

SOCIALIST REALISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE AFRICAN WRITER

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ABSTRACT

When we go back into the history of socialist countries we find that at the birth of socialism, during the transition period, literature had a vital role to play. To be more precise, the socialist realist method contributed to the coming of socialism. This socialist realist method, filled with optimism, was committed to the working class.

Many countries in the African continent are now going through a transition period towards socialism. A transition period, as stated above, is a very important period in which the African writer has a great role to play to hasten the **coming** of socialism. So far, most African writers, using the critical realist method, have only gone as far as merely depicting society. Society in turn, has been presented in a deteriorating state. Apart from this, no place has been given for the optimistic rising class - the working class.

Learning from the experience of socialist writers, a new African writer is emerging. Ngugi, taken as an example, has been greatly influenced by Gorky's Mother, a socialist realist novel. Furthermore, as the African writer is living in a transition period, he is working towards socialism. This indicates that the socialist realist method has some implications that are useful to the African writer. These implications will help the African writer as a means for the advancement of socialism, which in turn, will improve the African novel.

INTRODUCTION

When we look into the history of mankind we see that he has passed through many socio-economic formations. He has started from the primitive communal society and moved through slavery and feudalism. At present some societies are in the capitalist formation experiencing its highest stage, imperialism. On the other hand, other societies are in a transitional phase of socialism with communism as their goal. In other words, through time, society has shown a gradual change towards development.

Alongside these socio-economic formations we have literary formations indicating that there is some correspondence between the two. For example, we have classicism and romanticism slightly related to feudalism while we have realism and modernism in the capitalistic formation. As quoted by Marx:

...in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, from the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch...¹

When we look at the primitive communal society we find an equal division of labour and equal status among individuals, the reason being no classes. Hardly any literary records can be found but, most likely, this crude equality would have been reflected.

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, Manifesto of Communist Party, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1952), p. 20.

The next formations are class divided ones, namely, Slavery, Feudalism and Capitalism. In these formations we find that literary activity focuses on the upper classes: the aristocracy, feudal lords and the elite; in other words, on the owners of the means of production. Literary formations, to begin with, were reflecting society. Later, however, the focus began to turn towards the imagination. Thus, in romanticism, we find this alienation of mankind manifesting in an escapist tendency. "Art for Art's Sake" is the motto under which the artists claimed that there is no connection between the economic and literary formation. In the later stages of capitalism, realism began to revive with a critical nature. Society with all its imperfections, even today, is the major emphasis of literature. The major defect of this literary method is that no solution is given to the problems of society.

Mankind today, is in a transitional period where the antagonisms between classes are being removed. Socialism has produced a new type of man - socialist man, and it is the duty of literature to depict this creative individual, working towards communism. Due to this, the major focus of this study will be on socialist realism which faithfully depicts the struggle of the lower classes.

This study has many significant aims. The first major aim is to delve into the meaning of the concept of socialist realism. Some of the major questions would be like, what do we mean by socialist realism? What are the major features and points of emphasis? What is the difference between socialist realism and its major counterpart critical realism? The main purpose thus, is to enable us to have a clear understanding of this complex concept.

Secondly, works on socialist realism have always been scattered among various articles, books and journals. One of the major tasks of this study will be to synthesize the articles thus enabling readers to use this work as a point of reference on matters pertaining to socialist realism.

Socialist societies are producing a new man which is being depicted in literature. Thus it is the duty of a writer to depict his reality. When we come to the African writer in particular who is in a society, which is in transition, his obligation increases. It is within a transition period that the foundations of socialism are laid and also it is a period where the coming of socialism can be quickened. The African writer should, therefore, show the problems of society and suggest certain solutions leading to the advent of Socialism.

Various methods will be used in this study, the first of which will be reviewing the literature on socialist realism. I will attempt to trace through the origin and gradual development of this method and attempt to deal in depth with various definitions. Along with this, the similarities and differences between socialist realism and critical realism will be discussed. Special emphasis will be given to major features, of socialist realism, like revolutionary romanticism, humanism, commitment and various other features. The purpose, as aforementioned, is to have a better understanding of socialist realism.

As the African novel has not developed much along the socialist realist trend, my next phase is to give a content analysis with major emphasis on the themes and characters of a set of African novels. I have

divided Africa: according to its geographical condition, that is North, South, East, West and Central Africa and tried, through these representative novels, to give a general picture of what the African novel is like today. Due to the wide nature of African literature I would like to point out that I am dealing with the novel in particular.

Finally, using Ngugi Wa Thiongo, and especially Devil on the Cross, as a central point, an attempt will be made to draw certain tentative implications that socialist realism has for the African writer.

CHAPTER ONE
REVIEW OF SOCIALIST REALISM

1.1 Definitions of Socialist Realism

Many Socialist critics have always refrained from giving a precise definition of Socialist realism. For some, it is a lack of complete grasp or understanding of the concept, while for others, it is fear. The fear is based on the fact that, by defining this concept, one will be restricting or narrowing down its scope. This belief that giving a definition circumscribes the meaning of a concept can be traced to Spinoza who says "Every definition is a limitation".² Alongside this belief is the fear that defining a concept makes it dogmatic. This same feeling can be traced in Rene Wellek, who feels that every definition is a "period concept"³ that will "run its course"⁴ in due time.

This is a false assertion, however, because socialist realism in its very nature is dynamic. As one critic put it, socialist realism makes amends for everything that is new. In other words, as socialist realism is based on a Marxist ideology, which in turn, is based on a relationship basis, it is in no fear of becoming dogmatic.

All this explanation does not mean that no definitions of socialist realism exist; in fact, there are plenty. I will start with the less developed definitions, and as we progress, present the more profound ones.

² A. Overchenko, Socialist Realism and the Modern Literary Process (Moscow: Progress Publishers., 1978), p. 328.

³ Rene Wellek as quoted by Fikre Tolossa, Realism and Amharic Literature (Bremen: University of Bremen, 1982), p. 19.

⁴ Ibid.

To begin with, let us have a look at Stalin's personal point of view regarding socialist realism. He says: "An artist should first of all show our life truthfully. If he complies with the task he will not fail to single out the factors which lead to socialism. This I would call socialist art, socialist realism."⁵ This view presented by Stalin is very broad because socialist art does not mean socialist realism. Socialist art is a broader category in which almost every socialist tendency in art is put. Socialist realism, on the other hand, is one artistic method used by the majority of the people in the Soviet Union today.

Zhadanov introduces a very controversial issue regarding art and this is ideology in art.

*... the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic portrayal should be combined with the ideological remoulding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism. This method of belles lettres and literary criticism is what we call the method of socialist realism.*⁶

The definition stands for an introduction of ideology in art which is acceptable because the two cannot be seen separately. Zhadanov, however, stresses the ideology to the extent that the artist's subjective view is neglected. This, however, is not what socialist realism advocates. Socialist realism includes the artist's creative ability but it should not be the sole aim of literature. In other words, literature should not only be personal but also social.

⁵ A Ovcharenko, 284.

⁶ H.G. Scott, ed. The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1977), p. 21.

Radek's definition is a little bit better but not so comprehensive as those of Gorky, Sholokov or Lenin. For Radek:

Realism does not mean the embellishment or arbitrary selection of revolutionary phenomena, it means reflecting reality as it is, in all its complexity, in all its contriety, and not only capitalist reality, but also that other reality, the reality of socialism...and a work of art created by a socialist realist is one which the artist has seen in life and reflected in his work.⁷

Radek's definition differs slightly from the previous ones because he deals with both the socialist and capitalist reality. It is also implied that the future must be examined. This idea of depicting the future is strengthened by the Writers Union where socialist realism is seen as "...the historical concrete reproduction of reality in its revolutionary development with the purpose of ideological reformation of workers in the spirit of socialism."⁸

Vaughan, in his research on socialist realism, elaborates this definition even further:

It embraces a number of questions: the evolution of art - the organic relationship between the art of the past and the art of the present and future; the class nature of art - its objective reflection of social relations; and the functions of art in society - the obligations of the artist in society in which he works, and hence the relationship between the artist and the politician. Moreover, it considers the didactic potential of art...⁹

This more thorough definition points out certain concepts like partisanship, romanticism and the relation between politics and literature.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157

⁸ As quoted by Fikre Tolossa, p. 10.

⁹ C. Vaughan James, Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory (London: MacMillan 2 Col. Ltd.; 1973). P. 1.

These will be discussed later on in the paper, as these are all characteristics of socialist realism.

To come to "The father of socialist realism, Gorky, we see that he gives a general overall picture of socialist realism:

*Socialist realism asserts life as action, as creative endeavour the aim of which is to constantly develop the finest individual abilities of man for his triumph over the forces of nature, for his health and longevity, for the great happiness of living on this earth which he wants to cultivate, in conformity with his constantly growing requirements, and make of it a beautiful home for mankind, united into one big family.*¹⁰

Up to the 1934 congress, these were the major definitions that were given by major critics and scholars. Later, however, the definition was touched upon by Sholokov in his Nobel speech at Stockholm.

*...Socialist realism is the art of truth of life, comprehended and interpreted by the artist from the point of view of devotion to the Leninist party principles... it seems to me that any art that actively assists men to build a new world is socialist realist art.*¹¹

In another extract he says,

As I see it, the true avante-garde consists of those artists who disclose in their work the new content distinguishing features of our age... I am speaking of that realism which carries within it the ideal of a renewal of life, to transform it for the good of the human race: the realism which we call socialist. It is unique in that it expresses an outlook accepting neither a purely meditative

¹⁰ Vladimir Scherbina, Lenin and Problems of Literature (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), p. 114.

¹¹ M. Parkhomenko and A. Myasnikov, ed. Socialist Realism in Literature and Art (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971) p. 85.

*approach nor an escape from reality but calls us to fight for human progress which will enable us to achieve aims that are dear to the hearts of millions and light their way in the struggle.*¹²

We can go on listing more definitions of socialist realism, but for our purpose, this will suffice. From these definitions, we can deduce that socialist realism covers much ground. To sum it up, it includes the role of art in the struggle for communism. Partisanship is another characteristic of socialist realism. This means commitment to the Marxist Leninist principles and the party, the party representing the people in the historical process of the past, present and future. When we think of revolutionary romanticism we must keep in mind its strong correspondence with reality as opposed to the previous romanticism based on mere fantasy and imagination.

To conclude, I would like to give Lenin's definition regarding an artist and his method:

*"An artist brooking no compromises in depicting the life of the people awakened to conscious historical creation, an artist who shows" the pains of the birth of the new man in the heart of the man in the old cast", an artist seizing life broadly in its historical movement, in the whirl of shattering changes, and not depriving mankind of real hope, an artist able to show, in the fates of individuals, the fate of a people seized by the furious desire to overturn the world, an artist who sees the world with all the eyes of the active participants of the socialist revolution, seeing in these participants the beauty of mankind; an artist achieving in all this or, rather, achieving thanks to all this, a marvellous realism - such an artist is indeed the genuine socialist realist. The method of such artists we call the method of socialist realism.*¹³

¹² M. Khrapchenko, The Writer's Creative Individuality and the Development of Literature (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977) p. 188.

¹³ Lenin as quoted by A. Ovcharenko p. 134.

1.2 Realism

Socialist realism and critical realism both have their origin in realism. Its predecessor romanticism was greatly involved in the ideal and the beautiful. Romantic writers were dissatisfied with life because they found it meaningless. These writers tried to create a world of their own in their literature. They are thus labelled escapists for their slogan was "Art for Art's Sake" instead of "Art for Life's Sake." During the romantic period, man was not the focus of attention; things like nature and beauty were given priority. Under realism, however, literature began to become more anthropocentric and to deal more with practical life. Man had to be depicted, his surroundings and way of life and romanticism could not meet this demand. Gradually, romanticism began to fade and give way to realism.

When we come to critical and socialist realism under realism, we find that their roots are primarily realistic. The differences, however, come out in concepts like partisanship, and romanticism. To understand these two branches in realism I would first like to deal with realism. Rene Wellek defines realism as one that:

*"...rejects the fantastic, the fairy tale - like the allegorical and the symbolic, the highly stylized, the purely abstract and decorative. It means that we want no myth, no Maerchen, no world of dreams. It implies also rejection of the improbable, of pure chance, and of extraordinary events, since reality is obviously conceived at that time, inspite of all local ipersonal differences as the orderly world of nineteenth-century science, a world of cause and effect, a world without miracle without transcendence even if the individual may have preserved a personal religious faith. The term 'reality' is also a term of inclusion: the ugly, revolting, the law are legitimate subjects of art. Taboo: subjects such as sex and dying (love and death were always allowed) are now admitted into art."*¹⁴

¹⁴ Rene Wellek, Concepts of Literature (London: Yale university Press, 1963), p. 241.

