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This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

**THESIS TITLE: THE STYLE OF THE SHORT STORY IN KENYA :
An Analysis of the Short Stories of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o,
Leonard Kibera And Grace Ogot**

The thesis examines the style of ten short stories by three of Kenya's pioneer writers in that form. The study has been prompted by a lack of any serious critical attention paid to the genre in this country, yet it is the one form that renders itself easily to production in dailies, weeklies, magazines, periodicals and journals. Unlike its sister, the novel, it does not require a lot of space to communicate meaningfully and aesthetically; nor does it demand of the author the kind of external complexity that is synonymous with a good novel. The result of this is the story's popularity with writers and publishers of periodicals which form the story's favourite venue. Ironically, the deceptive simplicity responsible for the genre's popularity is the very cause for its avoidance by literary critics who view the finished works in this form as not being able to stand up to the rigours of critical appreciation.

In this study, we are focusing our attention on style because that is the one essential element that can lend authority to anything we can say the short story is since the genre treats the same themes as those that are to be found in the novel.

One major objective is to analyse each writer's style in terms of the special way each one uses words to enhance point of view, setting, tone and

mood and to suggest the meaning of the work. Another objective is to highlight the various points of departure in the three authors' approach to the short story through analysis of the style of each. A final objective is to arrive at what one can, with relative confidence, define as a short story in Kenya, basing the conclusion on style.

The study has used library research as the dominant methodology. This has been necessitated by the nature of the task at hand: analysing the style of the ten selected stories in the larger context of literary studies on the short story as a form. Nonetheless, the study has also been enriched by views, information and observations collected from one writer- Grace Ogot - a relative and a friend of Kibera and Ngugi respectively. Open discussions were used to collect this information.

The theses is in four chapters. These chapters have been presented in such a way that each author's works are given a chapter of their own under a heading that highlights the author's peculiarity: "Elasticity in Prose", "A Genre on Trial and "Dream and Reality" for Ngugi, Kibera and Grace Ogot respectively. In this way, we have been able to focus on each writer's style in detail, highlighting those elements of the short story adhered to or ignored, the stylistic devices used and the final achievement. The approach has been adopted as the only way to avoid over generalisations. The method has also enabled us to come up with what appears to be each individual author's idiosyncrasy.

The thesis has two main achievements: it has introduced the study of the short story as a genre to Kenya's literary studies and that it has done so from an approach that is unique- analysing style. The conclusion - that the short story is at its best when allowed to focus intently on one main character, one setting both in time and space, one theme and to operate along one strong story line - is reached by purely examining the three authors' artistry. Thus, using style, the thesis has been able to demonstrate the richness of the short story both as a medium for social commentary and as an aesthetically satisfying entity.

INTRODUCTION

The choice to study the style of the short story in Kenya has been prompted by the rapid rise noticed in the tempo of creativity. The result is that what Bethwel Ogot in the early sixties described as a literary desert (Transition 1961) had by the late seventies become a luxuriant forest of literary activity. By the late eighties, when the present work was first conceived of, creative writing had so established itself in this country that what was needed was a critical evaluation of the existing works. Novels, especially those of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Meja Mwangi, have been receiving this kind of attention. The short story, however, has remained unnoticed by critics in spite of the fact that prose in this genre has always out-matched the novels by an unimaginable margin.

Published in local dailies, weeklies and magazines as well as in anthologies which may each comprise several stories, the short story is a popular form. The lack of interest that critics have shown the genre does create an imbalance between creativity and appreciation. Yet, criticism, it is my contention, is essential to creativity and the development of art, for by highlighting both the strong and weak points in a literary piece of work, the critic helps the artist (the short story writer in our case) to widen his/her horizon, examine more critically the society of which his/her writing is a mirror and even come up with a new and more useful world-view in subsequent works. The short story, thus, needs the kind of critical attention to which we intend to subject it in this study.

We are going to analyse the selected short stories of Grace Ogot, Leonard Kibera and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. The three authors have been chosen on the grounds of their pioneer position, prolificity and variety. Grace Ogot, for instance, has three anthologies in which there are more than twenty stories besides the several unpublished ones. Land Without Thunder, The Other Woman, The Island of Tears have all been published at different stages. In addition, there are two novels: The Promised Land and The Strange Bride. On his part Kibera has eleven stories in Potent Ash while Ngugi has thirteen titles in Secret Lives.

That there is variety in the art of the three authors in this study is testified to by the range of themes in Grace Ogot's short stories, for instance. In these stories themes range from the shock of trainee nurses on realizing the contradiction between the demands of their new job and the society's expectations of a decent, marriageable young woman in "The Old White Witch" (Land Without Thunder, pp.1-20) to the damaging confidence of the new elite in "Elizabeth"(pp.191-201), and from the indifference of mid-wives on night duty in the face of anxiety and worry of mothers in labour pain in "The Night Nurse" (pp.175-190) to the emptiness of the modern forms of marriage in "The White Veil" (pp.48-69). There is also a marked variety in the setting of Grace Ogot's short stories. This varies from the rural in "The Empty Basket" (pp 35-47) to the city of Nairobi in "Elizabeth", from New York in "The Graduate" to Cairo in "Karantina" (pp.120-141). The style also differs from

simple narrative to dialogue that touches on the mimetic. This variety calls for the kind of investigation that we intend to carry out in this study.

The stories of Ngugi wa Thiong'o also display great variety. In Secret Lives the variety of setting ranges from the villages in "A Meeting In The Dark" (Secret Lives pp.55-70) to hectic urban centres in "A Mercedes Funeral" (pp.113-137). In terms of setting these stories have one thing in common: they take place in central Kenya, the geographical setting of Ngugi's novels. There is also variety in the treatment of themes such that a theme like hypocrisy - Ngugi's favourite - is subtly conveyed in "The Martyr" and in another story, namely "The Mercedes Funeral", the author goes for invective, abandoning satire which seems too quiet for his purposes in this story.

In the stories of Leonard Kibera one notes great variety in characterization. Characters vary from young helpless blind beggars in "A Silent Song" (PA pp.9-16) to confident, self-sufficient businessmen in "The Tailor", (pp.118-120) and from victims of Mau Mau in "The Stranger" (pp.30-58) to victims of the emerging black elite in "The Spider's Web" (pp.134-146). The mood too displays variety, ranging from the pathos of the firing squad, the new method of ridding society of criminals in military regimes in "It's a Dog's Life in Our Kinshasa"(pp.16-20) to the horror of the insecurity of the Law enforcers in the face of criminals in "The Hill"(pp.170-201).

Grace Ogot, Leonard Kibera and Ngugi wa Thiong'o have one thing in common: their works, which display so much variety, attesting to the three writers'

involvement in the life around them and reflecting the society from several angles, have not yet attracted much literary criticism.

Grace Ogot, for instance, has remained relatively obscure despite the fact that her short stories got published in such reputable anthologies as Africa Today, Pan African Short Stories and Black Orpheus. Kibera, who has eleven short stories in Potent Ash, is known more for his one novel, Voices in the Dark than for the variety of talent shown in the short stories.

The problem of neglect of the short story is not confined to these authors alone.

Ngugi's novels, too have attracted a substantial amount of literary criticism and debate while the short stories in Secret Lives have remained secret to the critic as we will demonstrate later on in the study.

Thus, critics have tended to ignore the short story in favour of the novel. Yet, it is my contention that the short story as a literary form has a very important role to play in the society. The fact that a given subject can "be covered fully" in twenty pages and be aesthetically satisfying as happens in Ogot's "The Professor", or Kibera's "The Spider's Web" is in itself evidence that the short story is a form that is handy for the reader and is, therefore likely to attract wider readership than the novel. It can be safely assumed that the wider the readership, the wider the variety of criticism a form is likely to receive. Here, I must make it quite clear that the term criticism is being used to refer to both informal and formal appreciation of any literary work. However, this has not been the case in regard to the short stories.

Thus, this study is focussing on a problem that has been created by absence of any formal, scholarly critical analysis of the short story.

Essays that are available on this genre cannot pass for scholarly works of literary criticism as they all lack depth; they are normally introductory essays in anthologies. In passing, for instance, editors have expressed such generalized views as "Tekayo" has a strong folkloric tone' (Mphahlele, 1971, p.11) or 'in "The Rain Came" the writer displays her interest in a rural past, the nostalgic charm of old Africa' (Denny, 1965, p.xii). Angus Calder used a similar approach when commenting on the style of Potent Ash when it first appeared on the market (Zhuka, 1969, p.ii).

The present study intends to examine the style of the short stories of these authors using the term style in the sense Lucas defines it:

style is simply the effective use of language, especially in prose, whether to make statements or to rouse emotions. It involves, first of all, the power to put facts with clarity and brevity; and with as much grace and interest as the subject permits (Scott, 1965, p.274)

Thus, we intend to use the term style to refer to the way that each of the three authors manipulates language to say what he/she wants or intends to say and to build whatever atmosphere he/she wishes to build. Lucas's definition is important to us as we will assume that "brevity and grace" in prose are mainly results of deliberate linguistic choices made to that end. Leech's idea of style as linguistic choice in general does concur with what Lucas has conceded about style. (Leech et alia, 1981,

p.19). In our investigation, these definitions are bound to prove useful.

The study of style investigates how in a brief moment Grace Ogot builds the atmosphere of tragedy in a story like "Elizabeth" (LWT p.63). The focus is on the choice of words that make the suicide of a young secretary rise above sentimentality and melodrama. This calls for literary scholarship even more urgently than the bare theme of betrayal or suicide in that story. What images Kibera employs to treat the theme of estrangement and build an effective atmosphere of estrangement in "The Stranger" is our task in this thesis (Potent Ash pp.).

It is not enough to see the writer of short stories as one who seems to find in fiction the form in which he/she can say what it means to be a Kenyan in Kenya today (Denny, 1955, p.xi) nor is it enough to talk of Grace Ogot's stories in Land Without Thunder as being works in which the author gives "full reign to her profound feeling for the macabre and fantastic" (Denny, p.x). An analysis of the words, images, phrases and sentence structure as a means of evoking the macabre and fantastic is imperative if we are to use these terms or any other with confidence in relation to a literary work.

The scope of this thesis takes into account the fact that a study of the style of the short stories of Grace Ogot, Kibera and Ngugi is inevitably a study of the emergence of the short story in Kenya. There is, therefore, a section devoted to the history of the genre, and the concerns of the authors. In the analysis of style we are limiting our scope to five aspects: dialogue, irony, suspense, symbolism and point of

view. The aim of focussing on these five using only ten short stories in total is to give concentrated stylistic criticism of the works such that by the end of the study, new directions in the analysis of the style of the Kenyan short story in particular, and prose in general will have been illuminated.

The detailed analysis of each of the ten selected stories has three objectives. The first one of these is simply to throw some light on each of the writer's use of words to form images, evoke ironic twists, create meaning-packed dialogue or symbols and even suggest point of view. In other words we are investigating the author's skill in terms of how closely the style relates to and enhances the meaning of the text. The study's second objective is to arrive at what one can, with certainty, define as a short story in Kenya basing the conclusion on style. Finally, the thesis aims to provoke scholarly interest and critical debate on the short story as a genre. At the same time, this last aim embodies in it a desire to stimulate concerted interest in, study and discussion on style in Kenyan fiction as an academic concern.

There are three major considerations that justify this study. The first one has to do with the fact that literary criticism on Kenyan prose has constantly limited itself to the novel. At the same time, writers are increasingly channelling their creative talent into the short story. The situation has, thus, reached a stage where we can say, an imbalance exists in literary criticism. This thesis is a step toward the correction of that imbalance.

It is also justifiable to focus on style on the grounds that the term is used a great deal in literary discussions and discourse. Yet, it is an area of study that has evaded investigation and scholarly scrutiny among Kenyan critics. Critics have become so preoccupied with the questions of themes and relevance of literary works that matters of style have remained almost untouched. We say almost because in discussing theme and relevance an inadvertent reference must occasionally be made to style. However, since themes and social issues repeatedly talked about are communicated to the reader in language and registers deliberately chosen to suit the message and elicit response, the kind of analysis this study engages in is necessary.

There is also need to focus on the short story as a literary form that has achieved a great deal both in coverage of social issues and stylistic quality. An anthology of short stories will talk about love, marriage, death, loneliness, deprivation, travel, and leisure, struggle and relaxation among other themes as the reader moves from one story to another. Each theme is dealt with briefly but satisfyingly.

Finally, we justify our choice of the three authors on the basis of their being rated as the best writers of short stories of the pioneer literary artists. In this endeavour, we have limited our analysis to ten stories mainly because it is not possible to study in detail every story that each of the three authors has written within the time constraints before us. Besides this we are convinced that the selected stories of each author are the best he/she has published; this is to say that we have selected

the finest effort of each writer for stylistic analysis. It will be noted that even in those stories where the study points at glaring weaknesses in style, such works are still the best among the other works by the same author.

In order to analyse the style of each of the ten short stories in this study we have used the comprehensive approach to literary criticism. This approach is appropriate to the task at hand as it allows the study to make use of several theories in the endeavour to place the writers and their stories. For instance, we have been able to employ the pluralist approach as developed by Leavis (1948), psycho-analytical criticism from both the Freudian and Jungian points of view and to a limited degree, structuralist criticism. We have had to adopt the comprehensive approach because of the various switches in emphasis experienced from one author to another and at times from one story to another even by the same writer. For instance, psycho-analytical criticism as developed by Jung's theory of individuation provides new insights into Ngugi's story "The Martyr" while Grace Ogot's "The Hero" and "Elizabeth" are best appreciated using Freud's preoccupation with the "unconscious processes that take in the imagery (much of which may be interpreted in terms of sexuality) and plot of a work of literature" (Guerin *et alia*, 1986, p.9). On the other hand, structuralist criticism is used across the board precisely because within this framework, each story is made to make its "own form its subject" (Peck and Coyle, 1984, p.165). This means that the focal point comprises the choices the author has made. Rather than being on what the story tells the society, the thrust of the argument is on how the story does the telling. Finally, the study needs the

stylistic pluralist approach as articulated in The Great Tradition (1948) because while investigating the "literariness" of a literary piece of work, which is best seen in terms of style, the critic is obliged at the same time to acknowledge that literature is still other things as well as aesthetic experience.

This thesis is investigating two hypotheses. The first is that the style of prose fiction, in our case the short story, is an essential element in the artistry of that text as a literary piece. This hypothesis rests on the view that the linguistic choices an author makes in the course of writing the story influence the reader's response to the story in a myriad of ways so that in the final analysis the story begins to function independently of the initial circumstances that triggered it off and even independently of the author's life experiences that anyone may wish to drag into the story. Such independence is a sign that the artistry of the story has complemented and then superseded the message. The study also investigates the hypothesis that a definition of the short story can be arrived at partially through an examination of the style. In this case, the hypothesis is resting on the assumption that the ability of the short story to communicate so much information in such a short time and in so brief a space lies in the special way that language is used in the genre.

A study of the style of the short story obliges the critic to delve into the meaning and definition of the genre at the outset. There are several definitions of the short story arrived at by various scholars of the form. This thesis, however, limits itself to only those that serve its main argument: style in the short story. We

are aware of Poe's efforts to define the short story. He emphasizes the ability of the story to achieve "a single effect" (Carpenter & Neumeyer, 1974, p.19). According to Poe, a short story should be

compressed and economical the way a poem is, free from digressions and irrelevancies, and marked by its intensity. (Carpenter et alia, p.19).

This definition emphasizes qualities and expectations of a short story. Stress on compression and economy is in our view stress on style. It is the handling of words and whole sentences in the story that leads to the effect of compression. The choice of words in such a way that each word or cluster of words releases sufficient meaning while evoking the required response is the essence of the comparison Poe draws between a poem and a short story.

Poe saw in the short prose narrative "requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal" the answer to the author's wish to carry out the "fullness of his intention" and the writer's control over the reader's full attention. (McMichael et al 1974, pp.981-981). The definition Poe gave to the short story has been quoted by other critics like Berg Esenwein and Grandsaigne. The former takes the argument further and commits himself to the following definition:

a short story is a brief imaginative narrative, unfolding a single chief character. It contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed and the detail of the whole treatment so organised as to

produce a single impression
(Current-Garcia *et alia*, 1961 p.61).

This definition is relevant to our study. It touches on the style of the short story without the necessary analysis and elaboration to which we intend to subject the stories in this thesis to. The compression that has attracted the attention of critics of the short story is only an effect, the cause of which is the task of this study, given that compression of detail involves picking on the most elastic words, the most accommodating figures of speech as well as the most symbolic arrangement of words in a phrase, clause or sentence.

Taylor's view of the short story limits itself to

a single, complete episode and making up
in compression and intensity for what it
lacks in scope and breadth of vision
(Taylor, 1981, p.54)

This is relevant to our study when it is considered that intensity is an effect brought by an interplay of character and situation and told from a particular point of view in a particular way.

We will finally consider the conclusion that Coppard reaches in his analysis of the short story. He says:

a short story and film are expressions of
the same art: the art of telling a story by a
series of gestures, swift shots, moments of
suggestions, an art in which elaboration

and above all explanation are superfluous.
(Bates, 1941, p.21).

The relevance of this view to our study lies in the fact that we intend to investigate the handling of language in the selected short stories. The use of language in all its dimensions to suggest and vivify situations and character will form the chief objective and practice of this study. Moments of suggestions in a short story will, for our purposes, refer to those unstated or omitted, yet expected actions or words in response to the stated ones.

On the short story in Africa, critical works are scanty. We are aware of Roscoe's essay on the short story in West Africa. The conclusions Roscoe makes on the short story are based on the length rather than the quality of the stories being analysed. From this stance he says that "both the reader and the writer are short distance runners" (Roscoe, 1971, p.76). Roscoe seems to be keen to bring out the writer's art in terms of the medium- English. In this vein, the critic concludes that limitations imposed by the level of competence in the language used is partly responsible for there being a bigger number of short stories in West Africa than novels. It is also possible that the critic is basing his argument on the oral narratives and several short stories to justify his view that tradition has not given the writer practice in long, complex narrations nor has it endowed the reader with sufficient patience.

Here we would say that such a view tends to ignore the essence of a narrative - to tell a story. A novel tells a story so does a short story and the genre a writer

chooses deserves to be studied in its own right. Thus, Roscoe's comparative study does little to enhance a critical study, let alone a stylistic analysis of the West African short story.

Grandsaigne in the introduction to African Short Stories in English emphasizes attributes of a short story as being:

a profound respect for form, an instinct for clarity and conciseness and an unerring flair for the truly dramatic situation
(Grandsaigne, 1985, p.11)

This is the basis upon which he selects the short stories which he includes in the anthology. Basing our argument on the view that the "truly dramatic moment" in prose is primarily suggested by the choice of words and the length of sentences used, we will submit that Grandsaigne's suggestion lies in the realm of style. Grandsaigne has, thus, shown in passing interest in the style of the short story. Clarity involves saying the right word in the right context and thus showing careful cultivation of language habits. Profound respect for we take to mean display of awareness of what words, phrases or sentence patterns convey the meaning and emotions intended as they are intended to and satisfy the reader.

We are also aware of Carroll's study of the short stories of Achebe's Girls At War and Other Stories(Carroll, 1980, p.4). In this brief study Carroll treats the style as well as themes of the stories in the anthology. The critic focuses on contrast and symbolism as characteristic of Achebe's style. Generalizations are

evident as Carroll's presentation of stereotype Achebean themes - conflict between the old and the new - super imposed themselves on this discussion on style. Nevertheless, the work is useful as a starting point in the study of the style of the short stories of Achebe. It is a recognition of the short story as a genre that explores sensibilities and mores of the time artistically.

On the short story in Kenya, where critical works on the genre are even rarer, we are aware of Wanjala's comment on Grace Ogot's writing in The Season of Harvest. Wanjala seems to agree with Cook's view that Grace Ogot is a writer who lacks "literary verve and sophistication." (Wanjala, 1978, p.102). This statement is rather generalised and so is the summary that hers is slovenly artistry" [that is] "teeming with amateurish flaws" (Presence Africain 82, p.133). The two are comments on style made in passing and calling for investigation. In the absence of any academic stylistic analysis of any aspect of style such statements contribute little to the calibre of debate this thesis hopes to engage in.

Maryse Conde's submission that Grace Ogot's writing "lacks neither style nor imagination" is of some relevance to the present study. (Presence Afraine 82, p.133). What Maryse Conde sees as a weakness in the same work - Grace Ogot's tendency to offer "her fellow woman a dangerous picture of alienation and enslavement" - is a thematic rather than a stylistic one. (Pr. Afr. 82, p.133). Conde's comment rightly belongs to the domain of the feminist approach to criticism.

We are also aware of Denny's comment on the stories of Grace Ogot in the introduction to Pan African Short Stories. He says:

The charm of old Africa fascinates Grace Ogot... her stories deal more or less romantically with rural Africa, the nostalgic charm of old Africa (Denny, 1965, p.12)

Denny does not go into the details of how this "nostalgic charm" is woven into the stories though the phrase "deal romantically" is a submission related to style, indicating that the editor is remotely thinking of the linguistic choices made in the stories.

When Mphahlele in the introduction to African Writing Today says that Grace Ogot's stories "have a strong folkloric tone" and proceeds to group them with those of Amos Tutuola, it is clear that he is referring to themes and setting though the word tone draws the assertion closer to style (Mphahlele 1965, p.x). However, a closer study of the style of the authors is necessary before such groupings can be justifiably done. Suffice it to say that the abandon of Tutuola's imagination in his picaresque novels is difficult to trace in Grace Ogot's short stories, not to mention the shock a reader of Tutuola's novels encounters in the confident employment of clearly ungrammatical English.

Interviews with either the Voice of Kenya - (1968), the Voice of America (1985), the Sunday Nation (1971) or critic of African Literature such as Berth Lindfors (Muzungumuzo, 1980, pp.123-126) offer only a peep into the world view of

Grace Ogot and an even fainter light on her style. The four interviews available for perusal do not help the critic of her art much if the critic's interest is in her use of language. Her assertion that she uses English because she wants to reach a bigger audience than would be the case if she used Dholuo does not do much in the way of helping advance the argument of a study like the present one (Sunday Nation, Nov. 28, 1971). We will analyse the work of art itself to advance our debate.

Taiwo's study of Grace Ogot's short stories will be useful to this thesis. Reviewing her works in 1984, almost two decades since they were first published, Taiwo comments aptly on the artistry. In Female Novels of Modern Africa Taiwo has said that Grace Ogot's "style is lucid and attractive." (Taiwo, 1984, p.160). He has gone further to quote Welbourn who says, "Grace Ogot is a very good writer of short stories" and that she is "particularly proficient in the use of verbal art" (Taiwo pp.161-162). These statements are relevant to this thesis as their authors are hinting at the artistry of Grace Ogot. Leonard Kibera, as a short story writer, has received proportionally less attention than Grace Ogot. We are aware of Angus Calder's comment on the style of Kibera's prose in Zhuka 3. Calder says:

Kibera's style suffers from over emphasis
and ponderous use of coincidence. (Zhuka
3, p.1).

Calder does not go into detail to explain this submission. The summary, for instance, considers "The Hill" in Potent Ash mainly. An examination of the style of other stories like "A Silent Song" may, however, reveal use of coincidence that is

simple and credible. The death of Mbane just after he has been collected from the streets and brought into a home with relatives is a rebuke to the brother's religiosity. It is a coincidence the author effects subtly. Calder's generalization leaves this unponderous case out and for our purpose it is not crucial since the word style in the comment is used in its loosest sense possible and neither shows nor implies any interest in linguistic choices of Leonard Kibera.

It is important to point out that there is greater critical attention paid to Grace Ogot's short stories than to Kibera's. Critics have tended to show more interest in Voices In The Dark than in any of Kibera's short stories. We are aware of an article in Busara where Wanjala treats the theme of loneliness and alienation in Voices In The Dark (Busara, vol.4, 1972, p.71). The author of the article shows little interest in the style of the novel since the theme is the starting and ending point of the essay. In Busara, vol. 2 Carpenter has also commented on the ineptness of Gerald, a character in Voices In The Dark (Busara, vol. 2, 1971, p.40). Style has not arrested the critic's attention. The short story does not feature in these scholarly debates on the author's prose.

As a novelist, Ngugi wa Thiong'o has received a great deal of critical attention. There are several essays and a number of theses on the novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o. On the other hand, his short stories, some of which were written before the novels, have not been subjected to much critical analysis beyond the editorial comments in the anthologies in which they appear. "The Return", for instance,

published in Transition No.3 (1961) has been lauded for the "affirmation of life in spite of loss and estrangement."(Benson, 1986, p.113).

Our focus in this thesis will be on the style of "The Return" and how "the affirmation of life" is suggested. It will be a study of what linguistic habits have made the stories in Secret Lives what they are.

The imbalance evident in this literature review is a true reflection of the imbalance in the existing literature on the three authors and their short stories.

On the style of prose in general there is a sizeable amount of study done but this is mainly based on the European novel and more specifically on the English and American novel. Interest of study has been shifting in the last eight decades so that critics have moved from showing keen interest in the historical, social and economic background of the novel and its writer in the early years of this century through structuralism to the Leavis's pluralist approach to criticism that insists on marrying structuralism which is a linguistic approach and functionalism which is a thematic approach to literature.

Crystal and Davy have, for instance, have discussed style in great detail in Investigating English Style. Here the two authors' definition of style suggests that style is synonymous with register. Thus, style is not restricted to linguistic choices a writer makes in a literary piece of work. As this thesis intends to investigate linguistic choices deliberately made, such a definition as Crystal and Davy's is not likely to prove useful.

Leech and Short in Style In Fiction contend that "a comprehensive view of style" can only be meaningfully contributed to by monism, dualism and pluralism where monism stands for a way of seeing style as part and parcel of content while dualism sees style as simply a way of expressing content which can be discussed independently of the style. (Leech & Short pp. 9-30). Pluralism strikes a balance between the two.

We have belaboured these definitions or ways of understanding style in fiction mainly because the objective of this thesis is to analyse the style of Grace Ogot's, Kibera's and Ngugi's short stories. These are pieces of prose fiction and since the studies of Leech and Short are so far the most readily available, we find it helpful to try to understand them. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the examples they use are either not all known or partially read by the authors on whom we intend to base our arguments in this thesis. James Joyce, for instance, may be totally unknown to Grace Ogot. Thus, using Leech and Short's analyses as a guide may not prove adequate in the course of time. We will, however, refer to the theories they have advanced and try to apply them to the three authors of our study wherever possible. It may prove useful to read the result of a theory developed for the European or English and American prose and tested on a Kenyan short story. That may suggest the universality of fiction.

Library research is at the centre of our methodology in this thesis. The study will rely on the use of language in the text to make any conclusions. This means

that textual analysis will be our starting point. In order to say with certainty, for instance, that Grace Ogot relies on short, simple sentences to build the atmosphere of panic, tragedy or despair, evidence must be produced from the text where this takes place. It may be erroneous to assert that such is characteristic of Grace Ogot without bringing forth pieces of further evidence of the fact. One cannot say, for instance, that dialogue is limited or used sparingly in Kibera's short stories without adducing evidence to that effect. Our evidence lies in the texts; in the nature of paragraphs that characterize his prose. Evidence that Kibera or Ogot breaks rules of grammar can only be found in the text in which this takes place. Thus, textual analysis of the stories we intend to study in this thesis is one inevitable aspect of our methodology. In this case we will study such arrangement of words, phrases and sentences as these:

If any of you know just cause or impediment why these two persons should not be joined in holy matrimony, you have to say it... Achola looked at the congregation and her eyes were dazed. Did they hear what she heard? ... the hymn book slipped off her sweaty hands ... she looked at the pulpit, Yes, the clergyman looking at the congregation. His hand was clutching a pen, Yes, he was going to sign it. She must get up and shout ... "He is mine, Owila is mine, Rapudo is mine." But she felt dizzy and sick ... she could not get up. (L.W.T, pp.167-168 all emphasis is mine).

Thus, Grace Ogot describes a scene of shock, panic and overwhelming fear. Achola, who has been in love with Owila for quite some time now and believes that

Owila loves her, learns that Owila is in fact engaged to another girl and the banns are already being read to the church for approval. In her innocent approach to courtship, she fails to connect her refusal to give in to premarital sex, which she considers disgraceful and tainting, to Owila's decision to drop her and get engaged to another girl. The author treats her innocence vividly. She builds an emotional storm in the young woman's whole being. Achola's complete involvement in the clergyman's words, which to her constitute a kind of death sentence, is depicted in the repetition of the word "Yes". The contrast between her inability to hold the hymn book and the clergyman's firm grip on his pen - the pen that is going to separate her from Owila for ever - helps rid the reader's mind of the presence of anyone else except the two: Achola and the clergyman. Her loneliness is complete and the tension is clear. It is only dizziness and the fact of faintness, which the author consciously brings in, that ease the tension.

This passage has been picked upon as illustrative of Ogot's sentence patterns that evoke an atmosphere of panic. The monosyllabic word that affirms that panic-"Yes", the placing of three complete sentences one after another without separating them with full stops all go to build up the atmosphere of breathlessness, panic and repudiation of etiquette.

The style of Leonard Kibera and Ngugi wa Thiong'o is studied in the same way as that of Grace Ogot. Passages such as this have been singled out for discussion:

Kamau stopped at the Government Road music shop, scratched a bug out of his hair, and with the palm of the other hand beat off lies which gave him no peace. He was barefooted ... the world still bewildered him ever since his mother deserted him ... The police had then tossed him into the hands of one charity home to another like a basket ball ... (P.A., pp.94-95)

The author is here describing the plight of a deserted child just before he commits the crime that will scare him to his death. Lonely and desperate Kamau is presented in words that characterize the outer discomfort. The verbs stopped, scratched, beat, deserted, tossed are all active verbs connoting either a dead end or violence. Lack of fellow feeling on the part of those dealing with the child is suggested in the active verbs deserted, tossed and in the final figure of speech like a tennis ball.

Thus, this study engages in such analysis of texts as these two examples show. In order to fully appreciate the author's achievement in such passages, we have referred to several authorities on style and the short story.

At the same time, some of the arguments in the thesis are strengthened by information from Grace Ogot, neighbours of Ngugi and a relative of Kibera. These interviews have been necessitated by the fact that a writer's tastes, impressions and undeclared attitudes inform his/her art and a discussion with him/her or people who have known him/her intimately could throw some light on certain emphases, euphemisms and omissions, all of which are pertinent to the study of style. This is

to say, in effect, that while the analysis of style may lift the work to heights unrecognizable by either the author or those who have known him closely, nevertheless some autobiographical or even biographical knowledge may become useful for a fuller appreciation of which standpoints the work has lifted the critic from.

The thesis is divided into four chapters besides this one which introduces the study using the expected format: the statement of the problem, the scope of the study, research objectives, theoretical framework, hypothesis, literature review and the methodology used. In the first chapter which we conveniently refer to as *The Emergence of the Short Story* in Kenya we present an overview of the factors, fora and artists responsible for the inception and growth of the short story as a genre in Kenya. We single out the early writings of Grace Ogot and Ngugi while mention is made of Kibera's days as an editor of *Transition* and *Ghala*.

In Chapters two to four, we focus on the style of each of the three writers: Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Leonard Kibera and Grace Ogot respectively. For each writer's works we have provided a heading which serves as a summary of the author's peculiarity or most outstanding characteristic of his/her stories. Thus, Chapter Two is entitled *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Elasticity in Prose* while chapter Three is headed *Kibera : A Genre on Trial*. Chapter Four bears the title *Grace Ogot: Dream and Reality*.

CHAPTER I

To conclude the study is a brief section that highlights the discoveries made in the course of the thesis. We point out what we believe are fresh contributions to the study of the genre in this country. We also suggest several aspects of the short story and style which can be studied for the benefit of literary criticism and writing as a discipline.

One of the most important contributions of this study is the discovery of the short story in the Philippines. The study may also help and be useful to the study of the genre in other countries.

The greatest contribution to make in the Philippines is that the readers should know more about the short story in the Philippines. The study of the short story in the Philippines is a part of the English studies. Young people attending upper primary and secondary schools are exposed to short stories by Timothy Huxford (in one book anthology) and other young and best selling authors by simply abridging them. Like Austen's *Emma*, among others which is read to a child in one book novel. Valerius Sarmiento also contributed to the study of the short story in the Philippines. During the 1950s, the short story became popular and most liked. The history of the short story in the Philippines is the result of the study of the short story in the Philippines. The study of the short story in the Philippines is the result of the study of the short story in the Philippines. The study of the short story in the Philippines is the result of the study of the short story in the Philippines.

In addition to the above mentioned titles, there were other titles translated from the Bible and published in their own anthologies in Bible stories. These are the result of the study of the short story in the Philippines. The study of the short story in the Philippines is the result of the study of the short story in the Philippines.

CHAPTER 1

The Emergence of the Short Story in Kenya

1.1 Opening Remarks

A study devoted to the style of the short story in Kenya is bound to raise several expectations. One of these may have to do with getting information on how long the genre has been on the scene. The study may even oblige one to expect to be told how the genre found its way onto the Kenyan scene.

The easiest statement to make in the circumstances is that the modern short story came into Kenya at the same time as the study of story books as part of the English syllabus. Young people attending upper primary and secondary schools got exposed to short stories by Tolstoy (Ivanhoe is one such anthology) and novels which had been turned into short stories by simply abridging them. Jane Austen's Emma, among others which I read as a child, is one such novel. Tales from Shakespeare also circulated in school libraries and classrooms, forming the earliest encounter between Kenyans and short fiction. The brevity of the shortened novels helped its popularity as the number of stories read by week was recorded. Incentive for more avid reading was provided in the form of grades awarded to students' book reviews.

In addition to the above mentioned titles, there were stories extracted from the Bible and published in their own anthologies as Bible stories. These too formed part of the body of prose fiction that Kenyan school-going youth read in the course of their study.

It should be noted here that in these early beginnings of the study of English literature, the stories read both for leisure and in class were not distinguished by their genre, hence, the distinction between the short story and the novel was not belaboured. The short story as a literary genre remained unnamed.

It is also important to point out at this juncture the fact that literary writing throughout this period (pre-1961) was the domain of the white author. There were no local literary magazines to encourage the increasing number of people with a high language proficiency in English to write in that language. Writing and publishing stories remained esoteric so that the Kenyan youth who was encouraged to read story after story found his literary world saturated with English authors, and English stories. Ulli Beier used this fact to argue for the establishment of and support for Black Orpheus (1957).

However, we need to spell out quite clearly that writing good prose was a respected skill. These youth, exposed to short stories about foreign lands and peoples, used certain aspects of the short story to write original compositions set by the teacher for grading the mastery of the written language. Letter writing also formed a channel for self-expression in continuous prose. We note here that it was through letters written to her boyfriend that Grace Ogot practised her skills of writing prose. She has admitted the encouragement received from that man as being the main source of inspiration. For writers like Jonathan Kariara, James Ngugi (Ngugi wa Thiong'o of the seventies) Leonard Kibera, Sam Kahiga and Rebecca Njau secondary school English composition classes formed the spring board. There were also school magazines in some cases:

Ngugi's first story "I Try Witchcraft" was published in such a magazine. Further impetus for writing creative stories was provided by Makerere University College's Department of English. For purposes of this study we will first acknowledge the role of Penpoint, the Department's literary magazine. Young, energetic and creative minds were tickled into imaginative writing by the possibility and, in many cases, certainty of getting published. Kariara, for instance, is on record as having prompted Ngugi then (James Ngugi) to complete his first story, "The Mugumo Tree," and hand it in for publication. (Secret Lives, p.3) This magazine tapped talent unspoiled by monetary demands. What is more, the young writers held lively debates on what constituted a good story. Because of the limited space, the short story and the poem became the favourite genres of Penpoint.

The youth were bubbling with themes. Given the independence of Ghana in 1957, the horror of the Emergency experienced by the Kenyan students-cum-young writers, the emerging students' awareness of Western conspiracy to underdevelop Africa and of the sinister activities of the America Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the list of themes was endless. The arrival of Neogy's magazine, Transition, in 1961 must have been greeted with the Hardian expression: "the more the merrier". Writers like Okot p'Bitek, Taban Lo Liyong, David Rubadiri and Rebecca Njau wrote for Transition. This was, after all, an international literary journal and it was "at home" unlike Ulli Beier's West Africa-based Black Orpheus. Though Grace Ogot had had "The Rain Came" and Ngugi "The Return" published in the West Africa-based magazine, Neogy's

magazine is responsible for the creation of some of the oldest and greatest short stories in Kenya.

With time the East Africa Journal, a periodical devoted to socio-politico-economic debates launched a "special issue on creative writing." This was done in September, 1966. This special issue seems to have tapped so much creative talent that within a space of two years a need for "a responsible outlet" of this talent was felt. Thus, Ghala was launched in July, 1968. The editor of Ghala said:

"Ghala" is a Swahili word meaning 'granary', reservoir', 'depository' in which the seasonal harvest of corn is stored. East Africa Journal was among the earliest (and is now practically the only serious) of pioneering magazines engaged in the significant task of planting, harvesting and storing the cultural cereals of our countries.

The launching of Ghala must have revived the creative enthusiasm dampened by the revelation of the funding of Transition and the exit of that journal from the scene. In Ghala Grace Ogot and Ngugi got their stories published: "Pay Day" (July 1968) and "Minutes of Glory" (July 1972). Unlike either Transition, which combined discussion on culture and creative writing, thereby limiting the number of stories per issue, or the special issue on creative writing within the East Africa Journal, which was not regarded as a "responsible outlet" for the creative talent it was encouraging, Ghala was devoted to literary works.

The result was that it was possible to have as many as eight short stories in a single issue. Hence, in the first issue (July 1968) alone names like Kimura ("A Taste

of Honey"), Singh ("Merely a Matter of Colour"), Zirimu ("Kintu and Nambi"), Watene ("Darkness of the Soul"), Gecau ("The Crossroads"), Gichangi ("Green Pasture"), Mativo ("The Other Alternative"), and Ogot ("Pay Day") appeared.

An examination of several of these stories reveals one thing about them: prolificity was emphasized at the expense of the fineness of the art. For instance, a story like Gichangi's "The Green Pasture" has little artistic merit to recommend it to any literary journal. Lacking any tangible story line, the story nevertheless excels in detailed descriptions of the setting (the pasture) at sunset, the grazing cow and then the main character's past and present expectations. The use of dreams as a stylistic device fails as there is lack of focus for the whole story; the author fails to co-ordinate the dream and the reality the character and his family are facing. Because pieces of information per se do not constitute a story, one is led to submit that there is no story; and yet, the prose piece got published. This fact reinforces the view that focus was on themes and their relevance to the East African situation rather than the style of the story.

It is important to note here that by the time Ghala was launched both Grace Ogot, having first published "And The Rain Came" (1957) in Black Orpheus and Ngugi, having first published "I Try Witchcraft" (1957) in the school magazine, were seasoned short story writers. The two authors, among several others, had been at the forefront of the 1962 Makerere Conference and had gathered a wealth of information on creative writing in Africa. Hence, these two authors are about the only writers whose stories in the periodical quoted above read like well told tales with a focus and a definite story line.

There is a marked switch in the themes as is revealed in the comparison between the 1957 stories of the two authors and those appearing in Ghala. The authors' response to the changing social scene is discernible in the comparison.

In Black Orpheus, Penpoint and the initial Transition issues Kenyan short stories either depict traditional practices as they affect an individual ("The Rain Came") or the just ended Mau Mau and its impact on the individual ("The Return"). By the time Ghala was established the people of Kenya, and indeed, East Africa had experienced so many changes in their social, political as well as economic lives that writers of this period had little room to remember the idyllic past. Thus, young authors found writing the best means by which to express their shock at the acquisitive spirit and attendant greed that were fast engulfing the society and robbing people of humanity. As a result of this increasing inhumanity, an increasing number of undesirable classes caught the attention of the author, demanding expression: these were the classes of beggars, pick pockets, conmen and prostitutes. These have always been classes of lonely people, alienated and repulsed, the paradox of the prostitute's clientele notwithstanding. This was the reality that the short stories of the mid- and late sixties had to depict. James Stewart put this aptly when he wrote of the time as one demanding that "the story of alienation and the pangs of loss" be written.

This study is, therefore, concerned with the style of a form that emerged from three different standpoints all of which are of great significance to the literary tradition of Kenya. The three prongs are namely: the oral tradition, the European modern short

story and the individual artist's sensitivity to rapid and drastic changes taking place around him.

In this chapter we will examine briefly both the oral and the written traditions as providing a strong spring board from which the Kenyan short story writer got a headstart.

1.2 The Oral Roots of Written Short Stories

In the introduction to Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol (p'Bitek, 1966) G. A. Heron points out a fact he had noted as a common weakness in African writing thus:

Sadly, the written literature of the African nations has been clearly separated in many people's minds from the oral literary heritage that is present in every African community (p.)

Here the critic is bringing to the fore a very important point about literature in general and the short story in particular the world over and throughout the ages. Before writing and publishing stories, there was the oral tale. This is to emphasize the fact that man has always had the urge to narrate his experiences to his audience just as the urge to use language to communicate to those within earshot has been within him from time immemorial. When the two species-specific actions combine with the innate longing for entertainment, then the need to colour experiences with the fantastic is called into play.

Real experiences which when told only excite the first time and fade out of memory shortly after, sounding intolerably boring at every moment a repeat performance

is attempted, recede as imaginary people meet and converse or fight with or marry imagined tortoises. In this way oral narratives are born : they are as old as language itself. One can then say that oral narratives are the indigenous form of literature in any given community.

Oral narratives characterize the literary life of most rural communities in Kenya. A one day field trip focused on oral narrative is able to come up with as many as ten different narratives. The ease with which the narrator tells the story and the originality that makes each story arrest the attention of the audience, even when it is being told for the third time by a third artist clearly attest to the assertion that oral literature as opposed to written literature is the better enjoyed form of the two.

However, it must be pointed out here that since the advent of Christianity and literacy these artists have not enjoyed the prominence they were indulged with before, being seen up till the late nineteen eighties as largely primitive and not worthy of study. Heron's lament was directed at this kind of attitude and as the present study focuses on the period he was referring to, it is apt that it receive a brief mention. Before oral literature became a compulsory component of the literature in English syllabus, oral artists were not taken seriously nor were the students (university students and their one or two lecturers) who set out to go and interview them and record their performances.

