

" A THEMATIC STUDY OF
PETER ABRAHAMS' NOVELS "

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DECLARATION

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



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This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis, "A Thematic Study of Peter Abrahams' Novels", consists of the Introduction, Chapter One, Chapter Two, Chapter Three and the Conclusion.

The Introduction deals with who Abrahams is, and what influenced his writings. An assessment of the criticism already done on his works is made so as to justify the need for the study of Peter Abrahams. In this section, we define what method of analysis we are going to use in approaching Peter Abrahams' works.

Chapter One examines the way Abrahams views apartheid in Wild Conquest and Mine Boy. In it, we show that Peter Abrahams does not see apartheid as having its basis in the economic system in South Africa. He sees it only in terms of racial differences. His correct belief is that racism stands in the way of human relationships. This leads to the false conclusion that its removal automatically leads to equality among the different racial groups.

Abrahams disregards the fact that racism is used by capitalism as a justification for exploiting the black section of the South African society. Therefore, racial integration as suggested by Abrahams cannot be a solution if the economic system does not change.

Chapter Two deals with the ways Abrahams depicts an attempt to fight against colonialism in A Wreath For Udomo and A Night of Their Own. Abrahams makes the mistake of seeing it as a fight of a few black people against colonialism. He ignores the majority of the people's participation in this struggle.

By virtue of their class position, the interests of the middle class are inimical to those of the majority of the people. Since they are inculcated with this elitist mentality, the type of independence these Udomos fight for does not necessarily improve the condition of the majority of the people.

Chapter Three deals with Abrahams' depiction of an attempt to change the power structure in an independent black country that suffers foreign domination in This Island Now. In his attempt to create a plausible power structure that caters for the majority of the people, Abrahams does not see the capitalism he advocated for the Island as inherently exploitative: therefore, in prescribing it as a solution to the Island's problems, he ends up contradicting himself.

In the Conclusion, we give a summary of how Abrahams consistently fails to suggest positive solutions to the problems of imperialism because of his inability to see his own and his characters' class

positions, and what these stand for. He also ignores the majority of the people who have the potential for positive innovations.

In this section, we look into the achievements and failures of Abrahams in handling the issues he deals with in his works. We also suggest areas of further work on Abrahams.

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INTRODUCTION

Peter Abrahams is a black South African writer, whose writing career started in the early forties. According to his autobiography, Tell Freedom,¹ his creative bent was sparked off by English writers like Shakespeare and Keats, whose works he came in contact while attending the Mission School, Grace Dieu.

These writers inspired him to write poems that he circulated among his class-mates. Such poems were very similar to the English poetry they learned at School.

Abrahams' early collection of poems which was entitled A Black Man Sneaks of Freedom (1940) was the first work by Abrahams to be published. Commenting on the poems in this volume, Kolawole Ogungbesan says, "the poems are unpolished although they never lack energy"². He proceeds to say that there was one particular poem that reflected Abrahams' yearning to overcome the daily frustrations of the life of a black man in South Africa.

Since there is no way of making a personal assessment of this book because it is out of print, it is difficult to establish what could have made

¹Peter Abrahams, Tell Freedom (London: Faber and Faber, 1954).

²Kolawole Ogungbesan, The Writing of Peter Abrahams (London: Hodder and Naughton, 1979) pp 1-2

Abrahams such a progressive writer at this stage. His book of short stories, Dark Testament³, appeared in 1942. This means that Abrahams started writing in the early forties, during his self exile in Britain, where he got involved with the Communist party, but their insistence on censoring his first books made Abrahams feel that marxism was just as inhibiting as the South African censorship regulations. As a result he broke away from the Communist party. Due to his petty bourgeois class position, Abrahams viewed Communism as negative, perhaps this is the reason why he never suggests Communism as an alternative to capitalism in his works.

Peter Abrahams started writing at a time when writers like Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Doris Lessing and later, Ezekiel Mphahlele were writing. This period is characterised by "the liberal traditions in thought, literary sensibility and politics contained from the onset a fusion of social, political and racial egalitarianism."⁴

At this time, South African writers, especially black writers were beginning to write about themselves and matters concerning the present situation.

This writing addressed itself to arousing white consciousness to black misery. Alan Paton's Cry the Beloved Country (1948), for instance emphasizes

³Peter Abrahams' Dark Testament (London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1942)

⁴Christopher Heywood, Aspects of South African Literature (London: Heinmann, 1976) p. ix

the need for a religious solution to the problems of apartheid, so as to touch the consciences of the whites.

Liberalism is a middle class ideology that served as an ideal political attitude for the rising middle class of capitalist societies. Liberalism does not accommodate the working class movements and parties as instruments of change. The class that holds this ideology is only progressive when its desire to become the big bourgeoisie is threatened by the international comprador bourgeoisie. Liberalism does not believe in class struggles.

Liberalism lacks a convincing view of the structure of the society as a whole. It disregards the whole question of class because class identification contradicts the egalitarian or the principle of equality of mankind, which is characteristic of the period.