Realism can be traced all the way back to Aristotle and his concept of "mimesis," the "idea of imitation". Later, this imitation led to an abstraction and the human element was gradually left out; trends such as naturalism, classicism and modernism can be taken as examples.

When we come to critical and socialist realism, we find that there are certain ties with the Hegelian heritage. As pointed out by George Bizstray, it goes to show that one of the basic concepts of Hegelian aesthetics is that "...great literature represents reality as a process."¹⁵ and this is one of the arguments of socialist realism. This is elaborated further by pointing out that humanism is also another Hegelian element: "At the center of this process is man in all three stages of artistic communication: as creator, hero and leader."¹⁶ The interdependence of literature and philosophy is also a major feature. Hans Mayer points out that "...the question of realism is not independent of general , philosophical problems... " ¹⁷ Yet another component of Hegelian heritage.

Within realism, we find major concepts that are also found both in critical and socialist realism. Bizstray says that "...didacticism appears closely linked to the concept of realism"¹⁸ just as Hegel, who felt that we always have to learn from great literature.

¹⁵ George Bizstray, Marxist Models of Literary Realism, (New York: Columbia University Press., 1978), p. 16.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 18

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 10

After examining realism, we come to ask what socialist realism is and what differences and similarities are there between socialist and critical realism.

Critical realism is another name for bourgeois realism. Advocates of this realism greatly concentrate on the "is" instead of the "ought to be." The major driving force behind this movement is the passive recording of events. Literature is seen as merely descriptive, that is, pointing out the "imperfections" of the world. Critical realism is commonly condemned for not giving solutions to the problems that plague mankind. In many instances, critical realism overlaps with realism and both terms are sometimes said to be synonymous.

1.3 Critical and Socialist Realism - Similarities and Differences

Critical and socialist realism are two major trends under the heading of realism. Critical realism is advocated a great deal by George Lukacs, and he has his differences with socialist realism, mostly represented by Gorky.

According to Bisztray, for Lukacs, there is no difference between socialist realism and the "nineteenth century bourgeois realism." the difference is only "terminological" he stated. He goes on to say, that previous realism was already predictive, so nothing new has been added. Gorky, however, strongly disagrees and says that this "new realism" was being born with "... the dawn of the socialist order"¹⁹ and is vastly different from the bourgeois realism. Bisztray, goes on to show that

¹⁹ Bisztray, p. 101.

Lukacs wants to "emphasise the elements of preservation"²⁰ while Gorky is out for "abolition". When we examine the concept of abolition, we must keep in mind that Gorky means the destruction of "the bourgeois elements" that still exist, meaning the unwanted and bad. Abolition does not mean the destruction of everything. In fact, it means the preservation of the good of the past upon which the present and future are based and built.

Bisztray goes on to show the difference of stress on the name, socialist realism. He says that for Lukacs, this concept is primarily "realist" while for Gorky it is "socialist." Gorky justifies his stand in saying that Lukacs's is critical only to the extent that it "...is needed for class strategy to show up the bourgeois errors in the struggle to render their rule stable."²¹ In accordance with this, socialist realism should be more realist to fight the "survivals of the old world"²² and its "pernicious influences."²³

Lukacs and Gorky also differ over the word commitment. Gorky feels that commitment is one of the major attributes of socialist realism. Lukacs, on the other hand, thinks it is the least important. Regarding politics and commitment Lukacs was on par with Antonio Gramsci, who felt that "an ideologically correct reflection of life was no substitute for aesthetic values."²⁴ To the same effect Mao also believed that "...art is a more concentrated, qualitatively richer, representation of life than any biased social propaganda, and that the latter cannot substitute for genuine art."²⁵

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 74

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 106

²⁵ Bisztray, p. 106

Brecht, however, was on the side of Gorky and felt that "Class conscious writing is more superior."²⁶

Critical realism, in its time, was very progressive, keeping up with the vogue of the day and trying to explain and solve the problems surrounding man. Gradually, however, this progressive tendency gave way to the retrogressive tendency that it has today. Regarding this Lunachaisky states as follows:

At first it was progressive realism. The bourgeois satirists made fun of the upper classes, defended the bourgeois "virtues" and presented the bourgeois ideology in ringing vivid forms, attempting to make it the ideology of the oppressed masses following in its wake. But this youthful period passed. Realists of another sort appeared. These simply oriented themselves on the environment, merely drawing pictures of reality. But their pictures were meaningful even though the great representatives of the second stage of realism (for instance, Balzac or Dickens) had no precise idea of whether to lead society or what aims to set before it. They could not distinguish clearly where their real enemy lay and even were not quite certain in whose name they were in fact writing. Then we can distinguish a third stage when the petty bourgeois begins to be moan reality, which it finds disgusting. The foul and impoverished state of society casts shadow even on Nature and on the Universe itself, and pessimistic realism appears."²⁷

Khrapchenko also tries to elaborate on the differences between socialist and critical realism. He says that there are many characteristics that are common in both. We find "echoes of the contemporary mass popular movement"²⁸ with the "renewal of men on completely new social bases"²⁹ and

²⁶ Ibid., p. 107

²⁷ Parkhomenko and A. Myasinkov, ed. pp. 56-57.

²⁸ Mikhrapchenko, p. 189.

²⁹ Ibid.

the "rebuilding of society".³⁰ Remarking on critical realism, the author says that it is "...a study of the increasing imperfections of the world".³¹ This is not its only deficiency when compared with socialist realism. Especially regarding the future of man Khrapchenko says that critical realism and the rest "...stop short at simple faith in the power of good and humanity, trusting if not to reason, then to some combination of spontaneous desires and feelings, which will supposedly help to overcome the faulty in the acquisitive society."³²

Critical realism has been condemned for its passive nature. As one critic put it, a mere recording of events around man means, a blind acceptance of the reality as it is. Socialist realism, on the other hand, is out to change and rebuild society thus making it a different type of realism, one of action and dynamism.

Previously it was felt that critical realism was seen to have an assertive or more superior role thus giving it "pride of place" when compared to socialist realism.

Later, however, this claim was seen to be false because socialist realism is seen to "...weld together, the assertive, critical and analytical principles, with the result that an excessive stress on any one of them cripples the method."³³

To conclude, socialist realism and critical realism, though they have much in common and both depend on or are incorporated in realism, are two very different methods. To some like Lukacs, the differences may only be terminological, but when seen in depth, it is clear that critical realism is an outdated mode of criticism and should give way to its contemporary socialist realism.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ M. Parkhomenko and A Myasinkov, p. 17.

1.4 The Major Characteristics of Socialist Realism

Before we go into the major characteristics of Socialist realism, it will be worthwhile discussing the history of socialist realism briefly.

Socialist realism, a modern phenomena in literature, dates back to the 1920's and 1930's. It was finally institutionalized in 1934 and used as the means of literary expression in the Soviet literature, the only socialist country then. In the 1930's and even today socialist realism has been looked down upon, especially among Western critics. The main reason for this, is that Western societies are class divided ones and socialist realism advocates the needs of the lowest class. Thus, it is not a favourite with Western Literary critics of Literature. Most Western critics have considered it as a mere political tool that does not take the aesthetic element into account. This is not true because, though there is a strong commitment to the principles of Marxism, this does not mean that the aesthetic element can be overlooked. Without aesthetics we cannot have literature and as socialist realism includes aesthetics it cannot be used as a mere political tool. For the proponents of socialist realism, this method has always stood as "...the reflection in the arts of the battle for the creation of a socialist state."³⁴

The opponents, on the other hand, advocate that socialist realism is something that was "...forced on unwilling artists in the early thirties by the creation of the artistic union."³⁵ This is not actually true; rather, writers were forced by their own conscience into realizing that

³⁴ C.V. James, P.X

³⁵ Ibid.

critical realism could not portray a socialist reality. Thus they turned to socialist realism. It is true that during the early stages of this literary method the use of other methods was discouraged and the socialist realist method emphasized. This can be seen in Zhadhanov's inaugural speech at the Writers Union in 1934. He says: "Our literature is the youngest of all literatures of all peoples and countries. And at the same time it is the richest in ideas, the most advanced and the most revolutionary literature."³⁶ This implies that as this is the best method it is expected to be used.

Under the major characteristics of socialist realism, we have Narodnost, Klassovost and Partiinost. These three elements cannot be seen apart from socialist realism as they constitute the core of this method.

1.4.1 Narodnost (People-ness)

Narodnost is one of the major features of socialist realism, according to C.V. James, the literal meaning of the word is people-ness.

For the last few centuries or so, art has been exclusively, as Lenin said, for "the upper ten thousand". The elite of society has always enjoyed this privilege, while the majority of the people have been restricted to their oral literature. The term Narodnost, therefore, implies an attempt to give the majority of the people a chance to be exposed to what they were denied previously. Socialist realism stands on the side of the people. As Lenin said "... should we serve exquisite cake to a small minority while the worker and peasant masses are in need of black bread?"³⁷

³⁶ H.G Scott, p. 17.

³⁷ M. Parkhomenko and A. Myasinkov, p. 28.

By Narodnost we mean the "relationship between art and the masses"³⁸ What should be done to give the majority of the people the opportunity to share our cultural heritage? This same question can be traced in the thinking of Hegel who felt that "Art does not exist for a small exclusive circle a restricted group of highly educated men; it exists entirely for the whole people."³⁹ We have two methods of popularizing art among the people: The Schillerian and the Leninist points of view.

According to the Schillerian approach the attempt is to "...elevate mankind as a whole"⁴⁰ to the level of the upper classes so that they could appreciate literature. This idealistic approach has no clear-cut methods of how it is to be done. Furthermore, it is criticized for being "...far removed from reality"⁴¹ As this takes some time, literature will suffer and it is also too ambitious to take all mankind at once, to a high level.

According to Lenin's approach, art should come to the level of the common man and help to bring him up. Even more, art should not only be "intelligible to the masses, it must spring from them."⁴² By this is meant that as literature serves its class, it reflects the interests of that particular class. Gradually, as the artists point and guide the people into the future literature will bring society up to a higher level. As Lenin said:

³⁸ C.V. James P. 1

³⁹ Ibid. p. 5

⁴⁰ C.V. James, p. 5.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Lenin as quoted by C.V. James, p. 8.

*"...art must have its deepest roots in the very depths of the broad masses of the workers. It must be understood by those masses and loved by them. It must write the feelings, thoughts and will of the masses and raise them up. It must arouse the artists among them and develop them."*⁴³

In agreement with Lenin was the Belgian poet, Rodenbach, who also felt that "...for the people to understand it, it must first be reduced to their level"⁴⁴ meaning that literature should come to their level. This, however, does not mean that the level of art should deteriorate, on the contrary it is strengthened because it slogans the feelings and aspirations of the majority, instead of the minority. Lenin plainly put it as follows:

*"...serving the people...did not by any means imply adopting oneself to backwardness, on the contrary, it implied spiritually enriching the masses, raising their cultural level and developing their socialist mentality"*⁴⁵

1.4.2 Klassovost (class-ness)

Klassovost is another component of socialist realism. It refers to the class character that art has, and as art represents a particular class, it serves and dedicates its purpose to fulfilling this. In accordance with Marxist Philosophy "All art is class art...wherever class antagonisms exist, they are reflected in art".⁴⁶

As art, especially realist art, has been a reflection of society, the contradictions between classes have been depicted. When we examine society we find that there are two cultures: one of the exploiter and another of the exploited. Due to this, any writer will always be influenced by his particular class and the economic benefits as well as his social relations with that class.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 6

⁴⁴ H. Khrapchenko, p. 169.

⁴⁵ Lenin as quoted by Vladimir Scherbina, p. 111.

⁴⁶ C.V James, p. 11.

Klassovost tries to point out that there is this class nature in all art. Based on this principle, writers should consciously write and be aware that they are writing for their class. In the case of socialist realism the writer supports the working class. As socialist realism advocates the aspirations of the workers of the world, it is evidently a class oriented literature, thus making Klassovost one of the pillars of this method.

1.4.3 Partiinost(Party-ness)

Another very important aspect of socialist realism is the concept of partisanship, meaning loyalty to the principles of the party, which in turn, represents the people. Literature has almost always had a double function. Firstly, a purely aesthetic, and secondly a class interest. When we come to the class interest we find it under the guise of the so called freedom category. Regarding this, Lenin has shown how class interest has been "hypocritically masked" by the money bag and corruption. Literature has thus served a certain class - the rulers, at times explicitly, otherwise implicitly.