It is in this kind of atmosphere that Ngugi, Grace Ogot and Leonard Kibera wrote their short stories: an atmosphere of positive rejection of the primitive and illiterate. The three authors were operating in an environment similar to the one "Alfred's national

policy that spelled doom for oral literature" generated: one that would enjoy oral performance for its ability to rouse nostalgia rather than for its artistic power and beauty (Nature of Narrative, 1968, p.37). Revising the essays (1974) he had written in 1962 after the Makerere Conference, Mphahlele referred to this state of oral literature with a great deal of fervour, thus:

I would like to see high-school students devote at least half of the total time for literature in one's career to African literature, from its oral beginnings in various indigenous languages. Students can be set projects to collect oral poetry and tales from their own ethnic groups and discuss them in class. (African Image, 1962, p.31)

By the time of this revision in attitude the anthologies for this study had already been written.

The interest in the pre-nineteen sixty-nine stature of Kenyan oral literature is further based on the fact that literary artists and scholars in this country were experiencing what their predecessors in England had gone through at the advent of "Christianity and the establishment of a book culture as the basis of aristocratic (western in our case) education" (N.N., p.37). From the apologetic statements by critics at that time, it is clear that both writers and critics were aware of the power of the indigenous literature and its possible impact on the writing of the time. It is also evident that existing oral narratives presented a problem of choice of language and form. Okot p'Bitek, for instance, elected to "go back to the oral sources of his culture and evoke traditional African wisdom in his songs." (Season of Harvest p.64) He earned severe

criticism from Wanjala, a first-generation critic of East African writing, thus:

... Ngugi picks at the passively harmonious society that Okot, seems to envisage in his songs. Okot symbolizes a society that is content with its own limited vision and striving to remain closed to the external world Season of Harvest. 1978, p.65.

Though Wanjala was referring to the theme and vision of Okot's Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol, still one can see this comment as applying to the choice to "go back to oral sources of his culture" and "its own limited vision" aptly. The comment on Lak Ter confirms our view, thus:

Okot's first novel, Lak Ter is not only addressed to his people, but it is also written in the mother tongue Season of Harvest p.66.

Thus, using oral sources and/or the mother tongue was in the eyes of the critic in the nineteen seventies synonymous with "sticking to decadent values and evoking the mystic of the [past] African dance" Season of Harvest, p.71. Ngugi, writing in the realist tradition, a tradition praised by Wanjala as being one of most accessible to a vision that has adjusted to the demands of [the] society, is extolled for treating the past as "a mere glimmer" Season of Harvest p.71. It is along this trend of thought that Kibera's Voices In the Dark, is described as "a brilliant novel!" that is "cleverly written" Season of Harvest p.75, Wanjala's is, thus, a demonstration of a conscious effort to run away from the oral heritage; an aversion to that form of verbal art. By such utterances he

epitomizes the awe in which critics of the nineteen seventies held the printed word; thus, what Scholles and Kelloggs refer to as "the sanctity of the printed word in [our] culture" had overawed the Kenyan budding elite and the critic was not spared The Nature of Narrative, 1968, p.19. The writer, too, got caught up in the wave towards the "sanctity of the printed word", being constantly eager to receive approval of the critic.

The dismissal of Grace Ogot's art and the total discouragement of the author from writing novels (her only novel in two decades, The Promised Land was condemned because there was "no dividing line [for the author] between realism and fantasy") stemmed from the fact that her stories were mistakenly viewed as being heavily influenced by the oral literature of her people. Wanjala says of her writing:

Grace Ogot enjoys writing the short story ostensibly because she is deeply rooted in oral literature and the oral tale is an important genre there Season of Harvest, p.102.

In contrast, he saw Kibera whose approach to writing was furthest from oral tradition, a writer who strived to write short stories in English for the award of a degree in English, as the superior writer with "cleverly written stories". Ngugi wrote according to the rules of Penpoint, a Department of English magazine whose editors went to great pains to select only stories that were written in correct English.

We can, then, argue that whereas the three authors were operating at a time when the expected works would have been what Scholles and Kellogg refer to as the "transitional text", one that represents a combination of oral narrative and written composition, the eagerness to demonstrate a clear difference between the man or woman

of letters and the illiterate, who was also economically deprived and seen through the eyes of the intellectual as culturally inferior as well, militated against the critic's preparedness to give such an idea of combination a chance The Nature of Narrative, p.31). Grace Ogot's "The Rain Came" is the closest she gets, in her short stories, to a transitional text. Hence, a critic who sees this story as representative of all her short stories is guilty of overgeneralization; not to mention the fact that such a submission begs a consistent discussion of the possibility or otherwise of the existence of a "transitional text." Scholles and Kellogg rule out such a possibility while suggesting the certainty that:

new, genuinely written literary forms [will] begin to emerge out of the old tradition with the new [sic] academic tradition ibid p.31

This view of the emergence of hybrid-type literary forms is exemplified in a story like "The Rain Came." Then, there is the mysterious world of "Tekayo" which draws this text closer to the "hybrid text" than to either the traditional oral tale or the modern short story. Thus, the comments of both Wanjala and Cook to the effect that "her short stories suffer from gross looseness of structure" excusing this weakness on the fact of that structure being "typical of the oral folk tale" are based on the critics' lack of awareness of the hybrid nature of the form Grace Ogot was ushering onto the Kenyan literary scene. Her style caught critics unawares just like that of Okot's songs did.

The oral tradition is rich as Ngugi was to discover later, after faithfully sticking to the modern tradition in all his pre-nineteen seventy-five works. Spurred on by Ulli

Beier's acceptance of The Rain Came, Grace Ogot stands out as the only author who exploited this tradition to produce a new form. It is not a wonder that critics shunned her work at best and at worst dismissed it as lacking "literary verve and sophistication, (Sunday Nation, Nov. 28, 71). Yet, an examination of her stories in the light of May's argument that the short story constitutes a "new" genre in its "self-conscious combination of the conventions of the realistic and romance form" leads one to the conclusion that what they lack is what would have weakened their artistic merit. In a sense, Grace Ogot steeped herself in the oral tradition while being already informed by the academic tradition to come out with a hybrid form, a "new" genre which critics were ill-equipped to handle. She introduced a form that could best be handled by May (1992), a short story scholar who focuses on the "Metaphoric Motivation in Short Fiction" rather than the critics of the realist novel and seekers after literature of commitment and edification or emancipation of the women readers. These have expended their energy on the search for messages and positive images of women in Grace Ogot's stories and ended up condemning her writing for lacking what it ought not to have as short stories in the first place Season of Harvest. p.105.

This section will end by pointing out that oral tradition as a spring board for writing modern short stories in Kenya cannot be traced in Kibera's "well written" stories. The co-editor of Ghala (July, 1968 Issue) seems to have had little time for a tradition that his upbringing in Kabete did not help nurture very much. The fervour for "reorientating [our] whole education system, so that children are brought up with a life-long aesthetic

interest in books "could not allow the artist in the forefront of it to think of oral tradition, let alone consciously introduce such a tradition in his works (Ghala, Jan., 1971). The same can be said of Ngugi except that his rural background (some thirty kilometres away from the city of Nairobi) and the oral literature thereof occasionally reared its head in his short stories and got accommodated. Here one is thinking of the song in "And the Rain Came." (Secret Lives p.10). Beyond this, one can say that like Kariara, the editor of Penpoint who encouraged him to plunge into the world of writing (1960), Ngugi (James then) had little time for the verbal art of the "illiterate and ... economically deprived" (NON, p.18). It is Grace Ogot, the truest rustic of the three authors in this study, her home being situated some four hundred kilometres away from the city, who, three years before Ngugi could publish any story except the one in the school magazine of 1957 ("I Try Witchcraft"), published a story ("The Rain Came" in Black Orpheus, 1957) that set to motion the corpus of works that resemble what Scholes and Kellogg were to refer to later (1966) as "new, genuinely written forms" and which fit May's theory of "a new" genre. (The Nature of Narrative, p.31, Re-orienting Rhetoric, 1992, p.65).

Thus, the oral tradition has played a significant role in the creation of these stories that have caused the author to be described as "one of the really disturbing writers in Africa today" who "has more sensitivity than most writers" (East African Publishing House, 1968). Use of oral tradition caused the editor of Nexus to describe Grace Ogot as "the most African writer in East Africa" (Nexus, 1967 p.24). All these compliments

stemmed from the result of the merger of the oral and the modern traditions to create what some of the most modern critics would acknowledge as the "new" genre the short story.

Grace Ogot has acknowledged the contribution of oral narratives told to her mainly by her father while she was growing up. She refers to him as a pioneer feminist who enjoyed talking to his daughters about school and telling them stories. It is from him she learnt that no personal experience is too flat for an audience and with this in mind, she was able to write stories set in the hospital, in airports, on the train, in the university and even at funerals. The urge to tell a story to an audience, whether it is an already told story or a fresh one created by the author carries within it the obligation to entertain. Grace Ogot says that this has been her guiding principle in all her writing (interview with me, Nov. 1990).

Having traced the possible oral heritage of the short story in Kenya, we will now go on to examine the impact of the modern, western short story on the style of this form in Kenya.

1.3 The Written Tradition

The arrival of the modern short story in Kenya cannot be divorced from the increased access to higher education and the aggressive interest in cultural awakening. The English Department in Makerere which launched and ran Penpoint thrived in an atmosphere of increased access to university education. Students of English saw

Penpoint as a forum for expressing their creative talent. One had a story and he/she sent it to the magazine. Poems were also published here. Criticism and evaluation of the works to be published played a central role as the contributors were usually students of literature and, thus, practising young critics. The editorial board comprised the best students.

Ngugi made his debut into the world of creative writing through Penpoint. His first story for the magazine, "The Fig Tree" (1960) was written as a response to Jonathan Kariara's request that he submit a story to him as he had bound himself to the task. Kariara, it is to be remembered, was a member of the editorial committee and his encouragement must have been regarded very seriously by the young student-writer. With Penpoint a young student-writer saw his name in print and got assurance of exposure to a wider audience than that made of the usual members of the writers' workshop. This was a concrete incentive for Ngugi, among others. That Penpoint built Ngugi is evidenced by the fact that by mid-1962 he had published five stories in Penpoint and Kenya Weekly News (Benson, p.68). This, by any standards, was a sign of great motivation resulting in high prolificity. The publicity accorded him by Penpoint can be said to be directly responsible for his connection with Kenya Weekly Review. It was a kind of literary homecoming to use Ngugi's own word; a way of telling the Kenyan reader that a local writer had been born.

At this juncture, it is important to point out the central role Penpoint played in the formulation of the modern short story in Kenya. As student-writers, contributors

to this literary magazine as well as the editorial committee were using certain standards by which to write and accept or reject a text for publication. What constitutes a story was a question on the mind of both the writer and the editor. Providing answers to this question usually generated very lively debates. The writing and editing were consciously or otherwise, heavily influenced by the western model. Ngugi has quoted D. H. Lawrence as being one of his favourite authors, for instance (Siecherman, 1992).

It is true that it is the European novel which dominated the syllabus; nevertheless, when it came to writing the short story for Penpoint, techniques of writing theoretically belaboured in the study of the novel were adopted. In this way brevity marked the main difference between this "new" genre and the novel. In other words the young writers echoed Eikhenbaum that the short story has two characteristics:

compression rather than expansion and concentration rather than distribution. (Lohafer, 1989, p.64).

With this as the guiding principle, a writer like young Ngugi compressed the story of Mukami's misery and the mysterious creation of hope in her ("The Mugumo"). The story has a conflict which is then resolved at the end. However, this ending almost gives the impression that the author is striving for it: it is so contrived as to be fake. Her discovery that she has been pregnant for sometime is almost mechanically linked to the vision-cum-dream in which she encounters Mumbi, the mother of the tribe who tells her as much: "I am the mother of a nation" (Secret Lives p.7). It is as if the pregnancy has been caused by "the mother of [the] nation;" it is thus a mysterious pregnancy: yet the

mystery of it all is not quite convincing.

One can say that part of the ruggedness of the resolution is caused by the desire to compress the long story of Mukami's romantic marriage to Muthoga, her failure to get pregnant within the expected time, Muthoga's coldness and cruelty, her desperate attempt to desert the home and her final return to the Muthoga household. It had enough scope to be developed into a novel and yet Penpoint wanted a short story; hence the untidiness caused by omission of information crucial to the making of a neat, satisfying resolution.

That Kariara was impressed by this story is evidence that it was typical of the stories published in that Magazine (Secret Lives p.iv). Stories which encouraged "speculation on the part of the reader" seem to have found favour with the editors.

As well as providing a forum for trying a hand at writing fiction that did not allow for the creation of what Gerlach would refer to as "a fleshed-out sense of character" which is one of the strengths of the novel, a genre well known to the student-writers, Penpoint also exposed these young artists to the lively debate on culture and cultural revolution that were at that time in vogue. Stories were seen as one way of conserving cultural practices and values. Authenticity and Africanness were assiduously belaboured. Ngugi's inclusion of polygamy and the women's positive attitude to that practice, religion centred on Murungu and the role of motherhood in marriage is evidence of the fervour. Thus "The Mugumo Tree"! is clearly culture-conscious.

The arrival of Ulli-Beier in Kampala in 1961 and his overt interest in the culture of the English speaking peoples of East Africa must have given the young writers for Penpoint greater motivation to create stories that enhanced the cultural awakening that was in the process. The activities of Black Orpheus were clearly spelt out to an audience of those who were either interested in writing or had already contributed a poem, play or short story to a magazine. Keen to emphasize the role of culture in the new era- the period during which several African countries were either preparing to rule themselves as independent nations or were already independent and, thus, were busy defining their new status to themselves - Beier found audience and disciples in writers like Grace Ogot and Ngugi. These two, among others, passed their stories to him for publication. We note here that Black Orpheus enjoyed international recognition as it was modelled on Presence Africaine, being its Anglophone counterpart. In handling in "The Return", a story highlighting the plight of an ex-Mau Mau fighter who comes home only to learn of his wife's desertion and to be informed of his parents' acceptance of the false rumours about his own death, Ngugi was committing to print and posterity both the history of his people and certain cultural values regarding people's attitude to those who die in war, young women who are left unattended by their husbands in war situations and the whole question of the individual versus the society. Kamau rejects suicide finally because he recognizes the trend of thought of the entire society. His parents' simple response: "Muthoni went away" seems to imply that in such circumstances when rumour that a young husband has died in war is on everyone's lips the young woman so

"bewidowed" has only one choice: to accept an offer of marriage from whoever gives it. Thus, "Muthoni went away" means that Muthoni had no choice and so Kamau has no reason to be angry with her; neither should he feel betrayed by his parents for custom obliges parents in their position to release the young woman.

Grace Ogot in the same year (1961) handed in her first story, "The Rain Came". Mphahlele's response to the published story in Black Orpheus indicates that the African promoter of the continent's cultural activities was pleased with the short story for its ability to evoke values and tastes of old Africa. A story centred on human sacrifice for rain, depicting, on the one hand, the deeply superstitious nature of the people and, on the other, the ineptness of the very gods who are taken so seriously as to be given whatever they ask for, sold to the international community the vast possibilities within the author's culture. Ogot's acceptance of her fate, coupled with her mother's view of the whole request held a mirror to the way individuals related to each other both within the family and beyond, especially in a moment of crisis.

Judging by the enthusiasm with which these two stories were received, we can argue that the focus of Black Orpheus was on creative writing as a means of achieving cultural liberation. Neogy seems to have interpreted the spirit of Black Orpheus when he decided to form his own forum: Transition based in Kampala. Established in 1961, Transition, an international journal that promised to sell the young contributors' names beyond the areas covered by Penpoint, was able to attract poems, plays and stories from more of the older and more ambitious writers than the local journal.

Like Ulli Beier of Black Orpheus, Neogy had no problems with funding his journal. However, his complaint in mid-1962 to the effect that during the year he had been in East Africa he had recognized "the stunted nature of literary activity" was indicative of the fact that there was still inhibition about venturing beyond Penpoint (B.O., T & MCAA, 1968, p.98). Neogy further noted with concern that actually "no much literary activity" was emerging", and yet the funders were keen on the publication (Benson, 1986, p.12; Indangasi, 1993, p.5).

It is significant, however, that even as Neogy was bemoaning the limited nature of literary activity, two Kenyans were ready to present their works to his journal. These were Ngugi ("The Return") and Rebecca Njau ("The Scar"). These two Kenyans were also among the founder writers of Transition. With clitorrectomy as the central theme of "The Scar", the publication of this play must have served as tangible evidence that Transition was determined to expose the various cultural practices through literary works.

It was further evidence that creative writing provided one of the most effective ways of availing information on some of the customs and cultural practices that were so central to the African way of life that it was regarded a taboo to discuss them out of their social context. Rebecca Njau's play exposed fears, aspirations and dangers that were known only to initiated women and no one else. The clash between traditional values and the emerging cosmopolitan Christian tastes as demonstrated in the very courage to write the play was a reflection of the reality facing the new African society in the new era as well as an ironic comment on the young writer's cynical decision to expose secrets, which

were availed to her in simple trust that she would guard them for the good of the community, to outsiders whose interest in the story she could not explain. In this way creative writing exposed some of the crucial strings that had hitherto held the society together. Through writing cultural beliefs and practices were laid bare.

When Mphahlele asserts in Conversations with African Writers that works coming from Africa (in the nineteen sixties and early seventies) were new - found voices that introduced the continent to the world, "laying bare its soul" before it (the world), works like "The Scar" come to mind. Njau's play can be used as another illustration of Grace Ogot's view of writing vis-a-vis a people's background, a people's culture. She says:

Any living people, be they white or black or green, have a background which makes them what they are. Scratch them deep, you find it there [sic]. In writing, you can use them so that later on when our children change beyond recognition they will know what they were in the past (Conversation with African Writers pp.209-210)

This is in reference to the message in "The Rain Came." The author, while confessing that the story was written as a personal response to a very moving story she had listened to during her early childhood, she, nevertheless, brings in a new element: the idea of writing stories for posterity; writing to specifically preserve a culture threatened with disintegration. The latter phrase, however, sounds like a belated attempt to toe the line of argument of the increasing number of East African writers. One hears the echo of Wanjala's words:

... we are writing for people at school who are growing up in new values and trying to point out to them that the African traditions, the African cultures, had their own [positive] values which we must not lose so quickly (ibid., p.295).

Thus, the post-script which has been doctored to almost accurately correspond to Mphahlele's cover commentary, "You are listening to a continent defining its cultural consciousness," has little to do with the author's original intention; yet at the same time it has everything to do with the objectives of the two publications- Black Orpheus and Transition. An aggressive campaign ostensibly launched to revive the hitherto inhibited area of culture was on.

It is, therefore, our contention here that the short stories written for Black Orpheus, Transition, and Penpoint were all spontaneous responses to a need to commit to print a story orally transmitted to the author in childhood or else a desire to write stories akin to those read during early school days as is the case with Grace Ogot and Meja Mwangi respectively. Of his early debut into the world of writing (at the age of seventeen) Mwangi says,

I used to read these (European kids' books) and I got to like these stories. And from there I started reading novels -small novels, novelettes. I continued with this and finally I thought I would like to write a story like the stories I read (Conversation with African Writers, p.16).

The case of Mwangi needs further investigation: he also implies strongly the role that stories listened to by the author actually played and the influence they had on his desire

to write when he says:

So I started writing and the first one was a story I had been told by a certain old man. ... I enjoyed it and I thought it made good reading (ibid., p.17 Emphasis mine).

Thus, the three journals were operating in an atmosphere of bubbling talent, their ardent desire to expose African culture to the West notwithstanding. Authors wrote stories burning to be told and the publishers praised the stories and paid royalties to the writers for quite a different reason: the stories answered to the funder's objective - to appear to be consciously promoting African culture while penetrating the mind and sensibilities of the citizens of the newly independent states as well as those of the subjects of colonies that were about to become independent. Thus, writers were on the whole unaware of their role in the politics of New Africa.

The 1962 African Writers' Conference held at Makerere was a landmark in East African creative writing. Writers in this region who had so far been introduced to the world of literary activity through Penpoint, Transition and, to a very limited extent, Black Orpheus, were the natural hosts of the great conference. The focus was definition of African literature. Participants in the conference sought to clarify to themselves and the world what constituted African literature. Several ideas were floated; some of which were that African literature must identify with Africa's problems both economically and intellectually. Whether a writer was black, brown or white, his writing could only be regarded as belonging to the body of African literature if both "intellectual and emotional" identification with African hopes, fears and aspirations was discernible

in his work (Indangasi, 1993, p.4).

These pronouncements laid emphasis on themes. Thus, themes of racism and how it affected the African were encouraged so were themes that exploited the ever widening gap between traditional values and practices, on the one hand, and modern life on the other. Mphahlele's The African Image (1962) was a lucidation of the theme of the Conference. Having organised this conference, Mphahlele was able to write with great authority on what the writer of African literature seeking identification with Africa's problems ought to understand: the African character. He ruled out the Negritudist stance, considering it to be romantic and outdated.

The pronouncement at the Conference and the critical work of Mphahlele had effect on post conference writing. Identification with African hopes, fears and aspirations seems to have been interpreted to mean using story-like narratives to have a swipe at themes of racial conflict, hunger, avarice, sexual immorality and all forms of greed. It is in this atmosphere that Mativo's "The other Alternative", a highly experimental piece, appeared with its short, school-boyish naive sentences like

It was hot. It was quiet everywhere. No bird sang. No bull bellowed, not a single person sang. All was quiet and dead (Ghala, July, 1968 p.47-49).

Both character and action are dull to the extreme. Ngugi's "Minutes of Glory" bears the spirit of the 1962 conference and other debates subsequent to it. The scope of this story is undirected while the criticism levelled against the society is too overt to be artistic. Thus, the encouragement to write, especially, short stories, does not seem to have been

accompanied by hints on how to write. Several school boys plunged into writing for Ghala and Nexus without the slightest idea on the artistry demanded of them as short story writers. It is in this atmosphere of tackling or highlighting topical issues that Grace Ogot presented her Land Without Thunder and contributed to Ghala her story "Pay Day" earning for herself the following compliment from Kimbugwe:

a gifted writer ... well aware of the changes taking place around her yet retains a deep and close understanding of the traditional ways of thought of her people (East African Journal, April, 1969).

She was singled out as having "More African sensitivity than most writers" (E.A.P.H. editor, 1968) while Nexus (1967) had praised her as the "most African writer in East Africa". All these compliments indicate that the Makerere conference (1962) had, by emphasizing focus on themes, ironically stifled artistic activity while ushering in flat, issue-packed pieces. The recognition she received was a clear indication that writing fiction demanded more than a lucid knowledge of the rampant social hopes and fears: it called for great control of style; a conscious effort to rouse aesthetic pleasure even as the horrors of selfishness and greed are highlighted.

Thus, the emergence of the short story in Kenya is a three-pronged affair. We have the oral narrative providing a model for writers of the modern short-story, Grace Ogot confessing and displaying the greatest degree of indebtedness and Ngugi shyly showing vestiges of influence. The form has also gained a great deal from the western

model. Both Ngugi and Kibera show signs of this influence. Lastly, we have the writers' individual contribution where the initiative to tell a story already existing in the tradition is beefed up with the urge and ability to tell that story well and in a manner unique to the writer thereby producing a new genre; a modern short story that has only some resemblance to its oral origin. We are, therefore, going to analyse ten stories whose authors are operating in a tripartite situation.

CHAPTER 2

ELASTICITY IN PROSE: Ngugi wa Thiong'o

2.1 Opening Remarks

A study of the short stories of Ngugi wa Thiong'o is an exercise in appreciation of an ever-shifting approach to writing. The term elasticity has been identified as one that is most likely to embrace both Ngugi's shifting focus as well as tone. The adoption of this phrase is further a recognition of the fact that Ngugi has been a restless writer from the time he got his first stories published in Penpoint up till today when he has turned his attention to stories for children and further experimental writing. There is elasticity in his tendency to make the short story flout the conventions of the genre in order to serve what the author perceives as the social role of literature: Ngugi will be preachy and detailed where he believes that a point has to be "driven home" into the reader ("A Mercedes Funeral") just as he will give superfluous authorial statements when he feels that subtlety will not work. Yet, the same author has floated some of the finest non-preachy short stories in Kenya. Thus, elasticity is the operative term chosen to aid in the discussion of the style of the short stories which span a period of one and a half decades (1960-1975), treating themes of immediate relevance that convey shifting tones and points of view, with the result that the loud Ngugi of "A Mercedes Funeral" (1972) is very different from the almost quiet author of "The Return." (1960) That it is the same author is a point that moves one to exclaim "How elastic! or How flexible!"

Because this is a study of the artistry of Ngugi's short stories, it will limit discussion to an area this author has increasingly shown discomfort with: style, while bringing in his favourite aspect of writing - themes and concerns as content and form cannot be separated in any meaningful discussion of prose fiction.

Ngugi is one of the oldest writers in English in Kenya, having made the initial debut into this field in 1957 when his story "I Try Witchcraft" got accepted and published in the school magazine (Alliance High School Magazine). Ngugi was then in Form III and, going by his interview with his biographer (Sicherman, 1992), one can say that the student author was already fascinated by the clash between the people's traditional beliefs of which witchcraft was an important component and Christianity as presented to him by his teachers. His comment to the effect that he "was only interested in the ironic denouement", shifting the responsibility for the presence of a Christian moral in the story to the teacher-in-charge, is an after thought. Unfortunately, the story as it stands is all we have for guidance in any attempt to analyse it. In this way we allow ourselves to be guided by Frye's view of after-thoughts, thus:

One has to assume that the work as produced constitutes the definitive record of the writer's intention... All other statements of intention, however fully documented, are suspect. The [poet] may change his mind or mood; he may have intended one thing and done another, and then rationalized what he did. (Frye, 1957, p.87)

Then, he concludes:

What the [poet] meant to say, then, is, literally, the [poem] itself (Frye, p.87)

We will interpret this view to mean that themes of immediate concern may sound non-issues to the writer later, causing him to insert corrections. Such after thoughts demand careful scrutiny if they are to affect the critic's view of the work, at hand. For instance, Ngugi's fascination with the theme of conflict and his choice to focus on witchcraft can easily be traced back to his polygamous family background, a well known enabling environment for practice and discussion of witchcraft. Because the way a man experiences events is moulded by "the language, the way of life, the religion and science of his people" (IRL, 1962, p.155), it is quite clear that the morality of witchcraft, seen through the eyes of a youth surrounded by missionary teachers whose interest in rooting out attitudes formed by traditional practices was overt, could not have been beyond the young writer's intention in writing the story.

When in 1960 Ngugi picked up the pen again, a lot had taken place on Kenya's political scene. While in 1957 he had been influenced by Tolstoy's short story "Youth" (Sicherman, 1992), in 1960 the centre of discussion and speculation was Mau Mau and the attendant evils of betrayal and sometimes total disillusionment. These seem to have been the driving force behind the stories he wrote for Penpoint. "The Return", for instance, highlights betrayal at a family level. In the story the author exposes the irony of the Mau Mau fighters' situation. The returnees encounter shocked faces where they expected excitement and deserted houses where they looked forward to welcoming

embraces and a great deal of fuss.

That the full implication of the Mau Mau uprising was felt by both the white and the black communities is the point Ngugi is highlighting in "The Martyr". The Emergency roused the survival instinct to its fullest alert. In such a situation suspicion and fear characterize relationships, making complacency and trust fatal. In "The Martyr" both servant and mistress are driven to death and despair respectively by one fatal flaw: being too trusting. Njoroge trustingly believes that his voice should be recognised by Memsahib and save her from the "Boys" and he is killed by the untrusting woman. On her part, Mrs. Hill causes herself a great deal of misery after the murder because her complacency cannot allow her to understand Njoroge fully enough to respect the humane aspect of his character.

The tragic irony that engulfed the master-servant relationship was not excluded in husband - wife - servant relationships. Ngugi focuses on disintegration of family in "Goodbye Africa". In this story a man, the D.O. suddenly discovers that the shamba boy, who had worn a perpetually servile, submissive face, causing him to be shocked that his gift of "a long coat and ten shillings" were rejected and thrown back at him with rude laughter, had actually been his own wife's lover. The thought that while he pursued success in order to please his wife, she gave herself to a non-entity, whose servile demeanour and comic gestures of gratitude caused the D.O. to feel fatherly towards him, crushes him. Thus, her confession is a bomb shell to him. Like Kamau in "The Return" the D.O. is forced to face the futility of his life's struggles and he burns the note

book bearing his views of the white man's mission in Africa.

"Goodbye Africa" ends on a satirical note with the author seemingly answering in the affirmative the D.O.'s questions:

Was it wrong for us, with our capital, with our knowledge, with our years of Christian civilization to open and lift a dark country onto the stage of history? ... had I fallen so low? My life reduced to burning down huts and yet more huts? (Secret Lives, 1975 p.75)

Satire is also employed in the story of Joshua's spiritual crisis in "The Village Priest" (pp.22-28). The futility of Livingstone's tireless efforts to effectively convert Makuyu to the Christian faith is the focal point. When Livingstone is not there, Joshua, the village priest he has entrusted with the responsibility of converting more villagers to Christianity by preaching to them and living a life that radiated with the values of the new faith, gets confused by the apparent power of the rain-maker, the servant of the God of Agikuyu. He even goes to the sacred tree to "make peace with his people's god" (ibid., p.24). The missionary is the prime target of satire as he listens patiently to Joshua's story and later concludes the episode with words of assurance and a prayer. That Livingstone's religion has had little effect even on Joshua's family is a fact subtly implied in the wife's immediate reaction: "she went back to the kitchen wondering what had happened" (ibid., p.28). The message is very clear : Joshua does not pray unless something terrible has happened and that the world of Livingstone and that of the village

priest are miles apart only that the missionary will not see it as such.

While the problems of the white man's efforts to convert the native to Christianity ("The Village Priest"), or colonize him politically, economically and morally ("Goodbye Africa") formed ready material for satirical writing, Ngugi's attention was also arrested by the plight of the individual in what seemed to the news media and the world a topical meteorological issue: drought. "Gone with the Drought" are two stories which focus on individuals trapped in hostile environment that seems to have vowed to destroy them. Passionately told from the omniscient narrator's point of view, "Gone with the Drought" vividly and sombrely brings out the tragic moments of a helpless mother having to watch a son die of hunger as he incessantly pleads for some food.

Ngugi demonstrates sensitivity to the plight of failed motherhood when he depicts either mothers who cannot fend for their children or those who are unable to bring forth any child. In "Mugumo" we are presented with a case of a barren woman, Mukami, in a polygamous marriage. She is portrayed as lonely and miserable until she realizes that she is pregnant. There is a Biblical allusion where the author seems to be deliberately implying that Mumbi, the reverie and the sacred tree form the combination that leads to Mukami's realization that she is pregnant thereby suggesting a parallel between her discovery and that of the Biblical Elizabeth (The Holy Bible, St. Luke 2:) "And the Rain Came" depicts dead motherly feelings revived by contact with a child in danger. The "delicate but passionate cry" of the "two or three years old" child melts Nyokabi's destructive jealousy prompting her to abandon her decision to die and instead inspiring

her to save the little one, no matter whose it is (Secret Lives, p.12). At the end of the story one gets the impression that the Christian allusion to baptism in water, signifying change in personality for the better, is at work. Nyokabi comes from the rain "wholly drenched" and her state touches her husband, filling him with great pride as he handles the evidence of her transformed heart: the rescued child (Secret Lives, p.13).

The "well for short stories" did not dry up before Ngugi had taken a swipe at the increasing rate of recklessness and hypocrisy. In "A Meeting in the Dark" the author depicts the crushing hypocrisy of Stanley's lifestyle in two distinct moods; fear and panic. It is the only story of the creative period (1960-64) in which Ngugi switches tense, abandoning the past and adopting the simple present and thus intensifying the light on John's frantic actions. John smothers Wamuhu while caught up in a frenzy.

Events leading to the murder of Wamuhu are not convincingly presented. The plot is too weak to help us to even appreciate the verdict: "He is mad" (p.69). In the same way the ending of "The Black Bird" (pp.29-38), though anticipated in the first paragraph, fails to get artistically linked to the flow of the story. The magic that turns Mundu Mugo into a Black Bird bent on revenge on even a grandson who had never had any dealings with him is not suggested. Except for the Judaic allusion- "The sins of fathers being visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation", there is no link between the modern young medical student and the old man whom he never saw (ibid., p.33). The inclusion of the second commandment of God to the people of Israel can be seen as Ngugi's way of drawing parallels between the God of the Agikuyu and

his priests like Mundu Mugo and that preached about by the missionaries. Nevertheless the suicide of a brilliant medical student, who calmly receives the news that he has failed, sounds like patchwork. Even the suggestion that Mangara welcomes death, as he is portrayed as one wearing "a strange look of peace... as if he had accomplished a difficult task. The look you sometimes see in the revivalists", is not satisfactory. (*ibid.*, p.55).

The tribulations of the disgraced member of the elite class that own Mercedes Benz attracting the group tag "Mubenzi tribesmen" are the focal point of "The Mubenzi Tribesmen". Told from the omniscient narrative point of view, this story highlights the disgrace that lurks behind every ill-acquired symbol of success. For the first time in his early works Ngugi allows the sense of smell to dominate the atmosphere and suggest rejection, revolt and even moral decadence. Ruth chases away the smelly Waruhiu, telling him, "I don't know you, I don't." One can say that in a way she is right for the stench he is exuding makes him a stranger to her and his failure is unacceptable. At the same time she is implying that she too has changed so that her new self must sever relations with the past if her present identity is to benefit her. The stench is also symbolic of the moral decay that has destroyed Waruhiu.

These stories of the prolific period (1960-64) exhibit one of the aspects of a short story that any critic expects to encounter in works in this genre: brevity. One critic has said that a short story should be:

brief enough to be read at a single sitting, but long enough to produce the desired effect on the reader (Writers Digest, July 1991, p.20).

There is a conscious effort to lead the reader to "look beneath the surface " of each object, character and action held out to him to see or hear as if the author had Perrine's precepts in mind. In his finest stories of the period, there is meaning hidden in every word-image used. For instance, in "The Martyr" this statement becomes of significant interest as we read the following line that describes that attitude of the settler's widow:

Convinced that she and her kind formed an oasis of civilization in a wild country of savage people ... (Secret Lives p.40).

An oasis is a life-giving feature and so the significance of this word-image is to enhance the irony in the story: Njoroge meets his death not out there among savages but within the precincts of civilization in the oasis. Rather than reassure Njoroge of life, the civilised world of Mrs. Hill unleashes death on the unsuspecting servant. It is the presence of such word-images that enhance meaning in such a short time.

Secret Lives has three stories that were conceived of after the author had "looked at the tired and bewildered faces of the people" as they drowned "their memories of yesterday and their hopes and fears of tomorrow in drinking" (Preface, p.i). In each one of these three stories we discern a dominant tone: that of anger and protest. For instance, in "Minutes of Glory" barmaids' moral decay and occasional calculated, malicious crimes such as stealing from a trusting night companion are painstakingly

rationalized. Beatrice, a girl who rejected the idea of helping her lonely parents on the farm and with house chores terming village life dull, is portrayed as being justified to commit crime: to steal trusting patron's money. By portraying those "big" men who disapprove of her action in a negative light Ngugi is shifting all sympathy to the thieving barmaid. Cynically he refers to the new found solidarity between the "man with the five-ton lorry" (Beatrice's victim) and the big "shots" who have all along ignored him, thus:

And without anybody being aware of it the man with [sic] the five-ton lorry had become a hero...Some even bought him drinks. More remarkable, they listened, their attentive silence punctuated by appreciative laughter. The averted threat to property had temporarily knit them into one family (Emphasis mine. Secret Lives p.96)

"Minutes of Glory" is in the end a story of ideas. It is denouncing decaying morality in the big shots who will as soon offer drinks and invitation for companionship to a glamorous woman as watch indifferently while she is led out by police; he even condemns her strongly. At the same time it is placating the female counterpart of the males condemned here: it is explaining why Beatrice steals from her night companion; it is stated that the man with the five-ton lorry is to blame for her action as he ignored her thus making her feel neglected, humiliated and retaliative.

"Wedding at the Cross" (ibid., pp.97-112) is also written with the aim of bringing out a point : the negative effect of the current acquisitive spirit. Wariuki is transformed into a cold, calculating individual whose wife becomes increasingly lonely until she

finally disowns him in public. Living for the day he is to get his revenge on his father-in-law for having humiliated him before his prospective mother-in-law and fiancée, Doge Livingstone suffers mortal shame when Miriam rejects his carefully and painstakingly cultivated personality, declaring:

‘No, I cannot ... I cannot marry Livingstone... because... because... I have been married before. I am married to... to... Wariuki... and he is dead (*ibid.* p.112)

Thus Miriam, does what has never been done before in similar circumstances. Her reason is superfluous and weakens the intensity. It is what V. S. Pritchett would refer to as a "fatal convenient explanation" that starts "fatal leaks" in the story (The Critical Idiom; The Short Story, 1977, p.54). The same weakness can be identified in the efforts to elaborate the rationale for Miriamu's disappointment, alienation and total rejection of what she knows her husband has worked for and would give him immense pleasure to realize it.

In "A Mercedes Funeral" we detect a similar tendency: the author goes out of his way to explain why things happen the way they do. Once again we are presented with Ngugi's efforts to reflect reality in a short story. The story of Waihenya's life is given in such detail as to negate some of the acknowledged attributes of the genre chosen. The details finally blunt the story, leaving one with the feeling that the importance of the piece may have been more to the writer than the reader: that Ngugi was indulging himself with memories of personal progress vis-a-vis the fortunes of his age mates whose academic life had been terminated by the advent of the Emergency. In dismissing "A

"Mercedes Funeral" as a poorly conceived piece, we are guided by the sentiments of Stewart concerning the requirements of a short story, thus:

... the story should be intrinsically worth telling. If its chief importance is to the writer, as in so many autobiographical stories, it is a common place slice of common place life; ... if it is merely about the miseries of this or that set of social or domestic conditions, not rising to some intriguing human drama, then it may be of some psychological or sociological interest but it is not really a story that anyone can reasonably be asked to sit down and listen to. (Stewart (ed.) 1967, p.ix, emphasis mine)

In this story as in "Wedding at the Cross" and "Minutes of Glory", where Ngugi gets so entangled in the miseries of alienated, good-hearted wives of money maniacs or prostitutes who take their revenge on unsuspecting clients consequently getting arrested respectively, he fails to handle the artistry that would make the stories worth telling: to light the incident "with humour and compassion" (Stewart, 1967, p.ix).

Finally, we will focus on the "*The Mubenzi Tribesman*" a story conveyed of in 1964 but placed in the section entitled 'Secret Lives', a section teeming with stories of ideas. This story has in it certain features that it shares with Ngugi's early stories. For instance, it is brief and steers clear of explanations, leaving the reader with plenty of room to interpret motives and consequences. Still revolving on the theme of betrayal within the family like "The Return" and "Wedding at the Cross", "The Mubenzi Tribesman", however, evokes more debate around the cause for Ruth's decision to forget her wedded husband, Waruhiu, and invite another man into her house. His resolve never to betray Ruth is made at a time when Ruth has already betrayed him. The ironic

twist of events infuses compassion and pity in this story: Waruhiu is jailed for stealing the company's money in the hope of pleasing her with the lavish expenditure thereby afforded; yet she views the punishment for the crime as calculated to humiliate her and, hence, a form of betrayal and so she deliberately plans and executes an act of public humiliation and betrayal against him. While Waruhiu is busy resolving never to let her down, Ruth is already enjoying a treacherous relationship. Nevertheless, the finesse with which Ngugi handles the heart-ache caused Kamau by the news of Muthoni's desertion of the marital homestead ("The Return") is difficult to trace in "The Mubenzi Tribesman". The meeting between Waruhiu and the erring Ruth is life-like and bereft of any artistic merit : it states all, leaving nothing for imagination, thereby linking this story to the rest of the post-1971 stories that were written to reflect the misery in the hearts of the people with "tired and bewildered faces" (Preface Secret Lives).

In this chapter we will focus on those stories that display greater elasticity in style than those that show the tendency to preach and protest. To say it as it is, is not art; to imply it is art. The choice to study in detail "Gone with the Drought", "The Martyr" and "The Return" is based on this view. We are also persuaded to concur with Coppard's long cherished theory that the short story is

the art of telling a story by a series of subtly implied gestures ... moments of suggestion, an art in which elaboration and above all, explanation are superfluous and tedious. (Story and Structure. 1959, p.21).

Because the subtly implied gestures lead to a wide variety of valid interpretations, they form a crucial element in the entertainment aspect of the short story.

2.2 "Gone With the Drought" (pp.15-20)

"Gone with the Drought" records the misery of a community gripped by fear of starvation. There has been a prolonged drought during which families have used up all the food harvested in the previous rainy season; nothing new has grown to replace that which has been eaten. So fearful is the community that weather forecast has become an item of "news of importance to everyone" Everyone wants to know when it is that rain is expected.

This story is told in a sombre mood. The author employs one character whom he packs with memories of painful experiences connected with famine in the past and fear caused by the present drought. The choice of an old woman is significant. In her experiences he is able to reflect vividly the mercilessness of drought and the depressing effects of the "burning sun". The loss the old woman has experienced is intense: first she lost the two sons who died one after another during the "Famine of Cassava" and then the youngest of her sons whom she had got late in life was now in agony, waiting for death as a result of severe famine. As a mother she has been robbed of three sons and as a girl she was robbed of both grandparents. Drought and famine have become horrifying twin monsters in her life. Knowledge of her life is knowledge of what tragedy drought and famine can cause in the life of a community.

Thus, "Gone with the Drought" can be said to be a story whose impact rests on the mood generated by the author. To establish this mood, the author relies on short, simple sentences that imply finality - impasse.

The old woman's situation, which is symbolic of that of the entire community, is suggestive of a stalemate: total pathos. This is effectively conveyed in sentences like the following:

... I also came to believe she was mad. It was natural.
For my mother said that she was mad. And everyone in
the village seemed to be of the same opinion .. she never
talked much. (Secret Lives, p.14).

The note of finality in the sentence "It was natural" dismisses any hopes that any reader may entertain for the old woman's future (ibid, p.16). That even a child, despite his innate disposition to hope for the best for those known to him as in the case of the old woman, can believe it natural that she be called mad is indicative of how engulfing the state of despair has become. The short crisp sentence is thus, suggestive of absence of energy to be complex even in speech.

Ngugi's employment of the technique of variable distancing also enhances the sombre mood of the story. As a technique variable distancing involves

the writer seeing his subject through an adjustable lens, choosing for some purposes a distant, wide-angle view, for others an up-close, telephoto study (Writers Digest, July 1991, p.21).

