

**THE NOVEL AND THE ALLEGORICAL MODE  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE AERODROME,  
CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY, LORD OF THE FLIES,  
INVISIBLE MAN, GRENDEL AND A TIGER FOR MALGUDI**



**By**

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Thesis

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**ESTHER SYIEM**

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## **Chapter-I**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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The novels under consideration will be studied primarily as having their own stories to tell. The emphasis will be on the narrative modes that they have adopted. The endeavour would be to discern the allegorical elements that distinguish each of them, underlining thereby, a simultaneity of quest and of point of view. Each novel will be taken to be representative of itself, of a mode of storytelling that has expediently cut across the frontiers of time and space, and of vastly differing traditions and cultural differences. Chronology has been observed only to the extent of guaranteeing coherence in method and study in order to facilitate insight into a particular mode of perception that has in most cases, been forbiddingly bracketed with medieval scholasticism and renaissance learning. The objective would be to perceive the allegorical mode within the common forms of narrative fiction and to seek to justify its relevance in contemporary fiction.

Gay Clifford in his book The Transformations of Allegory<sup>1</sup> observes that "essentially allegory is, like irony, a mode, and capable of subsuming many different genres and forms." This is a relevant observation that presupposes the allegorical possibilities of all literary genres. It forms an important dimension of one's study of the six novels that employ the allegorical mode of narration. Whilst keeping in mind certain "generic" features of allegory such as "the

extended and extensive use of personification and personified abstractions", one ought not however, allow one's study to be limited by a formalised notion of what to expect from each novel. One has to be aware of the significance of Gay Clifford's observation that although allegory has allowed itself to be transformed extensively, its "formal features" are usually "subordinated to didactic purpose or to the preconceived intellectual structures the author wants to convey"<sup>2</sup>. This element of the didactic determines one's understanding of the "allegoricalness" of each novel. The mode employed in each of them continues a tradition of storytelling that predates the written narrative. It goes back in time to the primal role of the artist as a conscientious chronicler of the "truth". The contemporary artist has however, travelled a long way from his simple task and his role has been constantly redefined to suit the needs of a heterogeneous society. Didacticism has undergone a complex change. It has been put to varied use in the six novels through the employment and co-mingling of a diversity of narrative strains. In the realm of fiction, the traditional allegorist has been replaced by writers such as Rex Warner, John Gardner and R.K. Narayan who are impelled by a zealous desire to educate and teach the reader on the significant allegorical aspects of the novels written by them. The "allegoricalness" of the narrative mode determines the moral

perspective of each novel. In a figurative way, it manipulates reality for a renewed understanding of it. It informs itself through various ways, through characters who sustain a representative identity, through narratives which recreate human reality seen from an angle never seen before as in Golding's Lord of the Flies or through a philosophical framework which imparts a dual relevance to the fiction as in A Tiger of Malqudi. The allegorical mode has to be viewed as being an integral part of the artist's visionary perception of his own world. One's understanding of each novel is dependent upon one's ability to reconstruct the allegorical meanings that ultimately reside in the fiction itself. The allegorical mode thus demands reader participation at two distinct levels: at the level of the story and at the level of symbol and metaphor, significantly allegorical tropes which alludes to a level of insight and a level of reality that goes deeper than the fiction itself.

One usually tends to associate allegory with the Middle Ages and the Renaissance so that one's generic understanding of it is derived from a study of works belonging to these literary eras. In the course of the discussion, however, various definitions of allegory will be referred to for a better understanding of the allegorical mode. Edwin Honig's book Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory and Angus Fletcher's book Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode

provide a close analysis of the nature of allegory. They have been referred to as guiding references in this study of the allegorical mode used in the six novels. One begins, therefore, with a simple assumption taken from Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode that "allegory says one thing and means another"<sup>3</sup> in order to understand the distinctively allegorical nature of the imagination controlling all the six novels. This has its roots in a "protean"<sup>4</sup> ability to disguise itself for the reader's entertainment; hence the novels are not overburdened with the explicit moral tag that usually comes at the end of each story.

Most of them are either first attempt novels or belong to an early phase of the novelist's writing career. It is interesting to note that these novelists have actually begun their careers by involving the supposedly old-fashioned spirit of morality. Once clothed in the pedantic images of truth, this deeply human propensity to spell out the quintessential nature of life in terms of symbol and metaphor has been reworked into the genre of fiction-writing which has definite leanings towards the realistic rather than towards the romantic. These novels have to be read as being representative of the kind of fiction that continues to be written and which, according to some critics, show a marked tendency to withdraw into the traditional framework of fiction writing; to be "restrictive rather than extensive, to

bring back traditional character and plot rather than to seek the inexpressible; in brief, to return to more self-contained matter while retaining, however, many of the technical developments of the major moderns."<sup>5</sup> In the context of this study, they may be placed within a tradition of writing whose sensibility can neither be regionalised nor particularised for they share a common mode of perception that has defied all social and cultural norms.

The mode of narration that they adopt is clearly linked with the artist's vocational sense of self which presupposes a unique radar for sensing the truth; to objectify and to project it in its full complexity through characters who are morally bound to their own environment. The novels have a broad human perspective which allows for a common identification with and an understanding of the characters and the values depicted within them so that an allegorical correspondence between fiction and reality is plausibly reached.

Importance will be given to each novelist's view on his vocation as artist or writer and to the observations that he makes on his own fiction. There has been a pre-meditated effort to provide, however humble, a broad perspective of the kind of novels that still continue to be written whose narrative mode is guided by a deeply moral impulse to liberate the ideals of the spirit.

The chapter on 'The Allegorical Method' in Rex Warner's book The Cult of Power, traces its efficacy in several literary masterpieces. He finds in it ample scope for the creative elucidation of conventional truths normally hidden from view. He points out the allegorical development of "language" and "thought", for as he tells us, when we "use the words 'God the Father' we are speaking or thinking allegorically" and goes on to say that, "'other-speaking' has become an atmosphere to us."<sup>6</sup> Writing as he did on the evils of totalitarianism during the calamitous war years, Warner sought to communicate himself through the allegorical mode of narration. It sought to dramatise the contradictory nature of contemporary history. His novel The Aerodrome is thus based upon an imaginative restructuring of events which would fictionalise the arena but not the facts and which would replicate both the "grandeur" and the "insecurity"<sup>7</sup> of the human world. The world of The Aerodrome resonates with the loss of values and with the search for a new order. The life of each character is symptomatic of the pressurising changes that have taken hold of both individual and society. Warner traces personal histories and links them with political upheavals in order to point to the inevitable connection that exists between the public and the private. In the midst of the imbroglio there is a definite move on the part of the protagonist towards the ideal of love. The novel has been

structured around representative embodiments of specific values. In order to understand the allegorical mode working within the novel one has first to understand the figurative significance of the title The Aerodrome and its subtitle 'A Love Story', both emblematic of the two world views of village and aerodrome, that separate the characters from each other. Although it has been said that the book is melodramatic and the characters flat, and, though this is a typical feature of allegorical narratives, yet one ought to be able to see the book in its entirety. One has to be able to appreciate it for its sincere attempt to diagnose the bigotry and power lust that dominates the lives of its characters, something that is chronic to humankind in general; and its attempt to suggest the most human antidote to it, that of love and forgiveness. The book functions on an imaginative level that is allegorical because of its ability to infuse the narrative with a dual sense of itself which is at the level of the story and at the "other" level which deals with the political values governing life during the war years.

Following a textual analysis of the allegorical components that make The Aerodrome what it is, a novel whose sustaining interest is the allegorical interplay of ideas within it, the next novel to be taken up would be Alan Paton's book Cry the Beloved Country. In The Allegory of

Love, C.S. Lewis makes a valid observation on the allegorical mode of perception by stating that

Allegory, in some sense, belongs not to medieval man but to man, or even to mind, in general. It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms. ...<sup>8</sup>

which reveals mankind's natural propensity for sighting the universal in the personal, the infinite in the finite. South Africa's desolation might well be the desolation of any other race in any other country in the world today. The locale of human strife may be constantly shifting in the flux of contemporary life and in Paton's portrayal of South Africa's dilemma we have a figurative statement of the suppressive conditions of life in an apartheid society. More significantly, we also have the most humane resolution that can ever find political sponsorship within the forgiving heart of man. In order to arrive at his vision of life dignified by love, Paton employs a narrative strategy that holds together a diversity of feelings and experiences that portray the qualitative failure of life in South Africa. Entry into the South African milieu of Cry, the Beloved Country would also signify the allegorical voyage that one would have to make with Stephen Kumalo into Johannesburg and into the intractable depths of the human heart. At every turn of the novel one would have to identify the allegorical methods that Paton uses to make his story cohere into an

integrative unity of fiction and allegory, of the South African story and its illimitable origins in the human heart. Ultimately, one would have to attempt to define Paton's mode of story telling as being allegorical because of the symbolic associations that each character, each experience, and each fictional element, has with a host of other experiences and ideas wholly and partially visible to the reader in life itself. The allegorical means towards the achievement of a visionary end within the novel would have to be sought for in the Christian overview that has influenced the style and the overall pattern of the quest which reaches out to a prophetic sighting of the "comfort" to be found in the "dawn" yet to come. The novel has to be studied as one which has fictionalised the events of South Africa, with the intention of drawing parallel observations with the lived reality. This has been achieved through the fusion of different narrative strains and narrative voices which allegorically bear the weight of their discoveries within the fiction itself. In this respect, Cry, the Beloved Country and all the other five novels to be examined possess what Edwin Honig in his book, Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory, stipulates to be an important dimension of allegorical fiction:

The fictional creation cannot be one thing and the allegory, the symbolization of a philosophical view, another — as it is in the hands of the moralizer. Fiction and allegory must be simultaneous, a single creation. Both together must

assert an integrated vision of reality;  
and this creative authority must be  
sustained within the work, not by any  
appeal to a body of doctrine outside of  
it.<sup>9</sup>

This would be the qualifying criterion for all the six novels  
to be studied.

Invisible Man has been selected as being a novel that  
voices issues distinctively Black and significantly American.  
The quest for self takes the invisible protagonist away from  
the common patterns of black selfhood into the unfeared  
dimensions of a self totally absorbed in remaking personal  
history. The journey motif has to be closely understood as  
marking the thematic movement of the book from the south to  
the north and from innocence to experience. Thus the early  
process of initiation into the larger American reality, is an  
allegorical extension of the initiation of the untutored self  
into the harsh realities of life. In attempting to understand  
the allegorical dimensions of Invisible Man, one has to be  
aware of Ellison's unique response to his own identity as a  
Black American, and as an American individual, in search of  
the one authentic identity that would give him a wholesome  
understanding of himself and of his environment. On the one  
hand, the book has to be studied in terms of the invisible  
protagonist's symbolic resurrection of the multiple layers of  
the black personality. This is an aspect of the allegorical  
replay of the black struggle<sup>10</sup>. It would involve a careful

study of that mythic sense of history that is figuratively represented in the contrapuntal medley of figures and voices rising from a black past. The hitherto hidden vortex of the black self has to be seen as a distinctively richer entity of black self-definition. On the other hand, the mapping out of the protagonist's journey into the self is the allegorical voyage into the subterranean darkness of the unknown self, which has always remained invisible to the world. The move from visibility to invisibility is the figurative move to freedom and to greater depths. The coal cellar which hides the invisible protagonist is the symbolic womb, which will nurture him into full creativity. It must be seen as the emblematic point of vantage from where observations will be made and stored, and brooded upon until such time as the moment is ripe for action. Meanwhile, the state of hibernation that he professes to be in, must be understood as one of the many subterfuges that the invisible protagonist uses, in his voluntary exile from public life into the archetypal depths of the black self, which would provide him with the intuitive feelers necessary to discover his American identity. The mode of narration as such is allegorical in its visualisation of a black reality and a black identity that is perennially linked to a cosmic sense of self. Thus the ultimate question that he puts to the reader must be thoroughly examined in the context of the allegorical search

for self, identifiable only in terms of the radical self newly discovered. To comprehend the workings of the allegorical mode within the novel, one would have to draw upon Edwin Honig once again, to understand how the allegorical mode functions:

Like the development of a musical theme, the amplified statement based on the trope becomes the mark of the work's allegoricalness: the whole work partakes of it and also fulfills it. The allegorical unit then resounds with innumerable connotations. ... For the meanings of allegory depend, as in poetry, upon the accretion of certain tropes. These tropes make evident a consonance between objective facts and their moral or psychological counterparts, so that the reality ... is ultimately transcended by the total organization of meanings which is the fiction itself. And so one may say that the language of allegory makes relationships significant by extending the original identities of which they are composed with as many clusters of meaning as the traffic of the dominant idea will bear.<sup>11</sup>

The fictional components or "tropes" responsible for extending the "allegoricalness" of the novel have to be sought for in the consciousness of the narrator as it is reflected in a narrative that has been inspired by a metaphoric and therefore, representative sense of the truth.

The next novel, Lord of the Flies, has already drawn attention to its literary status as a fable. It figures as an important novel of the post war years more concerned with the unpopular<sup>12</sup> task of dwelling upon the imperfectibility of

man, than with the technical innovations that then determined fiction. Golding's accompanying essay, 'Fable', makes his position as "moralist" very clear and it is to didactic ends that he fits in the plan of his novel. In a much later book which deals with fiction of the 1960's and after, Robert Scholes points to the characteristic feature of modern fables:

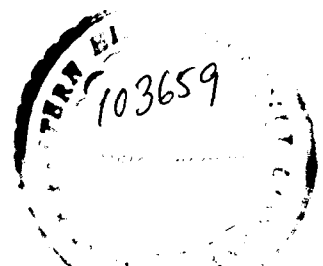
For the moment, suffice it to say that modern fabulation, like the ancient fabling of Aesop, tends away from direct representation of the surface reality but returns toward actual human life by way of ethically controlled fantasy.<sup>13</sup>

"Ethically controlled fantasy" is a phrase that would be applicable to the nature of the fictive imagination at work within all the six novels. It aims at re-orienting the reader's vision of himself. In Lord of the Flies, Golding manipulates his characters in order to dramatise a particular aspect of man as he found out for himself during World-War II. He plucks out his experiences from life and uses them as representative images of the fable that he sets out to write. In examining the novel as fable one must keep in mind Golding's stricture that, "the fable must be under strict control". Yet, for all that, he himself admits to the split at the seams which is a result of, a "plenitude of imagination".<sup>14</sup> Golding's critical observations of his own work helps one to look forward to a novel whose prolific

imagination communicates itself through the allegorically affiliated tropes of symbol and metaphor, irony and paradox, thus accounting for the allusive nature of the narrative. It imbues the boys' experiences in the island with powerful significance. In attempting to examine the allegorical mode used within the book, one has to tie up the connecting strands of each narrative figure to be able to comprehend the confused ethos of darkness and evil that permeates the novel. The novel as fable covers an important aspect of one's study of the allegorical mode. The important factor to be kept in mind, however, is that one's ultimate responses must be to the characters themselves in order to be able to place them within a framework that is at once real as well as allegorical. This study will attempt to examine how Golding uses his fable to transcend its limitations so as to be able to project a convincing portrayal of evil. The evil inherent in man has been further portrayed in Grendel, a novel differently constructed from all the others. Yet it is similar to them in its desire to probe the hidden depths of the self through a monster protagonist who inhabits the nether world of darkness and confusion. Like Lord of the Flies which broadly speaking, is a satirical replay of Coral Island, Grendel too has its affiliations with the old English epic Beowulf. Grendel is the name of the monster terrorising the ancient world of Beowulf. The similarity ends there

however, with Gardner's modern recasting of a monster, who is both cunning and intelligent, but who is tragically locked within a condition of muteness so severe that it hampers communication with himself and with the world outside.

Grendel is a metaphoric projection of the disgruntled psyche hemmed in on all sides by emotional disabilities. Though his intellect penetrates deep into the heart of things, yet he suffers from an obsessive predilection. He reduces all experiences to the level of the absurd; monster and man resemble each other in a striking way. Both suffer from a debilitating malaise of the spirit which affect their imagination and imprisons them within a world of violence and doubt. The narrative modulates between the subterranean world of the monster and the terrestrial world of Hrothgar; between Grendel's unending metaphysics and Hrothgar's ruthless demonstration of his own power to project the symbolic associations that the two parallel worlds have with each other. There is never an overlapping of the two worlds, only the reflective ability of the narrative to juxtapose the two worlds to trace out through the characters the ethics of brute survival that predominates in both worlds. The allegorical mode has to be understood as an important medium which symbolically heightens man's closeness to Grendel. It sees in man the psychic imprint of the monster. As associations with man and monster build up, the narrative



portrays on a lesser key, characters that are associated with certain patterns of experiences that are charged with positive allegorical significance. The Shaper and Wealtheow attain allegorical depth through their respective claims upon the values that uphold their vision of truth and integrity which sustains life even in Hrothgar's kingdom and confuses the brutish reasoning of Grendel. The transmuting vision of the Shaper's poetry anticipates the fire of Beowulf's imagination. In an allegorically symbolic moment of poetic affirmation, it razes to the ground Grendel's absurdist philosophy. The narrative concentrates upon a symbolic but total expulsion of the kind of values instilled by the Dragon and propagated by Grendel. It moves from Grendel's myopic surrender to the deluded ideals of freedom and existence, to a world that is a symbolic travesty of its own ideals; from the Dragon to the Shaper, from Grendel's mother to Wealtheow and finally, from the inner abrasive conflict within Grendel to a symbolic confrontation of values and personages in Hrothgar's court and in Grendel's mind. This would exact its own price from Grendel who would have to face up to the inevitable consequences that follow his recognition of the absolute ideals of life and death. Gardner communicates through an allegorical mode of narration that qualifies itself through a metaphoric replay of characters and world views, philosophy and vision, all contributive to a

definition of the negative realities of Grendel's solipsistic world and the positive realities of Beowulf's affirming vision of life.

The last novel to be discussed, A Tiger for Malgudi may be read as Narayan expected it to be: a story about a tiger. This is a different tiger, however, calling for a sensitive response from the reader. He has the ability to record his own life and to trace his own spiritual growth from a primal quadruped to a creature mellowed with insight and vision. At the simple level of the fantastic, the novel is an animal fable with literary antecedents in the rich collection of fables to be found in ancient Indian literature. At the profounder level of myth and allegory, the tiger stands for the soul in its quest for eternity. Narayan's introduction prepares the reader for the allegorical nuances to be found in the narrative so that one is well prepared not to take anything at face value. Raja, the tiger-protagonist takes on progressively human dimensions as he moves from one encounter to the next. Each episode unwittingly carries him closer to his saviour and as he details the stressful conditions of his life away from the jungle, one is clearly made to understand that somehow Raja is more human than any of the devious humans who gang up against him. Narayan portrays them from the tiger's perspective who sizes them up according to their professional abilities. This is perhaps a characteristically

animal way of proving or disproving another creature's identity, measuring his worth according to his physical prowess. In the eyes of Raja every human is wanting in basic jungle virtues, such as, the respectful observance of a hierarchical creed that brooks no disturbance. As one is taken deeper into the novel, one begins to empathise with Raja's plight which demands of him total subservience to the humans who manipulate him for profit and self-gratification. The novel relates to the reader in Raja's own terms. One has to be able to accept Raja's validity, his more than human ability to analyse people and situations and to prove his own feelings. The world of Malgudi never changes. The only change lies in its main protagonist who has to be understood as being allegorically representative of all dimensions of the self in its carnal and spiritual forms. The surface comedy of Malgudian life in the novel, is overlaid by Raja's continual sense of embarrassment or shock at the sight of humans ignobly exposing themselves as they really are. And as one follows the story through its very end, one would agree that Malgudi does need its very own tiger, to frighten it, to shame it, to teach it, and to save it from itself. The story about a tiger of Malgudian stock makes for the kind of novel that characterises Narayan. However, in this later novel of his, Narayan lays emphasis upon the ideal of a tiger searching for a spiritual abode and finding it within

himself. The fictionalisation of Raja's life abounds with allegorical significance. It reaches out to the reader at all levels through Raja's encounters with the human world, through his juxtaposition of life in the natural jungle of Mempi and in the human jungle of Malgudi, through his minute observation of Malgudi's do's and don'ts and through his avowed devotion to the Tiger Hermit who represents the elusive Hindu ideal of self-attainment. One must prepare oneself for a dual understanding of Raja's world in A Tiger for Malgudi. This would be in accordance with Narayan's expectation of the reader's understanding of what codifies the tiger's existence.

In the introductory discussions to the six novels, mention has been made of the allegorical mode used in all of them. The significant point to be stressed is that it is inextricably linked with the artist's perception of reality which views what it sees in the representative figures of allegory. It is not that these novels formally take on the characteristics of allegory. It is, that they have been specially selected to show how the allegorical strain permeates into fiction and is a product of the contemporary sensibility. The themes of all the six novels relate in diverse ways to the inner self. Generally speaking, this has emerged as an important concern of the novel and has revolutionised fictional technique. It has challenged the

novelist to cast his story in as innovative a way as possible in order to better understand himself in particular and the human psyche in general. To understand the six novels selected for this study one has to keep in mind the relativity of values in this changing world and its effect upon the individual. The private arena of the self becomes a significant point of entry for the reader into a subterranean world of personal definitions such as the one elicited in Invisible Man. Though each world has been subjectively conceived according to the novelist's singular perception of truth, yet the degree of subjectivity has been evenly controlled to allow for reader identification with and reader participation in a fictional world objectivised by those values that have been found to be integral to human life at whatever cost. These values form the allegorical backbone of all the six novels.

One begins one's study with a pre-determined effort to establish a vital connection with the inner meanings embedded in the novels. In all of them, the novelist uses the simple narrative ploy of creating a credible fictional world; that of South African disharmony in Cry, the Beloved Country, of the malignancy of evil in Lord of the Flies, of the fantastic autobiography of a tiger in A Tiger for Malqudi. Into the fictional world is woven the dualities of the controlling allegorical vision which tells its story at the fundamental

level of the plot whilst aiming all the while to extend its meanings. Even as one finds oneself carried away by the impetus of the plot, one realizes that the process of truly understanding it would depend upon one's total understanding of the entire book:

A good allegory, like a good poem, does not exhibit devices or hammer away at intentions. It beguiles the reader with a continuous interplay between subject and sense in the storytelling and the narrative, the story itself, mean everything.<sup>15</sup>

There will have to be a close study of each novel in order to understand how characters relate to life or how the allusive nature of the narrative is able to bring up personal and universal associations for the reader. The attempt will always be to view each novel in its entirety, to see how the different parts of each novel work towards bringing together a complex unity of experiences that are characteristically allegorical in the patterning of emotional, intellectual and spiritual truth. One would also have to keep oneself open to the figurative nature of language, which would naturally echo with multiple layers of meaning embedded in a single strata of thought. Cry, the Beloved Country is especially illustrative of this, in the sustaining lyricism that it employs to universalise its tragic experiences.

The allegorical mode used in all the six novels must be understood to be a complex vehicle of the novelist's vision.

It follows the emotional structure of the story and justifies itself through a novel usage of "tropes", of "verbal modes"<sup>16</sup> and of fictional ploys such as character and situation. There are multiple points of contact within each novel to rouse the reader's perception of the underlying truths that prevail. However, the writers that are being dealt with in this thesis are, first and foremost fiction writers and ought to be viewed as such. That their fiction should reflect upon an inbuilt propensity for the intuitive sighting of hidden meanings, illustrate what a vast number of critics have understood to be natural to man. For purposes of clarification, and in order to understand the allegorical mode better, one would have to turn to The Nature of Narrative which divides the narrative form into the empirical and the fictional, and further sub-divides the fictional into the romantic and the didactic. Allegory has been naturally categorised as being didactic because of its "intellectually controlled"<sup>17</sup> nature. The six novels that are to be studied have to be understood as being primarily inspired by the writer's ideational view of human society as in The Aerodrome; by a conceptual understanding of the true heroism of self-integration as in Grendel; by an empirical finding of the nature of man as in Lord of the Flies; by a perception of truth as embodied in A Tiger for Malqudi; by a perception of love as a potent force of change in Cry the Beloved Country

and by the artist's overriding sense of conflict as in Invisible Man. These must not, however, be viewed as rigid pre-conceptions which bind the novels to a particular form. For the purpose of this study they have been isolated in order to see how they are given representational significance. They form the moral sub-stratum of the novels moulding consciousness and rooting it to the ethics of the artist's personal vision. In "Fable", William Golding explains the process of writing according to this inner dictum. R.K. Narayan's introduction, schools the reader in the evolutionary ethics of Hindu philosophy. Alan Paton's meaningful sub-title "Comfort in Desolation" to his novel, Cry, the Beloved Country is an indication of the allegorical direction that it would inevitably take. Rex Warner has amply justified the importance of "The Allegorical Method" in his expression of the realities of the war years in The Aerodrome. Each novel is a sampling of truth in its own way. In observance of the laws of the novel, they fictionalise the characters and their situations whilst successfully tapping areas of experiences remotely hidden from ordinary view. Therefore, Gardner's exploratory descent into the subterranean regions of the old English epic, Beowulf, unearths a figure as dramatic as he is significant to an understanding of the pitfalls of human reasoning. In the epic, Grendel is a monster who fulfills his obligatory

role. In Gardner's novel, he is an allegorical figure who reflects upon the intellectual confusion that reigns within. He vociferously discredits the role of the imagination through his violent ways. He is an ironic figure of doubt. Around him is structured layers of experience that call up a multiplicity of allegorical meanings. The monster without has been internalised to reveal the monster residing within. In a different way, Invisible Man is reflective of the contemporary search for identity. He has been likened to the picaresque hero,<sup>18</sup> living on the fringe of human society, subverting traditional morality for a higher authentic order of self-definition. With his capacity for survival and his instinct for life, the "invisible man" is the allegorical questor in secular terms. He revamps an entire world view and redefines the objectives of American society which are discovered to be the objectives of all societies everywhere.

The allegorical mode works through various ways to attain its moral ends. There is a clear demarcation of values ethical from values unethical, in a manner that evokes a response to both the positive and the negative. Within the moral framework of his vision, the artist dramatises the human situation in its various hues, using all fictional devices to simulate the conflict and the choices that one makes in life. One enters a fictional world that has brought together a number of forces contending with each other; a

microcosm of fermenting confusion that uncoils itself through the artist's manipulation of plot and character. In the same way that one is made to accept the logistics of fairie land in The Fairie Queene so must one submit to the rationale of the six novels in order to apprehend the artists' moral envisionings. The artist is one with his fiction as his fiction is one with the currents of thought and feeling that control it, and are given free play within each of the six novels. In addition, one is always made aware of the hidden significances of the plot, the characters, the fictional appendages that add up to the multiplicity of meanings within the context of the novel. In Lord of the Flies, the events leading up to Simon's confrontation with the Beast will be discussed in all its allegorical significance. The Christ-like figure of Simon confronting the pig's head has deliberate resonances of the confrontation between good and evil. The imagery figuratively evokes the spiritual heroism of Simon as he must combat the forces of evil dwelling in man. The narrative mode in such cases uses the figurative idiom of poetry in order to telescope into a single experience the multiple layers of meaning attached to it. Thus actual experiences are symbolically and metaphorically transcribed into the kind of fiction that one would call allegorical. What defines it as such is the mode of

perception that communicates itself through a narrative mode which exploits the figurative possibilities of language.

The allegorical unit resounds ... with innumerable connotations. The tension between the theme and its inherent meanings is built up on all levels of connotation so that the reader is drawn into the extended allegory ... the meanings grow naturally out of each action in the narrative ...<sup>19</sup>

Each part is compounded of thought and meaning vital to the establishment of an allegorical pattern within the text. The "invisible man" moves from a one-dimensional view of reality to a multi-dimensional understanding of the experiences that have accrued within his adult years and which give shape to his journey to the centre of the self. The mode of communication that he adopts reflects upon the Black propensity for using music, jazz and the blues, as a medium of self-expression. In the course of inner journeyings he discovers the archetypal symbols of Black self-consciousness. He uses them to enunciate a definable pattern of behaviour. This subscribes to an independent view of life which gathers within it a kaleidoscope of Black experiences that resonate with hidden abilities. Thus for the invisible protagonist at the factory hospital, Brer Rabbit comes alive with all the psychic implications of the black identity which will be the turning point for an understanding of himself. The narrating protagonist identifies himself as the universal questor who transcends the stereotype of the black self. His ultimate

definitions equalise all struggle, thereby allowing for his own experiences to speak in an allegorical way, for others. The link that he forges with other innumerable selves in the Prologue and in the Epilogue, is responsible for that allegorical sense of self imparted through his ability to implicate the reader in his quest, challenging him to accept him in the unconditional terms of the self newly discovered. The narrative mode in the six novels, is a reflection of the thrust of the protagonist's mind which endeavours to sort itself out through the classic ordeal of the metaphoric and the literal fire of pain and suffering experienced by Ralph and Simon in Lord of the Flies in order to arrive at a cleansed view of the universe. By implication the narrative mode reflects upon the allegorical potential of the novel at all levels.

The role of the protagonist in all the six novels is an important one. Needless to say, his significance in proportion to the story, resembles that of the hero of an allegorical narrative. He reinforces the value system of a particular world, whose pattern not easily discernible at first, proves its integrity through him. The protagonist of The Aerodrome is a significant embodiment of the virtues of love tempered by understanding and forgiveness. Roy, however, is not a rigid portrait of an unchanging virtue. His humanity is defined by his erring nature, which ultimately rights

itself through his fearless ability to reorient himself to a less rigid but more spiritual ideal of love in personal and in social terms. The values that he upholds in his own life are a natural counterfoil to the values that abide with the village and the aerodrome. Through his constant searchings he mirrors the ideal norm of life which must effectively embody the quest for spiritual fulfilment. In the end, he arbitrates in an allegorical manner for a universally "clean" world, "most intricate, fiercer than tigers, wonderful and infinitely forgiving".<sup>20</sup> He is the allegorical hero who extends the significance of personal values from a fictional world to the real world. On the other hand, the thesis also has to deal with a protagonist like Grendel who does not by any means embody the elevated ideals of allegorical fiction. In reading Grendel, one has to be aware of the role that Gardner assigns to himself which is the integrated one of moral educator. The methods that he uses to fictionalise his objectives are the innovative ones, characteristic of the varied literature of the twentieth-century.<sup>21</sup> A familiar world order is thus repudiated by a monster who allegorically represents mankind's inverted psyche. He functions as an allegorical link with the dysfunctional values of Hrothgar's kingdom, as an allegorical foil to the positive forces of love and poetry within it and as an allegorical antagonist to Beowulf. Beowulf's significance within the book lies in his

commitment to the truth of the imagination. He is an heroic figure; he is everything that Grendel is not. The allegorical value of the book lies in Gardner's ability to invoke history through a monster's life which encodes the pejorative aspects of human philosophies. Every thought and every action of Grendel's is provocatively paralled in Horthgar's kingdom in order to make the reader understand the inescapable connection that exists between monster and man. Gardner has himself explained how the novel has been woven around some of the misplaced ideals of human civilization. In an inverted way, through the inverted mentality of Grendel and in an inversely allegorical manner, Gardner restructures the story of human civilization. He fulfils his self-professed role of moral educator through his bizarre portrait of the evil genius that lurks behind the human facade.

This brings the discussion to an important aspect of the novels: the definite overtones of the didactic. 'Didactic' is a term that has been disputed by Gardner. However, for want of a better word it has been used in this introduction to point to the irreducibly moral nature of the allegorical imagination. To cite a few examples, we have Golding's adherence to the fable form in Lord of the Flies. The term animal fable has been used to describe A Tiger for Malqudi. Grendel is a parable of the collapse of the human intellect. Invisible Man has been viewed as an allegorical

work of fiction that depicts the contemporary search for identity. All such definitive modes are a variation of the allegorical mode. They conclusively indicate the trend towards moral instruction which forms the mainstay of the allegorical method. The element of the didactic, however, in the allegorical novels that form the subject of this thesis, is an integrative unit of the story. This goes to show that each novel develops an inbuilt "world of fictional reality", resilient enough to determine the "story's figurative meanings all along the way".<sup>22</sup> Nothing may be taken for granted, for each fictional component gears itself for ultimate allegorical meanings, which results in an enhanced view of one's self and of one's understanding of the universe. Each novelist is a self-conscious practitioner of the art of fiction. One good example of the self-conscious artist would be R.K. Narayan—tailoring his art to meet the sensitive demands of a deeply moral imagination that keeps itself in touch with the spiritual needs of the moment.

All six novelists work on an artistic tightrope in which the balance between fiction and allegory has to be maintained. They deploy their talents through the allegorical mode which harnesses fictional creativity in order to make it serve the moral ends of the artist's vision. This is the reason why these novels differ from traditional allegory. They have not been structured around a rigid scheme of values

that need to be closely interpreted. Although they have their sociological and cultural affinities with their own societies and with their own ages, which provides the framework of reference for the reader, yet the characters embody a depth of thought and feeling that reflect upon the dynamism of the novel. All the important characters will have to be evaluated in the living terms of the novel and not as dead personifications. This implies the need to understand the worth of each novel as a fictional entity in itself, complete with its own set of values that have been structured upon a higher, less visible, scheme of values: in other words, the fiction comes first, the allegory later. There is a steady build-up of allegorical meanings in the movement of the plot, in the actions and in the thoughts of the characters as they interact with one another, or as they seek to flout or to fulfil the hidden ideal of the spirit.

The criterion for likening these novels to allegorical works of fiction would lie in another definition of allegory which states that

An allegory is a fiction which is complete in its own narrative world while simultaneously adducing and reflecting upon another structured world.<sup>23</sup>

The other "structured world" belongs to the ideal plane of the artist's moral envisionings. He works out the ethics of his vision as minutely as possible so that by "the

penultimate page, the primary and secondary levels have become so entwined that they function simultaneously".<sup>24</sup> An important example of it is the juxtaposition of Ralph and the naval officer at the end of Lord of the Flies. It gathers within it an association of meanings that have allegorical precedence in the story.

The allegorical mode used within the novels is a method of narration that sometimes illustrates a particular world view, as in A Tiger for Malgudi. Here Narayan demonstrates his ability to merge the western form of the novel with an older literary form, the animal fable. He expresses himself in understandable terms, the Indian absorption with the illusory world of appearances as it conflicts with another, lesser known, but more vital, world of the spirit. The mode of narration allegorically plays with images taken from the social world of appearances into which is thrown cryptic figures like the Tiger-Hermit who convey the Indian ideal of fulfilment. The method of narration works through a duality of perception that is thoroughly Indian in sensibility. The pattern of Raja's experiences have been fully exploited to render, allegorically, into fiction the final validity of the soul.

There is general agreement that allegory has always been chosen as the obvious literary tool, wielded against any form of oppression. This is especially true of South African

literature and in Cry, the Beloved Country, Paton uses the allegorical mode of narration to portray the immeasurable depths of despair and to trace the heart's journey through hopelessness and pain. In the novel, the allegorical mode is especially effective in portraying the stress under which the individual is placed. In The Aerodrome Rex Warner utilises the allegorical mode for purposes of relaying the truth to a perceptive audience. He does this by exploiting the possibilities of fiction that lie in the portrayal of characters and in the creation of a fictional world that symbolically hypothesises, through village and aerodrome, the truth about a society faced with the imminent collapse of its values. The thrust of the allegorical mode is to enact at the personal level through characters like Roy and the Air Vice Marshal, the crisis of political change that can sweep a society to destruction if it is not founded on the strength of its spiritual envisionings.

In all the six novels, the allegorical mode is synonymous with the artist's enunciation of personal vision. Its strength, and therefore, its acceptability, lies in its ability to diffuse itself in a number of ways, through the narrative. It is not confined to intellectual strictures concerning the advocacy of the artist's moral principles. Its idiom of communication lies in its creative manner of poetic subterfuge whereby literary tropes such as symbol and

metaphor are exploited to enhance meaning and perception of itself. This may be clearly seen in Ellison's figurative and metaphoric manipulation of the Black American realities so as to convey through the flexible nuances of speech, an allegorical sense of the quest. As one reads the novels one must prepare oneself for the onslaught of allegorical meanings that function at all levels of the narrative. It would be delimiting the allegorical mode employed if one were to define it strictly according to a pre-conceived notion of what to expect from it. Although it has its affiliations with allegory, yet it may be differentiated from it in its ability to fuse different realities together. This is why the novels have to be closely studied, meanings worked out in detail in order to determine the underlying theme of the artists' moral observations. The novels form a cross-section of the kind of fiction that still continues to hold sway. They are intimately associated with their own societies, aware of their social relevance and genuinely concerned with the social function of art, that is, to teach a generation split by divisions of its own making.

As one reads all the six novels, one realises that the art of story-telling has been truly internationalised.<sup>25</sup> They form a literary cross-section of the contemporary novel with its own regional characteristics which further suggests however, that the novelists of "British, American and

Commonwealth fiction ... are eager to grow beyond" narrow "national groupings" in order to "confront the aesthetic issues of their times".<sup>26</sup> Especially noticeable is Gardner's concern with the aesthetics of fictional creativity which places his novels in the forefront of the contemporary novel. Narayan's art of story-telling is more conventional in its adherence to the Aristotelian plot. But he uses his Indian sensibility to forge the kind of novel that is suffused with the ethics of the Indian world-view. The western form of the novel has been the standard means for the universal ends of all art, which for Narayan implies the ability to sharpen one's perception of oneself. On the whole, all six novels have to be specially considered as being representative of a mode of narration that ties them up within a unique framework of perception. Though these novels are of British, American, Indian or South African sensibility, they share a common insight into the collapse of institutionalised living. Though they use a common heritage of literary principles, yet they distinguish themselves from one another through the kind of fictional creativity that utilises their differences with regard to their sociological, historical and political backgrounds in a manner that is metaphoric and symbolic, attributes of the allegorical imagination.

In each discussion of the novels, there will be a detailed follow up of the story in terms of plot and

characterisation, so as to discover as one reads the text how the allegorical mode functions. The allegorical mode has to be viewed in its successful relation to the story which would enhance the stature of the novel thus emphasising the truth about it, that the allegorical imagination is never outdated; rather, it lends itself to a creative metamorphosis of form and expression. The fictional world of each novel serves to enhance the "other" levels of reality. One might prepare oneself for an imaginative induction into a fictive world that allows its latent meanings to evolve with the story and with its characters who are dynamic enough to change themselves and others around them. The allegorical mode transports the reader from the enclosed world of fiction to larger realities through its sustaining concern by bringing home the normative ideals of the truly integrated life. What these are, remain individualistically embedded in a domain of fiction that employs the allegorical mode to draw out their universal significance.

## END NOTES

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## **Chapter-II**

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**THE AERODROME AND CRY. THE  
BELOVED COUNTRY A Challenge  
to Totalitarianism**

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The Aerodrome (1941), like Cry, the Beloved Country (1948), is a novel that has definite political implications in the kind of observation that it makes of man's capacity for ruthlessness and power. It was written against the unstable political background of the 1940's, a novel, allegorically shaped by its insight into human psychology and by its uncommon instinct for the principle of unity residing in the right kind of love, which creates but which never destroys; hence, its sub-title "A Love Story". It is a "prophetic"<sup>1</sup> parable of "Sinne and Love" the two contradictory features of human experience which forever remain as unknown as they are unpredictable:

Philosophers have measured mountains,  
.....  
But there are two vast spacious things,  
The which to measure it doth more behove;  
Yet few there are that found them: Sinne  
and Love<sup>2</sup>

Within the novel, "Sinne" has not been theologically defined, but it may be understood in terms of the excesses that debilitate the life of the spirit in The Aerodrome. "Sinne", on the one hand, denotes the slothful and unregenerate humanity of the village, and on the other, the life denying principles of the aerodrome. The central paradox of the novel is the interconnectedness of both village and aerodrome. Though manifestly different, they are connected with one another through characters who have involuntary links with

both worlds. The village and the aerodrome are the two symbolic antitheses around which the story has been woven. The ideals of the village are as broken and disorganised as are the ideals of the aerodrome: rigid and fanatical. These are the two allegorically polarised realities that challenge Roy's status as a free-thinking individual.