Partisanship, under socialist realism has appeared with a clear stand - "Commitment to the people, who are represented by the party."⁴⁷ So partisanship means serving the people by abiding by the principles of the party, in other words, literature now has a definite purpose.

⁴⁷ A. Zis, Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics (Moscow Progress Publishers, 1977) p. 286.

As Lenin said "Literature must become part of the common cause of the proletariat"⁴⁸ serving the people and constructing a new society. Partisanship in literature means:

*"...the highest form of dedication to the people, the fullest expression of the militant strength of the progressive-minded writers' conviction, who consciously and openly devote their talent to the people and the cause of socialism"*⁴⁹

Partisanship ultimately leads to truth, the cornerstone of realism, and one of the major components of socialist realism. As expressed by Alexander Tvardovsky:

*Life will lose its whole meaning
Do you know without what?
Truth that makes the life worth living,
Truth that goes to the heart!
Truth and only truth for me,
Bitter as it wants to be.*⁵⁰

Partisanship, according to Zelinsky, helps one to see through the "...dimmed glasses of partiality and bias"⁵¹ that hinders one in achieving ultimate truth. Alexander Pope, however, has always labelled partisanship as one of the four bad aspects that hinder impartially in criticism. There is no doubt that partisanship is very important in any work of literature. Writers and all other people of art cannot stand on the side and comment on other peoples' mistakes. We are building a new society and it is our duty to stand for our class that is working towards equality of all mankind.

⁴⁸ Lenin as quoted by Zelinsky Kornely, Soviet Literature: Problems and People (Moscow Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 381.

⁴⁹ Vladimir Scherbino, p. 97.

⁵⁰ N. Parkhomenko and A. Myasinkov, p. 165.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 135

Lenin elaborates further, by pointing out that the upper hand is attained through this "...conscious, committed services"⁵² that the author renders society, thus helping the working class in the political struggle. This leads to the conclusion that the essence of partisanship is as pointed out by Lenin "the open allegiance of art to the cause of the working class."⁵³

Freedom

The concept of freedom has been the most controversial issue. As described by Jurgen Ruhle, a West German sovietologist, party organization and party literature is nothing other than a "...manifestation for the enslavement of literature through politics" and commitment is described as "shackles forcibly thrust upon artists"⁵⁴ This view is, at best misleading. Literature without politics is itself a political stand because literature and politics are inseparable. Many Western critics claim that their literature is free from politics but this is not actually true. The escapist tendencies themselves give the impression that governments and regimes are invincible. This is a political stand. As Lenin argued "...one cannot live in a society and be free from society."⁵⁵ A socialist society is not a mere accidental phenomenon; we have to build it, and to build it consciously, we need commitment.

⁵² M. Parkomenko and A. Myasinkov, p. 137.

⁵³ Lenin as quoted by C.V. James, p. 13.

⁵⁴ A. Zis, p. 278.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 289.

Different Soviet writers have different attitudes towards freedom. Konstantin Fedin believes, that the main function of literature is to serve society and as long as this is abided by he feels he is free.

Mayakovsky makes a distinction between the moral and material aspects of life. He says that he is materialistically independent, dependent on no one for his income, but morally he belongs to the revolutionary movement. In one of his poems, he specifically shows how he depends on the party for his moral obligation and task.

Let Gosplan (state planning committee)

*debating from dusk to dawn,
my yearly assignment set
and let the people's commissar
the thought of the times direct.*⁵⁶

The best explanation, regarding freedom, was given by the Nobel Prize winner Sholokhov, in 1954, at the 2nd Writers Congress. He said:

*"Our furious enemies in other countries say that we Soviet writers write according to the dictates of the party. But the fact of the matter is a little different. Each of us write according to the dictates of his heart, but all our hearts belong to the party and to the people whom we serve with our art."*⁵⁷

Partisanship thus goes hand in hand with freedom, and with partisanship alone, can any writer serve the people, as service to the people should be our aim. As Lenin said "...to serve the interest of the masses, the millions and tens of millions of working people - the flower of the country, its strength and its future."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Zelinsky, p. 61.

⁵⁷ C.V. James, p. 14.

⁵⁸ V.I. Lenin, Collected Works (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), pp. 48-49.

1.4.4 Romanticism (The third reality)

Romanticism or the new revolutionary romanticism, is another of the components of socialist realism. As Lunachrasky put it, socialist realism cannot be conceived without romanticism, as it is part and parcel of it.

This concept was elaborated and explained by Lenin, who in turn, based his assumptions on the thinking of Pisarev. Pisarev felt that this new phenomenon, meaning romanticism, would "support, and strengthen the energy of the working man."⁵⁹ Some ambiguity, however, arises as to the difference between the new romanticism and the previous romanticism of the last century.

Gorky's initial explanation was that the bourgeois romanticism "arose from a dissatisfaction with life"⁶⁰ thus turning "...for an unattainable dream."⁶¹ He goes on to say that they console "...themselves in the realm of beauty "⁶² through mystic religious abstraction. The new romanticism has a different basis, and has a more positive outlook. According to Pisarev the new romanticism is only acceptable if:

...the dreamer really believes in his vision, looks closely at reality and then compares his observations with his castles in the air and works conscientiously to turn his fantasy into fact. When there is a point of contact between dream and life, then everything is for the best.⁶³

So the difference lies in that the new romanticism's roots are found in actual reality. The old romanticism, on the other hand, is based on

⁵⁹ C.V. James, p. 25.

⁶⁰ H. Parkhomenko and A. Niyashnikov, p. 58.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ C.V. James, p. 25.

fantasy and whims of the imagination. After all, talking about the future does not make us idealistic because as Noise Kagan said "...tomorrow grows out of today."⁶⁴ So there is definitely a link between the present and the future.

We might not understand how an abstract concept like revolutionary romanticism relates to socialist realism that is based on reality. George Biztray turns to two philosophers of science, Herbert Fiegl and John G. Kemeny, for his answer. Fiegl says that prediction is part of science: "...prediction is closely related to description and explanation, and as such belongs both to the function and to the definition of science."⁶⁵

As socialism is dependent on a scientific basis and socialist realism on this ideology, it follows that, socialist realism's romantic aspect is scientific and not based on individuals' whims and imagination.

Kemeny explains a little further by saying, "We have facts which we can start with, and from the theories and facts known to us, we deduce new facts."⁶⁶ This is as far as the scientific aspect goes, but it cannot be denied that romanticism has an element of the ideal in it. How can this be justified? As Pushkin said "The goal of art is the ideal."⁶⁷ Socialist realism, in turn, has to account for the aesthetic element as well, in this case, the ideal. Revolutionary romanticism, according to science, has been proved to be connected with reality, thus making it a part of socialist realism. Our attempt should be to realize our expectations of the future with the help of romanticism that directs us in that direction.

⁶⁴ M. Parkhomenko and A. Maysinkov, p. 163.

⁶⁵ Biztray, p. 57.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Vladimir Scherbina, p. 145.

As Mayakovsky said:

*"We're realists too
But not ruminant cattle
sticking in domesticity.
We're all in the future,
all in battle
for communism
brilliant with electricity"⁶⁸*

1.4.5 Optimism or Pessimism

Connected with the idea of humanism are the concepts of optimism and pessimism. We have previously said, that towards the latter stages of critical realism, realism took on a pessimistic outlook towards life. By this it is meant, that mankind was seen as a victim of circumstances. This is plainly attributed to the lack of explanation of the laws of history. Man could not explain his surroundings, thus resorting to a fatalistic outlook of life. This was, and still is, reflected in literature of the critical sort. Man lacked confidence because he could not understand life and this resulted in frustration. As Balmont said in his poem:

*Help me! Help me! in the silence of the night I am alone
All the world is my heart's burden, but I bear it on my own.⁶⁹*

Due to the above reasons pessimism became dominant in literature and man is seen and presented as a morally and physically weak creature.

When we come to socialist realism we have an optimistic approach to the human condition in general. Firstly, as socialist realism is based on Marxism-Leninism, it has a more positive outlook towards life. By this

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶⁹ Khrapchenko, p. 167.

it is meant that, reality is explained, and life is no more a mystery. The laws of history are clearly laid out for man, and he can clearly see how he can influence and change history, thus giving him an optimistic and a confident outlook towards life. This brings man out of his shell of pessimism and loneliness and shows him a bright future. Regarding this, Gorky said

...a sense of historical optimism is inherent in the best characters of the art and literature of socialist realism. They are imbued with a desire to make history, and are in fact making it. They look upon the world with the eyes of masters and builders, who have set themselves the aim of transforming the world for the happiness of man and of making the earth "the beautiful habitat of mankind, united in one family."70

Secondly, as Zhadchanov pointed out, socialist realism is not optimistic due to any animal instinct but since "...it is the literature of the rising class of the proletariat"⁷¹ It is filled with enthusiasm and the spirit of heroic deeds. Due to these reasons socialist realism is characterized by the presence of optimistic heroes who give life to the spiritual rebuilding of man.

Humanism Old or New

Before realism came to the fore in literature, and romanticism was in vogue, there was great stress on nature, of which naturalism can be taken as an example. Apart from this, trends like modernism dealt with the abstract impressions and expressions. Man was not the focus of literature and at times the bare reality was presented. When we come to realism,

⁷⁰ M. Parkhomenko and A. Maysnikov, p. 12.

⁷¹ H.G. Scott p. 20.

especially critical and socialist realism, we find that literature becomes more anthropocentric, the difference however, lies in how man is presented.

In socialist realism, we find that the focus of literature is on optimistic man, thus making it humanistic. We should, however, ask ourselves if it is the same sort of humanism that is presented in critical realism. The answer, of course, is no. To explain this answer we have to see the differences between the two realisms regarding their humanistic approach to literature.

Under socialist realism, humanism is completely different from the humanism in critical realism. As Gorky put it, "The word MAN rings proud."⁷² Man is seen as something strong and beautiful, ready to fight for his dignity. The difference between the two humanistic approaches, as pointed out by Overchenko, lies clearly in their outlook. For the previous bourgeois outlook, man was seen as a "trembling creature"⁷³ bowing to the so called destiny of man and ready to accept what may come. No hope is seen in the future of man, who tries to escape from life through drink and sex, with suicide as the end. Socialist realism, on the other hand, is the "... declared enemy of the dehumanization of man."⁷⁴ This method of writing does not dethrone man, but as pointed out by Overchenko, sees man as the "crown of life."⁷⁵ When we say man, according to Gorky, it does not include the idle and lazy individuals but man at work, the working man.

⁷² Khrapchenko, p. 400.

⁷³ Overchenko, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Khrapchenko, 190.

⁷⁵ Overchenko, p. 11.

One of the criticisms against critical realism is that it deals more with the problems of man and not with man. On the contrary, socialist realism deals more with man than his problems. Man is no more seen as a pitiable creature but a maker of history and "master of his own fate."⁷⁶ As voiced by Lunacharsky and Gorky, the function of literature is to enable man to "push humanity ahead and make people better, stronger and wiser."⁷⁷ As one critic put it, modern man makes "...changes in those 'circumstances' that prevent the working man from becoming Man with a capital M."⁷⁸ Now we are in a new era, the socialist era, where man is becoming Man with a capital H. He is working for his goal - a communist society, and due to this, a new man has entered the literary scene, thus we need a new literary method depicting this man.

⁷⁶ C.V. James, p. 97.

⁷⁷ Overchenko, p. 29.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

CHAPTER TWO

MAJOR THEMES DEALT WITH BY SELECTED AFRICAN WRITERS

Africa, due to its geographical location and various historical backgrounds, has come forward with a literature that has a rich variety of themes and approaches. For convenience's sake, I have divided the continent into five major areas: South, North, Central, Eastern and Western Africa, and have tried to show what the major themes are within selected literary works from these areas. The main aim is to show that African literature looks like today, as represented through the works of selected writers from the cited regions. In a way, the works of these writers, are considered representatives of the general literary works of their respective areas. Since I will be dealing with the works of Ngugi Wa Thiongo in Chapter three, I have excluded East African Literature from this chapter to avoid repetition.

2.1 South African Literature

In South African Literature, the dominant theme is that of apartheid. Unlike other African countries, South Africa has been exposed too, and still is at the mercy of white domination. Inclusive with this, the introduction of pass laws, the establishment of locations, (meaning areas where people are forced to live in), and the segregated means of transport, education and social life, have made the South African situation unique.

