

As is shown by these versions of the tale of the strong-willed woman who found ill by exercising her individuality, the folktale clearly delineates the specific values upon which society rests. This, perhaps is as it should be. For the clarity and force with which the folktale states the social principles, goals, held or accepted standards, as well as taboos enable us to see better the strengths and weaknesses of society. By so clearly and vigorously defining the unjust and sexist society, even if with approval, the folktale presents itself as a form through which those very ills may be challenged. In this way the folktale may be seen as a powerful form through which the community itself grows towards the just society.

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ART AND ARTIFICE IN TWO NOVELS OF PETER NAZARETH

Olatubosun Ogunsanwo *

"I am primarily a political writer,"¹ says Peter Nazareth in 1976 to Bernth Lindfors in an interview. Peter Nazareth, of Goan descent, a socio-literary critic, an exiled British citizen of Uganda where he was born and reared, now a permanent resident and University professor in America, has written two novels up to date,² both set in East Africa.

In *a Brown Mantle* (1972), his first novel, presents post-independence disillusionment and corruption in Damibia. The events are presented in the form of a reflective retrospection in the guise of a confession of a Goan Damibian now in self-exile in Britain. The Second Novel, *The General is Up* (1984), is also largely the sorrowful chronicle of David D'Costa and his family in post-independence Damibia. David is also of Goan descent. Along with thousands of East Indians who are life-long British citizens of Damibia, David has just been ordered out of Independent Damibia. All East Indians are indiscriminately accused of dominating Damibia's economy.

This essay deals with the aesthetic question of the relationship between creativity and artistic vision. Nazareth's artistic problem in both novels, he says, is how to write a novel about Goans which was simultaneously a political novel about Africa.³ The problem, as he describes it in *Africa Now*, "was how to find a fictional solution".⁴ Generally in his works Nazareth tries primarily "to explore the relationship between society and individual and vice versa",⁵ just as he admires Paule Marshall's skill in interweaving individual experience with historical force in *The Chosen Place, Timeless People*.⁶ And he is a self-conscious artist who says plainly: "I am a writer of social ideas and I use whatever form suits the expression of those ideas".⁷

Generally, such political or social works have an overriding concern with social reality. In some such works, 'ideology', meaning not just conscious political doctrines but those systems (aesthetic, religious, legal and others) which shape individual's mental picture of lived experience, emerges prominently, drawing attention to itself either in the Marxist form of positivistic historical sequence or in the Socialist Realist sense of concrete social reality.

*O. Ogunsanwo lectures at the Department of English in the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

consciousness, or imaginative world created, transmuted and re-creates objective reality. In this respect, the novelist in the final analysis cannot write literally as a politician or social historian, but within the fictional mode. Even when self-histories are described as fictional autobiographies, they must have undergone imaginative transformations. Pius Coto in *In a Brown Mantle* is more or less than the historical Pius Coto. The General in *The General Is Up* is not a photographic reproduction of the historical Alhaji Dr. Idi Amin, however close the likeness. Dedan Kimathi in Thiong'o and Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) and Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Noghaisi in the play of that name published in 1974 are further illustrations. Neither of them is a literal transcription of the real-life original. The playwrights artfully re-create them to make them meaningful and relevant to our time, drawing on the basic truths of their historical actions for their eternal truths, just as we can say of Robert Bolt's *Thomas More* in *A Man for All Seasons* (1960) or Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In this sense, an imaginative work of art still at bottom harks back to the notion that great art is primarily concerned to reflect objective, permanent verities, even when atomized or fragmented in the modernist sense that seeks to reflect the apparently meaningless disorder of its time. In short, there is something essentially mimetic in great art of any time and situation.

It is important to first realize that for Nazareth "literary art needs its reader, its interpreter (who) must be a true, active critic" who has to "play his part as creative interpreter."⁸ The apparently phenomenological stress in his interviews and essays on the role of the reader-critic arises partly from his own lofty conception of the fictional forms:

*fiction is the highest form of exploration of reality because it can examine all the contradictions and complexities in a situation. Fiction engages our emotion and intellect.*⁹

The synaesthetic expectation of the reader that he balance keen thought with deep feeling as demanded by both novels puts considerable emphasis on the reader's central role. His expectation of the reader as "participant-interpreter"¹¹ talks, in the manner of reader-response theory, of his own realization that it is the reader who, by actively applying the code in which the message is written, actualizes what would in his novels, like in any serious work, otherwise remain only potentially meaningful. In other words, a work of art is the expression of a subjectivity that is addressed to the subjectivity of the reader-critic. And since literature is a sphere in which the totalitarian domination of society can be imaginatively challenged and resisted as is the case in *The General Is Up*, the reader's subjectivity can be kindled against the bond-

age of myths and half-truths, an effect Nazareth admits in the Jamaican Andrew Salkey:

Salkey finds it necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals may rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths.¹²

Another thing to note is that Nazareth urges his reader not to regard any of his works as a smooth mimesis of objective reality. To him, for literature to present itself as a seamless unity of discourse is to be unchallenging, or politically regressive in the Brechtian sense:

I believe that the work of fiction has to interact with the audience or reader, who are part of the problem. Just as you read a book, the book reads you. I always search for technique that will challenge the reader's or audience's assumption.¹³

All this is primarily because Nazareth wants to "implicate" his audience "so that afterwards, with a heightened consciousness, they could take action in real life to stop the situation developing".¹⁴ So Nazareth manoeuvres his narratives "for the purpose of playing with consciousness".¹⁵ Since all artistic creation basically involve stylization, a fictive reflection in itself is not a pure transparency in which the reader can grasp a concrete reality, more so as it is composed of the inherently imprecise human language. "What is a novel if not words?" asks Nazareth thought-provokingly in 'Acknowledgements' to *In a Brown Mantle*. As the slipperiness of words, in the Barthesian sense, makes the definition of reality elusive, by the same token it renders them susceptible of considerable manoeuvrability. And Nazareth exploits this: "I am aware of the different uses of language to explore different levels of reality".¹⁶

Moreover, his novels can be seen as conscious artifices containing such devices as omissions and silences purposely for the reader to fill in, if he is to "play his part as creative interpreter". Talking about *In a Brown Mantle*, Nazareth plainly warns: "a work of fiction may have multiple levels of meaning, all of which are valid. . . not only the words but also the silences are important".¹⁷ Then, the literary critic is not only to examine how all the parts of a work of art fit together but also to attend, like a psychoanalyst, to the text's unconscious. Also for Nazareth, when "an author tells the story . . . his perception may be part of the problem", just as the reader himself is part of the problem the text is faced with.¹⁸ In *The General Is Up*, for instance, the novelist is morally indignant with the General as shown unmistakably in his authorial voice on the few occasions he presents him clearly

ni the third person. So, the reader has to sit back, as it were, since Nazareth aims to "implicate (him) in the novels, forcing him to make judgements, to question not only the story he has read but also his own perception of self, the group and socio-political reality".¹⁹ All this narrative purpose stresses that artistic representations are artifices drawing largely on the individual author's 'sensitivity, perspective and motivation'. And for all this reason, it is arguable that a Nazareth novel is in reality not an 'innocent' text. Robert Kyeyune in *In a Brown Mantle* is very sensible of the manoeuvrability of texts, oral or written, when he tells Deogratus (Joseph D'Souza) after an electioneering campaign:

"My dear Brown Friend", said Kyeyune, laying his huge hand across my back, "Don't be too fair. We are at war, you know, and we cannot make concessions to the enemy".

He admitted that the British were better than the Belgians. He had lived near the Congo border when he was young, and he knew what the Belgians were like. Belgians' rule in the Congo had been one long bloodbath, with no benefits to the Africans. The cities were marvelous, but only the Belgians enjoyed the amenities.

"But", he said, "shall I stand up and tell my people about this? Can they make subtle distinctions?"

Mock-declaration, "My friend, the British are good rulers. They have ruled wisely like our fathers. We love them, we thank them, we bless them. But let us chase them out because I Kyeyune, will do better.

"No, my innocent one. As the Americans would say. "They'll never buy it".

"But need you attack Asians?", I asked.

"My dear fellow, yes. The British are clever. They placed a middle-man of another race between themselves and Africans so that they could rake in the profits undisturbed. . . It is the one who deals directly with the African who is hated most. . ." 45

This narration is not asking the reader to distrust the author and trust the text in the conventional way. The creative transmutation that goes on in a Nazareth novel contains not only silences but also the unconscious. And it is the creative 'decoding' by the perceptive reader that can reveal the hidden truths. For example, the socio-political ideology which Deogratus in *In a Brown Mantle* and David D'Costa in *The General Is Up* present as their own systematized explanations of the political reality of their society reveal inherent gaps when situated critically within the texts. The inco-

herence can also be said to correspond to the inherent lapses which inevitably emerge in the narrative or textual process.