Since liberalism disregards class considerations, change is not seen through a revolution, but through individual actions and co-operation in attempting to change the situation despite their class position. This is faulty because it is one's class position that shapes one's attitude towards positive social change. Those who own property cannot support a workers' revolution because it is a threat to their ownership. They therefore work hard to maintain their position by suppressing the revolution. Liberalism ignores the fact that genuine freedom is attained when the control of the means of production by the working class becomes a reality.

Another yardstick that Abrahams uses in assessing imperialism and colonialism is nationalism.

In this case, the fight against colonialism begins by the African people putting up a fight against certain unjust practices like forced labour and inadequate salaries. At this stage the colonial subjects begin to identify and fight against the coloniser. Eventually this fight takes on a more nationalistic turn and the demands made on the colonial power are those of nation-hood. Up to this stage nationalism is positive because it seeks to liberate the nation from colonial powers. The national bourgeoisie that takes over from the colonial powers, besides being a minority, is far removed from the majority of the people. So at this stage nationalism becomes negative as a liberation tool because it only ends at mobilising the people "instead of being the all embracing crystallisation of the inmost hopes of the whole people"^{5A} *Wreath for Udom*

The national bourgeoisie that takes over from the colonial power has no economic power; hence it has to rely entirely on the former colonial power for economic assistance. This class is not engaged in production of any kind, so it only serves as the western bourgeois business agents. The country still provides raw materials or unfinished goods that return to the country as finished products and are sold at very high prices. The economy of the country is never put on a new footing after independence. ✓

The opportunism of the national elite and their using of workers as objects become manifest. The system of greed set by the former colonial masters

⁵ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (Harmondsworth Penguin Books, 1967) p. 119

makes it impossible for the national bourgeoisie to behave differently, and to ally themselves with the people by using ~~the~~ intellectual and technical experience acquired while going through colonial Universities. Instead, they exploit their countries by investing the money they make out of their people outside the country, and by indulging in unnecessary luxuries like big cars and houses. As a weapon against economic competition, the working class is called upon to renounce foreign businesses, so nationalism becomes mere racism.

Abrahams writing within such a framework was bound to be caught up in the pitfalls of liberalism and nationalism. His insistence on integration is a manifestation of his liberal outlook.

Looking at the critical works that have been done on Abrahams' novels⁶, we found that Michael Wade does not point out Abrahams' failure to see the South African history from the point of view of the blacks in Wild Conquest. He only mentions this in passing and does not explain how Abrahams does

⁶ Peter Abrahams, Wild Conquest (New York: Harper 1950).
_____, Mine Boy (London: Dorothy Crisp and Co., 1945).
_____, A Wreath for Udomo (London: Faber and Faber, 1950).
_____, A Night of their Own (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).
_____, This Island Now (London: Faber and Faber, 1960).

this, he gives no examples of what he means.

According to Georg Lukacs, "perspective ... plays a decisive role as a selective principle in literature"⁷. So Wade should have seen that by viewing history from the standpoint of the imperialists, Abrahams clearly comes out as pro-imperialist, he sets out to apologise on behalf of the whites and sympathises with them. In other words, from the onset he takes a stand. He condones imperialism.

Wade clearly articulates some of Abrahams' world views, such as seeing the coming of the whites as a beginning of a new day. This is negative because it implies that Africa was all darkness before the coming of the whites, so their coming brought light. As far as I am concerned, it was a new day for the imperialists because they were going to be masters of a continent. Wade does not criticise this, he confirms it, which means he also shares a similar view.

Wade also comments on Abrahams concern with individuals developing hate and the desire to destroy. He views the humanism of the whites as positive and disregards the fact that this is due to Abrahams' liberal outlook. Wade therefore shares in Abrahams' ignoring of class position.

Wade has made comments on issues like imperialism, liberalism, racism and nationalism, but

⁷Georg Lukacs, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism (London: Merlin Press, 1963) p. 94

he does not understand them. He does not demonstrate how these have shaped Abrahams' vision regarding the South African situation. Generally speaking, Wade ends up pointing out issues as they arise in Abrahams' works, but he makes very little critical assessment of them. This makes him give more of a summary of Abrahams' works.

Kolawole Ogungbesan echoes Wade when commenting on Abrahams' works. He asserts that Mine Boy is based on the marxist theory, but he does not explain what he means by this. He also touches on Abrahams' concern for "individual change", but he does not elaborate on this either. Ogungbesan accepts Abrahams' idea of integration as a way of bringing about equality among blacks and whites. He views the humanism of Abrahams' whites as positive. Ogungbesan believes that Paddy rallied around Xuma in Mine Boy, when in actual fact it was Xuma rallying around Paddy. Ogungbesan affirms the idea of blacks rallying around their mentors. He agrees with Abrahams' seeing the black cause in terms of white leadership and black assistance. This can be seen as a lack of faith in the black people on the part of Abrahams.