The aim of the South African writer, so far, has been to expose the white government and to show what an ugly life the African people are experiencing under this regime. Out of the numerous South African writers, Alex-La-Guma and Peter Abrahams stand within this category. As one critic said, "They portray the situation sensitively and let it speak for itself."⁷⁹

When comparing the South African Writer with writers from west Africa, like Chinua Achebe, or North Africa, like Naguib Mahfouz, we find a radical difference. Other writers have had the time to delve into the past and show the glory, though at times a little exaggerated, of our ancestors, or have been able to deal with the phantasies of the individual and with religion. The South African writer, however, has a duty of portraying the grim reality or racism and its negative effect on the South African people. Thus, the concentration is more on the here and the now of life.

Alex-La-Guma has three well known books, The Stone Country, In the Fog of the Seasons' End and A Walk in the Night, the last book, being a collection of short stories. Peter Abrahams, on the other hand, being one of the first African writers, has contributed a greater number and variety of books as compared to Alex La-Guma.

To begin with La-Guma's first novel In the Fog of the Seasons End, deals with the plight of the South African people and the struggle of the resistance. We see the underground, resistance, led by Beukes,

⁷⁹ Shatto Arthur Gakwandi, The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1977), p. 8.

fight against the white government, and we also have the spreading of leaflets, by progressive forces, against racism demanding equality and power in the government. For example one of the pamphlets says:

...We bring a message... you will wonder that men and women would risk long terms of imprisonment to bring you this message. What kind of people do these things? The answer is simple. They are ordinary people who want freedom in this country. ... From underground we launched the new fighting corps... sent youth abroad to train as peoples' soldiers, technicians, administrators... We will fight back... To men who are oppressed freedom means many things. Give us back our country to rule for ourselves as we choose.

In this paragraph we see the people's great desire for freedom. The unique aspect of this excerpt is that we find a demand for equal power in their country and not a mere portrayal of circumstances. Along with this, when the novel begins, we read of the torture of an African, a symbol of the oppressed peoples, and this is the reply he gives when asked to co-operate with the white government.

You have shot my people, when they have protested against unjust treatment, you have torn people from their homes, imprisoned them, not for stealing or murder, but for not having your permission to live. Our children live in rags and die of hunger. And you want me to co-operate with you? It is impossible. You are going to torture me, maybe kill me. But that is the only way you and your people can rule us. You shoot and kill and torture because you cannot rule in any other way a people who reject you. You are reaching the end of the road and going downhill towards a great darkness.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Alex-La-Guma, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1972), p. 58.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

The novel also shows the humiliation of the black people; Elias is made to pull down his trousers to have his age determined. While working for the racist regime, men are made to live in barracks away from their wives, who live in locations outside the city. This all leads to frustration and demoralization. Regarding life, Elias says in disgust, "They have command of everything now, even the length of time one is entitled to live in this world".⁸² La-Guma, however, does not leave us in total disillusionment; he leaves us with the following flicker of hope.

Beukes stood by the side of the street in the early morning and thought, they have gone to war in the name of a suffering people. What the enemy himself has created, these will become battle-grounds, and what we see now is only the tip of an iceberg of resentment against an ignoble regime. And those who persist in hatred and humiliation must prepare. Let them prepare hard and fast - they do not have long to wait. He stood there until the van was out of sight and then turned back to where the children had gathered in the sunlit yard.⁸³

Peter Abraham's Wild Conquest appears, like Achebe's Arrow of God, to move away from the present and delve into the past. It is a historical novel and the major theme is to show the eventual disintegration of the tribe and the emergence of the Boer society. Abraham however, has not deviated far from topical issues, as Michael Wade, a critic, says:

Abraham aims at an imaginative interpretation of the relationship between past and present. In this way he is able to see right and wrong on both sides, and to assign reasons and causes for the attitudes and prejudices which define race relations in South Africa.⁸⁴

⁸² Ibid., p. 128

⁸³ Ibid., p. 180.

⁸⁴ Michael Wade, Peter Abrahams (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1972).

The story is Wild Conquest revolves around a white family, the Kaspers and the Matabele tribe. The story begins with the Kasper family leaving its land and the black servants taking over. Johannes leader of the servants sees a bright future and says "My people, now we can begin. The valley is ours."⁸⁵ The Boers, however, consider this occasion a day to be avenged and leave, cursing. Later on Koos, a member of the Kasper family explains to Stefan, a small child: "They have stolen our home. Remember that, Stefan. They have stolen our home."⁸⁶

In the second part of the novel "Bayete", Abraham gives us a glimpse of the Mzilikazi empire and its internal rivalry for power. The novel ends with the clash between the Boer and Matabele people, resulting in the defeat of the Africans by the Boers. Abraham thus ends his novel with the following words. "Over the land was the shadow of a new day."⁸⁷

Most of La-Guma's and Abraham's novels have this pervading pessimistic tone. The main reason for this is that the South African people face a reality filled with pain and misery. This pessimism is evident in A Walk in the Night to the extent that we are led to total disillusionment. The quotation from Hamlet shows us that man's life is a waste and man is born to die and be forgotten.

*I am thy fathers spirit;
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away.*⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Pter Abrahams, Wild Conquest (London: Faber and Faber Limited, no date), p. 65

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 78

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 383

⁸⁸ Alex-La-Guma, A Walk in the Night (London: Heineman Educational Books Ltd. 1969) No. page number.

We see a similarity between A Walk in the Night and Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. In both works we find nausea and dissatisfaction with life, represented through the decay in society. In A Walk in the Night we see "A row of dustbins lined one side of the entrance and exhaled the smell of rotten fruit, stale food, stagnant water and general decay".⁸⁹ Along with this we have a description of a staircase which is very similar to that of Armah in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born:

*The staircase was worn and blackened, the old oak banister loose and scarred. Naked bulbs wherever the light sockets were in working order cast a pallid glare over parts of the interior, lighting up the big patches of damp mildew, and the maps of denuded sections on the walls. Somewhere upstairs a radio was playing Latin-American music songs and maracas throbbing softly through the smells of ancient cooking, urine, damp-rot and stale tobacco.*⁹⁰

Not only the plight of the Black African is shown, but also that of the white South African is given. From the white characters we have Raalt, preoccupied with his family problems and at the same time receiving bribes from the black community because his salary would not suffice. The young, white constable is also depicted with his unbiased attitude towards race relations, which has made the white man indifferent towards his black brothers. For example, the young constable could not understand why Raalt left the dying Willie Boy, a black criminal, to go and buy cigarettes. We also have Doughty, the drunk Irishman, who is dissatisfied with life. Doughty can be compared to Daddy in Nine Boy; both feel that life has no meaning for them, and are thus defeated individuals.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

Moving to Abraham's novel Mine Boy we find the very sensitive issue of adjustment in society. Michael Wade sums it up by saying that Mine Boy tries to "...deal with the theme of urbanization and the polarity between traditional rural existence and modern industrial town life."⁹¹

Xuma, the protagonist, a young man from the countryside, simple and free from bias, is thrown into a class society with all its constraints. He tries to fight back, but is crushed, because he is a single individual. In a way, Abraham shows us that the individual has no identity and thus he is unable to express his demands. Michael Wade comments on this by saying the novel "...suggests that depersonalization and lack of individuality are a condition of non-white urban life."⁹²

Through Xuma's relationship with other people we see the evils of apartheid. We find Eliza tragically in love with things of the white man, which she is denied, because she is coloured. This makes her a misfit in a black society. Here frustration does not allow her to accept Xuma as a man; so when her craving eventually overcame her, she ran away. Daddy, the broken spirited old man, who only finds relief in alcohol had tried to resist the challenges of life, but with all his great ambitions and desires, he is pulled to the ground. Through Daddy's death, Abraham again comments on the lack of identity of the South African. He says "...and Daddy who was Francis Ndabula would be forgotten. Only those of his own house would remember him. And even for them the memory would grow faint and misty. Life is so...."⁹³

⁹¹ Wade, pp. 5-6.

⁹² Ibid, p. 33.

⁹³ Abraham, Mine Boy, p. 144.

Leah is another outstanding character and the very opposite to Daddy. She is not yet ready to give in, and is a symbol of a woman trying to meet the standards of society asserting her rights. She is ready to fight for it. She says:

...all the time you are fighting, fighting, fighting! when you are asleep and when you are awake. And you only look after yourself. If you do not you are finished. If you are soft everyone will spit in your face. They will rob you and cheat you and betray you. So to live here you must be hard. Hard as stone. And money is your best friend with money you can buy a policeman with money you can buy somebody to go to jail for you. That is how it is Xuma. It may be good it may be bad but there it is. And to live one must see it.⁹⁴

Through Leah we see the illicit brewing and selling of liquor, the paying of bribes to the police to look the other way and, in general, the way of life among the poor people of South Africa.

Paddy's healthy relationship with Xuma on the other hand, shows the new emerging class in South Africa. Paddy, though he has certain weaknesses, tries to look over the colour barrier and accept the blacks as men. He tries to firstly accept Xuma as a man and secondly as a black man. Eventually, Paddy has to prove his principles of equality, so during a strike at the mine, he stands with his black brothers in protest against the white government. In his taking sides he is labelled as a traitor and is taken to prison.

Abraham, very unlike La-Guma, delves deeper into the South African society and brings up further the theme of class relations in his novel A Night of Their Own. In this novel, he touches upon the sensitive

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 50.

issue of the Indian community. This community is a class that fears the white society on the one hand and is looked down upon by its counterpart, the African.

The story revolves around Nkosi, an African artist who has brought money for the black underground movement to be handed over through the Indian community. Following him is Kar Van As, a whiteman full of contradictions and who is trying to accept the African as a man yet asserts his superiority. The novel ends with the Indian community trying to reconcile with the Africans and this is symbolized by their helping Nkosi to escape.

Again this novel, like Mine Boy, is based on human relationships. The healthiest one, is a love affair between Dee, the young Indian cripple and Nkosi the African. Their relationship is symbolic, and represents a unification of the oppressed in South Africa. Commenting on this Wade says "The positive issue of the affair for the participants looks well, symbolically for the future of their joint political struggle."⁹⁵ At times we even find Nkosi talking about democracy and equality of people. When talking to the old man he says, "Democracy is rule of the majority, but the full flowering of the human spirit needs more than just that, though that must be the beginning."⁹⁶

Apart from this, we see the methodical organisation of the Indian Community, the cover for their underground smuggling operation, their various contacts, their hideouts and so on. The contradictions between

⁹⁵ Wade, p. 164.

⁹⁶ Peter Abraham, A Night of Their Own, (London: Faber and Faber, Limited, 1965), p. 252.

progressive new ideas and conservative ones are symbolized through the old man Danda and his son. The old man believes in utilizing his power to the utmost and prospering under the corrupt white regime while the son believes in the struggle and in helping it and sharing the fruits of victory.

Similar to the relationship between Paddy and Xuma, where colour prejudice is over-looked, there exists a relationship between Karl a white man, and Mildred, his coloured mistress. The relationship, however, is strained, and Karl is not willing to sacrifice as much as Mildred, who has refused to marry and wants to stay with him. Class influences are upon him and he does not want to accept that she is equal to him. All in all, Abraham deals with the racial problems among the black, the white and the Asian communities, and their eventual unity for the achievement of a common goal, namely freedom.

Coming back to La-Guma his novel The Stone Country, gives us a picture of prison life in South Africa. We find all kinds of people in prison: George Adams imprisoned for political reasons, the Casbah kid for murder and many other characters. We get the feeling that our lives are predestined, and we find George arguing with the kid. George says "Man, if our life was laid out for us before hand, what use would it be for us to change things, boy? Right mister. You can't change things...."⁹⁷ The prison symbolically represents South Africa, because all the rules of apartheid also hold true in prison. Jefferson, a friend of George's says "This jail is a small something of what they want to make the country. Everybody separate, boy: white, African, coloured.

⁹⁷ Alex-La-Guma, The Stone Country, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1982), p. 14.

Regulations for everybody, and a white boss with a gun and a stick."⁹⁸ Even the food, given to the blacks and whites in prison, differs because of their colour. We see the internal struggle between rival groups to sieze power and the rough treatment of the guards; in a way, we realize the desperate condition the South African people are in and we leave this book with George Adams' words before he falls asleep, "There is a limit to being kicked in the backside."⁹⁹

Coming to the last novel I will be dealing with from this region, it is evident that This Island Now is one of Abraham's best novels. This political novel depicts a state in transition from a white dominated feudal state to a sort of African democracy. Abraham uses a variety of characters to represent different groups. Mr. Freeways, the white minister, represents the old standard still refusing to change. Max and Martha Lee represent another level of white expatriates who are gradually surrendering their power to blacks. We also have the Sterning clan, a rich mercantile family, exchanging shares to influence the political standing, and finally Josiah, the president, a new and vigorous force along with Stanhope, looking forward to total change.