In both novels the literary forms Nazareth adopts help to make the reader circumspect of the social ideology operating in Damibia. First, the literary use of Deogratus in *In a Brown Mantle* as a narrator trying to confess his past in itself entails a double perspective suited to the complexity of the social history. Deogratus tells his story in form of his life-history retrospectively and prospectively. Structurally, since the story is an introspective recollection and memory naturally wanders, his account, being fragmented, moves to and fro, involuntarily revealing lapses. Thematically, he is a participant in the main action who relishes his status as an African Goan or Goan African, depending on his convenience. He is also a liberal humanist/politician who with a sense of social commitment regards himself as the champion of the social cause of Goans and Africans as well. But the gaps in his self-estimation are, for instance, hinted at by Pius Cota in one of their political discussions: "Your experience of society is petty bourgeois Goan society". (67)

The double perspective underlying the entire narrative significantly conveys the two ironic sides of his political career, as illustrated especially by his final flight from Damibia with his ill-gotten gains kept away in a Swiss bank. His monetary gains are in a way his own chosen compensation for his rejection as a Goan, represented by Gombe-Kukwaya (The Cow) and Kyeyune himself. On the other hand, it is a negation of his humanist stance or political idealism represented by his association with Pius Cota. Pius Cota is a Goan who lives above racial chauvinism, engendering in Deogratus the noblest feelings towards both races; whereas The Cow in particular often brings forth in him the meanest of racial feelings.

For Nazareth, the answer to Deogratus's political plight is apparently to present all the contradictions for the reader to discover the inner truths for himself. Thus the narrative form allows the reader to grasp the intriguing nature of racial politics, while he can see through Deogratus's seemingly fluent discourse of socialist vision and liberal humanism. Again in *The General Is Up* David D'Costa's criticism of what he calls George Dapa's "cocktail socialism" (123) smooths over the contradictions between moral and economic requirements portrayed in both novels. The contradictions lie between liberal humanism which requires a sense of fellow-feeling both among Africans, low and high, and among all the races and, on the other hand, economic success which drains all value from human relations and forces it solely on material benefits, while thriving on racial sentiments.

Though the novels are apparently concerned to win our sympathies for their Goan protagonists, the ironic distancing of the reader from them illustrates Nazareth's serious desire to throw

insights into the social development of his time. The hard fact that the present plight of the East Indians in Damibia is in a way due to historical process is, for instance, clearly perceived by Joaquim D'Costa in his discussion with Deogratius in *In a Brown Mantle*. Deogratius reports the discussion:

But he told me that he was leaving because he had seen the writing on the wall. He said that Goans would not be accepted in Damibia in the near future. I asked him what made him think so. He said that when the number of Africans coming out of schools and universities had increased in four or five years' time, the African leaders would not keep people like him in employment but would kick them out. He said that he preferred to go to Canada and establish himself before so many Goans started applying for Canada that he would never be admitted. . . .(87)

Here, Joaquim D'Costa, the only Goan who ironically can be described as "the complete sensual male" (85) in the entire novel, shows both a profound insight into the historical development in Damibia and an honest foresight into the likely social developments about Goans in Canada. The combined perception encourages the reader to see the situation in terms of human history at large, though the irony is here very bitter.

Indeed Nazareth possibly leans towards the Hegelian side of Marxist thought: the two novels reflect at bottom an unfolding social system and seek a permanent and universal interpretation of historical developments. In *The General Is Up* the main victim, David, conveys the same impression:

"I'm too tired to argue", said David, going to the fridge and taking out a bottle of beer. "East Indians and Goans are not hated as such. It is a political problem, going back to and created by the British colonialists. . . .(98)

David has just returned from his journey to Lubele, Damibia's political headquarters, where he had sought in vain to obtain a certificate of Damibian citizenship in the hope that he would remain in Damibia. It is remarkable that David, despite his depressing experience, can see the situation dialectically, apparently in the Hegelian sense that informs the Marxist interpretation of 'history': Significantly, David's perception here recalls Joaquim D'Costa's earlier on. In the two novels, history is not presented as stasis: it is diachronic, it is a movement and therefore a change, sometimes for the worse. Both novels strongly convey a sense of

orthodox Socialist Realism. However, whether Socialist Realism or Bourgeois Realism, what matters is the extent to which an artistic work illuminates social developments of its time. Both novels, in their insistence on the material and historical structure of the Damibian society, reveal the underlying pattern of contradictions in Damibia's social order. Just as in *The General Is Up* Lubele can be easily mistaken for an exclusively Indian community, so also is the entire economic fabric of the nation irretrievably undermined by both the British and American entrepreneurs. Yet the General in his public utterances blindly puts the entire blame on the East Indians.

