David Gitari, *Let the Bishop Speak*, (Uzima, Nairobi, 1988).

¹¹² Ngugi, *Detained*, op. cit., p. 65.

¹¹³ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, op. cit., p. 226.

¹¹⁴ See Ngugi's note to the English edition, p. VIII.

¹¹⁵ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, op. cit., p. 291.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. VIII.

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