Abraham cleverly depicts the intrigues of political power and gradual disintegration or decline from good to bad. Josiah had started with the aim of changing his "backward country" into a new society, free from the tentacles of old Moses, but fails to do so. To begin with, Josiah was full of revolutionary ideas such as the nationalization of foreign companies, expulsion of foreigners and a complete reform

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 74

in the economic sector. This phenomenon is present in most African countries in transition. Through time and pressure, however, Josiah gradually changes. National and personal security is tightened, freedom of press is curbed, thus forcing Max against his principles and making him leave. Furthermore, the black government begins to pervert the law and manipulate it for its convenience, making Judge Wright oppose this dishonour. Josiah is deteriorating, mentally, with nobody to understand him. In frustration he says:

And I have done more for them in five years than old Moses Joshua did in twenty five. Today all the children go to school from the age of five onwards. And the labour battalions have wiped out unemployment. We have eliminated most of the margin gatherers and those who remain, work for us. We have started on the road to economic self sufficiency and if food is short it is the fault of the farmers who withhold their crops. The other things, the luxury items, the foreign clothes and cars and wines and spirits we will keep out until we can afford them. All this had been made plain to them so they know it; they know they make the sacrifices, and they know what the rewards will be. And each one from the president down makes the same sacrifices. No one is exempt. Perhaps they had been promised for too long that there were easy ways out of situations like this. There is no way out except through hard work.¹⁰⁰

Josiah eventually turns to brute force and brings in the army. Stanhope wants to avoid this and wants to kill him, to allow another coup d'etat, but his courage fails him and the tyranny continues.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Abrahams, This Island Now (London: Faber and Faber limited, 1966), pp. 249-250.

To sum up, South African literature deals with a number of themes. The main theme is one of apartheid, and under apartheid the writers deal with racial and power conflicts, for example, we find the Indian Community trying to assert its equality with the blacks. Paddy can also be another example of racial conflict, he however is trying to ease tensions between black and white. Kar Von As on the other hand wants to show his white superiority. Power conflicts can easily be seen in Wild Conquest and This Island Now. In the former novel white domination is explained through this historical development. Black and white are pitted against each other, with whites gaining power. In The Fog of the Seasons End, however, we see how the blacks are fighting against the white government to attain power. We also have the culture clash in which the difficulties of urbanization is depicted. Xuma unexperienced in the ways of the city finds it hard to adjust himself. To conclude, South African writers have contributed to African literature but by depicting the rising working class they can further enrich literature.

2.2 North African Literature

Going to North Africa, we find a literature totally different from that of South Africa. North African literature has been exposed to and influenced by the Orient. The Arab world its religion, philosophy and custom - has infiltrated into North Africa, giving its literature an Arab touch.

When we take a closer look at North African writers, the most prominent ones are from Egypt - Taufik-Al-Hakim and Naguib Mahfouz. Looking into their works Bird of the East by Hakim, Miramar and Midaq Alley by Mahfouz) we find them steeped in philosophy, religion and culture.

Hakim takes a specific instance of a student in Paris and tries to show the culture clash. Mahfouz, on the other hand, chooses two local scenes to portray life as viewed by the Egyptian layman.

Mahfouz's most prominent novel Midaq Alley deals with a certain girl called Hamida living in this particular alley. The people she lives with, meets and courts, all revolve around her in this alley. What enriches the novel is the everyday human interaction Mahfouz has been able to present in the alley. UmmiHamida, a broker who deals with finding suitable husbands, Abbas with his love fantasy, Kamil the sweet meat seller and Mr. Kirisha, the cafe owner with his hashish addiction and homosexual tendencies, all represent an Arab society. Other low class characters that represent the scum of society are Dr. Booshy, the dentist, who steals golden teeth from the graveyard and Zaito, the cripple maker.

Religion seems to be one of the major themes in the novel. Mahfouz has used Radwan Hossainy as the symbol for religion. The pious man who makes the eventual pilgrimage to Mecca, is always around. He is the elder of the village always ready to bring peace to the people. One of the teachings of Islam is that women are inferior to men. A good example would be what Kirsha believes about his wife. "He was her husband and her master."¹⁰¹ Religion also advocates a pre-planned life. Abbas says "It's God who chooses for us."¹⁰² Even modern things like elections are connected to God. Uncle Kamil, upon seeing the erection of a pavillion for elections exclaims, "We all belong to God and Him will we return. Oh Almighty, Oh Omniscient One, Oh Master."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Naguib Mahfouz, Midaq Alley (London: Heinmann Educational Books Limited, 1975), p. 64.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 64.

Regarding custom, we find Hamida confined to her small room unable to work or court in the open. Her husband is to be chosen for her and this is to be done through her step mother. Since religion has closed all doors for her, she envies people who are more free than she is. Once while walking along the street she meets her friends who work in the factory and she expresses her envy as she says: "They were girls from Darasa district, who, taking advantages of war time employment opportunities ignored custom and tradition and now worked in public places like the Jewish women."¹⁰⁴

We also find negative statements about life in this novel. When talking about Kamil's fat they say he is gaining weight because "Life is merely a prolonged sleep."¹⁰⁵ Talking about change we also have this negative attitude somebody says, "The poet has gone and the radio has come. This is the way of God."¹⁰⁶ This pessimistic outlook of life as being totally governed by God leads to a hope of a better future and trying to forget the present agonies. Hussain, drinking with Abbas, says "Be brave my boy, life is much more bitter than this drink and its effects far worse."¹⁰⁷

The reader accepts that life is unchangeable and feels that there is nothing to do about it.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp 34-35.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 215.

Taufik-Al-Hakim in his novel 'Bird of the East takes a theme similar to that of Achebe in No Longer at Ease and Kahiga in A Girl from Abroad and this is one of culture clash. The difference, however, is that Hakim's protagonist experiences this frustration not in his homeland but in Paris.

Mushin, a very sensitive Arab boy, a representative of his society, is always wasting away his time in thought and love for Suzy. He finds it difficult to adjust to this new culture and is misunderstood for a dreamer with no ambition. He also cannot understand how love, a sacred thing, could be paraded in the streets. "He did not approve of vulgar exhibition of the soul's most noble treasure which must be jealously preserved in the heart like pearls in a jewel box. But in Paris everything is on display."¹⁰⁸

Something interesting about Hakim is his introduction of characters like Andre and his wife Germaine, both are representatives of the working class. These characters seem to have grasped the major concept of the relations between classes and are more practical than Mushin. They seemed to have influenced him, but progressive ideas are still not coming out of him. We find Mushin saying "...its true slavery will never disappeareach era has its serfs and its slaves"¹⁰⁹

Another complicated character is Ivan, the Russian emigre, most probably a white Russian. He believes in the grandeur and beauty of the past and for him, his future is in the past. His dream is to go to the East for he believed that "The West discovered the earth, but

¹⁰⁸ Taufik-Al-Hakim Bird of the East (Beirut: Khoyab Book and Publishing Company S.A.L., 1966), pp. 41-42.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

the East heaven"¹¹⁰ Ivan, a reactionary, feels that he is a mere drop of water in the ocean but seems to realize that there are exploiters in the world. When talking about life he says, "The only ones to profit from this accursed speed are a handful of blood suckers who have managed to accumulate wealth for their own profit and are called capitalists."¹¹¹ Even though he realizes the existence of classes he does not believe in Marxism to be the solution. Another of his reactionary traits is his mistrust of mass education. He says "The masses who have learned those stupid symbols that make up the alphabet, what have they gained?"¹¹² Eventually T.B. overcomes Ivan and the novel ends with his death.

Hakim has skillfully introduced some concepts of religion and custom and placed them against change and modernization. Due to their opposite views of life the reader is made aware of progress in life.

Coming to another novel of Mahfouz's, entitled Miramar, we find four characters with different backgrounds at an inn, and through them and their love affairs with the house maid Zohra he projects his view of life. Amer Wagdi, the "Archaic" journalist who is like a father to Zohra feels that the good old days are over and that we are in an era of chaos. Through his conversations with Zohra, we hear how custom had affected Zohra and she was being forced to marry an old man in the countryside. Wanting to get education she ran away to the city.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 86

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp 15-16.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 155.

Hosny is a very rich landlord's son and depends on his father's wealth. We are made aware of this mis-appropriation, in Mr. Bahy's comment regarding Hosny and people like him. Mr. Bahy says these people are "...men who amassed their power from the flesh and blood of the people."¹¹³ Tolba is another character who has a reactionary attitude towards people. Mr. Tolba's favourite statement is, "Once a peasant always a peasant."¹¹⁴ This probably shows that Tolba refuses to accept, the law of change and an individuals potential to develop and improve his life.

Mansour Bahy, one of the younger people of the group who works for a broadcasting company despises the older generation since he comes from the progressive class. He is for change and wants to implement his ideals. He says, "I'm sure the ideal is to believe and put your beliefs in action. To have nothing to believe in is to be lost forever, But to believe in something and nonetheless sit there paralysed is sheer hell."¹¹⁵

We find that Bahy believes in his potential as a human being and the tone of pessimism is absent. He claims "Life gives nothing except to those who are strong enough to live."¹¹⁶

The Don Juan of the novel is Sarhan, who eventually wins the love of Zohra. His sole aim in life is chasing women and making money, very much like Hosny, the rich merchant's son who drives through town in his flashy Sports car. Sarhan, a man searching for worldly pleasures, always tries to get an advantage out of life without consideration for

¹¹³ Naguib Mahfouz, Miramar (London: Heinemann Educational Books Limited, 1978), p. 68.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 83.

others. For example, when talking about marriage he says "What's the good of going into it, if it doesn't give me a push up the social ladder."¹¹⁷

All in all North African literature deals with the basic questions of religion, custom and philosophy. Regarding religion, we have the attitude that all progress and development is based on the will of God. Man's existing state of affairs are due to God's intereference because man's life is predestined before he was born. Because of these factors characters like Kirisha, Abbas and uncle don't try to change society. Furthermore, religion advocates that man's slavation is after death where he will be rewarded in the kingdom of God. For these reasons most of the characters are passive. Lastly, we have the cultural clash between tradition and modernization, a problem of all developing countries. To conclude, what makes North African literature different from other African literature is the strong Arab influence it has. When compared with South African literature we find the culture clash but the rivalry for political power is absent. In North African literature we have the veil of religion hanging over man's life.

2.3 Central African Literature

When we come to the literature of the Central part of Africa we find that it is not as rich as the literature of the other parts of Africa. Foreign influences are greatly detected in almost all other parts of the continent, be it Arabic, Dutch, English, French or Portuguese.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

Central Africa, though it had been colonized, does not seem to have a great number of writers in a foreign language. To deal with novels in the vernacular, if any, would be beyond my means so I have taken Sudan as a representative of Central African Literature and Tayeb Salih's novels written in English in particular.

Central African literature should be viewed from its attachment with North Africa. The wide spread influence of Egypt on Sudan cannot be over looked, and in turn, the Arab influence on Egypt, is greatly reflected in Sudan. The themes of religion and culture conflict play a major role in this literature.

Tayeb Salih has written two well-known novels, The Wedding of Zein, a collection of short stories, and Season of Migration to the North. To begin with, Salih's strong religious inclinations come out in his short The Doum Tree of Mad Hamid, in his first book. The story is about how this tree is to be cut down to make place for a harbour. The people revolt, are imprisoned and the freed as national heroes. The story is told in the first person, thus giving it a tone of friendliness, reflecting the Arab culture. Apart from this in the Arab culture a guest is revealed and he can use almost anything in the house as his own in the hosts house. For example the host says "come in, my son, treat this house as your own".¹¹⁸ Apart from this, we find the usual fatalistic belief that we cannot develop and change our lives because it is the will of God. A character says, "Oh, I wish, my son, I wish - the asphalted road of the town - the modern means of transport - the fine comfortable buses. We have none of this

¹¹⁸ Tayeb Salih, The Wedding of Zein (London: Heineman Educational Books Limited, 1978), p. 6

we are people who live on what God sees fit to give us".¹¹⁹

Religion forces the people to focus on religion rather than on other secular affairs. A good example is when the host is speaking he says:

*Excuse me, my son, while I perform the sunset prayer. It is said that the sunset prayer is 'strange' if you don't catch it in time it eludes you. God's pious servants - I declare that there is no god but God and I declare that Mohammed is His Servant and His Prophet. Peace be upon you and the Mercy of God.*¹²⁰

The protagonist has been hypnotized to the extent that all other instincts and foresight are dulled in him; he even begins to see the unbelievable: "I saw the doum tree prostrating itself in worship."¹²¹

The major short story in the collection is The Wedding of Zein. The story revolves around the village idiot, Zein who is very similar to Wole Soyinka's Ifada in "The Strong Breed". Through Zein, Tayeb Salih portrays the life of a Sudanese village-their custom of sitting and talking together, going to marriages and living together.