In the two novels, the artistic representation gives us a truer and a more dynamic picture of reality. It forcefully makes us realize that Damibia's history of exploitation and oppression is a part of the large human suffering, an example of which in *In a Brown Mantle* is the Goans' wearying experience at the hands of the Portuguese for more than four centuries. Deogratius's father, for example, had to come to East Africa "to get a breathing space from Portuguese persecution in Goa" (68).

In short, a good or bad development in history is not random; nor is it a straightforward linear progression, but rather a dialectical development. In every social organization, as Nazareth shows in both novels, the prevailing mode of production and distribution, primitive or sophisticated, causes contradictions expressed in Damibia in form of racial conflicts.

In other words, serious literature belongs to the sphere of ideology. But it does possess a relationship to ideology which is even less direct than is found in the case of political, religious or philosophical systems. In actuality, it works at the least at two removes from ideology only to produce an effect of the 'real'. The perceptions and meanings in the text are a re-working of objective reality. Consequently, the literary production is not merely a reflection of ideological discourse but a particular production of social ideas. In this respect, art is set apart from objective reality to which it refers, and it is this distance that gives the work of art the power of criticizing social reality and functioning 'pragmatically' within that objective reality as an irritant. It is this novelistic contrivance that allows Nazareth to show a sense of realism that transcends racial prejudices, far beyond what a conventional mimesis can do.

But this is also saying in a way that there is a notable measure of "manipulation of reality" in a Nazareth novel. James McGuire perceptively finds *The General Is Up* to be

a very personal and subjective reflection of reality that is useful as an art form grounded in reality only by the historical correlatives we can pinpoint. Thus the text is a manipulation of 'reality'. Reality becomes

elusive and we become aware that the text's relationship to reality depends solely on its author.²¹

Since every creative sensibility or effort is individual despite any objective conception and rendering, *The General Is Up* is basically "a very personal and subjective reflection of reality", and is addressed to another subjectivity, that of the reader-critic, as said above. Again, the historical correlatives are transformed in a way that makes them relevant to the human situation the novel is concerned with. However, the novel combines pure farce with stark horror and has a gothic mood caught in surrealist terms and defies conventional definition of reality. It begins in the middle, when the General is already gripped by the hallucinatory thoughts of his own murderous efforts to remain in power.

He was coming in the dark, creeping up to the bed through the redness, creeping with a knife, with a machinegun, with a grenade, until...

"Get away!" the General sprang out of bed, gun blazing, "Plop, plop, crack, wram!!!" Bodyguards burst in and turned on some light.
"What happened, your Excellency?"
"Who are you shooting, Bwana?"
"I was... I... Captain Oma was here with guns, knives, grenades!"
"But, General, Captain Oma is..."
Yes, yes, it slowly came back... (9)

Right from these very first lines of the story proper, Captain Oma exists only in his innermost fears, as the Captain only stands irremovably to him for every imaginable mortal opposition. He had himself actually killed the Captain, his chief murderous agent, whom he had later distrusted.

The scarcity of realistic detail and the copious use of omission, which characterize the entire narrative, are particularly noticeable at this very beginning of the novel. But it should be noted at once that it is a realistic technique as it is concerned here with a nightmare which naturally will defy a detailed grasp. Significantly too, the narrative proper ends in the same surrealist manner, with the General's self-murder in a demented shooting spree. The elliptical form of narration leaves the 'matter' of the nightmare sketchy and the reader has to fill in the 'silences' if he is to make meaning of the incident. And this is precisely because it is an imaginative apprehension of a reign of terror that the narration seeks to capture. Remarkably, the elliptical narration with the barest details strongly recalls Iris Murdoch's perception of the

relationship between reality and the fictional form in *Encounter*, January 1961.

Reality is not a given whole. An understanding of this, a respect for the contingent, is essential to the imagination as opposed to fantasy. Our sense of form, which is an aspect of our desire for consolation, can be a danger to our sense of reality as a rich receding background... But since reality is incomplete, art must not be too much afraid of incompleteness...²²

Undoubtedly, all this 'incomplete' form of representation is far from, say, the Jamesian total dramatization or the photographic, naturalistic representation. But it has the authenticity of the the shattering, ungraspable and hallucinatory situation for its realism. This incomplete representation allows Nazareth to telescope within the first page and a half of the novel the nightmare and the hilarious ceremony in which the General is presented with all conceivable national honours, and we are plunged directly into the absurdist main action of the novel. It is during this ceremony that he announces that God himself had told him in a dream that all East Indians must leave Damibia "by the next moon". This pronouncement instantly creates an overwhelming atmosphere of confusion and panic under which a large number of East Indians and suspicious 'true-blue' Damibians are callously murdered. Thus the taut narrative form shows in a most gripping manner the horrid results of fits of frenzied paranoia arising from the unhinged mind of a tyrant whose fatuity creates an ironic calamity in which both the oppressed and the oppressor are inordinately hunted.