At first the drama revolves around Roy, the main protagonist, who updates the reader on the recent occurrences that have thrown his life in complete disarray. He recounts everything that happens on the night of his 21st birthday celebration when he was told that the Rector and his wife were not his real parents. He is devastated by the shock of this revelation that he had actually been an abandoned waif, "found in a basket lying at the top of the village at the place where the main road now is". (pp.24-25) When the novel opens, we find him face down in the mud after having drunk himself senseless over the news. As he recovers, he recapitulates the sudden but fateful change of tide in his personal affairs which has brought him so low down. He is "sitting" devastated "in the mud" (p.27) thrown back upon the only certainty known to him, his own self. A series of memories flash back to him in a moment of reflective stock-taking. He recalls an idyllic past seemingly buried in a life where "polyanthus and honesty" are still in "full bloom". (p.15) These pleasant reveries transport him through the

well-trodden by ways of a scenic village life until in his mind's eye, he traverses beyond the familiar pub onto the unknown precincts of the aerodrome, a totally new feature of village life altogether:

This was an institution which, so we were informed, was of great, even vital importance to the defences of our country; but it was so well concealed that many visitors to our village have gone away from the neighbourhood without ever having suspected its existence. ...  
(p.17)

Coincidentally, Roy's crisis of identity, "that I did not know who I was" (p.20) concurs with the changes that have accompanied the aerodrome and which seem to have eroded the social fabric of life in the village. Little does Roy foresee how closely intertwined his life with the Air Vice-Marshal's life will be; he who is the main executor of the aerodrome's political creed of selfish ambition, who also happens to be his biological father. Roy's musings also personalise the extent of the coming changes. They give the reader perspectives into the past, typified by the easy life of the village, into the present, as reflected by the outrageous credo of the aerodrome; and into the uncertainty of the future already visible to the reader in Roy's manifest uncertainty:

When I lay drunk in the mud I had been able to forget my sorrow, but now it returned upon me, in pangs of uncertainty and desperation, like the wounds of love. ... (p.20)

His personal sense of alienation is further deepened by another untoward incident. As he returns to the house later in the evening, "... I moved back again to the window through which I entered the house, and, though I disliked occupying the position of an eavesdropper, I shielded myself with the curtain, fancying that I should have only a few minutes to wait before the prayer was ended ...", (pp.28-29) he overhears the Rector's confession of his attempted murder of his friend Anthony. This succeeds in driving him further away from himself. Even as the story unfolds itself at the level of the domestic and the personal, at the extra personal level one may observe the political forces of anarchy attempting to knock down human considerations. Thus the deliberate murder of the Rector by the Flight Lieutenant is airily dismissed by the Air Vice-Marshal whose concern for change far exceeds any concern for the human:

'Whether any of you', he said, 'is yet aware of what is shortly to happen in this village, I do not know. Briefly it is to be taken over by the Air Force. The property of your leading landowner, who gives most of you work at very low rates of pay, will be bought up by the Government. We shall install an Air Force padre in the place of your deceased Rector ... Now I merely wish to point out to you that you would do well to prepare for a great change in your lives. We in the Air Force look upon things very differently .... Muddle, inefficiency, any kind of slackness are things which we simply do not tolerate ... That is enough

... Now we shall bury the dead body.'  
(pp.97-98)

The issues that the novel concerns itself with are not immediately apparent until one has understood the encroachment upon human life of a set of values bizarre enough in their consolidated attempt to oust the existing ones. "Do not let pity or any other feeling drag you away from the certainty of your own integrity and the knowledge that in the last resort we love only ourselves". (p.187) The panoramic view is one of personal turmoil and political turbulence. The public and the private impinge upon one another at the cost of the human. At the centre of the stage stands Roy who is obviously ill at ease. He is in the unenviable position of being completely alone caught in the cataclysmic changes that are beyond his control. Ordinary events take on a morbid turn, effectively uprooting Roy's sense of sureness with the realities that have always governed him. What follows is an onslaught of radical ways upon a way of life which has always thrived upon general disorder and apathy. Roy finds himself literally alone confronting the metaphysics of being and selfhood in what may be observed to be Kafkaesque<sup>2</sup> in tone. The similarity, however, ends there for the book essentially concerns itself with the ethics of freedom and love; questions which Roy must seek to answer for himself apart from village and aerodrome, but within the context of a social-bound existence. Roy must

be able to steer himself clear of the uncertainty and doubt that has completely assailed him and which has overturned the entire village. He registers the emotional predicament of one caught between the changelessness of the "village as it had been and as it still was" and the "rapidly accelerating change or threat" (p.14) represented by the aerodrome. He will remain the yardstick by which the aerodrome will be measured in terms of its genuine ability to bring about an acceptable change. The forces of change meanwhile masquerading as the forces of renewal have swept the village.

They stem from a point outside the closed matrix of village life. They are synonymous with the aerodrome, the counterpointing antagonist to the familiar scheme of values represented by the village, and first encountered in its human aspect in the figure of the Flight Lieutenant whom Roy has befriended and whom he had invited to his birthday party:

This young man was remarkably handsome, and dexterous in all his ways ... Often too, in the course of a general conversation he would shock me by some brutally expressed criticism of our way of life. His actions were sometimes entirely irresponsible. He would play the most absurd and often cruel practical jokes on perfect strangers. (pp.20-21)

Roy's relationship with the Flight Lieutenant, however, is an unstable one marked by the Flight Lieutenant's initial rebuffs at Roy's attempt to befriend him and of his stolen affair with Roy's girlfriend Bess. When he is betrayed a

second time, his induction into the aerodrome is complete. He is the son whom the Air Vice-Marshal fathered. His real mother is the Rector's wife. She married the Rector believing her lover the Air Vice-Marshal, to be dead. Meanwhile, in Chapter Two we have already been privy to the Rector's confession of his attempted murder of his friend Anthony. Unknown to him, Anthony survived the attempt and his identity was ironically changed to the Air Vice-Marshal. The Squire's sister was another of the Air Vice-Marshal's mistresses who also bore him a son, the Flight Lieutenant. An intimate knowledge of personal histories becomes an important factor in understanding the paradoxical realities of human success and human failure, in order to understand the "brilliant irony of the book" which "lies in the inescapability of family ties".<sup>3</sup> This is how the two symbolic worlds of village and aerodrome are pathologically tied to one another.

Warner's insight into the psychology of "sinne" brings the reader face to face with the realities that underlie the public face of an institution like the aerodrome with its unnatural roots in avaricious self-seeking. On the other hand, the village, represented by a paltry lot of "unskilled" labourers who have "no confidence" and "no initiative" whatsoever, (p.119) is another aspect of human weakness, of its total incapacity for self-discipline. Between the two, Roy must choose. We observe him confronting the two

alternatives that have metaphorically formulated themselves into village and aerodrome. He takes the reader to an allegorical confrontation with issues at stake within the novel, both personal and political, through an undaunted commitment to finding out the truth for himself. As a seeker of truth, he finds himself the unwitting victim of the conflict between village and aerodrome, of the pull between the familiar but decrepit rule of the village and the unfamiliar but efficiently calculated order of the aerodrome.

The book dramatises Roy's sense of dislocation through a set of events that de-familiarises the familiar and estranges Roy from those whom he had always believed himself to be close to, the Rector and his wife, the Squire and his sister. The microcosmic entity of the individual represented by Roy, is shown to be easily prone to the debilitating influences of doubt and a general loss of faith:

... And I was suddenly shocked to find that my feelings towards my guardians were no longer frank and open as they had been; for now my first thought was to dissemble ... (p.45)

In another startling encounter that he has, this time with the Squire's crude display of naked emotion Roy's sense of alienation increases. On his deathbed, the Squire bites his sister's hand. To Roy as he says;

They had been symbols to me of security and peace; but I had learnt that they could represent neither of these

qualities. What I had thought to be solid, rounded and entire, now seemed to melt into frightful shapes of mist, to dissolve into intricacies wherein I was lost as though I had never been. (pp.123-124)

There is a logical inversion of perspectives and a reshuffling of priorities to suit his own desperate need for stability. His involvement with Bess is at first darkened by passion and rebellion. In a world of shrinking values, she is the only physical certainty known to him. Hence the intrepidity of his feelings for her are largely self-endorsed:

I felt fully able to take on myself the responsibility for any step which we might take together, since the responsibility was presented to my mind in the form of extreme and confident delight, in the face of which, both the village and the aerodrome itself seemed hardly stable things, but malleable to my own desires. ... I saw a kind of liberation in avoiding the obligations, the conventions, the manners in which I had been brought up and which now for me, perhaps owing to my present lack of security, seemed buried in the ground with the body of the man whom I had thought to be my father. (p.109)

He marries her secretly just before his voluntary entry into the aerodrome, a transitory period of vulnerability and of high expectations. Her betrayal, however, crystallises all his efforts at remaking his own life, "now I had become unthinkingly, savagely and, with no conscious effort of the will determined to succeed and to excel in an Air Force of

which I still understood neither the purpose nor the organisation". (p.176) The ideal of the Flight Lieutenant is replaced by the larger "figure of the Air Vice-Marshal, a figure of greater strength, more solid purpose and more extensive power". (p.176)

The ironic convergence of the two, of Roy and the Air Vice-Marshal, of father and son as yet unknown to one another, in the powerful arena of the aerodrome, allegorically shifts the drama of individual pain and loss from the personal to the political, from village to aerodrome. Incidentally, Chapter Twelve, entitled "The Air Vice-Marshal", which more or less forms the middle section of the novel, is an exposition of the Air Vice-Marshal's philosophy of power, the totalitarian ideology of the aerodrome to which the deserted Roy seems more than fully committed. He enters a period of "unthinking" reorganisation in which he wilfully cuts himself off from all sources of human love and human sympathy. Allegorically, the complete takeover of the individual person by the aerodrome may be understood in the ominous political terms of the absolute regimentation of society under Fascist dictatorship. This has already been foreshadowed by the aerodrome's seizure of the Squire's personal property, which is only the beginning of an extensive takeover. "It isn't simply a question of my land and my house. the Air force want to occupy the whole

village ...". (p.79) Shortly after, the Squire succumbs to illness metaphorically indicating his own weakness which lies in his inability to help himself, and which is symptomatic of the general spiritual apathy that reigns over the village.

In dramatising the endemic political situation of the 1940's Warner has also been able to carve out of history a slab of human experience whose allegorical overtones may be distinctively understood. Roy is a representative figure of moral creativity, of the individual's capacity for exercising his own rights; to freedom and to love. The antagonistic forces that threaten to overrun him especially embodied in the figure of the Air Vice-Marshal, represent the dark forces of the human psyche which seek consolidation through the exploitation of personal power. It re-enacts in political terms the uneasy political situation of the 1940's where the likelihood of an authoritarian takeover was very strong. Warner's concern as an artist for the impending doom of the individual is reflected through characters who embody the ideological temper of the times. They are shown to be grappling with ideas and concepts that control them and which influence their lives completely; the Air Vice-Marshal being the climatic embodiment of it. Allegorically, he is the military dictator who rejects his own humanity and denies himself the right to live as a sentient being. He has a past history of betrayed loves and emotional failures which he has

used as excuses for setting himself up against humanity in general. His life has been an aborted attempt to cut off his past altogether and to woo the material life of the ego with its insistence upon the "escape" that it must make from "time and its bondage", to wilfully construct "something of clarity, independence and beauty". (p.295) His ringing call to order attracts a number of young, able-bodied men who "were attracted to the new order of things by the higher rates of pay which were now offered for their work and by the opportunities which might come in time of wearing uniforms". (p.136) Roy is among them, optimistically involved in an organisation that seemed to lift them up and help them soar on its material wings of inhuman progress. The aerodrome defies traditional social norms in much the same way that it defies the villager's understanding of it, "he never seemed to ... have any clear idea of the purpose or the future of the organisation to which he belonged". (pp.135-136) It stands on the farthest pole away from the easy informality of village life. Its appeal lies in its ability to woo young, impressionable people to a profane envisioning of a world crudely founded upon selfish ambition:

... that you are still tied to the immense and dreary procession of past time is true; it is the business of a man, and particularly of an airman, to rid himself, so far as he can, of this bond. And the first step to take towards this end is to shut out entirely from your lives your parents, people who are

unimportant in themselves, but who have served in most cases as channels or conduits through which you have all in varying degrees been infected with the stupidity, the ugliness, and the servility of historical tradition. (p.178)

Through its chief spokesman the Air Vice-Marshal, Warner has exploited the totalitarian ideas of freedom and success. They are shown to be alluring to young idealistic people from the village whose notion of life is considerably motivated by the propaganda used by the aerodrome. Hence their voluntary induction into an organization that lures them with specious lies and baffles their thinking with its inverted notions of morality and self-empowerment:

'Remember that we expect from you conduct of a quite different order from that of the mass of mankind. Your actions, when off duty, may appear and indeed should appear wholly irresponsible. Your purpose — to escape the bondage of time, to obtain mastery over yourselves, and thus over your environment — must never waver. You will discover, ... the necessity for what we in this Force are in process of becoming, a new and more adequate race of men. ...' (p.187)

In his novel, Warner uses the allegorical mode to portray the ominous threat of totalitarian rule. He builds up a figurative picture of reality consisting of village muddledom, inefficiency and warm camaraderie. These, however, prove inadequate to withstand "an organization" like the aerodrome, "manifestly entitled by its own discipline, efficiency, and will to assume supreme power". (p.226) The

conflict that follows has been allegorically personalised in Roy's initial surrender to the self-negating principles of authoritarian philosophy and in the Flight Lieutenant's assumption of the stereotyped personality of an airman. However, both suffer under the stringent terms of the aerodrome which plots to impede the growth of the inner self. As Warner allegorically traces out the subtracting effects of a life of complete regimentation he also brings in the earlier theme of love that allegorically lies in the subtitle "A Love Story". Meanwhile, his perception of the paralyzing effects of totalitarianism may be further understood by quoting Darshan Singh Maini who has pointed out Warner's ability to fight the greatest fight of all; his personal "crusade against fascism", as an artist morally concerned with the restoration of the individual and society. His is "essentially an assertion of the humanist values which were threatened with total extinction by the fascists". As artist,

the method which he applied was not one of direct, frontal sledge-hammer blows, but that of oblique, poetic, and symbolic sleight of hand. Perhaps Warner realized that any crude, straight attack on fascism was likely to yield little results. By its very nature — its cynical pragmatism and violence — totalitarianism was bound to succeed where the adversary fought with weapons already perfected by it. Thus the best way out at that time was to deal with the menace on the ideological or spiritual plane. A recourse to fantasy and allegory, incidentally a common feature

of a great deal of contemporary political fiction was thus something of an intellectual necessity.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of his observation and in the light of historical fact Warner's novel is a symbolic affirmation of faith in the humanist values of a democratic set up. This implies that his vision has not been dimmed by the negating realities of the aerodrome. If at all, it has been sharpened by its exposition of the totalitarian creed, to understand that the forces of love which are deeply expressive of human creativity, may never be suppressed. Even as the anarchical rule of the aerodrome wreaks havoc in the personal lives of some characters, there is another, less audible theme embodied in the lives of the other characters who commit themselves to the rigorous ideal of a virtuous love. The book is thought provoking enough to solicit the kind of response that it does, from someone who may be compared to Roy, who actually lived through the troublous times of the 1940's, and who discovers the "superior force of human love" as being the only alternative to a life of suppression:

To our disgust and scorn for the muddle and complacency of our elders the last sentences of the Air Vice-Marshal's speech had the strongest siren appeal — 'I urge you to escape from all this, ... .' By 1941, some inkling of the death of the spirit that lay behind the siren song of a clean, aesthetic society, unencumbered by muddled human emotion, had reached all but the most blind of us ... There was no inhuman short cut to bliss. On the other hand, the revelation of what totalitarian

utopianism (of all kinds) meant in terms of human deformity, of the cutting off of all sources of human deformity, of the cutting off of all sources of human warmth, did not reconcile us to the cruelties caused by the evasions, incompetences and callous hypocrisies of English society between the wars. And for most of them, as for Roy the escape from the nightmare illusions of totalitarianism came from the superior force of human love.<sup>5</sup>

The book is a measure of Warner's response to a deeply troubled era. He allegorically portrays the political situation of the times through characters who dramatise the tension of having to cope with the stressful changes that demand a total surrender of one's humanity.

In his essay "The Allegorical Method" Warner speaks of the age-old technique of clothing the familiar with the unfamiliar for effective purposes of literary communication, of allowing for the inter-penetration in writing, of the "prose truth of observation and the poetic truth of suggestion and significance" to arrive at an "extension of the understanding" necessary to all great works of art. According to him, many allegorists of the past were able to clothe their ideas in a human and understandable way because their narratives were anchored to a "fantasy" that was intimately related to reality, and to "pure observation" which was meaningfully directed by an "imagination or moral impulse". It is an essay that posits a personal but valid point of view. It stems from the assumption that allegory or

"according to the dictionary ... 'other speaking'"<sup>6</sup> is second nature to all. It reveals itself in the everyday speech that makes a number of oblique references to ordinary experiences and sensations. To a novelist like Warner, whose imaginative output stems directly from society and who has been observed to be "not merely a social commentator but a social critic who is an artist"<sup>7</sup> the allegorical method has been deliberately chosen as an effective channel for his diagnosis of contemporary ills. He considers it a natural way of expressing oneself:

The allegorical method, then, appears in different forms and, as it were, in different strengths. Part of our normal means of expression, its use is extended for particular purposes. Perhaps it has been used with most remarkable effect by those writers who, like Plato, Bunyan and Dostoevsky, have been most acutely conscious both of the grandeur and of the insecurity of their environment.<sup>8</sup>

That "grandeur" and "insecurity" has been symbolically portrayed, from an insider's point of view, in the events of the 1940's. History is seen to execute itself through a spectacular series of interconnecting relationships and incidents that mounts up to the tragic "conflagration" (p.297) at the end. Roy's ultimate moral discovery, denied to the Air Vice-Marshal because of his wanton quest for power, is an allegorical throwback to the failure of regimented political systems. Meanwhile Roy's capacity for regenerative

insight into his own life allows him to revive his love for Bess which had been kept in cold storage during his life as an airman. Despite her betrayal of him, Roy's humanity has not been completely erased, his capacity for forgiveness not entirely doomed. In contrast to him, the Air Vice-Marshal is unable to forgive the past. Bonded as he is to the past, his life ironically becomes a concerted attempt to construct in his "brief existence" something "guided" by his "own will, not forced" upon him "by past accidents" but "something of clarity, independence, and beauty". (p.295) These are phrases that are resonant with feeling but in the context of the aerodrome they have no real human relevance because of their complete separation from human feeling and human emotion. The wilful efforts of the Air Vice-Marshal to remake humanity altogether is an allegorical reflection of the political attempt to reconstruct the world according to totalitarian ideology. Warner points out humanity's capacity for self-deception through its unqualified acceptance of the aerodrome with all its follies. This is an allegorical reflection on the potential "insecurity" of the human heart which allows itself to be easily seduced by ideological claptrap. On the other hand, however, the "grandeur" of life may yet be paradoxically discovered within the human heart which proves itself to be a dynamic entity of change and growth. This is

the theme that may eventually be linked with the novel's subtitle "A Love Story".

Roy's life at the aerodrome has been one of complete identification with it until the gruesome death of the Squire's sister at the hands of the Air Vice-Marshal. The events unlock a spate of emotions that remind Roy of a past that may not be so easily wished away:

As it was, I was almost superstitious enough to imagine some fatality that seemed to bind me to these characters from my past, so that I had not been able to avoid being actually present at scene after scene of violence and stress in which they had been the chief actors. And these scenes, however much I might consider myself a mere spectator, still strangely moved me. (p.238)

When he learns a little later, about Bess's sickness, he is certainly moved and makes all efforts to help her through Dr. Faulkner. On his way to fetching him, he meets his mistress Eustasia who informs him that she is going to have his child. Roy's feelings are one of "horror and shame" at having broken the rules of the aerodrome, but "at the same time" experiences "a certain satisfaction". (p.248) The public world of the aerodrome and the private world of personal emotion and love are once again at deep conflict with one another. Eustasia is all set to run away with him. Roy too begins to question himself, "Could it be, I wondered, that all this time I had been engaged in pursuit for which my enthusiasm had been in a way forced and not natural?" (p.249)

but rediscovering his pledge to Bess painfully leaves a broken Eustasia behind. Never for a moment does Roy expect her to opt for life by running away with the Flight Lieutenant who is in love with her and whose dissatisfaction with the aerodrome has already made itself obvious. The Aerodrome remains faithful to its sub-title "A Love Story", which is an ironically cryptic understatement on the daunting challenges of love. It is a term much maligned and misunderstood by village and aerodrome and it demands a heavy price from both alike. As the novel works out the exacting price of love through its characters' ventures into its realities it also reveals the numbing casualties of excessive regimentation. The aborted end of Eustasia and of the Flight-Lieutenant, proves just this. Their fate holds up to judgement the values that concur with the "undeviating success" (p.284) of the Air Vice-Marshal. In Roy's own words:

So I continued to read and as I read I wished with all my heart that they might be safe and happy, though I dreaded any moment to hear news of their capture ... and I do not know whether anxiety or admiration for the fugitives was the feeling uppermost in my mind. They seemed to me to have done something noble and desperate in making this deliberate escape along the white and dusty road that would take them almost immediately into a world of towns and villages where our standards no longer applied or had a less certain application. (pp.285-286)

They are literally smashed to bits by the Air Vice-Marshal's recruits, for daring to challenge him. In their deaths the pattern of violence is repeated again as it has been frequently repeated throughout the book. Allegorically, they point to the anarchical process of subversion which accompanies all totalitarian regimes, and which Roy has had to reckon with in the quest for his real identity. The novel is an allegorical rendering of contemporary history with its challenge to the personal life of the individual, and with its own political innuendoes. Options are kept perpetually open for Roy. He must be able to distinguish between the alien values of the aerodrome as embodied in its young airmen who scorn love and serenade success and the simple ones of the village which he later finds out, however, that, "inspite of its drunkenness and its inefficiency, was wider and deeper than the activity with which" the young airmen "were constricted by the iron compulsion of the Air Vice-Marshal's ambition". (p.261) Meanwhile, he is still involved in the process of becoming.

Darshan Singh Maini has noted in his essay that Warner's technique reflects upon a "dialectical understanding of reality" which does not presuppose a synthesis of opposing "extremes".<sup>9</sup> In another essay, A.A. De Vitis says that in "defining the thesis and the antithesis explicitly", Warner "fails to make a satisfactory synthesis".<sup>10</sup> This, however,

proves to be an unsatisfactory observation because in The Aerodrome, Warner does not aim to weld the two opposing world views. He humanises the facts of history and allows for the respective values of the two world orders, of the village and the aerodrome, to reveal themselves in a drama that is full of life's ingredients. Roy is the common human denominator who is caught in the giant clash of ideals. He belongs to the village and also chooses to sample the efficacy of the new order. It is to his credit that the choices that he ultimately makes are uniquely his own. The world of the village and the world of the aerodrome are ironically set apart from each other by a respective code of ethics that forbids the imposition of one upon the other. The irony is that both village and aerodrome are linked to one another through characters who share a common humanity. The Air Vice-Marshal is Roy's father and the Flight-Lieutenant's father. Roy's mother is the Rector's wife and the Flight-Lieutenant's mother, the Squire's sister, Florence. Both women are stalwarts of village life. A sequence of past events of attempted murder which involves the Rector, and of jilted love, which involves the Rector's wife and Florence, the Squire's sister is uncovered. The present success of the Air Vice-Marshal as architect of that inestimable order of change is a direct result of a disillusioned past: "What a record of confusion, deception, rankling hatred, low aims,

indecision! One is stained by any contact with such people. Can you not see, and I am asking you for the last time, what I mean when I urge you to escape from all this, to escape from time and its bondage ...'" (p.295) which bears him down with a crushing sense of hopelessness. As he locks himself up in emotional sterility, he seeks to compensate for his past by his simple minded commitment to the principles of self-seeking power. Needless to say he fails, in as much the same way as everyone else in the village fails through the common sin of being utterly fallen and irredeemably human, and through a shared heritage of lost values. Allegorically, both village and aerodrome represent the antithetical poles of human reality. There can be no synthesising possibilities between the two unless both altogether transform themselves. The only means of this transformation lies in the kind of self-introspection that a character like Roy is capable of. Both village and aerodrome have been found to be wanting in the ideals of integrity and love, qualities needed to reverse the process of disintegration that has threatened to overcome both village and aerodrome.

There is unanimity of opinion in viewing The Aerodrome as a "latter day Everyman" which "need not be accepted in the ordinary sense as a novel. It is really a moral dialogue thrown into narrative form. It is humanity versus power sprawling life versus death-dealing regimentation".<sup>11</sup> Written

by "an accomplished allegorist who is speaking to us of great matters in terms of symbols and simplifications"<sup>12</sup> Warner "aims at something that is not realism".<sup>13</sup> "Like many modern novelists, [he] has been intent on giving us more of what is "real" than realism can give ... and to this end he has written his novel in a special vein of fantasy".<sup>14</sup> He has been observed to have "found new forms in which to make political ideas at once artful and urgent".<sup>15</sup> Above all, the mainstay of his talent has been his ability to record the human: "Warner was the only English novelist of that time who succeeded in turning the threat of Fascism into literature. He could do so because his theme was greater than the immediate political issue; he saw behind it to the deep human conflicts — the conflict of freedom with fear, of individualism with the state, of authority with human feeling".<sup>16</sup> Considered to be his "finest novel"<sup>17</sup> The Aerodrome moves in a realm of ideas and emotions both generative of each other. However melodramatic the action and, however involved the plot, the novel has been able to convey an allegorical sense of the truth through its ability to fashion the two symbolically opposing realities of village and aerodrome. The politics of change and the politics of power is shown to be constantly striving to take over life in the village. It confronts the apolitical ways of the village in a violent attempt to uproot tradition. This has been amply

demonstrated in the chapter entitled 'The Agricultural Show', where ordinary village folk converge together for a celebration of all things rural, reflecting upon the old world values of a homogeneous society. The actions of the young Flight-Lieutenant, new entrant to the aerodrome, strikes a discordant note of irresponsibility. In a rash display of exhibitionism so typical of the aerodrome, he releases the Squire's prize-bull which sends waves of fear and incredulity. "The Flight-Lieutenant's action was only one of many actions performed by him or other members of the aerodrome staff in direct contravention of the rules that governed the life of the villagers". (p.57) The next chapter follows the theme of village versus aerodrome through to its ominous conclusion. Against an arcadian background of village togetherness, Roy and Bess, deeply involved in one another, are rudely interrupted by the Flight-Lieutenant:

... 'I say, Roy, ... I'm afraid I've potted your old man.'

I knew immediately from these words, inadequate as they were, that the Rector had been either killed or seriously wounded in some accident for which the Flight-Lieutenant had been responsible... he had actually used live instead of blank ammunition in the machine-gun whose performance he had been demonstrating... (pp.69-70)

In hindsight one may observe that these incidents allegorically foreshadow the unforeseen divisions that ultimately accompany the new order, with its total disregard

for human life. The book examines the threat of a totalitarian takeover and shows its repercussions at the level of the human. It is an exposition of the artist's confrontation with the values of totalitarianism as it desperately tries to obtain a certificate of natural citizenship within the village. The consequent subversion of order aiming to sabotage ties of blood and of nature, throws up a political scenario that is rife with contradictions and beset by deeply human implications where the only options that exist remain closed ones. The framework of the family that has, to date, been the bedrock of village life is virtually destroyed. On the other hand, what seems to hold sway are the compelling sophisms of the Air Vice-Marshal as he attempts to lead the young recruits, aspirants to that remote order of "freedom" away from the convictions of the heart:

'... science will show you that in our species the period of physical evolution is over. There remains the evolution, or rather the transformation, of consciousness and will, the escape from time, the mastery of the self, ... your preliminary training has been exhausting, your discipline will continue to be exact, though the period of your hardship is over. But this discipline has one aim, the acquisition of power, and by power-freedom'. (p.188)

Roy has also chosen to be part of the aerodrome. He successfully merges himself with it until his inevitable confrontation with his own past which revives his slumbering

humanity and reveals to him the excesses of the aerodrome. When he puts on the garb of an airman, he had, by all means, been irrevocably lost to the world of human relationships. Allegorically, this is the dark phase of his life that would either portend life or death for him. Fortunately for Roy, the transfiguring love of Eustasia for him and his discovery of his own love for Bess allows him to realise that "it was one thing to lose one's way, another to proclaim, as the Air Vice-Marshal had done, that no way was to be found". (p.265) From now onwards, there would be on Roy's part an attempt to consolidate his own life, to route it through the rediscovered principles of love and sympathy. His life as a free individual is restricted when his right to expression through love is challenged, and it is then that Roy begins to re-examine his own situation and his relationship with the universe, to find it wanting in intensity and love:

... And it had been gradually, almost insensibly, that I had lost touch with the country where I had been bred, looking down on it from the sky with a kind of contempt, indifferent to the changes of climate and of seasons, the rising and falling of the ground, except in so far as these things affected the readings of my instruments or the immediate purpose of the hour. Now I thought with longing, and with shame for my neglect of them. ... (p.260)

When he dons what might be understood to be the mask of the anti-personal self, the garb of an airman which is a visible

denial of the inner life, he becomes a robotic servant of a single "will and imagination", (p.261) devoid of human feeling. It is only then that he begins to see the aerodrome for what it is. It is only when his ties with the village are almost severed that he begins to understand his position in life to find it seriously wanting in the values of a love-based existence:

And I saw again the stalks of the prim roses in Bess's lap, and it seemed to me certain that there was more in life even in despair, even in the Rector's rankling conscience, even in the Flight-Lieutenant's perplexity and in Eustasia's disappointment, than there was in the ease, efficiency, and confidence of our ways. (pp.260-261)

Roy begins his life all over again. His is a rediscovery of his own humanity and of the healing power of a love that may only be identified with a future waiting to be explored. Allegorically, the moral resuscitation of the individual can only come from within. Eustasia's tragic choice awakens Roy's capacity for love and in direct contravention of the aerodrome begins to seek out Bess in reaffirmation of his love for her: "there was, I think ... a tacit understanding between us that if there was anything in the past on either side to be forgiven it was forgiven, if there was anything in the future that could be shared then it would be shared". (p.272) He succeeds in taking that one crucial step further than his father, to be able to realise a process of "change"

(p.277) within Bess and within himself which presupposes the kind of moral flexibility that does permit forgiveness of oneself and of others.

The concluding section of the book deals with the moral consolidation of characters like Roy and Bess, and with the crystallisation of the aerodrome's values as embodied in the Air Vice-Marshal's failure to come to terms with his own humanity. With the incident of the deliberate murder of his former mistress Florence, the Squire's sister, events shaping the destiny of the characters begin to take an uncompromising urgency. The symbolically sacrificial death of Eustasia and the Flight Lieutenant for the ideal of love, exposes the aerodrome's weaknesses and propels Roy to a greater vision of love and to a deeper sensitivity of the Air Vice-Marshal's feelings. Not until the end, however, does he learn who the Air Vice-Marshal is. When he confronts the Air Vice-Marshal with the facts of his own involvement with Eustasia, the Air Vice-Marshal's reactions are typical of the "inhumanity of the organisation which he had constructed with such an expense of will and which seemed ... to be designed to stifle life". (p.280) As events begin to speed up in justification of the respective values of the aerodrome and of the more enriching values of love and compassion, there is an audible clash of the principles of human emotion with the principles of "the Air Vice-Marshal's undeviating success". (p.284) The

allegorical confrontation takes the reader into a realm of feeling and thought that has directed the course of events within the novel. Warner allegorises the will to power in the implacable figure of the Air Vice-Marshal who has succeeded in capturing the imagination of the young villagers and in claiming a major part of the village upon which to construct his antiseptic society of the future. The allegorical figurations of life and death, of love and hatred, of guilt and forgiveness fall into place as Roy makes the ultimate moral choices that would free him from the "iron ring" into which he had "forced" himself. (p.290) The forced entry of the Rector's wife into the Air Vice-Marshal's office is, on an allegorical level, the final confrontation that must take place between village and aerodrome. The Rector's wife, whom Roy discovers to be his own mother is bent upon stopping her former lover's brutal reign of oppression. "You have killed one of your sons. I have come to do what I can to save the other, my son as well as yours". (p.293) However melodramatic the situation, it metaphorically spells out the urgency of the individual's need to defend his own moral position in life. "She spoke with a power and a determination that I had never seen her show before" (p.292) as she appeals to the Air Vice-Marshal's basic humanity:

'Antony', she said 'why must these crimes and cruelties continue? You have the power to put an end to them'.

He looked at her gravely and said:

'these crimes, as you call them, must continue so that the world may be clean'.  
(p.296)

His overriding will to succeed makes him emotionally inaccessible. The name 'Antony' no longer has any meaningful connotations for him; symbolically, he has yielded his identity to the scientific forces of achievement which has blunted his intuitive capacity for perception and understanding. He remains the Air Vice-Marshal of a remote order of freedom, a fixed entity of unbending will and unreasoning intelligence.

Even if Warner's essay "The Allegorical Method" is kept in mind, the novel does not fit into the form used in traditional allegory nor is it a modern equivalent of its traditional counterpart. What one finds hidden within the narrative folds of the book, is the vision of an artist who is deeply bothered about the plight of the individual who must face his destiny alone and yet be able to preserve his moral integrity. The result is a fictionalisation of events that dramatises the conflict between the individual self and the powerful forces of political ideologies. The characters have a psychological consistency which arises from Warner's instinct for portraying only what is human and, therefore, deeply relevant. The allegorical mode that he adopts is an expressive means of communication, "to it men have recourse when their thoughts seem to have outrun the ordinary and

accepted modes of expression".<sup>18</sup> It proves to be an important tool of moral interpretation and of moral understanding for it provides an ethical framework of moral absolutes which educates the reader. Ideas and philosophies are put to positive or to negative uses in the lives of the characters and in the network of human relationships that govern the realities of the novel. Warner succeeds in launching a story that involves a realistic portrayal of the "moral anarchist", the Air Vice-Marshal, who is "the individual asserting himself against general standards that seem too weak to be able to restrain him".<sup>19</sup> This study which has a sociological, psychological, and an historical basis is given a dramatic turn at the end, where "the only reply to the cult of individual or racial power and violence is the actual practice of general justice, mercy, brotherhood and understanding".<sup>20</sup> These are values that are associated with Roy's freshly discovered humanity.

It must be remembered that Warner or, for that matter, all the other novelists to be studied in this thesis, function from within the established tradition of a narrative literature that takes into account the recent evolution of fictional narrative. This is a form which is perennially "governed by two opposing impulses: the esthetic and the intellectual, the desire for beauty and the desire for truth. An extreme form of esthetically controlled fiction which

minimises both specific relationship to reality and intellectual control is romance. Extreme forms of intellectually controlled fiction, whether more or less specifically related to the real world" are called "didactic". These "didactic forms" are primarily "allegory and satire".<sup>21</sup> This brings the discussion to a reading of The Aerodrome and to a reading of the other texts, as novels that specifically pertain to the common realities of the "real world" intellectually probing and didactically seeking out for themselves the reality that underlies all appearances. In The Aerodrome, this is not something to be easily understood nor easily achieved for it lies neither with village nor with aerodrome, but with a genuine capacity for love which makes one fallible to mistakes, and to one's acceptance and forgiveness of them.

Roy is thus able to tell us in the concluding chapter that:

... I knew that, but for accidents of various kinds, I should myself have followed in my father's path ... Now I had found my parents and I had found that I was both united and at variance with them both. In so doing I had also found myself. (p.301)

His discovery of himself lies in his ultimate ability to accept his own humanity which is also an acceptance of the past with all its mistakes. He has succeeded in taking that

one crucial step further than his father to realise this for himself,

'That the world may be clean': I remember my father's words. Clean indeed it was and most intricate, fiercer than tigers, wonderful and infinitely forgiving. (p.302)

to be unafraid to retract the mistakes that he has committed, to take the plunge back to the self, to revive the realities that the aerodrome had partially destroyed: "the spirit of adventure, inquiry, the sweet and terrifying sympathy of love that can acknowledge mystery, danger, and dependence". (pp.261-262) Therein lay the intricacy, the ferocity and the wonder of a life that could forgive him as it could have forgiven his father, the Air Vice-Marshal of the sins of his past. He realises more than before, especially in the concluding pages, after he has withstood the challenge of his father's personal appeal to him, to join him in a lifelong partnership of unquenching ambition and unexcelled success that he is bound to others by a common heritage of "sinne" and "love". This realisation and the violent end that subsequently follows his father puts Roy in touch with the greater realities of a love fulfilled in its capacity for self-forgiveness, self-discipline and of ultimate insight into the dual partnership of "sinne" and "love".

The Aerodrome appropriates not so much the style as the profound moral vision of allegory, which, of necessity, must

dictate the presentation of its story. The allegorical mode used within the novel emulates its literary predecessor only to the extent of allowing for certain didactic impulses to mobilise a fictional canvas that is heavily charged with human concerns. The nature of the imagination at work is never constricted by what was perforce considered to be the ultimate message to be delivered. The book allegorically chalks out its unique responses to the human and contemporary issues of survival in a highly politicised world. Its importance as an allegorical work of fiction lies in its ability to negotiate with the facts of contemporary history to bring to it an added dimension of allegorical significance that echoes with the universal in life. Given the turbulence of the 1940's, Warner has succeeded in transcending it by rooting events in the timeless arena of undated history and unspecified geography. He has updated and overhauled the unwieldy convention of the allegorical mode to fit the demands of fiction, which is a fairly recent off-shoot of narrative literature.

The book must, therefore, be read as it is; a novel of the early twentieth century era that delves into the nature and the significance of the changes that come about with the regimentation of ordinary life. It allegorically objectifies an era that was torn asunder by the warring principles of a love-centred universe and a politically motivated existence.

It examines causes and consequences through characters who may appear to be one-dimensional and melodramatic but who are the mainstay of the plot and its vehicle of communication as in the other five novels. Similar to the characters in the other five texts, they show a natural propensity for love which in the novel is thwarted by the dehumanising currents of political change. The allegorical conflict between village and aerodrome, between the need to find oneself through love and the sub-human forces of totalitarianism bring about a tragic reversal at the level of the personal, in the mutilated history of the Air Vice-Marshal. There is also a deeper sense of failure in the larger political sphere of the macrocosmic universe which bears the imprint of crumbling ideologies. The book probes the very element of political upheaval. It is governed by an imagination that has a clear perception of the ironies ingrained in life. These exist in both village and aerodrome, so that the Air Vice-Marshal cannot in all justification, simply jettison his past overboard. He who is the sole engineer of the aerodrome has the dubious distinction of being the father of two airmen, who will in course of time be estranged from him by a natural process of self-discovery, both being born of women who have a natural bond with the village. Village and aerodrome, are linked to one another through the sanctity of the familial

tie which the Air Vice-Marshal has attempted to erase but which Roy has succeeded in coming to terms with:

If there had been guilt in the village, there had been guilt also at the aerodrome, for the two worlds were not exclusive, and by denying one or the other the security that was gained was an illusion. (p.295)

Allegorically, Roy has been able to stay the threat of a totalitarian takeover by his uncompromising commitment to the ideal of love which humbles him in the face of adversity but which may not be identified with the easy-going ways of the village. Underlying the political crisis of the 1940's are the realities that have to be met with in the life of the individual. A contemporary reader may empathise with Roy's crucial struggle to identify himself as a free individual. Allegorically, his world is equally dominated by the seismic waves of personal stress and political challenge; forces that continually plot to destabilise the individual.

Cry, the Beloved Country (1948), is a novel whose literary status has often been questioned. The fact is, that, it has already established itself as Edward Callan states, upon the one enduring principle of literary achievement: universality.

An essential mark of any great work of literature is its universal acceptance; and evidence of universal acceptance is, in part, an enduring interest in the work through the passage of time and in part, the response the work elicits from readers whose languages and cultures

differ from those of the writer. Both of these measures attest to the remarkable esteem in which Alan Paton's novel, Cry, the Beloved Country continues to be held.<sup>22</sup>

The above statement includes within its parameters of judgement an important criterion, that of having withstood the test of time for nearly half a century. Though South Africa is now fighting its own war against apartheid, though there have been surprising upheavals in politics and reversals in world governments, Cry, the Beloved Country, remains as topical, as human, and as relevant, as it was, when it was first written; born of the travails of a nation, that was hardly known to the rest of the world. No matter how personal one's reading of the novel may be, the hard core of truth in it remains undisguisedly affiliated to all things human. Nothing could be closer to the truth than its allegorical subtitle "A Story of Comfort in Desolation", which actually spells out the inexpressible and which gives voice to the mute suffering of a nation even as it strives to restore to itself a vision of the "dawn"<sup>23</sup> yet to come. In the light of recent occurrences, Paton's vision has, unbelievably enough, been able to realise itself in historical fact. It would not be presumptuous to state that South African reconstruction would depend upon the kind of inner heroism that the novel depicts, which in turn would depend upon the rapport that would be ultimately forged between the

individual tribes and races of South Africa. There can be no hope for restoration in South Africa unless a James Jarvis and a Stephen Kumalo understand one another as only two men can who have been similarly tested.

Jarvis looked at him, at first bewildered, but then something came to him. You can mean only one thing, he said, you can mean only one thing. But I still do not understand.

-It was my son that killed your son, said the old man.

So they were silent. Jarvis left him and walked out into the trees of the garden ... He went back to him.

-I have heard you, he said. I understand what I did not understand. There is no anger in me. (pp.155-156)

The profound depths of the book rises from an underplay of emotion and a classic understatement of the truth. The focus in the confrontation between the two bereaved men, is upon a shared sorrow, respectively haunting them but which paradoxically draws them together, uniting them in a common understanding of the unfulfilled realities of South Africa.

The suffering in the old man's face smote him ... and Jarvis said to him, not looking at him. There is something between you and me, but I do not know what it is.

... you are in fear of me ...

... It is very heavy, unnumza. It is the heaviest thing of all my years. ...

... Tell me, he said, it will lighten you.

- I am afraid, unnumzana.

... But I tell you, you need not be afraid. I shall not be angry. There will be no anger in me against you. (p.155)

The unburdening that follows "it was my son that killed your son", climaxes in a symbolic communion of pain. For James Jarvis this is an open acknowledgement of his own weak humanity in the presence of a black priest. "He himself was moved and unmanned, and he would have brought the thing to an end, but he could find no quick voice for it". (p.156) For Stephen Kumalo this is a tragic milestone in an odyssey of suffering that would metaphorically take him to the ends of the earth through darkness and death and bring him face to face with violence and evil. Were it not for the search of a missing son, Stephen Kumalo would never have been able to realise the unmeasurable depths of a faith that would steer him through grief and alienation. The "comfort" born of conflict and strife is one to be bought with the price of one's heart. The conversation that follows delineates the indifference that characterises life in Johannesburg:

... This old man, he said in English, has come to inquire about the daughter of a native named Sibeko, who used to work for you in Ixopo ...

- I had to send her away, said Smith's daughter. She was good when she started, and I promised her father to look after her. But she went to the bad and started to brew liquor in her room. She was arrested and sent to jail for a month, and after that of course I could not take her back again.

- You do not know where she is? asked Jarvis.

- I'm sure I do not know, said Smith's daughter in English. And I do not care.