Something new and strange in the muslim culture is Ni'ma's fight against custom, which is shown in her turning down the various suitors that come to propose. According to the Arab custom, a husband is chosen by the young lady's parents, Ni'ma, however, being a liberated, woman chooses Zein, a totally unexpected choice. The fatalistic outlook, however, still has a hold on her. This can be seen when she meditates about her marriage:

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 13.

As the Nile floods its banks, storms rage, the date palms produce their fruit each year, as corn sprouts, the rain pours down, and the seasons change, so would her marriage be a destiny fore-ordained by God for her from before she was born, before the Nile began to flow, before God created the earth and all that is on it.¹²²

The culture of the people is portrayed in weddings where people eat, dance and make merry. It is usually an open house to all the people of the village where, similar to the Ethiopian culture, people invite each other.

In the Season of Migration to the North Salih moves out from the small Sudanese villages and crosses the oceans to France. The central character has just come back with a Ph.D. in English, but Mustaffa the highly respected citizen of the village, who represents the more experienced person in life says, "We have no need of poetry here. It would have been better if you'd studied agriculture, engineering or medicine."¹²³

Salih very skilfully uses Mustaffa Sa'eed to show how an individual can reach the height of education and turn back to his animal instincts, thus falling to the nadir. Salih uses the method of long flashbacks showing Mustaffa's vigorous days, thus luring the reader into a feeling of reverie.

Passion appears to be one of the major themes of the novel. Mustaffa the brilliant student of the village, wins a scholarship abroad, where he graduates with honours. He is later employed as a lecturer, but turns to the pleasures of life, women as in his case. He loses control of

¹²² Ibid., p. 54.

¹²³ Tayeb Salih, Season of Migration to the North (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1970), p. 9.

himself, first it was Sheila who commits suicide, then it was Anna who gassed herself all because of Mustaffa. Next came the married lady Mrs. Isabella Seymour and his last prey was Jean Morris.

Usually, sex or passion for sex, is not a major theme in African Literature. We have a few exceptions like Armah in Fragments but otherwise the theme of sex is seen as taboo. In Salih's case due to restraints of religion he is trying to justify how low one can fall in life, and eventually take his life due to the obsession with sex.

Jean Morris had a strong grip on Mustaffa who in frustration, stabs her to death and spends the next seven years languishing in prison. Upon his release he becomes a changed person and tries to rejuvenate, but in vain.

Salih, like most African writers, can be criticized for the novel's ending. Mustaffa, unlike I who had "...felt not like a stor. swept feather but like the plam tree, a being with a background, with roots with a purpose",¹²⁴ committed suicide. We also find characters like Nkosi in A Night of Their Own or the protagonist in Weep Not Child either trying to kill themselves or running away from reality.

The protagonist I, though in the background he has more determination and love of life than Mustaffa, this love for life is not stifled; instead of drowning and being washed away from this so called world of misery. I "...screamed with all my remaining strength, 'Help! Help!'"¹²⁵ To sum up,

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

Central African literature is very similar to the literature of North Africa. This is because religion has a strong role to play in both regions. Again, features like predestination, religion and culture conflict are the major preoccupation of these writers. Furthermore, North African writers have been circumscribed by their critical realist outlook.

2.4 West African Literature

West Africa seems to be one of the major sources for African literature, with Nigeria at the fore front. The main reason, again, is the strong contact with foreign powers. A very interesting fact, however, is that even though Nigeria has a great number of muslims, religion is not one of the major themes in the literature. Instead, we find the strong influence of christianity.

To begin with, I will briefly deal with Achebe's four major novels Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, No longer at Ease and A Man of the People.

When dealing with Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God Achebe is greatly concerned about the dignity we lost, or appeared to have lost, when christianity was being introduced, Achebe says.

...the writer's first duty is to demonstrate that African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ G.D. Killam, The Novels of Chinua Achebe (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1969), p. 90.

To begin with, in Things Fall Apart we find a very orderly society. We have the elders who help in governing the community, the peer groups, and then each individual who is guided by his personal god. Okonkwo inspired by the fear of failure, came up to become one of the nobels of the community. When depicting the rise of Okonkwo, Achebe skilfully includes many incidents pertaining to the custom and way of life of the people, thus giving us a picture of the society. For instance, the wrestling competition, Animo day - a special day where the ancestors come out of their graves to eat the food left out for them to eat and market days.

Dealing with the past society does not, however, mean that Achebe has neglected topical issues. In fact he deals with universal phenomena. Pride is clearly portrayed as being the road leading to destruction. Ezeulu, who believes that he is above everyone else, refuses to acknowledge the advice of his friends, and is rejected. We also find jealousy within the family, where the wives fight it out to gain their husbands favour. Ambition, is a positive quality that is also depicted, but, since it surpasses normal ambition, as shown in Okonkwo, it turns sour and finally draws Okonkwo towards destruction.

Okonkwo and Ezeulu are thus representatives of a proud race that is crushed by foreign intervention. Both try to adjust to the change in different ways. Ezeulu, accepting the inevitability of change sends Nwafo to be his eye and ear in the mission school; Okonkwo, refusing to accept change, fights it. Okonkwo, however, arrives too late because of his year in exile in his wives land and finds the new religion firmly entrenched. Even as he kills the messenger, his way of opposing the new order, as Palmer says "...he realizes its futility for the men of

Umofia would not go to war."¹²⁷ Ezeulu seems to be more understanding and tries to change but the contradiction within his clan and himself led to his downfall.

Next, we find complete frustration and lack of hope, which has been a major theme in most African writing. After independence, a new African "whiteman" assumed power and turned out to be even more corrupt than the previous white man. Achebe in A Man of the People and No Longer at Ease and Armah in The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born have faithfully depicted this.

Living in luxury, Koomsoon, contaminates everything he touches, describing him Armah says he is a man "...whose mouth had the rich stench of menustral blood"¹²⁸ He lives in the rich suburbs, is driven by a chauffer and dresses his child like a white man. A new upper class has emerged that is beyond understanding. This is also portrayed by Kobina Sekyi in the Blinkards where Mr. Tissibi a black cocoa magnate is willing to pay Mrs. Brofussem, the lady of fashion, to make his daughter blush.

The Man, on the other hand, tries to remain untainted; he refuses to accept bribes and quietly receives advice from his mentor, the teacher, another withdrawn, uncommitted character. The Man has been greatly criticized for being a passive protagonist; he does not get involved. He sees his wife trying to enrich herself with her dealings with Koomsoon but the man does not have the stamina to stand up and fight.

¹²⁷ Eustace Palmer, The Growth of the African Novel (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1972), p. 59.

¹²⁸ Ayi Kwei Armah, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1981), p. 163.

Armah has gone further and depicted a society greatly geared towards the material aspects of life and neglecting human needs. The expensive cars, luxury boats and liquor and the Atlantic Caprice, which represents the wealth that everyone is prepared to get even at the expense of others. On the other hand, the "Keep Me Clean" boards throughout the city, representing the needs of the people, are drab and dirty with nobody to care for them.

Yet another aspect of critical realism is Armah's pejorative approach. Everything seems to be going from bad to worse. The Man leaves the house at dawn and returns at dusk, defeated and hopeless. Most of the characters lead a life of misery with hope only of killing themselves. Even after the military take-over, we are left with no hope; the soldiers are forcing bribes from the passengers. We have the impression, that we are doomed to injustice and there is nothing that we can do about it.

Armah has symbolically represented Ghana as a state with no future in which everything has reached the worst possible stage. Through the effective techniques of symbolism and pejorative we conclude that Africa has no contribution to make towards life. We find this sense of disillusionment even in Soyinka's The Interpreters, where we find the same bureaucracy and frustration, because of the tension between the old and the new. Armah has been labelled as a "writer of decadence" and he has achieved this by leaving us with a sense of doom. We should, however question this state of hopelessness.

Ngugi in Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross has attempted to show with a new theory that individuals, backed by the majority can throw off this subjugation and become their own masters.

Armah has truthfully depicted the sad reality, but this is where critical realism lacks that quality of revolutionary romanticism, in which that truthful future can be portrayed. Out of the debris of frustration and hopelessness the sparks of hope must glimmer.

Focusing on the topic of corruption, in post independent Africa, Achebe's novel No Longer at Ease can be taken as another example of novels dealing with this topic. The protagonist, Obi, a foreign educated person, is frustrated by traditional values. He cannot marry Clara because she is an outcast; he has to support his younger brothers and at the same time pay back his debt. All this makes him uneasy.

Like every educated person upon graduation, he has great ideals about developing his country and fighting corruption. He could not understand when his immediate boss, Mr. Green says, "The African is corrupt through and through."¹²⁹ Achebe skillfully shows how gradually Obi becomes of reality and finds out that his salary cannot cover expenses, thus he succumbs to the temptations of bribery and is finally caught in the act.

The tragedy is that Obi was never really given the chance, thus being unable to fight circumstances. Achebe tries to show the reader that Western education, instead of benefiting the individual, makes him a victim in society. People expect too much of him and yet treat him like the ordinary African, which amounts to handcuffing a person and expecting him to contribute to society. We must, however, question this unresolved dilemma between these two aspects of modernism and traditionalism.

¹²⁹ Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease (London: Heinman Education Books Ltd. 1960), p. 3.

Achebe, in his last novel, moves towards a more committed stand when he wrote A Man of the People. He said; "This is a beginning for a phase for me in which I intend to take a hard look at what we in Africa are making of independence."¹³⁰

In this novel, we find a somewhat socialistic outlook maybe indicating Achebe's gradual change towards a socialist stand. One is tempted to say this because we are not left with the feeling that we can't do anything. Instead we find that a unified stand can help overcome these problems. We find Odili trying to fight for a democratic election, though his motive is personal, we also see in Odili, a desire for unity. At a certain meeting he wants to know why there are no workmen at the meal. In answer to this, he hears, "...that this is not entirely accurate...what you see here is only the vanguard, the planning stage. Once we are ready we shall draw in the worker, the farmer, the blacksmith, the carpenter..."¹³¹ We have the sense of unity that is present in Petals of Blood, where Munira brings the people together.

Apart from this, we find Mr. Nanga, like Koomsoon, frequently using everything to his advantage. He seduce Odili's girlfriend and then tries to bribe him to go on a scholarship. Mr. Nanga's fall, however, is apparent, and after his hired thugs beat up Odili the election turns into a complete chaos forcing a military take over and the detention of Nanga.

¹³⁰ Hans Zell and Helene Silver (eds) A Readers Guide to African Literature (London: Heineman Educational Books Ltd., 1978), p. 118.

¹³¹ Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1982), p. 78.

Achebe does not, however, leave us with complete despair as does Armah. Instead, we find Odili recovering with Edna to support him. We might conclude that the future would be better . . . obstacles bar the way.

Coming back to Armah, he also uses the method of psychological realism, to show an individual's frustration. This comes out both in the novels Fragments and Why Are We So Blest?

Armah in his novel Why Are We So Blest?, through the characters; Solo, Modin and Aimee, presents the degeneration of the younger generation. These individuals have lost all sense of direction. The predominant feeling is that they have no control over their lives. Again like Tess of the D'urberville. Again, too, the pessimistic feeling of things getting worse is prevalent. As opposed to the socialist realist attitude of trying to challenge life, Armah makes his characters turn towards vice. This is characteristic of most critical realist writers, drink, hashish and sex are the means of escape from shouldering the responsibilities of life. This loss of direction can be clearly seen from what Modin says:

*I do not know where I am. Perhaps I am the spume, a little speck of fugitive water sent up into the air by huge waves in their crashing against hard obstacles. Perhaps I am the spray, a minute globe struggling to survive the shock of the wave, split from the parent water and flung upwards into the sky, to disintegrate and evaporate.*¹³²

¹³² Ayi Kwei Armah, Why are We So Blest? (London: Heinmann Educational Books Ltd., 1972), p. 11.

Throughout this book, and Fragments we find failure heaped upon failure, desperation followed by frustration, leading to a total collapse at the end. Towards the end, however, Modin says "...revolution would be the art, revolutionaries the only creators. All else is part of Africa's destruction."¹³³ Baaku, on the other hand, reaches a stage of complete disillusionment and life has no meaning except for bizzare desires which are figments of the brain.

All in all, apart from despair, we learn nothing of the beauty of life and expectations that we have to fulfill. As builders of a new nation such suicide prone individuals have very little to contribute to society. Armah truthfully presents these characters who are actual individuals of a decadent society, but this does not mean that we have nothing to learn from Armah and Achebe. We come to the strong realization that we have a lot of hardship to overcome in the future.