Indeed, Nazareth's art does create the affective violence of the surrealist "attempt by a non-violent man to deal with a violent world" (186). So, the novel appears like "a horror-script" to Hungry Pete, the Lebanese immigrant in Booklyn, to whom Ronald D'Cruz has by chance entrusted his "grubby pile of handwritten pages" (186). Pete describes his own immediate reaction to it:

That night, I read, *Spiraling*, *The General Is Up*, a novel by Ronald D'Cruz. It was a most incredible story, what I could read of it. There was several paragraphs of gory descriptions of murders which had been deleted, along with the deletion of some names. It seemed like a work of fantasy or a draft for a horror-script. But it was promising, I thought I couldn't put it down until I had finished. But it would need more work and some editing (187).

This is about the last part of the entire text, which is in fact

the Epilogue. We are here given some hints about the nature of the whole text and the relationship between the text and the reader. The final text is at more than two removes from the reader, through the double 'editing' that has shorn it of all lurid details. The editing principle has led to the racy radio style for which the listener has to rely basically on words that conjure up swift, mental images of actions. Ronald D'Cruz is of course very much the same person as Ronald D'Mello of the Damibia's Ministry of Information in the main body of the narrative, and he is apparently familiar with radio stories. The transformation in 'persona' from the silently inquiring and analyzing observer of most of the crucial events in Damibia to an imaginative re-creator of the entire situation correlates with the change in his name. Perhaps he was a mellow man in Damibia, watching the events in a 'mellow' or, rather, 'unpragmatic' way; and now that he is mentally on the 'Cross', his spiritual development has put the burden of the creative reproduction of the harrowing experience on his shoulders, as is the case with Coleridge's Ancient Mariner who must tell the tale of his experience, not only to instruct other people but also to relieve his own soul of moral horror.

There is consequently a moral distance from the objective evil of the entire situation. The putative author finally remains many removes from the tale, and by extension the historical novelist keeps all the farther aloof from the entire event. Obviously, the novel is not seeking the conventional suspension of disbelief in the Coleridgean sense, nor in the Jamesian sense that creates an intensity of illusion for aesthetic realism, nor even merely in the sense of any realism achieved by the pure modernist art in which fragmentation and disjointedness is an authentic reflection of the meaningless disorder of nihilism of the time. The novel depicts the Conradian unspeakable moral horror, and strongly adds to this the horror-scare of a psychotic tyranny:

"Are you talking about Mohan Thakore, the lawyer?" David asked.

"Who else?" said the silver one. "I am Ramesh Husseini. What happened to him?" David was afraid to hear the answer. "Major Ibrahim stabbed him, tore out his eyes, and threw his body into the incinerator for the secret documents in the President's office. Two hours after his arrest".

"How do you know?" David asked. . . .

"There are ways", said Husseini, mysteriously.

"There are people in the General's office who will tell you anything for a fee".

Husseini took out his handkerchief and blew his nose. "But at least he was lucky", continued Husseini. "At least he was not chopped alive into

pieces in the marketplace, as Ibrahim did with Gregory Mawaswa at Kibumba. And at least he was cremated like a good Hindu".

"But surely---well, why was he killed?" asked David. Just because the British journalist was carrying a letter from Jack Withers with his name on it? There were other names on the letter as well.

"That, and more", said Husseini. "The General does not trust anyone. Do you remember the time the General was accused of corruption several years ago, when he was a major? Who defended him against the charges of embezzlement. . . .? Mohan, of course. . . .Mohan was a good liar---er, lawyer, so skilled at semantics, that he got him off the hook! Only to get himself onto the hook. The British reporter's letter reminded the General that Mohan was around, living evidence of the General's corruption, while the General was posing as Saviour. As for Ibrahim, this was his chance to get a great sports car. His family were butchers in one of the towns and killing comes easy to him". (84-86)

The main action appears bare and chronological because the horrid events that form the material web of the narrative occur offstage. The plot is actually fragmented with the scaring details of the offstage incidents retailed most sketchily and when they can best stir the reader's sense of moral outrage. Thus, the novel graphically conveys a moral unease at barbarity. Again, this passage bristles with a very black humour in the most offhand manner as an absurdist reflection of the mental and moral degeneration of human life and value, which is far beyond a matter of racial conflict. The "butchers" and their prey have caught the psychosis. The fellow personages who have seen far worse cases make cross-references with little shudder because they are getting inured to horror. And so the novel brims with horror imagery which acquires a serious moral concern as it possesses an intense totality that corresponds to the extensive totality of an unspeakable tyranny.