Like Wade, Ogungbesan is able to point out important issues like imperialism, liberalism, racism and nationalism in Abrahams' works, but only by way of accepting the way Abrahams views them. For example he asserts that after becoming Prime Minister of Pan-Africa, Udomo aimed at building a modern African State in A Wreath For Udomo. Ogungbesan does not realise that this implied that the economy of Pan-Africa

would still be controlled from outside. He points out the fact that Abrahams blames both the dictatorship of Josiah and the masses for the fact that capitalism still prevailed on the Island in This Island Now, but he does not even challenge the fact that the masses are blamed and yet they have been left out in the whole novel, except they are only mentioned in passing. This ruling out of the masses is an assumption that they would not be in a position to take part in solving the problems of the neo-colonial situation in the Island. In other words, they are without a social consciousness.

Ogungbesan sees no further implications of the steps taken by Josiah after the death of Moses Joshua. Josiah forced every institution to serve his own intentions, but Ogungbesan does not see the glaring dictatorship in Josiah.

On the whole, Ogungbesan has made a good interpretation of Abrahams' world views, such as liberalism and nationalism and as a result, he comes up with valid statements and conclusions but he makes little attempt to assess the author's outlook. He does not examine the workability of such a world view in solving the problems of imperialism.

Christopher Heywood⁸ in "The Novels of Peter Abrahams", makes a comparative study of Abrahams and the English novel. In other words, the emphasis is on how well Abrahams compares with western writers.

⁸ Christopher Heywood (ed), Perspectives on African Literature (London: Heinemann, 1971) pp 157-172

This means he uses the western novel as a standard of literary criticism, and views issues from the standpoint of the west. Commenting on the theme in A Wreath For Udomo, Heywood says that this novel like William Golding's Lord of the Flies⁹ deals with the fact that man is depraved and therefore, needs ritual cleansing. He does not show how this relates to the struggle against colonialism in Pan-Africa. He merely reads his own ideas in the work without bothering what the novel is all about.

Wilfred Cartey¹⁰, comments only on Abrahams' autobiography, Tell Freedom. He asserts that Abrahams as a young man saw his dreams and education opportunities crumbling before him because of the ferment in his society. Cartey does not view western education as a source of one's alienation from the problems of the majority of the African people. He believes that Abrahams had become aware of the problems of apartheid because of such education.

Cartey, like Abrahams, undermines the social consciousness of the masses by implying that only the educated, that is, the national and petty bourgeois class members experience the stifling atmosphere of the apartheid system. Cartey proceeds to say that Abrahams' Tell Freedom portrays the harsh encounter with colonialism but he does not comment on how Abrahams reacts to colonialism.

⁹ William Golding, Lord of the Flies (London: Faber and Faber, 1952).

¹⁰ Wilfred Cartey, Whispers From A Continent (London: Heinemann, 1971).

Arthur Gakwandi¹¹, in "Abrahams' A Wreath For Udomo and Aluko's One Man One Matchet", has treated the theme of nationalism. Gakwandi does not emphasize the extent to which nationalism has been a positive element in the struggle against colonialism. He does not make a systematic analysis of the weaknesses of nationalism. This makes it difficult to assess how nationalism can be a positive or negative element in the face of colonialism.

Janheinz Jahn¹² in "Modern Literature in Africa" has commented on Mine Boy and Wild Conquest. Jahn makes very general and sweeping statements concerning these works. He asserts that these works merely assimilate European elements and do not indicate any African stylistic features, pattern and expressions, even though they are written by an African. Jahn does not back up such a statement, and makes no mention of the rest of Abrahams' works.

James Gecau in "The various levels of Betrayal in A Wreath For Udomo"¹³, explores the different levels of betrayal in the novel. Gecau does not show how this relates to the overall picture of Abrahams' response to the issue of colonialism, since it is only then that the theme of betrayal becomes significant in the book.

In this thesis (we) intend to study the theme

¹¹Arthur Gakwandi, The Novel of Contemporary Experience in Africa (London: Heinemann, 1977) pp. 43 - 65.

¹²Janheinz Jahn, Muntu: An Outline of neo-African Literature (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1961).

¹³James Gecau, "The Various Levels of Betrayal in A Wreath For Udomo" Vol.11 (busara, 1969).

of imperialism, liberalism, racism and nationalism because it is through such themes that we shall be able to trace the development of Abrahams in terms of awareness. These themes will enable us to assess the extent to which Abrahams has contributed to African Literary achievement. Through these themes we shall also examine how far Abrahams has contributed towards the battle for freedom in Africa and all blacks elsewhere. To assess if, through liberalism and nationalism, Abrahams has been a major contributor to this or he has simply fallen in the pitfalls of "art for Art's sake".

In order to bring out Abraham's limitations better, we shall assess his works from the Socialist realist point of view because "Socialist realism is in a position ----- to portray the totality of a society in its immediacy and the reveal its patterns of development."¹⁴

Since Socialist realism is in a position to view issues from the Society's point of view, it is able to present the different class view especially in a class Society.

It does not ignore style even though we are examining the works in question at a thematic level.

It also deals with characterisation fully, that is not only how the different characters interact but also how the characters interact with the Society, as a whole.

14 Georg Lukacs, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism (London: Merlin Press, 1963) p. 99

CHAPTER ONE

Imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. It involves the sharing of the world among international capitalists, that is, the territorial division of the world among the greatest capitalist powers. This involves both the domination and monopoly of finance and political policy.