- She does not know, said Jarvis in

Zulu. But he did not add that Smith's daughter did not care. (p.156)

It bears its own consequences in the lost and broken lives of Cry, the Beloved Country. The attitude of indifference and the problem of social and moral delinquency are but aspects of a greater evil that reside within the brutalised realities of Johannesburg. The human face of this evil is symbolically incarnated in the slaying of Arthur Jarvis, a zealous spokesman of equality and fraternity. He "represents an ideal in which Paton was passionately interested",<sup>24</sup> the only character whose heart is not shadowed with doubt, whose death it may be said, brings reconciliation to some. Meanwhile as the story progresses from the rural to the urban, from simplicity to complexity, from Ndotsheni to Johannesburg, Paton builds up a conglomerate picture of violence and love, of harshness and sorrow. At the level of the plot, the narrative emphasises the unreconciled heart of Johannesburg. At a deeper level it echoes Stephen Kumalo's faltering vision of love and reconciliation. He valiantly struggles to maintain faith in the face of despair. "One day in Johannesburg, and already the tribe was being rebuilt, the house and the soul restored". (p.31) The condition of despair has so overwhelmed life in Johannesburg that it dogs Stephen Kumalo wherever he goes. There is a doubleness to life in Cry, the Beloved Country which rarely escapes the penetrating insight of the novelist. It echoes the frustrations of a

bonded humanity which has bound itself to a crass metropolitanism. It also abounds with moving instances of sympathy and love that cross the barriers of caste and race. This dual insight into the contradictory realities of Johannesburg has been lyrically encoded in a story that spells out the anguished "cry" of one's "beloved country" and the need thereof to find the "comfort" that must be born of "desolation" for wherever one looks one finds, as does Stephen Kumalo, evidences of dishonesty and guilt. One also finds evidences of loving and caring. They do not cancel each other out, however. They paradoxically exist side by side in a country that spills over with the cruel ironies of life whose hope for redemption lies not in isolated instances of faith but in a macrocosmic revival that would reclaim the broken heart. However, one realises as one follows the story that the moral end in sight is never visible to all. Faith rests with the few who may be crucified for it as Arthur Jarvis, but whose missionary sense of it outlasts the anarchical forces that bring confusion and disunity. The book has to do with the loss of vision of a particular race. It also deals with the valorous attempt of a few to maintain spiritual integrity in the face of disunity. The embodiment of faith within the book rests with a humble priest, Stephen Kumalo, whose sole confidant is his God. He establishes a pattern of experience which echoes with the kind of hope that

has been lyrically enshrined in the most unexpected of places, in Shanty Town and in Ezenzeleni. The novel strives to maintain a two way vision of the human heart; of its ability to love and of its ability to hate. Allegorical depths are sounded out everywhere when a picture of the human heart is portrayed as being split into two by its inability to overcome itself. The two irreconcilables of hope and disillusionment render Paton's story about South Africa's crisis into an allegorical one of universal significance.

There is a matching of style and vision in the book which is reflected in its narrative:

It is not only in its emotional power, or in its evocation of those aspects of Hebrew poetry found in good translations of the Bible, that the style of Cry, the Beloved Country attains to the intensity of poetry. As implied earlier the novel may be classified stylistically with those modern works of fiction that, like Joyce's *Ulysses*, have the intensity, compression, and connotative power of poetry in one or more of its three forms: lyric, dramatic, and narrative.<sup>25</sup>

Paton's vision in Cry, the Beloved Country is rooted in the social. It seeks to express itself through the figurative medium of the allegorical mode. It enhances itself through the allusiveness of its language and its figurative exploitation of the realities governing life in South Africa. He has succeeded "to a remarkable degree in portraying a segment of South African life during a brief period

immediately following the end of World War-II".<sup>26</sup> The various strands of the narrative which consists of social documentation, of sensitive insights, of a compelling sense of human tragedy, of a Christian sense of forgiveness and of an apocalyptic foresighting of the future coalesce in various hues together to formalise a "regional portrait" of South African "actualities" founded upon the more "fundamental themes of social disintegration and moral restoration".<sup>27</sup> How he verbalises his thoughts, how he transcends the immediate to solicit the lasting spiritual values of love and faith, how his characters are shaped, are questions not easily answered until one begins from the beginning which is at the primary level of sensitively responding to the undertones of human distress and human faith contained within each recorded episode in the book. This implies the reader's need to assimilate the extraordinary milieu of South African life. Allegorical parallels also arise between the South African dilemma and the inner dilemma of the individual. The novel's ability to yield its meanings at several levels, at both the literal and at the allegorical level, makes it valid enough for a multiple interpretation of its themes which are those related to the contradictory realities of the human heart with its vast potential for creativity or destructivity. Its "humanism" has been said to be "old fashioned" and "sentimental".<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, therein lies its strength for

it upholds within the traditional genre of the novel the moral values of a Christian life of patience and love, values that are shown to be universally dependent upon the cumulative effort of all individuals. Although there is a thematic insistence upon the "fear" that has seized reality within the novel, this may be overcome by "something good and deep" even though it be accompanied by "tears". (p.187) There are other alternatives to this fear suggestedly, through the use of violence or through the devious ways of politics. Both fail disastrously, however. In the final summing up of the truly meaningful existence, Stephen Kumalo's faith succeeds where all other means have failed. His is a vision of the ultimate reconciliation that must remain a "secret" yet to mankind's unseeing heart:

- I am sorry my friend.
- This world is full of trouble, umfundisi.
- Who knows it better?
- Yet you believe?

Kumalo looked at him under the light of the lamp. I believe, he said, but I have learned that it is a secret. Pain and suffering, they are a secret. Kindness and love, they are a secret. But I have learned that kindness and love can pay for pain and suffering. There is my wife, and you, my friend, and these people who welcomed me, and the child who is so eager to be with us here in Ndotsheni - so in my suffering I can believe.(p.193)

The visionary quality of Stephen Kumalo's faith ties up the novel within a framework of explicit moral values that give

the book its underlying sense of spiritual coherence even in the face of confusion and pain.

The method of narration relies heavily upon Paton's ear for the modalities of "the rhythms of Zulu speech" which, in Callan's explanation of it, is a "recreation in English of the sound and syntax of spoken Zulu".<sup>29</sup> The effect is unduly authentic as it simulates living history and gets as close to the truth as possible in order to convey the excruciating dilemma of a lost individual and a broken tribe. As one follows the unnatural course of Absalom Kumalo's life, one realises the irretrievability of a condition that may be traced to a pattern of cultural dismemberment which is the tragic malaise of South Africa. Several allegorical parallels may be drawn with the desolation of life in Cry, the Beloved Country. Paton, however, is not using South Africa as an analogy to illustrate his findings about something else. The novel emerges as it is, of a distinctively hybrid form of narrative that incorporates a variety of technical methods to capture the truth in its various allegorical mutations: in the personal odyssey of Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis; in Arthur Jarvis' unfortunate commitment to the ideals of social justice and human dignity and in the paltry justice meted out by the colonised race to the colonised one. The irregularities that have shaped Absalom Kumalo's life carry him through a life of criminal excesses. He is unable to

offer any reasonable explanation for his actions locked as he is in an isolating wilderness of confusion. He is neither able to defend himself nor absolve himself of any crime. Thus the only answer that he is capable of, before the pronouncement of judgement upon him, is: "- I have only this to say, that I killed this man, but I did not mean to kill him, only I was afraid". (p.173) This is the fear that stalks life in Johannesburg and represses one's potential for love.

Whenever something is observed or commented upon, or identities revealed, as in Stephen Kumalo's reunion with his sister Gertrude,

There is laughter in the house, the kind of laughter of which one is afraid. Perhaps because one is afraid already, perhaps because it is in truth bad laughter. A woman's voice, and men's voices. But he knocks, and she opens. It is I, my sister. Have no doubt it is fear in her eyes. ... They stand and look at each other, he anxious, she afraid ... (p.28)

there are always echoes of deeper meanings within the narrative which irradiate the entire book with a pervasive sense of moral uneasiness. It is at this level that the novel churns up its resonating themes of endless strife which endows the story of Absalom Kumalo's delinquency with allegorical dimensions. Unlike Lord of the Flies which builds up its story pattern through a symbolic manipulation of psychic states and emotions, Cry, the Beloved Country, achieves its allegorical unity through extended meanings:

"Here no doubt it is fear in the land. For what can men do when so many have grown lawless?" (p.67) They connote a universal range of feelings and experiences that have been primarily derived from one's insight into the South African dilemma. The plight of the characters allegorise the plight of those individuals who are bound to the inflexible laws of a regimented society. Thus the face of the Law in South Africa ironically bears the face of the White People "for it is the White People that make the Law". (p.137) The implications are obvious, the Law legitimises only the White Man's dictum.

The novel speaks of the wounded psyche. It also speaks of matters that relate to the social; of social immobilisation and social alienation, yet it directs its ultimate vision to a deeply moral evaluation of life. This conditions a narrative presentation where the reader finds himself intensely moved by an imagination that is sensitized to the tragic ironies contained in the life of South African blacks. It sincerely tries to apprehend the truth in its human aspect in a manner that could be said to be truly allegorical. The mode that it adopts subsumes within itself the different narrative strains that lie with the dramatic, the lyrical, the Biblical, the poetic, and with the use of uniquely indigenous patterns of speech. These enrich the narrative by manipulating the story to partake of the universal, through

common metaphors, common symbols, and through a shared knowledge of Biblical values. They extend the scope of the novel to allow for reader participation and reader identification to such a degree, that, in the end the book has to be taken out of its regional confines to be allegorically understood for what it is: "A Story of Comfort in Desolation". Even as there must be disillusionment in life so must there be hope. "And while there is life, there is hope for amendment of life", (p.94) says Father Vincent to Stephen Kumalo who desperately wishes to believe in his son's innocence. The anxiety-ridden "search" becomes steeped in fear. But, as Father Vincent continues, the fear must be turned to sorrow, "for fear impoverishes always, while sorrow may enrich". (p.96) Thus Stephen Kumalo's quest becomes a learning process and an initiation into the dynamics of a living faith. In Book three, he can actually identify the solace that comes to him in Ndotsheni, for he knows that "something deep is touched here, something that is good and deep. Although it comes with tears, it is like a comfort in such desolation". (p.187) The allegorical mode is clearly visible in the various methods that Paton uses, to wield out of his South African homeland a story that has been founded upon the conflicting principles of love and violence.

One may observe that in the novel's primary evocation of the South African homestead, there is also a significant

undertone that invokes an easily understood and easily perceived frame of reference, in the mention that it symbolically makes of the land. These are lines often quoted and often mentioned as profound examples of the novel's lyricism. They initiate the reader into the stalwart values of the land. They create an anticipatory sense of fulfilment:

There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills ... The road climbs seven miles ... to Carisbrooke; and from there, if there is no mist, you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa.

...

The grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. It holds the rain and the mist ... stand unshod upon it, for the ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator. Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed. (p.7)

only to be erased by the lines that follow it. Towards the end of the section, the narrative begins to narrow its focus down to the particular and the individual to the "valley below".(p.7) The sweeping canvas of the land is undercut by a tragic sense of alienation which symbolically plays upon the desolation of life:

The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth has torn away like flesh ... Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left, and the maize hardly reaches the height of a man. They are valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them any more. (pp.7-8)

In the opening lines itself the narrative modulates from a sense of productivity to a tragic sense of betrayal with its inevitable result in despair. This is the kind of despair that dominates reality in Johannesburg, the figurative metropolis that ironically offers itself to young refugees fleeing from their rural homesteads. Paton states his themes at the allusive level of the plot. This creates an anticipatory sense of the disturbing realities of the novel, both good and bad, both fulfilling and unfulfilling. It plays upon the reader's perception of the dualities surrounding life. The reader's attention is then steered to the

Rev. Stephen Kumalo  
St. Mark's Church  
Ndotsheni  
Natal (p.9)

The land has been figuratively identified and humanised though its people and its priest. What follows is a dramatisation of the events that implicate the reader in an allegorical voyage into the unknown darkness of the human heart. This would mean the "bitter" (p.25) journey to Johannesburg, undertaken by Stephen Kumalo to bring a sister back; but which would also result in an attempt to recover the prodigal son and to trace an erring brother.

- He is in Johannesburg, she said wearily. When people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back.

- You have said it, he said. It is said now. This money which was saved for that

purpose will never be used for it. You have opened a door and because you have opened it, we must go through. And Tixo alone knows where we shall go. (p.11)

Whilst the themes related to the novel converge upon Stephen Kumalo and his revelatory experiences at Johannesburg they also cut across the narrow divides of history and geography to bring out the tangibly universal theme of strife, both at the personal and the extra-personal level. The ordeal of Stephen Kumalo ultimately portrays the classic ordeal of personal pain and private loss. The divisions that are perceived to be endemic to Johannesburg reflect as much upon the theme of betrayal as upon the heart's propensity for rebellion and disorder.

As a point of interest, it should be noted that in one of the more recent definitions of the allegorical narrative it has been said:

Since the development of an allegorical narrative is determined at every point by its one-to-one correspondence to the implied meaning, it tends to work against what Henry James called "the sense of felt life" in the novel. Allegory, therefore, appears in mainstream fiction, if at all, in interpolated narratives like dreams ... or stories told by one character to another.<sup>30</sup>

The implied relevance of Cry, the Beloved Country as a novel with human and, therefore, universal and allegorical dimensions does not presuppose a reading that makes that "one-to-one correspondence". The primary aim of the novel is

to render the depths of South Africa's crisis into the kind of fiction that morally seeks responsibility for every utterance that it makes. This puts it at par with the kind of narrative that is guided by didactic norms that seek to appropriate the truth through various guises like the parable or the fable. In the process, fundamental depths are perceived within the novel. These establish meaningful correspondences with the reader's experiential knowledge of life. The pattern that finally emerges from the story is, as already stated earlier, of a two-fold nature: the pattern of South African life, and the steadfast relation that this bears to easily identifiable forms of experiences that have allegorical significance. It is to Paton's credit as a sensitive artist, that he has been able to wield the element of the human from a story that could have been overrun by an irreparable sense of loss. The vision that shapes the allegorical pattern of the novel is one that lies with the novelist's ability to trace meaning out of meaninglessness. Cry, the Beloved Country fulfils its endeavour to universalise the trials of alienation through the allegorical associations that it creates with its allusive references to universal symbols. The novel has been influenced by the writer's liberalism, his Christian insight and his literary expertise. Hence, the allegorical mode that he adopts rises from an imagination expansive and educated enough to perceive

the paradoxical in life. He refuses to simplify issues and weaves into his story the allegorically contradictory elements of life itself: of love and abandonment, of suffering and despair, of indifference and hope, and of pain and fortitude. Any strict conformity to a preconceived notion of how to read the book would drastically reduce one's understanding of it. Once the initial impact of the story about the break up of South Africa is felt and understood, there follows an inevitable association of its latent meanings with one's personal experiences and understanding of life itself. This is how the allegorical mode functions within the novel. Its "sense of felt life" is not in any way diminished because the book is not a symbolic narrative. Symbolic associations arise only after the initial story has unfolded itself to the reader. The characters are not types nor are they predisposed to a particular kind of behaviour. They all have an inner complexity that comes from life itself.<sup>31</sup> The book is, on the whole, evocative of life in all its regional and extra-regional colours. It sustains a sense of human complexity by its adherence to a mode of narration that takes into account the lived reality, teeming with all manner of contradictions. It contains within its vision, that allegorical sense of life which perceives reality not in material forms but in the immaterial ways of the spirit. The following incident characteristically chronicles an event

that involves the main characters in the book. Paton draws upon his ability to fuse a diversity of feelings within a single episode. As he objectifies a picture of the Law in the form of the Judge he juxtaposes it with the figure of a man black and broken, and that of his guilty son; both arbitrary victims of society and of fate. The involuntary gesture of compassionate understanding on the part of the white man for the black man focusses upon the underlying potential for love on the part of all men. However, the reality is that nothing has been resolved until the Court has made its decision. The ironic sense of reality is reinforced by the allegorical implications that relate to the nature of men as they must conform to a code of behaviour instilled in them by the restrictive rules of an apartheid society. The episode gathers a number of allegorical associations, so that the ultimate picture is dense with meaning:

The Judge rises, and the people rise. But not all is silent. The guilty one falls to the floor, crying and sobbing. And there is a woman wailing, and an old man crying, Tixo, Tixo. No one calls for silence, through the Judge is not quite gone. For who can stop the heart from breaking?

They come out of the Court, the white on one side, the black on the other, according to the custom. But the young white man breaks the custom, and he and Msimangu help the old and broken man, one on each side of him. It is not often that such a custom is broken. It is only when there is a deep experience that such a custom is broken. The young man's brow is set, and he looks fiercely before him.

That is partly because it is a deep experience, and partly because of the custom that is being broken. For such a thing is not lightly done. (p.174)

References have been made to the allegorical content in the names of both Stephen and Absalom Kumalo.<sup>32</sup> This, however, is not indicative of Paton's explicit intentions of writing an allegorical work of fiction. In calling his vision allegorical, one would also have to be conversant with the forces that went into the shaping of the novel. In his book on Cry, the Beloved Country, Edward Callan has explained this in a manner both detailed and enlightening. He has pointed out how some characters have emerged from the original in life. He has also shown how Paton's liberal upbringing shaped his attitude towards South Africa which made it possible for him in Book Three, to visualise the fulfilment of Ndotsheni. In keeping with the allegorical mode of perception, which must apprehend the ultimate meanings of life, this is a symbolic envisioning of the fulfilment of South Africa. The novel has been said to be Christian in spirit. The Biblical overtones add moral significance to it. The tragic has been deliberately dramatised. Callan has also accounted for the preciseness with which Paton employs the narrative technique to effect the startling realities of South Africa and ultimately of life itself. Paton's literary accomplishments

may be discerned in Cry, the Beloved Country through his use of

... a narrative voice not merely to complement the dramatic method. He employs a number of narrative voices, one of which is both omniscient and markedly poetic. It may be said that Paton, a writer of both poetry and drama, effectively combined aspects of his talent for both modes of expression in his novel.<sup>33</sup>

Wedded to his versatile technique is a heartfelt sympathy for the human lot. All the characters bear the stamp of self-dignity. He has extended the limits of South African history and found in it a broad spectrum of everything conceivably human. Nadine Gardimer's review of Alan Paton's book The Long View is also a helpful aid to one's understanding of Cry, the Beloved Country,

Alan Paton is a liberal with a large "L"  
... Alan Paton is not a black man, but as one who lives definitely as a member of the human race, he has seen the black man's disabilities as his own. There is no them in his view point only an us.<sup>34</sup>

The novel continues to be read on the strength of the novelist's infinite ability to place his concern for the human above everything else. The tragic momentum of the narrative, builds up to its climactic moment of death, in the irrevocable fate of Absalom Kumalo; of denial, in Gertrude's abject surrender to carnality; and of betrayal, in John Kumalo's indifference to the ties of blood. On the other hand, there is a spiritual sense of certainty in Book Three

in the re-affirmation of life in Ndotsheni and in its continuity, symbolised by the young "inkosi", the son of the dead Arthur Jarvis. In Book Three, the reader is permitted an insight into the future, in much the same way as the Red Cross Knight is granted a vision of the New Jerusalem in Book One of the Faerie Queene. Until he fulfils his duty as a Christian Knight, however, that spiritual consummation will have to wait. In Cry, the Beloved Country, the "comfort" born of "desolation" is dependent upon the faith that one must achieve in order to have sight of that "dawn" of "emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear". (p.296) When that would be fulfilled, remains a "secret" until men discover the secret power of love:

But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love. Because when a man loves, he seeks no power, and therefore he has power. I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it. (p.37)

Cry, the Beloved Country, does not yield itself to a simplistic interpretation of its meanings. The allegory latent in the book is inextricable from the theme and the plot. This has been structured around the novelist's intuition of the spiritual pattern underlying confusion and death. The guiding metaphor is South Africa's capacity for

life, discernible in Shanty Town's courageous acceptance of its lot, however despicable, however unfortunate.

... There is not much food there, but it is shared by all together. ...  
... What shall we do in the rain, in the winter? Quietly my child, your mother is by you. ...  
... O lie quietly, little one. Doctor, can you not come? ...  
... We do not need the doctor anymore. ... Such is the nature of women. Such is the lot of women, to carry, to bear, to watch, and to lose. (pp.52,53,54)

In a generation known for its conflicting awareness of basic human rights, the novel will, allegorically continue to remind the reader of the individual's right to freedom and of one's duty towards one another. These dramatic interludes heighten the underlying sense of fear and insecurity.

It was a white man that brought my father out of darkness. ... The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again. ...  
- It suited the white man to break the tribe, he continued gravely. But it has not suited him to build something in the place of what is broken. ... there are some white men who give their lives to build up what is broken.  
- But they are not enough, he said. They are afraid, that is the truth. It is fear that rules this land. (p.25)

The theme of the disintegration of life in South Africa is repeatedly emphasised to show that Paton's multi-dimensional appraisal of life is a "bitter" but necessary "journey" (p.25) undertaken to understand the problems of South Africa better. This has resulted in a sharpening of perspective

which enables the reader to understand the magnitude of pain and despair that consumes the individual. On the other hand, the book may also be understood to be a record of the individual's struggle, represented by Stephen Kumalo and Arthur Jarvis, to identify the life of the spirit in a wilderness of sin and grief. The alternating tones of hope and despair dramatise the opposed realities of life, in Cry, the Beloved Country. Repeated throughout the novel are the significantly human refrains that reflect upon the heart's ability to overcome its own anguish. On the other hand, it is an enunciation of the bitter hardening of the human heart. "And our lives will shrink, but they shall be the lives of superior beings". (p.71)

The sociological overtones in the book are balanced by the psychological undertones. The classically tragic sense of human wastage is counter-balanced by the Christian overview of faith, hope and love. The actual presentation of South Africa's dilemma is figuratively enhanced, extended and universalised through the allegorical mode of narration. One finds that the book is governed by a sense of morality compelling and realistic enough to initiate the kind of associations that it does with issues beyond it. Allegorically, therefore, the situation in South Africa could be likened to a similar situation elsewhere in life. Unlike allegory, however, the characters live out their lives in

conflict and pain. They are not mere personifications. The allegorical mode of narration used within the novel is derived from Paton's ability to relate in the dual language of ordinary sensation and of extraordinary perception. When a particular incident is being depicted as in Stephen Kumalo's reunion with his son, there are emotions that remain unacknowledged and questions that remain unanswered. They find relevance not only in the excruciating agony of the moment, but in all other similar moments of unfulfilled reunions and unappeased feelings. The questions repeatedly asked, pertain to the questions that one asks of life but which remain lost and unanswered because of the obduracy of life's realities:

- My child, my child.  
- Yes, my father.  
- At last I have found you.  
- Yes, my father.  
- And it is too late.  
... Is it not too late? he asks.  
... You were at the reformatory, my child?  
...  
- And this is your repayment, my child?  
...  
- Why did you leave the work that I got for you?  
...  
And again the tears in the eyes. Who knows if he weeps for the girl he has deserted? Who knows if he weeps for a promise broken?  
Who knows if he weeps for ... another self that has always been defeated? Or does he weep for himself alone, to be let be, to be let alone, to be free of the merciless rain of questions, why, why, why, when he knows not why? ... . (p.89)

As one follows the narrative, one is immediately caught in the atmosphere of uncertainty and doubt that accompanies the mysterious letter from Johannesburg. The contrast is already established between the simple lifestyle of the Reverend Stephen Kumalo and his wife in Ndotsheni; and the hidden complexities hinted out in the letter, of life in Johannesburg which has already claimed a sister and a son. "He is in Johannesburg, she said wearily. When people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back". (p.11) There are inevitabilities to be faced, however, which Stephen Kumalo intuitively understands. "You have opened a door, and because you have opened it, we must go through". (p.11) The narrative pace in Chapter Two matches the "slow tribal rhythm" (p.99) of life in Ndotsheni, but there is an emotional quickening at the end of Chapter Three, which forbodes ill:

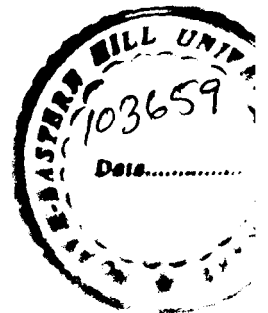
The journey had begun. And now the fear back again, the fear of the unknown, the fear of the great city where boys were killed crossing the street, the fear of Gertrude's sickness. Deep down the fear for his son. Deep down the fear of a man who lives in a world not made for him, whose own world is slipping away, dying, being destroyed, beyond any recall. (p.15)

Revelations concerning his fallen sister, Gertrude, and his brother, John Kumalo, a carpenter turned politician, who "has no use for the Church anymore" because "what God has not done for South Africa, man must do", (p.25) come swiftly and

painfully to Stephen Kumalo. But, implanted in his faith is a resilience born of an inner vision of God's plan for human kind. This imposes its own sense of order amidst the tangle of uncertainties: "the humble man reached in his pocket for his sacred book, and began to read. It was this world alone that was certain". (p.16) It rises poetically and lyrically to the surface of the narrative, to re-echo in the larger human context and to give the narrative its Biblical overtones of prophetic insight. As important as it is for Stephen Kumalo to find his lost son, so is it for the reader to come to grips with the tragic reality of lost and broken lives in South Africa. Thus the drama enacted is one of universal pain and suffering, one which Edward Callan observes to be a metaphoric representation of the quest for unity:

Set over against Arthur Jarvis's intellectual quest, and transcending it, is the spiritual aspect of the quest of the chief pilgrim in this novel, Stephen Kumalo. Through its association with St. Stephen, the first Christian Martyr who was cruelly stoned to death, Stephen Kumalo's name implies the way of suffering. Thus Paton created another metaphor, this time for the Christian journey, in the character and quest of Stephen Kumalo who, on the physical level, searches for his lost son, and on the intellectual level seeks to understand what must be done to restore society, and finally, on a spiritual level, faces the temptation of despair before going forward in faith to endure the pain of his son's fate.

Kumalo's vision of peace, like Dante's glimpse of Paradise, cannot be reached on the earthly journey.<sup>35</sup>



This reading of the text could be taken as a starting point, a helpful aid towards a wholesome understanding of its more general meanings.

Several contradictory statements have been made concerning the book's value. It has been called a "good bestseller",<sup>36</sup> with the comfort offered in Book Three described as being a "trifle pat".<sup>37</sup> Paton's literary work has been considered to be more "significant as propaganda than as literature".<sup>38</sup> In another essay, a "moral geography" has been attributed to the book. It symbolically matches the physical terrain within the book with a moral one: "Paton has, in fact, even readjusted South Africa's profile to resemble that moral terrain which both Bunyan and Dante travelled and of which everyman knows something, I think, though he has read neither".<sup>39</sup> The last statement gets too close to a literal approximation of the novel as pure allegory to be wholly acceptable whilst the other statements disprove themselves by the very fact that the book has, as initially confirmed, "universal acceptance".<sup>40</sup> A critical opinion worth pondering over, is of an examination of the book as "parable"; of Paton, simplifying issues in order to "move" people and to catch their "attention":

"... It is almost as if a serious novel on the theme of the disintegration of African culture and society, a serious novel on the misfits of our culture, would not be accepted or would not be

understood; but reduced to these simple, almost fabular terms, it was intelligible and it made an impact".<sup>41</sup>

The most conclusive of all observations, however, is Paton's own statement on the book in Kontakion For You Departed, which is a requiem for his dead wife:

So many things have been written about this book that I would not add to them if I did not believe that I know best what kind of book it is. It is a song of love for one's far distant country, it is informed with longing for that land where they shall not hurt or destroy in all that holy mountain, for that unattainable and ineffable land where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for that land that cannot be again, of hills and grass and bracken, the land where you were born. It is a story of the beauty and terror of human life, and it cannot be written again because it cannot be felt again. Just how good it is, I do not know and do not care. All I know is that it changed our lives. It opened the doors of the world to us, and we went through.<sup>42</sup>

A greater perception of life's inequalities and a deeper appreciation of the permanence of love is born of one's association with the land and the characters in the novel. Allegorically, the lyricism which defines the novel is a reflection of the potential dynamism of the human heart, of its capacity for transmitting sorrow and pain.

The element of fear predominates. It is, what Stephen Kumalo begins to realise for himself, that "... Everywhere it is so. The peace of God escapes us". (p.23) It assumes dimensions menacing enough to paralyze ordinary human

feelings. "Have no doubt it is fear in the land. For what can men do when so many have grown lawless? ... There are voices crying what must be done, a hundred, a thousand voices. ... and one cries that, and another cries something that is neither this nor that". (p.68) The book has a series of interpolated chapters that are contrapuntal to one another and which sound out the basic themes of the story. Edward Callan calls these chapters "the dramatic choral chapters that seem to break the sequence of the story for social commentary, but which in fact widen the horizon of the particular segments of action to embrace the whole land, as well as such universal concerns as fear, hate and justice".<sup>43</sup> In Book One, Chapter Twelve, in its brief dramatic sections the theme of fear and the plight of South Africa resounds with the "cry" of the "beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply" continues the refrain "for fear will rob him of all if he gives too much". (p.72) Such is the conflict of loyalties which blights human faith in South Africa. Absalom is at the receiving end of the injustices meted out by a racialist system. In Book Two, Chapter Eleven, in the courtroom scene, one may observe the implementation of a swift and retributive justice. The judge argues out his reasons for having to deliver the death sentence. There is an element of truth in his findings:

The most important point to consider here is the accused's repeated assertion that he had no intention to kill, that the coming of the white man was unexpected, and that he fired the revolver out of panic and fear. If the court could accept this as truth, then the court must find that the accused did not commit murder. (p.172)

There is also an element of irony in the presentation of the actual facts of the murder, which glosses over the criminal activities of Absalom's accomplices, and disregards Absalom's confession if only to help mitigate the yet, undelivered sentence. Although the judge draws attention to the pleas of the defending lawyer on grounds of "the disastrous effect of a great and wicked city, on the character of a simple tribal boy", (p.171) yet reality is harsh, for the Law has been solicited to defend society from itself: "it is one of the most monumental achievements of this defective society that it has made a Law, and has set judges to administer it and has freed those judges from any obligation whatsoever but to administer the Law". (p.170) The Law enacted is, supposedly, the impartial servant of a society that is bent upon righting its wrongs through a rigid enforcement of justice. Under the Law, Absalom stands condemned, for to all appearances he is a dangerous man, who must be dealt with accordingly. Truth becomes a misfit within the context of the South African judiciary; so too is mercy. Book Two rings with the anguished

cry of the condemned juvenile who has barely learnt anything at all about his own life.

At those dread words the boy fell on the floor, he was crouched in the way that some of the Indians pray, and he began to sob, with great tearing sounds that convulsed him. For a boy is afraid of death....

- Be of courage, my son.

- I am afraid, he cried. I am afraid.

- Be of courage, my son.

The boy reared up on his haunches. He hid nothing, his face was distorted by his cries. Au! au! I am afraid of the hanging, he sobbed, I am afraid of the hanging.

...

He stood up, but the boy caught his father by the knees, and cried out to him, you must not leave me, you must not leave me. ... (p.177-178)

The other face of the observable reality may be seen at the beginning of Book Two, Chapter Six:

There is little attention being paid to the trial of those accused of the murder of Arthur Jarvis of Parkwold. For gold has been discovered, more gold, rich gold. ...

This gold is as rich as any gold that has ever been discovered in South Africa, as rich as anything in Johannesburg. Men are prophesying that a new Johannesburg will rise there ...

Oh, but it is wonderful, South Africa is wonderful. We shall hold up our heads the higher when we go abroad, and people say, oh, but you are rich in South Africa. (pp.145-146)

which altogether dispenses with human feeling and human sympathy. There is an indifference inbuilt in South African society, which at first reveals itself in the anarchical

confusion awaiting Stephen Kumalo when he first arrives at Johannesburg. This is the climate of indifference that typifies the lives of the white colonisers in their bid for authoritarian rule. The inherent disparities are brought out at all levels and reflect upon the colonising instinct for preserving identity at the cost of freedom. This becomes an oppressive tool of exploitation which holds up the impenetrable barrier of the closed heart:

... Who knows how we shall fashion a land of peace where black outnumbered white so greatly? ...

Who knows how we shall fashion such a land? For we fear not only the loss of our possessions, but the loss of our superiority and the loss of our whiteness. ... Is it not better to hold what we have, and to pay the price for it with fear? ... (p.71)

The overwhelming sense of white supremacy is a total denial of South Africa's potential. The book reveals South Africa's inbuilt prejudices, which narrows life, down to the most primeval instinct which is that of fear and hostility. The perennial theme of Appearance versus Reality is repeatedly emphasised in the incidents that cover Book Two. In a society that is bent upon achieving its own ends, the human factor is obliterated. As a result, its vision becomes blurred, and there is an interchanging of values to suit itself. Arthur Jarvis is slain by a society that, bent upon withholding profits to itself, produces a class of over-exploited natives

who "produce criminals and prostitutes and drunkards, not because it is their nature to do so, but because their simple system of order and tradition and convention has been destroyed". In Arthur Jarvis's own words:

It was permissible to allow the destruction of a tribal system that impeded the growth of the country. It was permissible to believe that its destruction was inevitable. But it is not permissible to watch its destruction, and to replace it by nothing, or by so little, that a whole people deteriorates, physically and morally. (p.127)

Ironically enough, Arthur Jarvis's implementation of the Law, and his faith in it is inadequate to protect him. He is crucified on the very principles of destruction against which he has been crusading. The tragedy about such a society lies in its chronic indifference. It is unable to recognise its own heroes and its own martyrs. This in effect, is the whole truth about South African society. It is bound hand and foot to an unyielding law of survival. This is the Law that brings justice to James Jarvis's household, but which is unable to give him spiritual succour.

In his quest for Sibeko's daughter, Stephen Kumalo is brought face to face with James Jarvis. The ensuing conversation points to the human aspect of a meeting between two men, who are for a brief moment, alone, free of social obligation and, especially on the part of James Jarvis, with no desire to put up the facade of a social pretence. This is

the reason why both understand each other so well. But when the mistress of the house returns, social hierarchy is once again restored and with it, the merciless face of the Law that must at all costs be implemented. Thus, this is the answer that Stephen Kumalo receives when he questions her about the whereabouts of her maid, Sibeko's daughter:

- I had to send her away, said Smith's daughter.
- You do not know where she is? asked Jarvis
- I am sure I do not know, said Smith's daughter in English. And I do not care.
- She does not know, said Jarvis in Zulu. But he did not add that Smith's daughter did not care. (p.157)

In many incidents of the book, this attitude of indifference inhumanly seals up the fate of several others.

Meanwhile, the meeting between the two men has already had its effect on James Jarvis:

- Why are you so disturbed, James? she asked.
- Why were you so disturbed when you came into the house? (p.157)

whose vision of death has been supplanted by an inner vision of love and understanding. This is the theme of reconciliation that must follow Stephen Kumalo's return to Ndotsheni in Book Three. It is in tune with the procreative forces of the land visible to the reader in the novel's initial evocation of its verdant plenitude. It manifests itself in Johannesburg, in Ezenzeleni, the colony of the blind. It is a force that has remained potent and alive,

throughout the ordeal of suffering and pain and has been responsible for generating the kind of inner strength that allows characters like Msimangu and Stephen Kumalo to pilot themselves on the hidden trail of faith. It is thus able to write off the penalty of the Law, not in any legal terms but in the unwritten terms of forgiveness and mercy.

The story of Absalom Kumalo's crime ends with his death, but its full significance does not. The sense of futility associated with it is countered by the essentially Christian spirit of hope, even in the face of death, hence Absalom Kumalo's marriage. The implications are quite obvious: that Stephen Kumalo would care for the unborn child "even as if" he were his "own"; that in losing a son, he would have gained a daughter; that another son is already given to him by a sister who in her desertion of him and of everything that he stands for, is symbolically dead, that in the paradoxical way of all Christian truth in death is life. The death of Absalom presages the restoration of Stephen Kumalo in a way never before anticipated by him. In a similar manner, the death of Arthur Jarvis opens up avenues of human sympathy between the white world and the black world in Book Three.

Edward Callan has pointed out how Book Three is easily given to "charges of sentimentality" from those who do not share Paton's Christian perspective, and of "uncritical

applause" from those who do. Although the protagonist is a priest who "invites us to enter a realm beyond tragedy and to witness a resolution on a higher plane"<sup>44</sup> any sensitive reader would be open to the novel's insistent search for order; to its mystical suggestions of love; to see it being practically fulfilled in the lives of some of the more positive characters who, even in death, as in the case of Arthur Jarvis, proclaim their visionary message of hope.

Restoration does not come easily to Stephen Kumalo nor to the people of Ndotsheni for it is dependent upon the spirit of penitence and forgiveness, of sacrifice and love that must prove itself in outward action. When Stephen Kumalo sends up his prayers of thanksgiving he prays also for that which is "hardest":

And this is the hardest that must be prayed, but he humbles himself.

And Tixo, my son ...  
They do not moan, they are silent. Even the woman who gossips does not moan. His voice drops to a whisper:  
Forgive him his trespasses.  
It is done, it is out, the hard thing that was so feared. He knows it is not he, it is these people who have done it. Kneel, he says. So they kneel on the bare red earth, and he raises his hand, and his voice also, and strength comes into the old and broken man, for is he not a priest? (p.191)

Whether he would still be allowed to remain a shepherd to his flock after circumstantial evidence of the guilt that stains

him and his family would be a question to be answered only in the mysterious ways of faith. It comes in the form of a letter from James Jarvis thanking him and his church for their sympathy in the death of his wife, and which also solicits his help in the construction of a new church for Ndotsheni. "Kumalo stood up, and he said in a voice that astonished the Bishop. This is from God." (p.223) Although harmony must logically follow Stephen Kumalo's return to his village this is dependent upon the people's continued acceptance of him as their priest. There is, in the final section, an emphasis upon the element of shared suffering that draws humanity both black and white together, and which reinstates Stephen Kumalo to his rightful position as priest. The conclusion of the book is a looking forward to life and renewal even as Stephen Kumalo keeps a prayerful vigil on his son's last night on earth. Paton ends the book in the same manner with which he started it on a note of hope. It is the sort of hope that has learnt to reconcile itself to an intervening period of darkness for it knows that the coming of the "light" is a "secret" yet unrevealed. It affirms the coming of the light in the same way that Stephen Kumalo affirms God's presence by partaking of his repast, in thanksgiving and prayer, with a spirit of calmness trusting himself completely to God. The end of all strife symbolises the beginning of a new "dawn". This is an optimism that is

tinged with the fearful understanding that "one day when they turn to loving they will find that we are turned to hating". (p.235) At every turn of the story the reader is constantly brought back to a realistic confrontation with the bitter truth. Hence the optimism attained by the characters and displayed within the book itself, has not been an easy one. It has been bought with the price of fear; a deadening emotion that brings in its accompanying weight of pain, but which also sees love as the only alternative to it:

That men should walk upright in the land where they were born, and be free to use the fruits of the earth, what was there evil in it? Yet men were afraid, with a fear that was deep, deep in the heart, a fear so deep that they hid their kindness ... . And such fear could not be cast out, but by love. (p.235)

This is what Stephen Kumalo realises when he reaches home, that "something deep is touched here, something that is good and deep. Although it comes with tears, it is like a comfort in such desolation". (p.187)

Stephen Kumalo's faith finds natural restoration in the simple environment of his own village. "Our home is simple and quiet, there are no great things there". There is a deep sense of certainty in his homecoming which reinstates the familiar values of <sup>the</sup> land:

The path is dropping into the real land of Ndotsheni. It is a wasted land, a land of old men and women and children, but it is home. The maize hardly grows to the height of a man, but it is home. (p.188)

Book Three abounds with images of natural harmony and of quiet restoration. Though Absalom's death is an unmitigated part of the future Stephen Kumalo's faith dignifies it with a quiet sense of hope for his son's ultimate reconciliation. Meanwhile the emphasis in this section is upon the young people who have been literally and allegorically rescued from the travails of Johannesburg. The young inkosana, Arthur Jarvis' son, also embodies the regenerative vision of hope that would mark the recovery of a nation. Symbolically, though Ndotsheni is a "land of old men and women and children" (p.188) its spiritual dynamism transcends its limitations. It represents the other hopeful face of reality. In its valley, humanity thrives because the natural processes of life have never been aborted. There is hence, an anticipatory sense of new beginnings:

- Umfundisi, said the young man, and his face was eager, there is no reason why this valley should not be what it was before. But it will not happen quickly. Not in a day. (p.217)

The natural rhythms of the universe symbolically restore the balance in life. The much awaited rain comes down as a rejuvenative symbol of God's love. Stephen Kumalo's confirmation of the young believers whom he knows, "will go away, for the soil cannot keep them any more" (p.220) as it has not been able to keep the "men ... the youngmen and the girls", becomes, however, an affirmative act of faith in the

spiritual pattern that ordains life. Bereavement and death may therefore be viewed in the mellowness of spiritual insight.

The resolving vision of Book Three is an allegorical denouement of the spiritual crisis that has seized humanity in Johannesburg. It works on the simple values of human faith and challenges the contemporary reader to commiserate with its vision of total forgiveness and childlike acceptance of life's inevitabilities. Simplistic as it may seem it posits the only hope for the human heart allegorically riddled with its own contradictions. Ironically, the symbolic centre of faith, hope and love; and of violence, hatred and death within the novel, is the human heart. Cry, the Beloved Country symbolically portrays these contradictory impulses raging within it. Each character has to bear the heavy burden of knowledge both carnal and spiritual, for which he must inevitably pay. Experience has been bought at the metropolitan wasteland of Johannesburg and for each questor the existential dilemma has to be confronted in the face. Each character has had to face the natural consequences of the choices that he has made. Death awaits Absalom Kumalo as meaninglessness awaits Gertrude, and political power, John Kumalo. The death of Arthur Jarvis is proof of the cumulative consequences of the moral evasions of South African whites. Cry, the Beloved Country dramatises history but

metaphorically searches for the truth within the human heart so that the tragic senselessness of colonisation has been juxtaposed to the consistent faithfulness of Stephen Kumalo. The novel emphasises the dual element of suffering and love which presupposes life. When James Jarvis and Stephen Kumalo meet for the last time they are brought together in a symbolic moment of understanding". I understand you, he said, I understand completely". (p.232) The process of healing has already begun to take place within the human heart. The last section anticipates the restoration of South Africa in no simple way. It follows Stephen Kumalo's anguish through a night of prayerful questioning. As he keeps vigil on the night before his son's death and as he waits for the moment of death there is a sense of fortitude and calm born of a spiritual acceptance of the mysterious ways of God. The dawn presages symbolic beginnings possible only through Stephen Kumalo's recognition of the paradoxical realities of life and death. His envisioning of a future temporarily buried in a fearful present is an affirmation of faith in human restoration. This is the transcending vision of the book. It allegorically reinstates the simple values of the South African homeland.