Furthermore, the warp and woof of the entire narrative is lightened with a gripping effect by means of a mingled visual and auditory device. Thomas Kisirwa, the well-known Damibian newscaster, relentlessly reminds the East Indians of the number of days left for them to leave Damibia. The emotionless impersonality with which he makes the broadcast is in itself frightening. The hideous grip is intensified by the continuously interlocking announcements in the textual process.

For instance, Chapter 5 of the novel ends precisely with Kisir-

the General's order and Chapter 6 begins immediately with exactly the same news item containing more threatening details in case of any non-compliance. And Chapter 7 begins on a note of the increasing uncertainty and panic as the "people are still trying to figure out when the next moon was", a term that interlaces with the expression of the people's inability to work out the deadline at the end of Chapter 6: "And what period was by the next moon" (53). Above all, the character of the news bearers, like Castro Viagas, is extremely unreliable. Just as the all-determining phrase "by the next moon" is as imprecise as the lunar calendar, it is also a graphic reflection of the mind of the lunatic General whose behaviour apparently relates to the mythological Luna. If we recall the historical fact that the actual length of time given by the General Idi Amin for all the Asians to leave Uganda was three months, we can best grasp how Nazareth's narrative contrivance sets in focus the insufferable atmosphere in which everyone is caught.

It is all this narrative manipulation that makes Nazareth's art within the social reality an irritant which heightens the reader's consciousness. The human mind, as an experiencing consciousness, is fundamentally in the novel simultaneously a narrative subject and medium. The experiencing minds of the personages with different racial origins are the mediating consciousnesses of the harrowing effects of the General's maniacal actions, while David D'Costa's mind functions as both the principal mediating and suffering consciousness. The large number of experiencing minds across races is an eloquent testimony to the General's reign of terror. And through their various consciousnesses every event and every phrase define the agonies arising from his ceaseless outrages.

And the total picture of the bewildering situation is all the more challenging as Ronald D'Mello, the most notable observer of the action in Damibia, cannot be categorically described as the third-person omniscient narrator of the main body of the narrative, however identifiable he may be with Ronald D'Cruz, the author in the end. However elusive the identity, there is definitely an implied author who sorts out the fragments of the shattered events. Noticeably through Ronald D'Mello's gathering mind particularly from Chapter 25 after David D'Costa had fled to Canada, a composite picture which throws further insights into the sinister situation emerges. Obviously, the implied author sees himself in David whose sad experiences he arranges and gives meaning to, even after his departure from Damibia. In other words, the third-person narrator is actually both inside and outside the story of Damibia's oppression, with incisive insights. His stance allows the action to grow larger than David had anticipated (David is finally forced by increasing fear to leave Damibia in the last minute, but no Goan is actually reported arrested after the deadline). The narration also

recreation of the entire situation (even if Ronald D'Cruz is taken to be the third-person narrator of the entire action from scratch), is finally edited by Hungry Pete by sheer chance. In sum, all this circuitous process of the text is an artistic reflection of the yet unriddled riddle of Damibia's situation which the creative reader-critic has to confront for himself, so that he can, "with a heightened consciousness", react actively.

The narrative manoeuvre that occurs in *In a Brown Mantle* beneath the flowing 'confession' is akin to the roundabout textuality of *The General Is Up*. It undoubtedly makes the text "a manipulation of reality"

Nazareth himself describes the form of the narrative: "The story takes the form of a dialogue the narrator is holding with his conscience. Therefore the sequence in which he remembers things is important" ²³. On the surface, the narrative has a smooth-flowing chronology like any conventional autobiography. But the confessional-narrator consciously frustrates familiar plot arrangements by dislocating the material details. Ironically, this contrivance has a defamiliarization effect, in that the inescapable unconscious of the confession throws up the other side of his story which he is at great pains to hide, and draws attention to his own inner disquiet at the end, more than to Damibia's social disorder.

Deogratus's confession is triggered by some startling newspaper headlines very early one morning in Britain where he is in self-exile:

"BULLETS MISS MR KYEYUNE,
"AFRICAN LEADER NEARLY MURDERED!"
"ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON DAMIBIAN
LEADER FAILS".