Imperialist nations wanted to make huge profits in the fastest possible way by supplying their countries with raw materials, as well as manpower in the form of slaves.

The local peoples were only used as tools to accomplish this. They were exploited and brutalised in the process, and their continent was under-developed because imperialism deprived it of its natural resources and manpower.

In the continent of Africa, South Africa and other African states like Kenya, Zimbabwe and Malawi, the imperialists did not come to take what they would out of those countries but to make a home. They subdued the indigenous people by exploiting them economically, socially and politically. These people were deprived of their rights and privileges as citizens of these countries.

In order to maintain his "superior" position, the white man in South Africa instituted laws that were meant to keep the African in "his place" as it were. Apartheid is the basic law for the accomplishment of this.


In the earlier stages of Boer settlerism, classical slavery existed. The Boers at this time practised slavery as an institution. This differed from the domestic type of slavery that existed after the communal stage in the development of societies, whereby everybody did the work; yet they were discriminated on the basis of having been captured from other communities during inter-communal wars, or people given to other communities in order to settle differences. Such people also consisted of individuals who for some reasons, like having been exiled from their communities looked for asylum outside their own societies.

This form of slavery was more domestic than economic in the sense that the society was at the patriarchal stage, where even though the men distinguished themselves as superior, everybody still did the work and there was a fair distribution of the fruits of labour.

The type of slavery depicted in Wild Conquest, was the beginning of apartheid in South Africa. It differed from the earlier form of slavery because the whites who started it were part of the western bourgeois society whose aim of coming to Africa was the search for profits. This form of slavery was meant to discriminate against the blacks so as to exploit them.

Old Johannes and his children's children were slaves in the latter sense. They did all the work and earned nothing. Other white families owned slaves both in the Cape and elsewhere, that is why

there was such an uproar among the Boers when the emancipation proclamation was made by the British at the Cape.



The British, on the other hand, advocated the abolition of slavery for economic reasons. Slavery was becoming less profitable as a result of the fast growing industries in Europe. It was cheaper to have people selling their labour to the capitalist instead of being part of the property of the capitalist because that meant that the capitalist had to maintain the slaves as well. Another thing, importing raw materials was less tedious than importing human beings. The abolition advocated by the British therefore was more of a change in the form of slavery. They did not do it for humanitarian reasons as propoganda has it.

As a reaction to the abolition as advocated by the British, the Boers embarked on their move towards the interior, away from the Cape where the British pressurised for the freeing of slaves.

During the "trekk", a great number of blacks were wiped out. These "trekkers" actually hunted for blacks. Before setting out on their journey towards the north, Koos Jansen used to go out hunting for them.

Once they sighted a band of roving kaffirs. They had made a long detour. Another time they had seen a bush move. A rare thing because Bushmen are such wonderful hunters. A well aimed shot had stopped the bush. Koos

had dismounted and kicked the shrubs away from the body of a fat shabby little bushman.¹

During the "trekk" there were always armed men going ahead of the "trekkers" and killing every black they came across.

When they finally came in contact with the Ndebele, they fought hard in order to take possession of the land. The "trekkers" had the advantage of the gun, which is a technologically advanced weapon, unlike the spear and shield that the Ndebele depended on. The Ndebele were finally subdued, and the foundations for the political, economic and social set up of domination were laid.

Wild Conquest deals with events arising out of the arrival of the whites in South Africa. Old Johannes had been a slave for almost all his life. The slaves had to guard the entrance to the valley against "kaffir" invasions day and night. They tilled the land and produced all the necessary food; yet everything, including the slaves themselves, belonged to the Jansens as Johannes points out:

Look at the house and the earth and the trees and the beasts. All that you see belongs to the Jansens, to Kasper Jansen and his family, yet we, built the house and tilled the earth and got rid of the weeds and planted the food and looked after the cattle.²

¹Peter Abrahams, Wild Conquest (New York: Harper, 1950) p.16

²Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.24

It was the slaves who did all the work, and yet the fruits of their labour went to the Jansens. The Jansens had over twenty slaves, but Kasper ordered that the number of slave women cooking for the other slaves be reduced from three to two. This implies that the slaves were overworked.

The food Jan ate when he came to tell old Johannes and the other slaves about the emancipation suggests that the slaves were poorly fed despite the fact that they had to work hard.

A young woman brought back the hurriedly hidden plate of food Jan had been eating. He took it and stuffed a handful of brown pappy food into his mouth.³

For shelter, the slaves stayed in shacks, which suggests that the slave housing was very poor.

Inside the shack, Johannes' wife Ma Johannes, was flat on her back on a wooden bed built into the far wall of the shack. A pile of sacking and rugs made of animal skins trailed over the side of the bed.⁴

Besides poor shelter, the description of the form of bedding suggests the poor type of clothing the slaves had. The welfare of the slaves was no concern of their masters. They were merely used for the production of food and looking after animals. Since the wealth of the settlers was still in the form of land and domesticated animals, the slaves were actually

³ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.21

⁴ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.20

involved in taking care of the wealth of their owners. The slaves were also responsible for the safety of their owners, that is why they were taught how to shoot. They also had to guard the entrance to the valley day and night.