This technique affords the author greater credibility as well as making the deprived woman palpable. For the purposes of achieving objectivity and thereby avoiding the loophole of sentimentality that a character so weighed down with such misfortunes can lead the creator into, the author uses reports from people older than the narrator. They are older and have, therefore, seen the old woman around longer than the narrator can ever claim; they are in a position to comment on her situation with the authority lent them by time. The narrator's father, for instance, should know something about the cause of the old woman's misery. His answer is non-committal; it is in fact evasive. Resorting to the prevailing weather conditions to explain a neighbour's condition of clear depression deliberately falsifies the true reason for the misery and spares the young questioner the agony of being obliged to visualize agonizing effects of drought and famine on a family. Thus, the response reads:

Perhaps it is sorrow. This burning sun, this merciless drought... running into our heads making us turn white and mad! (Secret Lives, p.15)

It is a deliberate effort by the narrator's father to distance himself from his answer. "Perhaps" is a convenient word to use in a situation where the speaker wishes to detach himself from the message he is about to convey.

At the same time the narrator too distances himself from the plight of his subject: the old woman. The repeated use of the auxiliary "May have" at the beginning of the story implies a non-committal stance: the narrator is not emotionally involved. Emotional involvement with the unhappy woman is further checked by the conjecture :

"she was mad" (p.15). This in itself alienates her from the society; and especially that of children to which her young visitor belongs. The difficulty of treating mad people with sympathy or understanding must have been well known to the author when he depicts the woman as one regarded mad. Thus, exposing the conjecture to the narrator must be a conscious way of distancing him from the woman.

The encounter with the woman is presented from the same "wide-angle view". She is found alone, "huddled in a dark corner" apparently thinking about her dead son. To heighten her loneliness, the author has "dying embers of a few pieces of wood in the fire place" as the only source of light, which light only makes the room more frightful than if it was not there at all: the slight flickering of the light produced by the embers causes "grotesque shadows over the mud walls" (p.16). The young visitor braves the frightening atmosphere and moves forward to present his gifts of njahi beans and yams but the reaction of his hostess scares him and he runs away, leaving her lonely still but psychologically devastated. She shocks him with the words:

"I thought it was "him" come back to me, ... Oh, this drought has ruined me!" (p.17)

This clearly shows that the unhappy woman lives in her own world which seems to afford her communion with her dead relatives, especially the one she lost last: her youngest son. The author portrays her as one who clings onto this world while her mind is consistently immersed in that of the living dead, justifying the conjecture, "she was mad"; the narrator is forced to also conclude, "Perhaps, she was mad" (p.17).

While the "wide-angle view" affords the author the opportunity to almost passionlessly present the main character who is potentially a highly moving, sympathetic figure, he needs an "up-close, telephoto study" to effectively communicate the emotional story of the old woman, which story is the root cause of her present situation. Ngugi adjusts the lens. The old woman narrates the story to the narrator who in turn narrates it to the reader, retaining the moving pleas of the dying boy, verbatim. There is an effort to convey the atmosphere of the room where mother sits watching her son struggle with the heavy hand of death.

However, this new position fails to have the desired effect. The reported speech implied in the words, "The old woman never once looked at me as she told me all this" in itself implies a distancing of the reader from the events; the author creates a distance which checks the weight of the response. The direct impact of the experience is left to the narrator and the reader, as it were, gets only the vibrations. As well as the distance created by the narrator detracting force from the desired impact, there is also the element of melodrama as the author strives to recreate the environment in the room of death. This is a room the description of which would evoke sadness. It is, therefore, a lapse into melodrama to make conclusions, thus:

Words cannot recreate the sombre atmosphere in that darkish hut as she incoherently told me all about her life-long struggle with drought (p.17)

In this way the narrator conditions his audience to encounter a moving experience and

to react emotionally. Feelings of pity are wrung out of the audience in advance. The audience is not allowed to hear what it is that "words cannot recreate" and, then, decide that actually words have recreated experiences that are too painful to find expression in language. Thus, foreshadowing as a technique has in this context weakened the impact of the woman's account.

Besides playing the role of foreshadowing, this statement, coupled with the fact that relationships conjured (mother-son relationship) lends credence to Brook's definition of melodrama, thus:

The desire to say all seems a fundamental characteristic of the melodramatic mode. Nothing is spared because nothing is left unsaid, characters, --- assume primary psychic roles, father, mother, child, and express basic psychic conditions (The Melodramatic Image, p.4).

The agony of the old woman in the darkish room and that of the starving son are presented to the reader simultaneously. The reader is made to feel it. These two victims of drought and famine and the agony that is made to pervade the air around them form a perfect setting for the lapses into melodrama, a feature that is to characterise the story-within-the story. There is the mother's confusion which renders her unable to look for help; then when she starts to seek it, she finds it too late to save her son; it takes her two days to find food and by the time she arrives home carrying it, her son has already died.

The death of the boy at a time when the mother has found food wrings tears from the reader; the old woman is deliberately steeped in self-pity; in the words of Brook, she is

"allowed the pleasure of self-pity" (The Melodramatic Image, p.12). Because it is her son who has died just when she was about to save his life after a long struggle, she becomes a symbol of "the misfortunes that surround [man]" (ibid., p.12). The drought reigns supreme, claiming victims who leave behind them heartbroken mothers.

While exploiting the pathetic atmosphere created by the loneliness of a mother and her son to hold a picture of misfortune to the reader Ngugi, in his ardent "desire to express all" and indulge "strong emotionalism" has the narrator report the boy's expressions of fear of death verbatim (ibid., p.11). Such repeated expressions as:

Do you think I'll die, Mother? ... Mother, I don't want to die ... Mother, give me something to eat. (Secret Lives, p.17)

evoke strong emotions, yet, they are not trusted to function on their own. Their power is further increased by the speech tags chosen, thus:

... the pleading voice ... kept on insisting ... and again, the accusing voice ...(p.17)

Thus, both the words assigned to the dying boy and the speech tags that suggest the manner in which the pleas were presented reek of extravagance. It is the kind of inflated and extravagant expressions that one may find in the novels of Dickens. In such episodes, the impact of the sad moment of death, which has nevertheless great potential for dignity as it is at the same time the moment of relief from memories of famine and threats posed by the unrelenting drought, deteriorates into sentimentality. Such melodramatic accounts may have "held up" the Victorian novel but the case of the short

story is somewhat different, having a structure that "is too tenuous for a load of ... opinions, observations or moral attitudes" (The Modern Short Story, 1957, p.27). Thus, belabouring the agony of the dying boy while emphasizing the pathos of the physical environment of the narrating mother is overloading the story. At the same time the melodramatic effect created waters down the hypnotic atmosphere that is needed if the full impact of the crisis is to be felt. One can submit that the attempt to create a vivid picture of agony turns out to be a load too heavy for that short story to effectively carry; it denies the story the precision that is an essential element of a short story.

Besides sagging under the weight of extravagance, "Gone with the Drought" is at the same time packed with detailed descriptions of historical events as well as emotion-loaded rhetorical questions such as

What could a woman without her man do? ... Was it a curse in the family? ... Why was it only her? Why not other women? ... Why had she not heard of this earlier? (pp.17-18)

These questions do not advance the story; they do not add anything to the pathos evoked by the atmosphere generated by the image of imminent death by starvation. Thus, the effort to make vivid an image that is best left to speak for itself ends up weakening it as can be seen further in the case below:

The night before .. was marked with an unusual solitude and weariness .. There was no noise in the streets. The woman watching by the side of her only son, heard nothing. She just sat on a three-legged Gikuyu stool and watched the dark face of her boy as he wriggled in agony

on the narrow bed near the fire place. When the dying fire occasionally flickered, it revealed a dark face. (p.17)

The "mathematical exactitude" attained by the simple juxtaposition of a quiet, indifferent environment and an anxious, desperate mother beside her despairing, yet voluble son, is blurred. Equally harmful to the precision so essential to the pointedness of this story is the tendency to weave into it anecdotes that fail to explain their presence. One such anecdote is the one concerning the death of the old woman's husband; and then there is an almost full text on each of the famines in which the old woman's relatives had perished.

"Gone with the Drought," however, derives a great deal of strength from the author's employment of symbolism. A close study of the title reveals the author's desire to use both the intrinsic symbol which has significance in itself and the extrinsic symbol which points to meaning outside itself calling into play the employment of conventional associations.

The symbolic impact of the phrase "Gone with the Drought" depends to quite a considerable extent on the conventional associations of the two lexical items in that phrase: "gone" and "drought". It is of importance to this study that the subject for the past participle "gone" is not provided, thus, the reader is given a free hand in the choice of a subject. The subject affixed to answer the question what/who is gone .. will of necessity dictate the tone of the phrase and, to a certain extent, that of the story. "Gone" implying "absence of" as a result of either choice or compulsion can in this context be

supplied with three possible subjects each of which will affect the symbolic impact of the title. For instance, the subjects hunger, thirst, misery, intolerable heat, or simply dust can each be affixed to the participle with ease. In this case the sonority of the /0/ in "gone" would signify a sigh of relief. At the same time the entire phrase will symbolize a victory cry; a shout of jubilation: a genuine human shout of joy that the end of a cruel period of heat, dust, a listless landscape and starving animals and people has come.

However, the title is not the only phrase to be examined for further significance of the word 'gone' but the entire narrative structure of the story and this obliges the critic to look at other possible subjects for the participle "gone". The narrative has two characters from whose point of view the subjects we have so far provided, using the point of view of characters other than that of either of the two, could hardly be satisfactory: the old woman and the young narrator of the story. From the point of view of the old woman the only logical subject for this participle may be the phrase "all that makes life worth living". In other words the participle "gone" rings a hollow note, signifying futility and a need to give up life. She, thus, goes with the drought. To the young persona of the story, the value of the sound /0/ in "gone" has a double meaning: joy that the drought is over and unhappiness at the loss of the old woman.

Thus, it is in the single participle "gone" operating within the precincts of the phrase in which it is found and in the context of the entire story, that one encounters the ironic twist in the story. The persona and the reader are the only ones allowed into the secret: the chilling reality that amidst the celebration and joyous

welcome of the rain there is mourning.

The coming of the rain is celebrated because of the negative power of drought. Because famine has come to be associated with drought, one can say that that word does have symbolic significance in the phrase as well as in the story. As a symbol of despair and death, "drought" in this story dominates every object and every action; it reigns supreme. The young narrator's father affirms this in his evasive response to the boy's question; he evasively says

This burning sun, this merciless drought ... running into our heads making us turn white and mad! (p.15)

On another level drought becomes symbolic of a malignant force that can tear a family apart as can be seen from the persona's response to "a jocular remark about her [the mad woman]" by one of his brothers:

I stood up and glared at him. "Mad indeed!" I almost screamed. (p.20 Emphasis mine)

This response startles the rest of the family. His father does not display shock, but his poise - he "kept on looking at the same place" - testifies to the fact that he too has been adversely affected by the malignant force and that the damage caused cannot be easily repaired by the coming of rain.

The destructive force of the drought is finally summed up in the death of the old woman in the story. This death is of symbolic significance. That the old woman dies

at a time when there is reason for all to rejoice and to become hopeful makes her death a symbolic rebuke to nature. Her death negates the benevolent gesture of nature manifest in the coming of rain. Thus instead of the gesture reviving her spirits and affirming her indomitable will to live, it destroys her. It is a paradox which reminds us of Frye's emblematic image of which he says:

[it is] a heraldic emblematic image which is in a paradoxical and ironical relation to both narrative and meaning. (Frye, 1957, p.92)

Thus, while the general trend of the narrative at this stage is towards the optimistic, the image of death, always a negative sign, is simultaneously leading the reader into deep pessimism. The impact of rain coming at the end of the story is to affirm life; yet at the same time the image of death suggests negation of life. It is as if the herald of life is the herald of death.

There are two other symbols in this story that deserve discussion: drought and rain. Though most of the action in the story takes place during drought-past and present - so that drought becomes part of the setting, it is still possible to treat this condition as one loaded with symbolic significance. Drought saps dry both soil and vegetation. Both man and animal are not spared either. In this story, drought gains the symbolic stature of an agent of death; both moral and physical death. Physical death is suggested by the death of the old woman's three sons. She herself dies at the end of a long spell of drought implying that

the drought has affected her fatally. Morally, drought has adversely affected the community. It has tampered with their sensibilities and, in some cases, destroyed them. A case in point is the headman whose reaction to the old woman's plea for food is inhuman:

Apparently he had nothing. And he seemed not to understand her. Or to understand that droughts could actually kill (p.18).

Thus, he turns her away without any food but with instructions on where to go next for food. Humane feelings, which could have enabled him to realise that drought could kill, seem to have been destroyed totally.

The headman is, however, not the only one afflicted with a blunted sensibility and moral bankruptcy. For instance, the old woman's response to her son's pleas for food is inhuman. Instead of responding to the suffering persistent cry for a morsel of food by going out to look for it, thereby availing herself the opportunity to learn about the queues at the D.O.'s office, she simply sits by him and does nothing until it is too late to save his life. Thus, the old woman aids drought to destroy her son's life which in itself is a case of great irony.

Rain symbolises life. The author reminds us of this universal symbol when he writes:

Now it has rained. In fact it has been raining for a week, though just thin showers. Women are busy planting. Hope for all is mounting (p.19).

The chattering and laughter in the street confirm the mounting hope. The author however, checks the exuberance that would have sustained the suggestion of hope. He plunges the narrator's father into a gloomy mood while the narrator himself is depressed by the knowledge that the old woman has suffered a great deal and died miserable. These checks introduce an ironical twist in this universal symbol of hope for new life and prosperity.

As if in direct contrast with the signs of life and hope embodied in the rain outside, the old woman's hut is crowded with symbols of death. First of all, the fire is out. Then, the lighted lantern can only afford a "flickering yellow flame" and produce a "waning cold light." Here the author has used conventional symbols of life and death to suggest that the old woman's life has come to the end. Fire, which usually symbolises warmth and vivacity, is said to have gone off while the light from the lantern is so weak that it can only give a yellow flame quashing any hope of the old woman getting any supportive heat from it. The action of flickering goes beyond the yellow light to symbolise the weakening will to live in the old woman. The "waning cold light" in this cluster of symbols finally suggests the old woman's surrender - her death.

Thus, inside the hut there is every sign of gloom, despair and death. "Huddled up in her usual corner" (p.) the old woman's posture does not suggest that she is ready to see death as only a transition to a better life. Just as the three symbols discussed above suggest that death is the end of everything and that beyond it is darkness, so does the old woman's posture. The impending death of the old woman is predicted by a

cluster of symbols rather than being presented. In other words the author evokes death and avoids the explicit naming of it (Frye, 1957, p.90).

The analysis of the symbolic use of language will be deemed incomplete without a look at Ngugi's employment of allusion. First of all, the old woman's death is conveyed in her own words that are highly allusive.

I see them all now. All of them waiting for
me at the gate. And I am going. (p.19).

In this final speech of a woman tormented throughout life by drought and famine one is reminded of the Biblical gate of heaven where angels wait for Christian souls and usher them in to a life of bliss. The last words of Stephen the martyr are also alluded to so that where Stephen, lynched by an angry mob, declared before he died, "I see Jesus", the old woman in this story sees "them". Here "them", could be either angels or her dead relatives. Whichever way one looks at the speech, the persons that the old woman sees are benevolent: they promise hope and happiness to a soul and mind battered by forces of nature coupled with cruelty. It takes the knowledge of the original text - the Bible- to fully appreciate the weight of the old woman's utterance. Thus, Ngugi is using this particular source - Acts of the Apostles ch.7 - to raise the old woman's (spiritual) stature to that of a saint.

The impact of this Christian allusion carries elements of irony in it. While Stephen of the Bible is a hero of self-hood in that he will not renounce what he believes in for any gain, not even life, the old woman is a victim of circumstances beyond her

control (drought and famine) as well as being a victim of human selfishness and cruelty. She has no choice in the matter. Thus, to accord her the status of a martyr is to make her a heraldic emblematic image. As such, the old woman becomes a symbol whose meaning points to the themes of cruelty, inhumanity and selfishness. In spite of the fact that she is a member of the society, she has sustained such a lonely life that she communes with the dead with ease, pointing at them even when she has human company. The boy's gesture of kindness remains unnoticed when she is seeing "them all". It is as if she is experiencing a rapture, a victory. Nevertheless, she is alive and desperate and so her state is a condemnation of the entire selfish society. In her brief speech, the Headman, and all the other men and women who are in a position to alleviate suffering but choose to remain aloof and indifferent, are effectively condemned. The heraldic emblematic image in this case emphasizes how far in stature the old woman is from Stephen and yet, how near to the saint she is in the sense that her death is caused by the cruelty of fellow human beings.

2.3 "The Martyr" (pp.39-48)

In "Gone with the Drought" Ngugi concentrates partly on mood and setting to highlight the themes of death and fear of impending death. The tragic story of Njoroge's death at the hands of a mistress he has served for ten years in "The Martyr" also relies on mood to bring out the element of betrayal which is a very important

ingredient in the tragedy. Unlike the case of "Gone with the Drought" in which the mood remains sombre from the beginning of the story to the end of it, mood in "The Martyr" varies: what people say about the murder of the Garstones is rendered in a light tete-a-tete mood that smacks of mockery and sarcasm while the condition of Mrs. Hill and that of Njoroge after they part is presented in a sombre mood. This contrast in mood light on the nature of betrayal; it is inevitable in the circumstances in which the killer and the victim find themselves.

The image of death is introduced right from the beginning of the story, thus:

When Mr. and Mrs. Garstone were murdered in their home by unknown gangsters, there was a lot of talk about it (p.39)

In this way, the image of death, as suggested by the mention of the murdered couple, should naturally sober the reader from the very beginning. However, the author does not allow this mood to develop. The use of the second person with its conspiratorial effect destroys the expected mood. The author appeals to the reader, thus:

... wherever you went ... you were bound to hear something about the murder (p.39)

While this statement reinforces the clause; "there was a lot of talk about it" (p.39) which, by the choice of the word "talk" rather than "horror" "fear" or "shock" reduces the expected impact of death on the people. The statement also suggests impatience rather than sympathy as the response elicited by the news. This light-hearted mood is

intensified in the conversation between Mrs. Hill and her guests. Ngugi presents to us a very spirited conversation whose tone is mainly satirical. The main topics, which the speakers seem to know very little about, are death and the betrayal of masters by their own servants. Each one of the participants in the discussion on the grave subjects is clearly outlined to represent three types of colonial women: the liberal-minded, the racist and the neutral. For instance, Mrs. Hill is conservative. She is convinced that all her men servants, though they are married, are boys and that all they need is good treatment. It is also her conviction that they all love her. This belief has blinded her from seeking evidence of love or otherwise. Thus, as she expounds on her faith in them to her guests, the dominant tone is satirical. Mrs. Smiles, the racist, thinks very highly of her own opinions. Her contributions are such rejoinders as:

"How could they do it? We've brought'em civilization. We've stopped slavery and tribal wars. Were they not all leading savage miserable lives?" (p.40)

The satirical note is further suggested in the speech tag: "Mrs. Smiles spoke with all her powers of oratory (p.40)". It is quite clear that the author is holding her up to ridicule as he allows her to address the reader with complete conviction on complex topics like abolition of slave trade and European civilization in Africa when she has already been depicted as one incapable of comprehending such issues. To complete the laughable trio is the image of the dull Mrs. Hardy whose rejoinders are even more comical:

"They should all be hanged" ...
"Indeed?" (p.41)

Yet, it is strange and even tragic that an opinion to the effect that all the squatters and other servants of a murdered white should be hanged without trial should be expressed without conviction. In this way, as is with the depiction of the hatred of Mrs. Smiles and the complacency of Mrs. Hill, Ngugi sets a comic foil against which the tragedy of Njoroge's death is to be appreciated. Thus, beneath the surface of this light-hearted mood lies the ever-present fear of death. Each one of the three women is happier talking about the villainy of the murder(s) than the actual scene or act of murder. This fear is what leads the reader to the somber mood created largely by the setting- "a lonely house built on a hill" (p.39) and, then, "too far from any help in case of an attack". (p.42).

The sombre mood suggested by the setting is intensified further by Njoroge's conversation with his shadow. This is to say that suddenly he finds himself confronted by "the darker side of [his] unconscious self, the inferior and less pleasing aspect of the personality which [he wishes] to suppress" (Literature and Interpretive Techniques, 1986, p.13). The respectful personality of the obedient house servant disappears and in its place we have a bitter, vengeful native; one who is ready to lead murderers to his mistress. While in this mood, he addresses the employer's image now looming large in his embittered memory, thus:

"You. You. I've lived with you so long.
And you've reduced me to this" (p.42)

While in this state of negative self-discovery, Njoroge almost rejoices that the night bird's cry is a warning to her. The shadow confronts him again and he is able to entertain only such thoughts as can fan anger and hatred for his mistress, thus:

... again his whole soul rose in anger-anger against those with a white skin, those foreign elements that had displaced the true sons of the land from their God-given place. (p.43)

The repetition of the word "anger" for emphasis conveys a conscious effort on Njoroge's part to suppress any inner voice that might suggest to him that the object of the impending violence is a woman, a mother and his employer. Horror and gloom permeate the scene. In this atmosphere of hatred, one thing still comes through, nevertheless: the fear of death. Death looms all around Njoroge and he admits his fear by initially refusing to see that killing Mrs. Hill is killing one woman and not killing a "foreign element" or "a settler" (p.43). In fear he takes refuge in a series of points that would justify his part in the imminent murder of his benefactor: payment for "her smug liberalism, her paternalism" and payment "for all the sins of her settler race" (p.43). Preoccupation with the idea of paying for crimes and omissions apportioned to her or her race forms the thin veil behind which Njoroge tries to hide from an oppressive reality; the reality that the death of his mistress is an individual's end that has nothing to do with that individual's associates, current or past.

Thus, the reality of death, with all the predictable determination to run away from it is at the centre of the somber mood. In addition to this there is the night bird which seems to be informed of the impending crime. In its third cry Njoroge can only read one message: "the death of Mrs. Hill" (p.41).

There is a turn of events at this point, but the somber mood is still maintained. The shadow fades back into its proper place: the unconscious self. This gives way to Njoroge, the man, confronted with the female image of Mrs. Hill. He sees her for what she is : a widow and a mother, a fellow human being; she ceases to be a type or a representative of a plundering race. As the anima - the female designation in the male psyche - takes possession of Njoroge, he drops the idea of abating the crime against Mrs. Hill. The horror of his initial decision to lead the Freedom Boys to her house dawns on him and with this comes the real conscious fear of the reality of death. He decides to evade death physically, thus:

... he could not do it ... but Mrs. Hill had suddenly crystallized into a woman, a wife, somebody like Njeri or Wambui, and above all, a mother. He could not kill a woman. He could not kill mother. (p.45).

At this juncture panic and horror dominate the mood. The short simple sentences used successfully suggest this mood. This mood is maintained up to the time Njoroge is killed by Memsahib.

As well as employing mood as a stylistic device that enables him to create an atmosphere that is ideal for such horrifying events as death of a servant at the hands of

his mistress, Ngugi uses suspense to sustain the dramatic tempo introduced into the story at the point the reader is led into Njoroge's psyche. Njoroge's split personality that allows a lengthy debate within himself triggers off the moment of suspense. The hatred he expresses keeps us wondering whether the "very faithful" Njoroge giving the impression he "likes [Memsahib] very much" will actually work himself up to the point of allowing her to be killed (p.42). When, then, he drops the idea of betraying Mrs. Hill, we are led to yet more suspense. The substance of the suspense at this juncture is centred around Njoroge's dilemma: whether or not Njoroge will succeed in saving Mrs. Hill and, thus, betraying the "Freedom Boys" and with what consequences.

It is notable that at the height of suspense the author resorts to only action words:

So he ran with one purpose ... He stepped
into the bush .. He waited breathlessly ...
He ran on ... (p.43)

This has a dramatic effect on the story. Njoroge is under pressure and this pressure is conveyed to the reader, in the simple sentences in which prominence is given to the subject, Njoroge, and the barest predicate - what he does. There are no embellishments.

In this way, it becomes clear that Njoroge is actively aware of the dilemma he is in. The keen focus on the panic-stricken servant-turning traitor is typical of Grandsaigne's idea the functions of a short story; thus:

[a short story shows] an instinct for clarity and conciseness
and an unerring flair for the truly dramatic situation (AASS
1985, p.11)

These words apply very well to this story at this juncture. The dramatic element in the story is sustained even after the focus shifts to the lonely woman, Mrs. Hill. Like in the presentation of Njoroge's dilemma, the lonely widow's situation of panic and confusion is conveyed to us in short cryptic clauses and sentences; thus:

Sweat broke out on her face ... this was her end. The end of the road ... She knew she was alone. She knew they would break in. No! She would die bravely. (p.47)

The drama here palpitates through the pages. Her state of mind just before she pulls the trigger, is thus, vividly conveyed. In this moment of crisis, when there is even no time to sustain any one thought for long, as is conveyed in the absence of compound or even long simple sentences, any action in self defence seems admissible. The suspense which has been upheld by the question as to whether she will shoot or simply open the door and listen to Njoroge is resolved by the explosion of the gun. A death occurs; death of a man who has consciously fought to keep it off. The denouement is achieved. This can be detected in Mrs. Hill's review of the event; she has become flat, indifferent. She is depicted as one dazed by the event, thus:

She gazed still into space. Then she let out an enigmatic sigh. "I don't know" she said (p.48).

As the author resolves the suspense, the overall tone of the story is affirmed: it is one of pity and awe. Mrs. Hill's tone of indifference is in fact an expression of her own awareness of the tragic situation. Hers further affirms the overall tone of the story.

This tragic story of mistress killing a well meaning servant in circumstances in which she finds herself left with no choice but to shoot in apparent self-defence relies quite a lot on the use of irony. Dramatic irony stands out prominently. In this case, the reader is exposed to Mrs. Hill's assumptions that have no bearing on the reality. It is greatly ironical, for instance, that Mrs. Hill trusts Njoroge very much and imagines that he, on his part, like her very much (p.42). She basks in this illusion while the reader is exposed to Njoroge's mind. The author takes the reader on a "tour" of Njoroge's mind and there the reader gets Njoroge's real feelings for the woman as a settler and a land grabber. The reader recognizes the truth to be that Njoroge is bitter about the loss of the land his father had told him was his; the land is now occupied by Mrs. Hill. He is also bitter about Mrs. Hill's complacency that has often led to self-congratulations. In contrast to this truth about their relationship is Mrs. Hill's confidence in her workers which is based on the assumption that they are satisfied and happy with what she considers to be good treatment of each one of them. Her motto is "Treat them kindly. They will take kindly to you" (p.40). Ignorance of the true feelings pent up in Njoroge is at the centre of the irony of their relationship.

It is ironical that at the time she is declaring to her two friends,

Look at my "boys", They all love me. They would do anything I ask them to! (p.40)

Njoroge has already lined up the Freedom Boys to come over and kill her. She is absolutely unaware of this conspiracy by one of the servants she treats 'kindly'. The contrast between the confident boast "...my boys. They all love me" and the debate

preoccupying Njoroge as the time to meet the murderers he had lined up draws nearer and nearer is at the heart of the irony.

In addition to dramatic irony, we do encounter the use of irony of situation. The discrepancy between appearance and reality is brought out in Mrs. Hill's summary of the achievement of her race. In her view, the indigenous people have gained a lot from colonialism. Unaware of the reality that the people she thinks have "a lot to thank the Europeans for" are actually angry with her presence and that of the rest of her race, Mrs. Hill maintains that

People like Njoroge now lived contented
without a single worry about tribal wars.
They had a lot to thank the Europeans for
(p.46).

There is also an element of irony of situation in Mrs. Hill's personal rating of Njogoge. While it should be clear to her that her servant is a full grown man with a family and friends in his community, the reality of the relationship between mistress and servant is that to her he only exists as a servant; a house boy. This naivety is at the centre of the tragedy. Her wilful ignorance makes it impossible for her to relate with her servant as a human being. Thus, when he risks being killed by the Mau Mau Boys by coming all the way back to warn Mrs. Hill, he meets his death after she shoots him in panic. This panic is a result of her refusal to see Njoroge as "a man with a family" given all the years he has worked with her (p.47). The realization that he actually is a grown up man responsible for a family shocks her and while she is in this state, she hears a knock and then his voice. Here there is "a discrepancy between what is and what

would seem appropriate" (Story and Structure, 1959 p.224). Given that she is inside the house and that all her servants love her, it would seem appropriate to find out his reason for coming back. However, her faulty rating of the man proves fatal when at this crucial moment she once again divests him of any trace of human feelings and decides to see him as any man, and worse still a traitor.

Finally, there is irony of situation in the circumstances leading to Njoroge's death. Njoroge realizes that Mrs. Hill is a mother and that her death would cause her children to be both "fatherless and motherless" her husband having died many years ago (.p45). He drops the idea of betraying her on this account. His intention in going back to Mrs. Hill's house is therefore, to warn her to be ready to save her life when the Mau Mau Boys come to attack. Ironically, however, his effort to save Mrs. Hill's life leads to the loss of his own. His expectations - to call Mrs. Hill, have his voice recognised and his warning listened to - are contradicted by circumstances. This happens when she quickly draws a parallel between Njoroge's presence at her house and that of the late Garsons' servant's at their house and the subsequent betrayal committed against the couple. She will not take chances and so she shoots to kill, ironically in self-defence.

There is also a tinge of irony surrounding the discovery of the one naked fact about each other: that each one of them is a human being. Ngugi presents this discovery as one taking place at the same time in the minds of the two characters. It is as if the discovery is meant to enable the two to relate to each other better than they have hitherto. Njoroge is determined to save his mistress implicitly to preserve his job and

explicitly to enable her children to continue enjoying the care she was lavishing on them. Mrs. Hill's discovery promises to make her more human; she resolves to see to it that the mistake is "righted in future" (p.47). It is, therefore, ironical that when each party has resolved to view the other positively, events should turn the way they do. Things happen in such a way as to suggest that Mrs. Hill's reaction to see to it that things are "righted in future" could easily imply that the righting of things may involve becoming suspicious of, and consequently tough on Njoroge. In this case, then, it can be argued that there is a subversion of normal expectation: the kind of discovery each makes should lead to mutual respect, yet what it actually leads to in the case of Mrs. Hill is development of deep-rooted suspicion and fear of the new man, Njoroge and an unexpected determination to defend herself against him. Examined from this angle, it is clear that Mrs. Hill's inner self which, unlike what Njoroge does to his, she will not face, absorbs this determination and explodes to the surface in the cry: "Come and Kill me!" directed at Njoroge (p.47). In other words, what appears to be one discovery made by two people at the same time turns out, on further examination of its impact on each discoverer, to be actually two different revelations with totally different results.

When she pulls the trigger, Mrs. Hill is sure that she is shooting at Njoroge, a servant-turned-traitor and, hence, murderer. She reads treachery and not the intended desperation in the calling: "Memsahib! Memsahib!" There is a misinterpretation of intention, leading to a situation of great irony.

Using irony in the depiction of this relationship that ends tragically, the author manages to suggest several meanings without having to state them. For instance, in addition to the suggestions already arrived at, one is led to argue further that the ironic contrast directs us to yet another meaning: condemnation of the stereotype trusting native who rushes to his death in the attempt to save a colonizer who spends time calculating how to deal harshly with him. It is significant that just before Njoroge knocks on the door, Mrs. Hill's words that end "something to be righted in future" have not, as it were, dried on her lips (p.47). Thus, the author contrasts a calculating stance and an emotional one, and dismisses the latter.

The death of Njoroge at this moment is significant and this leads us to the next stylistic device used in this story: symbolism. The death of the humane character, who risks death at the hands of betrayed friends - the Mau Mau Boys - only to run to his death at the hands of the one he hurries to save, underscores the destruction of humane feelings which is the result of the Emergency. The brief incident is dramatically presented, thus:

It was Njoroge's voice. Her houseboy. Sweat broke out on her face. She could not even hear what the boy was saying... This was her end. The end of the road. So Njoroge had led them here! She trembled and felt weak.

But suddenly, strength came back to her. She knew she was alone. She knew they would break in. No! She would die bravely (p.47).

There is a clear contrast between the cause of Mrs. Hill's sweat and that of Njoroge's. While the woman sweats in panic and resolves to steel herself and fight to save her life,

the servant is doing so to save someone else's life. The author endows her with the ability to think systematically even in the midst of a crisis while Njoroge's mind remains woolly. We are told "she knew" while of Njoroge the author says, he "prayed ... unable to decide" (p.45). This contrast becomes in itself a symbol, making it "possible (for the author) to suggest meanings without stating them (Story and Structure. 1959, p.226). In this way, Ngugi symbolically suggests not only the death of the native's tender, humane feelings but also the supremacy of the white race which depends on cold, faceless defence of personal interests. Mrs. Hill's action symbolises further the hardening of the heart that must withstand and survive the psychological ravages of Mau Mau.

In addition to the symbolic use of action as a stylistic device, Ngugi also includes object-symbolism. An example of this is the house on the hill. The position of Mrs. Hill's family house gains symbolic significance from the ironic relations it finally has to its meaning in the story. The hill is in effect a "heraldic emblematic image" (Frye, p.92) Whereas the conventional symbol of a hill is closeness to holiness, purity and solace, the hill in this story harbours a woman who rouses hatred in the mind of Njoroge. The Hill also suggests safety; but in this story it is the centre for worry and eventually the scene of death. Hence, what this object, the hill, promises to suggest is not what the reader meets. Because it is the isolation which is its disadvantage that also bears within it the disadvantages encountered in the story, it is clear that what Frye refers to as "the heraldic emblematic image [which] is in a paradoxical and ironic relation to the meaning" (Frye, p.92) is employed here with the advantage of generating more

meanings from the relationship between the hill and the characters who either live on it or frequent it. For instance, the hill does not inspire anyone with reverence. All that one finds in the house on it are affectation, gossip and hatred from the conversation of the three women at the beginning. Mrs Hill's attitude to her workers, whom she seems to hold in contempt, is definitely not inspired by this feature. Hence, the murder and the horror of realizing that it has been committed sum up the true atmosphere of the life on the hill. This in itself is a paradox.

Name-symbolism is another aspect of symbolism employed. Names such as (Mrs) Hill, Hardy and Smile do acquire symbolic significance as the story develops towards its denouement.

Mrs. Hill, for instance, turns out to be as remote as the hill on which her house is situated. Her world-view bewilders other settlers; they cannot understand her attitude to her servants and she will not lead them to understand it. She lives alone, her husband having died earlier on and her children living in England. Her sense of independence is strong and so she rejects the idea of leaving the hill for Nairobi or Kinangop. She seems to see herself as the one pillar of strength upon whom all her servants have to lean. They look up to her for sustenance. Symbolically, then (Mrs.) Hill the woman and the geographical feature hill upon which the woman lives have merged and become one and the same thing, fulfilling one purpose: that of providing for the servants' needs, ranging from security to shelter and food.

It is important to note at this stage that the name-symbolism invested in (Mrs.) Hill develops into a heraldic emblematic image when the symbol of protection and safety turns into a death trap for Njoroge. This is also the case with the name-symbolism that is encountered in the case of Mrs. Hardy. Hardy suggests toughness, boldness as the dictionary definition reads: "having a tough constitution; bold; courageous" Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary, 1976, p.594. Ironically, the name-symbol is not sustained as the character bearing that name has "no opinion of her own about anything." (p.40) Rather than being bold, she is spineless and of weak intellectual-capacity. In the trio's conversation she finds "herself in agreement with whatever Mrs. Smiles [said]" (p.40).

The name given to the third woman (Mrs) Smiles, forms further evidence of the recurrence and, hence, the significant role of name-symbolism as a stylistic device. Like in the case of the other two women whose names suggest qualities that negate the meaning of the names the general demeanour of this character and the contribution she makes to the trio's conversation are in contradistinction to the meaning of the word smiles, her name. The three names stand out as the author's deliberate move to suggest hypocrisy as the one weakness that all the three women have in common.

It becomes increasingly clear as to why none of the three women can at least act in line with the name by which she is labelled. The question as to why Mrs. Smiles should, in addition to having a "tough, determined nose and tight lips" (p.40) that suggest the rarity of smiles that may escape those lips, lend credibility to suspicion about her being mean and hard by constantly steering the conversation towards unfair and even

cruel conclusions. She will not give the benefit of doubt to Garstone's servants as is seen in the extract:

(smiles) ... who more kind? And to think of all the squatters they maintained!

(Hardy) Well it isn't the squatters who..."

(Smiles) "Who did? Who Did?" ...

(Smiles) "And to think they were actually called from bed by their houseboy!" ...

(Smiles) "Yes. It was their houseboy who knocked at their door and urgently asked them to open. Said some people were after him-"

(Hardy) "Perhaps there -"

(Smiles) "No! It was all planned, All a trick. As soon as the door was opened, the gang rushed in. It's all in the paper. (p.41)

This extract demonstrates the kind of malice that is harboured in the person Smiles; a name that is suggestive of smiles that are conventionally taken to be psychotherapeutical in difficult times. Just as malice is clothed in a missionary called Smiles - a word/name whose pronunciation forces a smile on the lips as it is almost iconic - so is weakness and stupidity hidden in the one labelled Hardy; and danger allowed to thrive in the seeming dependable Mrs. Hill. Name-symbolism, thus, becomes a useful technique that effectively suggests hypocrisy without explicitly naming it.

Ngugi, whose writing has consistently held up hypocrisy to ridicule takes the usual swipe at this social ill. Seen from this angle, then, the killing of Njoroge is the logical conclusion of insisting on a relationship that is sustained by hypocrisy. Mrs. Hill is stunned, but this condition can be interpreted to be the result of her realization that she has exposed her "settlerist" fangs for all to see them. Her calling out, "come and kill me!" is a desperate cry that signifies the realization that with her hypocrisy exploded, she has become vulnerable to attack. From now on, her servants can no longer trust her, her settler friends cannot take her ardent defence of native innocence seriously.

Finally, there is the use of the word martyr that the author chooses as title for the entire story. This guides us to interpret it as yet another instance of name-symbolism. In normal usage a martyr is one who deliberately chooses to die rather than turn against principles he believes to hold true. A martyr will normally go through a series of interrogation sessions during which he/she will clearly show the principle(s) he will hold onto to his death. The conventional Christian definition of a martyr is drawn from the behaviour of Stephen before and during the lynching (Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 7).

A lasting principle on trial has to be established, and conditions in which the principles are threatened with abandonment in pursuit of the easier alternatives made explicit. Thus, the tag hero of conscience used to describe such martyrs remains apt.

However, in the case of Mrs. Hill and Njoroge, principles and conscience are pushed to the periphery. Njoroge cannot be regarded a martyr given the private confrontation he has with his shadow. This episode plays an important role in the

evaluation of his death as he strives to carry out a noble task: to save Mrs. Hill. The noble act is necessitated by Njoroge himself. As such one can rightly argue that he is a victim of his own foolishness: he is killed because he is naive enough to imagine that he can please the two warring sides in the same night and live to tell the tale.

Njoroge fails to answer to the expectations anticipated on hearing the word martyr. The name - symbol in this case can also be said to be a heraldic emblematic image as in the other three cases. An examination of the name - symbolism in "The Martyr" leads us to conclude that the author has picked on this device as the best technique by which he can highlight and emphasize the human folly exemplified in the four characters: Njoroge, Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Hardy and Mrs. Smiles. Hypocrisy and stupidity are the tragic flaws suggested in the name-symbolism and the contrast brought out between name and object affords the tragedy moments of grim humour.

In conclusion, we would say that this story, whose heading takes the form of a verdict, "The Martyr", relies on an infinite number of stylistic devices to lead to those deep levels of meaning that make it an enjoyable short story. The present study has only managed to focus on tone and mood, suspense, irony and symbolism. These devices are regarded by this study as being responsible for the final effect of this story whose substance is depressing: it is emotionally pleasurable and enjoyable.

2.4 "The Return" (pp.49-54)

This story, like "The Martyr" focuses on the theme of betrayal. Using a wide variety of stylistic devices, Ngugi has given us a story in which the martyr is an anti-hero and a victim of naivety in the face of deep-rooted racist colonial contempt for and suspicion of the native. At the end of that story, one can argue that Mrs. Hill is the betrayer though Njoroge sets the traitorous events in motion. This ambiguity is also to be detected in "The Return." Nonetheless, our sympathy for Muthoni is not as spontaneous as the one evoked by Mrs. Hill. This is mainly because of the different ways they are presented to us: Muthoni's motive is reported by her parents-in-law while Mrs. Hill's is given directly to the reader through the omniscient narrator. Thus, we remain distanced from the former woman's dilemma while we are involved in that of the latter.

Kamau's plight in "The Return" is presented to us using three main devices: symbolism, parallelism and suspense. Description is also employed. We will discuss each one of these techniques as it contributes to the emotions of anxiety, excitement and finally, near-fatal disappointment and despair.

Description of the road, the main character and the landscape is somewhat detailed, covering more than half of the story. Though there is evidence of linking the setting and the characters' reaction to Kamau to the general mood of despair, the overuse of description tends to stand in the way of dramatic conflict. "The dramatic situation" (Grandsgaine, 1985, p. 11) is bound to communicate more information and even feelings than long paragraphs of description as the reader listens, to the characters and "sees"

them in action. Thus, in "The Return" the focus is on the depressing effect of betrayal which is achieved by the use of long paragraphs of short sentences such as:

The road was long ... He walked on , however, unmindful of the dust and ground under his feet. Yet with every step he seemed more and more conscious of the hardness and apparent animosity of the road ... But the road stretched on. (p.49)

These suggest the weariness and anxiety to come to the end of the journey. The value of the sounds /o/ and /:/ used in five different words successively at the outset of the story is significant: it is to emphasize fatigue and weariness and to predict despair. Thus, the story starts at the point where the main character is tired; he is too tired to think about the dust around him. Yet, he is capable of being "conscious of the hardness of ... the road" (p.49) The words hardness and animosity are words in which the /s/ sound is easily hissed, thus, suggesting hostility and rejection that are awaiting the main character. The words also suggest the unfavourable changes that have taken place in his absence.

In the brief description of the landscape, the author refers to the unfavourable changes in three different ways: the crops in the farms are "sickly-looking" and they, as well as everything else, "appeared ... unfriendly" (p.49) and the whole country is dull and weary. Even the bundle he is carrying is not spared, it too is in the process of deterioration : the cotton cloth in which it is well wrapped has lost the red-flower-prints that had once caused it to appear beautiful. To complete the picture of weariness and to predict despair is the old coat worn by Kamau that is said to be "Now torn and worn

out" (p.49). Thus, one can see that description as a technique in this short story is kept exact and meaningful, bringing out their desires fears and expectations of an individual character through suggestion. The choice of the words is deliberate as each of the adjectives relevant to Kamau's mood denotes rejection, viz *unfriendly*, *dull* and *weary*, *faded* cotton cloth, *torn* and *worn out* (p.50). They have the desired effect.