## END NOTES

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**Chapter-III**

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**LORD OF THE FLIES**  
**AND INVISIBLE MAN**  
**METAPHORS OF DARKNESS: OF**  
**EVIL AND OF BEING**

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The initial reviews on Lord of the Flies (1954) place emphasis upon the allegorical nature of the book: "... Lord of the Flies is an allegory on human society today, the novel's primary implication being that what we have come to call civilization is, at best, no more than skin-deep".<sup>1</sup> This study of the novel will also be an attempt to trace out its "allegoricalness" from the point of view of the narrative mode that it uses. One, therefore, has to begin by making the inevitable reference to Golding's essay "Fable" in which he states that, "With all its drawbacks and difficulties, it was this method of presenting the truth as I saw it in fable form which I adopted for the first of my novels which ever got published".<sup>2</sup>

One's reading of Lord of the Flies must be based upon a knowledge of the basic Christian premise of man being essentially fallen. The condition of life in a fallen universe has been allegorically interpreted by a writer "who had discovered" man's "capacity for greed, his innate cruelty and selfishness" which was, however, "being hidden behind a kind of pair of political pants".<sup>3</sup> Bent upon making this shocking revelation in a manner that captures the imagination of the average person, Golding makes a radical choice of both subject and technique. He inverts the story of Ballyntyne's Coral Island by placing a similar group of young boys in an isolated island in the Pacific. These young protagonists,

however, undergo a gradual process of reversion to the savage and the primitive. As early as Chapter One, Jack already seeks to redefine himself according to the unstated laws of the survival of the fittest. His new-found identity as "hunter" gives him a foretaste of unlicensed power. "He snatched his knife out of the sheath and slammed it into a tree trunk. Next time there would be no mercy. He looked round fiercely, daring them to contradict".<sup>4</sup> The technique that Golding uses is sustained by a ceaseless effort to harness the truth through an allegorical exploitation of factual reality. He uses characters whose capacity for change is life-like. They cannot, therefore, be looked upon as being mere embodiments of a psychological, a psychical or a spiritual state. There is a sense of the characters' close proximity with the lived reality which propels the reader's understanding beyond the sequence of events that take place within the novel. The plot unravels itself at two distinct levels: at the literal level of the story and at the profounder, allegorical level, of symbolic reality.

Claire Rosenfield's article "Men of a Smaller Growth": A Psychological Analysis of William Golding's Lord of the Flies"<sup>5</sup>, is a convincing interpretation of the children's "return to a primitive and infantile morality". It sees them degenerating "into adults" proving indeed that "children are but men of smaller growth". Admittedly relevant for a

psychological understanding of the characters, this reading of the text imposes its own set of values<sup>6</sup> upon a book which, according to its author, was meant to be read as a fable. The "fabulist" by nature of his craft is, however, "didactic". He "desires to inculcate a moral lesson "knowing fully well that people, however, "do not much like moral lessons". The "pill" must then be "sugared ... to be witty or entertaining or engaging in some way or another".<sup>7</sup> He engages the reader's interest in a story of the bleak survival of young school boys set against the larger backdrop of atomic warfare. Golding engages him in a dark journey into the otherwise unplumbed darkness of the boys' hidden selves which ultimately forces a virtual recognition of the break that must occur in the delicate balance that is maintained between the civilised self and the primitive self. In the final summing up of events within the book, Golding juxtaposes an adult, a naval officer who is engaged in fighting a vicious war to exterminate others, and a juvenile victim of equally juvenile but vicious delinquents, in an ironic summation of the true face of reality. Ralph and the naval officer confront one another in a manner both shocking and revealing to the reader:

He stumbled over a root and the cry that pursued him rose even higher. He saw a shelter burst into flames and the fire flapped at his right shoulder ... then he was down, rolling over and over in the warm sand, crouching with arm up to ward

off, trying to cry for mercy.

He staggered to his feet, tensed for more terrors, and looked up at a huge peaked cap. ... He saw white drill, epaulettes, a revolver, a row of gilt buttons down the front of a uniform.

A naval officer stood on the sand, looking down at Ralph in wary astonishment. On the beach behind him was a cutter ... In the stern-sheets another rating held a sub-machine gun. (p.246)

The concluding section of the book draws to a close everything that has happened on the island. At the same time Golding also "throws everything that has gone before into a new and surprising light",<sup>8</sup> so that the children are now seen from the eyes of an adult naval officer who is "completely unaware and largely indifferent to the suffering" that Ralph has had to endure.

... In fact the ... cruel irony of the matter is made all the more stronger by the sudden switch in perspective ... the arrival of the officer at the end with its sudden shift from Ralph's agonized eyes to the benign view of the child throws the story back into grotesque miniature. The children are dwarfed to children again.<sup>9</sup>

Golding's fable achieves its results through his handling of a conclusion that deliberately unmask surface reality for didactic purposes. In an interview with James Keating in 1962, Golding's reply to the question concerning Golding's criticism of the rescue at the end of the novel, as being "ultimately a "gimmick", a trick"<sup>10</sup> is one of definite

rejection. This proves the seriousness with which Golding views his fable, for he explains himself thus:

I've been haunted by the word, "gimmick", ever since I used it in an interview explaining that, I liked a sharp reversal at the end which would show the book in an entirely different light so that the reader would presumably be forced to rethink the book ... . I don't know, in that event, whether the saving of the boys at the end is a gimmick or not. The reason for that particular ending was two fold. First I originally conceived the book as the change from innocence ... to a tragic knowledge. ... If I'd gone on to the death of Ralph, Ralph would never have had time to understand what had happened to him ...

The other answer is that ... the book is supposed to show how the defects of society are directly traceable to the defects of the individual, then you rub that awful moral lesson in much more by having an ignorant, innocent adult come to the island ... Then in the last sentence you let him turn away and look at the cruiser ... doing exactly what the hunters do — that is, hunting down and destroying the enemy — so that you say, in effect to your reader, "Look you think you've been reading about little boys, but in fact you've been reading about the distresses and the wickedness of humanity." If this is a gimmick, I still approve of it.<sup>11</sup>

The allegorical discovery that one ultimately makes is of the "darkness" within. What seems to be a rescue for Ralph turns out to be quite realistically, a confrontation with an adult world which is at war with itself, and which on a more intimidating scale is even more destructive and even more regressive than Jack and his pack of hunters. The "coda"<sup>12</sup> is

an important segment of the narrative. It takes the reader beyond the imaginative confines of the book and plunges him directly into the tangible realities of human behaviour, when the "shibboleths of twentieth-century civilization are erased with appalling ease".<sup>13</sup>

The tragic enactment of the fall into the darkness of moral chaos and psychic irrationality plays itself out in the lives of the young boys. When they are ejected on the island, there is a gravitational move towards order. The aura of civilization still suffuses their thoughts and actions which in the novel centres around the conch:

Piggy paused for breath and stroked the glistening thing that lay in Ralph's hands.

"Ralph!"

Ralph looked up.

"We can use this to call the others. Have a meeting. They'll come when they hear us —"

He beamed at Ralph. (p.22)

The conch has been associated with the adult world of order and discipline upon which the boys feebly attempt to model themselves. But their plight uproots the hitherto, domestic and disciplined sensibility to replace it with a sense of mistrust and a fear of the unknown. The uneasiness gradually intensifies: "Ralph was annoyed and, for the moment, defeated. He felt himself facing something ungraspable". (p.48) Each meeting that they have forebodes the malignancy of doubt and despair that will follow them. Even as Jack

reiterates to his exiled compatriots that "We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English; and the English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right things", (p.55) the next few lines convey the overwhelming sense of darkness both physical and metaphorical:

They gazed intently at the dense blue of the horizon, as if a little silhouette might appear there at any moment. The sun in the west was a drop of burning gold that slid nearer and nearer the sill of the world. All at once they were aware of the evening as the end of light and warmth. (p.56)

Allegorically, the movement of the novel is inwards into the retrogressive darkness of the atavistic self, where words no longer communicate and action arises from the most primal instinct of hunger and self-preservation:

Indignation took away Ralph's control. "I was talking about smoke! Don't you want to be rescued? All you can talk about is pig, pig, pig!"  
"But we want meat!"  
"And I work all day with nothing but Simon and you come back and don't even notice the huts!"  
"I was working too —"  
"But you like it!" shouted Ralph. "You want to hunt! while I —"  
They faced each other on the bright beach, astonished at the rub of feeling.  
....  
He wanted to explain how people were never quite what you thought they were. (p.69)

Once the story builds up, there is a parallel accretion of meaning in the images and symbols that have been deliberately

used to connote meaning to theme and action. These are important arrow-marks because they grow out of a story that compels the reader to look beyond its surface meanings in the allegorizing ways of its narrative.

At the beginning of their adventure, the boys' camaraderie defines itself through a spontaneous exhibition of friendship and emotion:

A kind of glamour was spread over them and the scene and they were conscious of the glamour and made happy by it. They turned to each other, laughing excitedly, talking, not listening. The air was bright. Ralph, faced by the task of translating all this into an explanation, stood on his head and fell over. When they had done laughing, Simon stroked Ralph's arm shyly; and they had to laugh again.

"Come on", said Jack presently, "we're explorers." (p.33)

But with their unrelieved incarceration within the almost pre-historic surroundings of the tropical island tempers begin to explode. More significantly, however, personalities begin to undergo a tragic crisis of transformation. The definable priorities of an ordered and civilised nature undergo a systematic process of devaluation and the instinct for self-preservation begins to take a heavy toll on Jack and his hunters.

"Jack!"

Jack's voice sounded in bitter mimicry.

"Jack! Jack!"

"The rules!" shouted Ralph, "you're breaking the rules!"

"Who cares?"  
Ralph summoned his wits.  
"Because the rules are the only thing  
we've got!"  
But Jack was shouting against him.  
"Bollocks to the rules! We're strong —  
we hunt! If there's a beast, we'll hunt  
it down!  
We'll close in and beat and beat and beat  
—". (p.114)

By the time one reaches the end of the story, one finds that the victimisation of Ralph is a logical climaxing of the train of events that have been steadily building up towards a total destruction of the civilised self.

"Listen, Ralph. ..."  
...  
"— you got to go for your own good."  
"The chief and Roger —"  
...  
"They hate you, Ralph. They're going to  
do you".  
"They're going to hunt you tomorrow."  
"But why?"  
...  
"— and we've got to be careful and throw  
our spears like at a pig". (p.232)

Meanwhile, the boys are shown to be ganging up together in an instinctive attempt to suppress their deepest fears. Ralph and Jack have already been singled out as their natural leaders. Although there has been a democratic show of "voting" for a leader this will soon be undermined by the boys' inability to still the "beast" within. Ironically Ralph has been elected not because of the "stillness" that marks him out, but because he has been identified with the conch that he blew into in order to bring the boys together. "The

being that had blown that, had sat waiting for them in the platform with the delicate thing balanced on his knees, was set apart". (p.30) At this early stage in their adventure the norm of human rationality and order still functions as a motivating source of action. The boys imbue the conch with significance and attribute to it the disciplinary power that used to be associated with parental authority. The call of civilization is still audible to the young protagonists, but it becomes consistently weaker as the boys' memories of another existence is eroded by the primeval forces of the jungle.

At another meeting a "littlun" vocalizes the hidden fear, "He wants to know what you're going to do about the snake-things", (p.46) which is shrugged off and explained away unsuccessfully, however, by the young leaders. In the course of the meeting the suggestion to make a fire in order to be rescued, is taken up with zeal and Piggy's glasses are used as a means to this apparently useful end. The burning fire becomes symbolic of uncontained energy. It singes everything in its path. "That little 'un — "gasped Piggy —" him with the mark on his face, I don't see him. where is he now?" (p.60) There is a premonition of evil in the first encounter that the boys have with death. The fire has been unable to exorcise the lurking "beast" which threatens to take over life in the island jungle. Instead it has merely

served to release the boys from the restrictions that civilization has imposed upon them. Allegorically the fire has burnt off all their inhibitions. What started as a sincere attempt to establish contact with the adult world becomes an orgy of destruction foreshadowing the evil uses to which it will later be put.

In "Fable" Golding stresses the "strict limits" from within which the fable must function. Yet, he says "it is at this very point, that the imagination can get out of hand".<sup>14</sup> Given the complex range of experiences over which the novel traverses Golding's imagination does overstep the limits of the fable in order to spell out in allegorical terms the evil indwelling in man. Frank Kermode calls it Golding's "mythopoeic power"<sup>15</sup> which is his ability to transcend the narrow "programme" of the fable. The characters then inhabit a multi-dimensional universe of irrational suffering and fear. The book has an uncommon claim on verisimilitude because of Golding's ability to emulate the very thoughts and feelings of each boy character so that the reader primarily sees them as being a realistic portrayal of boys struggling with the demons within. Immediately after the tragedy of the fire-making attempt in Chapter three, Jack is seen to be "bent-double" and "dog-like", creeping forward "on all fours" on the trail of a pig as if to demonstrate the self-alienation that now marks him out.

He closed his eyes, raised his head and breathed in gently with flared nostrils, assessing the current of warm air for information. The forest and he were very still.

At length he ... opened his eyes ... that in this frustration seemed bolting and nearly mad. ...

The silence of the forest was more oppressive than the heat ... . Only when Jack himself roused a gaudy bird from a primitive nest of sticks was the silence shattered ... Jack himself shrank at this cry with a hiss of indrawn breath; and for a minute became less a hunter than a furtive thing, ape-like among the tangle of trees. Then the trail, the frustration, claimed him again and he searched the ground avidly. (p.62)

This is a chapter that brings into clear focus the three protagonists Jack, Ralph and Simon, as they relate to the universe around them. Jack has almost reverted to the savage and the primitive. His responses bespeak the brute physicality to which he has begun to give himself up. Ralph is seen to be struggling with the shelters. He has the greater good of the community in mind. The two boys have been summed up as being "two continents of experience and feeling, unable to communicate". (p.70) Jack's "If I could only get a pig!" is counterpointed to Ralph's "I'll come back and go on with the shelter". Both are poised for a devastating confrontation which is for the present staved off because they still adhere to a semblance of civilised behaviour. Simon, on the other hand, inhabits a very personal universe which is shared only by nature around him. As he makes off

alone for his natural "cabin" he helps the "littluns" pluck fruit in order to feed themselves. When he arrives it is dusk, a transitional moment of natural harmony when the "candle-like buds" (p.72) begin to bloom in the darkness. For Simon, darkness does not have any connotations of evil. The scene is marked by the "scent" of the flowers spilling out into the air and taking possession of the island. At first, Simon is an enigmatic person silent and withdrawn. He takes on a powerful significance, however, when he attempts to unmask the Lord of the Flies; this forms the central metaphor of the story — the decapitated head of the pig hangs as a mockery of all the careful constructs of human civilization, "dim-eyed, grinning faintly, blood blackening between the teeth". (p.170)

Foreshadowings of the evil that will envelop the island is portrayed in a minor key in the lives of the younger ones. Maurice kicks sand in Percival's eyes, Henry playing with the tiny creatures brought in by the tide "became absorbed beyond mere happiness as he felt himself exercising control over living things". (p.77) The rift between Ralph and Jack grows persistently wider as Ralph, sighting a ship and finding that the fire has been neglected dimly realises Jack's potential threat to him. Jack in the meantime, regresses a step further when having smeared himself with clay, he heads a procession of hunters with the "gutted carcass of a pig swinging from

the stake". (p.86) Simon's intuitive reaction is one of fear especially as the chant that floats up "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood" (p.86) is a figurative defiance of order and decorum. Jack is consumed with the knowledge of his own power, "that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink". (p.88) The boys are shown to be steadily reverting to the primitive and the anarchical; even Ralph dribbles at the sight of roasted pig. He is unable to cut himself off from Jack and his ways because he too is seduced by the promise of meat. Whilst Ralph, with Piggy's help is able to maintain a rational rule over himself, yet both of them have been implicated in the death of the "littlun" which lies in their inability to curb themselves and to stem the ravaging fire. Later in the novel the death of Simon will be another reminder of their guilt-stained lives. The boys, including Ralph and Piggy who share the spoils of meat with Jack, allegorically begin to inhabit a dark area of ambiguity,<sup>16</sup> where the thin veneer of civilization has been wilfully cast away. They must, therefore, make the inevitable propitiations to the Lord of the Flies, the Lord of Dung, Balzebub himself.<sup>17</sup> There is an inner vacuum that follows their separation from societal authority which is proportionately filled in by the "beast", (p.103) another dimension of the Lord of the Flies.

The two chapters "Beast from Water" and "Beast from Air" figuratively demonstrate the falling apart of things at the centre. In the earlier chapter "Beast from Water", Ralph's hold over the boys begins to falter. The meeting called at a symbolically late hour, just before the onset of darkness, emphasises his inability to control the fear that has taken hold of the boys. Jack's challenge to Ralph more obvious now, lies in his brute mastery over the boys whose instinct for survival is greater than the need to rationalise.

Ralph summoned his wits.

"Because the rules are the only thing we've got!"

But Jack was shouting against him.

"Bollocks to the rules! We're strong — we hunt! ..."

He gave a wild whoop and leapt down to the pale sand. ... The assembly shredded away ...

The dispersed figures had come together on the sand and were a dense black mass that revolved. They were chanting something ... . (p.114-115)

The gap between Ralph and Jack becomes an opposition of uncompromising rationality on the part of Ralph, and of hatred and resentment on the part of Jack. Piggy is Ralph's ally. "Piggy could think. He could go step by step inside that fat head of his, only Piggy was no chief. But Piggy, for all his ludicrous body, had brains". (p.97) He is also Ralph's adviser. Above all, his spectacles are an important key to the survival of the boys in the island. As long as

Piggy remains with Ralph the advantage is on Ralph's side. "Piggy handed Ralph his glasses ... Ralph stood back ... This was the first time he had admitted the double function of the fire. Certainly one was to send up a beckoning column of smoke; but the other was to be a hearth now and a comfort until they slept". (p.199) However, the menacing presence of the "hunters" illustrated in Jack's climb to power: "the chief was sitting there, naked to the waist, his face blocked out in white and red", (p.197) is reflected in the uneasiness shared by Ralph and his friends. It forebodes the violence that will follow. Ralph and his friends are symbolically targeted by "dark figures" who "didn't come for the conch" but who "came for something else". Piggy's piteous cry "Ralph — what am I going to do?" (p.207) is lost in the metaphoric darkness of evil. Jack's demonic quest for absolute power is complete as he is now in possession of a mighty tool of great potential:

Far off along the bowstave of beach, three figures trotted towards the Castle Rock. ... occasionally they turned cartwheels down by the moving streak of phosphorescence. The chief led them, trotting steadily, exulting in his achievement. He was a chief now in truth; and he made stabbing motions with his spear. From his left hand dangled Piggy's broken glasses. (p.207)

Although the plot follows a logical unravelling of character and event, there is a symbolic build up of meaning through action, "... his footprints became bays in which they

were trapped and gave him the illusion of mastery" (p.77) through the repeated descriptions of the island's dystopian surroundings, "Tall swathes of creepers rose for a moment into view, agonized, and went down again. The little boys screamed to them, "Snakes! Snakes ...!" (p.60) and through the encounters that are unique to each boy or to each group of boys. "They were used now to stomach-aches and a sort of chronic diarrhoea". (p.74) Jack's realities are those of his chosen prey, harmless enough at first but definitely increasing in violence.

His mind was crowded with memories; memories of the knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink.

He spread his arms wide.

"You should have seen the blood". (p.88)

For Jack, the ritual of the hunt becomes a means of the assertion of the brute self at the cost of everything human and vulnerable. When Ralph, Piggy and Samneric go to Jack's "fort" to claim Piggy's stolen glasses they are confronted by armed "savages". And when Jack appears, "a hunter crouched on either side" of him all "masked in black and green" he is unrecognisable to Ralph. As they approach Ralph they symbolically drop behind them "on the grass the headless and paunched body of a sow". (p.217) For them rationality has been relegated to another life. This is the reason why they

answer Piggy's and Ralph's questions with "an incantation of hatred".

"Which is better — to be a pack of painted niggers like you ... or .. sensible like Ralph is?"

...  
"Which is better — to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?"

...  
"Which is better, law and rescue, or hunting and breaking things up?" (p.222)

Ralph faces them armed with a spear. In a bid for life, Piggy holds out to them the useless "talisman, the fragile, shining beauty of the shell". Samneric have already been tied up as prisoners. This is a significant moment in the story because it holds up the balance to humanity to find it absolutely devoid of good. Jack and his "hunters" have already crossed over to the primitive and regressive whilst Ralph and Piggy are unable to deal with the chaos confronting them. The only answer that Jack and his "hunters" are capable of must result in violence. With "delirious abandonment" Roger leans his "weight on the lever" with deadly precision:

The rock struck Piggy ... the conch exploded ... Piggy fell forty feet ... on his back ... His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed ... Suddenly Jack bounded out from the tribe and began screaming wildly.

"See ? See ? That's what you'll get! I meant that! There is'nt tribe for you any more! the conch is gone —"

He ran forward, stooping.

"I'm Chief!"

Viciously, with full intention, he hurled his spear at Ralph. (pp.222-223)

The novel completes its identification of Jack with anarchical rule when later on, in the narrative, the twins confess to Ralph that under Jack's instructions, a "sharpened stick at both ends" (p.234) has been prepared for him, as for a pig. Jack's complete alienation is perceived when only his briefly delivered commands and ululations are audible; as if to emphasise his absolute defilement of human communication, turning him more precisely into a "furtive thing", initially glimpsed by the reader in Chapter Three, "ape-like among the tangle of trees".(p.62) The sheer force of destruction unleashed by the boys wreaks havoc upon the island. The penultimate moments before the arrival of the naval officer dramatises the treachery of Jack and his cohorts, as the savage game that they play with Ralph becomes a vindication of the amoral forces that have been let loose. For Ralph these are moments of intense clarity. In as much as Jack's personality becomes locked in aggression, so is Ralph's personality locked in pain, both physical and metaphorical. Where Jack seeks destruction as an end in itself, Ralph seeks justification for his actions, each of which has been carefully weighed. "But I've done nothing", whispered Ralph, urgently. "I only wanted to keep up a fire!". (p.232) From this point onwards, the narrative focusses upon Ralph as it follows him in his desperate, undercover bid for freedom.

The imminent threat to his life comes in the form of physical torture played through a vibrantly sensitive mind. The focus of observation has been fully directed upon Ralph, who must be victim to Jack's unbridled fantasies of power. These are the forces that Ralph had attempted to control but which "Ralph's inadequate democratic machinery" could not "keep in check",<sup>18</sup> and which have claimed all of them either as victims or as slaves. The penultimate pages of the book throb with the fervour of his opponents deathly assaults on him. This is a realistic enactment of man's potential for evil made convincing by the incriminating evidence that has even mounted up against the moderate Ralph and the logical Piggy who are also guilty of murder in Chapter Nine when they find

... themselves eager to take a place in this demented but partly secure society .... glad to touch the brown backs of the fence that hemmed in the terror and made it governable.  
"Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (p.187)

They are actually swayed by the overwhelming dementia that draws the mass of them into a single body of murderous insanity:

The circle became a horseshoe. A thing was crawling out of the forest. It came darkly, uncertainly. The shrill screaming that rose before the beast was like a pain. The beast stumbled into the horseshoe.  
"Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!"  
...

... the beast struggled forward .... At once the crowd surged after it .... There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws. (p.188)

The fall-out of Simon's murder may be seen in the rift that separates Ralph and Piggy from Jack and his hunters. Jack becomes a painted "Chief" aggressively consolidating his position. He rules out any timid suggestions of the "beast" actually being Simon, and of the ritual killing actually being an act of murder. He has virtually put off the garb of civilisation and assumed the mask of the primitive self. The ultimate murder of Piggy will be yet another milestone on the road to chaos.

Meanwhile Ralph wakes up to a tragic recognition of himself as a marred creature, stained with the bloody murder of a friend. "The air was heavy with unspoken knowledge". (p.195) This is a realistic presentation of a sense of deep self-betrayal on the part of Ralph, Piggy and Samneric. It reverberates beyond the arena of death within the novel. All four of them stand out as character portrayals of the constantly shifting nature of humans:

The characters, in fact, are not conveniently divided up into "goodies" and "baddies", though Jack and Simon do lie towards the extremes. ... It is the complexity of human nature that accommodates the possibilities of both good and evil ...<sup>19</sup>

When they refer to the ritual dance enacted on the night of the ritual killing, they are actually referring to their

inadvertent involvement in a murder which cannot be undone. This in itself proves to the reader to be a stabbing reminder of man's irredeemability which is the "terrible disease of being human".<sup>20</sup> Through them, the narrative implicates the reader in a symbolic murder of the higher self which may, as happened in the case of the more reasonable-minded boys like Ralph and Piggy, be easily extinguished under pressure of primal feelings.

From then on as the scent of blood courses through Jack's veins and intoxicates him and his hunters, Ralph and Piggy, with Samneric, heroically try to stem the tide of destruction by keeping the fire alive "to make smoke; and more smoke —" (p.201) in the futile hope of being rescued. But, in one of the typically ironic workings of fate, the boys do get rescued, not however, through the signal fire that they have tended. They are detected by the smoke that comes from the fire that has been set alight by Jack in his attempt to smoke out Ralph. The entire island is set on fire. This may be read as a symbolic indication of the tragic conflagration that ends all violence. In the chapter entitled "Beast from Air" the horrific effigy of death taunting and frightening the boys is an ironic judgment on man himself. In a moment of abject hopelessness when the boys are battling with their own fears, they strive unsuccessfully to reassure themselves and to "convey" to themselves the "majesty of

adult life". Ralph's desperate cry for help, "If only they could get a message to us ... send us something grown-up ... a sign or something". (p.117) is answered in the brutalised language of war. This takes the form of the bizarre figure of the dead airman, trapped in his own parachute lines, and turning him as it were, into a macabre puppet.

But a sign came down from the world of grown-ups, though at the time there was no child awake to read it. There was a sudden bright explosion and a corkscrew trail across the sky ... there was a speck above the island, a figure dropping swiftly beneath a parachute ... the changing winds ... took the figure where they would ... till it lay huddled among the shattered rocks of the mountain top. ... and the figure sat, its helmeted head between its knees, held by a complication of lines. When the breeze blew the lines would strain taut and some accident of this pull lifted the head and chest upright so that the figure seemed to peer across the brow of the mountain. Then, each time the wind dropped, the lines would slacken and the figure bow forward again, sinking its head between its knees. So ... the figure sat on the mountain top and bowed and sank and bowed again. (p.119)

The breakdown of human reasoning on the island jungle is matched by the collapse of civilisation in the adult world. Fear on the part of the boys is a natural reaction to the grotesque image peering at them. Since they are alienated from a moral order they naturally withdraw into superstition. The "beastie" of the "littluns" has now become the "beast" of the older boys which must be propitiated or exorcised at all

costs. It is at this allegorical level that the evil form of the Lord of the Flies begins to take shape in the picture of the boys casting themselves into the darkness of misrule. Its natural culmination is the metaphoric fire of destruction that Jack lets loose on the island.

Meanwhile, Ralph loses credibility in the eyes of the others. At the beginning, his leadership is allied to a strong sense of democracy, supported by the "true wise friend called Piggy" (p.248) asthmatic and comical. Piggy is in a broad sense, representative of logical thought. Both Ralph and Piggy, however, prove inadequate for the establishment of a strong moral order in the island. Ralph is forcibly ousted from his position of power. He demonstrates the unhappy plight of democratic values in the face of a radical show of muscle power. Golding's war experiences as he tells us in "Fable", completely changed his belief in the "perfectibility of social man" so that the "diseased creation"<sup>21</sup> called man, mirrors itself in the discordant climate of moral strife found amongst the company of lost boys.

Apart from Simon, Ralph has been the only character who is sensitive enough to objectify his situation, to see himself alter beyond recognition and to experience the horrifying changes that have certainly obliterated their identities as young schoolboys marooned in an unknown island.

The nightmare reality of Ralph's position is a throw back to the kind of primitivism out of which civilisation was supposed to have emerged. In the darkest hours before he is rescued, Ralph's sense of doom is highlighted by the realistic portrayal of the hunt, screened through his consciousness which is the consciousness of the hunted; and it is together with Ralph that the reader hides, screams, stumbles, wishes for "a pax, a long pause, a time to think!" (p.241) but ultimately having to roll "over and over in the warm sand, crouching with arm up to ward off, trying to cry for mercy". (p.246) All past events and personal irreconciliations between the boys have amounted to this savage display of primitive strength and cunning to underline what the beast had to tell Simon:

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" ... "you knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" (p.177)

The picture inscribed in the reader's mind, is of the boys' assumption of the grotesque dimensions of the amoral forces of death and of destruction. The allegorical significance of the story arises from this logical displacement of identities. It takes place even as the boys enact a life of violence and crime in a horrifying interchange of values

which distort them and invest their surroundings with the shadow of their misdeeds.

Simon's "lonely, voluntary quest for the beast is certainly the symbolic core of the book. The meaning of the book depends on the meaning of the beast, and it is that meaning that Simon set out to determine."<sup>22</sup> In "Fable" Golding has defined Simon's role as being that of a Christ figure, "solitary, stammering, a lover of mankind, a visionary, who reaches commonsense attitudes not by reason but by intuition. Of all the boys, he is the only one who feels the need to be alone and goes every now and then into the bushes ... and prays ... turning a part of the jungle into a church, not a physical one, perhaps, but a spiritual one."<sup>23</sup> The rest of the boys, Jack and his pack of hunters, define themselves through actions that seek a common identity in a common strategy of lawlessness. The impact of their combined energy forces the narrative onwards at a reckless speed which allows no human weakness of self-introspection. The current of unleashed energy demands a total withdrawal of human rationality. This is the reason why Peggy has had to be silenced for his "intellectual daring". (p.160) Against this anarchical medley of irrational forces Simon is a solitary, prophetic figure of wisdom. He is unable to relate to others, due, not so much to a lack of communication skills but because of an inborn innocence to the rude ways of the

average boy. In so describing him, it would seem as if one were investing him with a maturity far beyond his years. Viewed from the total perspective of the book, however, he is a poetic figure of maturity and knowledge. The presence of Simon in Lord of the Flies assures the reader that the book is not merely a fatalistic statement on the errant ways of man. It is through Simon that the nature of evil is symbolically portrayed and hence understood. His search for truth initiates a counter flow of reality which, on a metaphysical level, forces the reader to see deep into the nature of evil and yet not be destroyed by knowledge of it.

When Simon withdraws into the seclusion of his "bowl of heat and light" (p.71) it is almost as if he were an unseen presence allowing nature as it were to unfold and to illuminate itself at the higher level of perception. Having followed Simon's solitary trek to his natural harbour, the narrative refuses to elaborate upon the significance of his brief sojourn there. But the fertile images of nature that spill over, contrast very distinctively with the sights and the sounds of the island as perceived by the fallen senses of the other children in the chapter immediately following it. This, in effect, places Simon apart from the rest. He "represents and has access to a dimension of experience it is proper to call religious".<sup>24</sup> Simon's characteristic receptivity to truth, precipitates the hunt for the Beast:

"I think we ought to climb the mountain".  
The circle shivered with dread. Simon  
broke off and turned to Piggy who was  
looking at him with an expression of  
derisive incomprehension:  
"What's the good of climbing up to this  
here beast when Ralph and the other two  
couldn't do nothing?"  
Simon whispered his answer.  
"What else is there to do?" (p.159)

This is a significant question that offers the only feasible alternative to a situation already overburdened with ceaseless talk and the threat of a senseless rampage. On Simon's part, it brings in its own tragic share of suffering. It impels him on a relentless hunt for the hidden fact for which he is mobbed and killed.

Meanwhile the story prepares us for the dramatic crystallisation of the anarchical forces of the jungle. On the one hand, the boys are steeped in fear of the unknown beast. On the other hand, Simon has already chosen the course of action to be taken. He opts for his hidden canopy of verdant foliage and continues "to sit" in almost meditative fore-knowledge of what is to happen. Ralph and his group of equally apprehensive boys are shown to be not impervious to the more tangible promises of meat and security to be found within Jack's tribe. Simon's absence has been noticed, but

"You don't think he's climbing the  
mountain?" Piggy broke into noisy  
laughter and took more fruit.  
"He might be". He gulped his mouthful.  
"He's cracked". (p.164)

which echoes an opinion unanimously held. In an effort to dispel their fears and in an outward show of bravado Jack and his tribal savages, hunt for the pig. But they "leave part of the kill ...", (p.169) and as Jack proclaims:

"This head is for the beast. It's a gift". The silence accepted the gift and awed them. The head remained there, dim-eyed, grinning faintly, blood blackening between the teeth ... (p.170)

This is the image of evil that confronts Simon in his private, natural cell.

Within the narrative, there is a physical sense of foreboding as storm clouds gather and as Simon patiently withstands the insufferable heat and the buzzing flies. At the same time on another part of the island the boys gang up together against the "beast". Simon's lonely convulsive effort to understand the significance of the Lord of the Flies anticipates the surreal effects of his ritualistic murder:

At last Simon gave up and looked back; saw the white teeth and dim eyes, the blood- and his gaze was held by that ancient, inescapable recognition. (p.171)

This is the "inescapable recognition" that must come to someone like Simon, far removed from worldly ambition. By virtue of their personalities, the boys plunge directly into evil. By virtue of his sensitivity Simon plunges directly into a metaphysical confrontation with evil in which he too becomes implicated. "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?"

Close, close, close! I'm the reason why its no go?" (p.177)  
As the Lord of the Flies challenges him in a one-sided wordy  
duel, incriminating him with evidences of evil, Simon's  
responses could be said to be almost one of inarticulate  
pain.

He knew that one of his times was coming  
on ...  
Simon's body was arched and stiff ...  
Simon found he was looking into a vast  
mouth. There was a blackness within and  
blackness that spread. ...  
Simon was inside the mouth. He fell down  
and lost consciousness. (p.178)

An epileptic seizure at such a moment could be explained away  
as being brought on by an awful discovery of the truth.  
However, having confronted and recognised the evil within,  
Simon heroically regains consciousness; his original sense of  
mission remaining unchanged.

Simon spoke aloud to the clearing.  
"What else is there to do?"  
... He walked drearily between the  
trunks, his face empty of expression, and  
the blood was dry round his mouth and  
chin". (p.180)

Virginia Tiger observes that in the "confrontation scene, he  
recognizes his own capacity for evil as well as his ability  
to act without evil".<sup>25</sup> As we follow him up the island, he  
literally takes on the image of Christ,<sup>26</sup> battered, alienated  
and blood-soaked. The pig's head, the Lord of the Flies,  
undergoes a change too, but a primal one. "The Lord of the  
Flies hung on his stick like a black ball." (p.180) The

flies covering it bespeak the evil that it represents. Their significance ties up with the flies crowding round the decaying corpse of the airman, which allegorically represents the "picture of a human at once, heroic and sick". (p.128) When Simon and the Lord of the Flies part company, the Lord of the Flies assumes the human dimensions that it has always threatened to take.

"... we are going to have fun on this island ... so don't try it on, my poor misguided boy, or else ..."  
"— or else", said the Lord of the Flies, "we shall do you. See? Jack and Roger and Maurice and Robert and Bill and Piggy and Ralph. Do you see?" (p.178)

In the demoniac dance that takes place the obsessive energies of evil are released. Each boy submerges his identity in the "throb and stamp of a single organism" whose movement "began to beat like a steady pulse". The chant vibrates with "terror" but another "desire, thick, urgent, blind" rises out of it, to culminate in the only plausible manifestation of it, the total annihilation of life.

The circle became a horseshoe. A thing was crawling out of the forest. It came darkly uncertainly. The shrill screaming that rose before the beast was like a pain. The beast stumbled into the horseshoe.  
"Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!". (pp.187-188)

The ritualistic killing of Simon becomes a reenactment of mankind's pathetic attempt to exorcise an externalised devil

when all the while the devil lurks within. Ralph begins to understand this only after the murder has been committed, and after he himself realizes that he too has been a guilty participant: "I'm frightened of us. I want to go home. O God I want to go home". (p.194) Whatever is left to be demolished is swiftly done so. Piggy's glasses are stolen: firemaking as a symbol of the preservation of life becomes an evil process of destruction. Piggy is murdered and Ralph hunted down. Piggy's rationalism and Ralph's democratic values are not enough to withstand the evil machinations of the Lord of the Flies who functions on the undermining principles of confusion. Piggy and Ralph function from within the strict legalities of a social existence which blunts their perception of things other than normal. In contrast to them, Simon proves to be an extraordinary figure of uncompromising good. He neither seeks social acceptance, in the way that Ralph and Piggy do, nor does he compromise what he sees with what he knows. Under threat of death, "You know perfectly well you'll only meet me down there — so do'nt try to escape", (p.178) Simon returns to his fellow creatures with the "news". (p.181) But his becomes a voice crying in a wilderness of random destruction:

"Simon was crying out something about a dead man on a hill.  
"Kill the be beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!". (p.188)

The removal of Simon's body after his death, has been variously commented upon as being "magical and naturalistic".<sup>27</sup> It is contrasted with the abruptness of Piggy's end, to bring in the characteristic difference between the two. Simon's intuitive acceptance of his impending death, "What else is there to do?", is remarkable for its unshirking courage in a boy who shunned the crowd at assembly meetings. In placing Simon's death within the perspective of evil, predominating the book, one would begin to understand the metaphysics of evil. The paragraph describing the lifting of Simon's body by the tide, ends with his "dead body" moving out "towards the open sea" (p.190) as if to emphasize the ultimate triumph of Simon's quest, which is to penetrate the impenetrable, and yet maintain steadfast integrity even in the face of total destruction. There is a sense of stillness in the way that the sea accepts the passage of Simon's body which contrasts with the unceremonious dumping of the airman's corpse into the sea. What is brought to light at this juncture is the symbolic significance of Simon freeing the corpse from the deathless trap of its own parachute lines. He stands as a fragile symbol of strength, able to conquer his deepest fears:

Simon saw a humped thing suddenly sit up on the top and look down at him. He hid his face, and toiled on.

... He crawled forward and soon he understood ... the mechanics of this parody. ... Simon knelt on all fours and

was sick till his stomach was empty. Then he took the lines in his hands; he freed them from the rocks and the figure from the wind's indignity. (p.181)

to understand the truth about the deluded human heart and to actually wish to share his discovery with others.

Within the allegorical framework of the novel Simon represents an apparently fragile moral order, one that has also been associated with the conch. The tragedy of the boys lie in their inability to see what Simon wishes them to see and to hear the truth about the beast. They have aborted all capacity for dynamic thought and action in their inability to uphold the principle of integrity within themselves; they become indifferent to the norms of human conduct. Every act of theirs, beginning with the attempt to start a fire and eventually culminating in the murderous pursuit of Ralph, reflects their dark potential for evil. Contrasted to them is the "delicate" form of the conch which was initially used to bring order to the island-society. When Piggy holds it out as a talisman before it is smashed to pieces, it is described as being a "fragile, shining beauty" which explodes into a thousand "white fragments". (p.222) Allegorically, the conch is associated with the ideal of human order. Its efficacy lies in the boys' ability to use it for specifically moral purposes. However, once the boys are initiated into destructive ways there is a compulsive need to destroy everything that cannot be identified with them. Hence the

fragmented conch is a symbolic image of loss of vision, which is a grave consequence of the boys' inability to recognise beauty and nurture respect for the "otherness" of things. When they murder their saviour they rush away screaming into the "darkness" literally foaming with fear from another dark source. Coincidentally, it is at this moment that they also see the corpse that Simon had "freed", bumping "over the reef and out to sea". (p.189) The "darkness" that they withdraw into is the metaphoric one of delinquency and regression. It is from the vantage point of his "darkness" of primordial emotions that they will now function as they continue to strike out against Ralph and against everything that is associated with a civilised moral order. The theme as Golding tells us in A Moving Target, is "grief, sheer grief, grief, grief, grief"<sup>28</sup> at the evil that man is capable of. When the naval officer confronts the filthy but weeping Ralph at the end, he too becomes incriminated in the game of darkness that the supposedly civilized adult world also amuses itself with. Like the boys, the naval officer is impervious to human feeling:

The officer ... was moved and a little embarrassed. He turned away to give them time to pull themselves together; and waited, allowing his eyes to rest on the trim cruiser in the distance. (p.248)

He trains his eyes upon the only reality understandable to him, his own weapon of destruction. This is the impenetrable

darkness that figuratively binds the boys to their adult counterparts in a war-stricken world.

One's reading of Lord of the Flies must be backed by an ability to accept the fact of evil within oneself and the darkness that resides deep within. As the narrative delineates the excesses that the boys are capable of, the island becomes fraught with symbols and metaphors pertaining to the state of mind associated with them. The book gains depth in terms of the novelist's interpretation of human reality as he sees it and as he conceives of the story to be told, as a fable in Lord of the Flies.

There is a general agreement amongst commentators of Lord of the Flies that Golding's adherence to the fable form is a compromising one. This is so because Golding is not hypothesising about the nature of evil, but fabricating in order to convince. He depicts something that he had actually been through in the second world war when he saw "little by little what man could do to man". In effect the writing of the novel was a release for him,

The years of my life that went into the book were not years of thinking but of feeling, years of wordless brooding that brought me not so much to an opinion as a stance. It is like lamenting the lost childhood of the world. The theme defeats structuralism for it is an emotion.<sup>29</sup>

a way of re-ordering his view of man, so that even for the reader the effect is both educative and cathartic<sup>30</sup>.

Characteristically, although the fable must start from a "skeletal abstract" which is "fleshed out" with what are "appearances of "real life""<sup>31</sup> and, although Golding stresses the deeply moral element in the story, one finds that the story validifies itself more through character in action rather than through the initial moral proposition. Although the behaviour of the boys in the island does go a long way to proving Golding's initial stance on man as a fallen being, yet the dynamic core of the novel takes its shape from his insight into the vastly shifting complexities of life itself. Perhaps this is why there has to be a Christ figure in the book, reflective of the ameliorative dimension of the allegorical imagination.