When the emancipation proclamation came, the Jansens intensified their cruelty against the slaves. Old Johannes was forced to apologise for referring to Koos as "you" instead of "Baas Koos". His son, Paul was shot dead for revolting against this and for showing a rebellious spirit. Paul wanted to fight and free himself and his people from the Jansens because they had kept them in bondage when the emancipation had been declared a year before.

The news brought by Jan about the emancipation created tremendous unity among the slaves of the Jansen family; yet it was Paul who was prepared to fight. The rest of the slaves waited for the day the Jansens would decide to leave the valley to the slaves.

Well, this could be a strategy as old Johannes argued that there was no need to fight when freedom could be attained without fighting.

Johannes is not convincing as a character. His consciousness as regards the slave situation was very clear. He knew what slavery meant and what freedom was; yet Abrahams depicts him as having been completely brutalized and resigned to slavery. Abrahams distorts Johannes' consciousness to suit his purpose. It is actually Abrahams himself who is against the attaining of freedom through fighting. He is against

violence, so he disapproves of Paul's rebellion and he merely puts it into Johannes' mouth.

Old Johannes himself clearly articulated what freedom meant to the slaves.

When the valley belongs
to us, and that house belongs
to us, and when the things
we build and the food we
grow is ours, and we and
our children can eat and
sleep in that house and
there is no Baas Koos and
no Baas Kasper to take
what is ours; I say that
is freedom.⁵

Old Johannes and his fellow slaves had six rifles and had been taught how to use them. Their masters consisted of just two men, a woman and a child, but Johannes did not want to attack them, not even after the cold blooded killing of his son by Kasper.

There were slave revolts in different farms after the emancipation proclamation was made. Slaves killed their masters to secure their freedom, which I think could have encouraged the Jansens' slaves to fight for their freedom. Abrahams does not even show us these revolts, he merely mentions them in passing. He disapproves of them and advocates peaceful means in tackling the problems of imperialism. His liberal attitude makes him avoid class struggles.

Old Johannes' lenient attitude towards the slave masters is a manifestation of Abrahams' failure to grasp the workings of imperialism. He suggests that

⁵Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.25

It was the slaves who did all the work, and yet the fruits of their labour went to the Jansens. The Jansens had over twenty slaves, but Kasper ordered that the number of slave women cooking for the other slaves be reduced from three to two. This implies that the slaves were overworked.

The food Jan ate when he came to tell old Johannes and the other slaves about the emancipation suggests that the slaves were poorly fed despite the fact that they had to work hard.

A young woman brought back the hurriedly hidden plate of food Jan had been eating. He took it and stuffed a handful of brown pappy food into his mouth.³

For shelter, the slaves stayed in shacks, which suggests that the slave housing was very poor.

Inside the shack, Johannes' wife Ma Johannes, was flat on her back on a wooden bed built into the far wall of the shack. A pile of sacking and rugs made of animal skins trailed over the side of the bed.⁴

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³ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.21

⁴ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.20

time will solve the problems of imperialism in Africa. When that time comes, imperialist powers will just withdraw and freedom will be restored without a struggle. He really comes out as pro-imperialism.

This attitude also makes the slaves appear completely brutalized in the sense that they appear helpless and they are made to appear like they expected their freedom to come on a silver platter even though they could easily get rid of their masters without much effort. Even if stopping to work for the Jansens as old Johannes suggested was meant to hit back at the enslavers, it was a less effective strategy because the Jansens could easily force them to do work or even make them do it at gun point if there was any resistance, since killing blacks was normal practice for the enslavers. They killed for the slightest reason so as to terrorise the slaves into subjection.

Kasper justified his killing of Paul, saying that he was only fulfilling the law of his forefathers.

Shoot first and speak
afterwards. It's a good
old Boer rule Anna.
Our forebears who had
to fight the kaffirs knew
just how good it was.⁶

The slave masters were ready to shoot the slaves at the slightest excuse. The whole slave-master relationship was based on this. Their lives were spared as long as they were docile and therefore useful to the enslavers. They were shot down as soon as they showed any sign of disobedience. That is why I feel the passive resistance suggested by Abrahams

⁶ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.48

through Johannes would not work. In fact there is nowhere in the book where Abrahams suggests that military resistance is the answer to slavery or oppression in general.

As soon as the Jansens learned that the slaves knew about the English ruling at the Cape concerning the emancipation, all the fear and suspicion towards the slaves became manifest. In response to Koos' cautioning the other members of the family that they should keep an eye on the slaves, Anna ran for her son Stefan.

She had dashed out of the room and only stopped to think when Stefan was firmly clasped to her bosom.⁷

The slave masters were so much on their guard that they had to take turns to watch the slave who guarded the entrance to their place day and night. Anna recalled her father's old saying which he used to intone now and again - saying:

With my rifle and my bible
I fear no man, I fear no
beast, I fear no spirit.⁸

The rifle and the bible were the most powerful weapons of imperialism. Praying at the grave side of his fellow "trekkers" who had been killed by blacks, Van As asked the god of his religion to strike and destroy the blacks.