When the mood changes with hopes of reaching home at last rising in Kamau, the author indicates the excitement using one friendly physical feature of the environment : the Honia river. Kamau's reaction to the river, the source of life for all those living nearby, is recorded in long sentences that suggest a bubbling rhythm by the series of subordinate clauses that make each of the sentences, thus:

He quickened his steps as if he could scarcely believe this to be true till he had actually set his eyes on the river. It was there; it still flowed. Honia, where so often he had taken a bath, plunging stark naked into its cool living water, warmed his heart as he watched its serpentine movement round the rocks and heard its slight murmurs (p.50).

The sight of the Honia river and the memories it brings back to his mind do have a soothing effect on the traveller. Nothing has so far excited him as much as this river has. The long sentences are, thus, used to convey a state of mind that can handle a string of thoughts or dreams: a series of well connected thoughts and memories.

In direct contrast with the effect of the Honia river on the mind of the author is the cold attitude of the women drawing water from the same Honia river. The effect of the women's behaviour is recorded in short, rhetorical questions that appear in quick,

almost breathless succession:

Would they receive him? Would they give him a hero's welcome?... Had he not always been a favourite all along the Ridge? And had he not fought for the land? (p.50).

To each one of these rhetorical questions there seems to be a silent answer in the negative. Dreams and reality clash at the Honia river. The desire to run and announce his presence to the women by the well is checked and eventually destroyed by their indifferent faces. Thus, the rhetorical questions function on two levels: one of these levels is that of conveying confusion caused by the women's indifference, while the other level is that of capturing Kamau as one caught up in a situation that forces him to re-examine his motives, actions and achievements.

While the process of self-examination is recorded in a series of breathless questions, the one of disillusionment is conveyed in brief, mechanically controlled dialogue in which Kamau is at first the one asking questions and then obliging the respondents to say something to him. Brief statements such as these

"Oh, is it you Kamau? We thought you,..." "Perhaps I am no longer one of them!" (p.51).

suggest the distance between the speakers, a distance Kamau has to contend with.

The "cold, hard looks" (p.50) the women give him at the river become characteristic of every look directed at him subsequently. When he arrives in his home, his father's reaction is conveyed in short, simple sentences that suggest both the rising temper in Kamau and the fear that has gripped the old man.

The old man did not respond. He just looked at Kamau with strange vacant eyes. Kamau was impatient. He felt annoyed and irritated. Did he not see him? Would he behave like the women Kamau had met at the river? "Father, don't you remember me?" Hope was sinking in him. He felt tired ... He saw him stare with unbelieving eyes. Fear was discernible in those eyes. (pp.52-53)

The final feeling of despair and the sense of disillusionment that dominate Kamau's reaction to what he regards to be betrayal is recorded in short sentences that seem to suggest Kamau's inability to engage in any argument with anyone. The statement, "He felt tired", excuses him from any argument : it is a licence for his silence as well as for him to whisper the final brief, yet broken up questions:

'You - you gave my own away?' (p.54)

It is a question that is whispered. It is almost a rhetorical question. The plea that the parents come up with is not an answer to the whispered question. "Listen, child, child -" (p.54) is no response to a question that would require a yes or no answer, if it was to be answered. Thus, the encounter between parents and child which starts on a cold note, rising to bitterness and ending in an atmosphere of desperation is treated in delicate detail, using simple statements and questions all of which allow the situation so simply depicted to be understood at once.

As well as employing description and simple statements most of which are made up of words that enhance the feelings of the main character, Ngugi also uses suspense as a stylistic device in this story. The first element of suspense is discernible right at

the beginning of the story. Here the identity of the main character remains the 'author's secret' for almost two and a half paragraphs. By the time the reader learns that the "he" in the story is Kamau, the question of that character's identity has almost made itself loud in the reader's mind. It is as though the author wants to establish the fact that the story is about a male human being and that is all. The fact of being male is revisited in the story long after the reader has been led to know that the "he" in the story is Kamau. This is when Kamau is almost tempted to display emotions of excitement by running to the women at the river and declaring his identity to them. He resists the temptation by reminding himself that he is a man: "But he desisted. He was a man" (p.50). Thus, while the use of the pronoun keeps the reader in suspense, it also helps explain certain actions by Kamau. For instance, the intense anger that almost chokes him at the end of the story is caused mainly by jealousy in general, and specifically by the fact that Karanja, his timeless rival, had won and, thus, shown that he had actually challenged Kamau's manhood successfully.

The suspense created at the beginning of the story whets the reader's interest in Kamau. The reader learns all about his physical and mental dispositions before discovering his name. When his name is finally released, the reader welcomes the revelation so that the silhouette that he has been while going by the pronoun is quickly and firmly replaced by a man by the name Kamau. Withholding of Kamau's name for sometime becomes an effective device.

Another incident whose power is enhanced by suspense in this story occurs by the Honia river. Kamau approaches the women expecting to receive a "hero's welcome".

The author creates suspense, between the moment of encounter and that of realization of the situation on the part of Kamau. The silence that is broken by Wanjiku's question,

"Oh, is it you, Kamau?"

We thought you __" (p.51)

is part of the suspense that is left to build. This speech, comprising a question that is packed with surprise and even shock and an incomplete statement, is effective in conveying the increasing anxiety in Kamau. What the people "thought" is not mentioned. Wanjiku uses the plural form of the first person and is not corrected by any of the women at the river. She is instead given support by their glances of surprise and affirmation. That the women are afraid to look straight at Kamau implies that the people did not just think but they actually believed that he had died. This fact remains unknown to him until he reaches home and his mother breaks the suspense. She completes Wanjiku's statement in the words: "I knew my son would come. I knew he was not dead" (p.53) Then Kamau realises his situation: he has been presumed dead as a result of a false report brought from the forest by his rival, Karanja.

The realization that he has no place in the society and that his presence is like that of a spectre, causing fear in all those who see him except his mother and his brothers, relieves the suspense created by the initial inexplicable reaction of his immediate family to him.

Ngugi builds yet another moment of suspense after this one. This time the suspense involves the possibilities of reaction from Kamau. His mother attempts to relate the circumstances under which his parents let Karanja take his wife, Muthoni but Kamau refuses to comprehend. The author uses the words "He was not listening" (p.54) to imply refusal to understand what his mother is saying. The suspense generated here is sustained until the end of the story when Kamau rejects the thought of drowning himself as a solution to his problem. The question as to what Kamau will do after learning about his rival's victory, which victory involves Muthoni's desertion, is at the centre of the suspense and so Kamau's decision to live on, having got rid of the bundle that has for a long time now reminded him of Muthoni, resolves the conflict and the suspense is relieved.

While suspense as a device whets the appetite of the reader and, thus, increases the reading pace of the story, symbolism is employed to facilitate economy of language. The use of symbolism in "The Return" subscribes to the view that part of the job of a short story writer is "to find the .. images to suggest" the themes of the story. (Writer's Digest, July, 1991, p.14). Ngugi's setting - the countryside - is one such image. The detailed description reveals it as a medium for suggesting disappointment and near-fatal despair. The countryside, thus, takes on symbolic significance. In the light of the fact that Kamau is to encounter concrete evidence of hard-heartedness, the simple description of the ground upon which he is walking as hard, as well as that of the countryside as "dull and ... weary" is symbolic (p.49). These symbolise the human meanness and

cruelty which drove Karanja to not only lie about Kamau's welfare but also take his (Kamau's) wife away. Further to this is the suggestion of the indifference that awaits Kamau. The environment so described prompts us to read the destructive attitude of the villagers and even that of his parents who, when he gets to them, indicate that they are in the process of learning to forget him. They take an uncomfortably long time to show the expected parental interest in him. News of his death having been accepted as final and his parents having got rid of the only individual that reminded them of him, Muthoni, Kamau encounters a crushing form of indifference. It is as if he is an intruder and not a member of the family, a son returned in contradiction to convincing rumours of his death. The feeling of betrayal that shocks him equally shocks his parents. Thus, during the brief encounter the two parties are equally devastated.

In contrast to the hard ground and the dull countryside that portend evil, is the Honia river. This physical feature is prominent in the story. It is the only place the author surrounds with life of both plant and animal as well as human activity. The Honia river valley has green bush and trees and there are women drawing water from it (p.50).

In this way, the Honia river is depicted as a life - giving force and a source of life. It symbolises, in the context of the story, the will to live. This symbol is discernible not only in the luxuriance of life and the human activities around the Honia river but it is also felt by Kamau as he approaches it:

He quickened his steps as if he could scarcely believe this to be true till he had actually set his eyes on the river ... Honia, ..., [it] warmed his heart as he watched its serpentine movement round the rocks ... A painful exhilaration passed all over him... (p.50)

The Honia river as a symbol of life is, thus, depicted as giving weary Kamau new hope as is expressed in the quickened steps. The sight of the river seems to suddenly rouse in him an important aspect of his life that has suffered repression for a long time: the sensual aspect. Looking at the river alone rids his mind of any vestiges of the inhuman conditions he has left behind in the camps, and affords him a moment of self-indulgence as the phrase "warmed his heart" implies. This phrase and the clause "A painful exhilaration passed all over him" (p.50) are open and so in the context of the contrasting circumstances in which Kamau's shock is centred around the fact that he has lost his wife, these two expressions can be interpreted to refer to the restoration of both the sensual and the sensuous life in him. Kamau, thus, leaves the Honia river when he is alive in every sense of the word. It is no wonder, then, that when he later rushes back to it to destroy his life, he finds it impossible to do so, instead the power of the river forces common sense into him so that in the end he is able to appreciate the effect of time on man. That man is subject to time and the changes that of necessity come with it is a point that impresses itself on Kamau and he abandons the negative thoughts of suicide and embraces life. It is significant that Kamau's life is spared by a simple association with the river. The author in this way would subscribe to Goppard's

comment on the short story as an art form that displays

the art of telling a story by a series of gestures, swift shots
[and] moments of suggestions (Goppar, 1967, Preface).

Another object that Ngugi raises to symbolic proportions is the moon. It is significant to note that at the time Kamau is desperately rushing out of his father's homestead to get rid of his life, the moon is the prominent feature that the author mentions. Its presence is reported, thus, "The big yellow moon dominated the horizon" (p.54). As a conventional symbol of fertility, the moon is introduced in the story at this time to affirm life, thereby contradicting Kamau's desperate decision. As he stands by the banks of the river contemplating his anti-life act, the moon is symbolically rising higher until, at the time he drops the idea, it is right above him.

Thus, the power of the Honia river or the healing river, "honia" being the Kikuyu word for "heal", to revive the will to live is underlined. It is clear that the author is using the word with the intention of assigning it life-giving attributes. Combining with the Honia is the rising moon, the traditional cue for romancing. These compel Kamau to choose life. These two symbols of life are arranged in such a manner that they suggest nothing else but life:

The river moved swiftly, making ceaseless monotonous murmurs. In the forest the crickets .. kept an incessant buzz. And above, the moon shone bright. (p.54)

There is yet another object which, insignificant though it appears initially, gains symbolic significance at the end of the story. This is the little bundle. When Kamau

appears on the scene, he is said to be holding "a string tied to a small bundle"(p.49). The bundle is reported to be holding "the bitterness and hardships of the years spent in detention" (p.45). There is no mention of the bundle again until the time Kamau inadvertently drops it in the Honia river where it floats swiftly out of sight. The bundle is symbolic in the way it affects Kamau. While carrying it, the memory of his wife is alive and with it the bitter memories of the detention camps which have kept him away from her for five years. Handing the bundle to Muthoni seems to be the only action that will make sense to him. A fresh start involves such a re-union with Muthoni. The small bundle is in this way symbolic of the line between the oppressive past five years and the bright future that is to be characterised by the re-union with Muthoni, the completion of bride-wealth, the expansion of his family and the subsequent independence of that family in their own home.

On discovering that such a re-union is not to be, Kamau symbolically discards the bundle. Both sides of the symbolic line bear oppressive memories.

Symbolically, Kamau has to get rid of the bundle for ever in order to start afresh.

The disappearance of the bundle is recorded thus:

It rolled down the bank and before Kamau knew what was happening, it was floating swiftly down the river. For a time he was shocked and wanted to retrieve it. ... His wife had gone. And the little things that had so strangely reminded him of her ... had gone ... he felt relieved (p.54).

It is as though Muthoni and detention are inextricably linked in his memory and as such he cannot live with one without the other. In order, therefore, to start afresh Kamau must sever relations with the past in which Muthoni is a prominent figure. That the bundle that contained for him both the bitter memories of oppression and the fond memories is irretrievably lost to him and he feels relieved suggests yet another possibility: the bundle can be interpreted as an allegorical object that refers directly to the burden of guilt about uncompleted dowry and desertion of a young childless wife mixed with the bitterness accumulated over the five years of suffering all pressing upon Kamau's mind. In this light then, one can see a tinge of irony in Kamau's eagerness to meet his wife and his outburst, "You-you gave my own away", on learning that she had gone with the man who was present and ready to provide for her needs.

In this story, as in "Gone with the Drought", Ngugi makes use of a biblical allusion to the idea of each one carrying his own cross. The small bundle discussed in the light of symbolic and allegorical associations can be seen yet on another level as alluding to the Christian burden of sin that must get washed away in order for the converted person to feel relieved of the power of Satan. In the song alluded to the poet actually says "... the burden of my heart rolled away" where Ngugi says "... it [the bundle] was floating swiftly down the river." The resemblance is striking and the allusion clear.

There is also a reference to the Bible when Kamau, unknown at first to the women drawing water from the Honia river, approaches them and initiates the

conversation. This is allusive of a scene in the Bible where Jesus, a lone male, unknown to his audience, finds a woman at the well and initiates a conversation. The association of water and life is to be found in both contexts. In Ngugi's story the water that the women are drawing is itself the source of life, whereas in the Bible the water that is the source of life is to be given by the stranger. There is also a difference in the number of women; in the case of the Bible story there was only one woman while in Ngugi's story there are several. Nevertheless the allusion to a fatigued male taking a break by a river from which women who are confident in the importance of the water source are drawing water, is Biblical.

Thus, by employing symbols that draw upon conventional associations as is the case with the moon or special association as in the case of the allusion to the Bible and the Honia river, Ngugi succeeds in heightening the impact of Kamau's painful experience; the betrayal of trust. The total impression of it - the cause, the characters involved in it and the final resolution are all given in less than one hour of reading. Thus, "The Return", occupying only six pages of the anthology would respond aptly to Esenwein's idea of a short story:

... a brief imaginative narrative .. [which] contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed and the detail of the whole treatment so organised as to produce a single impression (Esenwein 19 , p.38)

The job of compression is achieved by the symbols used which suggest a great deal of detail about the person of the main character, the development of the crisis facing him and the resolution of that crisis. In fact the use of symbolism gives the story the quality

of the short story which Coppard has emphasized in his effort to analyze the form: that of telling "a story by a series of gestures" so that "elaborations and above all explanations are superfluous" (Essenwein, p.40).

Finally, we will examine the use of irony as yet another stylistic device the author uses to enable him to "suggest meanings without stating them" and thus enabling him "to gain power with economy". (Story and Structure, p.226). The kind of irony Ngugi uses in "The Return" is close to what Perrine refers to as irony of situation. In this kind of irony Perrine says:

... the discrepancy is between ... expectation and fulfilment or what is and what would seem appropriate (Perrine, 1959, p.226)

Yet, a closer look at the events gives us a situation we would simply define as that of irony of unfulfilled expectations or even tragic irony. In the story, Kamau's expectations are high. He thinks that his participation in the freedom struggle has endeared him to his people and as such his return should rouse excitement in all those who knew him or have heard of him. He feels that his name should be greeted with jubilation. These thoughts are reported, thus:

"... And had he not fought for the land? He wanted to run and shout: Here I am. I have come back to you" (p.50).

These expectations are contrasted sharply with what the other characters know to be the state of affairs: no one is expecting Kamau as the false news about his death has been accepted as a fact by all. There is, thus, a discrepancy between Kamau's expectations and

the reception by the river where his excited face moves no one; instead there is indifference. Only a few voices respond to his greeting that is meant to rouse in the women recognition and fond feelings. Those who fail to respond are said to have:

looked at him mutely as if his greeting was of no consequence (p.50).

His efforts to prod their memories yield even more depressing results:

"Do you remember me?" Again they looked at him. They stared at him with cold, hard looks; like everything else, they seemed to be deliberately refusing to know or own him (p.50).

Even when Wanjiku recognizes him, she does not show any enthusiasm, she lacks the warmth Kamau has been expecting all this time. Her words are a source of pain to him; the incomplete statement, "We thought you -", prompts him to regret, thus, "Perhaps I am no longer one of them!"

The encounter with his family also presents the reader with a further illustration of irony of situation. Once again, the expectations Kamau has entertained and which have, in turn, helped him get over the bitterness roused by the indifference of Wanjiku and her friends, are contrasted greatly with and destroyed by the cold reception he is accorded by his parents as well as his brother and sisters. There is a discrepancy between

Life would indeed begin anew. They would have a son... With these prospects before his eyes, he quickened his steps. He wanted to run - no, to fly to hasten his return (p.52).

and

'Why, who told you I was dead?'
'That Karanja, son of Njogu.' ...
'Muthoni went away'(p.53).

Hence, the expectation that keeps Kamau's spirit high meets no fulfilment. Thus, while it would be proper and appropriate that Kamau receive a hero's welcome, what actually presents itself before him is total rejection, and in some cases, a mere tolerance of his presence.

"The ironic contrast generates meaning" according to Perrine and this is borne out in this story (Story and Structure, 1959, p.229). The juxtaposition of the two discordant facts - Kamau's expectations and excitement about a full new life on the one hand and the fact of his being dead and, therefore, unwelcome - suggests the necessity for all, including Kamau, to discard the past and start afresh given that the resolution of the conflict involves Kamau's rejection of suicide and an acceptance of the inevitable : change and all that it entails.

There is also an ironic twist in the title of this story. Whereas the idea of a return carries within it implications of picking the thread where one left and going on as if the interruption admitted by the word return has had no effect, what actually happens in the story shows that in real life there can never be a return. Time and the tyranny of it - change - cannot allow a return. In a period of five years change has affected the relationship between Kamau and all the people he knew and even the environment as he knew it. There is nothing to return to; there can only be a fresh start.

At the end of this chapter we can assert that the stylistic devices identified in the three stories discussed are, generally speaking characteristic of Ngugi's style. The overview of the rest of the stories has highlighted efforts to employ these techniques with not so intense an effect as that achieved in the three stories focused on in this chapter.

In the course of the exposition we noted that, for instance, he exploits irony as a stylistic technique in its entirety in all the three short stories. It was also clear during the exposition that the use of symbolism runs right through the stories; so is the manipulation of structure to create mood and atmosphere. Thus, the style of the short story in the hands of Ngugi shows signs of careful, studied and applied craftsmanship.

Nonetheless, we find the discussion incomplete in the absence of a mention of some of the stylistic lapses in Ngugi's works. For instance, there is over-reliance on short, simple sentences to build mood or even suggest tone. While the exposition in this chapter leads us to admit that on the whole Ngugi has succeeded in even creating dramatic conflict using successions of monosyllabic words in the series of short, simple sentences, still the achievement does not rule out the doubt that lingers in the critic's mind concerning the author's mastery of the art of engaging narrative structure. The series of short, simple sentences expose the work to the danger of becoming monotonous. At the same time the required intensity which would be built by syntactic sophistication may fail to come through as often happens in the stories analysed in this chapter. Here we are thinking of episodes whose impact is flattened by the "baby talk" used to present them. For instance, the episodes in which Kamau learns that Muthoni

has left him have great potential for developing a complex set of emotions. However, the juxtaposing of several simple SVO/C (Subject Verb Object/Complement) type statements does not allow this to happen. Such broken thoughts as implied by the following sentences cannot build intensity:

Kamau felt something settle in his stomach. He looked at the village huts and dullness of the land. He wanted to ask many questions but he dared not. He could not yet believe that Muthoni had gone. But he knew ... she was gone. (p.53)

Such short statements that consistently start with the same subject become monotonous and faulty instead of giving the intended concentrated focus on the character. Avoiding complex sentences, where subordinate clauses and conjunctions would help suggest the variety of feelings and hence the total impact of the news on Kamau, makes his reaction commonplace, dull. It renders our involvement in his situation impossible thereby tampering with any inclination to empathise in a situation in which such a response would be the appropriate one.

Long paragraphs of description are nonetheless quite common. The omniscient author is voluble in all the stories with the exception of "And the Rain Came Down". In Ngugi's hands, however, these long paragraphs do not always suggest a sustained mood or atmosphere, having lost that power at the heavy pauses (full stops) forced on the reader at the end of every one of the short simple sentences used. The effect of some of these paragraphs moves us to agree with one critic who has advised short story writers to use characters' words and actions to supplement description (Writers Digest,

July 1991, p.8). He discourages the technique as he finds it capable of disrupting "the flow of a short story" (W.D > p.29). Taking "disruption" to refer also to the distractive efforts a disjointed flow may have on the reader, we would argue that one incident in Ngugi's stories where dialogue is needed but the author sticks to description is the introduction of Mangu in "The Black bird". There is something tedious in reading through three paragraphs about a character. Dialogue would avert such tedium.

Equally tedious are the anecdotes that seem to dot most of the stories. One gets the impression that the author is eager to grab every opportunity to introduce his community to his readers. This is to be found in "Gone with the Drought" where the first person narrator reels out the old woman's experiences with famine (pp.17-18). The anecdote is so long as to be digressive, causing a major structural fault in the story but underlining the author's knowledge of the history of drought among his people, "the Gikuyu people" (p.18). Another digression is noted in the presentation of Njoroge's crisis (p.43) He is shown reflecting on his father's fate, what he died vis-a-vis what he should have died for: a principle. The 1923 Nairobi Massacre is squeezed in. It all forms useful information but it is aesthetically disconcerting as the author displays ignorance of the fact that he cannot convince us that anyone in a similar frame of mind as Njoroge can afford to indulge in such irrelevant memories.

The above two examples of digression among others not mentioned here interfere with Ngugi's "aesthetic artistry" (Lohafer & Clarey, 1989, p.190). Economy is lost and with that intensity is not felt as instructive information arbitrarily thrown into the

narrative fail to relate to the other parts to give a strongly unified whole.

Nevertheless, the overall verdict on the best of Ngugi's short stories is that they are generally engaging. The variety of stylistic techniques he has used makes each one of these stories display the required external simplicity that acts as a foil to internal complexity or subtlety. Thus, elasticity in coverage and artistry is achieved.

CHAPTER 3

A GENRE ON TRIAL: Leonard Kibera

3.1 Opening Remarks

When Potent Ash was first published (1968), it attracted a great deal of attention, coming only a short while after Grace Ogot's Land Without Thunder in the same year. Angus Calder, then a keen promoter of young writers in Kenya, then, had this to say about Kibera's stories:

Kibera's style suffers from over emphasis and ponderous use of coincidence (Zhuka 3, 1970, p.1)

He singled out "The Hill" to support his comment. A study of that story confirms Calder's choice for illustration. We are reminded of the emphasis he lays on the subject of moral decay. Here Kibera focuses on the representatives of this weakness in society so intently that he leaves little room for the reader's speculation. Njeri's cruelty to her younger son is presented against a background of such detailed mitigating factors that one almost feels that the author is at pains to exonerate the callous mother. Her desperation which even sees her at a witchdoctor's hearth forms a strong foil for her future life of illusionary bliss in Mr. Martins house; yet it provides an example of undirected use of emphasis. The ten episodes, each giving a facet of the family saga that helps to explain Kimondo's misery, contribute to the over-emphasis.

A similar case of over emphasis is to be found in "The Stranger." Here we find the fact of the stranger's deaf-mute condition over-played. The author presents several incidents in which the disability is focused on so that the final product is an exercise in

repetition. In the hands of Kibera this device, which should enable a skilled artist to achieve the feel of "circular movements in a tightly woven rhetorical threading", becomes an end in itself. (O'Rourke 1992, p.20). The approach thus becomes a liability as it suggests padding.

While repetition is defensible under O'Rourke's theory that repetition which is an important element in the sermon as it allows the audience time to "ponder while it listens" and that the missing link between oral and written traditions is the short story thereby sanctioning repetition as a legitimate device that links it to its roots, coincidence as employed in some of the stories in Potent Ash is awkward. One is, for instance, reminded of the stroke of chance which leads little Kamau to Mr. Martin's swimming pool, Njeri to Mr. Martin's house in which her estranged husband is the servant or even Mbara into Chege's hands on the fateful evening. Chance works well only when the reader is allowed time to think of several alternatives and possibilities. In a short story the use of coincidence could be taxing as there is not enough time to develop a context that may excite the type of speculation that is needed to vindicate chance. In "The Hill" this device fails as it is overdone.

The response to Calder's observation that condemns Kibera's use of coincidence is deemed necessary as it leads us to the next point. This is the question of Kibera's achievement as a short story writer. He was the editor of Ghala (July 1968), a journal devoted to creative writing and a limited amount of critical works. This means that he was, at the time he published his stories, an authority on publishable and unpublishable

stories. This means that he was armed with an editor's standards of what a short story should read like. In other words what we have in Potent Ash is a critic's (for we take an editor to be a critic) applied skills.

One thing stands out in this anthology: the longest stories in the entire volume are those by Kibera - "The Stranger" and "The Hill". In them the principle of brevity, so cherished until Wright came up with the view that a short story is "a short fictional narrative in prose .. never much longer than Heart of Darkness", is ignored (O'Banion, 1992, p.50). Even while infringing the existing properties of a short story, Kibera is unable to be vindicated by twenty odd years of study which have led to Wright's submission. This is because he is not able to let episodes, actions and even characters speak for themselves. He strives to develop episodes in such detail as threatens to dull the reader's attention. Sub-plots and secondary lines of action are characteristic of these "long" short stories. Yet, the critic whose definition of the short story would have quickly covered Kibera's style says of digressions:

action [in a short story] tends to be externally simple, with few developed episodes and no sub plots or secondary lines of action (O'Banion, p.51)

Thus, the two stories present a complex situation which makes it necessary that they be given close scrutiny in this chapter.

Jack London has declared that a short story "should be concrete to the point... crisp and crackling and interesting" (Bates, 1941, p.16). Kibera displays ability to do this with varying degrees of success in the rest of the stories. "A Silent Song" is an

example of this author's ability to focus on one scene, one episode and one main character. The point he is bringing out is clear : religious hypocrisy can blind even a priest and cause him to live a life stifled with cruelty and self-delusion. Irony in this story is sharp. The intensity in this story, in which the author does not allow any waste or arbitrariness so that at the end of it each one of the three characters in it has been shown as having a vital role to play in the narrative, makes it mandatory that we devote a complete section of this chapter to it.

The life of a blind destitute whose rich, religious brother allows him to suffer want in the streets until he is sure that the boy is about to die seems to lend itself better to the short story, poem and play than to the novel. For instance, there are countless poems, published and unpublished alike on the beggar. In the Kenya Drama Festival the number of plays on this class of people attests to the fact that their life is amenable to that genre. Kibera's attempt at a novel about the dispossessed (Voices in the Dark) is a disaster, and this can be used to support our argument about the plight of beggars as ready material for this genre. One is, thus, obliged to agree with Virginia Wolf that the short story has "affinities with the drama... with the lyric ..." (Bates, 1941, p.31).

In other words, an experience that is painful is best treated in a short story where explanations are deemed "superfluous and tedious" (Bates, 1941, p.22). Suggestions of pain and sorrow are given in metaphor and symbolism, leaving the reader to speculate at the intensity of pain.

This chapter will, thus, focus on "A Silent Song" for its conscious display of economy and aesthetic artistry. "The Spider's Web" will be studied for what May would refer to as closeness to the "primal narrative that embodies and recapitulates mythic perception" (Lohafer, 1989, p.64). The dream in the story is significant. Initially, it implies the fear Lois has instilled in Ngotho. This takes us a step further as it reminds us of the fear of the Lord and the frequency of dreams and vision in the lives of persons who profess to live such a life. We are also aware of the confessions of persons who believe in the power of their dead ancestors and relatives; they too talk of dreams. Kibera's interest in dream as a way of foreshadowing the tragedy of his main character is evidence of the author's religious inclination which best finds expression in the short story form.

The nightmare also symbolises the inescapable, oppressive conditions that those natives, who have to work for their fellow natives who now occupy offices and houses formally used by colonial masters, have to endure. In it hypocrisy is suggested. That the dead man can still hear is a device the author adopts to highlight the death of the human feelings in both the husband and the wife: in the place of these emotions have been cultivated individualism and a crushing indifference. That an editor, a scholar, can combine dream and reality to comment on the plight of the ordinary citizens in a context of lots of promise and hope calls for a study into the achievement of that author in the given story.

On the whole Kibera, a much less reflective writer (reflection in the sense that he is more concerned with actions than thoughts of characters and as such there is hardly any self-analysis) than Ngugi, confines his stories to the days of Mau Mau and the early days of independence. With the exception of "It's A Dog's Life in our Kinshasa" which is set in the violent days of Zaire, all of the stories draw their material from the Kenyan experience. They have a characteristic mood: sombre. The tone is generally tragic so that one can actually say that Kibera's interest in the suffering of victims of pre-independence violence as well as the new form of punishing those deemed traitors finds expression in a genre that thrives best on suggestions, avoiding detailed explanations.

"It's A Dog's Life in our Kinshasa" (pp.16-20) has only four characters: the narrator, his new friends, the little girl and the condemned man. These are the only ones whose actions are individualized, the crowd being depicted as a frenzied chorus that shouts "Traitor! Traitor" without reflecting on the meaning and impact of death by the firing squad (p.17). The narrator experiences swift changes of attitude so that at the end of the story, he is appalled, frightened and disillusioned. He says of the final reaction to the spectacle:

May be he (the neighbour who has been excited and expectant) too had been touched at a very soft spot... We heard the report of shots and turned in time to take our due share of the violent anti-climax. The next we know we have clutched at each other (p.20)

Because all the events are narrated from the first person point of view, the vividness of the events is enhanced. There is sarcasm in the rhetorical questions,

...what was wrong with following the mob? What was wrong with joining in the spirit of the state? Did not the damned man deserve death? (p.16)

After waiting for over six hours to witness the grisly event, he reports to the reader his reaction. That he is not impressed by the death sentence is inferred in the words he uses to describe the crowd, the man standing next to him and the officer in charge. For instance, the man beside him is sarcastically referred to as "the jubilant man... stretching a snarl to reveal yellow teeth." (p.17). In a context of impending death, the adjective "jubilant" is inappropriate, it indicts the character's dehumanized state. The word snarl emphasizes further the death of human feelings in that individual as it suggests an eagerness to kill as happens in the world of animals of prey.

It is significant that the crowd is kept waiting for so long and no one, not even the narrator gives up. From his personal point of view we learn that this horrifying event is regarded by the crowd as a state function. Yet, this is the same character whose eye and ear only pick negative actions by and properties in those in the crowd that are near him. They either yelled, barked, swore at the narrator, "fell upon the crowd with a physical request to move" or had yellow teeth. Thus, the overall tone of this story is contemptuous, cynical.

However, towards the climax of the story, there is a mitigating scene, one that suggests the will to live which the crowd has since six o'clock and earlier been determined to ignore. It involves a little girl, whose relationship to the condemned man

remains unmentioned; she appears and braves the hostility and violence surrounding the man. She takes flowers to him. This action effectively rebukes both the crowd and the officer in charge of the firing squad of twelve. The doomed man weeps; he is touched. The impact of this scene is vested in the significance of flowers and the innocence of the bearer of these beautiful but highly perishable objects. That the doomed man weeps at the sight of the girl, suggesting his closeness to her and the knowledge that their relationship is soon to be put to an end as a result of possibly an act he could have avoided, is worth noting. Then there are the flowers which seem to remind the surging crowd of the transient nature of life, however robust, beautiful or full it may appear. It is, therefore, not surprising that

... he [the man] wept... Women drew out their handkerchiefs ... brave men, seemed to drop [our] heads down and pressed together ... I (the narrator) found myself moving away - backing out? - towards home, tail between my legs (p.20)

It is as if for the first time in more than six hours the significance of the doomed man's fate dawns on the crowd. The vulnerability of human life hits each individual in the crowd and the narrator notes it.

Thus, the use of an externally simple gesture gives the story the latitude to suggest several possible meanings. The gesture becomes a clue that sends the reader speculating. This is the climax of the story, the point at which the conflict between reason and emotion is resolved. Yet, Kibera does not end the narrative here. He loses the punch made and sounds lost as to how to stop his tale so that he resorts to telling the

reader the obvious:

We disengaged ourselves,... and he went a different way
(p.21).

As if this flat information is not damaging enough to the expected impact of such a moving story, the author destroys it further with an irrelevant, speculative conclusion: "for a strengthening lunch, no doubt." Clearly Kibera is fumbling for an ending, unaware that he has already reached a satisfying denouement.

"The Village Pastor" (pp.71-79) also suffers from the inclusion of superflous information. Reverend Johnson K. Mwaura's struggle against sin in all its forms and especially that one manifest in drunkenness, ministering and taking the oath reaches its climax when Johnnie's hunt for a terrorist empties Muriuki's bar into the church, causing the pastor to celebrate victory over evil only to realize a few moments later that he has been duped. His church is not filled by Muriuki's customers as a result of the preaching he has just carried on in the bar but as a fitting refuge from which the white soldier cannot evict them.

This narrative lacks certain essential elements of the story. Unlike "It's A Dog's Life in Our Kinshasa" which relies on a clearly defined psychological conflict and the resolution there of and one well delineated character whose point of view is constantly implied in what he chooses to point to the reader, "The Village Pastor" has hardly any such conflict or persona. What we have is a name and title. Opinions, actions or even utterances of that persona are of no consequence. Even when he breaks down and weeps, bringing his own service to a premature end, he does not make an impact.

Muriuki, another persona that could have been developed to create the expected conflict between bar patronage and church, fails to come through. Instead his bar takes the centre stage; but, then, nothing happens in the bar apart from the failed service.

In responding to this story, we are inclined to quote Stewart in his editorial comment on Introduction to Short Stories of Australia (1967), thus:

the story should be intrinsically worth telling ... if it is dull or repellent, if it is merely about the miseries of this or that set of social or domestic conditions, not rising to some intriguing human drama, then it may be of some psychological or sociological interest but it is not really a story (p.ix)

The author may have been inspired by the difficult time pastors had retaining their flock during the turbulent period of Mau Mau with all the frustrations it unleashed and which in turn caused drinking to go on the increase. Nonetheless, the human element that would have raised interest and speculation is lacking. Kibera is unable to penetrate the padre and the effort to retain a religious register only contributes to the weakness of the impact. Once again, he ends the narrative with flat information about the death, funeral and burial of the failed pastor.

While "The Village Pastor" attempts to recapture the difficult task of preaching Christianity to a community that is already biased against the original bringers of the gospel, "1954" (pp.100-112) takes us to the pavement where Ngure and his friend sit begging. In this piece of writing, the genre is clearly on trial. The author adopts the stream of consciousness as a device by which he takes the reader on a "journey" through

the unnamed persona's mind. Unfortunately, there is no effort to make sense. Even Nguire's reminiscences about the various experiences, hopes and fears of the Mau Mau fighters in the forest have the problem of intelligibility.

When reading "1954" one is reminded of the theatre of the absurd in which nothing moves, not even time. The past, present and future are depicted as merging; hence the dominant use of the ever present simple Present Tense. The last sentence in the piece reads:

There are three hundred and sixty-five days running ...
(p.112).

This is not connected to any sentence in what appears to be a conversation. The final punctuation(...) indicates that the undirected chat continues. Kibera seems to be experimenting with the principles of the theatre of the absurd in prose but he fails as the cynicism that keeps the disjointed conversation in that theatre going is lacking in this piece. For instance, a typical play in that movement, Waiting For Godot (1966), displays the intention to tell a story, the story of our hopeless existence where we are simply moving in circles and yet deluding ourselves that we are making progress. The two characters are apparently doing something- they are waiting for Godot- though in essence they are doing nothing. This is not the case with the two beggars in "1954" nor, worse still, is it with the unnamed personae of the unintelligible tirade preceding the disjointed, themeless conversation. Kibera fails to write a story and so the publication of this piece is an indication of the fact that the short story genre was still on trial.

The horror of 1954 made an indelible mark on young Kibera's mind. He revisits that year in "The Traitor" (pp.). The attempt to retell all at random in "1954" collapses. However, the story of Njogu's search for a job in the city, juxtaposed with the rich tailor's fatal eagerness to impress Inspector Jones by catching the youth for a crime he (Njogu) is not aware of, reads well. There is a definite story line; two characters who in the short time they are together affect each other, and action that moves in quick cinematic successions. M.H.K. Shah's life history is neatly knitted into the present events of the story. His past is the source of the irony in the narrative. Njogu is about the same age Shah was when he first came to Kenya and got a helping hand from an officer in the Town Council. That kind action set him on his way to the present position of affluence. It is, thus, ironical that he should be the same man who is eyeing the desperate job seeker with suspicion when he should know that securing employment now may mean a bright future for the young man before him.

Kibera introduces the radio announcement to make the events leading to Shah's death even more vivid. That the rich businessman is also a victim of the fear and violence unleashed by the state of emergency is brought out clearly in Shah's reaction to the radio announcement. He dies trying to catch Njogu and hold onto him for Inspector Jones to come over and arrest. The change of fortune shocks Njogu. A profound question of morality in times of social turmoil is posed and the young man, who though treated badly only a while ago, partly provides an answer: "in that rough hour of unexpected pain, Mr. Shah did after all need him, did need someone, anyone"

(p.52).

Thus, the tragic end of a successful career evokes pity at man's vulnerability and anger at the violent man-made circumstances that bring about that end. The pace at which events take place is almost cinematic, the author avoiding dragging to the point of dramatising the news of the death of Njogu's aunt. While listening to the radio, Shah maintains the kind of pin-drop silence that normally suggests an impending storm or a violent action. The suspense built is aptly broken with the crush in which the tailor dies.

The tension of the Mau Mau period which reduced everyone, including the Johnnies, to the level of victim of violence gave way to the type of exuberance expressed in "Something in Common" (pp. 147-154) at independence. Kibera focuses on three characters who are each affected by the events set in motion by the political freedom the country is enjoying. Party politics forms the theme. Samuel Ngure, the trade unionist holding the powerful position of President of the Shoemakers' and Allied Workers Union (S.A.W.U.), is already disillusioned about representative politics. On the opposite pole are the two candidates of opposing parties, both determined to win votes. In turn they approach Samuel Ngure and promise to defend the constituents' interest. The younger of the two men is so optimistic that he talks of introducing new ideas in Parliament, oblivious of the existing limitations within which members of the august house have to operate. Njoroge's naivety is satirized in the way he is depicted as an avant-garde in championing the people's cultural practices such as polygamy.

In this story the author adopts a cynical tone. He starts the story with the main

character already drunk, yet he goes on to depict him as a man of serious opinion whom aspiring candidates must talk to and extract a promise of votes from. This cynicism is further felt in Njoroge's approach to politics. As he strives to convince Ngure that he is the right candidate, he is depicted as continuing with drinking and becoming more and more reckless in his utterances: "Vote for Njoroge,... and you can all marry ten wives if you wish" (p.153). The number of items to be addressed by him when he gets to Parliament is great and the demands of each item before it can be fulfilled, enormous. That he believes his list is important makes him the target of the satire. Mang'au too is held up for ridicule as he stumbles over theories and practices. Overconfidence which leads him into academic jargon is his undoing. His conclusion that Ngure and he have a lot in common is a desperate move to lure the trade unionist to his side, which move only goes to reinforce the idea of cynicism in his approach to politics.

"Something In Common"(pp.166-) fails to make impact. This is partly due to the topicality of the subject - campaigning for parliamentary seats - which seems to have imposed the realistic mode on the story. The flat common place characters in it are not allowed to make any impressions on the mind as both their conversations and actions imply nothing beyond themselves. There is no suggestion, everything is stated including the last most uninteresting sentence: "you just can't trust anybody these or any other days" (p.154). It is a flat ending to a story which has failed to indicate any progress towards any goal at all. It is significant that the story ends with drunken hiccups and heads too heavy with drinks to be supported by the neck. One feels that the author is

accepting inability to give it any climax or even lasting mood.

That the genre is on trial is further demonstrated in the title story, "The Potent Ash" (pp.211-219). In this story Kibera successfully uses foreshadowing to create suspense and interest. As if writing for stage, he starts with voices then the statement that the main character is haunted by undefinable fear. Thus the affinity with drama is established. The sense of sight is summoned several times as can be seen in the repeated reference to darkness, seeing stars and responding to them as if they can intervene in men's activities. At the same time the sense of hearing is used to heighten suspense as well as to emphasize the degree of fear.

The story of Karo's crime and the realization that being a foreigner, he has no chance of survival shows close resemblance to the "primal narrative that embodies and recapitulates mythic perceptions" (Lohafer, 1989, p.64). The quest for identity and the shock that comes with the answers to the search are as old as man. Sophocles' Oedipus Rex is one of the earliest literary presentations of this constant thirst for knowledge of who is responsible for our being in this world. The Bible version of Adam and Eve as well as Darwin's theory of evolution are some of the world's most widely discussed ideas about the beginning of life; the first parents of man, clan race or even.

Kibera, thus, adapts this great question to bring out a point of grave human concern using Karo, his clan and his adopted clan. The gloomy atmosphere built is appropriate to the subject. This, coupled with the suspense generated by the interrogation whose goal remains unknown until the last minute when we learn that Karo

is killed, makes "The Potent Ash" a captivating short story.

The reading of "Letter to the Haunting Past" reveals yet another approach to the short story genre by the same author. He revisits the monologue form. In this case, the monologist remains undefined so that the reader is left to guess who it is that is addressing the great grandfather. Kibera has adopted the letter technique and it is evident that the limitations of that style bogs the narrative down. We hear the narrator's (monologist's) voice over and over again, accusing the addressee whom we do not hear even once; thus, the "you" of the narrative is harangued on and on until the speaker can say no more. There is no feel of a conclusion as there has been no action to conclude; neither has there been any character to move us nor any conflict to be resolved.