Newspaper headlines are characteristically elliptical and epigrammatic. And in place of the stories from the newspaper, it is Deogratus's own recollective account in the wake of these headlines that fills in his deliberate silence. So, the story of the abortive assassination attempt is reaching the reader circuitously. First the newspaper headlines come to us at two removes, through Deogratus's eyes. Second, Deogratus is now giving us the remote circumstances of the event, and from his own side; while 'blocking' the newspaper account of the immediate details of the attempt. He is relegating Kyeeyune, the subject of the newspaper account, to the background. In effect, Deogratus is looking at the text not really to read it: in his inner mind he is being read by it. The newspaper story has tickled his memory, recalling his own part in the entire event and challenging his conscience. His 'confession' is made indirectly to the reader, and before whom he can re-arrange his feelings and thoughts.

Again, the confession is made naturally in the first person.

Yet it is a summary account that is very much contrived like an indirect discourse, and this shears it of the fluidity of the first person narrative. It is in effect an introspective recollection that is highly selective and ingeniously ordered. Naturally in a confession, omission will occur for the father-confessor to decode, since memory cannot photographically recover and reproduce everything to the letter. Naturally again, memories occur in a flux and are associative. But here there is a disingenuous fragmentation and dislocation of the details. So there is no 'innocent' utterance all together, and this undermines the basic idea of confession.

The skilful manipulation is discernible from the division of the entire account into 4 parts, while these parts overlap and the material details are strewn here and there with additions and subtractions when they can possibly do the least harm to the confessor. The first two parts have to be taken together, in that the two together give the main outline of the entire recollection. They jointly describe in brief Deogratus' political experience as a whole: his brief introduction when he was 14 to Pius Cota; his political interest at school; and his political association with Kyeyune. Parts 2 and 4, taken together, fill in many more details, taking the 'confession' backward and forward. And the word confession in the entire text becomes a quibble: a mere statement about transgressions; an extenuation or an admission of a transgression? And the juggling of details and the fragmented narration of the events heighten this underlying quibble. For instance, Deogratus skilfully ordered his recollection towards his political lessons at St. Jude: "a foretaste of that mixture of idealism and calculating craftiness I was to meet when I started working with Kyeyune" (40-41). The expression "that mixture of idealism and calculating craftiness" hints at the basic quibble of his confession. It is a paradox whose two apparently conflicting parts have to be taken as inextricably interwoven, instead of a form of binarism, if any perceptive meaning is to be made of his intriguing political attitude and career.

His account of his political education starts straightaway from part 1 and he arrives schematically at such political discoveries in Part 2. Part 4 is also ingeniously organized in anticipation of the time he puts money away in a Swiss bank—the only plain and concrete admission of any 'transgression' he makes in the entire 'confession'. His manipulation of details is self-evident in this example. At Pius Cota's burial which begins Part 3 appropriately entitled "Fragments", the ironic words of the sermon by Father van Santen (the former Chaplain of St. Jude) prick his conscience and he finally hints at his running into Pius Cota in Zurich three months earlier. Immediately after this part, he goes directly to his mortifying experiences with the Cow, highlighting the demoralizing racial taunts he receives incessantly from him. When next he refers to his savings in the Swiss bank, it is in Chap-

ter 4 called 'Aftermath', and this is really at the tail-end of the whole 'confession'. Indeed, this admission is only after he has self-deridingly mentioned the sharp sting of Maria's taunt about his poverty and also Kyeyune's betrayal of Pius Cota to his assassins from the neighbouring Government. In sum, Deogratus has artfully established to us his own sense of alienation from the government and the governors, before talking frankly of his own instance of guilt in all Damibia's muddle. In an article Nazareth quotes some statement of James Joyce's protagonist in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as offering a possible clue to the moral problem. Tayeb Salih's narrator in *Season of Migration to the North* (1969) faces finally about his duties: "I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile and cunning."²⁴ Both Tayeb Salih's narrator, named Effendi, and Deogratus have to make a moral choice at the end. Undoubtedly, the last three words of Stephen Dedalus strikingly offer a clue to Deogratus's rhetorical confession. Is Deogratus not a "cunning" artificer, fashioning out his confession to suit himself?

Instructively, most of the notable characters cited in the textual confession speak "the truth and yet less than the truth" (45), requiring a discerning participant-reader to read between the lines, or hear between the words. When the Chaplain of St. Jude has to leave the college because of a crisis, he shrewdly avoids a full explanation, resorting to emotive omissions and silences that arouse the boys' sympathetic curiosity and lead to "all kinds of theories about the resignation" (37). When Mr. Greene is reprimanding Deogratus ostensibly for coming late to work, he cleverly omits his displeasure with Deogratus's official comments on Government loans to Damibians at Independence. When Deogratus has inner doubts about Kyeyune's request that he be his political assistant, he remains silent and Kyeyune makes aberrant decodings.