And, God curse with all
your anger the heathen
savage kaffirs. Strike them
dead. Curse them unto
the last generation with

⁷Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.26

⁸Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.52

everlasting damnation.
Curse their crops and their
cattle for they are devils,
the children of devils.²

This language is very similar to the language of the gun. The principle is that of killing and subduing. Foreign powers used the rifle and the bible to entrench themselves in militarily less developed countries, particularly in Africa. They subdued African nations by the use of the rifle, and imposed their cultural values. Abrahams condones cultural imperialism by implying that westernization delivered black nations from the evils of old Africa. He regards imperialism as the coming of a "new day" and anything African is dismissed as "tribal".

Foreign powers used blacks either as slaves or as instruments of cheap labour for the enrichment of their countries.

They used the bible for oppression. It completed the process of subjection by insisting on humility and forgiveness, so as to keep the black people submissive, and not seeing the contradictions in the way the foreigners did things. It was meant to lull the blacks while the whites were committing the most monstrous deeds to the black people. They also used it to justify the privileged position they had taken upon themselves. The Boers in particular use it to back up the myth that they are a chosen people as a nation, and that South Africa is the promised land that they must occupy and make sure that the

² Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.130

blacks do not take it away from them. This is the basis of Boer nationalism.

The Afrikaners have used it to justify the unjust laws they instituted in South Africa. Their hostility towards change is due to the fact that any change would adversely affect their privileged position, and would be contrary to what they said was the divine plan. This is a clear indication of how the bible is used opportunistically in support of Boer nationalism.

They regarded the trek as a call to the promised land, therefore just before the Jansens left the valley, Anna read the chapter of the bible that deals with the wonderings of the Israelites in the desert.

Abrahams handles the whole process of the trek very sympathetically. First of all he makes us see the Jansens leaving the valley which they had known to be their home. Commenting on what the valley meant to Anna Jansen, Abrahams says:

She had come as a young girl into this valley. In it, she had changed into a woman, a mother. Into this earth had gone part of her. It had gone deep. It had spread very wide. The life that was in her was a part of this valley. It was home.¹⁰

Abrahams views the trek as an act of faith on the part of the Boers. He regards it as a people going out to the unknown with nothing more than just wagons for homes, and a few possessions. Abrahams

¹⁰ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.59

is wailing the fact that the whole life of a people was reduced to wagons in the sense that all they had was a wagon and a few animals for each family, and that it was only determination that made them continue with their journey.

The women rode in the rear, under the canvas tents of the wagons. There, they worked on the clothing of their menfolk, repaired them and made others. There they prepared the food that their men would eat. The space covered by the tent was the extent of their home, and under it they did the things that were normal in a home.¹¹

Abrahams is really concerned with the change in relationships among the "trekkers", instead of being critical of the motives and the impact of the trek on the indigenous people. He consistently shows how Anna and Kasper drifted apart everyday.

She had known that Kasper wanted her. She felt it in his movements and in the way he turned and touched her; she had known it by his breathing. And something in her had gone cold and hard. She did not mean to be like that. It had just been so.¹²

More and more Boers were becoming like Koos, by taking pleasure in killing. Abrahams persuades us to believe that they had become like this in order to survive. He handles the whole question of the trek

¹¹ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.118

¹² Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.118

sympathetically, which makes him pro-imperialism

During the trek, the Boers killed every black that they found on the way. Then they met the Barolong who were organized and stayed as a bigger community. These did not even resist, they accepted the white man's help against the "Matabele", who were militarily strong.

In actual fact, what Abrahams calls the "Matabele" are the Ndebele who under the leadership of Mzilikazi, one of Shaka's army commanders, broke away from Shaka's jurisdiction. The term "Matabele" is a white racist term that is part of the distortions that whites made in African words simply because they did not take the trouble to know the Africans. Abrahams merely uses this term without questioning its implications. His use of racist language could be due to his petty bourgeois position which makes him not identify with these people.

At this stage when the trek came across the more organized South African peoples, there should have been a lot of resistance particularly from the Ndebele who had a strong army. In fact Abrahams sees no greatness in the Ndebele. He depicts Mzilikazi, the Ndebele king, as a bully who imposed taxes on smaller nations like the Barolong. The Ndebele are depicted as savages who went about half naked, when actually what they wore was a full national dress. If any part of their bodies was showing, it was because it was acceptable to the society.

The trekkers' weird ideas about the Ndebele and the Zulu from whom the Ndebele broke away are

indicative of Abrahams' attitude towards these nations.

As the trekkers discussed these nations, Martinus told the other trekkers that:

An Englishman called Harris tells of a fat old man with feathers in his hair who goes around naked and likes to be given presents. They say he's drunk all the time. He's king of the kaffirs. No, I don't think we have to worry about the north. It is in Natal, among the Zulu kaffirs, where trouble will be. There is talk of a heathen savage called Chaka who kills for pleasure ... He makes slaves of all the kaffirs who are not Zulus.¹³

The military competence of the Ndebele is undermined, and even where it is shown, Abrahams does not identify with the Ndebele. When they faced the white man's gun with simple weapons like spears and shields, that is not applauded as an act of bravery by Abrahams. He makes it appear like the Ndebele foolishly rushed to their death.