Using this form, the author manages to fling all sorts of information at the reader: literary artists, anthropological writings, themes in African poetry and even geography. Nevertheless, the knowledge has no aesthetic impact. As the indirect narrative draws to a close, we are bound to agree with Hills' observation that there are "terrible disadvantages" in "telling a whole short story in the monologue" (Hills, 1987, p.15). The choice to adopt this technique in yet another story - "1954" - justifies our decision to refer to Kibera's stories as representative of a "genre on trial."

The overview carried out in this section leads us to the next four sections acutely aware of the author's struggles to write a modern short story. We have seen the effects of writers like James Joyce and their practice with the stream of consciousness technique on the young author. The survey has also taken us through some of Kibera's fine,

water-tight plot-character-and-action-stories with real conflicts and resolutions thereof.

We have also highlighted the weaknesses that cause us to reject some of the narratives, though published, as short stories.

However, there is one weakness we have not belaboured in this section; and that is the question of the quality of language used. The stories show a great deal of variety in the use of language, including employment of incomplete sentences in contexts which beg correct grammar and even inexcusable, poor punctuation. For instance, Njoroge, the young candidate, says: "It is one of the terms Remove the semantics ..." (p.). These are clearly poorly punctuated sentences with the full stop omitted. A statement such as "Ngure suggested they stopped getting carried away" (p.151) betrays a weak command of the language used in the stories (sic). These mistakes abound especially in those seven stories that this chapter has excluded from detailed analysis. The errors interfere with intensity, reducing the final impact as Pritchett puts it in Reid's The Critical Idiom:

The wrong word, a misplaced paragraph, an inadequate phrase... start[s] fatal leaks in this kind of writing (the short story), which is formally very close to poetry (pp.54-55).

Both in the stories selected for closer study and those seven discussed briefly, short, simple SV and, occasionally, SVO/C sentences are so common that they often suggest an inadequacy in the handling of complex situations using compound as well as complex sentences. It is common to find whole paragraphs and even consecutive pages with such brief statements as:

Here and there were mixed faces. Black, white, brown, humanity breathing in unison and all pausing forward, necks craned with a strange passion. Sleepy soldiers kept us at bay (p.17)

In describing this crowd that seems to be surging back and forth would call for the type of continuity in the language of presentation that will enhance the spirit of the current atmosphere - violent, loud and monolithic in effect. Longer sentences that imply the state of confusion are likely to serve the purpose better than the present short, breathless ones that imply panic and shock where there is neither. Kibera's frequent use of baby language to present disturbing adult experiences does not enhance his artistry; it is a hindrance to the creation of sustained effect. In spite of these linguistic lapses, we have chosen not to examine and judge the work in this chapter from that point of view. Our submissions have been guided by the total effect of each work under review. The achievement in the selected four stories stems from the fact that they each have some serious comment on the nature and destiny of man, the unwieldy length of two of the stories notwithstanding. Their impact as opposed to the glaring weaknesses in some of the seven stories omitted in the scrutiny is evidence of what Springer (1977) says of fitting fictional modes of the short story: those

whose principle of coherence is most often serious or restrainedly tragic, seldom or never.. comic, though, parts are often comical in the service of satire and other forms (Reid, 1977, p.46).

Thus, the tragedy of Mbane ("A Silent Song") makes the story worth reading and analysing so do those ones of the entire village ("The Stranger"), Ngotho (The Spider's Web) and Kibonde and his entire family ("The Hill"). The gloomy atmosphere of each of the four selected stories and the stylistic devices used to build that mood form the focus of the next four parts of this thesis.

3.2 "A Silent Song" (pp.9-15)

This section focuses on the style of "A Silent Song" with a view to bringing out what elements of style are responsible for the overall sombre mood of this short story.

The first aspect of style that stands out in this story is the use of symbolism. As well as this Kibera uses contrast to highlight a serious social malaise: hypocrisy and the selfishness that causes and justifies it. In "A Silent Song" physical blindness is taken to represent and eventually symbolise mental and spiritual blindness. Ezekiel is gifted with physical sight. He can see his young brother, crippled, blind, ragged, starving and with a face distorted with pain; he can see that his brother needs help but he cannot understand the cause of that despair, that pain that is distorting Mbane's face. He cannot discern the reason behind the dying boy's rejection of the pastor's message about Jesus. Ezekiel's good sight which enables him to read extensively about Jesus has, however, not enabled him to discern the truth behind the teaching. For instance, one can argue, judging from the pastor's relationship with his brother, that charity which the pastor has no doubt read about and believes he is demonstrating, is not part of his gifts as a Christian. His inner sight is defective, so defective is this inner sight that he is not

able to break the ice between him and his dying brother; the barrier remains until the boy dies understood. Because his spiritual sight is poor, he cannot empathise and as a result he is of no use to his dying brother. His brother's welfare only makes sense to him when he looks at it from his (as pastor's) point of view. In the conversation in which he is urging his dying brother to be baptised, it becomes clear that he has taken the young boy from the streets for his own spiritual comfort. He appears to be painfully aware of the fact that it would be negative publicity for him as if it were to be known that his own brother has died in the streets, uncared for and unbaptised. Mbane is, therefore, collected from his corner in the street, a place he would have liked to die quietly and undisturbed. He is dying and will not therefore be a bother to the pastor for long, but his presence in the house and his acceptance of Christianity may pay spiritual dividends if Ezekiel is to announce to the mourners that the blind young man has died in the Lord as he has been baptised in the last days of his life. There is, thus, a desperate search for praise and glory. Ezekiel is spiritually dead for such inhuman machinations cannot be conceived of in a warm, spiritually living person. There is a contrast. The spiritually dead Ezekiel insists on leading the physically dying Mbane to spiritual life. He rages:

Will you never stop thinking about your god even in your
dy... in this hour? I want you to be baptised. (p.14)

The symbol of baptism is conventional in the Christian world. This symbol is used to comment further on the spiritual ineptitude of the pastor. Baptism in the original use

of the term refers to a physical cleansing with water to symbolise spiritual rebirth. It further symbolises the death of cruelty and all that goes with moral filth. That Ezekiel ardently desires that his dying brother, who has hitherto lived a life of total deprivation, a life that has not been conducive to appreciation of human kindness and spiritual uprightness, be baptised is symbolic of Ezekiel's own inability to appreciate the meaning of baptism and the impact of the demonstration or lack of it, of the effect of baptism by those like him who are baptised.

Kibera deliberately uses this simple but universal Christian symbol of change of heart to better hold Ezekiel's hypocrisy to ridicule. He has eyes and he is baptised but he cannot see the effect of his cruelty right before him summed up and personified in the body of his dying brother.

The name Ezekiel is also symbolic. Ezekiel of the Old Testament is remembered for his prophetic powers, his closeness to God as well as his persistent reminder to his people of the fact that the burden of sin is carried by the individual sinner. Kibera's Ezekiel is not prepared to bear the burden for his brother's sin and, like Ezekiel of old who kept admonishing his tribesmen so that while each individual had responsibility for sins committed by him but only after he had been warned in vain to repent, Kibera's pastor Ezekiel admonishes Mbane, persuades and threatens. Kibera's Ezekiel sees it as his duty to lead Mbane to salvation and rants in character as a prophet but his name (Ezekiel) suggests that that is the furthest he will go; thereafter, he can comfortably blame Mbane's stubbornness.

Christian symbolism includes the names the author chooses for his two Christian characters. The two clusters of names - Ezekiel and Sarah and then Mbane symbolise the social and moral distance that separate the couple from Mbane. The two groups live in worlds that are miles apart. Though members of one family, the experiences of the two brothers are different and this difference is suggested in the names that have nothing in common. By using these names - Christian, exotic on the one hand and traditional and original on the other, - the author suggests the reason why Mbane is unable to get convinced by Ezekiel to join his kind of people. The distance also undermines the couple's effort to be of use, spiritual or otherwise, to the dying young man.

While names symbolise the distance and so help the reader predict the Christian couple's failure to get through to him, physical inability to see or walk is employed to symbolise the young boy's alienation. Mbane is a victim of two major congenital deformities which have cut him off the mainstream of society. He has been confined into a cocoon from which even those abilities he is endowed with-speech and a sound mind - cannot be developed to their fullest potential. Mbane talks to himself and whatever song he has, he sings to himself: it remains a silent song. He can neither move out of his corner in the street and mingle with other people nor can he see what others are seeing. He is alone. The limitations are treated as so total that as symbols of alienation - alienation from himself and his stinking body, from relatives, society as a whole and even from the world, man's activities and the proceeds of those activities - they are apt. Using these limitations that symbolise total alienation, Kibera is able to

vividly portray the pastor's hypocrisy.

In "A Silent Song" Ezekiel's dilemma is depicted in such a way that it develops into a symbol: a symbol of moral degradation. The dehumanizing forces of affluence and presumptuous pride that alienate the rich pastor who has no room in his nuclear family for the lowest of the low with a claim to kinship on him have engulfed Ezekiel. He therefore, is, in his own way, alienated. Ezekiel is alienated from the essence of the faith he professes. Ironically, he does not know that he is alienated from the tenets of the religion to which he is trying to lead his dying brother. Because he is alienated, he is not able to lead Mbane. Alienated Ezekiel must inevitably fail to help alienated Mbane. In the simple conversation between them the author brings this out:

"Mbane, I asked do you believe in God?" It was Ezekiel again,

"And I said I don't know", he answered weakly.

"No, you did not. You only lay there sobbing," ...

"Mbane - I - want Christ to save you. Do you know where sinners go when they die, do you know where those who are saved go? There was once a man called Jes.."

"Yes, I know," Mbane swallowed painfully.

"That is why you brought me here"

"And do you accept him?"

"I do not know. But I now see the light I have often thought about in my own way."

"You are worse than Judas," Ezekiel hissed in suppressed anger. (p.14)

Ezekiel's "suppressed anger" indicates recognition and acceptance of his own personal defeat. He realises that Mbane will not open up to him and so give him the privilege of saving one more soul. Kibera uses the word "hissed" deliberately as it evokes the cold, inimical attitude the elder brother has for his disabled sibling. A snake, the one whose sound is described as hissing, is a generally feared animal, especially in the cold central highlands of Kenya where snakes are a rare sight and are all taken to be poisonous so that every snake that one meets or hears hissing is understood, mistakenly or otherwise, to be poisonous. The snake's poisonous nature is exploited here to suggest Ezekiel's cruelty and divest his action of bringing Mbane home from the streets of any trace of kindness or claim to charity. He hates the boy and any association with him. At the same time the hiss symbolises the coldness of the pastor's heart. The animal to which the hiss is given by nature - the snake - is a reptile and a Biblically sworn enemy of man. Thus, by choosing to ascribe this word to Ezekiel, the author is exploiting this double symbol of the snake - that one based on one of the biological properties of the reptile (coldness) as well as on the conventional association (natural enemy) - to show why Ezekiel cannot succeed in improving the spiritual welfare of anyone. Symbolically, the pastor who is producing a hiss in response to signs of reluctance to yield to spiritual

guidance is long dead and cold spiritually. Thus, the word "hissed" summarizes Ezekiel's enmity or animosity towards his crippled, blind brother, making it unnecessary for the relationship to be treated in detail.

Kibera deliberately uses a dead or stale expression: "You are worse than Judas" (p.14). It is a dead expression that is meant to liken the blind, destitute cripple to the greedy, self-seeking Judas (Jesus friend) who suddenly turns foe and is prepared to sell the life of a friend and master for a few coins. There is no resemblance; as the hiss shows, they are not friends and their social relationship is that of brothers and not master and disciple. Thus, the attribution of such stale utterances to Ezekiel is consciously meant to hold him up for ridicule, and to explain his failure to persuade Mbane to believe in or accept Jesus. The stale curse can also be seen to further symbolise the hollow state of Ezekiel's profession of Christianity.

"A Silent Song" as has been demonstrated so far, relies heavily on diction for the successful evocation of the sombre mood that characterises it. There is, for instance, the word "light." This word gains the significance it commands from the fact of repetition. As a stylistic device, repetition in this case causes the concept of light to take on symbolic significance. The light - sunlight and all other forms of light that are detected by a normal sense of sight - that is denied to Mbane is enjoyed by Ezekiel, Sarah and the street people whom Mbane could not see. It is a different light from that light that is God (p.13). The choice of the word light and the denial of it to a boy who is at the same time given the hope of seeing a light that "lay far away beyond the pangs of

darkness, a light that is "bigger and more meaningful than that which his eyes were denied", is a conscious effort to exploit the conventional symbol of light as well as to suggest new meanings for the associations made for light in this story (p.14).

When the conventional symbol of knowledge and insight (light) is associated with one who cannot perceive or react to light, then the only choice left is to focus on the symbolic meaning Kibera's use of light in this association suggests that he intends to raise blind Mbane above the murky and dehumanizing environment in which he finds himself. He means to imply that alienated Mbane is endowed with attributes that are peculiar and essential to man: an optimistic inner self that is backed by dynamic insight. Being a Christian himself, Kibera uses this symbol to bring out the view that Mbane is not dehumanized by his dehumanising conditions, he has used his seclusion to better his ability to commune with the ultimate truth : the light or God. Spiritually, then, he is superior to Ezekiel and as such, he does not need the physical baptism that his brother is so much obsessed with. Mbane dies smiling.

"He is gone" [Ezekiel] said aloud to himself

"Yes, he is gone," Sarah whispered

"And - he was smiling.", he said, looking round at his wife.

"Yes, he was smiling." (p.15)

This smile, which both Ezekiel and his wife witness together is significant. It can be seen to be symbolic of the light in his soul; the hope, happiness and fulfilment the hitherto suffering blind cripple is enjoying. That there is evidence on his face that he has seen and still sees the light he has "often thought about in [his] own way" without

being first baptised by Ezekiel or even prayed for is a rebuke to the pastor. It is a rejection of the pastor's religiosity that is characterised by practice while remaining sadly divorced from the essence: spirituality. Mbane's smiling face contrasts with the grim, anxious faces of the pastor and his wife and the contrast suggests the superiority of reality over appearance.

Finally, one can say that the limited use of dialogue also contributes to the sombre mood of this story. Ezekiel's character and that of his wife are revealed mainly through the dialogue, so is their relationship with Mbane. The conversation is physically limited by Mbane's condition: he cannot hold forth; he has to take a break to cough or else to simply gain his breath. Such a condition is not conducive to conversation, and especially the type of conversation that Ezekiel has introduced. The serious subject of change of life-style at a time when it is clear that there is soon going to be no life for the new style is an unfortunate one, in fact, it is a cruel topic a callous way of preoccupying a dying man. The author reinforces the callousness with the image of Mbane's physical strain and suffering which pervades the mood of the entire conversation. This strain is further emphasised by the brevity of the questions and the answers to the questions.

"... I asked do you believe in God"

"... I said I don't know"

"No, you did not. You only lay there sobbing." (p.14)

There are no explanations, no effort to be friendly, sympathetic or consultative. Utterances, from both speakers are brief and dismissive, emphasising the spiritual distance between the two and, by the same token, Ezekiel's inability to discern that

distance in spite of his training and profession as pastor.

Thus, "A Silent Song" is a story in which the silent song of hope, then victory over suffering, squalor and hypocrisy remains inaudible even to professional discerners of human hearts. While remaining a story about a neglected blind cripple who, because of his relationship to a pastor, has no business begging, suffering and dying unbaptized, it emerges as an indictment against hypocrisy. The indictment emerges as a result of the author's style: his way of handling the delicate subject of the plight of the dispossessed.

4.3 "The Stranger" (pp.30-58)

Symbolism in "A Silent Song" is basically dependent on the physical disability of the young protagonist. The limitation imposed upon him in terms of how much of the physical world he can cover or see vis-a-vis the limitless inner vision suggested by the light he declaims with his dying breath symbolises the paradox of human existence.

In "The Stranger" Kibera presents to the reader a different type of disability. Here, the nameless deaf-mute is the main character. He is the stranger who just "happened. He just occurred" (p.33). Yet, the society is gripped in fear of the colonial administrators' boots and the yelling, torturous taunts of the homeguards as well as being torn with suspicion of neighbour and close relative alike. In such a context, the arrival of a stranger, who neither hears nor comments on anything going on around him is spectacular. The verb "occurred", which is associated with phenomena beyond human control such as natural disasters, is appropriate. His being in the midst of the troubled

community that is threatened with disintegration is in itself a disturbing mystery. Then like an accident or death which occurs but never explains itself, the stranger is a deaf mute - totally cut off from the people and yet visibly with them. That he cannot explain his reasons for being where he is, intensifies the mystery of his presence. What is on his mind remains a mystery.

The author consciously builds this character into a figure, with symbolic significance at the beginning when he uses short sentences such as "... he happened" and then "He just occurred" (p.33). To occur means to suddenly be. By depicting the stranger as one who "just occurred" or as one who, from nowhere, just suddenly was or suddenly came into existence, the author initiates questions about who he is and what his purpose in settling among these people is. Such questions elevate him above the people around him. He is above the villagers because the author manipulates his being to become symbolic of the silent observer/critic, one who disapproves but cannot be heard. In the silent criticism that only manifests itself in a head shake, one can read nature's disapproval of the socio-political goings-on. The stranger's inability to give any linguistic expression to the atmosphere of fear and animosity characterising his environment is significant.

The air of indifference that permeates his place of work and abode accentuates the disapproving shake of the head (p.40). The "unaffected look which pierced beyond the horizon" (p.40) stands for his ability to understand more than anyone can comprehend or accept. Thus, his disability is no impediment to his mental and spiritual capabilities.

As the story develops and as the community increasingly loses patience with the stranger, there is a subtle suggestion that fate or providence is deliberately holding a mirror of this community's indifference and increasing hardness of heart to its members so that they can, while being appalled by those weaknesses, see and appreciate them better.

The indifference of the stranger infuriates the famous young preacher, annoys the homeguards and their boss - the headman and scandalizes the villagers. When these reactions are seen in the light of the stranger's limitation, then it can be argued that these people's indifference is even more scandalous than that of the shoe maker. Thus, the shoemaker's apparent indifference is symbolically used. The author insists on this image to symbolise the indifference that is increasingly characterising relationships in the society, thereby threatening the very existence of that community. "Man walked alone" (p.54) is a statement that tells of this threat to the existence of the society. Apparently it "was understood", meaning that it was accepted (p.54). The threat to the cohesion that is necessary for a community to be seen to be one and which threat no one seems to be worried about, as it "was understood", is embodied in the stranger and the violent reaction to him. Symbolically each member of this community is as indifferent to his neighbour's needs or simply disturbing questions as the stranger appears to be. Thus, the unintended indifference of the stranger is a symbolic reminder to the community that communication is essential to the existence of every individual as a member of that community. The imposed situation of non-communicado is unnatural; it is bound to

create misunderstanding akin to the one witnessed between the stranger and the villagers. Cultivated indifference and meanness of heart can destroy the hitherto cohesive society.

The "famous young preacher of the location" (p.14) is portrayed as one with so mean a heart and so indifferent an attitude that he does not take any time to study the stranger and understand the cause of his silence. Use of force is the first thing that comes to his mind. In this hasty and cruel act, the author is underscoring the irony of the time; it is at a time when the harmful appear useful and profess benevolence while the harmless are misunderstood and ill-treated. The mean preacher's acts become symbolic of the confusion reigning in the community.

In expressions like "must be evil", "Satan's work is always suspect" (p.43) the author conveys a critical stance to the young preacher's perception of the current events and their effects on individuals. To conclude that someone is evil just because he cannot answer questions fired at him is a sign that the impatient preacher is afflicted by impatience, an offence that is responsible for the suffering being experienced by the native community in the short story. The gap between the deaf mute and the preacher as well as the crowd that is avidly waiting to hear his explanation for being where he is is symbolic of the gap between the colonial administration and the colonized natives. Because of the gap and consequent breakdown in communication, rebellion, protest and bloodshed have broken out. This violence that has caused uncertainty and increased suspicion among the people themselves is a result of lack of communication; a situation in which the natives have been forced to act and ignore any instructions from the colonial

government; the local administrative authority. The institution of the homeguard aggravates the situation further, making the people see a potential enemy in anyone hitherto unknown to them: a stranger. That a stranger must be evil and that the presence of a stranger can only be the work of Satan is a notion that tells the reader something about the holder: he is one whose awareness of the insecurity around him is so sharp that he finds it easier to condemn as dangerous those he does not know than give them the benefit of doubt and seek signs of harmlessness in them.

The preacher is at a loss as to how to react to the silent intruder's presence. His state of mind is portrayed in the single incomplete statement: "Must be evil". The incomplete statement is so brief as to be synonymous with action. In this way the action of leaving reported in the phrase "and left" is further to the gesture made by the words "must be evil".

The members of the community and the fear instilled in them by the presence of the home guard are both suggested in the presentation of the scene, thus:

Presently the homeguard came... He looked knives at the shoemaker. --- said Reverend Kanyua. Another nail ...
Over there, in the distance, a late cock crows and villages open their windows to greet the day. Over here irritated feet shuffle uneasily (p.41).

There is an element of vividness and urgency which the past tense cannot bring out. People on the scene are uneasy or embarrassed; they cannot believe the stranger will dare disobey the boss. At the same time they are impatient with the stranger for doing what they consider unheard of: standing up to the homeguard by ignoring him and, worse still,

carrying on with his duties as if the authority of the homeguard as well as the people's opinion do not matter. The hammering contrasts with the silence induced by horror and discomfort. The historic present helps bring out this contrast better. It also helps bring out the contrast existing in the actors in the scene : the noisy victims of the colonialist regimentation who cannot bear the sight of a silent, creative individual whose industry promises to keep him morally superior to the regimented members of the local community on the one hand and the quiet, hardworking cobbler on the other. The detailed stance of the narrator, which allows him to take the position of audience-cum-commentator and sit back, as it were, to watch the unfolding drama and tell it to those craning their necks to see what is happening, is most effectively conveyed in the historic present. What the reader of the episode is left with is an incident told with such detachment that the feelings of the persona only remain implicit. The details are carefully included: "Sound of the hammer. Jimmy barks... We all look at the headman's boots. "They face each other with open arms ---, each looking for an opening" (pp.44-45). Such details reported in the historic present have the effect of transporting the reader from the impersonal past of the main story, which past he cannot fully identify with, to the present which the tense used makes ever present.

The use of the historic present, coupled with that of short sentences and incomplete statements that suggest urgency and need for absolute clarity, facilitates the achievement of a cinematic effect. For instance, in this extract, the reader cannot and need not see the reporter.

The metallic, steady beat. Then a crack of the whip on the shoe-maker's back. He makes a sound which tears frightfully --- something between the cry of a humiliated adult and the whining of a chocked dog. He recovers, throws the hammer at the headman. The headman hides behind two of his guards, pushes them forward, says Arrest, arrest! One guard springs forward to arrest and the shoemaker spills him over his shoulder -- lands him into a pile of unmended shoes (p.45).

The persona's opinion does not intrude just like that of the film shooter can be successfully kept out of a given scene.

In this cinematic presentation of a scene in which the homeguards are publicly embarrassed by the surprising strength of the stranger, the verbs employed in the historic present do in themselves enhance the drama evoked. There are verbs like tears used to convey the shoemaker's surprise, anguish and protest so that the sound he makes does not ring but it "tears frightfully." Having used such a verb and having used it in the historic present, the author proceeds to describe the violence already suggested. Another verb that is lent power by the historic present is spill. The shoe-maker, it is reported, "spills, the homeguard "into a pile of unmended shoes" (p.45) causing him to appear like part of the pile of the unwanted shoes. The illusion achieved by the historic present - that it is all taking place in front of us making the reader develop the illusion of a spectator - makes the author's sense of the ridiculous even more effective.

In the treatment of the enthusiastic but ineffective men of authority, Kibera's sense of the ridiculous comes

through. Depicting homeguards as men whose strength cannot match that of the intruder they are supposed to rid the village of is in itself a conscious effort to hold the lot to ridicule. The author also invests humour in the appearance of the men of authority.

The headman's boots are described thus:

His big boots are worn out on the outside so that the heel particularly is eaten almost to the upper while there are still inches of the sole to the instep (p.45).

This observation, made by the persona - a little boy whose idea of leaders is contrasted by the headman's down - at - heels appearance - indicates the author's light amusement at the exploitation of the headman and the likes of him: worn out shoes do not speak of the privilege they should be enjoying as defenders of the empire.

The author's sense of the ridiculous is also detected in the comment he makes while describing the contest between the two homeguards and the stranger. That the headman needs two homeguards to fight the stranger is in itself a detached, yet a jibe aimed at the two homeguards. Then the author goes further to cause laughter by stating that

--- the small toe of the right foot could be seen quivering in and out of the dirty half-boot while the wide socks which had long lost elasticity by crumpled inside the boot around the ankle (p.)

Appreciated from the persona's point of view, the contrast between the homeguard's position and his attire as judged by the worn out socks, this description evokes laughter.

Kibera's sense of the ridiculous is extended to the Reverend Kanyua. First of all, the name Kanyua connotes behaviour that is regarded objectionable among Christians: a heavy drunk. Whether he inherited the name from his ancestors or not, the negative connotations of that name in the light of his profession create a contrast with the vocation he has chosen. There is, therefore an ironic tinge about Padre Kanyua's character.

The humour the author evokes using the padre comes in the tongue-in-the-cheek reference to Kanyua as the "famous young preacher of the location" (p.14) who "often interpreted the Bible in a remarkably contradictory fashion to accommodate his own whims" (p.37). His interpretation:

---one could not be precise about the soul because Jesus spoke in parables and the old Testament being in fact an old testament of the Jews by the Jews and for the Jews should be forgotten (p.37).

does not help him to retain the adjective famous except when used with the tongue in the cheek. An ordinary padre will make an effort to interpret the parables of Jesus concerning the soul; a famous one should be well grounded in theology - a study which centres on the relationship between God and man: man as the physical being and man as a creature with a soul; a spirit. That he brushes aside the necessity to explain to his congregation matter concerning the soul is a clear sign that he neither knows nor does he care to know anything about the call he is professing to follow. This fact reinforces the effectiveness of the irony. Padre Kanyua's preoccupation with the shop and his

attachment to the land which attachment prevents him from realising that the "old undesirable" is actually deaf and dumb and, therefore, needs to be handled with care rather than the roughness befitting one who is "audacious" make him a perfect target for humour (p.43). There is humour when, like the homeguard whose profession does not involve two levels of hearing, he asks the stranger,

"Hey! Have you ears to hear?" and then gets infuriated and demoralized on receiving no answer. This fury contrasts sharply with the lack of concern shown when the same shoe-maker settles on a plot belonging to a decreed money lender. The selfishness of the padre vis-a-vis the calling he professes evokes humour.

The impact of these words is the suggestion readable between the lines: the padre is selfish. The words depict him as one who enjoys monopoly and he is eager to keep that monopoly, whether in religion or dukawala business. Thus, when the author includes the persona in the conversation about the shoemaker's business "... and he [the padre] seemed convinced as we all were" (p.56) he literally means that the entire village was initially anxious about the actual reason for the shoemaker's being among them; and so the padre's anxiety was justified, being part of the feeling of the general public. However, the actual meaning of these words is a criticism of the padre's selfish approach to life. To fear competition on the pulpit as it is revealed in a later statement -

--- since the shoemaker did not seem to start another religion--- the reverend cowered and minded his shop (p.56).

is in itself contrary to the conduct demanded and expected of a person of his calling. Therefore, to be said to be as anxious about competition as any ordinary person in the community and to only accept and relax about a stranger when it becomes clear that he has his own line of trade is to be depicted as one who has no spiritual standing or moral fibre that can justify his claim to spiritual leadership.

Padre Kanyua moral ineptitude is ridiculed further in the depiction of his young brother. In this case, the author uses the word scholar in a situation where the literal meaning of the word and the contextual meaning of that word, are at variance. That the preacher's protegee should remain so wanting in social decorum as to develop such objectionable habits like smoking is a gentle rebuke of the preacher. It is ironic that Padre Kinyua's efforts to give him a happy childhood threatens to become the young boy's ruin and the benefactor remains ignorant of all this. This ignorance, juxtaposed with the famous young pastor's confidence in his own success as a guardian is the source of the irony.

In "The Stranger" the author has also selected facets of mannerism peculiar to the turbulent times during which the story is set, and he has targeted them for ridicule and humour. The word Dorobinson comprises the name of the officer - Robinson - and the rank of that officer - District Officer. The confidence with which the headman talks about the officer, "My friend Dorobinson... will not like this." (p.44) vis-a-vis his ignorance of his mistake renders the mistake humorous (p.44). The ridicule to which the utterance exposes the speaker is savoured further by the fact that while claiming him

to be a close friend, the speaker has not managed to know the correct way of referring to the officer. He is said to be a frequent caller at the residence of the D.O.'s yet he has not familiarized himself with the correct name and rank of the officer. In the same vein, his pronunciation of the command "Get up", gives him away as a plastic personality whose desire to pass for a friend of the colonial administrator as well as one who speaks like the administrator is so immense as to be pathetic and, in the eyes of the persona, ridiculous.

The headman's mannerisms prove disastrous when his friend Dorobinson embarrasses him in full view of the very people he has been oppressing using the name of the white official. That he is not a friend of the District Officer but rather he is to him an ordinary colonial subject like any other is a revelation that takes the persona by surprise. It is further revealed that the objects - chickens and eggs - extorted from the people do not ever reach the senior officer; they are the headman's. Thus, the headman is depicted, in a brief dramatic moment which the author presents in a detached manner, as a ruthless, corrupt liar who deserves to be punished. In this context, the rough handling he receives at the hands of "his friend Dorobinson" becomes a rich source of humour. He is cut to size, thus:

The headman greeted his friend. The D.O. stood facing him. Then he slapped him hard - on both cheeks -" and kicked him.

"I understand you steal eggs and kill chickens in my name ... then the D.O. kicked him some more and told him to get into the jeep (p.54).

Seen from the point of view of the narrator, who has learnt to associate the headman with harrasment as he demands to be given chickens and eggs, this brief scene is humorous. The author stimulates the sense of the ridiculuos akin to that felt by spectators of a scene in which the notorious, overbearing bully is humiliated by someone in authority.

This scene of great humiliation for the headman is brief and precise. It is cinematic. The object of ridicule is quickly removed and, like a scene on the screen which the audience stops commenting on as another presents itself for their view, the reader is conditioned to forget the headman and switch his attention to another brief but artistically effective scene: the Wangechi - D.O. Robinson encounter.

The speed with which the author dismisses this scene is suggestive of the difficulty involved in parodying that which is ugly. Kibera's reluctance to sustain the sense of the ridiculous echoes MacDonald's view that "most parodies are written out of admiration rather than contempt" (Parodies, 19 p.xiii) In this case we can see that the author is at ease when parodying the headman's pretension which he demonstrates by reproducing for us to read those English words and names which the local administrator mispronounces and misuses. There is, however, a tinge of unwillingness to carry out a full scale parody of public humiliation of the headman by the D.O. The act is mean, calling for condemnation rather than admiration in spite of the fact that the humiliated man is a victim of his own greed for power and naive faith in the benevolence of Dorobinson towards him as a defender of the interests of the crown.

The discussion of humour as it is evoked by detailed description which involves singling out certain individual items like the small toe that quivers in and out of the dirty half-boot leads us to a related stylistic device: the pun. Pun as a play on words that sound the same or nearly the same but whose meaning and spelling differ is an age old stylistic device that may be used to effect ambiguity which, in some cases, may be a source of humour. In "The Stranger" the author uses the word sole to refer to both that part of a shoe which steps down and that part of a human being which is intangible and which lives for ever - the soul. Soul and sole in spoken language are the same word. Only the context in which they are used may delineate the meanings. However, the contexts in which the author places the word sole only serve to extend the ambiguity. In the utterance, "He stayed. And he saved our soles" ambiguity is maintained. Spoken aloud, He could be heard to refer to a priest. Another example of ambiguity caused by the same lexical item sole is to be found in the statement:

... his one purpose in life was to mend our sickly soles
which seemed to approach the roads of life from all kinds
of illogical directions (p.55).

In the ambiguity created the shoemaker is given a role that is more than the one he is seen to be playing: that one of helping restore spiritual equilibrium. Seen in the light of the lines of the spiritual:

There is a balm -
To make the wounded whole
There is a balm
To heal the sin-sick soul

the ambiguity created by the idea "he stayed to mend our sickly soles" is legitimate. Souls can be sick and souls can be healed or mended as the spiritual above indicates.

However, the weakness in this ambiguity lies in the genre Kibera has chosen to use: prose. While pun can work very effectively in drama where the word played upon is heard rather than read as is the case in the following lines by Shakespeare,

... You have dancing shoes
With nimble soles:
I have a soul of lead
So stakes me to the ground
I cannot move
I cannot move (Romeo & Juliet Act 1 sc.1 lines 15-17).

in prose, where the communication is entirely dependent on silent reading, the impact of pun is not so discernible. The effort to give the shoe maker the role of a silent counsellor whose presence pervades the spiritual atmosphere, causing discomfiture in the hard-hearted headman, homeguards, terrorists and even the increasingly cynical villagers as well as their pastor does not therefore succeed. That he is robbed by homeguards and defrauded by the headman is sufficient evidence that he does not mend the villagers' souls: he only mends their soles, shoes. This pun also echoes a similar one in Julius Caesar. In this context in which the mender of soles is not able to talk about his career, the barb of the pun is blunted in the wordiness of the prose in which it is used. Thus, the limitation of the device (pun) to spoken language weakens the effect intended in this story.

Finally, we will examine the use of point of view in this story. The story about the stranger employs the first person narrative technique. The persona from whose

stance the reader is guided through the story assumes possession of first hand information. Except for what happens at the homeguard post which he learns from the scholar, another boy of his age, everything else that happens in the story is known to him.

The persona remains nameless. His identity is that he has a "beautiful brave sister, Wangechi who uses only lux complexion soap and then a father whose jealous protection of Wangeci yields little fruit as she elopes with the "famous young preacher" Padre Kanyua. Further to this is the fact that he is young, does not always wear a pair of shorts and that he is mortally afraid of his beautiful sister and ambivalent about his young friend whom he refers to as the scholar or else the cowboy.

One thing to remember when examining the style of this story told from a child's point of view is that the events narrated here took place fifteen years ago: the narrator is fifteen years older than he was at the time of the events. Thus, in a good part of the narrative, because it is about events and actions seen in retrospect, the tendency to describe characters and their actions from the point of view of a twenty-three or twenty-five year old is discernible. There are signs of mature understanding of events and relationships. One such betrayal of absence of pure childhood innocence and naive honesty is to be seen in a case already examined in this chapter: the case of the extortionist headman's humiliation at the hands of the District Officer. Sympathy for the oppressor-turned-underdog and humiliated by a member of the club of oppressors-the colonial administration-overwhelms the persona and he has no more to say about the

scene after the headman is ordered into the landrover. The over-twenty-one-year old in the narrator intrudes and consistency is sacrificed at the altar of the ever increasing patriotism or partisanship.

Nevertheless, the device centred on using a young, pantless boy to tell the story allows the author certain freedoms which the use of an adult persona would not quite achieve with similar finesse. From the young boy's amused detachment the reader is guided to laugh at such trivial details as a toe jutting out of a boot or loose socks heaped at the ankle. Such detail being observed by an adult person, whose experience of the world and the socio-economy reality that remains a constant threat to genuine, full mouthed, free laughter, would fail to evoke the kind of humour it does in this case.

Another area in which the age of the persona saves the day is the case of digression. By its very nature, a short story does not permit digression. In this case the digression is worked out in such a way that every time it appears, it bubbles, with youthful excitement to tell to one's listener everything the speaker knows about a given subject. It is a child's way of announcing that he/she too is informed or has had an experience similar to the one at hand. This is the eagerness which excuses the anecdote about the fight between the child narrator's uncles - Ngige and Kairu. The film about the loved Tarzan pitted against "savages" which intrudes in the story line can also be explained from the young narrator's point of view: the eagerness to demonstrate that he too had watched films. Thus, the choice of a young pantless persona is apt. The

innocence of the persona makes it easier for him to achieve an ironic effect whose roots are to be found in the inevitable distance between him (the child) and the "so called sensible adults" (p.44).

However, the choice of a tender age for the persona does show certain disadvantages. The intrusion of adult cynicism as is the case with the narrator's attitude to Padre Kanyua's protegee whom he refers to as a scholar, which is a satirical way of referring to someone who thinks highly of himself just because he has read a few stories set in foreign lands indicates weakness in the author's handling of the persona. That the author is unable to stick to the persona preferred and thus give the reader the entire story from the pantsless village boy's point of view is indicative of the author's inability to handle a stylistic device he has elected.

3.4 "The Spider's Web" (pp.134-146)

In the story about Ngotho, his expectations and his disappointment, Kibera once again demonstrates his love for symbolism. As a stylistic device, symbolism in this story enhances the tragic situation Ngotho finds himself in. This device also aids in heightening the human element in the changing fortunes of natives. The author launches an attack against the high-handed attitudes of the local people who are continually taking over positions previously held by colonial civil servants and other such high ranking officials.

The story starts off with a nightmare. The reader is presented with a man dreaming that he is dead, the cause of the death is suicide. For a whole one-eighth of the story, the nightmare on suicide engages the reader. Details of the burial, including the Christian epithet "... dust to dust" are given (p.134). The dead man's ability to hear all that is being said, feel the nails and the snap of the rope that sends his coffin tumbling down the grave, head first, makes up a bizarre detail carrying such grim humour as demands to be analysed in a multiple of ways.

This nightmare could be seen to symbolise Ngogho's resistance to the dehumanizing forces around him. He has his view of what a man should be : certainly a man should not wait on a woman, but that was the job he is doing as is revealed in his conversation with Kago:

"Hei, Kago!"...
"How's the dog's breakfast?"
... "Nyokwa"
"You don't have to insult my mother,"
"Tinned bones for Wambui and cornflakes for memsahib
are the same thing. We both, hang if we don't get them."
(p.137).

In this brief conversation, Ngogho is depicted as one who considers the job of waiting on a woman to be as demeaning as serving a dog. Now, given the fact that this servant is operating in a social context in which dogs are despised and regarded as animals that should never be given anything except left-over food, this remark underscores the deep hatred he feels towards his mistress. It also suggests that he is becoming increasingly fearful of losing his dignity. Made at a time when the lady employer is becoming

harsher and stricter with every passing day, this observation implies fear of loss of even the slightest shade of humanity that he may still have. Thus, on this crucial morning, he has a nightmare that symbolises the spiritual death that is threatening him as a result of the increasing suspicion, oppression and fear. Certain expressions in the nightmare affirm Ngotho's will to live which is, however, constantly threatened with stifling. For instance, in the nightmare Ngotho hears himself say "Let me out!" (p.134). This is a cry of anguish which is symbolic of refusal to be crushed. The narrow coffin, firmly nailed and completely confining, is symbolic of the increasingly oppressive atmosphere in which Ngotho has to operate. That the protest receives no response is also symbolic: standing for the indifference with which he fears society will treat him if he ever complained about or, worse still, protested against the discomfort he was experiencing daily.

The coffin in which Ngotho's body is laid drops into the grave, suggesting the social abyss facing him. The rope which snaps, leading to the drop, symbolises the sudden break between Ngotho and the society. It is as if society has let go of anything to do with Ngotho. This aspect of the nightmare symbolises further Ngotho's fear that if disgraced by the Njogu family, he will have no one in the community to turn to for help. This is suggested in the incomplete sentence, "This suicide, brethren ..." (p.134)

The word suicide suggests condemnation and rejection of Ngotho by the society as suicide cases are traditionally condemned and disowned, never to be talked about at any time. We can then say that these words which he hears as he lies in the coffin symbolise complete paranoia about his own alienation from the society; a situation he cannot cope

with in the event of ill-treatment by the Njogus or, worse still, dismissal from their service.

It can also be argued that this nightmare in which a coffin is a prominent object is placed at the head of the story to symbolise the narrowness of the world into which a career such as that one chosen by Ngotho throws the house servant. The house servant may not make an innocent joke or smile at one made; a comment on taxes or any other changes taking place and affecting him directly makes the master suspicious and hateful.

It is as if the master and members of his class have designed a specific framework into which the house servant must either fit and survive physically, or fail to fit and get destroyed. This physical framework, limiting movement, inhibiting speech as the speaker realises that words spoken from the coffin produce no response, and nullifying the sense of sight as there is nothing to see, is symbolic of the world in which Ngotho and Kago find themselves. Theirs is a world where they may not raise their voice to complain or to comment on the changes taking place around them.

In the same nightmare where Ngotho's increasingly narrow world is symbolised by the mean, stuffy coffin, Njogu's is portrayed as being symbolic of the chilling hypocrisy that usually accompanies affluence and the characteristic snobbery and affectation. It is, for instance, hypocritical of an employer who has consistently shown indifference to the suffering of a servant at the hands of his (that employer's) wife to display great concern at the way people handle the remains of the same servant. Thus, the caution, "careful, careful, he is not a heap of rubbish" (p.134) is hollow Mrs.

Njogu's tears are equally condemned. She is said to be "weeping righteously" (p.134). Her pretence is implied in the word "righteously" whose power to underscore the former employer's lack of sincerity lies further in the established relationship in which her cruelty to her servant while he lived is crushing. Thus, like her husband who shows great concern for the coffin in order to go on public record as a loving, caring master whose protection for his servants goes beyond the grave, memsahib is eager to be regarded as the kind-hearted mistress who breaks down and weeps at the grave side of her worker. The impression the context of the two actions gives is that the two actors are keen to conceal their true feelings about the suicide of their servant. That Lois is said to weep righteously and to do so only between pauses with the subtle intention to be heard by the rest of the mourners is indicative of the increasing loss of genuine, humane feelings which feelings are constantly being replaced with well rehearsed, pompously displayed signs of non-existent emotions of concern and fellow feeling. Njogu's concern for the corpse of one he has driven to despair and death by suicide is a mockery; the belated concern is symbolic of the selfishness that accomplishes the individualistic life the Njogus and members of his class have chosen to lead.

Ngotho constantly refers to Mrs. Njogu as the queen. The title queen has a history dating back to Lois's past as a village school teacher. Her refusal to take a slap meekly from the white lady inspector of schools earned her the nickname. Her bravery that enabled her to show her true feelings to the colonial schools inspector was admired in local circles. However the same bravery has translated into a contemptuous attitude

to her servants and this causes her to be feared and hated by them.

The word queen has two conventional referents and the author exploits both. The use of this word as a title used to refer to a female head of a monarchy suggests the fear she instils in her servants. Such fear is noticed when the mention of the nickname throws Kago in total confusion so that he forgets

everything about drinking ... and [felt] a thousand confused things beat into his head simultaneously (p.137).