Both novels are suited to the personalities of the principal characters who determine the movement of the main actions. Just as the artistry of *The General Is Up* is in accord with the General's absurdist behaviour, the quality of *In a Brown Mantle* derives basically from Deogratus's intriguing character. A theme basic to both novels is the complexity of a socio-political situation, particularly in a multi-racial setting. The complexity is forcefully illustrated by Deogratus with the contrasting reactions of many personages to the same situation. For instance, while Pius Cota in his address to the Goans at Abala Goan Institute condemns the "shameless imperialist exploitation in East Africa" (11) and urges "the Goans in Damibia to throw in their lot with the cause for African Independence" (10), a fellow Goan, Bernie Rodrigues, heckles. But the situation is again not a matter of sheer binarism

for Deogratius. His father genuinely feels that both Pius and Bernie have to tone down their manners of speaking, while in his library he talks privately to Pius "about loyalty, and whether, as an immigrant race we could bite the hand that fed us what we could not obtain at home" (11). To Deogratius, even among people of the same race there are many sides to the situation because of its complexity, and the answer lies possibly in presenting all the many parts to it, and the participant-reader can have a comprehensively thoughtful view.

In the same vein, he painstakingly points out the contrasting personalities of the major personages, as he perceptively sees them as basically unique individual beings, irrespective of their racial origins. Pius Cota will talk tirelessly about Socialism and Pan-Africanism while Kyeyune will soon retire to prostitutes on such occasions. But then, the Goan Pius sharply contrasts with the Goan Joaquim, the complete sensual male, who in this respect relates closely to Kyeyune. And Pius contrasts remarkably with Deogratius. When Pius talks about poverty in India, China and Africa and says to Deogratius: "Look at the statistics" (65), Deogratius can, by reflex, only think of the "36-22-36" of his girl-friends, because inwardly he seeks "to be fully as human as I could" (65), despite his reservations about Kyeyune's or Joaquim's sense of sexual morality. In view of all these down-to-earth portraits, his romantic view of his own disposition makes him slur over his own inner weakness in his confession. C. P. Sarvan points out the serious irony within the multi-racial setting:

Questions of authorial intention and implied readership arise. Given a climate of intention and mutual comprehension, misreadings, aberrant "decodings" are all too easy. . . Nazareth may aim at an East African readership but some will only have their prejudices about Asians confirmed by Joseph D'Souza's actions: accepting bribes, illegally sending money abroad and then absconding.²⁵

For a disingenuous tale-teller, even if he is giving a confessional story, art is artifice as it intrinsically entails a conscious ordering of words and events. Here, Deogratius cunningly applies his "sophisticated intelligence"²⁶ by manoeuvring the plot in order to conceal his own guilt. However, the historical novelist or the implied author, in contradistinction to the textual confessionalist, is more mature as the "whole novel is me, (but) both more and less than me".²⁷ And so, the literary form itself congeals Deogratius' flowing confession, showing up its gaps; and Nazareth need not be accused of politics of ambiguity. Triumph to the first person narration that technically excludes the author from the narrative! And the narrative can hang on its own between a so-

cialist historical tragedy and a bourgeois autobiography steeped in romantist protest under the cloak of racial oppression, and its ironic unity of form and content can portray it as an artistic opiate devoid of artistic integrity since its aesthetic obscurantism only stresses its lack of moral and social integrity. In contrast, *The General Is Up* has a fruitful dialectical relationship between formalism and realism, evident in the plotting, imagery and even in the deus ex machina killing of the tyrant and his collaborators at the end.

At any rate, aren't we all dissemblers seeking to cover our real selves? This can be the basic enquiry both novels are making about human nature beneath all the facade of the multi-racial politics. The General, too, dissembles his inner sense of insecurity, wearing the crusted mark of a God-elect patriot. Maybe in a final analysis, the unacknowledged inner self is what underlies all the trouble, if the two novels are seen in the Marxist sense of going to the root of social problem, which is man. Then, "another one walking beside you/Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle"²⁸ is the inner self, externalized by their shadows. So, it is the function of serious art to illuminate it for both ideological and aesthetic meaning. Nazareth's art demonstrates the importance of both creative and interpretative approaches that can search beneath ideological or humanistic postures. And we are back to his literary banter with his reader: "Just as you read a book, the book reads you". And in this very case "the author can learn from it as much as anyone else"²⁸

NOTES

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6. Peter Nazareth,
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14. Peter Nazareth,
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15. Ibidem, p. 6.
16. Bernth Lindfors, op. cit., p. 94
17. Ibidem, p. 93.
18. *Africa Now*, op. cit., p. 51.
19. Peter Nazareth,
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29. Bernth Lindfors, op. cit., p. 93.