The trekkers even felt it was safer to go to the North because the Ndebele were not that much of a threat.

Shaka too is depicted as a monster that rejoiced in killing without reason. Shaka's statesmanship is completely ignored by Abrahams. The accusation of Shaka's taking people into slavery is a complete

¹³ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.101

distortion because Shaka captured conquered nations with the aim of uniting the black peoples of South Africa. By this attempt, it should be clear that Shaka was the product of his society which had become feudalistic, and was in the process of consolidation. Abrahams reduces this to outright savagery. He has nothing positive to say about the black people of Southern Africa before the coming of the whites.

Due to his petty bourgeois class position, Abrahams views the Ndebele and the Barolong as an outsider. Like the white racists he distorts issues on the life of the African before the advent of the white man. He does not even stop to consider that there was a lot that was good in these communities.

There were good and powerful kings who did great things for their people. The people were merely at a specific stage of development. Abrahams distorts the whole picture and makes it appear as if life among the Africans was all drunkenness and superstition.

Tawana, the Barolong king is depicted as having been wallowing in drunkenness, and the Ndebele were busy with their weird "tribal practices" and cruel exploits like witch-hunting and unnecessary spilling of blood. In other words, Abrahams is suggesting that such a life was an evil one from which the whites delivered African nations. Abrahams always ends up pro-imperialism. He romanticises, distorts and apologises on behalf of the whites.

Using liberalism as a frame-work, Abrahams was caught up in some of its weaknesses, such as its lack of class considerations.

Paul, a Boer young man did not only associate with the Barolong but learned and spoke their language fluently. He became an interpreter for the other trekkers, and he always insisted that they had to know the blacks if they were going to stay with them. When Paul and Moses met Dabula, Paul took his time to chat with Dabula in a casual, friendly manner.

Abrahams views Paul as positive. This kind of attitude reflects Abrahams' conception of the nature of the meeting between imperialists and African peoples. He believes this meeting could have been peaceful if both parties had accepted each other without any suspicion or misgivings. This is part of Abrahams' idealism. Abrahams seems to imagine that imperialists came either looking for hospitality or playing hosts. He forgets that they came to conquer and subdue the African peoples for the benefit of imperialist countries. The black person was only important as far as he was the "robust nigger" who could serve their purpose better.

This attitude of the imperialists towards the blacks is illustrated by the way Van As viewed the killing of blacks. He felt it was inevitable and it was the only way to survive. Explaining this to his son, Paul, he said:

War changes a man Paul.
To live you have to be hard
in war. If you are not hard;
you are killed, you are lost,
you are defeated. In order to
win, to live, you have to be
hard, without pity, without
mercy. That is the only way.
With the kaffirs and us, it
must be so.¹⁴

¹⁴ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.124

Paul on the other hand, condemned Koos for his taking pleasure in killing blacks. He felt that Koos' lust for killing was so great that he was becoming more like an animal, and this lust was becoming infectious among the trekkers.

Compare this with
Arthur Jarvis in
Letters by the beloved
Gurney - is it the same?

Paul's sentiments were directed towards the wrong people in the sense that instead of promoting the interests of his fellow imperialists, which was subduing the blacks, he was busy sympathising with the blacks, and in so doing, he was actually going against what he stood for, and also contradicted the whole purpose of the white man's coming not only to South Africa but to Africa as a whole.

In fact the novel moves towards looking at war moralistically. The concern is about the way individuals are affected by it. Abrahams romanticises violence. This element is present in most of his works. He is concerned about the fact that war changes and hardens people, this makes the ideal of love impossible. This pacifist attitude is negative or rather reactionary. Such an attitude would be contrary to the direction events are beginning to take in present South Africa.

Even at the point of death, Paul after confessing to Gubuza that he was for peace, insisted that Elsie, his wife should teach their child to avoid war because it destroys, de-humanizes and spoils human relationships.

As they lay side by side, Paul and Gubuza conversed in the following manner:

"I was for peace".

"But you killed".

"There is hate in my people".

"Now there is hate in my people too".

"I am sorry".

"You are so young ... so young
to die and by my hand".

"What is your name?"

"Gubuza".

"You are wise," Paul said
but Gubuza did not hear.

He had ceased breathing after
telling the young man his name.

"What did he say?" Elsie asked.

Paul began to choke. Teach ...
our ... child." ¹⁵

This is melodramatic and Abrahams is hoping that children will learn in the future even though the material condition will remain the same.

The exchange of views by Gubuza and Paul is crowned by Paul's injunction to his wife. He exhorted his wife to teach their child the ways of peace.

After this very war during which this scene took place, the victorious Boers knelt down to thank their God for delivering the "kaffirs" into their hands, and made it possible for them to acquire the land they had fought for. This goes to show how misplaced Paul's sentiments were, and how contradictory they were to the aspirations of every Boer.