Thus, the word, queen as used to refer to the overwhelming authority she lords over her household takes on negative connotations. This nickname also symbolises the distance Lois has created between herself and her servants. The two camps- Lois's and that of Ngotho and Kago - are miles apart from each other and they cannot meet. One gets the impression that Kibera is working on some political reference. He is suggesting that there is a resemblance between the oppression of the colonial subjects as the queen of England lorded over them during colonialism and that of Mr. Njogu's servants as his wife consistently maintains a high-handed attitude towards them. The conventional physical distance between the monarch and her subjects symbolises the gap between "memsahib"'s class and that of her employees.

At the same time, the word is used to refer to the female bee that starts a new hive in which she kills virtually all males and with time fills it with her female progeny. In this story, however, the queen does not settle herself in a physically remote corner of the hive, but she does so psychologically by making it clear that her world and that of her servants are miles apart. At the same time, she is described in terms of a female

bee (the worker) who flaps her wings deliberately to scare. Thus, the double role of queen and worker (bee) serves to symbolise the paradox of Lois Njogu's life. Fit to command respect yet so petty as to "buzz around [a servant] as he [measured] breakfast-for-two", Lois cuts a pathetic figure as "she [spreads] herself luxuriously" in the servant's way (pp.138-139). Obstructing a servant in his duties is not dignified. It is rude and despicable. This rude poise has associations with many other descriptions of Lois's demeanour. At the end of this episode in which she obstructs the servant, for instance, she spits a mixture of saliva and toothpaste on the path that connects the house and the servants' quarters. After some time, she slaps Ngotho in spite of the fact that she is aware of that aspect of their culture which forbids a woman to raise her hand to slap a man. The conclusion we are led to make is that these various portraits of Lois have two things in common: violence and ineptitude. Bent on displaying the ineptitude of her life, Lois fails to live up to the expectations of the nickname that suggests maternity, sound leadership and dignity: The image of the queen collapses. The image of the bee as an insect that buzzes around its victim annoying that victim before either flying away or stinging him is sustained as Lois exasperates her servant before finally slapping him. And finally, the image of the authoritative and remote queen of the empire is sustained. Nevertheless, the crude personality of Lois does not permit the term queen to pass for an apt reference to the English woman who bears that title. This is because the monarch is a conscious practitioner of good manners and a polished observer of social decorum and etiquette while Ngotho's employer is crude and

rude. Thus, the word queen can only be used to satirize Lois's affected manners and overestimation of her social standing.

In "The Spider's Web" the author has used words that are rich in connotation in the title of the story. The choice of the phrase "The Spiders Web" is deliberate. A spider uses its web as a snare. Thus, to its prey a web is a sinister object. Because of this, the word web has taken on the extended meaning of snare. The spider then lies in waiting as the web traps unsuspecting victims; the spider takes the trapped insect and kills it for food.

It then follows that the phrase "the spider's web" is used in this story to imply the complexity of the system in which Ngotho and Kago have found themselves. Ngotho's happiness at the sight of a black family moving to settle in a house recently occupied by a colonial family is checked by the complication of the situation in which he finds himself. The situation has been complicated by the irony of Ngotho's position: a simple position from which he was unable to appreciate what constituted the master-servant relationship; a position from which the term exploitation had colour. He is, thus, completely ignorant of the fact that exploitation knows no colour. Mr. and Mrs. Njogu are aware of the danger inherent in Ngotho's simplistic interpretation of the current socio-economic and political environment. They are protected by the new government machinery. This family has a telephone by which the protective government machinery can be summoned at once and the unsuspecting trouble maker is nabbed.

Ngotho is on this fateful morning depicted watching a spider weave its "web meticulously... He [threw] a light stone at it. He only [alerted] the spider" (p.142). The simple action of the spider and the ineffectiveness of Ngotho's effort to interfere have a symbolic significance. In the context of this story the web comes to symbolise a socio-political structure that has been and still continues to be woven with the sole purpose of keeping Njogu and his class in a well protected centre of the structure while the likes of Ngotho remain on the periphery. From their position on the periphery, they can only watch for any attempt to disturb will only act as signals to alert the constructors of the structure and no more. They will only note the attempts and then ignore them, but those efforts that are directed towards the centre will of necessity meet disaster similar to that which a fly attempting to pass through a spider's web comes across.

There are also implications of sinister motives in this phrase "spider's web". The destruction of the patriotic dreams held by Ngotho is implied. Ngotho feels trapped and helpless. Kago has resigned himself to his fate and become "subservient as a child", constantly winding his "tail between his legs and [stammering]" whenever Mrs. Njogu is around (p.137). It is clear that he steers clear of the centre of the web.

Compounded with the bee-hive, a dwelling and breeding place for bees, which must be approached with caution if one is to avoid injury, the web forms a formidable image of intimidation. Kibera localises the image in the rhetorical question: "Had Mr. Njogu become a male weakling in a fat queen bee's hive, slowly being milked dry and sapless, dying?" (p.143). Then the hive and the web take on symbolic significance

when he says:

... there was behind the master and the queen now a bigger design, a kind of pattern meticulously fenced above the hive; a subtle web had been slowly, quietly spun and a pebble thrown at it would at best alert and fall back impotent on the ground (p.144)

A sense of desperation is suggested. The cruelty experienced at the hands of Mrs. Njogu is officially protected and the protective measures are lethal to the likes of Njogu. The image of a victim of a provoked bee-hive trying to escape and getting trapped in a web woven by a spider, an animal that is sure to prey on the fleeing victim is frightful.

The result of restriction of this magnitude is the existence of pent-up emotions. Such bottled up emotions may lead to hysteria like the type exhibited by Ngotho when he grips "the young tree by the scruff of the neck and (shook) it furiously" (p.143) The violence Ngotho directs to the tree is misdirected. Seen in the light of the old servant's knowledge of Lois as a poor child expressed thus:

Was this the girl he once knew as Lois back in his home village? ... A shy, young thing with pimples and thin legs ... She preferred to wear cheap skirts (sic) than see her ageing parents (sic) starve for lack of money (p.13. Emphasis mine).

This violent action against the young tree can be interpreted beyond the immediate context. It is a projection of the feelings of hatred and contempt which he has been harbouring against the mistress whose youth is still vivid to him. Kibera animates the young tree when he has Ngotho gripping it "By the scruff of the neck" (p.143). As a result of this device the reader is moved to react to the rough handling of the young tree

as though it was that of a human being or an animal, thereby making clear the parallel between Mrs. Njogu and the young tree. The destruction of the tree is an enactment of his desire to kill Lois.

4.5 "The Hill" (pp.170-201)

In "The Hill" the story of Kibonde and his wife Njeri is told in a solemn tone right through. The story is told in ten parts each of which is constructed in such a manner that it helps explain either Kibonde's inability to come back to Njeri, according to his promise, Njeri's unnatural treatment of her young son who later drowns himself or Mbara's inadvertent murder of his childhood friend, Chege. Unlike the restricted time span of one morning in Mr. Njogu's home, the story of Kibonde and his deserted wife, who turns prostitute spins over eighteen years.

The story starts with one short sentence that portends a lot more than its literal meaning. "It is not a significant hill," the author states, and then he goes to show that the hill is in fact significant (p.170). It is prominent as it rises above land that is so flat that no one can fail to see it. That the road leading to the market is near the foot of the hill is a further illustration of the fact that the hill is not insignificant. "It is not a significant hill" is thus an understatement. Kibonde's attachment to the hill as the story reveals in the course of its development is best conveyed in this understatement.

Then there is the loneliness of old Kibonde, a state which can easily lead effort to describe it into sentimentality. Kibera skilfully avoids the sentimental catch and

chooses the solemn tone that is best created in this case by use of understatement. A short, simple sentence, "old Kibonde feels secluded but conspicuous," expresses more information than the surface meaning of the sentence (p.170). It goes further to suggest a wish to be inconspicuous, a wish to hide. This is the kind of feeling that normally springs from guilt borne of an offence committed against either the entire community, a section of it or just one member. The culprit then feels condemned and withdraws. However, Kibonde's seclusion is only mental as he lives on a hill and so, like his abode, he cannot help being noticed by people. Those using the road past the hill will see him, so will those looking at the hill from a distance. It is as if he has been hoisted by fate for all to see him for what he is : old and lonely.

All the questions prompted by the two sentences - one coming at the head of the entire story and introducing the setting and the other coming after the description of the setting to introduce the main character - lead to the conclusion that the positioning of these sentences is appropriate as it is significant. Both foreshadow the final alienated state of Kibonde upon leaving Mr. Martin and that of Njeri upon deserting her five year old son and plunging into the reckless life of prostitution which demanded of her that she constantly disguise herself and thus remain permanently incognito. The hill legally belongs to the two of them by virtue of the fact that they did not divorce but only went their different ways. His coming to live here alone forms a parallel to Njeri's life of pain, suffering and shame in the same place. There is also some parallelism in there being a shadow (of insanity) in his head and the streak of insanity that drove Njeri to the

point of deserting her five year old son in the city, knowing that he child could not manage his life, yet not caring whether he managed or not.

The word 'shadow' as used in the sentence, "But the shadow was there" implies more than there being a sign of insanity (p.171). In this context the word 'shadow' could refer to Kibonde's wasted years that have left an indelible mark of gloom, on his face; there are unmistakable signs of affliction. The sentence also could mean that Kibonde is physically wasted away; thin. As the word shadow also denotes a mere appearance without the essence, the context is enriched to imply that Kibonde has outlived his usefulness. The achievement afforded by the word shadow is, thus, rich and it leads easily to the presentation of the circumstances that have led to the dehumanization of Kibonde.

Kibonde's conscience is presented imagistically. It is marred by a "blotted past" and constantly haunted by a past that is depicted as having taken on the appearance and qualities of a ghost (p.172). Given that a ghost is usually malevolent and always formless taking on only that shape given it by its victim, the use of the word "ghost" in the sentence, "The ghost of the past has once again caught up with him" conveys the impression that Kibonde's life on the hill, a feature associated with purity, is nonetheless miserable. His past experiences, which include his marriage and desertion, his years as a servant, the knowledge that his neglected son had lived badly and died desperate and then the crushing encounter with transformed Njeri who expected to be served by him as he was the servant and she the mistress, have all crystallized into one frightful form

which can conveniently be referred to as ghost.

The choice to focus on Kibonde in the evening is significant. In this time element we are able to read Kibonde's despair as well as fear of the unknown. On its own "evening" means end of daylight and beginning of darkness and limited visibility. In addition to this literal sense, the word evening connotes fatigue, end of active period and beginning of inactivity; the word also connotes gloom and a growing sense of uncertainty. As evening connotes approaching night and, with night, prowlers and other dangerous nocturnal beings that may attack one unseen, this word suggests fear in this context. Kibera emphasises loss of the security that comes from the assurance that danger can be seen and avoided by including the clauses "... the setting sun impresses a beautiful.. warmth on the western part of the hill" (p.171). With all its splendour, the setting sun has something serene about it that at one and the same time suggests the power that is no more and a determined effort to leave behind a lasting impression of beauty even when the power is no more. The inclusion of the setting sun in this scene complements Kibonde's fear that he is secluded; the fear that he has been set aside because of failure to make an impression either as a young man before he left for the city or as an elderly man in the last ten years of his life on the hill.

Kibonde's happy days are introduced by a word which is in itself negative and foreshadows doom. The encounter with his future employer reads, thus:

... his opportunity to become a house servant where he would at least be kicked by only one man instead of several, waddled in one morning in the shape of a stocky European (p.173 emphasis mine).

This kind of gait, clumsy and heavy, does not portend success. Thus, the word waddled seems to have been chosen instead of the commoner equivalent walked for its power to suggest the end of Kibonde's interest in straight dealing and the beginning of the practice of deceit, providing evasive answers to direct questions and deliberate betrayal of Njeri and their son. It is as though the author is forewarning the reader of Kibonde's character that is going to waddle as if in complement of his master's physical gait. The moral murk in which Kibonde later wallows without shame and the moral degradation which becomes characteristic of him by the time he gets forced out of Martins's house by the unbearable presence of Njeri are both suggested in the word waddle which in its literal sense refers to the movement of a duck - bird that is notorious for its dirty habits.

When Njeri is introduced, we get the sense of a calm before a storm. There is a contrast between her troubled mind and the serene surrounding in which she is placed. In this way, we can say that there is a deliberate effort to describe an idyllic setting that contradicts the character's mental disposition, thereby heightening the tragic mood. It is as though everything around is indifferent to her problems. For instance, the moon is depicted as teasing the unhappy woman, thus:

... the fresh moonlight [was] caressing
Njeri's hair and beads of wood and copper
around her neck and waist (p.176).

Moonlight is usually suggestive of romance. Thus, the mention of it in relation to love-starved Njeri is enough to invite us to construct further explanations and motives for the relationship. (Loafer, p.79). This renders words like caressing... beads, neck and waist, all of which connote romance superfluous. One even finds something unartistic in these actions assigned to the moon as the author's eagerness to explain the presence of the moon denies the reader the opportunity to speculate, which is an essential element of a story. In Gerlach's view of what a "story proper" should be - one "encouraging speculations on the part of the reader [rather] than what actually occurs in the reported event" (Loafer, 1989, p.80) - this image weakens the impact of the episode.

That moonlight is cold and lifeless is another aspect of this image we are invited to consider. Implicitly its embrace is lifeless, indifferent and not the kind one so love-sick should receive. Thus, while underscoring Njeri's desperation for love, the author is also foreshadowing the deserted woman's mental and physical state: dead sensibilities. Such a state provides a conducive context for inhuman actions.

It is also significant that what is above the depressed Njeri is not the sun or the stars but the moon. The moon has also been associated with fertility in countless human societies throughout the ages, the association stemming from the correlation noted between the fertile period in human females, female dogs and cats at the appearance of the new moon. That Njeri is in need of a second child need hardly be stated by the writer after he has depicted her as being caressed by the moonlight. Placing her in the moonlight alone and depicting her as desirous of destroying the moon, which is the

source of her caress is a subtle suggestion that Njeri is on heat, like most members of her gender at this time. Violence has been acknowledged as the inevitable companion of heat. That being the case, Njeri's reaction to what appears unconcerned with her amorous state and, instead, continually interferes with her concentration by distorting the image of the moon that is fanning the heat is justified. Her frustration with the river and then the moon for probably allowing its image to be distorted is reported, thus:

Now and then the bubbling resentment within her would burst, and then she [sic] plunged pebbles into the river with the unconscious desire to break the silvery reflection. Break and if possible annihilate the moon itself; for it seemingly mocked her as it stole sparkling reflections everywhere (p.176).

As the bubbling resentment implies frustration and the use of pebbles rather than stones suggests an unconscious acceptance of the impossibility of ever affecting the flow of the river, the author is stressing yet another reason for Njeri's desperation: time flows on unimpeded by any condition of man. Njeri's misery deepens with time while time, like the river, is unaffected by that misery. Her wish to be in her teens can, therefore, only breed misery.

The journey to the city is not long neither tiring; it is described as being tired. The choice of the word tired is deliberate when it is considered that tired would infer a wish to end while it also animates the abstract noun journey. That the journey itself is said to be tired of the two travellers is an implication that there is something sinister about their intention to travel. To suggest this sinister motive that has proved strenuous

to the journey, the author introduces the sun and its unrelenting, intense heat. The scorching effect seems to be deliberately directed towards the calculating mother to express its disapproval. Thus, Njeri's decision to go to the city and turn to a profession so shameful that she could only refer to it using the evasive pronoun that seems to find opposition from every corner including the journey she is making and the sun that is enabling her to trace her way with ease. Even the road is against her decision, all it provides is despair through its seeming endlessness. The absence of trees along the road gives the impression that the road is determined to punish her and further to this is the possibility that her unnatural decision to desert a helpless creature stands condemned by all living things, including the trees which will not present themselves to give her shade and tranquility on her way to the execution of the evil deed. Even human beings seem to have deliberately avoided the road.

Njeri's unnatural action is described in a matter-of-fact way. It is told from the child's point of view, thus:

The only thing he could now remember was the way he had clung to her dress on that long road. When they reached the city, she bought him the biggest cake he had ever seen and that was the last he saw of her (p.195).

The little boy, Kamau, her only companion on the journey to the city is given a cake to distract his attention from her; to let go her hem. The cake is like a bribe to rouse fond memories of her in him. However, the perishable cake which must be eaten and ejected within a matter of days or else go bad is too ineffective a bribe. Njeri's moral decay is

implied in this perishable object. The stench that will inevitably be produced by either a stale cake or the end product of the digested cake comes to mind.

Besides the word cake whose connotations help convey the level to which Njeri's moral depravity has sunk, the author uses the word wooden to describe her brassiere. Here the author's choice to dress her in wooden rather than cotton or nylon bras is deliberate as it successfully portrays the hardness of Njeri's heart, especially when it is considered that heart and breast are sometimes used as if they were synonymous. Njeri has encased her breast in a wooden framework, implying that she has successfully insulated her tender, humane being against any feelings. As such emotions have long ceased to exist as it is indicated in the clause: "she had hardly a care in the world" (p.199).

The death of Njeri's humanity is further brought to the reader by the choice of her attire. Kibera adorns Njeri in heavily artificial attire, the type that seems to announce the spiritual death of the wearer and that wearer's wish to announce the fact.

Artificial objects have neither life nor a suggestion of it. In order to convey this, the author describes Njeri, thus:

With wig and a mask of powder only the eyes would perhaps give her away. She spoke "reasonable" English (p.199).

There is a definite wish to run away from everything that links her to her past which past includes language. Disguised in mask and wig, Njeri becomes Kibera's most alienated

character. Her alienation is further suggested in her moving in with Mr. Martin, a character whose stinginess has already been communicated to the reader:

Every established tart in town must have known his bed,
and some violence in the morning if she was exorbitant
(p.198).

Mr. Martin does not like paying for services rendered to him by tarts. Hence, Njeri's settling in with him can only mean that she is in for exploitation and abuse. Such fate is simply suggested and not portrayed. Instead, the reader is shown a settled Mrs. Martin whose obvious contempt for her self-estranged husband, Kibonde, drives him out of the comfort and confidence he has known and enjoyed for years into a life of discomfort, poverty and despair.

As well as relying on diction to vivify the tragedy of Njeri and her children, syntax and switch in tense enhance the mood of the characters in their situation. Kibonde, for instance, is a spent force, having neglected his family and subsequently lost it to death and the city. The way he is presented enhances this state:

Over the years - no one can tell when - some of the water
has curved its insidious arm around the entire hill,
surrounding it, so that old Kibonde can jolly well consider
his possession of nine acres an island if he likes
No one else cares.. (p.171)

The parenthetical clauses - "no one can tell when ... No one else cares" - deepen the sense of loneliness and emphasize the degree of waste. The conditional "if he likes" reinforces the clauses in the parenthesis. The long sentences that convey Kibonde's loss

of the essential fighting spirit are balanced by equally long ones that reflect the violence of the wind. While the wind is powerful and in constant war against Kibonde and his hut, the river water has persistently eroded the hill. The unrelenting wind and river water are conveniently suggested by the complex compound sentence that seems unending.

Syntax is also effectively used to imply Mbara's ability to concentrate for long while studying his career of thieving. The contrast between the object of his concentration (items to be stolen) and that of his friends' in class (knowledge) is clearly brought out in the structure of the sentence:

At a time when many children of his age worked themselves to bits over big chunks of vernacular: Adam and Eve, Jonah and the Whale; at a time when the illusions and delusions of his friend Chege and others as policemen or even clergymen were the rule: Mbara was being practical (p. 183).

Those ambitious youth whose hopes and aspirations are alike have their minds captured and reflected in three parallel grammatical structures while that of Mbara which is miles apart from that of the others is portrayed in one decisive clause: "Mbara was being practical." (p.183) This is the main clause and the position it occupies - at the end of the long sentence - makes it draw attention to itself. Mbara's dangerous preoccupation is, thus, pointed out after a heavy pause which is suggested by the colon. The beginning of his career as a pickpocket and petty thief is presented in a similarly detached manner:

Buttons were missing off his classmate's pants and pins (sic) from girls hair. Then as Mbara realised his ambition further, the headmaster came in one morning to report that someone (not putting it beyond the capability of some in the class) had pole-fished his trousers (p.184).

The progression of his career from a simple stealthy pick-pocket to the accomplished robber that is encountered in the city on the fateful night of Chege's death is further suggested in the structure of the language here. The author moves from a position of caution and deliberate evasion of the mention of the thief's identity. The passive voice indicates lack of interest in the perpetrator of the sin; it is the crime that is at the forefront. He uses euphemisms rather than direct statements: Buttons were missing off his classmate's pants" instead of "Mbara picked buttons off his friends' shirts," or "someone had pole-fished his trousers" rather than telling us "someone had stolen his (headmaster's) trousers" (p.194-5). These indicate that the author wishes to present a slow but sure progression into the world of crime. The contrast between the manner-in which he steals during the early part of his dangerous career and the dare-devil tactics he uses in the city is significant. We also note the items increase in size with time - from tiny objects like buttons to large conspicuous things like trousers. This is symbolic of the hardening of the heart that Mbara is undergoing as he lives off robbery day in day out. Murder marks the peak of this life. It is significant that Mbara kills a childhood friend and playmate. This coincidence underlines the dehumanization that Mbara has undergone in the course of his career. That he breaks into a run in response to a polite address from a policeman is sufficient evidence that he has become so dehumanized that such gestures of friendship as "Excuse me" rouse in the unhappy man all his defense

mechanisms. This prompts him to misinterpret everything directed towards him, including the effort to stop the crowd from chasing him. No action has a positive effect. The panic, the run and the wild hitting out with a knife are all a manifestation of the kind of self-defence that an animal in trouble would display. Thus, the animal instinct in him is at the fore, the reasoning power which is the human being in him that the policeman is addressing is non-existent at this moment. Kibera implies the crime of murder. By using implication rather than stating the shocking act committed in the course of escaping from no danger at all, Kibera underlines the horror of the crime and, thus prepares the reader for the devastated frame of mind in which Mbari is found next time he appears. Once again syntax is used to enhance the horror. "Mbari made away in the rain " is the main clause; but coming as it does at the end of a long subordinate clause that conveys other people's reaction to the wild hitting out, knife drawn, the clause is meant to emphasise Mbari's ignorance of the identity of his victim until he reaches the village and attends the funeral which he learns to be Chege's. He learns that the policeman was Chege.

Mbari comes to a bad end. The author uses an understatement to inform the reader that Mbari does commit suicide. His thoughts suggest that he does end his own life: "He would not suffer sunrise." (p.195) Then, later the author reminds the reader of that particular fate:

He [Kibonde] cannot help that feeling when at full moon
the ghost of Mbari reflected in the encircling river below...
(p.201)

The pathos of the situation is better highlighted by implication and suggestion. Kibera's verdict seems to be that Mbara is a victim of cruel circumstances created largely by his father. The weight of Mbara's guilt lifts him above the level of the common hard-hearted criminal. The fact that his conscience comes back to life and "[nagged] at him" and that he is able to respond to the priest's call for repentance during Chege's burial service so that he goes "weak at the knee" is evidence that he dies out of remorse rather than with the desire to escape the consequences of his crime (p.191). He pays for his crime with his own life. The author portrays it as a form of penance; the most overt form and yet the most unchristian of all.

Kamau, Mbara's young step brother also meets his death as a victim of circumstances created by his parent. The act of plunging to his death is implied only to be suggested later. At the fateful moment the author simply states:

He stared at the water, coolly, almost unafraid. Its soft rippling beckoned him with a calmness that was so irreconcilable to the distant atmosphere at the music store.

The sun ... reached out its shattered fingers to him to reassure, to invite, menacingly.

Faintly, weakly, he tossed the handbag into the water. Then, submitting, he leapt in after it (p.196).

Kamau's death is a relief to the young boy. The pathetic dive after a handbag he cannot use in death is depicted thus to divest the act of any connotations of suicide. The reader is left to make the conclusion. Death by drowning is inferred from the absence of evidence for the fact that the boy could swim, and, further still, from a later reference to the tragedy:

Mr. Martin was reminded of the haunted look of the boy who was found drowned in the swimming pool ... nothing had been taken from the floating handbag (p.199)

and then

like Mr. Martin he [Kibonde] could also see something of the haunted boy's look in her (Njeri's) eyes and it made him very uncomfortable (p.200).

Thus a combination of syntax and positioning of information is applied to present the most pathetic incident of the story. This moving event whose full impact is somewhat weakened by the way it comes to us (in three separate and clearly delineated parts) is a further illustration of Njeri's leanness of heart, Martin's moral degeneration and Kibonde's loss of the fighting spirit. Hence, the statement, "You have no right ... no right all at", suggests a great deal about Kibonde's state of mind: he is involved in a morbid self-indictment whose result can only be self-hate manifested in a persistent desire to be left alone and to remain "rugged" and "hopelessly untidy" (p.201). This outward appearance can be said to be symbolic. In it one reads the shattered self-image that the disillusioned man has to content with daily.

This final image of a man metaphorically lying in a bed he made in his youth through into middle age suggests that the story is about Kibonde and all the other characters and events are there to explain the old man's loss of the fighting spirit. The explanation renders the story long and tedious, too loose for a short story.

Of length and characterisation in the short story Wolf has expressed a view worth noting at this juncture:

In the short story, time need not move, except by an infinitesimal fraction, the characters themselves need not move, they need not grow old, indeed there may be no character at all. (Lehmann, 1967, p.20).

while the novel is said to be

predominantly an exploration of life [in which] characters begin young and grow old; they move from scene to scene, from place to place (Lehmann, p.20).

Guided by these sentiments, we will say that when Kibera packs into the story of Kibonde's family ten short stories each one of which has a main character and action, he is ignoring the principle of brevity. The ten-episode story has its intensity reduced as the reader is directed to shift attention from one character to another and from one setting to another. Thus, the tragic story of the disintegration of Kibonde's family is severely weakened by the choice to describe in detail the characters, events and even places at the expense of neatness and precision, the two elements of the short story that give the genre the power it enjoys over the novel. This is to say that the four main characters move, grow older and older and are portrayed in their fullness. Each one of them moves from place to place: Kibonde himself is found in several parts of the city, having moved from the village into town and finally we find him back in a rural village at a time when he is old and disillusioned. Njeri is placed in several settings in the

village before we finally meet and leave her in the city completely transformed into a cold, calculating middle aged woman whose main interest in men is what they can provide towards her personal comfort. Kamau grows from a helpless, innocent child trailing his mother in the countryside into an insecure city urchin who drowns in bewilderment at the magnitude of his crime: stealing. Young Mbara moves from the village school classroom into the city where we meet him as a fully developed criminal. In all these portraits and scenic changes, the story loses focus. This in turn causes confusion as to what the purpose of the episodes (story) is, any of these characters having the capability to qualify her/him to be seen as the binding force, thereby rendering the author's effort to show Kibonde as the main factor artificial.

There is also something artificial about the numerous coincidences that keep the family's saga going. Such a coincidence is the one involving the killing of Chege by his childhood playmate and classmate, Mbara. Kibera has to make Chege the policeman on patrol on the night Mbara is at the bus stop. He makes him insist on talking to Mbara as a friend, while Mbara fails to quite identify Chege and, thus, guess his reason for wishing to talk to him: to have a friendly chat. He panics, draws out a knife, the fatal weapon, and he runs on as he hits out wildly. In the process, he stabs Chege. This coincidence is meant to revive Mbara's conscience; to provide an opportunity for the author's intention to redeem him. The coincidence acts as a foil for Mbara's remorse and rejection of life.

In the incident where Kamau drowns in Mr. Martin's swimming pool, the same pool at which his mother is going to sit and relax as Mr. Martin's wife within less than two weeks' time, Kibera once again works out a coincidence. This time it is meant to emphasise the dehumanized state of alienated Njeri. It is also to highlight Kibonde's helplessness: he cannot gather courage to interrogate Njeri on the issue. Like Mr. Martin, a total stranger who has never had any authority over her, Kibonde remains silent on the issue of the strong resemblance between the abandoned boy and Njeri. This coincidence is also meant to illustrate Mr. Martins' moral decay; even after noticing a resemblance between the abused dead boy and his mistress, he ignores the implications and goes on to cohabit with her.

Njeri's meeting and subsequent co-habiting with Mr. Martin, the same man who has employed Kibonde, are further instances of mechanically worked out coincidences. The irony of Kibonde finding himself obliged to serve Njeri as her servant stands out as a consciously moulded coincidence. It is as if the author is determined to get Kibonde out of town and onto the hill, the lonely spot at which he has to spend his last days. The irony bites and destroys Kibonde. That the man who loved the city to the point of sacrificing his family is forced out of the same city by one of his victims, one he thought too uncultured to fit in city life, is highly ironical.

Nevertheless, these mechanical coincidences which threaten credibility and weaken the plot are salvaged by consistency. The ten-episode story reminds us of Hugh Walpole's definition of a short story:

... a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading, through suspense to a climax and a satisfying denouement (Bates, 1941, p.267).

Yet, the way "The Hill" starts with miserable Kibonde, goes on to explain why he is so lonely and ends with him where we find him at the beginning and in the same mental state, interferes with whatever attempt there may have been to produce a satisfying denouement. The cyclic structure of this story does not invite the reader to "construct explanations about causality, connections, motives" with the result that it loses the flavour that sustains narratives in this genre (Lohafer, p.79). The source of sustained interest being what Gerlach has identified as the "speculations it encourages on the part of the reader" and the author here having given little room for that, preferring to lay before us all the possible causes for the ageing man's unhappiness, "The Hill" leaves us with the feeling that the ten episode narrative is strictly not a short story. (Lohafer, p.79). It can best be described as a decalogy about Kibonde.

CHAPTER 4

Dream and Reality: Grace Ogot

4.1 Opening Remarks

Introducing Freud's essay "Creative writing and Day-Dreaming", Kaplan states that the psycho-analyst has established one common element running through human creative activities "from childhood play to fantasies to dreams [and] to works of art: the human desire to alter the existing and often unsatisfactory or unpleasant world or reality" (Kaplan, 1986, p419). Freud defines dreams as repressed wishes of which we are ashamed and "which are only allowed to come to expression in a very distorted form" (p.425).

The decision to entitle this chapter "Dream and Reality" stems from Grace Ogot's pre-occupation with fantasy in some of her best stories. Being a nurse by training, Grace Ogot was exposed to the stark reality of our mortality. Reality in hospital involves watching people, initially strong-willed and proud, broken beyond humiliation by some debilitating illness or even knowledgeable doctors dying of diseases they have constantly advised people about. Death, the ultimate reality of everyone's life and the subject we are all eager to avoid in our conversation or even thoughts, comes to form a nurse's daily experience. To maintain sanity, the revulsions against death, the fear of it and then the wishes to run away from the frightening scenes of death all get pushed into the unconscious. These anxieties must find expression in dreams and fantasies. In Land Without Thunder we have characters dreaming, committing suicide, screaming about threatened life, struggling in vain to save life and recapture peace and happiness and even

physically running away from death. Thus, death, suggestions of it and an almost fanatical clinging to life pervade most of the pages of the anthology. The sense of tragedy is seen and the hero's vulnerability is affirmed. We note in this chapter that this is unlike the protection accorded the hero of the conventional day-dream and fantasy story where we find the protagonist is the one who embodies the will to live for he defies all odds and lives on to retell the tale of his life. What we have in Land Without Thunder is a mixture of the dream and reality peculiar to Grace Ogot, conveying the skeptical message of the paradox of life.

On writers of fabulation, the mode that dominates Grace Ogot's style, Scholes expresses this view: stories

[take] their readers beyond the boundaries of the ordinary and familiar, into worlds that resemble dreams, where feelings are powerful but meanings are disguised....: a world of plots and symbols, providing the reader with a mixture of pleasures and puzzles. (Scholes et alia 1968 p.201)

"Tekayo" is a case in point. The way the strange meat drops from the claws of the bird carrying it is strange; it is reminiscent of the Biblical desert quails on which the Israelites fed; yet this particular surprise liver becomes destructive. Tekayo's longing for it, which eventually turns him into a cannibal that feeds on his own progeny (grand children), has little resemblance to "the ordinary and familiar." The dreams can also be seen in "Land without Thunder", "The Rain Came" and, to a limited extent, "The Hero"

"The Empty Basket" and "The White Veil". However, even in these strange dream-like worlds, the reader is still called upon to recognize reality. Tekayo is still answerable to the society and is to be punished; only that he gets repulsed by his evil self and he takes his own life before the community lynches him.

While in "Tekayo" cannibalism, a tribalist myth prevalent in Western Kenya in pre-independence times, is treated in a surrealistic manner, giving it a strong air of oral tradition, the adoption of the first person narrative technique in "The Hero" coupled with the dream as a device makes that story as compelling as a surrealist story or a well told oral narrative.

Thus, devoid of any consciously studied theoretical framework within which the stories and their design are conceived of and written, these works, nonetheless, answer to several of the requirements of the short story form. Not being a critic herself, the author here does not spend time analysing or defending any of her stories. She has, like tellers of oral narrative tales, left the stories to speak for themselves to the audience. They address the heart of the reader, compelling him to re-examine his inner self in totality. The persona is not her target; she is interested in the shadow and the anima/animus. She strives to expose these using plots that are usually simple and economical.

It is, therefore, fitting that this study end with the analysis of these works that spring from personal experience and genius; works that are not borne of the desire to create an authentic story that is different from any of those by Poe, Tolstoy or

Hawthorne while at the same time successfully using the same techniques employed by the renowned authors. Even when using ready-made material, this author, nevertheless affixes her own indelible stamp known for its ability to address the reader's heart through highly personalised human experiences. For instance, "The Rain Came" is a well-known oral narrative which in the hands of Grace Ogot gives the heroine, Oganda a fresh appeal. This is achieved by use of irony as well as Oganda's reflections. The reader becomes privy to her reaction to her shattered dreams, her mental resistance to her fate-death through which the community is to be saved. Her escape of death belongs to the fantastic mode, yet the fact that she does not go back to the village to declare her safety brings to the fore the element of realism which is in line with the author's practice to blend fantasy and realism. Grace Ogot's stories which would pass for transcribed oral narrative but for her creative genius attest to O'Rourke's view (1989):

Over time, the story has changed from the oral to the written tradition, whereas the modern novel remains divided...the modern short story has completed this evolution...(Lohafer, p.20).

Hence, it is not at all correct to refer to her stories as oral narratives retold. She employs all the five properties that Wright (1989) assigns to the modern short story in varying numbers and degrees of intensity: brevity, character and action, external simplicity, unity and intensity. If the results of Grace Ogot's fiction shows close links with oral narratives, it is precisely because it displays evidence of its "self-conscious combination of the conventions of the realistic (the domain of the novel) and romance (of the fantasy world of oral tales) forms" (O'Henry, 1953, pp 6-11). Thus, rather than use

oral tradition, she lets the form serve her to create stories with deep human concerns which lead the reader into speculation over their meaning, which in effect is a hall mark of success in this genre.

The story of Owiny falling in love with a beautiful young woman who turns out to be his sister has its origin in oral tradition but the intensified focus on Owiny's psyche as well as the treatment of the search for an heir motif give the story ("The Bamboo Hut") a complexity that is beyond the reach of the oral tale. For instance, we are able to read Chief Mboga's fear of extinction (death) in his determination to have a son. Desperation develops in him and this makes him vulnerable to blackmail by the young man's threat to kill himself and implicitly deny him (Mboga) posterity, the only comfort we hang onto on the realization that death is inevitable. Owiny's attempt to run away from this reality through marriage and procreation is thwarted by the discovery that, in fact, he cannot marry Awiti, the woman he has chosen: she is his twin sister.

An analysis of the various parts of this story reveals the writer's conformity to Wright's formulation: the parts (of the story) tend to function in multiple and economical ways; [and] that there is a minimum of waste (Wright P. p.52)

A close analysis of the various parts of this short story in the light of the final climax will suggest that author conforms to this formulation to a large extent. For instance, there is the first part which depicts Chief Mboga's desperate yearning for a son, an heir to the throne; then there is the episode that focuses on the birth of the twins after which the author leads us to the important encounter between Owiny and Awiti as grown-

up youth. This encounter leads to the falling in love of Owiny for Awiti and finally the author resolves the conflict in a most uneventful manner: Achieng makes a private confession to her husband who then forgives her and orders a get-together feast for both his son and lost daughter. It is significant that the story excludes the feast which in itself is a mark of great economy. All the parts in this story are leading to one thing: the final revelation to the love-sick man that his beloved is his twin sister. The passage of time suggested in the phrase "years slipped by", is not given prominence. Propped by this phrase, the story moves from the cradle to the stage at which, we are told:

Owiny grew into a fine, strong man.. sulky, headstrong and independent (Land Without Thunder, p. 31) and of Awiti:

She is the daughter of Owuor Chilo, the clan elder of Usigu she is visiting her aunt here.

Try and see her tomorrow. If you like her, we will approach her parents. She should make a good wife (ibid, p.32).

Thus, activities covering twenty years or more are summarized in a few lines because those activities are not relevant to the story; details would blunt the impact. In this way Grace Ogot achieves the economy that is so central to the short story. The story's roots in the oral narrative are used to advantage in this respect.

That there is "a minimum of waste" can also be seen in the way the author treats Awiti's foster parents: they are only referred to. Superfluity is, also, avoided in the

way the story is allowed to end before the encounter between brother and sister.

Grace Ogot achieves economy by simply describing a reaction. When, for example, Owiny is tense, his sitting position is described thus:

Owiny tightened his buttocks on the oily stool he was sitting on... he felt dizzy (p.34).

The emotions going on in Owiny's mind are summarized in this vivid description. In "Tekayo" we encounter a similar tendency. For example, Tekayo's mental state is suggested by the way he sits and stares at dead ashes, and his absent-mindedness at a time when he should be active, telling the grand children stories: is conveyed to the reader:

Tekayo was not with them: he was not listening. He watched the smoky clouds....(p.53)

That he is painfully aware of his desperately despicable state which is increasingly alienating him is depicted:

Tears stung Tekayo's eyes, and he dismissed the family to sleep (p.53).

This anguish is a sign that he is no longer in control of his actions; it is a recognition of his own perdition and the author summarizes it in three lines, using the most appropriate words "Tears stung". In this way, the author prepares us for Tekayo's

suicide: the final act of protest against an overpowering obsession for the unacceptable and the ultimate affirmation of despair and acceptance of defeat.

In the creative hands of Grace Ogot despair, disgust and anguish are made palpable and even visible. The case of Dora's anguish in Karantina is an example. Her disgust is depicted:

A very big lump blocked Dora's throat and choked her till she felt tears rolling down her cheek (p.81).

Given that the context in which Dora's patience gets worn out is laced with a great deal of incongruity as is exemplified in the night sister's broken English vis-a-vis Dora's fluency and seeming expectation of the same from such a public figure, one can say that the author is consciously stimulating a combination of feeling and thought. The writer's interest in aesthetic conventions rather than realistic ones is clear. In this story the beauty of the contrast overrides details of circumstances leading to the traveller's suffocating anger. Dora's self-discovery is the "single goal" toward which the progress of the action is directed: that she is naive and ill-informed.

Nyagar's overwhelming greed is implied in his actions ("The Green Leaves"). Gestures are preferred to words. His obsession with the idea of robbing a man he believes to be dead is depicted:

He started to remove his clothes then he changed his mind. Instead he just sat there, staring vacantly into space (p.92)

In these two sentences the author suggests the tragedy awaiting the greedy man. He is depicted as one who is as helpless against his appetite as Tekayo: one in whom a destructive force has been set in motion and will not let go until its victim yields and gets destroyed. Intensity is thus achieved.

In the hands of Grace Ogot the gesture becomes very important. We are constantly called upon to "see" and judge. Tekayo's despair which develops into desperation, Dora's disgust with the airport authorities and Nyagar's obsession with the thief's money which he has not even seen, all go to show that use of gesture is an effective device that bails the author out of the tedium of description. There is also a powerful gesture at the end of "The White Veil". In order to emphasize the helplessness overwhelming Owila on this crucial morning of his life, the author simply has Father Hussein tap the confused bridegroom on the shoulder. The simple gesture and the simple message,

"My son, your wife is waiting for you"
(p.140)

suggest the resolution of the conflict started by Owila's impatience and arrogance.

Gesture as a device is complemented with conversation to create "truly dramatic situation[s]" which Grandsaigne emphasizes as being central to the short story

(Grandsaigne, 1984, p.11). The stories in Land Without Thunder are live with conversation. Owila's anguished cry in "The White Veil" is a case in point. His confusion which turns into anguish is revealed in his own words and reinforced by the carefully selected action words:

But father, Father.....' Owila staggered to his feet. "She is not my bride. She is" He staggered down to her..... "No, No, No," Owila shouted. Do something, Father, please (p.179 emphasis mine)

The hostility of the night Sister ("Night Sister") is conveyed vividly in dialogue and speech tags.

"Relax, relax", she shouted.
"Well, your hands are cold," I protested.....
"Well, it is freezing outside," she told me bluntly (p. 180).

Later the same cruel nurse is depicted psychologically molesting her patient, Mrs. Ochieng, thus:

"Did you go to toilet as I told you?" she quickly asked "
I did," I said bitterly. "I have just got back".

"Then you came to pass the rest of the urine in the bed," she snapped.....

"yes looks like urine," she said with finality (p. 183)

In this chapter we are, thus, going to analyse the style of stories whose origin is the heart of the author, or the creative genius of the author. We are going to analyse stories that are, in Sir Hugh Walpole's words,

a record[s] of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift moment, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and a satisfying denouement (Marrot, p.267).

In order to do an in-depth study we have chosen three stories: "The Old White Witch", "The Hero" and "Elizabeth" from an anthology of twelve stories. The three stories selected for close textual analysis are those that the study regards as Grace Ogot's most authentic works which one can use to understand her style. The three are also regarded by this study to be the best of the stories in Land Without Thunder in terms of style. Each of these three stories is tidy, raises a conflict and resolves it, thus, offering a "satisfying denouement". Conflict in the stories of Grace Ogot is conveyed by the exploitation of the senses: in several cases the sense of touch is used. For instance, Monica Adhiambo's head is said to feel like a hot brick in the hands of Matron Jack just before she accepts to remain in the mission grounds (p.22). At the height of the conflict in "The Bamboo Hut" Owiny is described as one "tighten[ing] his buttocks on the oily stool" (p.35). Obsessed with lust for wealth, Nyagar is shown touching the presumably dead man all over the body. The crushing blow in the right eye kills him. As well as exploiting the sense of touch, Grace Ogot also summons into play the sense of hearing. Weeping, screaming, sobbing and shouting characterize the world of "Land Without Thunder".