After examining the works of writers from the various parts of Africa we are left with the question; what are the significant characteristics that emerge? The two common features to all areas are those of predestination and cultural conflict. The main cause for cultural conflict is the development of society. Africa, at the present moment, is experiencing great change; it is always being exposed to new ideas, new cultures. So in whatever period we are, be it pre or post independence, there will always be cultural conflicts. For example, foreign and indiginous, urban and rural and modern and traditional conflicts are usually the theme of literature

¹³³ Ibid., p. 231.

The other common feature is one of pessimism and predestination. Predestination has always been one of the main features of religion. Predestination discourages change and attempts to retain the status quo. Along with this, comes the pessimistic view of life. If our lives are pre-determined, what is the use of trying to change it? All this leads to frustrated individuals who don't know what to do with their lives. Most of the characters like Daddy, Mustaffa Saed, and the Man are either passive or suicide prone individuals.

Apart from these major features, each region has its own individual features, mainly because a writer is a product of his particular society. South African literature's main theme revolves around apartheid and its wide spread effect. We have pass laws and its problems, racial troubles and the fight for liberation by the resistance movement. In North and Central Africa we have a picture of people who are heavily bounded by religion and who leave everything to God or else engage in all sorts of fantasy. And West Africa gives the picture of a once proud people, who now are mostly corrupt through and through. We have the impression that the African has no redemption.

It appears that the African writers have greatly depended on the critical approach to life, that is, presenting instances, people and conditions as they are, without and definite conclusion. We are, of course, greatly indebted to these African writers, and their contribution. We are, however, left with some lingering questions. In all or most novels we have a picture of doom and self rejection. We have for the most part weak and subdued individuals who are victims of circumstances.

Can't this sense of despair be overcome with a feeling of hope? How about the builders of a new nation, the peasants, students and workers can't they be presented? Or do we still believe in just watching, and accepting a dying society that is being presented to us. The answers to all these questions appears to be resolved in the socialist realist outlook. In the following Chapter I will try and show how the socialist realist method attempts to resolve these problems.

CHAPTER THREE

3. SOCIALIST REALIST IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN WRITER

For the African writer his role is to be one with the people so as to articulate their deepest aspirations for freedom and a higher quality of life.¹³⁴

We are left with several questions from the previous chapter on what the future of the African novel should look like. The role the African writer has, in regard to these questions, is very important. Various authors have different views concerning their actual role in society. To have a look at some of these views would give us a perspective into their stand towards their role.

Writers like Alex-La-Guma and Peter Abrahams "...tend to be less preoccupied with the past and are more concerned with the present."¹³⁵ Based on the review of limited literature, the preoccupation is with overthrowing the white regime and attaining power. The emphasis, therefore, is to deal with what is going on in South Africa now rather than delving into the past. The South African writer, however, has been limited to exposing apartheid. A writer like Soyinka also "...seeks to interpret the present in terms of the human characteristics of an African community without reference to the past."¹³⁶ His reason for doing this, however, is different. Soyinka feels that the nostalgia some writers have for the past, with all its beauty, is an illusion. He maintains that the African past is just as gruesome as the past of other people in the world.

¹³⁴ Ngugi Wa Thiong, *Writers in Politics* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1981), p. 105.

¹³⁵ Gakwandi, p. 8.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66

Writers like Achebe alternate between the past and the present, may be because they feel that both are as important. Regarding the novels in the past Achebe says:

*I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.*¹³⁷

Referring to novels dealing with the present Achebe says, "It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary African will end up being completely irrelevant."¹³⁸

Wherever the focus may be, on past or present, the African writer for the most part has merely been depicting the society around him. Critical realism, due to political and economic circumstances, has circumscribed his outlook and made him concentrate in one direction only. Commenting on the general tendency of the African writer Ngugi says:

...he makes a cult of Africanness, of Blackism, of the dignity of the African past, of the African approach to problems; or he simply becomes cynical and laughs at everything equally; at capitalism and its exploitative and oppressive social system and at the struggles of the people for total liberation or he may condemn every effort and everything - gains and losses in the struggle - in the name of abstract humanism, abstract universalism without seeing that free unfettered human intercourse is impossible within capitalistic structures and imperialism...

¹³⁷ Hans Zell and Helene Silver, p. 118.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

*for as long as there are classes - classes defined by where or how the various people stand in relation to the means of production - a truly human contact in love, joy, laughter, creative fulfillment in labour will never be possible.*¹³⁹

3.1 Ngugi's Pre-Socialist Realist Novels

Ngugi, himself originally began as a critical realist, and this is clearly seen in the novels Weep Not, Child, The River Between and A Grain of Wheat. Let us take a brief look at these novels.

In Weep Not, Child the protagonist is a young boy called Njoroge who is obsessed by the desire to get an education. Through his attempts to get it, Ngugi tries to show what pre-independent Kenya looked like. We have Boro who despises his father Ngotho, along with his generation who appear to have accepted white domination. Boro also leads the underground movement in the struggle for independence. We also have Jacobo, a representative of the homeguards who are prospering under the white regime, with the settlers like Howlands who have the best land. We also have people like Ngotho who passively wait for their land to be returned to them.

We pity Njoroge because he does nothing to fight reality; he accepts it with an escapist mentality. As Palmer said, "...he is a visionary and dreamer living in a world of illusion, and seeking every possible opportunity to escape from tough reality..."¹⁴⁰ Firstly, he tries to run away to Uganda with Mwhiki, but she, a more mature character, wants to stay with her family in time of need. Secondly, when he has to work as clerk to support the family no hope of continuing his education, he attempts to hang himself. This suicide tendency among characters is a trait of critical realism where, being unable to face the reality, the protagonist tries to destroy himself.

¹³⁹ Ngugi, Writers in Politics, p. 79.

¹⁴⁰ Palmer, p. 4.

In The River Between we have the contradiction between tradition and modernization, again a sort of cultural conflict. We find the central character Waiyaki caught between tradition and the christian front that is advocating change and education. Unfortunately, because Waiyaki could not explain that he wanted progress for the people, he was considered a traitor. We also see christianity gradually **entrenching** itself among the people. Joshua, with his ideas of spreading christianity, is pitted against the traditionalists but he has a contradiction within the family, Muthoni. Muthoni, a representative of tradition, tried to rebel against tradition, and get circumcised, but dies in the process, leaving Nyambura, her sister, in total dilemma. At the end of the novel, Nyambura and Waiyaki are to be hanged. Again we have that pessemistic ending where man has no way of changing his life.

A Grain of Wheat deals with the Mau Mau fight for independence and the agony people faced to attain it. We find the major characters full of recollections. Their inner contradictions, betrayals, and **misunderstandings** are presented to us on the eve of independence. Firstly, we find Karanja, now a political authority, who used to fight for the homeguards against the liberation movement led by Kihika. Secondly, we have Gikonyo whose involvement in the political struggle leads him to his detention and subsequent suffering in prison. Thirdly, we have Mugo torn between two extremes; to tell or to withhold the truth about his involvement with the killing of Kihiki. Lastly, we have Mumbi, who again like Tess, is a victim of circumstances.

Ngugi, however, does not leave us in total despair. At the end, we find good overcoming evil, and a little hope. Gikonyo and Mumbi are ready to start a new life just like the Thomsons who had also quarrelled.

Mugo, with a light heart, is ready to face the gallows and other characters are feeling guilty about past mistakes.

After having a brief look at these books and Ngugi's previous definition regarding the African writer, we find that he was not different from his predecessors. We then tend to ask ourselves as to what stand Ngugi has today regarding the role of the African Writer. Commenting on this question he says this:

What the African writer is called upon to do is not easy: it demands of him that he recognize the global character of imperialism and the global character of dimension of the forces struggling against it to build a new world.... He must of course be very particular, very involved in a grain of sand, but must also see the world past, present, and future in that grain. He must write with the vibrations and tremours of the struggles of all the working people in Africa, America, Asia and Europe behind him. Yes, he must actively support and in his writing reflect the struggle of the African working class and its peasant class allies for the total liberation of their labour power. Yes, his work must show commitment, not to abstract notions of justice and peace, but the actual struggle of the African peoples to sieze power and hence be in a position to control all the forces of production and hence lay the only correct basis for peace and justice.¹⁴¹

We find Ngugi greatly changed when he writes his two most recent novels, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross. We can clearly see how, especially in Devil on the Cross, Ngugi has used the method of socialist realism, thus presenting a completely different kind of novel, and of superior quality. This shift from critical to socialist realism appears to be in accordance with his previous definition. Apart from this,

¹⁴¹ Ngugi, Writers in Politics, p. 80.

Ngugi's experience in the Soviet Union, a socialist country, has enabled him to witness socialist man working towards communism. Furthermore, reading books based on the socialist realist methods seems to have inspired Ngugi to use this method. This influence is clearly manifested in Devil on the Cross where we see a strong correlation with Gorky's masterpiece Mother, a socialist realist novel. This is a certain indication that the time has come for African writers to go beyond the old critical realist method and adopt a more appropriate method - the socialist realist method.

3.2 Humanism and Optimism in Devil on the Cross

African literature has almost always been anthropocentric in its approach. In other words, mankind and his problems, aspirations and frustrations have been the focus of the African writer. The question, however, lies in how the African has been presented. So far, a totally pessimistic stand has been adhered to, presenting the African personality as aimlessly governed by destiny and frustration, and he in turn, trying to escape from it. Suicide prone individuals like Njoroge and Mustaffa, dehumanized characters like Daddy, Solo and Modin and simple passive protagonists like the Man have so far dominated the literary scene. Ngugi, however, based on socialist realist principles, has come forward with characters like Wariinga, Muturi, Wangari and Gatuira, the characters are out to change man's fate.

At the beginning, Wariinga appears to us, as the ordinary pessimistic character. We find her depressed and frustrated, hating her black skin and anointing herself with Snowfire and Ambi cream. She despises being

black, forgetting the saying "That which is born black will never be white."¹⁴² Wariinga, like Miss Tissibi, in the The Blinkards tries to follow European fashions and straightens her hair to imitate white people. Wariinga has reached a stage where she is thoroughly dissatisfied with life in Nairobi. Her boss has just dismissed her for refusing to yield to his lust, and her boy friend disowns her with the belief that she is flirting with her boss. She is in a dilemma. In this trance-like mood she nearly loses her life by falling in front of a bus. But she is saved by a passerby. It is from this point of total dejection, where we expect an escapist tendency, that the young man who saves her says, "We must never Despair, Despair is the one sin that cannot be forgiven by the nations and generations to come."¹⁴³ Gorky's novel, Mother also has this pessimistic attitude at the beginning. Mother, whose real name is Pelagea Nilowna, is married to a drunken farmer. The husband, in turn, who feels that life has nothing to give him, vents his rage on his wife. Eventually her husband dies and though she has escaped from one evil, the greater evil of hunger haunts her house. Life is bleak but Mother holds on, and does not resort to suicide.

From this point of deliverance onwards, Wariinga begins to change. Her experiences with Muturi and Wangari gradually transform her. She begins to realize the strength of unity and its power. After listening to the testimonies of the various people in the cave, she realizes who her true enemies are. She has to choose sides when Muturi confronts her and Gaturia, and asks them to join the procession. Wariinga makes her choice when she hears "...the voice of a worker was calling them,

¹⁴² Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Devil on the Cross (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1982) p. 11.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 27.

telling them that nobody could walk along two roads at the same time."¹⁴⁴
From then on she is ready to fight.

After the ordeal at the cave and two years later we find a completely new Wariinga. During the day she works in a garage as a mechanic and in her spare time she pursues her education. She dresses in simple, modest clothes and is actually proud of being black. She is the pride of the community. Wariinga is not

*...the one who used to think that there was only one way of avoiding the pitfalls of life: Suicide...No, this Wariinga has decided that she'll never again allow herself to be a mere flower, whose purpose is to decorate the doors and windows and tables of other people's lives, waiting to be thrown onto a rubbish heap the moment the splendour of her body withers. The Wariinga of today has decided to be self-reliant all the time, to plunge into the middle of the arena of life's struggles in order to discover her real strength and to realize her true humanity.*¹⁴⁵

Just like Wariinga, Mother also gradually develops. Starting out from total ignorance, with the help of Andrei, Mother rapidly widens her political outlook. Firstly, when she attended the meetings her son Pavel organized in her house, she was just a listener. After Pavel's imprisonment, however, she began to distribute leaflets and during the May Day march, she was beside her son full of vigour. After the clash with police, we even find her clutching a bit of the Red Flag. We also have this feeling of optimism with Andrei, a comrade of Pavel. He is the one who taught mother to read and write, a painstaking task, because she was totally ignorant. Andrei, always used to encourage mother and tell her about the future. On one occasion Andrei was discussing with mother.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 205.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 216.