Underlying the story is a deeply tragic reviewal of the character of man. Golding exploits the situation, allowing the boys as it were, to find themselves without the usual prop of a systematised thought, in surroundings that are mythic. The island as a microcosm of the ordered cosmos becomes a serious obstacle to the boys who find it difficult to sink their differences, to put on the mantle of social decorum. The conch then becomes a progressively fragile symbol of order under constant threat of being broken. Once broken, the principle of misrule represented by the "beast" is there to stay. Its terrifying gain in stature is brought back to perspective through a rescue initiated by equally

guilty adults. Thematically speaking, in the novel's end lies its beginning. There can be no rescue from misrule; nor is mankind redeemable.

The book "is allegoristic, rich in variant suggestions and best taken at the level of suggestive analysis";<sup>32</sup> an observation that keeps itself open to its profound network of images and symbols. The mode of narration leans heavily upon Golding's naturalistic description of the natural world, of the character of the boys and of the unfolding of events, which taken in totality becomes a symbolic analysis of the evil plaguing the character of man. "The fact is that Lord of the Flies is both "symbolic" and "naturalistic" ... Golding uses all available resources to move us, to make us vicariously experience what the boys on the island go through, in order to turn that experience into a terrible knowledge".<sup>33</sup>

Light and darkness become metaphoric representations of the inner landscape of the mind which orchestrates images taken from the island's immediate physical surroundings to convey a sense of reality vastly alienated from the normal. The natural backdrop of the island against which the story has been enacted is rich with symbolic suggestions. These gain the power of insight as they work together to orient the reader towards the underlying theme of evil. They are also responsible for extending the scope of the novel beyond the

topographical confines of the island to force upon the reader a recognition of the unregenerate values that are now co-existent with the conditions of life in the island-society. Thus the tangle of undergrowth, the smell of pig, the sudden darkness of the night, add up to the morbid sense of insecurity which drive the boys back to fear and regression. The allegorical mode of perception has been further strengthened by the consistency of its symbols and metaphors. It treads a fine path of imaginative realism where the boy characters may be immediately apprehended in both their original and in their representational roles. The hunt for a pig is an actual hunt; it is also a symbolic statement of human carnality. Simon is a physical weakling; he is also a social misfit, but in whose presence nature is ironically transfigured and changed. John Whitley comments upon the "true power" of the novel which lies in the

consistent presentation of boys on the most realistic level allied to a symbolic structure which increasingly invests their action with larger meanings involving that capacity for evil inherent in every human heart.<sup>34</sup>

Thus understood, Lord of the Flies cannot be faulted for any technical lapses in its use of the fable form, mainly because Golding has succeeded in writing about what he himself discovered, that "human beings do have a strand — or element, if you like — of real malignancy". As a "child" of

the "ambiguous"<sup>35</sup> twentieth century, Golding has brought the reader face to face with this shocking truth in a manner that dates back to the narrative technique of medieval and renaissance literature, but which has revamped its aims and its methods in order to educate a generation that lives under constant threat of self-annihilation.

It is important to note L.L. Dickson's observation that the "modern" allegorist is not "compelled to write" in the "rigid format" of allegory because he is "foremost an artist".<sup>36</sup> This is a view that has already shaped one's reading of The Aerodrome and of Cry, the Beloved Country. It would also shape one's reading of the next novel Invisible Man (1952), which makes creative use of Black Selfhood.

There has been a voluminous amount of work done on Invisible Man (1952), which points to it as a book that, not unlike the others already discussed, holds perennial interest to a wide section of readers who are always willing to be educated in the subtleties of the human heart. The book has merited the kind of criticism that comes in the wake of an artist's unrelenting display of moral courage in the face of innumerable tragic odds that force the individual to relegate his humanity to the controlling systems of power. "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?"<sup>37</sup> is a question that both challenges and haunts the reader after he has been initiated by the invisible protagonist into the

chaotic excesses of twentieth century history. The book is a forceful reminder of one's roots. Identity for the invisible protagonist becomes an achieved synonymy with one's inner conception of the self. In social terms, the identity becomes a negative one because of its non-conformity to the commonly upheld statutes of social values and of social behaviour. Ideally speaking, the protagonist becomes a freelancer in the metaphysics of being. He succeeds in the ultimate act of disconnection, from the objectives of a caste-ridden society. The overall movement of the protagonist and hence of the novel altogether, is from the unthinking verbalisms of a high-profile identity to the eloquent darkness of a truth-bound existence; from dependency upon outer phenomena to a discovery of inner strengths; from visibility to invisibility and from ignorance to knowledge. The process of growth has been depicted as being an inverse one of subjective movement inwards. The irony of it is, that as the protagonist plumbs the depths of his dark self he succeeds in resurrecting the universal dynamics of being which rests in all personal experiences, hence the primacy of his slave ancestry, and the blackness of his colour and environment. These provide the necessary springboard for taking up the challenge to find authenticity within himself. The invisible protagonist may be contrasted with the hero of eighteenth century fiction, Tom

Jones, whose identity concurs with society's expectations of him.

The cloak of invisibility that the protagonist wears has been partially thrust upon him by the wilful blindness of the Mr. Nortons, who are the pharisaical benefactors of Black Americans but who refuse to see them as they are. The state of invisibility is a metaphoric condition of the soul, a symbol of the selfhood that used to be traditionally defined in socially acceptable terms. Allegorically speaking, the book takes the reader through an inward journey, into the depthless dimensions of selfhood. Even as each episode takes the protagonist away from the easy familiarity of his workaday world, it foists upon him the immense responsibility of finding out just who he is; that too, in terms of all the rejections that have come his way. The allegorical pattern of the quest, is an important motif in the context of the Black American experience. The young, black protagonist finds credibility only in nonconformity. His face is turned inwards and against the world. He discovers all that needs to be discovered within the microcosmic entity of his unique self.

The story recapitulates the events of some twenty years back in time. It details every step that the young protagonist makes towards a visible definition of himself as an achiever, as an aspiring student and as a meritorious striver for excellence. Falsely equipped with the naivety of

youth, the invisible protagonist portrays himself as he used to be, an aspirant to the great ideals of the American Dream. From the very beginning, however, his personal diary of material pursuits has been undermined by the constant intonation, in his dreams and in his waking moments, of his dead grandfather's voice: 'Keep this Nigger Boy Running'. (p.32) At that time, as he tells us, he had no "insight" into its "meaning". But as his story progresses he is relentlessly pursued and kept running to fulfill objectives that are absurdly non-existent.

It may be said that Invisible Man reads like an inverted allegory, which observation, contradicts James D. Boulger's stance in his article entitled "Puritan Allegory in Four Modern Novels". He sees in Invisible Man the "Calvinist-Puritan Pattern" of "Election of an individual from without, by God; his pursuit of and trials in Vocation, leading to a firm sense of Vocation; the growth of sanctification ... and finally Glorification."<sup>38</sup> It could be said that, the outer form of the invisible protagonist's journeyings subscribe to this pattern. But, the evidently non-conformist trait in him allows no such conventional interpretation of his experiences. Nevertheless, the book's closeness to allegory is an important feature; one that must be understood in terms of the complexities that have shaped the identity of the invisible protagonist.

Addison Gayle Jr. in The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America describes the book thus:

This picturesque novel, therefore, depicts, through allegory, the history of the black man's trials and errors in America; dramatizes his running the gauntlet of American pretensions, suffering from the attempt by white Americans to define him, to construct roles for him, and to create images and symbols to which he must adhere. The modern-day Cain, thus, is a black man, rushing not so much from his sins as from those who offer him eternal facelessness and invisibility. To discover that the world for black men is one of immense possibilities, despite the power of the imagists, constitutes an awareness that moves allegory close to actuality.<sup>39</sup>

This observation conclusively adduces that the form of the novel is "lyrical and allegorical". In a traditional sense and in a truly allegorical manner the episodic structure of the novel does seem to impel the protagonist onwards to knowledge and to wisdom. One must, however, be aware that society within the novel, is no longer the integrative unit that it used to be. The potential hero is forced to divorce himself from society so that the reader is made witness to the "birth" of the "anti-hero".<sup>40</sup> He has no authentic role-model to fall back upon and must divest himself of the accepted rules of behaviour. He is a characteristic figure of the picaresque novel, "part rogue and part outlaw", transcending "all established norms of conduct" and violating all

ideas of social hierarchy. For with the breakdown of static social relations ... a bold confrontation with the new and untried became necessary. Hence the picaresque journey, no longer a religious quest or pilgrimage but a journey toward experience, adventure, personal freedom. It was the journey of the bourgeois soul toward possibility, toward a freedom possessed by neither serf nor lord under the old regime.<sup>41</sup>

This journey towards self-definition becomes a solitary quest for the certainties that are prohibited by society. The anti-hero becomes a veritable pioneer in the old field of human experience. He must record his struggles without the privileged sanction of society. Before he takes that initiatory step into chaos, towards an authentic definition of the self, he must be schooled in the well-worn rituals of social compromise. Thus the story begins where it does with a roomful of white men and a handful of black boys all poised to act out their parts to perfection. The snag lies in the insinuating dance of the naked white woman; a distinctively suggestive symbol of the lurking vulgarity and profanity within the larger world and predictably verified in the battle-royal.

The inversion of the allegorical mode lies in the character of the invisible protagonist who puts off the stereotypic garb of the black hero to don the iconoclastic habit of the secular pilgrim-warrior. His is a nerve-racking quest for an identity that must be acceptable to him, even

though it would cost him everything that he is, and all that he has; which it ultimately does. The journey is fraught with disillusionment and pain. One could superficially term it as an historical<sup>42</sup> allegory of Black survival in America. The sense of history is an important one for the protagonist. But the historical replay of events within the novel has been distilled through the discriminating consciousness of a young intellectual who is also black and who discovers for himself what it means to be "black and blue".(p.14) The mode of narration reflects the narrator's initial vacillations which later evolves into a steady affirmation of what he is. It is a convincing picture of the battered psyche of a class of people who were condemned to slavery but whose significant presence in American history, has been conveniently but unsuccessfully denied by the white majority. The point of view of the narrative is from the obverse side of the reality that has been dominated by the white enslaver. The invisible protagonist becomes the consummate artist, re-writing history and re-living his life according to the laws of an inner freedom that has been solely tested by him. Hence the plunge outside society, into what is understood to be non-being, becomes a subterranean journey towards a re-discovery of personal symbols and of personal forms of expression as they have been rooted in Black archetypal consciousness and as they have been obscured by the educated scribes of western

civilisation. One is aware that, the significance of a particular episode rests in the multiple layers of newly discovered meanings to be gathered from it. The invisible protagonist who is also the anti-hero of the modern novel, is geared for an epic<sup>43</sup> trial of intellectual strength. The imagination at work within the novel sees in the invisible protagonist the pain-filled but triumphant stirrings of a newly discovered humanity that seeks definition through subversive warfare with the establishment. The "invisible man" ultimately stands not for himself alone but for all the other questers who are also in search of authenticity. He is an existentialist,<sup>44</sup> living on the edge of faith, alone but never hopeless.

I say all this to assure you that it is incorrect to assume that, because I'm invisible and live in a hole, I am dead. I am neither dead nor in a state of suspended animation. Call me Jack-the-Bear, for I am in a state of hibernation.  
(p.9)

Thus, he charts out a very personal route to freedom and identity. The erstwhile roles that he has been forced to play are, retrospectively, stepping stones towards a consolidation of his own personal powers. These are the powers that have remained hidden from the eyes of society. The protagonist shoulders a responsibility which, allegorically considered, has both personal and extra-personal implications. He crucifies his old self as it were, on the cross of

meaningless ritual in order that he may discover a variety of meaningful depths within himself, merely waiting for release and for expression. Hence his emulation of Brer Rabbit's<sup>45</sup> multi-faceted talent for cunning and deceit. These are important tools of survival in a world writ large with lethal stereotypes.

Chapter one is an initiation into the commonly accepted pattern of social ritual, especially the "Battle Royal Passage" which is "a vital part of behaviour pattern in the South, which both Negroes and Whites thoughtlessly accept". In Shadow and Act, Ellison explains how he has dramatised episodes from personal experience in order to present them in all their complex nuances.

When I began writing in earnest I was forced, thus, to relate myself consciously and imaginatively to my mixed background as American, as Negro American, and as a Negro ...<sup>46</sup>

which consciously leads him to describe "that fragment of the huge diverse American experience which I knew best, and which offers me the possibility of contributing not only to the growth of the literature but to the shaping of the culture as I should like it to be". Surface reality within the novel is an episodic construction of the invisible protagonist's encounters with the American reality. It is a reality that uniquely covers the experiences of the American Negro who is a "most intimate part of American history". The aspect of

race is an important feature, to the extent that it fictionalises the life of a protagonist who shares a similar background of experiences with the author, and, whose identity has been shaped by the same cultural, psychological and sociological influences. These are deeply imbedded in a past that has to be meaningfully deciphered in a "broader context of meaning".

All novels are about certain minorities: the individual is a minority. The universal in the novel — and isn't that what we're all clamouring for these days? — is reached only through the depiction of the specific man in a specific circumstance.<sup>47</sup>

He writes a story which deals with an individual who is clearly ill-equipped for abject survival in a power crazed society. The conditions governing his life as a young black student are shown to be favourably disposed towards the regimented development of all his faculties. Dr. Bledsoe is a forbidding figure of black achievement, chairing an institution that, to the youthful protagonist, appears to be an oasis of educational progress. Even before his induction into college life, however, the "invisible man" stands out differently from the rest. He sees his resemblance to his own grandfather;

... a quiet old man who never made any trouble, yet on his deathbed he had called himself a traitor and a spy, and he had spoken of his meekness as a dangerous activity. It became a constant

puzzle which lay unanswered at the back  
of my mind. (p.18)

so that his thoughts are always undermining the actions that  
are "praised by the most lily white men of the town". (p.18)  
He can never quite accept the plaudits bestowed upon him:

On my graduation day I delivered an  
oration in which I showed that humility  
was the secret, indeed, the very essence  
of progress. (Not that I believed this —  
how could I, remembering my grandfather?  
— I only believed that it worked). It  
was a great success. (p.18)

Early in the story the "invisible man" recognises a  
flaw within himself, which is the peculiar aptitude that he  
has for sighting that which lies beyond his physical  
horizons, but which as of now, he has no control nor any  
understanding of. The early narrative reflects upon his naive  
optimism; the descriptions of the college are almost one-  
dimensional. However, it is when he veers from the  
standardised thinking of black academia that the story of his  
life takes on an added dimension of significance. His  
grandfather's ringing laughter and his intonation, "Keep this  
Nigger Boy Running" at the end of Chapter One, are symbolic  
of the "invisible man's" inability to obliterate a past which  
he sees as being a buried extension of himself. This is a  
frame of mind that is in keeping with the attitude of puzzled  
wonder as he stands in front of the bronze statue of the  
College Founder, who is in the position of lifting a veil  
that flutters above the face of a kneeling slave:

... unable to decide whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly in place; whether I am witnessing a revelation or a more efficient blinding. And as I gaze, there is a rustle of wings ... and when I look again ... the bronze face ... runs with liquid chalk — creating ambiguity to puzzle my groping mind: why is a bird-soiled statue more commanding than one that is clean?  
(p.34)

One of the characteristic stamps of the invisible protagonist is an inborn ability to laugh at a given situation in outright defiance of decades of negating realities. This has its justification in the blues<sup>48</sup> tradition which is an underlying theme in the invisible protagonist's quest for identity, and which proves to be an enduring philosophy of survival for the Black American. Meanwhile, the questions that he asks of himself are at first, naive and innocuous. But they pile up complexly in his consciousness, and divert his mind away from the assumed ideals of education and upliftment. The "invisible man" is unable to wear the figurative blinkers that will blot out a full sight of his surroundings. When he is selected to drive Mr. Norton around, he symbolically moves beyond the intellectual confines of the college. The inevitable happens: he plunges Norton directly into a vortex of confusion, which is the principle underlying American history. Unwittingly, he takes Norton to visit the incestuous Trueblood and then takes him to the Golden Day which is a tavern frequented by war veterans. In the Golden

Day Norton is mobbed by its irreputable clients and is forced to listen to the voice of truth:

'... To some you are the great white father, to others the lyncher of souls, but for all, you are confusion come even into the Golden Day'. (p.80)

Ironically enough, it is only Mr. Norton's complacency that has been severely shaken. He returns to life unaffected. This is borne out by the absurd encounter between Norton and the now, invisible protagonist, at the end of the novel: "Youngman, I'm in a hurry", he said, cupping a hand to his ear. 'Why should I know you?'" (p.466)

Tragically, however, the invisible protagonist, is expelled from college. This is the first in a series of episodes that will ultimately take away the recognisable identity of the "invisible man". One must keep in mind, the evident maturity of the narrator who is actually retelling his past. He impersonates himself by way of initiating the reader in the assumptions of history which falsifies the facts of actual life by focussing only on the accomplished virtues of the black race. These are the uplifting virtues of "Hope", of "Faith", of "Endurance" and of "Triumph", (p.106) that the blind Reverend Homer A. Barbee extols in his sermon at the college, and in his reminiscences of the College Founder. The "sightless eyes" (p.113) of Homer A. Barbee are symbolic of the malaise that afflicts society. The essay

"Sight Imagery in Invisible Man"<sup>49</sup> discusses the characters' inability to see beyond the circle of their own selves. This characteristic state of purblindness, which may also be depicted as a physical condition as seen in Homer A. Barbee, is, in terms of the novel, conducive to the development and fulfilment of the career of a Dr. Bledsoe, whose climb to power exacts from him, all the humanity that he possesses. Bledsoe is a successful monument to the American Dream of "social responsibility" without its accompanying virtue of social "equality", a term which has been vehemently banned from the vocabulary of the young protagonist:

'Say that slowly son!'

...

'You weren't being smart, were you, boy?'  
he said, not unkindly.

'No, sir!'

'You sure that about "equality" was a mistake?'

'Oh yes, sir', I said. 'I was swallowing blood'.

'Well you had better speak more slowly so we can understand. We mean to do right by you, but you've got to know your place at all times. ... (p.30)

This was a dream that was also permissible to the invisible protagonist, but only at the cost of his self-respect. Notwithstanding the cost, he is seen to be willing to fulfill its terms. However, it begins its process of souring very early in his career. Even then, as he tells us, he persists upon upholding his faith in the justness of these ideals.

How had I come to this? I had kept unsweringly to the path placed before me, ... And now to drive me wild I felt suddenly that my grandfather was hovering over me, grinning triumphantly out of the dark. ... I had to make my peace. It was either that or admit that my grandfather had made sense. ... somehow, I convinced myself, I had violated the code and thus would have to submit to punishment. ... (p.123)

Arbitrarily dropped and betrayed by the black educator, he is still innocent enough to set great store by the letters of introduction that he carries with him. He arrives in New York alone, yet uninitiated in the politics of survival. It is important to note that, the "ritual with which the book begins is constantly reenacted in the novel, always at new levels of awareness, as the narrator emerges from this innocence which trusts its own tormentors, and moves, in comic fashion, from ritual toward reality, from illusion to disillusion".<sup>50</sup> This is an observation that concurs with another, which states that, a "profitable method of dealing with Invisible Man is to see the action as a series of initiations in which the hero passes through several stages and groups of identification."<sup>51</sup>

The secondary phase of the protagonist's movement into the "unknown" (p.129) is backed by an initial sense of purpose and direction. Chapter Nine proves to be an eye-opener for the protagonist as well as for the reader, a veritable watershed in his solitary pursuit of employment. It

opens with an auditory sense of the "blues" which takes him "far back to things" he "had long ago shut out of" his "mind". (p.141) It could be said to be a choric foreshadowing of a future that, from now onwards can no longer be anchored to his hopes of returning to college. As he walks towards his future besides Peter Wheatstraw, the blues singer, the "Devil's only son-in-law" (p.144) he finds that his rapport with him is surprisingly complete:

I tried to think of some saying about bears to reply, but remembered only Jack the Rabbit, Jack the Bear ... who were both long forgotten and now brought a wave of homesickness. I wanted to leave him, and yet I found a certain comfort in walking beside him, as though we'd walked this way before through other mornings, in other places ... (p.143)

Dawning within is a consciousness of the larger world around him, manifested to him in the figure of Peter Wheatstraw, a splicing Black American who is "a piano player and a rounder, a whisky drinker and a pavement pounder" (p.114) someone who is visibly equipped to stand up to the pressures of reality around him; and aiding the invisible protagonist's re-initiation into the resilient ways of Black America. When the bombshell is dropped, and the betrayal revealed in Bledsoe's letter in Emerson's office, he is able to gather his wits about him. Caught unawares as before, the invisible protagonist, however, surfaces with an objectivity that has been influenced by the figure of a Peter Wheatstraw, classic

survivor and humble exponent of the blues as a way of life. In a similar manner, he finds himself caught in a tune clearly audible to him, which reflects upon his own predicament:

O well they picked poor Robin clean  
O well they picked poor Robin clean  
Well they tied poor robin to a stump  
Lawd, they picked all the feathers round  
from Robin's rump  
Well they picked poor Robin clean.  
(p.158)

This reveals an ability in him to review the situation for what it is. In Shadow and Act Ellison explains the blues as being able to

... speak to us simultaneously of the tragic and the comic aspects of the human condition and they express a profound sense of life shared by many Negro Americans precisely because their lives have combined these models. This has been the heritage of a people who for hundreds of years could not celebrate birth or dignify death and whose need to live despite the dehumanizing pressure of slavery developed an endless capacity for laughing at their painful experiences.<sup>52</sup>

In New York, the invisible protagonist finds himself open to diverse influences. In the spirit of the blues, constantly audible to him, he encounters mythic aspects of the unrevealed self. This enables him to achieve a distancing of the self from the emotional predicament suffered, thereby allowing him to conquer the most primal emotions of fear and despair. Anger in this particular episode, becomes an

important tool for the protagonist who has yet to learn mastery over his emotions:

... They'd sent me to the rookery, all right. I laughed and felt numb and weak, knowing that soon the pain would come and that no matter what happened to me I'd never be the same... I decided that I would go back and kill Bledsoe. (p.159)

The end of the chapter signifies the end of another episode. There is a definite change in the attitude of the invisible protagonist. "But no, they wouldn't catch me again. This time I had made the move." (p.159) He maps out a strategy of deliberate warfare with "them" and demarcates a special area for himself, dark and unknown to anyone but to himself. The earlier "campaign" (p.134) was to solicit help from Bledsoe's friends. Now, the invisible protagonist functions independent of any one outside himself.

As he moves forward in ritual fulfilment of the outer, social self, there is a corresponding movement deeper and inwards into himself. The inner realms of the self become shaded in darkness, decipherable to no one else but to himself. His stint at Liberty Paints becomes an open conflict with those in control. If there is anything to be gained from his experience at the plant it is to understand the meaningless workings of the gigantic wheel of the American corporate machine in which the individual counts, merely as an unidentified cog in that wheel. His unbidden entry at a union meeting within the plant decidedly puts him out of

favour with his manager, Lucius Brockway. It initiates him further into the absurd hierarchy of the American corporate machine which uses a questionable system of labour to build itself up.

.... the wise guys firing the regular guys and putting on you coloured college boys. ... that way they don't have to pay union wages. (p.161)

The union meeting presages the Brotherhood, to be encountered later, layer by deceptive layer. The episode ends with an ironically tragic sense of the protagonist's shortcomings. He has had to resort to an absurd fight with a superannuated manager who suffers broken dentures. The protagonist, however, is betrayed and sabotaged once again. This time it is his black manager who inflicts extensive injuries upon him. As an employee of the plant, he is unwilling to give up his position, that of serving his white master in the cavernous depths of the factory.

The invisible protagonist undergoes a symbolic death at the end of the episode. Each encounter with phenomenal reality, results in a partial eclipsing of his real self. In the same manner with which he begins his career, he blotches up the paint mixing process in the factory. Allegorically, he is unable to give up his real identity; that is, not to lose it in the melting pot of the American mainstream, not to make it appear figuratively white and clean. This in essence is an

allegory of Black survival re-enacted in all its proper forms in the life of a black protagonist who, however, shies away from what is usual and uncontradictory.

Chapter Eleven finds the invisible protagonist devoid of a known identity. "I realized that I no longer knew my own name". (p.195) After being mauled by shock treatments and manhandled by the supposed doctors of the factory hospital, he is pronounced cured. Meanwhile, the angle from which the invisible protagonist observes his doctors is a significant one:

... Faces hovered above me like inscrutable fish peering myopically through a glass aquarium wall. ... A terrible sense of loneliness came over me; they seemed to enact a mysterious pantomime. And seeing them from this angle was disturbing. They appeared utterly stupid and I didn't like it. It wasn't right. I could see smut in one doctor's nose; a nurse had two flabby chins. Other faces came up, their mouths working with soundless fury. But we are all human, I thought, wondering what I meant. (p.195)

This is the underside perspective of reality which taunts the invisible protagonist and which isolates him from the others who cannot see as well as he does. The events at the factory hospital act as a distorting mirror to the injured protagonist giving him an uncanny perspective into the meaningless ritual of reviving him. The bizarre questions that are directed at him and which are aimed at bringing him back to normalcy, instead, create the right subterfuge for

him to hide behind. Thus the questions concerning his name, his identity, his mother's identity come up blankly to him. But when he is asked, "'Who was Buckeye the Rabbit?'", there is a deep, involuntary response to it: "... I could not bring myself to admit it, it was too ridiculous — and somehow too dangerous. It was annoying that he had hit upon an old identity ...", (p.197) which must remain unacknowledged in the presence of his literal-minded questioners. Sociologically, Brer Rabbit is a classic survivor and a master of disguises. Mention of him creates "turmoil" (p.197) within the invisible protagonist. His identification with him rouses him to a consciousness of who he is; not in terms creditable to his prosecutors, but in terms that bring up his personal anguish and allow him personal revelations into the nature of his own position at the present moment, within the antiseptic boundaries of the factory hospital.

The entire experience has, in effect, been a deeply soul searching exercise for the invisible protagonist to whom identity has been given and taken away by the capricious will of others. This proves to be the crux of his journey. After his release, there is an inspired sense of freedom:

It was as though I were acting out a scene from some crazy movie. Or perhaps I was catching up with myself and had put into words feelings which I had hitherto suppressed. Or was it, I thought, starting up the walk, that I was no

longer afraid? ... I was no longer  
afraid. (p.203)

He is no longer driven to carve a niche for himself in society. He has had his lessons in futility and there is from now onwards, a sense of wanting to be wooed for what he is. As false as this may also prove to be, it points, however, to the invisible protagonist's developing sense of confidence in his own faculties, which has arisen from the bizarre experience out of which he has emerged with his integrity intact. He has been able to keep his identity unrevealed. As he finds identification with Buckeye the Rabbit, a typical sense of the last laugh being his begins to lighten his "turmoil". Jonathan Baumbach describes these shock treatments as being "intended to neutralize him, in effect to castrate him" leaving him "without the potency of self".<sup>53</sup> Out of it, though the "invisible man" emerges with a sense of being emasculated, as has been true of the Black American, yet his discovery of Buckeye the Rabbit, opens up possibilities of selfhood unknown to and unidentified by White America. "In truth ... the Invisible Man does not lose his identity; he falls back upon it in wonderment".<sup>54</sup>

The episode bespeaks of life for the invisible protagonist only as he is willing to take it. Although there is only meaningless chaos beyond the present and although he has no visible yardstick by which to measure the rightness of his direction, being completely alone, the "invisible man"

continues onwards with a destined sense of self. He sojourns with Mary in a "small but comfortable room until the ice came". It is a period of hibernation, one from which he will have to emerge from, but he will have to pay attention to the underground voices clamouring for attention. It prepares him for the second hibernation at the end which will take him deeper into himself, and further away from the superficial realities of a ritual bound existence. In the prologue he tells the reader to call him "Jack the-Bear", for he is in "a state of hibernation". (p.9) It is a temporary phase out of which he will emerge completely free and without illusion. Meanwhile as he says:

I had no doubt that I could do something, but what, and how? I had no contacts and I believed in nothing. And the obsession with my identity which I had developed in the factory hospital returned with a vengeance. Who was I, how had I come to be? Certainly I couldn't help being different from when I left the campus; but now a new, painful contradictory voice had grown up within me ... one moment I believed, I was dedicated, willing to be on the blazing coals, do anything to attain a position on the campus — then snap! It was done with, finished, through. ... If only all the contradictory voices shouting inside my head would calm down ... But there was no relief ... I became afraid of what I might do. ... (p.210-211)

In a truly allegorical manner, begins another phase of life which will bring the "invisible man" to a better understanding of the values that society sets great store by.

The yam eating is an initiation into an "exhilarating" world of possibility and freedom. "I walked along, munching the yam, just as suddenly overcome by an intense feeling of freedom ... I no longer had to worry about who saw me or about what was proper." (p.214)

There is a climaxing sense of events in the last episodes which begins with the "invisible man's" speech on "dispossession" (p.226) and which veils a hidden call for defiance. There is also a distinctive change in the style of the narrative, from the flatly descriptive in the early episodes, to the symbolic and the dualistic in the later episodes; as if to mark the transformations taking place within the "invisible man". Ellison explains the change in his own words:

In the south, where he was trying to fit into a traditional pattern and where his sense of certainty had not yet been challenged, I felt a more naturalistic treatment was adequate ... As the hero passes from the south to the North, ... the style becomes expressionistic. Later on ... it becomes somewhat surrealistic.<sup>55</sup>

When the "invisible man" sees the evicted couple, he sees in a vision, his own mother, "*And why did I standing in the crowd, see like a vision my mother ... why were they causing me discomfort so far beyond their intrinsic meaning as objects?*" (p.221) the consequence of which becomes a figurative blurring of past and present so that the organised

protest raised by him becomes a symbolic act of defiance against the historically sanctioned methods of the organised dehumanization of others.

The Brotherhood spots him out as a potential source of oratorical talent to be tapped for its own uses. It proceeds to equip him for its programmed use of him which must flatly deny selfhood to him. For the "invisible man", this is another entry into a new identity bestowed upon him by others. In actual fact, we find that he is seduced into entering a world of apparent intellectual freedom. The Brotherhood is an organisation that seemingly works against the stipulated norms of society; a society which has always worked against the best of his interests. His identification with Brotherhood policies is, at first, sincere because he has yet to learn to recognise the intricate workings within the Brotherhood, of double thinking and double talking. He is still guided by a prejudicial attitude towards society. Any attempt to sabotage it, would seem to him to be an act of positive commitment. Wedded to this naive speculation is the protagonists' awakening sense of personal history and personal destiny. There is also an over powering sense of freedom and power which recklessly impels him onwards.

The Brotherhood was a world within a world and I was determined to discover all its secrets and to advance as far as I could. I saw no limits, it was the one organization in the whole country in

which I could reach the very top and I meant to get there. Even if it meant climbing a mountain of words. (p.307)

Before long, however, he is stopped by a Brother and stripped of his Harlem identity. Meanwhile, as the invisible protagonist climbs the crest of power he begins to identify himself strongly with his black audience. "For now I realized that I meant everything that I had said to the audience, even though I hadn't known that I was going to say these things". (p.285) This proves to be a deterring factor for the Brotherhood. It has not reckoned on the protagonist's climb to personal power, "My name spread like smoke in an airless room", (p.307) and on his "unscientific" use of word and emotion. In the context of his journey to selfhood, the "invisible man" once again proves himself unfit to become an insignificant "cog". Even as a successful Brother, he is consciously aware of two selves:

... On the way to work one late spring morning I counted fifty greetings from people I didn't know, becoming aware that there were two of me: the old self that slept a few hours a night and dreamed sometimes of my grandfather and Bledsoe and Brockway and Mary, the self that flew without wings and plunged from great heights; and the new public self that spoke for the Brotherhood and was becoming so much more important than the other that I seemed to run a foot race against myself. (p.307)

In Chapter Eighteen he receives an anonymous letter. Thematically, the letter is an ironic repetition of an early

motif, "Keep this Nigger Boy Running". On the same morning, Brother Tarp presents him with a piece of leg chain that he had been dragging for nineteen years, "like a man passing on to this son his own father's watch, which the son accepted not because he wanted the old-fashioned time piece for itself, but because of the overtones of unstated seriousness and solemnity of the paternal gesture which at once joined him with his ancestors, ... and promised a concreteness to his nebulous and chaotic future". (p.314) It is a symbolic reminder of a past, "I feel that I can see sharp and clear and far down the dim corridor of history and in it I can hear the footsteps of militant fraternity", (p.279) that is loaded with meaning. Whichever way he turns, the "invisible man" is confronted with the certitudes of past enslavement and present entanglement. For the present, however, the Brotherhood has ensnared him too deeply. It has given him too vital a sense of self for him to be able to see through its cunning ability to actually programme him for action.

Another betrayal follows, after which there is the metaphoric calm before the storm of Tod Clifton's disappearance from the Brotherhood fraternity. The "invisible man" is recalled from banishment in order to seek out Clifton's whereabouts. He discovers not only a transformed Clifton trading Sambo dolls, but also an

"unexpected" aspect of a reality frighteningly unyielding and unknowing to him:

It was as though he had chosen — how had he put it the night he fought with Ras? — to fall outside of history. ... 'To plunge', he had said. But he knew that only in the Brotherhood could we make ourselves known, could we avoid being empty Sambo dolls. ... I'd ... hold on desperately to Brotherhood. For to break away would be to plunge ... To plunge!".  
(p.350)

Clifton's withdrawal from the Brotherhood is a symbolic gesture of defiance. He spies a song as he puppeteers a Sambo doll symbolically selling off his humanity to a white audience eager to be entertained. To the invisible protagonist whose Brotherhood identity is a vital source of sustenance, Clifton's death at the hands of a white policeman is a shattering erasure of one's identity, purposely and callously executed. This is the reason why he organises the funeral march and eulogizes the fallen humanity of a dead victim, who is also black. He is faulted by the Brotherhood for having organised it on his "personal responsibility".  
(p.372) The Brotherhood sees it as an ominous sign portending rebellion against it by his sincere act of humanity. The subsequent events almost repeat his initial expulsion from college. The difference lies in the degree of self-consciousness and self-determination attained by the "invisible man". It controls his insight into inner realities and outer forms. It foreshadows the dualistic sense of life

deeply entrenched in his vision of reality in the Prologue and in the Epilogue.

Hence his flight away from the Brotherhood, though a direct consequence of trying to escape Ras's men, is a natural fall-out of the confrontation with the one-eyed Brother Jack, who represents the spirit of the Brotherhood. The conflict is one of principles. The invisible protagonist has reached a determining point in his career where the two strands of reality the inner one, that of his grandfather, and the outer one, that of his present position, must either seek a compromise which they cannot, or, one reality take precedence over the other, thus permanently shaping his destiny. His last phase in the Brotherhood is fraught with the contradictions of the newly discovered possibilities of deception, creatively founded on a variety of old and newly emerging selves that defy consistency:

Well, I was and yet I was invisible, that was the fundamental contradiction. I was and yet I was unseen. It was frightening and as I sat there I sense another frightening world of possibilities. For now I saw that I could agree with Jack without agreeing. And I could tell Harlem to have hope when there was no hope. ...  
(p.408)

His discovery of the Rinehart identity of "Rine the runner and Rine the gambler and Rine the briber and Rine the lover and Rinehart the Reverend" (p.400) lies at the heart of this contradiction. It is a discovery of both "rind" and "heart"

(p.400) of the possibility of adopting convenient identities to suit oneself; of the possibility of inner freedom and outer compliance; of the possibility of a life being measured not in terms of a linear movement upwards but also of the movement downwards,

... Not only could you travel upwards towards success but you could travel downwards as well; up and down, in retreat as well as in advance, crabways and crossways and around in a circle, meeting your old selves coming and going and perhaps all at the same time ... (p.410)

He initiates through his discoveries a new phase of existence which masks an inner self no longer constricted by society's expectations of him; "I started yessing them the next day and it began beautifully". (p.413)

The "invisible man's" identity in the Brotherhood has to be supportive of its weaponry of programmed assault upon reality. This lies in its ability to distort the truth with its rhetoric. His underground voices force him to a recognition of the chaos and the absurdity that is the principle of life for the Black American, in the larger context of his American identity. The "invisible man" has always tried to accommodate himself between the two poles of existence, by defying his grandfather, and attempting to live by the rules of a pre-determined selfhood in a society pre-ordained by its white legislators. His pursuit of the

acceptable goals of social "responsibility" brings him opposite the "Jacks and the Emersons and the Bledsoes and Nortons" who are of a distinctly American lineage. It is only when absurdity knocks on his doorstep as it were, in the form of the mercurial Rinehart and the rioting Ras, that he is brought face to face with the contradictions that have always pursued him, the significance of which had always escaped him. However,

I looked at Ras on his horse and at their handful of guns and recognized the absurdity of the whole night and of the simple yet confoundingly complex arrangement of hope and desire, fear and hate, that had brought me here still running, and knowing now who I was and where I was and knowing too that I had no longer to run for or from the Jacks and the Emersons and the Bledsoes and Nortons, but only from their confusion, impatience, and refusal to recognize the beautiful absurdity of their American identity and mine . . . although to a great extent I could have done nothing else, given their blindness (didn't they tolerate both Rinehart and Bledsoe?) and my invisibility. . . . And I knew that it was better to live out one's absurdity than to die for that of others, whether for Ras's or Jack's. (p.449-450)

Revelations concerning his true identity come rapidly and incoherently to him, to be sorted out later in the contemplative privacy of his invisibility. When Harlem riots, the "invisible man" is once again called upon, as an indispensable organ of the Brotherhood, to exercise control and order over the situation; to stem the tide of militant

black nationalism in the form of Ras the Exhorter. This is another side of reality which consists of Ras the Exhorter and of Rinehart the con-man; whose identities have been shaped by their intimate ties with American history, and who play havoc with the values that pertain to the order imparted by white America. The invisible protagonist has already sampled the expediency of white supremacy which thrives upon a consistent violation of the Black American identity. He has also seen the fawning of the black American upon the white American in what used to be his own college. As he moves North to New York, his experiences reflect upon the multifarious dimensions of the American reality, bounded on all fronts by the sightlessness of wilful ignorance. This is the metaphoric darkness which circumscribes the American reality. It remains impenetrable to the near-sighted, most of whom are the black and white participants, who play the game of freedom with pretentious knowledge and skill. Ras the Exhorter, stands on one extreme of this reality, stridently insisting upon a black identity that disbands the American past. On the other extreme, stands Rinehart, who proves to be the more successful of the two because of his ability to abet in the hypocrisy and blindness around him. He becomes what "they" want him to be, lover and reverend, gambler and runner, displaying a facile ability to gamble with life. He adapts himself according to the blind expectation of others

and of their acceptance of him as he wishes to be seen. No one is able to see him for what he is: an unprincipled deceiver. However, the invisible protagonist understands that, however much he might be impressed by the Rinehart identity as a useful decoy to be used later on, he is unwilling to become a self-deceiving Rinehart. "... she dozed off and I decided again to end the farce. Such games were for Rinehart, not me" . (p.421) These are crucial moments of turbulent introspection. They come at a gap in his life when all his past identities have been reduced to rubble and the future holds but a bleak prospect of having to tow the party line. Confronted by Ras then, he literally lets "fly" the "spear" of self-defence. He has valued his life and found it worth fighting for, even in absurdity and in invisibility. He must preserve himself against all odds. He makes his last flight away from the unreasoning confusion of a ritual-bound society. He attempts to run to "Mary's" but finds himself pursued as always, and is ultimately pushed down the pitch darkness of an open manhole.

This is the final phase of his passage through a turbulent life. Ironically enough, the coal cellar provides the climatic point of self-related discoveries. In a graph that depicts a receding trend inwards and downwards, the coal cellar becomes the ultimate region and the ultimate descent whereby to establish whether his crisis of identity

is able to withstand the onslaught of painful revelations concerning a misbegotten past and a future doomed to falsehood. The trial begins in darkness, with the torching up of his high school diploma, followed by the sambo doll that refuses to burn properly and the anonymous letter, whose handwriting, the invisible protagonist suddenly discovers to be Jack's. This is a grievous blow to him, one from which he must recover. He does recover, but only after an inexplicably strange experience, almost mystical, which takes him to the edge of time and history.

... How long this kept up, I do not know. It might have been days, weeks; I lost all sense of time. And every time I paused to rest, the outrage revived and I went off again. ... It was a state neither of dreaming, nor of waking, but somewhere in between ... (p.458)

Out of it he emerges free of illusion after having chosen freedom by refusing to return to those who had "run" him. *"I'm through with all your illusions and lies, I'm through running"*. (p.458) In his reverie he is forcibly castrated, the price that he must symbolically pay for freedom. He sees in a vision the overt significance of the rites of castration being performed upon him, which implicates his castrators in an historically allegorical act of forced violence. The vision takes him to a prophetic realm of moral insight, one attributable to Ellison himself, whose view of reality is

compounded by an inner sense of America being a "nation of ethical schizophrenics".<sup>56</sup>

... though as passionate believers in democracy Negroes identify themselves with the broader American ideals, their sense of reality springs, in part, from an American experience which most white men not only have not had, but one with which they are reluctant to identify themselves even when presented in forms of the imagination.<sup>57</sup>

He awakes in "blackness" to an acceptance of his lot, knowing that he is "whole". He decides to stay on in the darkness of invisible selfhood, chock full of freedom and of other discoverable realities. Even though Edward Margolies says that the invisible protagonist, "... simply has no where to go once he tells us he is invisible"<sup>58</sup>, we find, however, that the Epilogue and the Prologue justifies the invisible protagonist's choice of a hibernating hole. He must bide his time to understand himself fully, to understand the forces that have shaped him and which will continue to shape him yet. Under the circumstances, he exercises the one valued faculty that has sustained him throughout, which is the ability to choose the roles that he must adopt. He chooses to stay where he is, as he is and as an American fully bound for freedom. He is thus in a position of being both relaxed and alert, of being able to assimilate both pain and laughter at the same time:

By the end of the novel the Invisible Man is speaking an idiom infused by the blues. Comforted, inspired, warned, and instructed, he learns to cherish the tradition out of which they were created. By the time he sits down to write his memoir, he has gained something of the ironical perspective of the blues. He has learned, too, from the blues of the wisdom of his forefathers, the humour, bitterness, love, disappointment, and the will to endure.<sup>59</sup>

These are the meaningful depths into which he has been fully initiated. The story of his life must then, transcend the purely "ideological". It is explainable in terms of Ellison's attempt to put into his writing the "aesthetic" goals of a serious writer of fiction, and the "belief that the work of art is important in itself."<sup>60</sup> The language of the Prologue and the Epilogue reverberates with a sense of self, at once personal and universal. Ellison sees the Epilogue as being the "most final reversal of all" making it, "therefore" a "necessary statement".<sup>61</sup> It is, a culmination of the invisible protagonist's existential bid for freedom and knowledge. Though he speaks from the symbolic depths of his Black Americanness, he shows himself grappling with the universally identified problem of who he is. He arrives at a knowledge of himself by a process of denial first and affirmation later; by a defensiveness over his slave ancestry first, and an offensiveness against the dubious ways of society later. As he learns about life, he begins to follow the ways of his black ancestors by an intelligent usage of

his past and of black forms of survival. Thus the element of the folklore speaks of an embattled attempt to be heard above the discordancy of lies, histrionically repeating themselves, to furnish the American individual with a false sense of history. Ellison's imaginative manipulation of factual reality becomes allegorical and symbolical by virtue of his ability to mythicize and to universalise the Black experience in America.