Thus, an analysis of the three selected stories is bound to focus on the significance of the sensitivity of the characters. We will also be examining the author's employment

of other aspects of style as irony and symbolism. This chapter is thus, a study of the creative genius preoccupied with the psyche or, better still, the "psychology of growing up". Grace Ogot makes use of all the three aspects of the process of self-discovery: the shadow, the persona and the animus and the three stories to be analysed in this chapter deal with one or more of these. The confrontation of a character with the darker side of his unconscious self (the shadow) is in the hands of Grace Ogot handled with such subtlety that without applying the theory of individuation, one may end up missing the root of the conflict. There are also cases where the author has the animus - image as the controlling factor in a conflict. In such cases, we will also turn to the theory of individuation to help us fully appreciate the conflict and the resolution thereof.

Chosen on the strength of the presence of a strong but economical plot that allows for the development and resolution of a conflict, each one of these stories has been deemed the best sample of Grace Ogot's mastery of the art of blending the realistic and the romantic. Each one of them is an example of the human touch that characterizes this author's fictional world in which dream and reality are not opposites but different sides of the same coin: life.

4.2 "The Old White Witch" (pp.9-27)

"The Old White Witch" is a story with only one predominating incident: the nurses' strike. The nurses strike because they have been reminded that they are expected to give their patients bedpans. Matron Jack makes it a condition for the continuation of

their training. She is alone in this demand, but those with dissenting views remain silent at the crucial hour and only make such views known to her when it is too late to change the situation.

Grace Ogot's main stylistic device in this tragic story is irony. There is a strong thread of tragic irony in the events of this short story. Monicah Adhiambo, the prefect-turned ring-leader is the tragic figure of the story. Initially, Monica's decision to lead the other nurses to rebel against hospital authority has a tinge of irony in it. This is because there is a clear disparity between the expectations the hospital administration has of Monicah and what she actually is and displays to them. Matron Jack and the rest of the hospital authorities expect the nurse they have given authority to foresee the behaviour of the other nurses, to be able to conduct herself in a disciplined manner and to discourage others from rebellious actions that are sure to hurt the patients. Her failure to do either of these places Matron Jack in a very awkward position. Matron Jack's embarrassment which turns into bitterness towards the nurses' head prefect is a result of the contradiction between what the Matron and the rest of the hospital community have taken Monica Adhiambo for and what she is showing them during the strike. Matron Jack sees this as an unbelievable transformation, while to the striking nurses, Monica herself and the reader, Monicah has not changed. There is a remote suggestion in Matron Jack's refusal to believe what she is hearing from Monicah that she desires to bask in self-congratulatory feelings that she has moulded native nurses' attitude to nursing. There is a tinge of irony in Matron Jack's situation. This is illustrated in her

self-delusion about the nurses' intelligence and independence of mind. She has, for instance, convinced herself that the nurses are like children whom she can bully and even manhandle without resistance and with impunity. She demonstrates this attitude when she tries to bully Adhiambo:

She was bubbling over with rage. She stepped forward and grabbed Nurse Adhiambo's hand, dragging her out of the group. The girl staggered and almost dropped her box, but somehow she managed to retain her balance. She put her feet together and disengaged herself from the old woman's weak grip (p.16).

Monicah Adhiambo is overwhelmed by her shadow. It is as if her persona - "our social personality, the actor's mask we show to the world"-has been subdued, leaving room in the unconscious self for the shadow. Matron Jack seems to be unaware of these possibilities in the psyche: hence the pathos of her situation. She is pathetic and yet complacent.

The condescending address, "All right, my child", is further demonstration of the matron's complacency and ignorance. This complacent attitude is responsible for her inability to see the nurses as full grown human beings who are eager to take their place in the community which has brought them up for specific functions: to get married and raise families. She sees the girls' conversion, education and devotion to work in the hospital as signs of the type of alienation from the society that makes one vulnerable to exploitation and she is prepared to cash in on it. Ironically, the girls know their obligation to the society and refuse to lose sight of this. Their refusal to "carry urine and

faeces of fellow human beings" (p.16) is a clear sign that they are not yet alienated; that their conversion and education have not caused them to lose contact with the values of the society in which they must eventually live and serve. That contact is what Dr. Joseph bluntly refers to as the "real savage" lying beneath the skin-deep "vener of civilization" (p.20).

The tragic death of Monica Adhiambo is surrounded with tragic irony. In her dying moment when she cannot object to anything, Monica Adhiambo finds herself in a situation similar to the one in which some of the crucial cases abandoned some weeks back by her plan and order were. Because of her insolence and self-confidence at that time, she led the other nurses out of the hospital, saying:

'We will not carry karaya now nor in future. Tell Matron Jack and her people that we are returning home to help our mothers in the shambas and to get married (p.16).

She does not know that lying in store for her is an acute illness that will require someone to carry to her the dreaded karaya neither does she know that for her there is to be no marriage and even helping her mother in the shamba is severely limited. Thus, the tragic twist of events in this story is totally unknown to the characters in the brief drama. It is ironical for Adhiambo to state with such certainty that she is going home "to get married".

In this incident we encounter the type of irony that is typical of great drama such as Macbeth where a character bathes in confidence about the certain unlikelihood of a

given misfortune befalling him only to later find himself/herself confronted with that unexpected impossible having become possible. It is as if fate conspires to force a proud character onto his/her knees. The turn of events in Monica Adhiambo's life after abandoning the sick can be seen as a case of cosmic irony or irony of fate where destiny manipulates events to frustrate and mock the protagonist (Guerin et alia, 1986, p. 1135). In the case of Monica Adhiambo we have a protagonist who is strong, confident and defiant being treated like a play thing in the hands of destiny, so that her crushing humiliation underlies the pity of our human folly. As head-girl, she has a chance to call off the strike and resume work. However, as a human being, prone to error made through a blind pursuit of self-gratification, she loses that chance. She is allowed to dominate the scene and seem the hero for the time being. When the reader encounters her next, she is on a stretcher, suffering from advanced amoebic dysentery. She is hospitalised in a ward that has been closed down as a result of lack of nurses after the strike which she as head prefect organized a month ago. The irony of her tragedy stuns her forcefully even in the weak condition that she is in. When she realizes that she has had to come to the hospital, the hospital she arrogantly abandoned a month ago, telling Matron Jack, "keep your head girl - I have left it in the dormitory....give it to someone else", she is shocked and resists the attempt to leave her behind but in vain. Her final confrontation with reality in the hospital shatters her vanity and she weeps bitterly as the irony of the events of the past one month stares her in the face and she succumbs. She yields to the mockery of fate and decides to remain with Matron Jack. It is like a form

of penance.

Even as we interpret the dying nurse's choice to remain with Matron Jack as an act of penance, mention must, nevertheless, be made of the tinge of verbal irony in the use of the phrase "The Old White Witch" in reference to the matron. A witch is conventionally a killer, Matron Jack is professionally a fighter against disease. Monica Adhiambo's use of the phrase can only imply admiration rather than rejection, awe rather than fear.

While irony as a stylistic device enhances the gravity of the impact of Christianity on both the new converts and the missionaries, dialogue in this story becomes a significant technique that helps quicken the pace. The use of dialogue enables the author to achieve economy in scenes which would have needed elaborate narration if otherwise presented. In this way the author would concur with Coppard's idea that a short - story is "the art of telling a story by a series of gestures...." (Bates, 1941, p.21). The words assigned to the various characters in the dialogue do help throw light on the mood of the speakers, the gravity of the situation as well as suggesting the relationship between the speaker and other characters in the story. For instance, a great deal of information is given about Adhiambo's character, attitude to the job of nursing and Matron Jack and her relationship with the other nurses in her words:

"You are wasting our time," Nurse Adhiambo said, stepping forward....

"we will not carry karaya now or in future. Tell Matron

Jack and her people we are going home to help our mothers and to get married" (p.16).

The mood of the occasion - defiant, and rebellious - is brought out vividly. Nurse Adhiambo's arrogant attitude is almost audible in the above words. The note of finality in the phrase, "now or in future" emphasizes the head girl's self-confidence and arrogance. These words call for the reaction that Matron Jack gives them: she is humiliated by the resolute tone of the nurse's defiant words; she is even hurt as she realizes her own powerlessness before the headgirl. Matron Jack helplessly says:

"Dont talk like that"

"You are the cause of all these fitina"(p.16)

Matron Jack's helpless position in the face of the rioting natives is made so vivid by the dialogue technique that when, a month later, she is found helplessly sitting by Monica Adhiambo's bed, reading the Bible, the contrast is even clearer than it would have been had her disgust and helpless state been reported in narrative. With the command "Dont talk like that" the anger, embarrassment and a feeling of betrayal, bottled up in Matron Jack's mind, well up and explode for all to hear. The words carry in them caution to the young woman to mind what she says about a profession Matron Jack believes to be noble, and also to mind how she talks about the care for the sick. Sister Jack's accusation to Nurse Adhiambo lays the blame for the strike and for the future closure of the hospital to in-patients on her as head girl. The strike, which Matron

Jack refers to as fitina. is the cause of the closure of the wards and since Monica is so vocal in the argument against bedpans and in the nurses decision to abandon the hospital, Matron is in this speech implicitly asking her to call it off so that the sick can be served. Monica Adhiambo's return to the hospital on a stretcher and unconscious a week later becomes clear evidence of the irony of fate when examined against this final exchange between matron and student nurses.

Direct speech also makes Nurse Adhiambo's rude statement "Keep your head girl" so vivid that when she finally dismisses her mother and chooses to remain in the hospital with the Old White Witch, one gets the impression that fate has dragged her back to the hospital to identify with her "headgirl" badge and become part of the hospital property like the badge is. In this way, the words "keep your headgirl" become ambiguous as there are two possible meanings in the utterance when Nurse Adhiambo, the headgirl, comes back and asks to be kept there. The ambiguity leads us yet to another interpretation of this rude statement: Nurse Adhiambo recognizes that a "Head Girl" badge outside the hospital is useless and when she is dying, she also realizes that she is useless to the community and so, the hospital can as well keep her. Her decision to remain with the "Old White Witch" is a form of affirmation of the futility of trying to run away from the hospital and all it stands for after having made the initial step to serve it and defend it in the capacity of headgirl. It is as if the words uttered by her own mouth a month ago have been haunting her until they have driven her back to the karaya and the hospital where she abandoned her second identity: Head Girl.

It is significant that Matron Jack refers to Monica Adhiambo as "my Monica". These words have a ring of fond feelings in them. In them, we are introduced to an aspect of character in Matron Jack which straight narrative may not do as precisely and as effectively; the direct speech here brings her out as a kind person whose ability to forgive is able to defy even the most scathing attack on her personal pride and her status. The state Monica is in when she is brought to the hospital on a stretcher moves Matron Jack to tears of horror and pity for the dying young woman who was bouncing with life only one month ago. The repetition of the words "my Monica" and the question,

"What have you done to my Monica"(p,22).

emphasizes Matron Jack's kindness and love for the former headgirl. Nothing seems to matter now, neither her rudeness and arrogance nor the negation her action a month ago has imposed on the hospital is of any consequence. The Matron is seen for what she is: a woman with a large heart.

Dialogue in this story also enables the author to achieve brevity which is a necessary ingredient in a short story. Rev. Odhuno and Issaca are portrayed as Christians whose fear for the white missionaries - Dr. Joseph Arnold and Matron Jack - has made the two men hypocrites. This weakness is revealed in their conversation:

"This is a terrible thing Rev. Odhuno",
Issaca rebuked the Father. "You and I

know that this new rule which enjoins that our girls should carry Karaya is wrong. You should not have sided with these administrators publicly - that was bad"

"Wait a minute, Issaca. I cautioned Matron Jack and Dr. Joseph that even Christian women will not agree to carry karaya - but they insisted..... you can see my dilemma, my brother - I couldn't get up publicly in the house of God and side with these nurses. We should give our missionaries support - they are so few! I know you understand"

"We feel hurt all the same, Father. The nurses are calling us traitors. You remember the scene in the chapel earlier today" (pp.15-16).

What Rev. Odhuno is referring to as support is deliberate withholding of vital information that is certain to make the missionaries relate with the local people better and also run the hospital effectively. In their timidity, they mislead the missionaries and in their hypocrisy they appear to be supportive of the group whose work they are damaging.

As a man who has earned himself the nickname Solomon, Rev. Odhuno is expected to exploit that advantage he enjoys over the other native staff at the mission and come out with a solution that will avert the disaster: closing down the hospital to in-patients. There is a great contrast between what he knows to be true- the girls ought not to carry karaya - as revealed in his own words to Issaca and what he publicly tells the girls and the missionaries in the effort to get the girls back to their duties in the hospital. The author reveals these deliberate contradictions in the pastor using dialogue and thereby avoiding passing any judgement against him. Like in drama, his words influence

the readers judgement of his character; the character is left to expose his weakness himself.

The tragic story of Monica Adhiambo is nevertheless, brightened by some limited humour found in one incident of dialogue. Nimrod, the Head cook, noticing with surprise and dismay that all the nurses are leaving the hospital compound with all their belongings, runs to Matron Jack and informs her of the new development in broken Kiswahili. To anyone who knows grammatical and accurately pronounced Kiswahili, these two sentences are ungrammatical

"Yote nakwenda, Matron yote"

.....

"Nurse yote yote nakwenda, nakwisha chukua sanduku"

(p.14).

They are also humorous. Nimrod's grammar and choice of expressions like "shauri yako" ("it is up to you/it is all your fault") suggest the speaker's simplicity as well as the fact that he has had very little exposure to Kiswahili. These are being used to foreground the tragedy of Monica; the humour functions as comic relief.

Nimrod's dramatic entry into the chapel coupled with the ungrammatical statement in Kiswahili which is "bubbled out" of "his mind", and the matron's spontaneous response, "what nakwenda..." form an instance of this short story's "flair for the truly dramatic situation". In this brief dramatic moment the author is able to bring out the matron's state of mind vividly. By giving the reader the matron's response to Nimrod's interruption in two languages, not even dialects as would be the case in such informal

language situations, the author is implicitly giving us information on the state of mind of Matron Jack. The confusion the striking nurses have thrown her into can be detected in statements that are made up of two different languages and will most likely not communicate outside this particular language situation:

What nakwenda, Nimrod" (What is going) ... "Kwenda kitchen, Nimrod, no more shauri sasa" (p.14)

The "flair for the truly dramatic situation" in this story seems to come naturally as a result of a careful choice of appropriate speech tags and action words. For instance, in the case of Nimrod's effort to get Matron Jack to act quickly to stop the nurses from deserting the hospital, the speech tag used is indicative of excitement: "bubbled out".

The words used during the drama are all action-packed:

ran to the chapel...flung the chapel door open...waved the Head cook off...turned...flared up...threw his hands in the air...banged the door...left...turned to Dr...was...on her feet...rushed out...followed by...run...catch them...shouted (p.15)

All the verbs used here are monosyllabic, only acquiring the second syllable, when they do, in their past tense form. Each one of them denotes either quick movement of either the whole body or part of the body. Breathless speed is suggested. Panic is built up and reaches fever heat at the point the matron is portrayed as having discarded all rules of protocol and decorum and resorted to shouting in the presence of Dr. Joseph: "Run after them! Catch them!" Everyone involved in this drama is tense: Nimrod, the Head cook, bangs the chapel door, totally oblivious of the presence of his employers and

Matron Jack shouts spontaneously "at the top of her voice", (p.16) the doctor's presence not withstanding.

Finally, there is the use of the significant silence technique in conversation.

Using these in the scene where Monica is brought to the hospital, dying, the author is able to build the appropriate atmosphere of panic, then despair. For instance, when Matron Jack asks Okutima, the watch man "Nini, Okutima?" ("What is it, Okutima?"), the watchman does not answer, instead he beckons to her to come. Matron Jack rushes to the pall bearers and when she asks,

"What is it" "Who is there, Issaca? Who?" (p.22)

no one answers her; instead of a verbal response, she is treated to a gesture where Issaca pulls "the blanket off the face" of the patient. Gesture takes over from language. This again happens when Matron Jack asks the pall bearers,

"What have you done to my Monica?"

and she is introduced to Monica's mother. Her address to Monica's mother,

"What have you done to my Monica?" is not answered either. Matron Jack's weeping publicly implies a non-verbal response from Monica's mother that must have implied helplessness on the part of the unhappy mother.

It is significant that all conversation ends at this point. The rest of the tragic story of Monica Adhiambo unfolds in silence and the author relies on narrative and description to build the final atmosphere of despair and death. In this way the author seems to be suggesting that the fight for life is too grave to lend itself to dialogue; man

must sit and watch in awe as Matron Jack does in this story.

As well as using the language of conversation to suggest the various reactions and feelings about the crisis at the hospital and the consequences of closing the women and maternity wards, the author also employs suspense as a stylistic technique. From the very first sentence, "The chapel was fuller than usual that morning" the reader is thrown into suspense. It is a simple sentence that does not go into explanations as to why the chapel was "fuller than usual". To maintain the suspense created, the author treats the reader to the description of the entry into the chapel of the various officials of the hospital. The nurses' attitude to each entry is given briefly but the reason for the attitude is withheld.

When everyone is seated, the author switches focus from sight to hearing. All have sat and so there is nothing to see. The suspense developed by the sense of hearing ends with Nurse Adhiambo's address that ends, "we are returning to our homes" (p.10).

Suspense in this episode of the story gains its power from a careful engagement of the sense of sight and the sense of hearing. In silence the reader's eyes are treated to Matron Jack and Sister Cocks as they sit "with their heads lowered in silent prayer" (p.7). Then eyes turn to Norman Orlando who walks "majestically to his seat". The contrast is given between the prayerful and pious gestures exhibited by both Matron Jack and Orlando and the defiant faces of the nurses, all sitting in the same chapel. The silence reigning in the chapel enables the eyes to note every activity. It is the disruption of this silence with the nurses' clearing their throats and jeering at Orlando that registers

the hostility clearly. The big clock strikes ten to end the pious silence with the singing of the hymn. When all the other people start singing, the nurses remain silent. As if determined to have their protest registered in every ear, the nurses sit down noisily, dragging "the wooden benches on the cement floor", (p.), and when Matron Jack concludes her address to the nurses, they respond with "loud whispers", jeering and muttering. The suspense is broken when Monica Adhiambo gives to the hospital senior staff the history of the young women's agreement to come and work in the hospital.

Having answered the question as to why the chapel is "fuller than usual", Grace Ogot goes on to build another moment of suspense. This time, the reader is left to puzzle over the possible solution of the crisis facing the hospital. Once again, the author turns, the optical nerves to action. The words she chooses indicate this:

She looked at the senior staff... all eyes
were turned ... He looked... she glanced at
it ... looked at the note ... timidly watched
(p10-12)

Silence reigns while eyes look on. On the surface it appears that Rev. Odhuno may convince the girls to change their mind. The suspense is broken when the girls burst out in "a tremendous laughter" (p.) as soon as they leave the chapel compound. The shouting and jeering are clear signs that they will not yield.

The final moment of suspense is the last episode of the story when Matron Jack and Monica Adhiambo's mother find themselves sitting by the bedside of the dying young woman. The suspense in this episode is initially created by digression. At first Monica's

past impression on the hospital community is given to the reader through Matron Jack's mind; then the author, adopting the omniscient narrator's stance, presents to us happy scenes of Monica's indulging the workmen on left-over food. This is all being narrated against the background of the gloomy question as to whether or not Monica will pull through. The forty-eight-hour suspense experienced by Monica's mother and Matron Jack as they sit by her bedside is made real in the story by the silence said to dominate the room. Whatever action is mentioned is either invisible or silent. For instance, we are told:

Matron Jack sat....reading her bible. big Blocks of tears rolled down from her eyes.... she turned her head slowly away from Adhiambo's mother..... Her thoughts turned from the past. She glanced at Monica.....Matron glanced at Adhiambo's mother sitting on a stool....she was slumbering. Workmen, one by one walked in, bowed their heads close to Monica's bed and walked away (pp.23-25).

The suspense is maintained by these gestures bereft of any verbal explanation or verdict on the patient's progress. It is Monica herself who is used to relieve the tension. The author depicts her in the last moment of her life as intelligent and eloquent to the last. She realizes the folly of having attempted to keep away from the matron and the hospital when it in fact had made an indelible mark on her world view.

Thus, she orders her mother,

"Return to father - I am staying with the Old White Witch: (p.25)

Another stylistic device that this story relies on for the effective communication of the theme of cultural conflict is symbolism. There are two prominent symbols in this story: the karava and the combination of rain, thunder and lightning .

The karava gains symbolic proportions through repetition. By the time Dr. Joseph uses the term bedpan to admonish Matron Jack over her insistence that nurses should carry them to the female patients, the term has become symbolic of all that is objectionable about the hospital and the white missionaries. The central role the bedpan plays in the training of a nurse and in the care of in-patients becomes the destructive force that brings the hospital to the brink of collapse. Grace Ogot emphasizes the paradox when she brings the karava into the story for the last time; this time the most fervent opponent of the practice of carrying bedpans is depicted as the one under whom the infamous, yet indispensable bedpan has to be placed. Monica's need for nurses is symbolic. It is also a direct moral for all reluctant nurses: treat patients as you would have yourselves nursed in event of sickness.

Monica's struggle with death is symbolised by the violence detectable in the pouring rain, the flash of lightning and the burst of thunder. There is a deliberate effort to employ in this story the negative aspect of rain: rainstorm that is said to have "started to pour" (p.25). In this clause alone is suggested the force to uproot plants, to wash away objects including human beings and their property and to cause fear and despair to those witnessing the down-pour. Lightning and thunder suggest destruction of objects, including life, through fire. These associations that are called to mind by the mention

of a rainstorm at a time when Monica's struggle with death is almost over, make the stormy evening a symbol in itself.

Throughout this story, there is the imposing atmosphere of death which everyone is trying to run away from; yet paradoxically everyone is preoccupied with it. The nurses, for instance, are running away from social death that is certain to be caused by the stigma of the karava. Dr. Joseph, the senior staff, and the male nurses are eager to avert death and when they know they have no facilities to succeed with the women and children, they send them away to face death somewhere away from the hospital; thus we are told:

It was difficult to estimate how many survived - there was no ward to nurse them in and some never returned after the first treatment (p21)

Finally, the tension, expectation and hopelessness by Monica's beside all build up towards the climax of the sombre mood that has by this time become a symbol of the ultimate reality. This explains why the author has Monica herself react violently to the irony of finding herself face to face with Matron Jack, and, then, her resigned acceptance of the final reality of her life as an alienated native woman who has no place in the village with her parents, but rather her place is with the missionaries - the Old White Witch.

We can refer to this final realization as the resolution of the conflict. Monica matures; she discovers herself and is able to appreciate who she is and where, in the turbulent social context of cultural conflict, she belongs. As happens to other literary

variants of the shadow - Iago in Othello, Lady Macbeth in Macbeth, Edmund in King Lear and Njoroge in "The Hill", Monica Adhiambo is destroyed at the resolution of the conflict. Monica's death is symbolic of the tragic impact that occurs at the full encounter between the persona and the shadow. Thus, underneath the irony lies the symbolic significance of the death of the heroine who can no longer live having realized how cruel she has been.

4.3 "The Hero" (p.)

This is a short story that focuses on the anxiety and sense of helplessness that engulf the rural mission hospital whose first African doctor has been struck down by an attack of poliomyelitis. The nurses, especially, are depressed as well as confused by the fact that a full grown up man who is also a doctor can be attacked by a disease they have all along associated with children. This category of the staff at the hospital is puzzled and plunged in despair. The doctors and the rest of the senior staff, who understand the resistance of poliomyelitis to treatment, panic for they know that their colleague's life is in real danger.

The author has chosen to use the first person, or I - narrative technique which Scholes and Kellogg refer to as the eye - witness narrative technique (1986) to tell this story of anxiety and gloom. This device enables the writer to focus intently on the dying doctor, the reaction of the nurses to his suffering and death, and finally the burial scene. This means that the eye-witness narrator's eye is "turned outward" making "the

other characters...become the dominant interest" (Scholes and Kellogg, p256). The outward focus brings the unconscious doctor very close to the reader. His deteriorating condition becomes vivid and the empathy for the panic-stricken mourners is elicited by the immediacy of the scene (Hills, P 126). At the same time, we have the social scene comprising doctors, the senior staff and Nurse Kigundu. Focus on these reveals the dying doctor's standing in that small community, thus intensifying the pity of his death. His mother's loud protest against burial rings loud in the reader's ear as a result of the intimacy developed between the reader and the events of the story.

It is important to note that in "The Hero" the I - narrator is a participant in the events of the story; she is characterised and, by virtue of this, she dominates the story, forcing both an inward and outward focus on the narrative. Identified only as Anna, she is able to confess to the reader her innermost fears. It is through her nightmare that the author portends the misfortune that is to befall the hospital community: the death of Dr. Sserwadda. The details she identifies in the entire episode are moving to the extent that the distinction between the narrator and her creator (the writer) is almost blurred. The story almost becomes autobiographical, sending the reader back to the author's life and experiences. However, we are led to discard the idea of factuality on the basis of the writer's own clarification that Anna's worship of Dr. Sserwadda has no bearing to her own life as a nurse but that it is typical of cases where in the closed environment of the hospital a nurse may develop an unpronounced attachment to a doctor (Interview with Grace Ogot, Nov. 1994).

The obvious limitation of the first person point of view - that the reader has access only to one mind, the eye-witness's since the latter "can only see everything" and he/she "can know only one mind: his/ [her] own"-becomes an enhancing factor in "the Hero". Scholes *et alia*". p.258). This device enables the author to omit the scene of Dr. Sserwadda's death. It is reported and the impact is heavy as the terse statement drops like a bomb in the ears of the tense narrator and her friend: "Dr. Sserwadda died at 4.30 a.m." (p.44). Thus, what critics like Scholes and Kellogg as well as Hills have pointed out as a limitation that novelists have to contend with when they choose this device turns out to be an advantage in Grace Ogot's short story, affording it a firmly fixed focus and the much needed preciseness for a narrative about such painful experiences. The reader is treated to the emotion - wringing hospital scene and even here the actual eye contact with the dying man is brief. Anna is forced to leave the bedside immediately because she is not dressed in isolation ward outfit, and with her the reader loses sight of Dr. Sserwadda. She remains behind when he is taken to Mulago hospital. This allows for the creation of suspense which dominates the atmosphere as the two nurses strive in vain to settle down and do some work. The closeness afforded the reader by the I - narrative technique not only heightens the suspense but it also contributes a great deal to the mood of anxiety, gloom and despair.

It is important at this juncture to focus on mood as the next significant stylistic device in the story. Grace Ogot builds a sombre mood right through the story. Firstly, there is the grim mood of the narrator as she leaves her dormitory for duty after a

frightening dream about a dangerous attempt at mountain climbing. Her emotional involvement in the tragedy accentuates this mood. This mood is heightened further by carefully chosen words and phrases that suggest stealthiness, fear of the unknown and anticipation of death. For instance, the author uses such expressions as "tip-toed out of the room", "the frightening grip on my shoulder...", Her grip tightened accusingly" to build an atmosphere in which words are superfluous and action suggestive of the need to remain silent and pensive. The author also uses the setting, a "still dimly moon-lit night" whose silence is only broken by "the occasional twitter of the crickets and the sorrowful moan of the night owl", to emphasize the sombre mood. Even long after Dr. Sserwadda has been transferred to Mulago hospital, this mood still persists, being sustained by the portrayal of the narrator and her friend, Nurse Kigunda as having been rendered inactive. So depressed is the pair that they find it impossible to concentrate on anything. Nurse Kigunda says this, "I can't concentrate on anything" (p.43).

When the telephone rings, neither of the two friends is willing to receive it. There is a short debate:

"Take it," she ordered
"No." I buried my hand in my apron
"Take it, please Anna, please," she begged.
"I can't," I sobbed. (p 44)

In this short debate one can detect anxiety, fear and even despair, the two girls fear for the life of the doctor and neither of them wants to be the first to receive news of his death. That the narrator sobs is further evidence of the sad mood of the scene. Individual actions seem to take over the job of communicating the mood generated by

Dr. Sserwadda's illness, leaving the tongue speechless. A study of gestures such as ordering, burying a hand in the apron, begging and sobbing reveals the author's conscious effort to build and sustain a sombre mood that has in itself imposed a feeling of helplessness as well as a deliberate rejection of involvement in the outer world. A telephone conversation generally forces one to suspend thoughts about his immediate environment in order to actively take in information from without and even comment on it. Thus, the narrator's refusal to take the phone as indicated in her two gestures - burying her hand in her apron and sobbing - is a sign that she does not want to lose grip of her present preoccupation which is essentially thinking about the sick doctor.

Finally, the news about his death is broken to the two nurses in a matter-of-fact manner and this helps sustain the sombre mood even more. The simple statements: "He is dead....Dr. Eric Sserwadda died at 4.30 a.m" (p.45).

is free of any emotions. It states a fact that has a devastating impact on the audience and failure to embellish the statement makes the impact even greater. All the three ladies in the scene - sister Mary, Nurse Kigundu and the narrator - are clearly devastated as one flops on the floor, while another has eyes that are red and sore and the narrator has to pull herself together and force air into her lungs to avoid suffocation.

Another device that Grace Ogot uses in this story is irony. It is a fact of great irony that Dr. Sserwadda, who is a consultant should be attacked by polio, a killer disease for which a vaccine has already been in wide circulation. Nurse Kigundu's innocent question: "Isn't polio only a disease of the children?" and the rejoinder, "At

least that's what my notes say" (p.), are significant. The author uses the nurse's genuine concern and her refusal to accept the diagnosis to underscore the irony of the situation in which Dr. Sserwadda finds himself. In this situation the simple nurses find it difficult to believe that a consultant can actually fall victim of a disease he must have talked about to his patients countless times; yet the true nature of the situation is that like the naive nurses, Dr. Sserwadda has thought himself beyond the reach of polio on account of his age and, hence, has not bothered to present himself for vaccination.

It is also an instance of great irony that a few minutes after the two anxious nurses have had hope injected in them by the news that Dr. Sserwadda is improving, he dies: The telephone message is received at 4.00 a.m and in thirty minutes' time, he dies (at 4.30 a.m). Sister Mary's message that "Dr. Sserwadda died at 4.30 a.m is in direct contrast with the feeling the two nurses express after the telephone call:

"He is doing very well according to Sister Jack, his breathing has eased a lot now and he can talk" (p.44)

This message causes the narrator to feel assured that all will be well and she decides that she can go to see him in the morning. As a result of this message, the narrator does not get a chance to see his progress for herself. In the words of Peck and Coyle the events here are "more complicated than any individual can grasp or understand" (Peck and Coyle, p.37).

In this ironic twist of events the author seems to suggest that matters concerning life and death are complicated and, in fact, a complete mystery.

As well as employing irony as a stylistic device, Grace Ogot also uses symbolism to achieve the brevity that the story needs in order to maintain its poignancy. The one powerful symbol that gains its power from persistence is night. Night is associated generally with mystery, evil and ignorance. In this case, the story starts in the night and all action takes place during the same night. By sunrise, all action is over and the main character, Dr. Eric Sserwadda, is no more.

Thus, while the author is using night as a specific setting in time, the twelve hours of persistent darkness in the story eventually signify something beyond themselves as an expression of time. As the mystery of Dr. Sserwadda's illness deepens, this mystery begins to be symbolised by the night. The two nurses, from whose point of view we are led to encounter the ordinary nurses' feelings are puzzled. It is a mystery to them as Nurse Kigundu asks the narrator:

"Why should Eric, a doctor and a specialist, catch polio? I mean with all these laymen in the land, why him?" (p.43)

In these two questions is encapsulated the mystery which the author has symbolised by the setting - night time and the characteristic darkness. The first question Nurse Kigundu is asking expresses one aspect of the mystery: the difficulty an ordinary nurse is faced with when trying to appreciate the possibility that Dr. Sserwadda, a doctor

and a consultant has not in all the years of his training, exposure and practice thought about his personal safety in relation to the killer disease whose victims he must have seen and treated several times. The reasons behind such an attitude to his own life form a mystery that engulfs even the narrator. She chooses to remain silent. Nurse Kigundu, however, decides to verbalise her puzzlement and in this way she expresses the second aspect of the mystery surrounding this attack. It is strange and, in fact, unacceptable to Nurse Kigundu that in a society where there are countless laymen who make hardly any contribution to the society that such rabble should be by passed by a killer disease while those people who can be described as indispensable because of the specialised knowledge they have acquired as a result of their hard work as well the unequalled dedication with which they serve members of the public are targeted and destroyed. Nurse Kigundu is, thus, confronted with the mystery of death and the usual anguished question as to who decides who should die. The absence of people who might contribute to the debate generated by her questions intensifies the mystery, making the night even more significant since it is itself the cause for there being a severely limited number of people.

Darkness as a symbol of ignorance in this story also calls for examination. The kind of ignorance that manifests itself in a doctor's death caused by lack of immunization against the killer disease can only be aptly symbolised by darkness. During a cloudy, moonless night, eyes are rendered useless; everyone trying to reach out for any familiar object gropes in the dark for it. Some people may simply grope in the dark to avoid hitting into unfamiliar obstacles. The reign of darkness is taken for granted and so

anyone stumbling onto a rock and falling or hurting himself draws sympathy from all those who learn of his plight. Definite knowledge about the whereabouts of stumbling blocks or support material is suspended. Viewed from this angle, then, the setting in time - night - gains meaning beyond itself, thereby setting up a context within which Dr. Sserwadda is to be sympathised with as he is to be seen as a victim of an unrelenting situation of ignorance. It is significant that night in this story has enveloped everyone in it. As the darkness of the night persists and exerts its pressure on the anxious minds of Dr. Sserwadda's friends and his wife, darkness as a symbol of oppressive ignorance that spares no one in the environment of its operation becomes larger and larger.

Dr. Sserwadda dies at 4.30 a.m: thirty minutes before dawn. Thus, the victim of ignorance is not allowed to see daylight. The narrator's wish - "if he can pull through the night, he will make it definitely" (p.) is significant to the symbolic function of night as this leads us to see the end of night as symbolising the end of ignorance and the ushering in of knowledge. In yearning for daylight, the narrator is symbolically yearning for knowledge, the all - encompassing knowledge that will counter the oppressing force of the present all-encompassing ignorance.

At this juncture, we are reminded of Plato's "cave and those who live in it and who spend their time yearning for the light outside their cave (). The narrator's confidence in daylight's ability to put an end to uncertainty about Dr. Sserwadda's condition has within it the suggestion that the arrival of daylight will lead to the eradication of ignorance and the inherent feelings of uncertainty that this state imposes

on the human mind. Thus, the symbolic use of the setting - night, which is a time associated with pitch darkness - enables the author to remind the knowledgeable reader of Plato's philosophical cave. In this way ignorance, which the cave is all about, becomes a powerful force which all those witnesses to the doctor's struggle with death cannot escape to acknowledge. One is also reminded of the socio-historical and racist concept of Africa as the dark continent. This view emphasises ignorance and disease as the two principal vices characteristic of the continent. From this point, it can be argued that the story about a doctor who, through sound exposure to Western education and should, by implication, be already freed from ignorance is still a victim of disease. His great learning does not help him out of ignorance either as suggested by the fact that the physician has not taken any precaution against the preventable disease in spite of knowing all about it and instructing other on the importance of vaccination. Thus, the debilitating myth concerning the African's inability to escape vices that are part and parcel of his environment is affirmed.

None-the-less, contradiction is suggested in several ways. The nurses' disbelief in their hero's vulnerability is here taken into consideration. The author, using the I - narrative technique makes the voice of rejection of the myth by all the characters in the story quite strong.

As well as signifying the mythical, morbid ignorance, night has been used to symbolise evil. Our first encounter with the suggestion that evil is lurking everywhere in the dark night is in the form of the narrator's nightmare. In the nightmare the earth

is described as cruel and it is "breaking [her] bones and quashing [her] into nothingness". (Land Without Thunder [p.39]). The implication of this nightmare is that the night has released evil to stalk the earth, unleashing fear and destroying life. The opening cry, "Help, help, help...."(p.39) is a warning that something is amiss, that evil forces are abroad. One is reminded of the conventional practice of chasing away evil during the night. At such times evil is addressed and told to go very far, leaving families and communities unharmed. In literatures, night has been used to symbolise evil in such works as Shakespeare's Hamlet in which late King Hamlet's angry ghost seeks audience with his son in the night and then orders the young man to avenge his death. Christian teachings have pointed out night as the favourite time for evil doers since evil thrives during the dark hours: "For men loved darkness better than light". (St. John 3)

In "The Hero" the evil that is symbolised by the night is the vicious attack of polio on Dr. Sserwadda. Dr. Sserwadda's illness is like the mysterious works of evil manifested. The effect of this manifestation is felt in the narrator's reaction to the episode. The nightmare she has serves as a herald of the evil to come. For instance, Dr. Sserwadda's gasping is forecast in the narrator's gasps and wriggles. Then, there is the "cruel earth that is breaking the narrator's bones and quashing her" (p.41). This foreshadows the grave into which Dr. Sserwadda is to be interred at the end of the story. At the graveside, the mother of the dead doctor gives the final "terrifying" yell:

No, no, no, don't crush his bones - he is my only son (p.46)

This terrifying yell is reminiscent of the first yell in the story by which the narrator is asking for help against the "cruel earth" that is crushing her. In both yells one can detect a direct confrontation with evil. Helplessness is also discernible. Both women are faced with the bare fact that death is the final manifestation of evil and they each reject it strongly. Dr. Sserwadda's mother is overwhelmed with this reality and she shouts in vain to avert it in the same way the narrator's yells in the nightmare bear no fruit.

It is also important to examine the setting of this story-night - and the darkness enveloping the earth as symbolising the ultimate evil: death and entombment. Fear of death pervades this story right from the time the narrator yells "help!" (p 41) up to the time Dr. Sserwadda is buried. The narrator is mortally afraid of being entombed and at the end of the story Dr. Sserwadda's mother pleads that her only son be spared entombment though she knows that he is dead and as such interment is inevitable.

Night in this story, as in the real world of our experience, where the hooting of an owl chills the blood of those who hear it as it makes them think of death and prompts them to make an effort to avoid it by either uttering a prayer or even chasing away the bird, symbolises death as well as an innate desire to run away from it. The two nurses, Nurse Kigundu and the narrator, want to shut themselves away from the reality of the fact that their hero is dying. This is exemplified in their reluctance to pick the phone. They are psychologically holding on to his life and thereby protecting their hero from the darkness of the grave. Even when the reality of the interment of the remains of Dr.

Sserwadda strikes the narrator, she still insists on avoiding the everlasting darkness of death into which he has sunk by describing him as looking "merely asleep"(p.46). It is significant that the narrator does not throw the earth into the grave as this would symbolically be accepting the fact of death; she pushes her "way from the graveside" while "still holding red soil in trembling hands" (p.46).

A psychoanalytic interpretation of events in the nightmare and the scene at the graveside will also reveal not only man's congenial fear of death and the consequent determination to run away from it but also the "fear of premature burial" (Guerine *et alia*. 1986, p. 27). The narrator describes the dream about being buried alive as a "terrible dream" (p.39), suggesting a mortal fear in her of being prematurely interred. At the graveside, the author introduces the hero's mother. She is horrified by the imminent interment of her son, a person younger than her and so one who is facing premature entombment. Her presence suggests the womb from which Dr. Sserwadda came. Treated synecdochally this episode would be seen as one in which the womb is offering resistance to the grave and pleading to have its product back into itself. At the same time, the presence of the mother and symbolically, the womb suggests the completion of the life cycle. The womb, working by synecdoche, is at the site to complement the grave. It is, thus, a paradox that the whole (the mother) should be horrified when the part (the womb) is faced with its natural complement.

In addition to embodying the complement to death - birth -the presence of the mother of the dead man adds more meaning to the earth that receives her son. "Mother

Earth" is a well known expression in literature. This fond reference to the earth does not, as this story suggests, just end at the earth being the one upon which all terrestrial life depends for existence. In this story, mother earth also opens an aperture within herself and receives the son of one of the mortal mothers. Symbolically, Mother Earth receives into herself what the mortal mother conceived and carried within herself. Thus, Dr. Eric Sserwadda's mother must be at the graveside to hand her son over to the immortal Mother Earth. Following this argument, then, one can say that her yell is a result of a primeval recognition of her own mortality which has been inherited by her son, obliging her to hand him over to the immortal Mother Earth. It is a cry of helplessness; a protest against mortality in the stark face of immortality. There is also a tinge of jealousy felt for the immortal Mother Earth who is destined to keep the son of the mortal mother for ever.

The contrast between the mortal and the immortal is worth of note in this story. Time is symbolised by the clock on the wall. We are told that there is a clock on the wall. At the same time there are five mentions of time and ten references to the passing of time, thus:

I was late
Age 31
Admitted at 4:30 p.m.
.....
...older or younger than 31
.....
By 12:30 a.m. Dr.

Sserwadda showed signs of deterioration...

.....

The clock on the wall struck 4 a.m.....

.....

If he can pull through the night.....

.....

At 7:10 a.m. I left Nurse Kigundu....

break fast trays

I had been there a minute.....

Dr. Eric Sserwadda died at 4:30 a.m

.....

The day was long.....

.....

The evening sunlight.....

Two long and weary days passed. On the
third day....(p.41)

On the whole the story, short as it is, gives attention to time and the passing thereof fifteen times. The narrator is depicted as one who is afflicted by time. She wakes up late for her night duty and has to slip on her uniform in a hurry. Every minute she passes in the word is characterized by the fear she has about Dr. Sserwadda's condition which seems to deteriorate with every passing hour so that by midnight he is in dire need of admission in a bigger hospital where "his breathing [can] be helped by an iron lung" (p.43). Even when she is praying, she is sensitive to the wall clock enough to hear it strike 4 a.m. She is able to remember that the news of his death at 4:30 a.m gets to her and Nurse Kigundu at about 7:10 am. After the announcement of the death of Dr. Sserwadda, the author suspends detailed reference to the hour and the minutes after it. This is significant in that in symbolic terms the mortal has passed into immortality which is a realm that is not subject to time. The symbolic treatment of death

as the end of subjection to time and hence freedom from the type of harassment that is discerned in the narrator before she learns of Dr. Sserwadda's death is found in the last episode. There is no mention of time at the graveside. The freed man, who has transcended the dictates of time, is described as not only "[looking] merely asleep" but also having lost the "little facial wrinkles" (p.46). The little facial wrinkles are marks generally associated with harassment and age both of which are impositions of Time on mortals. In contrast to the "wrinkle - free" face of the one who is no longer subject to dictates of Time are "the haggard faces of grief-stricken mourners" (p.46). This contrast is a symbolic affirmation of the supremacy of the Immortal and a rejection of man's futile attempts to run away from the inevitable and escape into a state unaffected by Time.