*"Ah, me!" came the mother's soft voice,
"So many people in the world, and all of
them groaning. I wonder where the happy
ones are." "There are happy ones, nenko!"
replied Andrei. "And soon there'll be
lots of them. Lots and lots."146*

Wariinga goes further than just attaining an optimistic outlook. She also refuses to accept that life is predestined like Ni'ma, in Tayeb Salih's novel. On her way to meet Gaturia's father they have an argument about hope, and Wariinga says, "...No lets not be content with hoping. We aren't going to wait for things to happen by themselves any longer. Why can't we make things happen the way we want them to happen."¹⁴⁷ When she meets the rich old man, Gaturia's father, and he begins to lull her with all the sweet words that had previously entrapped her, she shoots and kills him. After this incident she does not fall down and cry instead, "Wariinga walked on, without once looking back. She knew with all her heart that the hardest struggles of her life's journey lay ahead."¹⁴⁸

Wariinga is not the only character with this optimistic outlook. Muturi is another one. He says, "I am a worker...work is life"¹⁴⁹ When we first meet Muturi in the Matutu, he is a silent character in blue overalls and who is willing to pay Wangari's fare. Muturi is not the pessimistic and cowardly protagonist; instead we have a person proud of his work and ready to sacrifice himself for the improvement of life. Being from the working class he says

*"The unity of our sweat is what makes us able
to change the laws of nature, able to harness
them to the needs of our lives, instead of our
lives remaining slaves of the laws of nature.
Tell me this: is any other creature able to
trap and yoke the wind, water, lightening, steam?"*

¹⁴⁶ Maxim Gorky, *Mother* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), p. 155

¹⁴⁷ Ngugi, p. 246.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹⁴⁹ Ngugi, p. 38.

*Able to tie their legs and arms, with chains and lock them up, making them prisoners, submissive and obedient to its needs? No. Human nature and animal nature are quite different. Animals stoop low before nature, allowing themselves to be turned this way and that by her, just as sausages are turned casually in the fire by the boys. But the human being wrestles with nature and strives to command it.*¹⁵⁰

Muturi has the same characteristic feature of leadership as Pavel, the son of Mother. Both represent the working class on the rise, and are for complete change. In fact, just like Muturi's speech above, we find Pavel proud of his ability to bring about change:

*We are workers, people by whose labour all things are made, from children's toys to massive machines; yet we are people deprived of the right to defend our human dignity. Anyone is able to exploit us for his own personal ends. At present, we want to achieve a degree of freedom which will eventually enable us to take all power into our own hands. Our slogans are simple enough: 'Down with private property!' 'All means of production in the hands of the people!' 'All power in the hands of the people!' 'No one exempt from work!'*¹⁵¹

Muturi has always had a positive outlook towards life. Previously he had saved Wariinga from drowning in school and he had also pulled her from in front of the train. Along with this love for life Muturi has the qualities of a leader. He organizes the workers of Ilmorog and despite the presence of the police, he valiantly marches towards the cave to show the people how their wealth was being embezzled. Speaking to the crowd he says, "...we refuse to go on being the pot that cooks but never tastes the food."¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁵¹ Gorky, p. 435.

¹⁵² Ngugi, p. 221.

Pavel is also in for the future, talking to the crowds he says "Comrades...All our lives we must keep pressing forward. There is no other direction for us."¹⁵³ So in both these characters we see similar features; these are their optimistic outlook towards life, because they are from the rising class, and their qualities of leadership. Apart from this, their want for unity is another similar quality.

It is true that both Muturi and Pavel have similar qualities. However, we find Pavel contributing more to bring about change. Firstly, Pavel gathers his friends and tries to spread the words of equality. Secondly, he takes more risks than Muturi. More than once he goes to prison and even then, we see him forsaking his chance of escape in favour of a fellow comrade. We also find Pavel even more optimistic than Mother, Wariinga and Muturi. Towards the end of the novel, during his trial, he bravely stands up and says:

*We are revolutionaries and will go on being revolutionaries as long as some people do nothing but give orders and others do nothing but work...And we workers are sure to win!*¹⁵⁴

Another character that has a positive and optimistic outlook towards life is Wangari. She is a symbol of the African who, having fought for independence, cannot understand why the younger generation want to imitate European fashions. Talking about her younger days she says, "...ours was not a time for adoring our bodies with flowers and necklaces. Ours was is a time for decorating ourselves with bullets in the fight for Kenya's freedom"¹⁵⁵ Having had to sell her farm to repay a bank loan, Wangari

¹⁵³ Gorky, p. 221.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 436.

¹⁵⁵ Ngugi, p. 127.

comes to the city in search of work. Everywhere she goes, she is thrown out like a piece of useless old furniture and eventually she is charged for keeping a close watch on a particular hotel. At the beginning, heartbroken, Wangari is seen heading for Ilmorog,

Wangari, however, is not like Abdulla or Munira in Petals of Blood, she is not a passive character. Abdulla who fought for Kenya's independence and even sacrificed his leg, is reduced to a mere fruit seller. We see his usefulness during the march to Nairobi to make the representative of Ilmorog help alleviate conditions, but otherwise he is a passive character. Munira too, a weak creature, had originally fled the world and gone to Ilmorog where he attained self confidence, but otherwise, he too is passive. Wangari on the other hand, angered by the greedy capitalists that are gathered in the cave tries, according to her ability, to root out the cause of the sufferings of the people. Calmly walking in with the police, she says:

These are the men who have always oppressed us peasants, denying us clothes and food and sleep. These are the men who stole the heritage bequeathed to us by Waiyaki Wa Hinga and Kimaathi Wa Waciuri, and by all the brave patriots who have shed their blood to liberate Kenya. These are the imperialist watch-dogs, the children of the Devil. Chain their hands, chain their legs and throw them into the Eternal Jail, where there is an endless gnashing of teeth! for that's the fate of all those who sell foreigners the heritage of our founding Patriarch's and Patriots.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 196-197.

Wangari does not try to hide and run away from the corruption that is being boasted about in front of her. Nor does she try and stay pure and untouched like the Man; instead she tries to determine the future and rid the country of its dirt. We do not, in this novel, find pessimistic, passive characters. Instead, we have proud, constructive and optimistic human beings who have an aim in life and are ready to ascertain their rights in this world.

3.3 Socialist Commitment

In accordance with socialist realism, Ngugi is clearly seen to be a committed writer. His stand is definitely with the exploited class that is fighting for its rights and changing situations in life. His major characters all come from the exploited class: Wariinga the jobless, Wangari the peasant, Muturi the worker and Gaturia the educated. We also have the class of exploiters represented by the rich old man, Mwireri, Mwaura and the foreign imperialists in the cave. Ngugi in his previous definition, talks about the global power of imperialism in contrast to the working class that is attaining its rightful leadership. Here he clearly shows this global character of imperialism through the foreign and indigenous people collected in the cave.

Firstly, all the foreign guests are dressed in the currency of their respective countries, be it Dollar, Pound or The Yen. This implicitly reflects the global character of imperialism. Secondly, we have the badges reflecting how they exploit the ignorant people. Money Swallowing Insurance Schemes, Industrial Gobblers of Raw Materials, Traders in Human Skins, Loans for a Profit, Aid with Iron Strings, Arms for Murder,

etc. Apart from these, we have the indigenous exploiters who come forward with greedy methods of exploiting the people. Kimeendeeri feels that the blood, sweat and brains of a worker are the most important assets for exploitation. Furthermore, he wants to export these commodities to the west, in a pipeline, under the title Kenya-Saxon Exporters: Human Blood and Flesh. We also have the idea of selling cans of air and soil to exploit the people. If they refuse to be exploited, they can be denied the air. Ngugi brings all these ridiculous ideas forward to show how far imperialism expects to extend, and in a way, he is warning the people against this expansionist greed.

We also have a clear picture of Ngugi's commitment regarding unity. This is reflected through the student's speech outside the cave.

We, the mass of students in Ilmorog whether in primary or secondary school, or at the University, support the workers fully in their just struggle against the system of modern theft and robbery. Let us all now join hands with the working people in its neo-colonial stage. Let us join hands with the workers as they struggle to build a house that will benefit all the builders. What greater thing can our education do for our nation. 157

Ngugi also shows his belief in unity in the following quotation.

I believe that we, the workers, are of one clan and hence we should not allow ourselves to be divided by religion, colour or tribe. I believe that in the organization of the workers lies our strength, for those who are organized never lose their way, and those who are not organized, are scattered by the sound of one bullet. I therefore believe in the unity of the workers because our unity is our strength. I believe

157 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

that imperialism and its local representative are the enemies of the progress of the workers peasants and of the whole nation. I therefore vow always to struggle against neo-colonialism for neo-colonialism is the last vicious kick of a dying imperialism. 158

To conclude, Ngugi has, in this novel, clearly depicted the evil nature of imperialism and its ways of subjugating the people. Symbolically, through the words of Kihaaha Wa Gatheeca, imperialism says

...I'am very grateful to the masses of the Kenyan people. For, their blindness, their ignorance, their inability to demand their rights, are what enable us, the clan of man eaters to feed on their sweat without their asking too many awkward questions. 159

Though Ngugi has shown the evil ways of imperialism, he does not leave it for the reader to contemplate and be aware of. Instead he proposes a solution: unity with the workers, peasants and students and above all, education. Apart from this, Ngugi is clearly showing the way for progress and development. Characters like Wariinga are ready to devote their time to education, and then fight for their rights without losing heart. Wangari is ready to expose and bring to justice all people responsible for this unequal division of wealth and Muturi, the worker, is proud of being a nation builder. All these characters represent a new type of man, who is proud of being a productive, progressive individual and a builder of a new society with a bright future.

158 Ibid., p. 210.

159 Ibid., p. 116.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to deal with socialist realism as a method, the themes of a set of African novels and the implications of the former for the African writer.

To begin with an attempt has been made to give an over-all view of socialist realism and this view is made clearer when compared and contrasted with critical realism. Socialist realism shows the past and present of mankind along with the bright future while critical realism deals with the here and now. Critical realism does not want to consciously change society instead pessimism pervades. The main reason for giving this over-all view is to show the important role socialist realism played during the transition period in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, there are important implications for other writers in the world.

The study in the next stage takes a set of African novels from certain regions and attempts to show what the major themes are. The result from this section is that the African writer has reached a stagnant stage of merely reflecting reality. Reality in turn is presented with characters frustrated by failures in life. Apart from this each region has its peculiar features. South African literature is dominant with the themes of apartheid, the resistance movement and cultural conflict. North and Central African literature have strong influences of religion reflecting predestination while West Africa presents pessimism in varying degrees. In other words, the African writer using the critical realist method has only been critical about man and his life and this has been of little value. Critical realism does not even try to give solutions to the problems of man, in fact, it infers that there is nothing he

wants to do or can do. Apart from this, the critical realist method has given no place for the optimistic rising class - the working class. We can deduce from these facts that the critical realist method has become inadequate to deal with reality. The time has come to use a method with a much more comprehensive view, by this it is meant that socialist realism tries to point out the cause for mans problems and attempts to give the solutions the alternative method appears to be - the socialist realist method.

Lastly this paper tries to point out certain implications for the African writer that we can get from the socialist realist method. Socialist realism is a reflection of the socialist reality. Socialism in turn is being experienced on a world wide basis. The Soviet Union and most East European countries can be taken as examples from Europe. We also have countries from Latin America like Cuba, and China, and Vietnam from the Far East which are Socialist. We can clearly see that socialist oriented countries are increasing from year to year. The same holds true when we come to the African continent, many countries like Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique are in a transition period towards socialsim. A transition period in turn is a very decisive period in which the African writer has a great role to play in the coming of socialism.

We can already see African writers using the socialist realist method. Ngugi-Wa Thiongo in his novel Devil on the Cross has viewed society from a socialist realist outlook. Ngugi inspired by the works of socialist realist writers and his experience in the socialist world has presented optimistic characters who want to determine society. Equally, man and woman are portrayed striving to change society. This indicates that the socialist realist method has some implications, like optimism

and commitment, that are useful to the African writer. These implications will help the African writer in his role in the transition period and will thus improve the African novel.

To conclude, though socialism is inevitable the African writer can quicken its coming through his works of art. There can be no nobler task than showing the majority of mankind the exploitation of man by man and helping him to attain his rightful place in society. Hence, it is the duty of the African writer to guide and teach the people and the socialist realist method will help him in this task.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all the sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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