... Ellison blurs the scenery to prevent the reader from absorbing the novel either in simple realistic or symbolic terms. ...

For primarily Invisible Man is a study in the psychology of oppression. It is the story of an internal quest - a journey of the soul. The migration is from innocence to experience, not just from sunny south to ghetto and the underground. Ellison develops this story along mythic lines, incorporating elements of common cultural experience in the parable to generalize it further, and the protagonist's progress is finally a pilgrimage of the self. ...

... the novel is in fact, a fragment of an epic in form.<sup>62</sup>

By the time he begins writing his "memoir", he has been schooled in the deceptive ways of the world. The Prologue is a deliberate "foreshadowing" of the "underground" memoir to follow it. The stylistic changes attributed to the Prologue, the Epilogue and to the main body of his memoir, "try to express both his state of consciousness and the state of society".<sup>63</sup> One could see the changes as being stylistic

gradations of a maturing consciousness as it records changes in perspective, with respect to society and to itself. The "invisible man" is constantly seeking to retrieve himself from the blindness of a self-imposed ignorance. It is a sensitive portrayal of feelings that run deep and dark, remaining invisible and unknown to others. Unacknowledged and invisible as he is, the "invisible man" will have his say, "But I am an orator, a rabble rouser — Am ? I was, and perhaps shall be again. Who knows! All sickness is not unto death, neither is invisibility". (pp.15-16) He makes one of the most honest revelations concerning the ambivalence surrounding the American Negro. He communicates through symbol and metaphor which anticipates of the narrative style in the book. He lapses into the vernacular as he dramatises a past enslaved to a white master who is both promiscuous and unscrupulous. There are multiple layers of meaning and significance attached to this vision that he has of his own past. In the right circumstances it reveals its meaning to him in the Prologue, through Louis Armstrong's music filtering itself through a "reefer" intoxicated consciousness. He descends into the subterranean depths of the music "hearing not only in time but in space as well", (p.11) voices from his past which facilitates insight into the figure of a woman bound by love and by hatred to a white master whom she murders out of frustration and love. He

figures in it as a semi-detached observer, a contemporary questor, who, when he poses the question of freedom to her, is unable to receive a definite answer, but is held in a stone-like grip by one of her sons. He is pursued; and as he comes out of it he realises that he "was afraid":

At first I was afraid; this familiar music had demanded action, the kind of which, I was incapable, and yet had I lingered there beneath the surface I might have attempted to act. ... I had discovered unrecognized compulsions of my being — even though I could not answer 'yes' to their promptings. I haven't smoked a reefer since, ... because to see around corners is enough .... But to hear them is too much; it inhibits action.  
(p.15)

He does not permit himself such experiences again, one being enough for him to enable him to see into a past that is irreparably wounded and shamed beyond all limits. He is poised now, readying himself for action. The hibernation is another stage in the process of becoming, a necessary phase of complete invisibility. Meanwhile, he accepts all the insults that are hurled at him. He accepts irresponsibility, because, "Irresponsibility is part of my invisibility; any way you face it, it is a denial. But to whom can I be responsible, and why should I be, when you refuse to see me?"  
(p.16) This is a question that is not easily answered in the light of the injustices that have been directed against him which deprives him of the right to be seen.

At the heart of these revelatory insights in the Prologue and in the Epilogue is the "invisible man's" haunting need to be seen. Until then, he will continue to live in as much the same way as society has decreed his life for him. But the hidden frontiers of his identity will be rooted in what he tells us in the Epilogue, in the contradictory ability to experience conflicting emotions at the same time. This will be the principle of integration for him:

... so it is that now I denounce and defend, or feel prepared to defend. I condemn and affirm, say no and say yes, say yes and say no. ... I have been hurt to the point of abysmal pain, hurt to the point of invisibility. And I defend because in spite of all I find that I love. In order to get some of it down I have to love. ... too much of your life will be lost, its meaning lost, unless you approach it as much through love as through hate. So I approach it through division. So I denounce and I defend and I hate and I love. (p.467)

Unless he is recognised for what he is, invisibility will be his sole weapon against a forcible negation of his identity. This is the invisibility achieved at the price of pain, and at the deeper price of love. It consists of an ability to function creatively and positively, desiring to restructure future reality by "confronting, often for the hundredth time, that same pain and that same pleasure", a way of "seeing that it be not in vain."<sup>64</sup> Unlike Tod Clifton who chose to plunge outside history, the "invisible man" faces

the annihilative forces of history alone bent upon the constant renewal of a self so unique that he must record each discovery that he makes. These discoveries sometimes come hidden or veiled in entanglement. They leave him less ignorant and less blind each time, until he is enabled to see into the wholeness of truth. This rests with the knowledge of an invisible self, unfettered by obligations to recognised forms of existence. He derives objectivity and universality from his identification with an aspect of the past which fights oppression through its ability to look it in the eye and to laugh at it through music that has evolved itself despite decades of racial oppression and through its own integrity to a self, uniquely black and distinctively American. These are vital elements in the making of the personal self which becomes, whether he likes it or not, whether accepted or unaccepted, a public spokesman against all manner of oppression.

In order to understand the allegorical significance of his story, one must be able to understand the full import of a life deeply entangled in the intricacies of a deceiving society. The process of disentanglement results in the preservation of a self sincerely purged of all impurities. In its distilled essence, it would remain invisible to the corrupted eyes of the world at large. Its history is the personal one of self-survival. It also evokes on an

allegorical level, many of the universally tragic milestones of the journey to selfhood. By virtue of its peculiar history, it seeks fulfilment on the rejuvenative plane of personal affirmation. It redefines and revalues life in the form and in the language of music, of jazz and of the blues, thus striving to energise its perception of a self at once ordinary and extraordinary, intensely personal and convincingly universal. Ultimately, the invisible protagonist takes the reader through a labyrinth of deception and lies, challenging him to distinguish between the universal dichotomies of Appearance and Reality. Its moral is implicit in a vision of life that authenticates itself through suffering and through laughter. The principles of Black selfhood abide in the principles of a universal self. This brings us once again, to the ultimate question asked of each one of us, which in the context of the discussion, points to the allegorising vein buried deep in the narrative:

Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you? (p.469)

This is a question that will continue to be asked of one in the next two novels to be discussed.

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**Chapter-IV**

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**GRENDL AND A TIGER FOR MALGUDI**  
**THE CALL TO LIFE IN**  
**MONSTER AND ANIMAL**

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Grendel (1971) is an interiorised novel that has as its protagonist a monster who is Beowulf's antagonist. Its startling perspective annihilates every human construct for it sees men not as being involved in any meaningful activity but as a diminished race of beings easily prone to mental and physical excesses. "... They were small, these creature, with dead-looking eyes and gray-white faces, and yet in some ways they were like us, except ridiculous and at the same time, mysteriously irritating, like rats ..." <sup>1</sup> Grendel's lifelong obsession is to understand who he is. His mental gyrations are an overwhelming reflection of the moral vacuum within which he is imprisoned. Isolated but adamant, he watches humans and preys upon them even as they perform what seems to him to be their ritual antics. In the figure of Grendel we have all the manifest contradictions of a world gone awry. He is an allegorical dimension of the stubborn heart caught within the "walls" of its own selfishness. As such, we notice a very thin line dividing Grendel from humans, something that Grendel himself notices:

I was safe in my tree, and the men who fought were nothing to me, except of course that they talked in something akin to my language which meant that we were, incredibly, related. I was sickened, if only at the waste of it: all they killed - cows, horses, men - they left to rot or burn. I sacked all I could and tried to store it, but my mother would growl and make faces because of the stink. (p.30)

He has been assigned a place outside society because as he tells us, "And I, Grendel, was the dark side ... the terrible race God cursed." (p.43) Gardner has succeeded in recreating human history, not from the epical point of view, but from the point of view of the sub-human, to scale it down to the dimensions of a monster in order to recast with uncanny truthfulness human behaviour and human roles. Grendel is thus the epicentre of a stark universe of violence and love.

Grendel has been compared to Satan of the early books of Paradise Lost<sup>2</sup>, and to Shakespeare's Caliban in The Tempest<sup>3</sup>. He has emotional and intellectual attributes that are distinctively human but he fails to be one because of a tragic incapacity for self-integration. In this respect, he also brings to mind the qualities attributable to the three Sarazin brothers in Book One of Spenser's Faerie Queene: faithlessness, joylessness and lawlessness. All three are caught in a vicious cycle of self-preservation, a psychological aspect of the morally barren psyche, which in actual fact points to the resemblance that they have with Grendel on the one hand, and on the other, with the men who are caught in the endless cycle of vicious meadhall politics. Unlike Satan, who has already had a foretaste of angelic glory and therefore knows what he wants, Grendel's struggles are fraught with preternatural blindness and misconceptions.

He allows himself to be caught in a paradoxical relationship with the humans whom he watches so earnestly and devours so shamelessly.

Grendel's life reflects the collapse of the supportive values of love, which mirrors what seems to have happened in the human world. His forays into the lighted world of humans, reveal to him a patchwork of human relationships that begin with the sovereignty of the king, Hrothgar, his tribal chieftains, his rivals, his family and his heirs. The Shaper or the poet-musician is a viable part of this "treacherous" (p.27) community, a "harpstring scratcher ... inspired by words "who would" sing the glory of Hrothgar's line and gild his wisdom and stir up his men to more daring deeds, for a price". (p.35) This is how the monster defines human life for himself. He lives in a world of nihilism and fragmentation.

In an article entitled "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel", Craig J. Stromme discusses the philosophical relevance of each chapter. He also shows how these philosophical ideas are deliberately irrelevant to helping Grendel find the "best way to live in the world"<sup>4</sup>. Gardner himself tells us in an earlier interview, that "In Grendel I wanted to go through the main ideas of western civilization - which seemed to me to be about ... twelve? - and go through them in the voice of the monster, with the story already taken care of, with the various philosophical attitudes ..."

so that the twelve chapters are accounted for as being "hooked to astrological signs ...". Gardner admits to "echoing people; borrowing from people" and stealing "lots and lots of things all the time", for, as he says, "if my stuff works at all, it's because there's one fusing vision".<sup>5</sup> This is the vision underlying every fragmented experience that Grendel has from the time that he emerges from his mere in the zodiacal month of the ram until his final confrontation with Beowulf under the zodiacal sign, Pisces, which is a vision reaffirming the creative values of life through Grendel's antagonist, Beowulf. In the intervening chapters is spun the forgotten tale of a monster who inhabits the nether regions of old English literature. Gardner resurrects the monster from the mire of sloth and non-identity to allow him to make the symbolic journey towards fulfilment. Each step, however, is a travesty of that fulfilment for, as Grendel tells us about himself, he is but a "pointless, ridiculous monster crouched in the shadows, stinking of dead men, murdered children, martyred cows". (p.2) The story told from his point of view, is a strangely lyrical<sup>6</sup> portrayal of the self-defeating consciousness of the anti-hero. In Gardner's words:

Grendel came about because I was teaching an Anglo-saxon class, and I told the kids that the three monsters in Beowulf are very symbolic and Grendel is symbolic of the rational soul gone perverse. Somebody asked me in class if that was just old-

fashioned Christian talk, or was it possible in the modern world for the rational soul to go perverse. And I said "sure, Satre's Existentialism is perverse rationality." As soon as I said it I realized what I was going to do, and I began planning, Grendel.<sup>7</sup>

In as much as Grendel is trapped in "talking, talking. Spinning a web of words, pale walls of dreams", (p.4) between himself and all he sees, he resembles man trapped in an ordeal of doubt and faithlessness, a veritable victim of his limited constructs. Complete identification with the monster is, however, barred because of his natural inability to forge a meaningful connection with the universe around him.

What Grendel misses is the hidden affirmation of his vision. He is correct in thinking that we "create the whole universe, blink by blink"; he goes wrong, however, in ignoring the imaginative power of such a thought and act. Grendel's intellectual system is turned top-to-toe in that it makes of imagination a negative, not a positive force.<sup>8</sup>

Terrestrial life as perceived from the perspective of a monster who is "crafty eyed, wicked as an elderly wolf" (p.13) is seen to be a jigsaw of inconstancy and doubt. In a novel that lacks the traditional framework of the Aristotelian plot, Gardner departs from tradition by way of "modern fabulation" which "... like the ancient fabling of Aesop, tends away from direct representation of the surface of reality but returns toward actual human life by way of ethically controlled fantasy ..."<sup>9</sup> to effect a unique way of

reflecting back to society through a monster, the dubiousness of certain philosophic values by which society has set great store. He uses a half forgotten figure from old English literature to refocuss the reader's attention upon hidden and unrevealed motives. Whilst adhering to its eighth-century Nordic setting, he transports the characters through a distance of time, to the psychic realities of a modern day world which seethes with all the challenges of a pluralistic society. Grendel is the self-conscious exponent of a variety of world views that are, however, inadequate to help him meet the ultimate challenge of his life when it comes in the form of Beowulf. The inner landscape of Grendel's mind is as bleak as the territory he inhabits, as bleak as Hrothgar's heart which resonates with the curse of his own existence, "violence and shame have lined the old man's face with mysterious calm. ... And so he waits like a man chained in a cave". (pp.105-106) There are no redemptive possibilities for Grendel, so locked is he within the self. He is indifferent to the natural universe. The inevitable scorn and ridicule that he displays are the natural outcome of a consciousness that has radically separated itself from the creative processes of life:

I make a face, uplift a defiant middle  
finger, and give an obscene little kick.  
The sky ignores me, forever unimpressed.

Him too I hate, the same as I hate these  
brainless budding trees, these brattling  
birds. (p.2)

He burns with controlled intensity except when he unleashes violence against his human neighbours, whom he feels are indefinably close to him.

So far, the novels that have been studied, explore the relationship between society and the self, thereby arriving at individual ways of perceiving what must hold true for all times. In Grendel, one finds instead, that, one is twice removed from reality because of the controlling vision of a monster who is not of this world, who misrepresents the familiar and cuts up reality into several unfamiliar pieces. In Gardner's incorporation of literary myth<sup>10</sup> the reader already knows what to expect. The Beowulf legend, however, has neither been absorbed for the re-telling nor has it been satirised<sup>11</sup>. Gardner uses it in much the same way as Golding uses the Coral Island myth to prove the truth about man's bestiality. Whereas Golding sets out to qualify through his fiction, an aspect of human nature experientially known to him, Gardner set out to perform what the epic poet once did, which was to repeatedly familiarise society with the undying virtues of heroism. The methods that he uses are, however, unorthodox. He characterises a monster who has human attributes and who has a special ability to express himself intelligently. Through him, the novelist forces the reader

to determine the truth for himself. Several times in the book the monster moves towards some kind of understanding of himself, but he is inevitably trapped in "an intense *interior dialogue* in which he listens to ... views, considers them carefully, and argues them vociferously, if only to himself"<sup>12</sup>. The monster's lifestyle evokes the kind of meaningless absurdity that is reflected in his monologues. Gardner defamiliarises the familiar through a monster in order to reconstruct the story of human civilization through Grendel's deconstructive ideologies. In many of the interviews conducted with him and in his writings, Gardner discusses the centrality of art to society. "The true artist's purpose ... is to show what is healthy, in other words sane, in human seeing, thinking and feeling, and to point out what is not".<sup>13</sup> In an interview entitled "The Art of Fiction LXXIII" he goes on to say that "... good artists are the people who are, in one way or another, creating, out of deep and honest concern, a vision of life-in-the twentieth-century that is worth pursuing".<sup>14</sup> The underlying vision is not a simplistic reconstruction of the past nor a fortuitous foretelling of the future. It lies in the artist's ability to pin-point the centre of life, which, in Grendel, lies neither in the absurdity of human endeavour as understood by Grendel, nor in the monster's solipsistic "I"; neither in the crass materialism of the Dragon nor in the

existentialism displayed by Grendel. It remains deliberately out of reach until the end because it is left to the reader to perceive for himself the inner value of things; of Hrothgar's achievements, of Wealtheow's sacrificial love, of the Dragon's sophistry, of the true meaning of the Shaper's song and of the true nature of Beowulf's realities. The ultimate vision rests in Grendel's acceptance of death, which is an acceptance of Beowulf as his ultimate antagonist, an acceptance of the human realities that he had scorned and a final debunking of all philosophical systems in the face of a death which paradoxically gives meaning to his existence:

... "Accident", I whisper. I will fall. I seem to desire the fall, and though I fight it with all my will I know in advance that I can't win. Standing baffled, quaking with fear, three feet from the edge of a nightmare cliff, I find myself, incredibly, moving toward it. I look down, ... feeling the dark power moving in me ... moving me slowly to my voluntary tumble into death.

... I discover I no longer feel pain  
... My heart booms terror ...

Is it joy I feel? (p.152)

Grendel may not necessarily be fully conscious of the redemptive possibilities of death-in-faith, but the stirrings of joy that he is conscious of, is the most positive emotion in a creature riddled with doubt. This brings the discussion round to what Gardner feels must be the artist's priorities, that his art be related to society in a truly moral way. In his book The Novels of John Gardner Making Life Art as a

Moral Process, Leonard Butts explains how the word *moral*" has "supplanted artistic, critical, and philosophical usage to such an extent that the word is crippled when pressed into a literary context".<sup>15</sup> His entire preface clarifies Gardner's theory of art. Art, for Gardner "always in sworn opposition to chaos, discovers by its process what it can say". That according to the writer, is "arts morality. Its full meaning is beyond paraphrase ...". It is "life-giving-moral in its process of creation and moral in what it says".<sup>16</sup> Despite its over-worked meanings, it is a term that, for Gardner, honours the imagination of the true artist for it impels him to authenticate the truth through characters and situations that have a genuine relationship with life, using the uncompromising standards of artistic integrity. He has moved a long way from art as imitation. "Art leads, it doesn't follow. Art doesn't imitate life, art makes people do things."<sup>17</sup> Thus, "a truly moral book is one which is radically open to persuasion, but looks hard at a problem, and keeps looking for answers. It gives you an absolutely clear vision, as if the poet, the writer, had nothing to do with it, had just done everything in his power to imagine how things are".<sup>18</sup> He taps latent meanings and explores the unexplored in order to map out the authentic regions of the soul. He follows "the drama where it goes; the potential of the characters in their given situation". He lets them "go

where they have to go and analyze" as he is going along "what's involved, what the implications are". He thinks of ways of "dramatically setting up contrasts", so that his "position on a thing is clear" and then he "hounds the thing till it rolls over".<sup>19</sup> This is the reason why he has been called a novelist of ideas.<sup>20</sup> In Grendel, he recasts folk history from the point of view of the antagonist who passes on to the reader an inversely allegorical rendition of it.

Representative ideas of human civilization, recognisably embodied in Grendel's life are progressively reduced to nothing. The story of Hrothgar and the building up of his kingdom is also a substantive example of mankind's defeated endeavours to civilize himself. Nothing is overtly allegorical; but by virtue of the story, the novel questions the very ground on which humankind stands, by parodying the excesses of human reasoning through a monster who cannot even save himself. The message is clearly imprinted in the symbolic undertones that characterise the book. In view of Gardner's faith in the moralizing influences of art, Grendel does arrive at a moral stand that crystallises all the positive forces of love, of poetry and of human endeavour; forces that run counter to everything that has been associated with Grendel. Thus Beowulf justifies the visionary realities of faith and justice, and of courage in the face of death. In a despotic society such as the one

Hrothgar founded, ample room is provided for monsters like Grendel to wreak their own kind of havoc. Symbolically speaking, the monster within becomes the monster without, for which exorcism is near impossible because of man's propensity for evil and negativity. Behind Grendel stands an artist who manipulates a monstrous world order to reveal the hidden trauma of human civilization, set back by its inability to control itself. Hence, to go back to a point earlier stated, whilst the epic poet sings of Beowulf's virtues in the heroic language of all epics, Gardner tells of the underworld order of confusion and anarchy, to refer to the principle of annihilation that emanates directly from the human intellect. It is in this respect that Grendel most resembles man. As important as the epic poet was to society, so is Gardner to his times, because of the responsibility that he bears to his readers who form a significant part of society. "I really do believe Shelley's idea about the poet as the legislator of mankind".<sup>21</sup> One finds that the moral forces in Grendel work through a figurative understanding of the mental and physical combatants that Grendel faces. Grendel seethes with the conflicting issues of a civilization which has been represented and analyzed through characters who metaphorically inform the reader about the conditions for living in a complexly human universe. The aim is moral but the methods used unusual. One finds that as one reads the

book, one may identify characters and ideas that bear an inescapable connection with the lived reality. Through a monster, the novelist allegorically challenges the reader to face the "abyss" and to "hunt" through the fiction for "positive ways of surviving of living."<sup>22</sup> The total effort of reading becomes one with the artist's effort to affirm what he discovers. This communicates itself in an allegoristic manner through a symbolic and metaphoric presentation of reality.

In the initial encounter with Grendel, one is struck as much by the adamant "I" as by his cunning intelligence. He draws a fine distinction between the "old ram" and himself; between animal and monster: "Do not think my brains are squeezed shut, like the ram's by the roots of horns" (p.1) as if to enhance his personal worth, if only to himself. He inhabits a world which, darkened by the absurdity of a brute existence, echoes with the fury of non-meaning as in the season of the ram, Aries, he begins "the twelfth year" of his "idiotic war". (p.1) Grendel's accidental discovery of the world above brings him in touch with humans. They seem to bear a strange resemblance to him especially in their language. This is an unstable relationship, however, made all the more uncertain by Grendel's inability to understand their irreconcilable ways of living. His initial encounter with them, as a victim of accident, caught in the "crack of two

tree trunks", places him in a position of powerless observer. Even as he observes their reaction to him, "The tall one said, 'It's a growth of some kind, that's my opinion. Some beastlike fungus'." (p.18) Grendel is fascinated by them. He follows their talk only to discover, as he always will discover, that "... suddenly I knew I was dealing with no dull mechanical bull but with thinking creatures, pattern makers, the most dangerous things I'd ever met". (p.21) The intimacy however brief, however brutal, shared with what could be called his human counterparts brings out the more human aspect of speech in Grendel. "I tried to speak, my mouth moved, but nothing would come out". (p.20) After the incident, Grendel is irrevocably hooked. His return to the cave after his mother's rescue of him, only serves to intensify his isolation:

I tried to tell her all that had happened, all that I'd come to understand ... she'd forgotten all language long ago, or may be had never known any. ... But I talked on, trying to smash through the walls of her unconsciousness. (p.22)

At the end of Chapter Two, Grendel's defiance becomes a self-willed attempt to establish identity in the face of what he perceives to be an unintelligible universe. "I exist, nothing else". (p.22) The unaccountable universe of man continues to haunt and to challenge him forever, goading him to make deeper inroads into an unlighted self.

Reference has already been made to Craig J. Stromme's article entitled, "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel", which analyses the "philosophical discussions" and "philosophical musings" in which Grendel is involved but which leads him nowhere. It traces Grendel's journey from "solipsist to sceptic to nihilist".<sup>23</sup> Whilst some critics have discussed the philosophical ideologies that back up Grendel's attitude to himself and to life in general, Gardner has often been quoted on the parallelism that he deliberately draws between what he considers to be Satre's useless philosophy of life and Grendel's philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Grendel's weakness is for wasteful analyses of his own experiences. It wears him down and he becomes ill-equipped for a better making and a better sighting of his own future. So involved is he in the polemics of what he sees that it condemns him to a perpetual state of, spiritual blindness. His vision is obscured by the tyranny of an intellect which is always dissecting itself:

... I observe myself observing what I observe. It startles me. "Then I am not that which observes". I am lack. Alack! No thread, no frailest hair between myself and the universal clutter! I listen to the underground river. I have never seen it.

Talking, talking, spinning a skin,  
a skin ... (p.22)

Grendel chokes with emotions that remain perpetually untapped. It mars what could be his intuition of higher truths. His life becomes traumatised by a sense of self-

alienation which pursues him right up to the penultimate moments of his life. As he binds himself tighter and tighter within the "walls" of an ill-founded sophism unable to help himself, he is doomed to mere watching, "I would back away into the darkness, furious at my stupid need to spy on them, and I would glide to the next camp of men, and I'd hear the same", (p.28) inevitably drawn to the madness of Hrothgar's court. His link with them lies in their ceaseless carnage of everything that lives. "It was confusing and frightening, not in a way I could untangle. ... we were incredibly related", (p.30) an activity that even a monster like him finds distasteful in its wastage. "I was sickened, if only at the waste of it: all they killed - cows, horses, men - they left to burn". (p.30)

Within the novel, Grendel is the yardstick by which human achievement and human life is measured. Pitted against the monstrous world order of Grendel is the defective world of humans who impose chaotic divisions upon themselves and blight reality with their illusions. When he overhears the Shaper's song, Grendel is affected by it, "ridiculous hairy creature torn apart by poetry", (p.37) in the same way that Hrothgar is stirred to visions of greatness by it. Unwilling to believe and yet unable to forget, "It was a cold-blooded lie that a god had lovingly made the world ... It came to me with a fierce jolt that I wanted it", (p.47) we find Grendel

attempting to associate himself with men and being rejected by them. There is a split, however, in Grendel which is a result of the super-imposition of what is dimly to him, a desirable world order. Grendel is, accursed and doomed to the backwaters of a hellish existence. Nonetheless, he desires help and journeys to the Dragon's cave to seek assistance from him. The Dragon is the "nihilist who denies the relationship between man and his universe".<sup>25</sup> He encourages Grendel to become "an artist of darkness, antithesis of the Shaper."<sup>26</sup> As he was stormed by the Shaper's song into a sense of hopefulness, so is he subverted by the logistics of Dragon talk. "My advice to you, my violent friend, is to seek out gold and sit on it". (p.63) In chapter six, he takes stock of himself and realises that he is no longer what he was:

Futility, doom, became a smell in the air, pervasive and acrid as the dead smell after a forest fire - my scent and the world's ...

... Now, invulnerable, I was as solitary as one live tree in a vast landscape of coal. (p.65)

He is reborn into a vindictive self, shorn of humanity's dross: "I was Grendel, Ruiner of Meadhalls, Wrecker of Kings! But also, as never before, I was alone". (p.69) An intruder and an emotional misfit in Hrothgar's Meadhalls, his is an unenviable position, that of always having to stand at the edge of society. He orchestrates within the novel a complex

view of the tangled human situation which resonates with life's wretchedness and its incomparable splendour.

Borne on the tide of meaninglessness "... and I saw myself killing them, on and on and on, as if mechanically, without contest", (p.70) Grendel's confrontation with Unferth comes as, what he calls a "crowning absurdity" (p.71) in the repetitive doom of brutish violence. Grendel verbally spars with him and spares him his life. This is the first time before he meets Beowulf, that Grendel actually converses with a human being. The monster's raging perspective has been replaced by a bleak sense of humour. He deliberately spares Unferth in order to deny him a hero's death. His association with men has gained him insight into their ways, to the extent that he can actually challenge them as he does Unferth, on the strength of their blind, heroic notions of living. Talking to himself, he says,

... My enemies define themselves (as the Dragon said) on me. As for myself, I could finish them off in a single night, ... yet I hold back. I am hardly blind to the absurdity. Form is function. What will we call the Hrothgar-Wrecker when Hrothgar has been wrecked? (p.79)

At this stage, Grendel is no longer what he was: as naive as his first encounter with men, as "transmuted" (p.36) as he was when he heard the Shaper's song or as eager to comprehend life as when he listens to Dragon philosophy. He is adept at shifting perspectives to suit his own convenience. This is

how his "numberless blessings" are counted "one by one". (p.81) Monster logic has it that he is self sufficient. Yet the need to spy is compulsive. He observes the preparations for war and the ultimate negotiations that win Hrothgar a queen for himself. Grendel's response to Wealtheow is as instinctive as his response to the Shaper's song:

... But she was beautiful and she surrendered herself with the dignity of a sacrificial virgin. My chest was full of pain, my eyes smarted, and I was afraid — O monstrous trick against reason — I was afraid I was about to sob. (p.86)

He is torn apart by his vision of her as he once was by poetry. He holds on desperately to the Dragon's words in order to fight off her presence; "clenching" his mind on the "words of the dragon", but "helpless" (p.91) as always, drawn to observe unsolicited, that which he sees. He plays a hidden game of hide and seek with the antagonists in his life who also "tease" him toward "disbelief in the Dragon's truths". (p.31) He is locked as always within himself, unresolved, unable to communicate his feelings to anyone outside himself:

... He has attained a linguistic level of consciousness that permits him to pose questions about identity. It also enables him to comprehend the speech of humans and of a Dragon. He understands them, but they cannot or will not understand him ... thus he is trapped in a one-way communication ...<sup>27</sup>

His assault on Wealtheow is a vehement attempt to disbelieve what he sees. He is almost tamed by her in the classic Beauty and the Beast syndrome. But being the monster who must fight off the ideals of men as being deliberate lies, he is merely brought to the threshold of becoming more human. He stops short of it, for, as he tells himself, "I'd cured myself" by refraining from killing her. A few lines further, however, he honestly assesses his own feelings

I hung balanced, a creature of two minds;  
and one of them said - unreasonable,  
stubborn as the mountains - that she was  
beautiful. I resolved, absolutely and  
finally, to kill myself, for love of the  
Baby Grendel that used to be. But the  
next instant, for no particular reason, I  
changed my mind. (p.94-95)

Grendel contradicts himself with every change of mood and breaks the monotony of his life, by this attitude of contrariness which bars him from achieving any kind of self-knowledge.

As Grendel's vigilance continues unabated and as he is drawn deeper into the mire of human life, he throws up a picture of Hrothgar caught in a dilemma of his own making. Hrothgar's life seems to resolve itself in the only way possible, through violence. Grendel understands the imminent collapse of Hrothgar's world, yet sympathy for him is barred by his unreconciled hatred of Hrothgar, who in his eyes, is the epitome of everything detestably human. "How, if I knew all this, you may ask, could I hound him ... I have no

answer, except perhaps this: why should I *not*?" His conceited logic plumbs him deeper into a state of antipathy. "Ha! this nobility of his, this dignity: are they not *my* work? ... I made him what he is", (p.106) is the ultimate boast of a creature, blind to anyone outside himself. Frustration and anarchy are the principles underlying Grendel's life. His rhetoric confounds what he sees. His arguments reflect his fallacious notions "I made him what he is. Have I not a right to test my own creation? ... I'm a machine, like you. Like all of you. Blood lust and rage are my character". (p.106) He is hemmed in by darkness and myopically sees the one point of similarity that he shares with men — their common heritage of violence. He presupposes a false invincibility which trips him up eventually. The only reality close to him is the "learning, ordeal by ordeal" of his "undignity" as he grinds his teeth in his own "absurdity". Grendel's accurate sense of language is, however, morally and emotionally misplaced. He uses language to communicate ideas to himself, to attempt to understand what he superficially observes, to sing, however, sardonically of his own condition and to try for the ultimate communication, with man himself. However, "language is never neutral in Gardner. It either imprisons or liberates",<sup>28</sup> it reflects the disintegration of Grendel, in its inability to decipher the "language of ... experience. The mental

language" which is Grendel's "thought, is clever and logical but inadequate because merely private and hence limited to his own small portion in the world."<sup>29</sup> Grendel's subjectivity is a natural reflection of his egoism. He has a presentiment of death in the image of the hart, "the image clings to my mind like a growth. I sense some riddle in it", (p.111) but is too caught up in a facetious present to be able to comprehend its hidden significance. Thus the opportunity to play around with the priests becomes an irresistible urge for travestyng human faith and reducing it to the farce that it actually is. One notices, however, a progressive change in Grendel. His game of cat and mouse with human beings, no longer satisfies him

My heart moves slowly, like freezing water, and I cannot clearly recall the smell of blood. And yet I am restless. I would fall, if I could, through time and space to the Dragon. I cannot. (p.119)

The need to know remains still an important force of propulsion for him, but as he has already barred himself from further knowledge, "I was Grendel, Ruiner of Meadhalls, Wrecker of Kings!" (p.69) by his absolute commitment to an image of himself, he is unable to read the arrow marks of fate pointing to his own doom.

Vastly far away I see the sun, black but shining, and slowly revolving around it there are spiders. I pause in my tracks,

puzzled — though not stirred — by what I see. ... It is just some dream. I move on, uneasy, waiting. (p.119)

Chapter Ten is a sombre chapter dealing with death. Grendel's massacre of the horned goat anticipates his own end. "Death shakes his body the way high wind shakes trees". (p.123) The destruction that Grendel has been responsible for begins to take its toll on him for there are forces contrary to him gathering against him. He overhears an old woman telling of a "giant across the sea who has the strength of thirty thanes. 'Someday he will come here', she tells the children". (p.124) In Chapter Ten Grendel begins to be affected in a strange way by forces that remain unidentified by him. The death of the Shaper comes to him, couched in the ambiguity of all human occurrences. For a monster who has chosen to inhabit a territory of moral negations the Shaper's death must necessarily leave him "unsatisfied". (p.127) He is drawn to the funeral in the same way that he was drawn to the Shaper's poetry; but as always, every emotion registered by him is drowned in an affectation of indifference: "A stupid business *Nihil ex nihilo*, I always say. (p.131) Meanwhile, it is in Chapter Ten that Grendel is most alone. The "pain" of "tedium" is the cross that he must absolutely bear. Grendel becomes almost human in his despairing vision of time,

... and because now the Shaper is dead, strange thoughts come over me. I think of the pastness of the past: how the moment I am alive in, prisoned in, moves like a

slowly tumbling form through darkness,  
the underground river. Not only ancient  
history ... but my own history one second  
ago has vanished utterly, dropped out of  
existence. (pp.127-128)

and in his shattering sense of grief and hopelessness that leaves him feeling overwhelmingly "abandoned". "End of an epoch. I could tell the king. We're on our own again. Abandoned". (p.130) There are signs of fear, "when I sleep I wake up in terror, with hands on my throat", (p.131) unrelieved, however, by any transcending vision of life. At the beginning of the next chapter, Grendel almost becomes himself again, capricious and unmindful of anything except the fifteen "glorious heroes ... fat as cows". Immediately after, however, he is "baffled by the strange sensation" once again. "I knew more surely than before that something was coming". (p.133) The "pain" of the "tedium" that hung over Grendel's life is about to be broken. We find him crouched in darkness, observing humans at talk, avidly desirous of action and reducing all the order that he perceives to a state of being "unreal". Beowulf's arrival, brings to Grendel a recognition of his ultimate antagonist. "I grew more and more afraid of him and at the same time — who can explain it? — more and more eager for the hour of our meeting". (p.144) Beowulf is the epitome of self-integration; integrated in word and deed, in thought and action, in body and soul. "The stranger ... believed every word he said. I

understood at last the look in his eyes. He was insane".  
(p.142) He is the ultimate principle of order that must hold.<sup>30</sup> Grendel senses a conviction so strong that it defies him at the deepest level. Henceforward, he fatalistically gives himself up to the only reality discernible to him: the absurdity of all action.

It is the business of rams to be rams and of goats to be goats, the business of Shapers to sing and of kings to rule. The stranger waits on, as patient as a grave-mound. I too wait, whispering, whispering, mad like him. Time grows obeying its mechanics, like all of us.  
(p.144)

The final chapter literally enacts the inevitable. Seemingly unchanged in "bloodlust" and unfazed by Beowulf's presence, Grendel proceeds to his meadhall demolitions in like manner as before, this time with a table cloth tied as a napkin around his neck. He is caught unawares, defeated by the strength of Beowulf's unassuming heroics which challenges him to faith in life even as he is dealt the final blow.

As his rationality slips further out of control, further toward the existential absurdity, he allows his emotions to take rein, and acts upon pure and instinctive rage. ... He submits himself to the swift sweep of time moving toward a final darkness ...<sup>31</sup>

In the final meeting, Grendel sees Beowulf as a Dragon and tries to shake off the illusion without success. Nothing can help him now. He is ironically defeated by the one person who

sheds meaning on his world. Visibly ill-equipped, he is unable to deal with the charge of truth levelled against him.

His syllables lick at me, chilly fire.  
His syllables lick at me, chilly fire.  
His syllables lick at me, chilly fire.  
His syllables lick ... (p.149)

To Grendel, Beowulf becomes insanely inter-changeable with the Dragon, "Flames slip out at the corners of his mouth", (p.149) though his words are not.

*... As you see it it is, while the seeing lasts, dark nightmare-history, time-as-coffin; but where the water was rigid there will be fish, and men will survive on their flesh till spring. It's coming, my brother. Believe it or not. Though you murder the world ... The world will burn green, sperm build again ... (p.149)*

Beowulf forces Grendel not only to the figurative "hearing" which has failed before, "I do not listen. I am sick at heart. I have been betrayed before by talk like that" (p.150) but also to "seeing" and to "feeling", to consolidate himself into a unity of song that must be sung at the cost of a transfiguring pain bought with his own life.

*... you make the world by whispers, second by second. Are you blind to that? Whether you make it a grave or a garden of roses is not the point. Feel the wall: is it not hard? He smashes me against it, breaks open my forehead. Hard, yes! Observe the hardness, write it down in careful runes. Now sing of walls! sing! (p.150)*

Beowulf's destruction of Grendel is a destruction of Grendel's absurdist philosophy. He forces Grendel to

recognise the transmogrifying pain that would make his end meaningful. Beowulf demands that Grendel commit himself completely to himself: to the authenticity of a perceiving imagination that orders reality. He splits him open, literally and figuratively, breaking up a personality that is deeply sunk in confusion. He forces him to the edge of the abyss and leaves him to rave or to sing:

... "Accident", I whisper. I will fall. I seem to desire the fall, and though I fight it with all my will I know in advance that I can't win. Standing baffled, quaking with fear, three feet from the edge of a nightmare cliff, I find myself, incredibly, moving toward it. I look down, down, into bottomless blackness, feeling the dark power moving in me ... moving me slowly to my voluntary tumble into death. (p.152)

Grendel is conquered by the principles of faith. He actually learns to make poetry out of his life, to do to himself what the Shaper was able to do to others. The accident of death becomes the fortuitous accident of life permitting him to "see". "Poor Grendel's had an accident," I whisper, "so may you all". (p.152) are the parting words of a monster who was immune to life.<sup>32</sup>

It could be said that as Faustus was representative of an age, so too is Grendel representative of a contradictory age, lost in the dark mazes of a godless universe. In as much as Faustus overreaches himself, thus preventing the reader's total identification with him, so too is the reader prevented

from identifying himself with Grendel because he stands as symbol of the incarnate darkness that threatens stability. The inverted myth of Beowulf shapes the story to give it its sombre perspective of death and destruction. The attempt so far, has been to follow the narrative through Grendel. Each perception of reality from his point of view, takes the reader deeper into a primordial darkness of wantonness and destruction. Leonard Butts calls it the "Dantean darkness" out of which Grendel never emerges because of his "physical and mental isolation"<sup>33</sup>. He apprehends the world through gut feelings of hatred and animosity. He has a propensity for partial sightings of the truth. He dissects and analyzes but remains impervious to the synthesising possibilities of the creative imagination. Grendel never perceives the possibilities of love and hope in Hrothgar's kingdom because he is barred from a vision of life that permits him an enduring role in the universe. He inhabits a universe of his own making. The Dragon's philosophy forms his only criterion for living. He has his moments of vulnerability. He is sincerely affected by the Shaper's song, which "told of an ancient feud between two brothers which split all the world between darkness and light" in which "Grendel, was the dark side ... . The terrible race God cursed." (p.43) He actually acts an impulse to run begging for "mercy" for his condemnable part in the fable. When he is rejected he rages

with anger and expresses himself in the violent language that he has learnt from men.

I ran to the centre of the forest and fell down panting ... I wept — strong monster with teeth like a shark's — ... "Bastards!" I roared. "Sons of bitches. Fuckers!" words I'd picked up from men in their rages. I wasn't even sure what they meant, though I had an idea: defiance, rejection of the gods that, for my part, I'd known all along to be lifeless sticks. I roared with laughter, still sobbing. We, the accursed, didn't it even have words for swearing in! "AAARGH!" I whooped, then covered my ears and hushed. It sounded silly (p.44).

He is damned to an interminable sense of the absurdity of all life.