Because the state unaffected by Time remains a mystery to mortal man and so gets associated with night, and darkness, one can say that Grace Ogot's choice of night as the dominant setting of events whose end takes place in a dark grave is aesthetically very effective. The author emphasises the dominance of darkness as the dominant characteristic of night by giving this long night a moon that shines only dimly, causing objects hit by the dim light to look "ghostly thin and long" (p.43). This description of the moon and its effect on the environment robs the moon of the conventional association of that planet with fertility, mating and life. In this context the dimness of the moon can be said to be symbolic of the diminishing life force in the doctor. The moon that shines

dimly seems to be also symbolic of the diminishing hope that the doctor can recover. Despair, which is a state of hopelessness and physical listlessness, is aptly symbolised in the dim light of the moon.

In such weak light one can also read the destruction of the hero. The narrator and her colleagues worship Dr. Eric Sserwadda. This adoration has in it suggestions of the erotic as implied in these lines:

so many of us nurses worshipped him secretly. Everything about Eric was immaculate, and he was for us a perfect image of what any woman would want to see in a man. To us who he knew by name, we were a class apart (p 42)

The narrator's reaction to the flowers on the coffin as indicated in the phrase "smothering mantle of flowers" suggests her erotic disposition toward the deceased. Further suggestions of erotic love for Dr. Sserwadda are to be found in the narrator's reaction to the final rites involving throwing soil onto the coffin before interment. In this episode, the narrator pushes her way from the grave, still holding her soil in her hands. The hands are trembling. This overwhelming emotional charge leads one to read the reaction of a lover who is aware that the love is against current social etiquette so that display of it may draw implied or even open censure.

Following this line of argument, one can see the dim light of the moon as symbolising disapproval of the narrator's erotic disposition towards the married doctor. The chill experienced on this night goes to accentuate the fact of lifelessness suggested

by the non-life giving dim moon. Thus, the narrator's feelings for the dying man are in counter distinction with the dimly moonlit night. It appears that the realization of her feelings is as frightening as the shadows that "look [ed] ghostly thin and long" (p.43).

The dim moonlight that is unable to excite mating in female mammals, the narrator included, provides an environment that prompts the owl to moan, causing more fear in the heart of the narrator.

The dream at the beginning of the story can also be analysed in the context of the narrator's erotic disposition towards Dr. Sserwadda. According to Freud's theory of the unconscious, dreams are symbolic manifestations of unconscious desire and fears after the power of sleep has lowered the resistance that continually keeps them suppressed (Guerin *et alia*, p.9). The narrator's fear of personal death, which is a fear shared by the entire human species, is, in the context of this story stretched to include fear of the death of a loved one. It is significant that her first reaction to signs of ardent prayer for the sick is that the matron must have received some news for her "about a dead relative" (40). Dr. Sserwadda and a relative from home share one thing in common in her heart: either of them is a loved one, loved by her though not in the same detail since one occupies the nook of erotic love while the other rests in the area of philia love. Her unconscious desire for the doctor carries within it the fear of losing him which fear does in turn bear within itself the desire to die and be buried with him should death and interment be the method of losing him. Thus, in her unconscious self, the doctor's death is synonymous with her own death, hence the inclusion of these words in the dream:

The cruel earth was breaking my bones and
squashing me into nothingness (p.39)
and at the end of the story she says,

I remembered my dreadful dream: the earth
had buried and crushed me into nothingness
(p.46)

When one examines this story from this point of view, one can say that the scene at the graveside is a fine denouement of this love story. It becomes a story of self-discovery in which, by use of dream as a stylistic device, the author brings the self-deluding narrator face to face with the horror of her amorous desires for a friend's husband and the vulnerability of that love. The author completes the process started in a dream in an actual re-enactment of the dream when the maturing nurse has to watch the object of her love and adoration - her hero - buried. Part of the maturing process also involves listening to the Bishop's routine and passionless words, "what has come from dust must return to dust" and then watching mourners' symbolic acceptance of the fact of death as they throw earth into the grave. That she is terrified by her hero's mother's loud protest against his interment where she herself has not found words to express her feelings is indicative of her discovery of herself as an impostor in this case. Finally, she "push[es] her way from the graveside", signifying a realization that she cannot be buried with him and that the illusion that his death is synonymous to hers only belongs to the pre-self-discovery period of her life.

It is significant that this is the only story in which Grace Ogot uses the I-narrative technique.

4.4 "Elizabeth" (pp. 191-206)

"Elizabeth" is the tragic story of a young woman who joins a profession that is riddled with morbid male chauvinism which manifests itself in the assumption that women, and especially those young women who train as secretaries, are there for the exploitation by men. The people heading those institutions that need and employ secretaries are men while the secretaries are women. In the immoral world of this story, all secretaries, it appears, are expected to be aware of the fact that a boss may demand sex from his secretary who in turn should not only oblige but also feel privileged to be asked. In other words, a woman forfeits the right and authority she has over her body the minute she completes her training as a secretary and she should demonstrate that she understands the forfeiture. Any resistance against this undocumented code of conduct that has neither legal nor professional backing can only lead to the kind of frustration that Elizabeth encounters.

Told from the omniscient narrator's point of view, this story traces Elizabeth's life in the Department of Aviation, her third employer in a period of six months. From the letter she writes to Ochola, her lover who is studying at the Ohio State University, it is clear that prior to her getting her present employment, she was worried about the possibility of remaining unemployed as a result of her refusal to give in to demands which she regards immoral and demeaning as the author tells us:

Both bosses had given her the impression that she ought to be a cheap girl ready to sell her body for promotion and money (p.190).

She frustrates the expectations of both men by walking out on them, never to come back.

In this story that outlines a young secretary's futile attempt to flee the predicament which she lands herself into by virtue of her choosing a career that has been marred by the encounter of male chauvinism and female vanity and frailty, the author employs several stylistic devices. We will in this chapter concern ourselves with four: use of dialogue, description, irony and symbolism.

The employment of dialogue as a stylistic device in "Elizabeth" gives the story the dramatic punch which it requires as a protest short story. Dialogue enables the reader to see the characters and events and also to hear the voices on the phone, in the scene of seduction, in the grandmother's hut and finally in the note that devastates Mr. Jimbo. At the same time, dialogue in this story can be said to make the various emotions in it felt: Elizabeth's excitement on the phone, her anguish as she struggles to free herself from her lusty boss, her desperation as she tries to change and finally the twin emotions of despair and protest that are found in the note:

I have come to stay, it is chilly standing at the door, so I thought I would wait for you in the laundry - room. It is me, Elizabeth (p.).

In a particularly dream-or vision - like manner the author conveys the young woman's final protest against Mr. Jimbo's treacherous act. It is important to note that at the time of reading this message, the writer of it is already dead. She has been transported into the realm of ghosts so that reading the note that directs him to the place where he is to find her corpse is like talking to her ghost. Mythically, ghosts are known to complain of chill. In this way then, the author is exploiting the primeval fear of encounter with death and apparitions to make even more vivid Mr. Jimbo's panic and despair. Grace Ogot prepares the reader for this reaction through the use of the direct speech which prompts the inner eye and ear to see and hear respectively while our emotions are simultaneously aroused as these words hit the inner eye and ear. The note of finality in the message gives the episode a life of its own which makes it almost palpable.

It is significant that the story starts with a telephone conversation. Using the direct speech the author makes Elizabeth bubble with life, enthuse with ambition and hope and radiate confidence in her ability as a secretary. The politeness detected in the responses:

...can I help you?

Sorry, he has not come yet

...could you kindly ring again, please (191)?

endear her to the reader and the effect is akin to the one that a character on stage who is heard and seen talking politely has on the audience. Elizabeth Masaba is, thus, effectively focused upon as the sympathetic heroine of the story. When we meet her in

conversation after the tragic encounter with Mr. Jimbo, we notice the contrast as it is made vivid by her subdued tone in which she utters words indicative of despair:

That is what I want - help me find a
different job even if it carries half my
present salary (p.199)

The character of Elizabeth as a determined young woman who is ready to sacrifice the comfortable life of a personal secretary in a prestigious office just so that she can preserve whatever is left of her womanhood is brought out clearly in her own words.

Dialogue also enhances Mr. Jimbo's character. Jimbo's hypocrisy is acted out in the office in the presence of Elizabeth. In this episode Mr. Jimbo is eager to display a polite, loving - husband facade. The facade expresses itself in these words:

No - I will speak to her right away.
.....
Sorry, Amy dear, would you take the
driver, the meeting is still going on. I will
give you a ring when I finish.
(Wife) Right, will be hearing from you then
(p.192).

This brief drama in the office convinces Elizabeth further that actually Mr. Jimbo is a trust-worthy boss whose care for the family is sure to suppress the type of overindulgence that leads bosses to want to take advantage of their secretaries.

The destructive hypocrisy in the story is encapsulated in such fatherly utterances as:

I hate to leave you to walk to the hostel alone when it is so late, but I don't believe in giving lifts to young girls. Soon the town would start gossiping and you would get a bad name for nothing. You have a long future in front of you, my child. You should protect your name (p.194; emphasis mine).

Spoken by Mr. Jimbo himself, these words have a power that effectively allays the fears of the young woman as she is bound to remember not only the fatherly assurance but also the way he has said it in detail. When Mr. Jimbo discards the facade of the understanding fatherly boss, dialogue is used to highlight the man's wickedness. The urgency in his voice as is indicated in his inability to construct any complex or even compound sentence has no resemblance to the long sentences used earlier on in their encounter and remembered by Elizabeth with admiration for the moral strength that supports such attitudes. In the rape scene the author recreates the excitement of Mr. Jimbo:

Listen to me, Liz-listen...
I cant hurt you. I like you like my own child, I can't hurt you - honestly. I - I just wanted to feel your body close to mine, but I won't hurt you. I promise (p.195)

It is important to note that while Mr. Jimbo's direct speech is being used to expose the horror of the family man's lust in the face of the terrified young woman whom the author denies direct contact with the reader except for one last passionate plea in which she invokes the name of her boyfriend, Mr. Jimbo's family and the entire

society, Elizabeth's struggle which is reported in narrative style enhances the idea of victimization. One is reminded of the struggle between a sheep and its predator, a case in which the victim struggles silently to death while its attacker grows on.

Thus, the use of dialogue affords the author the opportunity to highlight the stuff that hypocrisy is made of without sounding preachy and commonplace. Dialogue also enables the author to predict the tragic end of the story without tampering with the necessary suspense that precedes the discovery of Elizabeth's body hanging in the laundry-room with the note "I have come to stay.....I thought I would wait for you in the Laundry - room" (p.203). These words are reminiscent of her plea on the fateful afternoon.

Please, sir, let me go...
Please, Ochola will not understand, nor will
your wife. your children and the people...oh
please, let me go--(196 emphasis mine)

He does not let her go neither does he stop to reflect on what it is that people will fail to understand. His holding onto her that day justifies her decision to stay by him on this day. The questions as to why she has killed herself and why she has chosen to do it in Mr. Jimbo's residence have answers which no one can understand. Thus, in direct speech Elizabeth warns her boss of the serious repercussions that his insistence on raping her is sure to have on her fiance, the boss's family and the community. When Mr. Jimbo reads her note and then sees her body, he collapses because of the power of the direct speech: the warning rings in his mind with all the accompanying facial expression, tone and gestures. Mr. Jimbo does not have to remember anything, the audio-visual

impact of the drama of the rape scene revisits him and he is overwhelmed. The reader shares with the disgraced boss the secret behind the note and the suicide, like the dramatized scene of rape is empowered by the use of the direct speech which has both inner audio and visual effect on us.

While dialogue enables the author to achieve clarity and brevity simultaneously, description makes Elizabeth's hopes and fears accessible to us. Mr. Jimbo's office, for instance, is described in details. The author emphasises neatness. We are told: "the spacious office was neatly arranged...Everything was neatly arranged on the table" (p.190). Included in the "everything" that is neatly arranged is the photograph of Mrs. Jimbo and her two sons. The floor of the office is covered with a deep green carpet. This spacious office that is neatly arranged and given a homely atmosphere by the presence of the photograph of wife and sons is to be the scene of betrayal and violence. The green carpet that suggests safety is to be used for a violent act that threatens to destroy and eventually destroys the life of an innocent young woman. The photograph, which should tame Mr. Jimbo as it announces to all those who come to his office that he is a married man with two sons to take care of and to provide an example to, proves meaningless on the fateful afternoon. Though it provides the only resemblance of human presence in the large office it only heightens the sense of betrayal and mockery of decent living. It is significant that Elizabeth refers to them as being there in the photograph in "one corner like watchmen guarding the office" (p.192) and on the fateful afternoon she refers to them too, reminding Mr. Jimbo of their existence and of the fact that it is

important for him to execute only those actions whose consequences can be explained and understood by his family.

Thus, the detailed description of the office, which leads one to admire it and see it for what it is—an executive office in which only formal discussions and official register are to be used—also has in it suggestions that some of the signs of honesty and respected officialdom are but a camouflage for base and incredibly mean activities that go on in it. Mr. Jimbo's vulgar expressions and behaviour shock the reader because they stand in contradistinction with the setting. Mr. Jimbo is speaking and acting in the wrong place, a place whose physical set up seems to be screaming out against the crudity and immorality being accommodated in it.

As well as giving a detailed description that packs the office with associations and meanings, Grace Ogot also describes the man, Mr. Jimbo, in significant detail. As is the case with the office, the author highlights only those areas that are of significance to the story. For instance, the fact of being forty years old is important to the story. Once we are told that Mr. Jimbo "was about 40 years or so", it is implied that he is old enough to be the young secretary's father and that he should, by rule of common decency, treat Elizabeth as his daughter. It is in this context that one is to appreciate her going in to his office and sitting on the settee "out of sheer politeness" (p.145); etiquette does not allow that she be rude to a man who is old enough to be her father. Because we are told he is about forty years of age, we are able to appreciate callousness in his seeming persuasion of Elizabeth in such expressions as:

I can't hurt you. I like you like my own child, I can't hurt you - honestly.....but I won't hurt you. I promise (p.195)

That one can attain the age of forty and yet be still ignorant of the consequences of casual sex to a young woman of Elizabeth's age is incredible. What the author intends to suggest by this seeming ignorance that fails to go with the stated age is that Mr. Jimbo is selfish and destructive.

The author describes Mr. Jimbo's voice as fatherly. This quality of voice is to be misused by the boss in the story. It is the "deep fatherly voice" that lures the young secretary into the office, the scene of her torture and destruction. The confidence and authority that characterise his voice are to be used to destroy the defenceless young woman's confidence as he threatens:

Now you are to behave like a good girl - the people will hear us - and think of the scandal. I've told you that I can't hurt you (p.196).

His confidence and authority instil fear in Elizabeth.

Mr. Jimbo is also a big man. He is tall, being five foot nine inches, with a chubby face that suggests stoutness. This size, described in the rape scene as bulky, renders unnecessary any doubt as to whether Elizabeth is forcefully taken advantage of or not; the bulkiness of her assailant's body rules out any chances of her ever successfully fighting for her honour against the huge man.

The description of Mr. Jimbo's teeth is important as these teeth that look "too white to be real" (p.) seem to be giving further information on the character of the

boss. His teeth are too white for their base - the dark gums. The contrast the teeth and gums form seems to be there to warn the young secretary that she is in an office where genuine appearance and dealings have all lost out to the artificial and the fake; the macabre. Her fate in this office that is teeming with the artificial is foreshadowed in the words: "But Elizabeth knew that time alone could tell" (p.191). Thus, the vivid description of Mr. Jimbo's appearance and characteristics helps suggest the background against which the reader is to judge the crucial action in the story, which action devastates both the perpetrator and the victim.

There is also the description of Mr. Jimbo's effort to get Elizabeth's consent to an act that she considers totally unacceptable. In one short paragraph Grace Ogot focuses on the detail she considers significant to the purpose of the scene: to communicate the fact that the young secretary has no chance of escape neither does she have the energy and bulk to match those of Mr. Jimbo and enable her to stop him carrying out his design. The author focuses on his big hands which stand in contrast to Elizabeth's "young breasts" for which the big hands are desperately reaching out. There is also the search for young Elizabeth's mouth by Mr. Jimbo which we are told is to be found on his chubby, oily face. The effect of this search on Elizabeth is to excite disgust in her. The description of his breath as "hot" enhances the atmosphere of disgust and dismay. His body too is appalling; it is described as one which is giving forth a suffocating masculine odour from every pore. Thus, in this brief paragraph, the author builds an atmosphere that is akin to an inhygienic police cell; an atmosphere that is

characterised by agents of dehumanization, brutality, sickening smells of the human body, pain and nausea and, above all lack of freedom. The young secretary is caged. By this description the author transfers responsibility of what happens to Elizabeth from her to Mr. Jimbo. This transfer of responsibility at this moment foreshadows Mr. Jimbo's final acceptance of the mess when "his feet [give] way and he [sags] to the ground" (p.203).

When Elizabeth later receives the doctor's report on her condition, her reaction is described vividly. Conversation is suspended, what the reader is exposed to are visual effects. We are told:

She grabbed Mother Hellena's arm and did not let her go (p.201).

It is as though the abused girl cannot find words to express her shock. Her confusion and shame translate into a disease that inflicts violent pain at the throat, in the chest and inside her belly. The choice of the three areas is significant: pain in the throat could be seen at this moment as implying the girl's disgust with breath and hence with the very fact of breathing and being alive. This pain that suggests suffocation could also be seen as foreshadowing the death by the rope which occurs at the end of the story when Elizabeth opts to end her life by suffocating herself using a rope. The painful chest in this context is actually referring to the increased heart beat that could easily lead to heart attack and death. Pain in the belly serves to emphasize the shock the young girl has experienced. The three major areas that are connected with a healthy pregnancy

seem to be in turmoil and seem to be violently opposed to the news and the state. Thus, the final decision to commit suicide is the mind's way of responding to the body's rejection of a state so difficult to get out of without sacrificing life or lives.

In "Elizabeth", Grace Ogot also displays ability to tell her story in "swift shots" using moments of suggestions" and thereby rendering "elaboration and explanations superfluous" (). For instance, the telephone conversation at the beginning of the story and the conversation between Elizabeth and Mrs. Jimbo indicate clearly that the young woman is an accomplished secretary. When it comes to the rape scene, the violent abuse is referred to in these terms:

... it was like one of those terrible nightmares without an end (p.195).

The term nightmare suggests a horrifying happening that only exists in the psyche; it has not happened and must not be entertained. This feeling in Elizabeth helps the reader understand why the discovery of the fact that she is pregnant shocks her. The suggestive phrase, " a terrible nightmare", divests her of any responsibility for the consequences of the [rape] act; it places her in a position from which she can claim shock and dismay at the revelation that she is pregnant, which revelation is also suggesting that she actually had sexual intercourse some time two months ago.

That the rape has destroyed her relationship with Ochola forever is suggested twice. The first indication is the crumpling of Ochola's photograph. We are told that "the crumpled photograph of her fiance' ... had fallen on the floor" (pp. 196-197). What

Elizabeth thinks about her engagement to Ochola is not described. Her fond feelings for him which are seen in the initial act of embracing the photograph are negated in three ways: the photograph is crumpled, it is left to fall on the floor and Elizabeth does not pick it up. Further to this swift, unelaborated "shot" is the deliberate action of burning the blood stained pants which were sent to her as an Easter present from Ochola. Systematically, she demonstrates that the relationship is irreparably ruined. The pants go up in flames, producing smoke which moves Elizabeth to tears. That Elizabeth sobs is significant. It is a gesture of release; she is compelled by the violent defloration and her conscience which seems appalled by any thought of continuing the relationship with Ochola to cancel the engagement and forget that it ever existed just as the burning of the pants will ensure that she is not ever reminded of its ever having been there. Thus, the simple objects and gestures on this eventful day become for the story highly suggestive and effective.

The impact of these gestures and objects helps the author achieve economy. At the same time, one can see the simple action of throwing the pants into an incinerator as symbolic of not only the irrevocable decision to have nothing to do with Ochola, the buyer of the pants, but also the death of Elizabeth, the girl who has lived for the engagement and the certainty of marriage until the fateful afternoon.

An examination of the final act of suicide in the story leads one to see more meaning in that action than its face value. One sees in suicide the final act of negation; a refusal to exercise the will to live. The author depicts Elizabeth preparing for this

death meticulously. Then she chooses the laundry room as the venue. It can be seen that the suicide, reinforced by the venue, gains symbolic importance. Elizabeth's corpse in the laundry room symbolizes the hollowness and even lifelessness of the existence of the Jimbo family. Symbolically the horror of Mr. Jimbo's infidelity to the family stares them in the face. The coldness of heart with which he deals with the likes of Elizabeth, contrasting sharply with the tenderness of heart which prompts him to take his family out for a leisure ride, is all there symbolized in the suicide victim.

Furthermore, the laundry room is a symbol of the family's fastidious life style. Following the adage "cleanliness is next to Godliness" one can argue that the author's choice of the laundry room as the place for the suicide and the siting of the corpse by the Jimbo family is made with the intention of creating an ironic contrast. It is ironical that a family that is so clean as to set aside a room for washing up dirty laundry should be headed by a man who is guilty of soiling young women's lives and thereby driving them away from Godliness. Elizabeth's dangling body has a powerful visual impact that goes further to suggest the Godless state into which she must have plunged before death. Thus, the ironic contrast created by the venue transforms the entire scene into a symbol of filthy living in which affluence, conspicuous consumption and pretence have been left to front for the emptiness of the life actually experienced by the Jimbo family.

In the tragic story of Elizabeth Masaba, the author also uses irony to condemn social pretence and self delusion. Mr. Jimbo, the forty year old boss, is an accomplished actor as well as being a practised rapist. As such he knows well how to get his victim.

Between him and Elizabeth it is only he who knows that his politeness, the glowing tribute he showers on her as well as the eagerness to pronounce personal adherence to etiquette which adherence makes it difficult for him to give Elizabeth a lift in his car, are all part of his well thought out scheme to oblige her to oblige him. His plan is to flatter and make the young woman feel indebted to him. The irony in this is that Elizabeth remains unaware of this wicked scheme and even counts herself lucky to have such a "fatherly boss" for once.

There is also irony in the choice of the simile "smooth and tender like petals of a flower" to describe Elizabeth's skin (p.196). Mr. Jimbo's words are uttered when he is already handling the young secretary so roughly that the honoured smoothness is diminishing. To view her as a flower and to fail to recognise her vulnerability in the face of violence is ironical. Thus, the author is using irony to expose Mr. Jimbo's dull-wittedness.

The conversation between Elizabeth and the hair-dresser is a classic example of irony when we appreciate the fact that the latter is talking in ignorance of the young woman's intention in seeking to look her best on this day. The conversation runs thus:

"You have got a twinkle in your eyes. Are you meeting him tonight"?

"Yes", Elizabeth whispered back.

"You are a beautiful woman, he is so lucky".

"Thank You - he is very handsome too, and kind (p.203)."

Elizabeth knows that she has resolved to make an appointment with death this same afternoon and, as such she will never meet Ochola. What the hair-dresser interprets to be a twinkle of excitement in her eye is actually a twinkle of resoluteness. To be obliged to say nice things about Ochola when she is in this state is, therefore incongruous.

In "Elizabeth" the discussion of the use of irony exposes some elements of satire embedded in it. Peck and Coyle say this of satire:

a mode of writing in which social affectation and vice are ridiculed ... [satirical works] present a picture of man in society, and by exaggerating or distorting the picture, they draw attention to how man often acts in an outrageous or absurd manner. People are presented as motivated by lust: lust for sex ... (Peck & Coyle, P.144)

Basing our argument on this view, we can say that the treatment of Mr. Jimbo in totality is an example of satire. The case of the tall, bulky, forty year old man with an oily skin that confirms his mature age, and a chubby face that suggests a comfortable life of plenty to eat and enjoy is one of incongruity when it gets mixed up with that of a young woman in her early twenties, judging by the fact of her having not worked for one year since her completion of training. The entire scene of attempted seduction that fails is incongruous. The antics he applies, the shortened form of Elizabeth - Liz - the expressions he uses such as "your lovely skin is smooth and tender like the petals of a

flower" (p.195) all go into presenting the reader with a case of incongruity where the contrast between the speaker and his audience is as great and, simultaneously, as laughable and pitiable as that created by a hangman behaving in a similar way toward a condemned man or woman at the noose.

Throughout this scene that is characterised by incongruity one can discern irony as the underlying stylistic device. It is, for instance, ironical that Mr. Jimbo, while engaged in a violent act that is meant to undermine Elizabeth's womanhood, should keep on saying,

I like you like my own child ...
I care too much for you ... you're so lovable ... I care too
much (pp. 195-196).

In this verbal irony one is led to the shocking reality that actually Mr. Jimbo is too blinded by his lust for the young girl to realise how much he is deceiving himself and his victim. Because Elizabeth, the girl he professes to care for, cannot be separated from her womanhood which is the essence of her being a young woman, he cannot strive to mess it up and still claim to care for her. The boss is ignorant of the contradiction his words create vis-a-vis his actions.

In the same scene the author provides us with another ironical statement. Once again, it is based on Jimbo's ignorance. When he praises Elizabeth's "lovely skin" and "the warmth of [her] womanhood" he shows ignorance of the fact that he finds these properties enchanting because he is old and besides they are being judged against the background of his elderly wife's. He is using the wrong foil.

There are also instances of verbal irony in Elizabeth's words. For example, she tells Mr. Jimbo on the fateful afternoon of rape. "you are an easy person to work for" (p. 194), little knowing that the boss has come into the office to demonstrate to her that he is not "easy to work for" and that the impending demonstration is to make the end of her employment in the Department of Aviation. In total ignorance of the lust and malice pent up in the boss' composed body, she praises him.

When Mr. Jimbo comments on Elizabeth's engagement ring, she responds:

... nothing doing for another two years or so
and by that time a lot of changes will have
taken place (p.195).

This is another incident of irony. Here she innocently reflects on the future in total ignorance of the fact that she is talking to the man who will trigger off the change by not only deflowering her but by making her pregnant as well. Her death by suicide, which is to put an end to her relationship with Ochola is a secret known only to the author. The irony in the statement can also be appreciated from Mr. Jimbo's point of view. In total ignorance of the true facts about the young secretary's life, tastes and moral values, the boss understands this statement to be one meant to encourage him to make advances to her. Thus, while Elizabeth is being evasive and polite about her private life in the presence of her boss, she is, once again, in total ignorance of the weakness of Mr. Jimbo, giving him a hint to seduce her. Both the writer and the reader share the knowledge of the intended meaning of the simple remark by Elizabeth on her

engagement ring but the two characters talking about it remain ignorant of both the intended meaning in the case of Mr. Jimbo and its impact on the addressee, in the case of Elizabeth.

Nevertheless, the polite response seems to be "inviting [us] to look beneath the surface to seek deeper levels of meaning ..." (Guerine *et alia*, p. 16). We note that the author gives the words to Elizabeth herself to articulate them and, although we have established the ironic impact of this utterance, it is important to examine it from the point of view of self-discovery. Looked at from this angle the utterance appears to be an expression of the unconscious admiration for the successful family man who has also made it economically. The admission that for another two years her ring has little significance is a verbalization of a sentiment prompted by the animus in her psyche rather than a consciously thought-out response to the boss's question. At this juncture the boss can be seen as the archetypal tempter as he fingers her ring and mock-admires the established lover who bought the ring. Elizabeth's response to the tempter's question as to the identity of her lover is significant:

'Still a student' ... (p. 195, emphasis mine)

Still in this context has a tinge of disappointment. It is an unconscious admission of her heart's desire: she would that he was through with the studies and ready to marry her. The adverb, still, coming at the head of the phrase also becomes an unconscious invitation to the boss, a man, to be intimate with her, at least for two years.

Thus, at the level of the subconscious, that level that is impervious to reason, Elizabeth invites the lustful man to seduce her only to realize moments later that it is the wrong thing to do; it is then too late to reverse the man's impression of her.

The study of the style of "Elizabeth" has so far brought to the fore those elements of the story which make it aesthetically satisfying. However, this examination would be incomplete if some of the lapses that weaken it were not mentioned. The first of these has to do with the inclusion of unnecessary elaboration which has the effect of blunting the poignancy of the story. For example, after Elizabeth has taken in details of her new boss's office, her wondering how long she [would] stay in the Department of Aviation does not need to be recorded. This clairvoyance bestowed on the young woman weakens the impression given of her as a devoted secretary as it tends to suggest that she takes new assignments with great reservations and the attendant detachment. Further to this is the clause "But Elizabeth knew that time alone could tell" which anticipates Mr. Jimbo's mischievous and fierce nature that is to be displayed later in the story. The effect of this clairvoyant's caution is that it blunts the irony developed around Elizabeth's ignorance of her boss's true character and hence the existence of complete trust in his apparently fatherly voice and authority. The consequences of blunting the barb of the irony here is an unconscious divestiture of innocence from Elizabeth, yet it is upon this innocence that the weight of the tragedy in the story relies. In order to argue that Elizabeth; is a victim of Mr. Jimbo's lust for sex and then go further to see her death as an indictment of such lust and cruelty, she must be presented as trusting and no more

than that. Thus, it is a sign of clumsiness in style to let a character consistently held up as the victim show cracks in that role and even give rise to the suspicion that she could have been consciously lusting for her attacker, thereby cleansing him of the stigma.

After the conversation between Elizabeth and the hairdresser is concluded on a highly ironic note, the authorial voice intrudes with the comment: "The words resounded in her mind to mock her" (p.203). This intrusion weakens the impact of the irony. By now both the reader and Elizabeth are sharing the secret that it is the knowledge that Ochola is handsome and kind, and he values the young secretary very much, that is sending the deflowered pregnant woman to her death to avoid an encounter that is certain to be disappointing and painful. That responding to the hairdresser's complement is self-mockery is clear to the reader. The authorial comment is thus, redundant.

Finally, we will comment on the tendency to include digressions and irrelevancies which have the tendency to weaken the intensity of the story. One such digression is the anecdote about the onset of Elizabeth's monthly period. It is rendered superfluous by the general flow of the story: the weight of the responsibility is on Mr. Jimbo's shoulders so that the whole drama preceding the rape is to be seen as Elizabeth's determined fight to escape the abuse. However, what this anecdote is doing is to shift responsibility to the injured girl. Whereas the rape scene does not depict Elizabeth as a frivolous girl "playing with boys", this superfluous flashback talks of warning against playing with boys and thereby inviting disaster to oneself and one's entire family. Thus, this episode introduces responsibility and cause for self-indictment which is to be later stated by the

omniscient narrator:

... the self-reproach for what she regarded as personal failure had blotted everything out from Elizabeth's mind (p.202).

Such self-indictment weakens the cathartic effect of the tragedy as it interferes with the story's ability to produce a single impression. The satirical tone adopted in the treatment of Mr. Jimbo is muffled with the possibility of cynicism coming to the fore and becoming increasingly apparent. In other words, this episode only serves as a specimen of stylistic lapses in the story.

"Elizabeth" concludes on a tragic note, however. The tragedy is double-edged as both the victim and her tormentor are destroyed; Elizabeth's physical death marks the end of Mr. Jimbo's career and prestige as a successful family man. His case is, in a way, more tragic than that of Elizabeth as he is left to live on with the image of his disgraced self; he has to accept that people have heard and the scandal is spreading without Elizabeth's screams. The incongruous heap into which he falls is a symbol of his crashed personality. It is a fitting denouement to this tragedy.

We will conclude this chapter on "Dream and Reality" by reiterating the point that Grace Ogot's contribution to the body of what is still regarded in the literary circles as a "new" genre is as a result of personal commitment to what is beautiful and pleasing. The language is kept close to the characters who use it and whom it is used to talk about. When for instance, it is necessary for Okutima to communicate to Matron Jack about the crisis in the hospital, the author gives him language that is appropriate to him and his

audience: Matron Jack, thus:

"Yote nakwenda, Matron, vote" (p.16)

It is broken Kiswahili, but then that is the only language common to the two. It causes humour in a context that is grim and, in this way it speeds up the pace.

Anna, Nurse Kigundu, Jerudine and Sister Mary in "The Hero" are all fluent in the English language. Conversation here is marked by what is accepted as standard conversation register: use of incomplete sentences, short forms and appropriate speech tags. The sombre mood is suggested in the conversation that constantly threatens to stop. In this way both the language and the users communicate one thing: the mystery that life cannot be understood, and, so it cannot be discussed.

In "Elizabeth" we come across the language of the city and it is used by the sophisticated class of bosses and their secretaries as well as by the simple development workers in charitable institutions. Expressions such as "Thank you, sir - the pleasure is mine ..." are examples of the sophisticated language used in Mr. Jimbo's office.

In addition to examining language use, we have in this chapter been able to analyse the use of irony as a stylistic device. It has been possible to see characters deeply disturbed or simply destroyed by their coming face to face with the truth which has eluded them throughout the story. The death of Monica ("The Old White Witch") is a case in point and so is Anna's revulsion with the act of interment ("The Hero"). Mr. Jimbo faints on realizing the truth about himself - that he is an unscrupulous, lecherous wretch and not a respectable family man.

There are also instances of symbolism as an aspect of style and hence we have come across conventional symbols such as the moon being used in a fresh way to convey meaning that is different from the one traditionally assigned to it. The earth, normally referred to fondly as Mother Earth has been used to signify destruction ("The Hero"). Destruction of a lover's gift by fire has been treated in such a way that the single effect it leads to is the symbolic end of the relationship ("Elizabeth"). The cold ashes that the pants are reduced to foreshadow the death of the character burning the object.

Finally, one can say the three stories, like the rest of the stories in the anthology, have shown a keen interest in the physiological as well as psychological well being of man. There is not any single part of the body that is left out in the stories in Land Without Thunder. It is as though the author is suggesting that tragedy does not stem from external forces, it starts right within the individual. Grace Ogot's characters are oversensitive: their tongues are busy rejecting bad food in Cairo ("Karantina"), their noses pick nauseating smells ("Elizabeth"), their eyes register grins that turn out to be suppressed weeping (The Hero) while their ears pick up piercing cries ("The Hero) or else agonizing yells of frightened men ("Land Without Thunder"). Thus exploiting the knowledge of the human body gathered in the course of her duty as a nurse, Grace Ogot is able to build mood or suggest emotion by simply manipulating the relevant part of the body. This makes her stories both moving and intimate in a special way.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to analyse the style of the short stories of Ngugi wa Thiongo, Leonard Kibera and Grace Ogot. The study focused on ten short stories: three by Ngugi, four by Kibera and three by Grace Ogot. In the course of the analysis of each author's stories we have been able to demonstrate that the study of the short story is the study of style in prose. The use of language to suggest more than it states none the less, keeps the form closer to poetry than to the novel. We have, for instance, seen how Ngugi's "Gone with the Drought" uses one lexical item: -"drought"-to imply withering away of life, loss of hope and even destruction of humane feelings. The word "light" in Kibera's story, "A Silent Song", functions on two levels: it suggests Mbane's physical suffering which has driven him to ardently embrace hope in life after death and it also underlines the irony of the preacher's spiritual condition (blindness) in a body endowed with physical sight. Grace Ogot picks on the word "grave" to invoke fear and to deepen the mystery of death. Through detailed analysis of the situational context of this single lexical item, the womb and the tomb have been seen as the two opposite sides of the same coin - life - to which we react in two totally different ways: the same woman who rejoices at birth gets shocked at the sight of the tomb. Thus, we have been able to show that literature, and in our case a short story, is capable of gaining meaning and a life of its own, transcending what the author originally set out to highlight.

The study of style which has all along limited itself to dialogue, irony, suspense, symbolism and point of view has not only been able to take us beyond the written word

but it has also enabled us to detect the various weaknesses of the authors. For instance the role of dialogue in creating intensity has been demonstrated to great lengths during the analysis of Grace Ogot's stories. We have examined the power of Okutima's broken Kiswahili outburst ("The Old White Witch"), Sister Mary's facial expression which at first looks like a grin when it actually is an expression of pain and anguish and then the simple matter-of-fact statement "Dr. Sserwadda died at 4:30 a.m." ("The Hero"). Both statements fall on the addressees with the weight of a thunderbolt: Matron Jack is shocked and is unable to believe that the nurses can walk out on patients while Nurse Anna is stupefied. The intensity is clear.

The lively conversation in "The Martyr" acts as foil against which we are to appreciate the existing racial tension, fear and the resultant wave of crime. Ngugi achieves intensity simply by letting us "listen" to the voices of the speakers. Complacency, hypocrisy and simple-mindedness are all detectable in the dialogue. The impact of the brief statement, "Muthoni went away" ("The Return") is great; it is a blow that shatters Kamau's dreams. Kamau's silence contrasted with his mother's effort to explain the circumstances of Muthoni's despair and devastation builds the kind of tension that can only be relieved by his leaving the scene.

Even the most prosaic Kibera resorts to dialogue when he wants to create a vivid scene that renders elaboration superfluous. In "A Silent Song" the conversation between Ezekiel and Mbane brings to the fore the unbridgeable gap that separates the two brothers. Ezekiel's selfishness in the face of Mbane's deprived state is inferred in his

insisting on the blind cripple's spiritual salvation and ignoring the physical discomfort which he has all along had the means to alleviate but has never bothered to. When Ezekiel refers to his way and that of his wife as the "way of good men and women" (Secret Lives, p.15), the indictment against his spiritual blindness is clear and Mbane's rejection of that way can only be viewed as well considered.

We have also noted that symbolism in the short story enhances brevity and intensity. This device allows for speculation and hence active participation by the reader. We have seen how the house on a hill as a setting for a story acquires many more meanings than even those Ngugi may have had in mind. Kibera exploits symbolism a great deal and this is part of the strength of an otherwise weak story like "The Stranger" enjoys. We have demonstrated how Kibera exploits physical disability - blindness, lameness, deafness and muteness - to comment on what he highlights as unhealthy human relationships. Mr. Jimbo's "hot breath and masculine odour" acquire a symbolic significance ("Elizabeth") so does Monica Adhiambo's stretcher ("The Old White Witch"). The suffocating breath and body odour suggest the man's corrupt ways while the stretcher symbolises a crushing defeat for the former arrogant head student nurse.

Irony as a stylistic device has been found to play a crucial role in achieving intensity and poignancy so important to the form. We have demonstrated how by use of irony Grace Ogot is able to heighten the sense of tragedy in the "The Old White Witch", "The Hero" and "Elizabeth". Through analyzing this device, we have been able to appreciate the fact that creative or even destructive duality is central to human

existence so that when a character like Mrs. Hill preaches to others about the importance of being kind to native servants and at the end of the same day kills one in suspicion and fear, we are left with only one verdict: she is a divided personality dogged by "do-good" intentions as well as racial prejudice and its attendant vices of hate, suspicion and fear buried in the unconscious.

We have also noted that point of view is very important in the short story. This is because an undefined point of view loosens the impact of the events. Examples of this weakness have been seen in Kibera's "The Stranger" and Ngugis "A Mercedes Funeral" where shifting point-of-view from an omniscient to the I-narrator perspective and back in such a brief span of telling creates confusion. Experiments with the I-narrator talking about himself in monologue have failed to impress mainly because of the elected technique ("A Letter to a Haunting Past"). The voice of the monologist in "A Letter to the Haunting Past" bores in our ears piles of unconnected information that might move a live audience in the theatre but which fails completely to register impact of any magnitude in prose. We have used this "Letter" to demonstrate the disadvantage of monologue. On the other hand, we have used "The Hero" to highlight persuasive power of a well handled I-narrator point-of-view.

Thus, the restricted fictional world of the short story demands precision, economy in the use of language and treatment of character and action. We have throughout the study argued consistently and demonstrated using the five aspects of style as a starting point that any threat to any of these demands of the form poses a threat to the final effect

of the artistry of the story.

This study has highlighted the important role the analysis of style plays when we want to appreciate the fact of the entertaining aspect of literature. In its quick pace, the short story seeks to attract attention and maintain it to the end. To achieve this the form uses suspense which must be broken soon enough to allow sustained pleasure. We have seen how, for instance, Grace Ogot uses hints to create suspense in a grim story like "The Hero" which has no room for laughter; yet the reader's elicited participation in making the hints meaningful yields a great deal of pleasure. The nightmare is a hint that preoccupies the reader so that the connection between Dr. Sserwadda's sudden illness and death fall in line thus, forming a satisfying denouement. We have also demonstrated how Ngugi leads the reader to derive aesthetic pleasure from two stories of betrayal and bitterness - "The Return" and "The Martyr". As we make meaning out of symbolic objects (Kamau's bundle) and features (the hill on which Mrs. Hill lives) or ironic twists in events, we are simultaneously being invited to enjoy the story. The characters and their actions become increasingly significant both aesthetically and imperially.

We can, therefore, say that the short story in Kenya has shown clearly that it does not need a long tradition to come out successfully. On the contrary, this study has led us to the conclusion that the writer who sets out to write a story to entertain while sharing an experience with the reader is likely to come out with a more aesthetically satisfying story than that one who intends to reflect society for what it is and then hopefully entertain the reader in the process. We have seen this clearly in Ngugi's post-

1971 stories in which issues in society become more pronounced than the artistry. Kibera's "Something in common" is one other glaring example.

Thus, a short story is at its best when it is brief enough to hold the reader's attention to its close. We have in this regard demonstrated that a simple plot, a restricted setting both in time and space as well as a limited number of characters are a pre-requisite. To enhance brevity further is the choice of language where the author consciously seeks to hint more than to state, thereby compressing a great deal of information rather than explaining and describing the actions and events. Hence, a short story is a compressed fast-pleasure yielding narrative in which artistry stands out more prominently than the message.

We have arrived at this conclusion as directed by the analysis of the Kenyan short stories. By this submission we hope to rouse more interest in the artistry of the short story as a genre that is increasingly catching the attention of both young and established writers in Africa. At the same time it is hoped that the conclusions made here will challenge literary critics to focus on content in the short story so that while this thesis is engaged in a form-and-content debate, theirs will be a content-and-form discussion. This is to say that this genre offers a wide range of possible topics and approaches to it and that ours is only one of them which has the intention of simply provoking future intellectual activity in this field.

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