Above the monster's mere is a universe inhabited by men who are related to the monster through speech. They are shown to have succeeded in building their own personal "walls" against each other. Ruthlessness and greed for power make them even closer to the subterranean monster than they themselves are aware of. The gradual consolidation of Hrothgar's power is allegorically echoed in mankind's perennial attempt to colonise the world. Through Grendel, the reader is presented with a pageant of characters who are similar to him in more ways than one. In Grendel's understanding of human reality, the Shaper becomes an aberration<sup>34</sup> of human nature because he has a capacity for visionary insight, which precludes the kind of metaphysical doubt that continually blinds Grendel to the positive aspects

of life. The Shaper has the ability to transmute the present and to anticipate the course of the future. Time for Grendel, however, is a conjunction of static states of existence which offer no meaning, locked as it is in a past immediately made dead by the present. "The future is as dark, as unreal, as the past. ... I will forget tomorrow, so her pain is a matter of indifference". (p.128) Grendel's inability to accept the hierarchical order of the universe sung by the Shaper which consigns him to a place outside history because he belongs to "darkness", distorts his perception of the world around him. According to him, the Shaper's song was "a cold-blooded lie".

... I knew what I knew, the mindless,  
mechanical bruteness of things of things,  
and when the harper's lure drew my mind  
away to hopeful dreams, the dark of what  
was and always was reached out and  
snatched my feet. (p.46)

Grendel stands self-condemned in his inability to understand the truth when told. He represents in all viciousness the limitations of the intellect which refuses to yield itself to the impulse of the imagination. Thus, even though Grendel is converted by the Shaper's song and even though he begs to be accepted by men, he cannot accept his ordained position in the universe. This is why he too must set up a bulwark of defence against the abyss that faces him. Human beings, according to the Dragon also try to defend themselves by mapping out "roads through Hell with their crackpot theories,

their here-to-the-moon-and-back lists of paltry facts". (p.55) He perceives them to be "thinking creatures, pattern makers" (p.21) similar to Grendel, the monster who is a prisoner of a demonic intelligence, grounded to false assumptions. The intelligence that guides Beowulf, however, is the polarised opposite of Grendel. Between the two, is metaphorically presented the pygmy race of men, bound hand and foot to their warring instincts, their vision dimmed by the kind of materialism that blights the Dragon's perspective.

Grendel's observation of men is not inaccurate. He remains the yardstick by which men are measured. With the arrival of Beowulf in the last chapters, however, the narrative provides for a possible view of man, already partially visible in the Shaper's creativity and in Wealtheow's innocence and femininity. This is a picture of man sustained by the integrity of an imagination which makes for possible salvation through the poetry that he must create out of his own life. Meanwhile, there is a narrow margin of difference between Grendel and the men that he feeds upon. Grendel's condition of being Lost is a condition matched in Hrothgar's subjects.

Men and women stood talking in the light of the meadhall door and on the narrow streets below; on the lower hillside boys and girls played near the sheep pens, shyly holding hands. ... They talked nothing, stupidities ... Then, circling

the clearing, I stepped on something fleshy ... It was a man. They'd cut his throat. His clothes had been stolen. I stared up at the hall, baffled, beginning to shake. (pp.42-43)

and in his progeny:

As a matter of fact, if the Shaper's vision of goodness and peace was a part of himself, not idle rhymes, then no one understood him at all, not even Hrothgar. And as for Hrothgar, if he was serious about his idea of glory — sons and sons' sons giving out treasure — I had news for him. If he had sons, they wouldn't hear his words. They would weigh his silver and gold in their minds. I've watched the generations. I've seen their weasel eyes. (p.45)

The microcosmic world of Grendel is a seething hotbed of rage and unresolved ideas and feelings. The larger macrocosmic world echoes with similar frustrations and persistent betrayals. The only difference lies in the human ability to form relationships and in Grendel's inability to do so. His lack of feeling for his mother has its own story to tell. He knows no filial respect for her and calls her, "my pale slightly glowing fat mother ... life bloated, baffled, long-suffering hag", (p.6) he does not define himself by her. His linguistic abilities take him away from her into the terrestrial world of humans." She'd forgotten all language long ago, or may be had never known any". (p.22) She has been described to be continually pacing their "dingy underground room". (p.6) She is a mass of feeling, an evolutionary rung lower than him in her excessive

subjectivity which prevents her from granting him an identity separate from her. "I was her creation. We were one thing, like the wall and the rock growing out from it". (p.12)

In Chapter Two after his mother rescues him from death she swamps him in a fury of possessiveness. "She gets up on all fours ... she hurls herself across the void and buries me in her bristly fur and fat". (p.22) She is a significant presence in Grendel's mind, a distasteful reminder of his origins. After Grendel's discovery of the world above, the underground cave identified with his mother, becomes a tedious prison for him one from which he is repeatedly compelled to escape. He is torn between monster gross-roots and the challenge of the unknown. However, the unknown, the human world has captured his mind so strongly that he must be both participant and spectator in it.

When confronted with the ideal of feminine virtue in the figure of Wealtheow, Grendel is nonplussed. He may have succeeded in identifying himself with the confused herd of men festering with violence, but he becomes nullified and short-circuited as it were by Wealtheow's suggestions of creativity and love. His responses to her are similar to his responses to the Shaper's song. He is "split" once again:

In my mind I watched her freckled hand  
move on the old man's arm as once I'd  
listened to the sigh of the Shaper's  
harp. Ah, woe, woe! How many times must  
a creature be dragged down the same

ridiculous road? The Shaper's lies, the hero's self-delusion, now this: the idea of a queen! My mother, breathing hard, scraping through her hair with her crooked nails, watched me and sometimes moaned. (p.93)

In his mind's eye he now juxtaposes his mother to Wealtheow; his own reality, to the inexpressible reality that is Wealtheow "in my cave, coughing from the smoke and clenching feet on fire with chilblains". (p.93) This conflict almost forces Grendel to commit another sacrilegious act. "I decided to kill her". However, he undergoes a demonic catharsis when he snatches at her, "her unqueenly shrieks were deafening, exactly like the squeals of a pig", and violates her privacy. He stops short of killing her. "It would be meaningless killing her. As meaningless as letting her live", (p.94) to establish somewhat superciliously and even more radically the absurdity of all action. The next lines belie everything that he says "I hung balanced, a creature of two minds; and one of them said — unreasonable, stubborn as the mountains — that she was beautiful". (p.95)

In Grendel's life, moments of epiphany come within tantalizing reach of him. The demand to yield humbly to the overriding truth of what is, to sustain a clarity of vision, and to discern order within disorder, are the pressurising factors that thwart what could be Grendel's moments of lucidity. "I clamped my palms to my ears and stretched up my lips and shrieked again: a stab at truth, a snatch at

apocalyptic glee. Then I ran on all fours, chest pounding, to the smoky mere." (p.38) The image of predator, expressive of confusion, always marks Grendel's responses to that which is not easily apprehended by him. In all respects he is closer to his mother than he would ever allow himself to believe.

As foreshadowings of doom darken his horizon, Grendel is more passionately driven to violence. Once again he hurls himself into a headlong confrontation with his chosen rivals, expecting as always, an easy victory for himself. He is ill-prepared, however, for the unexpected turn of events, which transform reality for him, and which drives him away from a lifetime of monstrous misconceptions. He reels under the impact of Beowulf's socket - wrenching handshake, his mind a whirlpool of thoughts, unvanquished by the pain, "My whole arm's on fire, incredible, soaring pain"; desperately searching for the reality that was; "the world is what is and always was"; convincing himself of his impenetrable "sanity". "He's only a man; I can escape him". (pp.148-149) but ironically slipping on his own blood. Even then he continues to fight off Beowulf's presence, but is inevitably forced to let go of himself in a paradoxical exchange of past for future. The ultimate vision forced upon him, is of the interconnectedness of all reality, of the eternal dynamics of time past, time present and time future. Beowulf is Grendel's ultimate redeemer. As if in recognition of this, Grendel

calls him "dear long-lost brother, kinsman-thane", (p.148) one to whom he must inevitably submit by token of his tangible superiority. His moment of death is a re-enactment of his violent past. The only difference lies in Beowulf's ability to draw out Grendel's soul, to strip it down to what it actually is, vacuous and naked; to force upon him a recognition of that climatic moment of pain and insight, of suffering and acceptance, of subjectivity and objectivity. Grendel's lifelong pastime of hypothesising the truth fails him at the most crucial moment of his life; that hour of reckoning which he had anticipated all these years.

The inevitable breakdown of Grendel's rationale may be detected in a language, that, until now, has mainly been used to propagate his own ideologies. It now bears the full brunt of pain, visibly felt, of confusion and deluded visualisations. The physical breaking in by Beowulf is described as a raw pain. Grendel finds himself succumbing to Beowulf's powerful auto-suggestions "spilling words like showers of sleet, his mouth three inches from my ear" (p.149) as he forces him to recognise the essential creativity of all life, commanding him to create even at the moment of death. Grendel retains his humour and his capacity for argument upto the last moments. But as the reality of death stares him in the face he calls out to his mother, which, unlike the earlier call of frustration, becomes an affirmation of death.

Acceptance of it hones his insight and brings him closer to the deeper human realities that have always eluded him. His final moments are paradoxical moments of joy, transmuted as he is by the implications of death-in-faith.

In Grendel's mind, Beowulf is a potent threat to him, challenging his very existence. Beowulf on the other hand, personifies a cosmic force of creation which must contend against the very existence of a Grendel. Hence Grendel's ultimate catharsis lies in the purging of his monster-emotions and a thorough purging of all monster realities. Shorn of his characterising brutality, Grendel reaches out to the reader in a conclusive song of acceptance, wishing upon all for a similar accidental fall into death, which is the metaphoric fall into faith. He takes that improbable step into the future through his own death.

At the end of the book, Grendel's journey into understanding may not even have started but the impulse towards it implicates the reader in a soul-searching effort to unmake the "walls" that impede him, exorcising thus the monster within and resurrecting a vision of the future, such as the Shaper sang about. To be able to see beyond what Grendel saw, to be able to hear what was only partially audible to Grendel and to be able to restructure the dimensionless depths of reality, are the pre-requisites of visionary insight and of visionary foresight: attributes of

the Beowulf personality that tragically remains in short supply. Allegorically speaking, through the Grendel perspective, the book mirrors the tragic fall-out of the intellect and shows its inability to reconstruct itself on account of a self-imposed will for destruction. Grendel stands as a symbolically negative figure of unyielding doubt. Insight into the Grendel personality would involve the ability to see it as an allegorical dimension of man's potential for self-destruction. This would invariably lead one "to the rejection of that quintessentially human pride in man's remaking of the world according to his own limitations, and to the recognition that reason is finite, with spirituality alone offering a next step."<sup>35</sup>

The edification of Grendel, as well as that of the reader, works on the strength of Beowulf's commitment to the ideals of the spirit. Implicit meanings arise as Grendel is associated with a self-generated confusion which is also a reflection of the confused human reality. It is only at the end, when Beowulf is able to reinstate the cosmic pattern of life, that the allegory latent within the book begins to coalesce. The allegory functions at the level of symbol and metaphor, at the significant level of the Shaper's song and Wealtheow's beauty, at the ironic level of the narrative and at the dynamic level of Beowulf's integrity, suggestive as they are, of other significant realities, of hidden depths

and of larger perspectives. The initial step taken into Grendel's mind is, allegorically, the initiatory step that one takes into chaos where the soul adrift in confusion is blighted by its own inability to "see". There is a progressive movement upwards and outwards, out of the monster's mere into a human world, itself darkened by confusion. However, images of light, of love and of faith, impress themselves upon the reader and upon Grendel even unto the final moments of his life.

In the novel the final call to life is the call to an integrated means of self-expression. For Grendel it becomes the call to order and to create, affirming himself through the moral process of art which "discovers by its process what it can say".<sup>36</sup> In effect the actual process of reading the book becomes a vicarious artistic experience that leads one to perceptible clarity. For a suspended moment, reality is displaced by the supervention of Grendel's world which echoes with the currents and cross-currents of the real world. Gardner's novel, being moral and creative, works in order to reveal the unrevealed; to sing in a manner never sung before. Reality may thus be better apprehended in a figurative presentation of itself through the careful study of a monster who is close to man by virtue of his capacity for reason and emotion. The mode of narration is an inversely allegorical reflection of the surreal depths of human reality as

portrayed in Grendel. Grendel is the symbolic monster who inhabits the hidden depths of reality. He is deeply embroiled in the argumentative politics of self-seeking. His abysmal sense of hopelessness is, ironically, an allegorical aspect of the human world of violence and greed perpetuated in Hrothgar's kingdom. The appearance of Beowulf restores the moral balance of a degraded world and challenges Grendel to embrace life in death. The conclusion looks forward to the redemptive possibilities of art and gives meaning to the integrity of Beowulf's enduring vision, that there is hope after all, even for a monster.

A Tiger for Malgudi (1983) is as remote from Grendel as Malgudi is from Hrothgar's Nordic meadhalls. As opposed in sensibility as one is to the other, they are, however, linked together through a common mode of perception which in all superficiality seems to be unrelated: the one deriving itself from a bleak underside perspective of man and the other, from a humane but comic view of the human situation altogether. One realises, however, after a reading of each book that both R.K. Narayan and John Gardner are arch fabulists who have harnessed their imaginations for a definite purpose: to edify and to entertain. This is a purpose as ancient as the myths that the novelists draw upon.

The archetype of the true artist for both novelists, lies in his ability to fashion the truth in a unique way,

using his potential for creativity to codify a world view that intimately arises from the artist's perception of the ideal norm. For Gardner this becomes a passionate commitment to instill the moral value of art in society. His fiction embodies the struggle to articulate a process of moral discovery. For Narayan, who unlike Gardner, is more of a story-teller than a theorist in the sense that he has less to say about his own fiction, this manifests itself through a fictional mode that ironically displays the comic inconsequentiality of human pretension. Though Gardner discriminates between "moral" and "didactic", the former according to him being a dynamic appendage to all good art and the latter categorically decried because of the clumsy moralisms attributed to it, yet the didactic nature of his fiction is an important feature. This didacticism, however, has been transmuted by the artist's poetic ability to clothe it in dramatic ways, thus allowing for the interpenetration of the larger moral vision. It would not be inappropriate at this level to seek corroboration from Narayan's view of fiction, which allows for didacticism to work in a manner that diffuses itself through the story so as to elicit both the aesthetic and the moral in art. "Since didacticism was never shunned, every story has implicit in it a moral value, likened to the fragrance of a well-shaped flower."<sup>37</sup> We find that in both, the truth is enhanced through a respective

dedication to the craft of fiction or to the art of story-telling. The story-teller or the fiction writer is an important voice of his community. Narayan's assessment of who the story-teller is, is an important aspect of his fiction, an important dimension of the narrative mode with which this thesis is concerned. He says, "he is part and parcel of the Indian village community, which is somewhat isolated from the mainstream of modern life."<sup>38</sup> In an interview quoted earlier in the chapter, Gardner too perceives the artist's responsibility to his own society: "I really do believe Shelley's idea about the poet as the legislator of mankind."<sup>39</sup> The moral "fragrance" of the "well-shaped flower" can never be contrived as is the moral vision of both Gardner and Narayan. It impels them towards a fictional formulation of values that need to be understood in the full context of the narrative mode adopted within their novels. Grendel is, allegorically speaking, the alienated voice that seeks to restore to itself a vision of the truth as it is cast in the terrestrial lives of some of the characters observable to him. In the attempt to discover inner meanings, he unearths the truth about his own monstrous self. He shows the reader through Grendel, an obduracy in human nature that cannot be vanquished by anyone except by the principle of order and of love embodied in Beowulf. The disintegrative view of life is an allegorical replay of the fragmented psyche that has been

disoriented by its commitment to wordy intellectualisms. Though Grendel, narratively considered, is an entire world away from A Tiger for Malqudi, the two novels arrive at individual verdicts on humankind. Both, however, display a fictional aptitude for making the usual unusual and for making fictional restatements of the truth through protagonists who do not belong to this world. Both writers step outside the ordinary in order to transpose in a different key altogether, an entire world view reconstructed from values that have normally remained hidden from life. Thus in both novels, the story has been manipulated for the special purpose of imparting a fresh moral perspective to the reader. Whereas Grendel's inverted philosophy is a fantastic parable of the breakdown of the human intellect, Narayan's tiger-protagonist Raja belongs to an artless but penetrating fable on the soul's journey to freedom. In the course of the story Raja is discovered to be an allegorical dimension of the human soul. He is an unevolved aspect of it, forming a part of the cycle of human life to be carefully understood, but not to be isolated as Captain, in his bid for success, did so.

Both protagonists are hampered by linguistic disabilities. They are unable to speak. Although Grendel strings whole philosophies together and uses words to express himself, there is a lack of conception that springs from a

basic lack of self-communication. On the other hand, the tiger-protagonist who is ironically so ignorant at first, allowing himself to be a naive sounding board of the human talk that carries on within his hearing, gradually begins to understand the conceptual meaning of certain ideas, which in turn revolutionises selfhood for him and carries him higher up the spiritual ladder. In Grendel, the conflict of idea and emotion is brought to a decisive end by Beowulf's radical breaking in of the Grendel consciousness; breaking it in order to make it whole for it to be able to perceive a vision of death denied to it in life. In a similar manner, Raja, the tiger-protagonist, is broken in by the Tiger-Hermit who assigns him a role in life and attributes to him faculties that are distinctively human. Grendel and Raja are symbolic dimensions of the human psyche. The thematic core of each novel rises from each novelist's perception, the one tragic, and the other comic, of the obtuseness of human thought and behaviour at all levels. A Tiger for Malqudi thus finds its place in the study of the allegorical mode by virtue of a perceiving sensibility that discriminates between the actual and the ideal, between the lived reality and the ideal norm of life and behaviour. The comedy that arises hence is the singular one of Malgudian disenchantment with itself, related in the universally allegorical language of symbol and metaphor.

In the introduction to his novel, Narayan traces his tiger's lineage to that of an actual tiger reported to be accompanying a hermit at the Kumbh Mela festival, freely moving "about without hurting or scaring anyone",<sup>40</sup> Incredible but true, it provided him with the seminal idea for a novel which was in turn precipitated by a bookmark that he happened to come upon, "a four-inch-long strip of cardboard with the picture of a young tiger pleading, 'I'd love to get into a good book'". (p.7) In thus allowing himself to be persuaded by the "Muses" (p.7) to take a tiger as the subject of his novel, he crosses over into a realm of story-telling that has definite links with the animal fables of ancient India. C.D. Narasimhaiah has remarked upon Narayan's return in A Tiger for Malqudi to the "motif of Panchtantra", thus making the tiger-protagonist "credible"<sup>41</sup> to the entire English speaking world. There is, however, none of that one to one correspondence between the animal and the human world that is to be found in the animal fable. Narayan adheres to a fictional pattern of story-telling that, although derived from Western literature, incorporates within it the story of an indigeneous tiger whose personality has deep resonances of the human. The indigeneity of the tiger and his setting has been artfully manipulated by Narayan to find significance in a novel whose philosophic world view corroborates the universal quest for identity. Narayan adopts

a mode of narration that is deliberately allegorical in its closeness to the fable.

Raja, the tiger-protagonist, addresses himself directly to the reader, explaining his lack of the higher faculties of the spirit and generally taking the reader back to the Malgudian setting, but this time from a tiger's perspective. The experiment with using a tiger-protagonist as persona was a challenge to Narayan as a fiction writer, for "humans" had always "monopolized the attention of fiction writers. Man in his smugness never imagines for a moment that other creatures may also possess ego, values, outlook, and the ability to communicate, though they may be incapable of audible speech". (pp.7-8) He is a perfect foil to the average Malgudian who makes a fool of himself all the time. The tiger-protagonist is endowed with the fiction writer's facility for zooming in on the more telling incidents of his life so that the self-portraiture is not a simple one of chronological detail but of inner discoveries, of outer changes and of strange relationships with men. In his introduction, Narayan has already prepared the reader for the philosophical overtones to be found in his novel.

Raja has the ability to recollect his past. We meet him in his old age at a philosophic moment at the zoo, as he laments over a forbidding exterior that actually hides a "soul within". "You are not likely to understand that I am

different from the tiger next door, that I possess a soul within this forbidding exterior". (p.11) He displays an objectivity that emulates the Tiger-Hermit himself. As he comes under the increasing influence of his Master, the Tiger-Hermit, he learns to question: "'Who am I?'" (p.12) The answer lies in his ability to transcend a past heavily charged with violence. Recollections of it does not bring him immediately closer to an understanding of himself. But, as he sees himself in the elucidating light of his Master's words, he evinces a positive understanding of his own past. He records the linear progress of his life upto the moment when his Master, the Tiger-Hermit, takes charge of him, after which, the pattern changes altogether. Life now becomes a muted attempt to understand God.

... All day long I lay across the entrance of his shelter. It was enough for me that I was near him, while he sat with his eyes shut in prayer. ... More than once he mentioned God. ... 'You may not understand the word. But let it sink in your mind and ring on your ears, ...'. (p.136)

As action-packed as his earlier life was, so is his life now free of the senseless cravings of the flesh. "I suffered hunger for consecutive days before seeking food again, but felt nobler for it". (p.138) His perspective on life undergoes successive changes. "This phase of life I found elevating: the change churning internally was still felt by

me, but did not bother me now as it did at the beginning". (p.139) In an early paragraph he asks the reader to touch him so he would hold out his forepaw to shake the reader's hand, after retracting his claws. Literally and symbolically, his life now is one of soul searching withdrawal into non-violence and love.

There is a strange congruence between the human and the animal in A Tiger of Malqudi. Whereas animal fables abound with animal protagonists who have limited faculties and who play one-dimensional roles, the tiger-protagonist in A Tiger for Malqudi is both human and sub-human. Human in his sensitivity to matters relating to the spirit, sub-human in his inability to "shed the frightening physical encasement" (p.138) God had chosen for him. He is a mute observer of men, "I lack only the faculty of speech", (p.12) and is an uncanny combination of shrewd insight and confused naivety that continually plays upon the reader's responses to him and to the human drama discordantly evolving itself around him.

The tiger-protagonist is first and foremost a tiger true to the limited constructs of his own genius. He perceives of God as being a giant tiger. He never hides his bloody past. The reader is made to understand the necessary evil of jungle survival in the forests of Mempi. This is an early phase of his life marked by freedom and by urgent primal feelings. It ends abruptly with the savage murder of

his family which becomes a bitter launching as it were, into the extravagant politics of human affairs. Raja describes his anguish at the sight of his dead family stretched out on a cart. What started off as a simple jungle tale, now appears to take on a tragic dimension:

The sight of my family stretched out there filled me with fury. In those days I was still a tiger, an unmitigated animal, and the only feeling that was aroused in me was fury, rather than grief, which I understand now. (p.22)

However, being a novelist whose penchant for the comic and the ludicrous for outweighs that the tragic, Narayan never allows his tiger-protagonist to dwell for too long upon his losses. Events so speedily catch up with him that we find him caught in a way of life as alien to him as the humans that he first encounters outside the Mempi range.

Narayan's whimsical selection of a tiger-protagonist has its roots in the Indian imagination whose world view is framed by a dormant sense of one's past. In an interview, Narayan affirms the significance of India's prolific past thus:

I have studied Indian mythology ... . After all, for any story writer the prototype still inevitably remains our own epics and mythological stories, though they might not be in a subtle psychological manner but, symbolically and allegorically. We cannot get away from that tradition.<sup>42</sup>

He, however, moves away from the simple construction of these tales, having inherited through a colonial past, the intricacies of Western literature and as he tells us in "The Fiction Writer in India":

The English language brought with it to India not only a new type of literature but all the world's literature in translation. Indian writers were exposed to new forms such as the novel and short story. These not only revealed new artistic possibilities for a writer but also stimulated his social awareness.<sup>43</sup>

He has successfully incorporated the traditional within the more complex form of the novel. The tiger-protagonist is thus a believable entity, rooted in the sociological and in the mythical ethos of Malgudi, a veritable part of the "story-teller's world". He represents an aspect of the Indian philosophical ideal of the transmigration of souls which presupposes the evolutionary potential of all creatures. At the level of the fable, the tiger-protagonist is a type and a variation of all its animal protagonists<sup>s</sup>. At the metaphysical level, the tiger-protagonist is an allegorical figure of truth attempting to explore the Hindu way of life. The mode of narration consequently adopted is neither overtly serious nor overtly comic, both allegorical and ironical at the same time. The one evocative of the symbolic layers of meaning attached to a tiger set loose in the human jungle of Malgudi, and the other, humorously focussing upon human folly; a major set back to spiritual development in Malgudi. The narrative

is a "rare combination of comic sense and religious sensibility".<sup>44</sup> Narayan never gives up his Indian sensibility which is "saturated with the Indian tradition and sensitive to the experience implicit in the Indian myth" to a greater talent for "candid reproduction of surfaces and manners and behaviour".<sup>45</sup> The coalescence of the two strains within the book calls for a reading of it at once sensitive to and appreciative of Narayan's ability to symbolically provide Malgudi with its own tiger. A tiger, who is avowedly its most sane inhabitant and through whom much comedy and much philosophy has been solicited. To take Raja at his face value, however, as merely being a character who adds to the comic confusion of Malgudian life would be to miss out on the inner significance of all his experiences put together, especially the brief but important relationship that he eventually forges with the Tiger-Hermit. The Tiger-Hermit proves himself to be an authentic *sannyasi* judging by the itinerary that he follows which does not allow him to become permanently attached to person or place; even to someone as much in need of him as his Malgudian family or Raja. The allegorical significance of Raja clearly emerges in the latter part of the narrative where he winds up being more human than tiger, tragically conscious of being "encased" in a ferocious shell. On reviewing whatever Raja has garnered from his association with the Tiger-Hermit, the residual

feeling that the reader is left with is that the inner ill-matched with the outer, strives to free itself of physical fetters; that Raja is the ultimate focus of all spiritual possibilities in A Tiger for Malqudi; that in comprehending what he stands for, one takes a perceptive step closer to the principle of unity underlying all living creatures; that in accepting him as an animal possessive of a soul, one is able to bridge the gap that lies between all living creatures. It would also imply that the reader has been able to take that imaginative step with Narayan towards an intuitive understanding of the inner reality of all things, that "deep within the core of personality is the same in spite of differing appearances and categories and with the right approach you could expect the same response from a tiger as from any normal human being". (p.9)

There is a sense of anticipation on the part of the old Raja lying on the cool floor of the zoo, "madly" hoping that his "Master might suddenly appear out of a crowd, open the door" of his cage and "command, 'come out, let us go'". (p.11) The Tiger-Hermit has been an eye opener for the tiger-protagonist as well as for the reader. Raja has been the allegorical vehicle through which a higher life has been postulated. The possibility for this lies in the Tiger-Hermit's ability to extricate Raja from himself, unlocking the doors of perception for him. Having being launched on the

journey towards selfhood Raja must learn to free himself from his attachment to the material, become what the Tiger-Hermit himself aspires for. In all honesty, Raja is deeply Malgudian in his attachment to material power and to the ego. It would not be too far-fetched to see "Raja's growth, traced through three phases in three symbolic locations — the jungle, the circus and the forest —" as being an allegorical enactment of "the growth from thoughtless self-seeking to a thoughtful search for the self".<sup>46</sup> He is Narayan's ideal choice for an allegorical character, partly human and partly sub-human, belonging entirely to the Hindu ethos which believes in the soul being present in every living creature.

A Tiger for Malgudi is an imaginative reworking of an old theme. A theme that is consistently human and consistently allegorical in its quest for the spiritual realities that underlie the material. Raja is exploited as a fictional means to a spiritual end. However philosophical the issues are that are raised through him, the book, still preserves its characteristically Malgudian irony. The characters in it all contribute directly or indirectly towards the evolution of Raja's soul. It is as a tiger that he enters human society through a Malgudian circus. It is as a tiger but as a different tiger altogether, that he retires from it. The intervening period is one of ironic descent into human society; a discovery of its human proponents and of its

peculiar values as it would reflect upon a tiger enslaved to its defendants. The comedy that arises is the characteristic one of Malgudian eccentricity as it sets out to domesticate a tiger, to make of it a circus performer for the sensational benefit of its Malgudian audience. What makes the book philosophical and allegorical is the unusual transpiration of events within it. The usual run of Narayan's domestic Malgudian comedy is overlaid by a sequence of events that could have brought carnage to Malgudi — Raja's bid for freedom at the cost of Captain's life. Malgudi town runs amok with fear of an unidentified carnivore. The appearance of the Tiger-Hermit amidst the uproar, aggravates the other Malgudians contending for Raja's blood. However, his enigmatic power over Raja saps Raja of all his strength and brings to the story a new dimension of experience utterly unknown to Raja, now well versed in the violence and volubility of Malgudian thinking. Narayan has already prepared the reader for the unusual and the extraordinary in his introduction to the novel. It comes as no real surprise, therefore, that the Tiger-Hermit breaks down all barriers of communication with Raja. In the context of the novel he is not a *deus ex machina*. He is what he is, a Tiger-Hermit, a *sannyasi*, who having "roused" his "supernatural powers" during "certain yogic practices", employs them to save Raja and to "transform" him "inwardly". (p.9) The metaphysics of

it being: all living creatures form a vital part of the cosmic principle of life. The novel follows the logic of Indian myths where realism is qualitatively displaced by figurative manifestations of psychic possibilities. Hence the accountability of the unusual and the extraordinary in the story and the identification that the reader may easily find with Raja's struggle for selfhood. Allegorically speaking, the material canvas of human life, deplored by the Tiger-Hermit, must be fully experienced before the process of the sanctification of the soul begins to take place; or before "one renounces everything" (p.8) in order to become a sannyasi. The Tiger-Hermit transforms Raja and sets him on the road on which he himself is travelling. For a better understanding of the book one would have to seek assistance from "A Hindu Fable" once again.

We can enjoy it simply as a witty variant of a familiar form: the animal fable that inverts the assumption that men are superior to beasts. Or we can take it more seriously and use it, as Narayan does, to explore those spiritual concepts that belong to the nebulous part of our religious imagination. These two approaches are not absolute alternatives, for the story moves with ingenious consistency, and on complementary bases, along both these tracks.<sup>47</sup>

A Tiger for Malqudi ought not to be mistaken for a philosophical treatise. Its philosophy of self-renunciation imparted by the Tiger-Hermit and plausibly realized in Raja's

earthly life has been factually dealt with as being a probable part of the dynamics of Malgudian life. After all, the Tiger-Hermit was once part of Malgudi. Yet he was able to step out of its orbit to orient himself to the higher, intangible values of the spirit.

Narayan unassumingly begins his story where it should, allowing his protagonist to commence his story with recollections of his "early days as a cave-dweller and jungle beast". (p.12) The novelty lies in the presence of a narrating tiger-protagonist who is almost human in his commitment to the ideals of non-violence. We follow his momentous journey back in time conscious all the while of an un-tiger-like conscientiousness in baring the facts of his past in an attempt to understand himself better. Narayan uses him as a perfect foil to the average Malgudian, figuratively lost in the histrionics of survival in a small town. Raja narrates incidents from his life which has to do with his human masters whom he as passive observer notices. The picture of humanity construed by him is of the undecipherable nature of men who always seem to be in constant activity. As noticeably observed by a number of critics Narayan's talent for sighting the comic incongruities of his characters finds ironic expression in depicting them in their situational roles. Distilled through a tiger's consciousness is the familiar goings on in the Malgudian circus. "Human talk in

different keys" is clearly audible to Raja who is bewildered and lost. "Captain and his yes-man would come off and on ... looking" at him, "say something between themselves, and then leave". His imprisonment leaves him no room at all for physical exercise. His one artless observation, "But no one cared" (p.41) brings into focus the indifference surrounding him. At a profound level, Narayan stands behind his tiger-protagonist enlisting his support in making observations on the "comedy of manners"<sup>48</sup> around him. "Narayan's sense of the comic is sustained not by a Dickensian kind of exaggeration but rather "by" the irony of understatement practised by a Jane Austen". In The Swan and the Eagle, C.D. Narasimhaiah comments on Narayan's commitment to the "sense of comedy", his employment of it in his earlier fiction with special reference to The Guide, which, if quoted at length, would help the reader to understand the narrative mode also used in A Tiger for Malqudi. It is a mode that is ironical in its delineation of comic peculiarities and at the same time allegorical in its ability to merge the comic in the philosophic. It is a primarily Indian philosophical world view which bears universal corroboration in its advocacy of the principle of cosmic unity. Continuing with his critique, Narasimhaiah observes that

... It is the surpassing triumph of the art which makes the comic pursue the ends of the tragic, in the attempt to resolve the duality and perceive the hard core of

things. It has been rightly claimed that all prose fiction is a variation on the theme of Cervantes' Don Quixote, of appearance and reality, love, beauty, money, prestige — those generations of illusion which mislead the individual and complicate human relationships and perpetually place him in a false position with man and God have to be broken through. The tragic muse who normally grapples with so serious an enterprise is here seen surrendering her privilege in favour of her rival, the muse of comedy, who accepts the opportunity with a daring and demonstrates her possibilities in the hands of a consummate practitioner of art. ...

Artistically speaking, may be, this calls for a greater degree of detachment and far subtler means on the part of the author than what is at the disposal of the tragic artist. But what it gains in detachment it loses in intensity and capacity for profound engagement — the strength of tragic art. But to penetrate areas clearly outside the bounds of tragedy and sensitize us to the possibilities of the commonplace for the apprehension of reality can only be the privilege of comic art. And it is a rare privilege of Narayan to use the comic mode to prove the highest kind of reality ...<sup>49</sup>

Narayan is keenly observant of his tiger-protagonists reaction to humanity, and of humanity's unwitting revelation of itself as it seeks to make of the tiger-protagonist, a performing artist. "Stepping into human society was a thoughtless act" (p.26) for Raja, whose initiation into it comes by way of a trap cunningly laid out for him. Meanwhile, the reader is given an updated history of Captain and his inheritance, the "Dadhaji Grand Circus". Nothing in

Raja's earlier life had ever prepared him for the mental and physical isolation that is to follow. As Raja gets closer to men he finds possible links with them:

For one used to the grand silence of the jungle, the noisy nature of humanity was distressing. In due course, I got used to it. When I imbibed my Master's lessons, I realized that deep within I was not different from human beings, and I got into their habit myself and never had a moment's silence or stillness of mind — I was either talking (in my own way, inaudibly) or listening, and thus became fully qualified to enter human society. (p.39)

It becomes ironical that the pre-requisite for entering human society would be the verbal ability to expound at great length. This is an aspect of human nature that at first confuses Raja, whose world consists of the two-dimensional extremes of action and inaction. However, he soon realises that disorder and confusion are the hallmarks of life in Malgudi, reflected as it is in the madness surrounding his practice sessions with Captain, in which the ultimate act that he is forced to perform is, to alternatively drink milk from the same saucer with a goat. Captain is the quintessential achiever whose business acumen is as sound as his interest in the animals that bring profit to him:

The most strenuous part of their lives was during the training period. At that stage he was unsparing; and if they perished during the training, he took it as an inevitable risk of his trade. Once they were trained to perform, he viewed them as his assets to be protected, his

own prosperity depending on their welfare. (p.59)

Raja's perception of Captain is of a good manager and a dedicated professional. He has a flair for showmanship,

'... It's a sequence of precise acts, timed properly, which sense of time is displayed uncannily by Raja. He will go through the act with precision, and finish the sequence as befits a country dedicated to non-violence, with the sip of milk in the company of a goat. ...'  
(p.63)

which never stands in the way of any blunder that may be committed by his performers. When Raja nips off the goat's head, Captain clears up the mess with remarkable deftness and alacrity, never for a moment allowing the show to be held up. A "mixture of pleasure and shame" (p.12) inevitably accompanies every memorable recollection that Raja makes of his own past. As he is bent upon discovering himself, he remaps his past as accurately as possible. The sense of immediacy is never lost as Raja re-lives each incident and recreates each character as he appears to him. Captain becomes an important aspect of his past, an important influence upon him before his tutelage to the Tiger-Hermit. Captain is characteristically Malgudian in outlook, as close to Raja as is permissible in such a violent relationship.

... The ways of Captain were mysterious. Whatever he had in mind, he seemed to be able to express it only through violence. How I wished that he could speak my language or I his. There was no meeting ground between us, but still we had so

much to do with each other all the time. That was the irony of fate. Captain was convinced that if he bellowed deafeningly I'd understand, stupid fellow, although I had to admire him for several reasons. (p.55)

The Tiger-Hermit may be identified with Captain to the extent that he too was once engaged in the daily pursuit of a livelihood. Raja too may be identified with Captain through a past that is inextricably tied up with him. Captain is portrayed as a successful master acquiring an excellent reputation in the limited circles of Malgudi:

He had done something original and really creative in the annals of circus and no one could repeat or imitate his programme; the success was entirely due to Captain's genius. (p.64)

If the book were to end with death, the death of Captain, there would be no symbolic meaning attached to Raja's life. Since the spiritual topography of the novel lies in the depiction of the inner life of a tiger who is attempting to penetrate the perennial question "'Who am I?'" (p.12) Captain's tragic death is not the pivotal point in the book. Structurally and thematically, however, it is important in so far as it secures freedom for Raja and permits him a view of man denied to him in captivity:

... As he stooped down to caress me with its tip, I just raised a forepaw, taking care to retract my claws, and knocked the thing out of hand. The blow caught Captain under his chin, and tore off his head. It was surprising that such a flimsy creature, no better than a

membrane stretched over some thin framework, with so little stuff inside, should have held me in fear so long. (pp.99-100)

There is a degree of clinical detachment in the retelling which allows him to observe Captain's gradual "corruption through contact with the film world". (p.95) He becomes uncharacteristically "submissive" and takes orders from Madan and the Cameraman, "my Captain blindly carrying out ... orders, whipping, hitting and yelling" and losing his "grip over himself and his self-respect". (p.97) This is how Captain vents his frustration upon Raja who would have "spoken" to him if he could and given him timely warning. "But he was drunk with authority" and could not "save himself". (p.99) The confrontation is brief and decisive, ending Raja's enslavement forever. It has already been mentioned that Captain is characteristically Malgudian firmly rooted to its realities. At the allegorical level, this is a phase in the life of Raja depicting his bondage to the material world and the intransigency of all physical reality. As the tempo of Captain's slave driving tactics steps up, Raja becomes perversely affected by it, and, as violence begets violence in a natural way, it forces Captain to pay for it with his life. Captain's impingement upon Raja's freedom is a violation of all natural order, its natural culmination being disorder and strife at the microcosmic and the macrocosmic level. Raja, unperturbed by the senseless

destruction that he has brought about enters "Market Road" at a busy hour. This marks his allegorical entry into a new phase of life altogether. His soul, as yet unanchored to the truth seeks respite for a while and as he advances deeper into the city, he sends people scuttling away from him. This testifies to the irony of men trying to run away from the consequences of their own actions and turns the situation into the kind of comedy that has unobtrusively marked Narayan's depiction of Malgudian life. Raja continues his monologue within the narrative describing the collective fear that seizes them. In his typically detached observation of everything that happens, he has a dig at the humans who have always considered themselves superior to all other creatures:

... I'm not out to kill ... I'm too full  
... Tigers attack only when they feel  
hungry, unlike human beings who slaughter  
one another without purpose or hunger ...  
(pp.101-102)

With the entry of the Tiger-Hermit at this point in the narrative, it takes a different turn altogether. An assorted crowd gathers in the school where Raja has just sought shelter, discussing ways and means of getting rid of him, and of rescuing the Headmaster. The Tiger-Hermit is also in their midst and he answers the queries that are put before him in his own mysterious way. At first, this misleads the reader into categorising him as a "crazy beggar" as the others do:

'... Who are you?'  
'You are asking a profound question. I've no idea who I am. All my life I have been trying to find the answer. Are you sure you know who you are?'  
'Crazy beggar ... there is no time for useless talk ...'. (p.103)

The full import of his words may only be discovered later on in the narrative. From now onwards his presence more articulate than words, works upon the disorderly bunch that presumes to be able to bring order to an unusual situation. The Tiger-Hermit lacks the "normal or social identity" and appears at the "fringes of the social order". A recluse by choice he is one of those "marginal or liminal people"<sup>50</sup> who inhabit Narayan's fiction. He is a stranger to others, but himself no stranger to the bourgeois values of Malgudi. He evidently understands each character's motive for action and passively remains in the background until such time as he is needed. The events preceding his rescue of Raja reflects Narayan's ability to exploit the comic and the ironic:

'We have no ladder in this school', he said timidly.  
'Do you mean to say', Alphonse asked contemptuously, 'that you run a school like this without a ladder?'  
'What is a ladder for in a teaching institution?' questioned the assistant headmaster in a foolhardy manner.  
'Don't be impudent', said Alphonse, glaring at him, at which the assistant headmaster took fright and tried to mollify him by saying, 'Headmaster requisitioned for one last year but the D.P.I.'s office are holding up the

sanction. Unless they sanction the budget, we can't even buy a pin ...' (p.110)

Alphonse proves to be a serious deterrent to the Tiger-Hermit's plans for rescuing Raja. He is characterised by his voluble talk and drunken ways.

'If I had four arms like some of your gods', said Alphonse from the roof, 'I would not have needed the help of these young people. Two of my hands would have pulled the tiles out, while the other two might have been holding the gun and triggering off the shot. ... And then he proceeded to remove a few tiles and asked the boys to follow his example. They tore up the tiles with zest and threw them down recklessly, enjoying the sight of their elders dodging below. (p.113)

He is zealously egotistical in his mission, bribing the "Save Tiger Project" officials in order to be allowed to shoot Raja as he was "known to be engaged in a flourishing business exporting tiger skins". (p.118) At the ordinary level of daily transactions the comic and the ironic infuses the narrative with a pedestrian sense of life maintaining all the while a measure of deep tolerance for everything human. The Tiger-Hermit is no less human than Alphonse and the Captain. This we get to know later on in the story when isolated with Raja in the Mempi jungle, he is visited and identified by his wife of Malgudian days. When she questions him in an attempt to bring him back, his candid answer to her conclusively puts away all sense of a personal past and of personal attachments:

'Listen attentively, my past does not exist for me, nor a future. I live for the moment, and that awareness is enough for me. To attain this state, I have gone through much hardship. I don't have to explain all that now. I have erased from my mind my name and identity and all that it implies. It would be unthinkable to slide back. You must live your own life and leave me to live mine and end it my own way. (p.148)

Raja overhears them and begins to understand the struggle involved in that voluntary surrender of the personal self to the cosmic self. Since the Tiger-Hermit himself was once a veritable *Malgudian* he displays great compassion for Raja's serfdom to the senses. Meanwhile, Raja's inner journey to real selfhood begins the moment he is in the vicinity of his Master, the Tiger-Hermit. "My Master's presence in the vicinity, though he had not come near me yet, must have begun to affect one". (p.118) The aura of his presence has already affected several others who have been confounded by him. Alphonse has had all his senses de-activated by the Tiger-Hermit's powers of auto-suggestion and his plans for killing Raja are completely foiled. The Tiger-Hermit has attained a degree of self-consciousness which has heightened his powers of perception giving him a spiritual edge over others. In the introduction Narayan explains how the genuine *sannyasi* attains certain powers:

... During certain yogic practices, eight kinds of supernatural powers may be roused ... But such magical powers are

considered to be stages in one's evolution, incidental powers acquired on the way, to be ignored and not exercised for profit or self-promotion, except to mitigate pain or suffering in others.  
(p.9)

It may be observed that the Tiger-Hermit has no personal gains whatsoever in his rescue of Raja, except for a disinterested commitment to the principles of non-violence, the spirit of which has been ironically travestied by Raja's annihilation of the goat and by Captain's pursuit of power at the cost of animal life. Into a confused world of circus masters, film-makers and self-styled educationists is brought the alien presence of an ascetic calmly interposing for the soul of a tiger. If one were to understand the significance of the Tiger-Hermit one would have to accept the transformation of Raja as an important manifestation of his powers. Raja is neither compelled to obey him nor restricted from pursuing his old way of life. In his new found freedom, however, he finds himself more disposed to listening to his Master talk, than to taking up his old life-style once again.

The latter part of the book is filled with the presence of the Tiger-Hermit. For the time being as he sojourns at the "foot of Mempi Range", Raja has the advantage of a companion who does not treat him "as an animal which sat before him in respectful silence trying to understand his words", but of one who is "trying to transform" him in "so many ways".  
(p.137) He is the exemplar of human equilibrium, as far away

from friction and conflict as Raja now is, from his old mercenary self. There is a symbolic change of setting and a symbolic change of environment in the backdrop of the Mempi Jungle where the Tiger-Hermit chooses his temporary abode beneath a "rock jutting over a ledge". (p.136) A sense of stillness and peace now seems to be within reach of Raja himself. Talk goes on as before, but it is not the ceaseless babble of words that was the norm in Captain's circus and in Madan's film-world. Conversation is marked by meaningful discourses on God and on life with sufficient time for meditation. The narrative takes on a deeply reflective tone suggestive of Raja's figurative withdrawal from his old self.

... Nowadays the keenness of my hunger was also gone, and I slipped away into the jungle, not too often, only when I felt I could not stand hunger anymore ... I ... stalked the littlest game, just sufficient enough to satisfy my hunger of the moment and not my gluttony. (p.137-138)

There is within him a growing sense of responsibility for his own actions; a heightened awareness of, and an appreciation of his natural surroundings, which the Tiger-Hermit interprets as "poetic joy", the kind of which one would associate with a sensitive poet. "Looking back, I would say that in one of your previous births you might have been a poet, and your deeper personality retains that Vasana still". (p.143) Layer upon layer of his outer self is gradually being

stripped away for Raja's edification. Reality for him now consists of an apprehension of the cyclic pattern of change moving towards resolution. As the basics of Hindu philosophy is being imparted to him there is a visible sense of release for Raja. He no longer seeks to define himself by outward action but through a process of "realization" allows for the "growth" (p.138) of the inner self. His relationship with his Master, the Tiger-Hermit, bears superficial comparison with the Manolin-Santiago relationship in The Old Man and the Sea. It follows the pattern of the teacher-disciple relationship. Raja's Master is a guru in the real sense of the word, respectful of another's physical identity but with an intuitional understanding of the inner life of all creatures. Having himself achieved a level of consciousness higher than normal, he displays a disciplined tolerance for human folly of all kinds and uses his mental powers to serve the ends of his own faith; which is that of rehabilitating the soul of a physical tiger, helping him discover his inner spiritual element. He is able to establish an unseen rapport with him, thereby proving the authenticity of his yogic powers to the reader, especially as they have been harnessed for a greater good.

A true understanding of the meanings implicit in a tiger's quest for selfhood lies in apprehending the allegorical significance of the story. At its simplest level

it reads like an animal fable but one that is curiously alive with perception and observation. At the allegorical level, it relates to issues that are genuinely metaphysical. It opens up avenues of experience that requires the reader to be able to look beyond the surface reality of all things, to be able to see, as the Tiger-Hermit does into the soul of things. At the beginning Raja is hardly impressive. This may be the reason why Narayan allows him to spin the story of his life, an aesthetic means of recasting philosophy in the ordinary language of everyday life. Seemingly, Narayan takes a back seat view of his tiger-protagonist who relates everything that he observes in as simple and as deliberate a manner as possible. The characterising elements of Narayan's comedy give momentum to the personal memoir of a tiger-protagonist who is but a fictional embodiment of the aspirant to the Hindu way of life. Allegorically, Raja's initial "cave-dwelling" instincts are the equivalent of the primal instincts of the undeveloped soul. Gayatri Acharya and Anita Desai<sup>51</sup> see his passage through the jungle, the circus, his ultimate apprenticeship to the Tiger-Hermit and his incarceration at the zoo, as allegorical stepping stones of the soul on its way to fulfilment. One cannot help interpreting Raja's sojourns allegorically, or actually seeing him as an embodiment of the soul on its way to finding itself. However, one has to remind oneself of Narayan's

critique of human egotism which always places man at the centre of the universe, "... Man assumes he is all-important, that all else in creation exists only for his sport, amusement, comfort or nourishment", (p.8) and which forbids him from recognising the essential validity of any other living creature. Contrary to popular fiction which bestows importance only on man, Narayan "wished to examine what the result would be if" he "made a tiger the central character in a novel". (p.8) Raja's story might read like a fabulous tale, but it is grounded in Narayan's talent for story telling. As the "story teller" himself, he owes it to his audience to entertain them with stories that are "fragrant" with the truth, using the utmost skill to make them interesting. His audience may be simple village folk who gather round the story-teller after a hard day's work expectantly waiting for mental succour, or they may be educated folks of a modern world. The story succeeds in conveying its meaning at different levels. It is both an animal fable and a parable of the mystiques of Hindu philosophy, using common narrative forms that may be easily understood. It may also be read as an allegorical rendering of the pursuit of the Hindu way of life. Whichever way one may look at it, one must never however lose sight of Narayan's original intention, of it being a story about a tiger. That the tiger should resemble man's inner self, that

he should be made to recognise his potential for spiritual growth is a feat of imagination achieved only through Narayan's ability to characterise the Tiger-Hermit who gives credibility to the tiger's soul, actually assisting it in finding God through its own ways. He represents a culminating point in Hindu metaphysics, humanised through his deliberate intervention in the preservation of Raja's soul. Narayan does not dwell too long on the Tiger-Hermit's antecedents but the reader knows that he too had once lived "by the clock ... anxious to be treated as a respectable man in society". (p.139) Like Raja, but in a different sense, he too was once engaged in intense physical activity, until such time as the senselessness of such activities weighed him down; that became his moment of renunciation. The Tiger-Hermit trusts Raja with his own past. Others are kept wondering about him, "let us forget him and his tiger. Something uncanny about him ...". (p.133) Even his wife is sent away unacknowledged by him. These prove to be authentic facts of the Tiger-Hermit's detachment from life. Narayan builds up a legend of the Tiger-Hermit through conversation and hearsay, important vehicles of communication in Malgudi, which obliterates the truth about him. Only Raja knows who he is; an ironic comment on humanity itself, for it proves itself unable to accept the truth as spontaneously as Raja. In his adoption of a central animal figure, Narayan has had to go back to a

literary past in order to incorporate a form for his narrative which in a universal sense speaks of the intractable heart of man. This he achieves by using an animal to measure the spiritual lack in man.

The tiger is indeed an important character in a Hindu milieu where "Narayan seems to be saying that not only is the universe basically one, but that animals too may attain spiritual growth and eventual release from the cycle of rebirths without assuming human form. To think that they must is merely one of man's more egotistical delusions".<sup>52</sup> Raja's acceptability as an important dimension of the philosophy of life posited by the Tiger-Hermit, would also depend upon the reader's ability to allegorise his very existence. Despite his claims for writing a novel solely about a tiger, Narayan does work towards a consolidation of a specific world order manifested through the Tiger-Hermit, a character whose past has common links with Captain and Madan. In the final reckoning the identities of Master and Tiger anticipate a coalescence of values which will submerge all physical distinctions. Though their personalities are not completely integrated, Raja anticipates just that as he patiently waits for his Master at the zoo. The allegory of the soul waiting to be united with its Master is only just subtly hinted at in the end. "'Both of us will shed our forms soon and perhaps we could meet again, who knows?' ..."

(p.152) It is a question that remains unanswered in Raja's lifetime. It merely hints at a visionary sense of the future that Raja must learn to accept as he makes the final move from his natural habitat, the Mempri Jungle, to the zoo. Linear time has been replaced by a sense of cyclic time, and by a redefinition of roles and objectives. Ironically, his identity lies buried in a past which must be revived in order that wholeness of vision may be achieved by him. In his old age there is hope for new beginnings. Allegorically, the end portrays a complete withdrawal from, and a total renunciation of the physical. Though imprisoned within the zoo Raja's mental horizon has increased considerably to the extent that the question "'Who am I?'" (p.12) becomes the absorbing interest of his old age. No definitions are proffered but as the novel reaches its conclusion, identification with Raja becomes progressively easier. The reader too has had his values overhauled and his spiritual insight sharpened by the Tiger-Hermit's systematic elucidation of "the profound Hindu conviction, or instinct for, the fundamental oneness of existence" which "operates in harmony with a quick feeling for the instantaneous present: an appreciation of the multiple and dispersed nature of existence."<sup>53</sup> Thus he bids the anticipatory "goodbye for the present" (p.152) to Raja, who must discover for himself the spiritual ideal which is based upon inner perception rather than outward form.

Symbolically and allegorically, his incarceration at the zoo is a necessary phase of introspection, an ultimate weaning away of Raja's soul from its physical attachment to the Tiger-Hermit, obligatory upon it before it is able to realize its own cosmic potential.

When one re-reads the book and meets Raja in the introductory paragraphs once again, one is distinctly aware of the criticality of Raja's position. He is still in search of a spiritual identity, the allegorical self searching for its soul as it were. This may not at first have been easily discernible to him, but as he moves through a steady process of inner growth he symbolically moves towards a stage where he will "shed" his outer "form" (p.152) and leave all appearances behind. The strength of the novel lies in its ability to suggest a way of life and a means of communication with one's inner self. Raja's spiritual diary begins where it should, from the outer to the inner, from society to self, from comedy to philosophy, from factual truth to psychic revelations. One finds oneself in disagreement with the critics who are of the view that

There seems to be a rush to finish, with the result that at the end we are deprived of witnessing the process by which Raja attains his insight, a process which should be the central part of the work. In fact it is not.<sup>54</sup>

This critical stance would mean a serious imposition of one's expectations on a novel whose primary aim is that of

entertainment first, out of which would follow the moral or philosophical elucidation. That Narayan has been able to adapt to his story a humanised version of the tiger's struggle to find itself, speaks much of his ability to render the comic into an allegory of the self-animal or human-journeying to the inner depths of its soul. Allegorically speaking, Raja communicating to the reader in his old age at the zoo, is more spirit than tiger, more supra-human than sub-human. The novel has led the reader through his discriminatory view of tigers and of animals on the whole, to an acceptance of the underlying unity of all living creatures. Tiger and man are hence indistinguishable.

However much Narayan might grumble against "graduate students writing theses on me" because they always "try to read meanings into my books, trace a theme relate this character to that ..." <sup>55</sup>, the fact is that his work, especially A Tiger for Malgudi has that combination of myth and fiction that allures the perceptive reader to its hidden fount of creativity which in William Walsh's words explains everything about the way Narayan perceives his universe and how it influences the narrative mode that he adopts:

The truth is that the Hindu Myths and religious parables ... are important not as theological scaffolding to the fiction but in being part of a whole economy of feeling itself sunk deep into the constitution of the novelist. These things are present and influential not as

dogma or metaphysics but as part of a mode of perception and a habit of reaction. They flow in and out of the writer's thought and touch. The religious sense of Indian myth is part of Narayan's grip of reality, of his particular view of human life and his individual way of placing and ordering human feeling and experience.<sup>56</sup>

In the Hindu pattern of existence, therefore, Raja must be viewed as both an important entity in himself and as an allegorical extension of the soul as it seeks to shed its physical dimensions. What is important in the novel is that Narayan has been able to merge his comedy into a philosophical framework represented by the Tiger-Hermit which actually takes into account all aspects of Raja's life, both physical and spiritual. Raja's quest for selfhood parallels the universal quest for unity. The passage through life is an important means of spiritual education for the answer to Raja's question "'Who am I?'" lies hidden in life itself. Understanding of it, but detachment from it, would naturally elevate one's perception of higher truths. Raja's growth is an allegorical replay of the spiritual growth that defines the soul on its way to finding release from the world of appearances. The narrative strategy that Narayan uses to portray this quest is the candid one of self-confession and of graduated self-realization. It not only works on the simple level of the animal fable, but works at the level of allegory and has the allegorical and symbolic dimensions of a

complex fictional work which is deeply representative of Narayan's Indian imagination with its immense capacity for perceiving hidden realities.

## END NOTES

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## CONCLUSION

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One's study of the six novels leads one to concur with Leslie Fiedler in his essay "No! In Thunder", that "the practice of any art at any time is essentially a moral activity", one in which the artist uses his discriminatory powers to choose and to select, which involves, "a judgement of the experience he is rendering; and such a judgement is, implicitly at least, a moral one". The artist who adheres to his vision desists from portraying man's "inherited" view of himself and of his destiny. Rather, he seeks to define him through his "struggles" and through the questions that he asks of himself. In the words of Leslie Fiedler, the vision of man "shared by our greatest writers involves an appreciation of his absurdity, and the protagonists of our greatest books are finally neither comic nor tragic but absurd."<sup>1</sup> This vision of the absurd would seem to contradict the essential spirit of allegory which has always aspired to maintain an heroic identification with the highest ideals of human civilization, of the material with the spiritual and of the tangible with the intangible. But when one has fathomed the symbolic significance of a monster-protagonist in Grendel or a Jack in Lord of the Flies or an Air Vice-Marshal in The Aerodrome, one would be able to understand the thrust of the artist's vision, which is to reveal the unrevealed and to trace out the absurdly flawed characteristics of a fallen humanity. The six novels have sought to record a vision of

man's potential for self-destruction, to hold up to him a mirror of his unregenerate self. The overriding vision in the six novels testifies to man's fallen nature which is easily prone to the excesses of the ego or of the passions. Simon's ultimate summation of humanity in Lord of the Flies is of it being "at once heroic and sick".<sup>2</sup> This sickness has been diagnosed in all the six novels and has formed an important theme which signifies the negativity and the sense of death surrounding the individual. Metaphors of evil and destruction have sought to express the hidden nature of man which is, however, overlaid by the normalising influences of society. When society no longer acts as the integrative unit of spiritual discipline as in Lord of the Flies, there is a conflagration of values and an alarming fall in behavioural ethics which results in a reversal of identities. The conflict that ensues arises between the newly emerging class of power mongers and the spiritual caretakers of a society that has already collapsed. Characters such as Simon who is like a Christ figure, are alienated and alone, forced to suffer for their precocious insight into truth. Ralph becomes a victim of Jack's self-styled tyranny. It threatens to overturn all pre-conceived order. Golding makes no attempt to mitigate his vision of truth which is founded on the awful knowledge of man's capacity for evil. The didacticism works

at the figurative level of the plot, it encodes the hidden treacheries that man is capable of.

The allegorical mode may be viewed as being representative of a way of expressing the truth as Golding perceived it, through the fable. There are no compromises in his perception of the evil inherent in man. The quality of goodness on the other hand, has also been presented without ambiguity. The humility attributable to a Simon, must, however, inevitably suffer for its single minded devotion to truth. Golding's vision of humanity holds true for all the six novels that figuratively, and therefore, allegorically perceive the absurdity and meaninglessness of a fallen universe.

The quality of goodness has, in most cases, been overshadowed by the malignancy of doubt, the spiritual and metaphysical kind which has characterised life in Cry, the Beloved Country and in Grendel. The spiritual topography of "man" in the six novels is one of self-delusion. The six allegorical novels start from the initial premise of a fallen universe but do not resolve themselves in any simplistic way. The emphasis is more upon the lowest common denominator of human pride and wickedness than upon the ultimate good which has been the overweening pursuit of all didactic narratives. Metaphorically and symbolically the fictional reality of these novels deliberately masks the truth in order to set the

reader on an allegorical voyage whose possible end is not a full discovery of truth, only dim foresightings of it as in Grendel's vision of life in death. The challenge to the reader lies in his ability to re-orient his vision according to newly discovered patterns of experience that the allegorical mode has been able to formalise. It is a mode which has not formulated itself upon the static rules of literary form. Rather, it is integrative with the novelist's dynamic perception of his own responses to a universe that has visibly uprooted all traditional values. The allegorical imagination is distinctly moral; it seeks to interpret the universe in the language of symbol and metaphor and emulates the allusiveness of poetry in order to probe the universal depths of its themes.

The bedrock of faith in the novels is found upon the artist's affirmation of his personal vision which usually takes conclusive shape only after one has assimilated the allegorical meanings embedded in the fiction. The "invisible man" must struggle to make sense of his life, to jettison a past burdened with worn out rituals and to anticipate a future based upon a personal discovery of his latent humanity. His life consists of a strenuous process of adapting himself to the highest, social good, which is acceptability by white Americans. This in itself proves to be fraudulent and self-defeating. He discovers instead the

essence of being, lying in the hidden creativity of the dark self, invisible and unknown, because neglected and untapped. His self-exploratory ventures into the unknown depths of the self only serve to bring out another past buried deep in the subconsciousness of the American Negro. It communicates itself in an allegorical way through the archetypal figures of black self-consciousness such as Brer Rabbit and Jack-the-bear, and through the idioms of jazz and the blues. A significant sense of history is gathered up with each discovery. Subsequent expulsions from the debilitating clutches of the larger American reality paradoxically brings him closer to the real self which in effect, is the prototypical self that has eluded everyone. Herein lies the basis of the allegorical mode of perception which conceives of the individual in universal terms.

The protagonists of each novel usually personalise the difficult ways of arriving at the truth. In this respect they are no different from the archetypal questors of traditional allegorical narratives. But where society endorsed the struggles of the questing knight who valiantly strove to affirm its ideals, the unorthodox questors of the six novels have to strive alone and unaided to find the authentic means to a moral end. They have been endowed with a personal sense of morality which is divisible from society and which arises from an innate ability to see. They project a vision of life

alienated from what has been accepted as normal, which struggles to maintain itself despite the oppressive forces threatening it. In The Aerodrome, Roy is unable to accept, unquestioningly, the changes that the aerodrome brings with it. He stands apart and alone in his unflinching commitment to a vision of the universe that is "most intricate, fiercer than tigers, wonderful and infinitely forgiving."<sup>3</sup> These are ideals that are expressive of the inherent anomalies to be found in the human world which Roy recognises and accepts as being part of life itself, but which the Air Vice-Marshal refuses to see. This is the reason why Roy is unable to be partisan to the Air Vice-Marshal's dream of the establishment of a clinically "clean" society. Nor is he able to come back to the muddledom of village life. The tangible alternatives available to Roy are a life of freedom without discipline in the village and a life of unlicensed power-mongering, in the aerodrome. He chooses neither, for he has already assumed the iconoclastic habit of the contemporary questor which would be necessary for him to forge a better relationship with the universe. This concludes with an echo of his father's definition of the world, "'That the world may be clean'", upon which he, however, deliberately superimposes his new found definition of a world strengthened by love. He ends his youthful phase with a commitment to love. This is an act of faith affirming his potential for creativity. The book

concludes on a note of expectation, neither assuming that Roy will succeed nor attributing to him the epical role of saviour of human kind. What matters is that Roy has authenticated himself through the kind of love that has been exemplified through his ability to forgive the past. With every character portrayal, with each dramatisation of the philosophy of change, associated with the aerodrome, the allegorical implications gradually build up to reinforce the novelist's hypothetical picture of a world divided from itself. The controlling metaphors serve to extend the allegorical implications of the story. They reflect upon the analogical bent of the novelist's imagination which seeks to qualify that which it perceives through fiction. The framework of the story forms the explicatory medium of the novelist who uses it as an allegorical means to clothe his moral perceptions. The life of his main protagonist is a record of his struggle to embody the emotional value of certain ideas which may or may not be acceptable to the other characters who on a lesser scale, allegorically embody the antagonistic aspects of the novelist's imagination. The momentum of the quest takes Roy through conflicting aspects of reality and further into the unmarked regions of a lesser known but potentially creative self. The allegorical voyage that the protagonist undertakes in all the six novels is backed only by a Jamesian openness to experience. Nothing may

be codified in a universe which has already disproved the homogenous set-up. The contemporary questor is deeply riddled with the contradictions of his own age. He has only his personal experiences to affirm. Protagonists like Roy, the "invisible man" and Stephen Kumalo allegorically work out a very personal conception of love which summons them to be honest with themselves at all times. It is this perennial struggle with dishonesty that makes for the "allegoricalness" of the novels. The contradictions that line the protagonist's path through life form the allegorical theme of the novels. There is no looking forward to fulfilment in another realm of the spirit. The novels allegorically grapple with the problems that confront their protagonists who make an all out effort to seek a way out of the maze that threatens to impede them. The struggle yields itself to the kind of allegorical interpretation that has marked out novels like Invisible Man and A Tiger for Malqudi.

Fulfilment may be found but only in a paradoxical way, in the protagonist's confrontation with the underlying absurdity of human life. The structure of experience within the novels, does not follow the traditional curve of the graph. Although discoveries are made, identities reshaped and perspectives changed, the best part of the novels is not a looking forward to the characteristic resolution of the underlying pattern. The novels take shape only as they follow

the protagonist's allegorical journeyings through the secular world of experience. This is the unorthodox path charted out by the protagonists in their compulsive search for order. They carry the cross of self-exile and an innate inability to submit to the dictates of societal law. Their tentative steps away from the usual marks an arduous journey towards affirmation of a very personal kind. For Raja, the tiger-protagonist of A Tiger for Malqudi, this takes shape in the struggle in his personal life between the spirit and the senses which results in the discovery of an inner self. His path to a partial attainment of a moral understanding of himself has been lined with the novelist's uncanny perception of the "familiar" struggle of "familiar" actors in a "familiar" world. Raja, however, shows himself to be unfamiliar with its ways. Every step which ought to take him closer to it actually takes him away from it, for he discovers only the selfishness of the ego. In actual fact, in the novel, man has been completely devalued in the face of a tiger-protagonist's search for moral sureties. That Raja attains it with the help of another character who has delinked himself from the world is part of the larger allegorical scheme of the book. What indelibly remains, is the picture of Malgudian crassness which is counterpointed by Raja's maturing vision of life. He has already been perceived to be an allegorical reflection of the self searching for its

own soul. He is also reflective of the valorous attempt of the self to authenticate itself without the prior sanction of society. Within the framework of the Hindu world-view, he has been identified several times over as being an acceptable part of its *karmic* philosophy. Within the framework of the novel Raja forms a structural part of the allegorical mode which works on the principle of figurative communication. The novel does not formalise any philosophic concept in the manner of traditional allegory. The reader must continue on his own after Raja has launched him on an eye opening expedition to a higher level of perception. The conclusion in all the novels, merely endorses the protagonist's claim to his own realities. These have been inevitably shaped by the circumstances governing his life and are harnessed to the inner convictions of the self.

These convictions sometimes seem to fail the test as in the depiction of Simon's death in Lord of the Flies. Simon's goodness in contrast to the Lord of the Flies is predictably consistent. Simon proves the steadfastness of his own faith when he decides to return to the other boys with the "news" of his discovery of, the airman's corpse. The allusive details of his death and ultimate burial at sea, however, serve to enhance that underlying level of goodness that allegorically exists on an identifiable plane with Beowulf's heroism in Grendel or with Stephen Kumalo's visionary sense

of life in Cry, the Beloved Country. One must understand that the principle of definition which the allegorical mode employs in the novels, is primarily that of defining the subversive features of a negative world order, hence its marginalisation of traditionally good characters in terms of plot. Some novels begin with the collapse of the social system as in The Aerodrome or Lord of the Flies; some with the collapse of the creative imagination as in Grendel; some deal with the direful consequences of social and spiritual uprootment as in Cry, the Beloved Country. The reality that one is confronted with has already been objectified by the main protagonists of each novel, it is the reality of the absurd for the invisible protagonist, it is the bondage to fear for Stephen Kumalo, to Grendel it is the tedium of monotony that drives him crazy, to Ralph it is his understanding of the darkness of a lost innocence, to Raja it is the overwhelming pressure of Malgudian confusion and to Roy it is the pull of the conflicting realities of political ideology and love. Nowhere do the novelists follow the allegorical convention of a painstaking explication of the higher truths visible only to the perceptive mind. These truths are irreducibly embodied in some characters like the oft mentioned Simon, the Tiger-Hermit or Beowulf; or contained in the protagonist's refining vision of himself and of the universe. Their significance extends beyond the narrow

limits of the novels for they charge reality with their imaginative power. Moreover, these characters are not the petrified embodiments of a particular world view. They attain an allegorical but dynamic depth of significance through their ability to empower the reader's imagination with their moral intrepidity. They challenge the reader to make the invaluable choice in order to determine reality for himself. Gardner makes a ringing proclamation of the moral value of art in The Atlantic Monthly when he says, "Art leads it doesn't follow."<sup>4</sup> This implies that one's reading of Grendel must lead to an affirmation of the values allegorically embodied in Beowulf, just as Invisible Man literally and allegorically influences the reader by the sheer truth of the invisible protagonist's experiences.

In Grendel the human cosmos has been thrown off gear by a monster's distorted interpretation of it. The destructive demons of his mind impose a demonic order of violence and hatred which overrules life. Strangely enough, the human world reflected in Hrothgar's court, is itself branded with similar violence and hatred. Getting to know the monster is also another way of getting to know humanity. The striking resemblance that exists between the two has been repeatedly emphasised and recognised by Grendel himself. The violence that determines Grendel's character seeks to resolve itself through violence. Hrothgar too is imprisoned within the

"walls" of his cruel ambition. The allegorical mode serves as an important conduit of the novelist's perception of man's dark and unrevealed motives. Grendel is the legendary monster. He is also an aspect of the depersonalised self; depersonalised by a spiritual short-circuit that cuts it off from the sustaining virtues of the moral imagination. In Grendel one may see the breakdown of all mental systems. It becomes a contemporary parable of man's loss of vision associated with his capacity for disreputable actions. There has been a remapping of man's personal history to reveal the ideological inconsistencies which have destroyed his capacity for growth. On a muted scale as in Lord of the Flies, there are the positive forces of life which have refused to yield themselves to the disintegrative influences of the intellect. These allegorical embodiments, the Shaper and Wealtheow, prefigure the final appearance of Beowulf. In a truly allegorical way the stage is set for the confrontation that must take place between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. But the confrontation has not been modelled on the allegorical or the epical pattern which dramatically ensures who the victor is, nor may it be described in physical terms. It transcends the physical and inducts the reader into a metaphysical realm both confounding and challenging to him. Grendel is forced to listen as never before. He is also forced to see, forced to respond to the barrage of poetry and

song affirming the creativity of life. "Though you murder the world, ... the world will burn green, sperm build again".<sup>5</sup> His death signifies no defeat for him. Figuratively, Beowulf has propelled him out of the mere which is the dark "cave" of the ego to take him to a death dignified by his acceptance of it. The abyss which faces him in death as it has always faced him in life is now confronted by a newly discovered stoicism so that his "voluntary tumble into death" is marked by "joy".<sup>6</sup> Though he knows that his death is but the result of an accident, a miscalculation on his part, he wishes all a similar, providential accident. Grendel joins the procession of allegorical questors in the other novels, rather late. Nevertheless like them, he undergoes a vital transformation which liberates the powerful tool of the imagination through poetry and song. Though Grendel, the involuntary questor dies, his death becomes an act of faith born of a confrontation with his deepest self which Beowulf was instrumental in bringing out. Grendel is saved by a simple act of faith, which is, to affirm life even in death. The novel concludes with Grendel's typically offensive stance, a challenge thrown out to the reader, "'Poor Grendel's had an accident'," I whisper. "'So may you all'".<sup>7</sup> It is also a statement that identifies him with human beings, never enunciated before. The identification may be extended to include Raja, the tiger-protagonist who is a sub-human

manifestation of the soul's evolutionary potential for growth. Grendel's life propagates the unbridled energies of the self. His death spells out the birth of a new self discoverable to the reader only as he too begins to break down his own "walls". The allegorical mode works through the reader's ability to follow Grendel's thoughts upto the moment when Beowulf succeeds in disarming him with his passionate decrial of Grendel's negativity. As the tide begins to turn in favour of his inevitable end, the parable converges upon a meaning of life hitherto obscured by Grendel's solipsism. His death releases him from the constraints of the ego and catapults him downwards into the abyss. Typically, however, he has already assumed the offensive, this time for a meaningful affirmation of his own death. The multiplicity of allegorical meanings attached to Grendel's confrontation with Beowulf, and Grendel's ultimate death would once again depend, upon the reader's ability to affirm the existence of the Beowulf personality deep within himself. Ultimately, the reader is called upon to affirm his own faith in the creativity of life despite his acknowledged similarity to the subterranean monster that threatens to overtake him at any moment. Whether Beowulf has succeeded in ousting the solipsistic tendencies of a Grendel remains to be seen and to be proved, for it lies beyond the ambit of the novel. Meanwhile, in keeping with its allegorical mode of

perception, the novel has worked out its own ethics of moral discovery through an allegorical figuration of a dark universe imprisoned within the mental "walls" of its own making.

The subterranean monster may be understood in the allegorical terms of a parable which inverts the usual for the unusual. It works on the principles of the fable as in Golding's Lord of the Flies for it apprehends reality invertedly, from the underground perspective of a monster who masks reality with specious arguments. Both novels metaphorically exploit the hidden darkness of the self and use it to personalise the illimitable negativity of the human mind, to build up a desolate picture of a universe harnessed to primal energies. In doing so, they allegorically explore the antagonistic dimensions of the human psyche. They create a vision of the universe deeply dependent upon individual faith and individual heroism. In each novel, the allegorical mode has been spelt out in various ways. It has been adapted to the requirements of an imagination whose moral imperative is directed outwards to the edification of the reader. Reader participation in these novels, as has already been observed in Grendel or Invisible Man and Lord of the Flies, is a dynamic part of the allegorical mode for it engages the reader at the gut level of passionate feeling and passionate thought. Important issues are raised but they are never

resolved. Even as the reader is involved in a vicarious participation of life within the novel, the allegorical mode of narration is engaged in the simultaneous creation of a secondary pattern of thought and feeling that searches his moral attitudes and questions the validity of his beliefs. He is forced to undergo a moral test of himself with Ralph in Lord of the Flies, to question his realities with Roy in The Aerodrome and to attempt to grasp the ultimate meanings of the moral issues at stake within the novel with a monster pressurised to transform himself in Grendel. These are issues that the novel may raise as in Cry, the Beloved Country but which may never be resolved for this is entirely dependent upon the reader's ability to integrate a vision of life based upon a dynamic understanding of latent meanings. Although the "dawn" of "emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear"<sup>8</sup> has been mentally construed by the protagonist Stephen Kumalo, and defined in a limited way in his final return to Ndotsheni, the reader is left with an unrequited sense of tragedy. The final emphasis falls upon it remaining a "secret" yet, to the unseeing heart of man so that the anticipatory end note confirms both renewal and despair. The destructive conditions of life in Johannesburg retards the reader's rejuvenative vision of the universe. Yet there has been an underlying sense of love and solace determining reality for some of the characters. The

resolution of discord may remain a "secret" within the context of the novel but for the perceptive reader the reconstructive possibilities of a love-based existence no longer remains hidden to him. He has made the allegorical voyage to the epi-centre of pain and suffering which has brought about a moral recognition of one of life's many ironies: pain may only be transcended by an acceptance of it in a spirit of faith that presupposes love. Cry, the Beloved Country is one of the novels that has most obviously adapted itself to the allegorical framework of narration. The values that it upholds are the theological values of faith, hope and love. They find fulfilment through Stephen Kumalo, a protagonist who is unswerving in his devotion to God and whose world view has been defined by a visionary sense of love. He is a stalwart of the Christian faith and his life has been allegorically constructed around the principles of Christianity. However, the allegorical importance of the book lies in its ability to universalise through the sufferings of South Africa, the search for spiritual order. In comparison to the other novels, the book lends itself to a straight forward allegorical interpretation of its themes. Its protagonist Stephen Kumalo shows the way to spiritual restoration. Like the protagonists of the other novels, however, he is both winner and loser, for like them, he too is steeped in the unabsolving mire of pain and suffering.

Being what he is, he can only put himself against the odds facing him and in the process win for himself a life of faith forged by adversity. The protagonists of the other novels are caught in similar situations. The only option open to them is for them to be able to authenticate themselves as the invisible protagonist does in Invisible Man, to make the right moral choice as Roy in The Aerodrome or to yield themselves to the revelatory insights of the soul as does Raja in A Tiger for Malgudi. The tortuous journey to the self advocated by each protagonist, is riddled with uncertainty and doubt. This is a natural reflection of the mental contradictions that have determined contemporary man. Each protagonist allegorically bears the responsibility of charting out the ideal norm for himself. He stands in direct contravention of all societal laws and assumes the anti-heroic stance of the picaresques hero<sup>9</sup> who must forfeit social legality for individual self-expression in order to have a better insight into a universe made solely explicable through the moral vehicle of the imagination. The allegorical mode propels him through a stark universe totally bereft of love. The only light in the darkness is the imaginative resilience of the protagonist who must take up the metaphysical challenge to his identity. Even in a novel like Cry, the Beloved Country, which upholds the traditional values of the Christian faith, the social universe depicted

has been eroded by hatred and fear. The protagonists are caught in an allegorical universe of anarchical strife but they climb out of it through an irrepressible capacity for life. The following quotation from Invisible Man emphasises the moral calibre of protagonists who tenaciously affirm a personal vision of the universe: "It's 'winner take nothing' that is the great truth ... of any country. Life is to be lived, not controlled; and humanity is won by continuing to play in face of certain defeat."<sup>10</sup> This is how the protagonists cast themselves on the allegorical path to self-knowledge neither sacrificing their right to learn nor soliciting social approbation. Allegorically, these protagonists are types of the contemporary individual, who finds validity only within himself. The expressive feature of their humanity lies in their overwhelming capacity for love, variously defined in all the six novels.

The conclusion in each novel is a concretion of symbol and metaphor that states on a muted key the full range of allegorical meanings embedded in the structure of experience recorded in each book. The conclusion is an important aspect of the allegorical mode. Meanings cohere in the final pages where the reader is called upon to contribute to the final assessment by his discretionary understanding of newly discovered meanings embodied by the protagonists themselves. In A Tiger for Malgudi the significance of the story lies in

the reader's ability to accept Raja as a veritable part of human life. Communication with him has to be established at the allegorical level. This presupposes the reader's acceptance of Raja's spiritual identity. The novel calls for an all inclusive vision which is a typically Indian overview of life. It challenges the reader to a multiple perception of the truth as a fable which has the sophisticated weaponry of a philosophic imagination. The reader sees not only the tiger at the zoo but is called upon to see beyond the metal bars, beyond Raja's physical presence to the soul within that yearns for freedom. Sympathy for the tiger-protagonist has been well manipulated. So endowed has he been with human qualities, that the reader does anticipate Raja's spiritual fulfilment. As always, the possibilities of life held out to the reader in the sentient form of Raja's soul are never quashed. The conclusion of each novel plays with the reader's perception of the grossness of reality, and reality as it may be transmuted by the living principles of the spirit. Herein lies the essence of the allegorical mode used in all the six novels. It remains an integral part of the artist's vision of a universe heavily tainted with negativity but with a paradoxically inbuilt capacity for regeneration. The thematic focus of the allegorical mode lies upon this dual perception of good and evil, of life and death, and of love and hatred. Characters such as the Tiger-Hermit reflect upon the

novelist's propensity for symbolic figurations of a deeper and nobler form of human existence, which affirms the moral possibilities of the artist's vision. The allegorical mode in all the six novels works with the extensive purpose of relocating morality within the sensitive heart of its protagonist.

The allegorical mode of narration, draws upon the novelist's perception of life's dualities, and works with an evangelising endeavour to convince the reader of the contradictoriness of life altogether. These are the contradictions that undermine the spiritual reality of life in all the six novels. Perception of these contradictions has been the main thrust of all the novels so that the way to knowledge or selfhood has always been gropingly initiated in spiritual darkness. Literally and metaphorically, knowledge of evil before good is the natural consequence of a fallen humanity. The principle of absurdity which lies at the core of life threatens to take over in each of the six novels. Each protagonist is found to be fighting against a personal hell of disillusionment. He is caught in an allegorical darkness of evil and of non-being which surrounds him and confuses him. His proper ability to "see" has also been impeded. In Lord of the Flies, Ralph gropes about for the conventional support of institutionalised morality only to find it symbolically smashed to pieces in the broken form of

the conch. His call to order has been betrayed by civilization itself. Confronting this betrayal is the allegorical challenge that the novels put up for each protagonist who, however, distinguishes himself from the rest of humanity by an intuitive understanding of the creativity of life. It is this deep sighting of the truth that propels the protagonist on his allegorical quest for life which takes him through various experiences. Instead of being pulverised by the contradictions that riddle him the allegorical questor, is further strengthened by them. Paradoxically, he thrives on the external disunity that threatens to consume him for he is then forced to seek moral sustenance from within. The struggle to live allegorically becomes one of overcoming the existential absurdity that characterises life, within the novels, in South Africa or in Malgudi. In all the six novels, the allegorical mode upholds the personal vision of the protagonist whose allegorical sense of self must be reinvigorated by knowledge of the anti-self reflected to him through the antagonistic forces that defy him at each step of his life. The inner vision becomes objectified through the protagonist's ability to wield meaning out of meaninglessness, to establish a pattern out of the chaos, to resurrect life as it were out of the metaphysical absurdity that surrounds him. This might take shape in the invisible protagonist's struggle to understand the creative darkness of

the soul; it might crystallise itself in Roy's vision of love; it might be observed in Ralph's agonising recognition of the human face of the Lord of the Flies; it might be seen in Grendel's final avowal of life or in the spiritual consolidation of Stephen Kumalo.

The six novels establish an allegorical pattern of experience that bespeaks the individual's capacity for rejuvenation even as he might be tainted with his own negativity as in Grendel. Nowhere in the six novels do the main protagonists give in to the anarchical rule of the ego. They all bear the stamp of self-responsibility which sets them apart from others and which endows them with the ability to initiate an honest appraisal of their own selves. They possess an honesty as ruthless as it is radical, for it overhauls the value system that has supposedly built up human civilization. In this respect, the protagonists exemplify the kind of moral integrity primarily required to remake society. They have a special relationship with it. They wish to be defined by it but valiantly struggle to create a meaningful order for themselves. The principles that they affirm chart out the integrated path to selfhood that society must endorse for it ultimately rests upon the democratic principles of spiritual sharing and love easily understandable to all. Raja is a spiritual beneficiary of the Tiger-Hermit's love. It allegorically releases a hidden chord of understanding within

him and makes him a voluntary participant in the evolutionary quest for spiritual freedom. This is a quest that should normally involve all of mankind but society having lost its footing is caught in self-generated confusion. It may yet find hope in the allegorical truth of a tiger's discovery of its own soul.

The self and society are the integral units of the allegorical imagination which is primarily involved in reinstating the personal values of the self in society. These values have been forged by the disciplinary principles of an honest life-style which sometimes admits to no material gain for the protagonist himself, as has been observed in Grendel and in Lord of the Flies. Such novels, however, allegorically succeed in distilling the essence of the truly integrated self through protagonists who, even in death affirm hope for mankind. As noted earlier, the allegorical mode used in the six novels is a multi-pronged effort to remodel the chronically habituated ways of society. Though its ends amount to the simple one of moral restitution for mankind in general, it uses means that are esthetically innovative and challenging to the contemporary reader who is also way-laid by innumerable traps. It sets the reader on the path of vicarious warfare with the antagonistic elements of life, thus implicating him in a moral campaign with each protagonist who is seeking to restore humanity to itself.

In conclusion one would note that the allegorical mode is dependent upon the novelist's ability to tune the reader's responses to his story in a complex way through a symbolic and metaphoric application of truth. One ought not to overlook the truly allegorical dimension of reality in all the six novels which consists of the two antithetical poles of Appearance and Reality, the Material and the Spiritual. The synthesis lies not as in pure allegory, within the context of the novel itself, but somewhere in an unknown future within the human heart. The inner arena of the heart becomes a dynamic constituent of the allegorical mode in all the six novels. It involves characters who are complexly driven by fate, whose destiny lies in their own hands underlining thereby the urgency of their concern with their own spiritual welfare. The allegorical mode in the six novels humanises the ethical dimensions of truth through characters who live out their lives in full justification of themselves. It objectifies each struggle through its ability to universalise its themes. It establishes hence a dynamic rapport with the contemporary reader who is also allegorically set on testing out values for himself.

## END NOTES

1. William J. Handy, Max Westbrook, ed., Twentieth Century Criticism the Major Statements, (New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers, 1976), pp.277-288.
2. Lord of the Flies, p.128.
3. The Aerodrome, p.302.
4. The Atlantic Monthly, "A Conversation with John Gardner", p.44.
5. Grendel, p.149.
6. Ibid., p.152.
7. Ibid., p.152.
8. Cry, the Beloved Country, p.236.
9. A Casebook on Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, p.210.
10. Invisible Man, p.465.

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