¹⁵ Peter Abrahams, ibid., pp. 379-80

In response to the white invasion, "Moshesh", king of the "Basuto" accepted English imperialism by requesting the English to "protect" his kingdom against Boer invasion. Due to his pro-imperialist stand, Abrahams thinks this is positive.

Abrahams uses the name "Moshesh" and "Basuto" comfortably. Apparently, he merely picked on these words as they appear in history books written by white racists. He overlooked the fact that it is a sign that the whites never cared to know the African better. Abrahams seems to have had the same attitude and just used terms like "Moshesh" and "Basuto" without scruples. The correct version of these terms is Moshoeshoe and Basotho.

Moshoeshoe had put up a strong resistance against the Zulu and by the use of simple weapons like stones managed to drive away the Zulu army. Therefore, there is all the reason to believe that if such resistance was put against the white man, Moshoeshoe could have contributed in the resistance against white invasion in South Africa. Moshoeshoe is depicted as having accepted the English flag readily and harboured a white missionary in Thaba Bosigo, his stronghold. Abrahams approves of this and handles Moshoeshoe sympathetically because he believes that this is how the imperialists should have been received.

Unlike Shaka who is said to have been taking conquered nations into slavery, and also Mzilikazi who destroyed Kunana, Moshoeshoe is depicted as having honoured his captives by ordering that their wounds be annointed with oil. The defeated Zulu army was given gifts and a feast was made on their behalf.

Abrahams portrays Moshoeshoe as a man of wisdom who was not as blood-thirsty as the Zulu. Abrahams takes pains to condemn violence by depicting Moshoeshoe the way he does. Moshoeshoe even taught the Zulu that there was no need to fight the white man since there was the option of a treaty. Abrahams views the question of a treaty as positive, he is not aware that by putting the Basotho under English protection, Moshoeshoe offered his country as an English colony. Abrahams therefore comes out as pro-imperialism.

Moshoeshoe had already become a Christian and wore the white man's clothes.

A strange one to be king, this.
Very small. And no sign of the
warrior about him. And he was
dressed in the clothes that were
shaped like a human body. The
kind of clothes white man wore.¹⁶

Abrahams dwells much on the size of Moshoeshoe to emphasize that he was not a fighter but a man of wisdom who solved problems without fighting.

The Ndebele on the other hand are depicted as giants, but not in the positive sense. Abrahams ridicules their big statures, and they are made to be out-witted by a man of small stature like Moshoeshoe.

Moshoeshoe is portrayed as having worn a kind expression:

And his eyes, when he looked
up were the eyes of Mkomosi. It
was as if sadness never left
them. Yet his mouth seemed
always to smile.¹⁷

¹⁶ Peter Abrahams, *ibid.*, p.301

¹⁷ Peter Abrahams, *ibid.*, p.301

ALBERT WITH MY
NDING M.A. THESIS. THESE
ARE SAY THAT THIS THESIS
IS WANTING (CONSIST OF
MEERE SEXUAL NARRATIVES).
O.E.A.

DO IT AND PROVE IT! (1947)

Moshoeshoe is depicted as a saint, a very insignificant man in stature, who achieves great things without much effort, and treating the Ndebele as his erring brothers who need forgiveness and understanding.

Abrahams thinks wearing the white man's clothes, having religion and being literate are the signs of a positive man. | you do not! abrahams (2044)

* Mine Boy introduces us to a different slant of the confrontation between whites and blacks, in the sense that it deals with more recent times in terms of the history of South Africa, and therefore handles this confrontation at a more sophisticated level.??

The working class living conditions in Mine Boy were very squalid. Malay Camp, which was a black township was dark, filthy and overcrowded. There were no proper roads and drainage system. living conditions.

which one?
the large Ukhanda
Africa

According to Walter Rodney, development on the individual level implies increased skills and capacity, creativity, responsibility and material well being, that is, adequate food, proper shelter and clothing. At the group level, development means increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships.

In Mine Boy we see under-development both at individual and group levels.

Groups of children walking down the street carefully studying the gutters and vying with each other to pounce upon dirty edibles, and fighting each other for them.¹⁸

¹⁸ Peter Abrahams, Mine Boy (London: Faber & Faber 1946) p.77

Abraham
Widdowson
- Poverty

From the behaviour of these children, it is obvious that food for the people in Malay was not adequate, therefore the children tried in vain to satisfy their hunger by picking dirty bits of food from the streets and eating them.

The miners also had very little to eat despite the fact that they had to work very hard.

All the men had the same kind of little tins. In each tin was a chunk of mealie-meal porridge cooked into a hardened chunk, a piece of meat and a piece of coarse compound bread.²⁰

Obviously, this kind of food was not good enough both in quality as well as in quantity. It was carried in little tins, which suggests that it was little. These people did not get enough food to satisfy their hunger, and the little they got was not nourishing enough to reinforce their strength after the hard work, hence their capacity to do work was hampered.

Simple?

Boiling work.
Boiling
return to spa.

The houses in Malay Camp were tiny and built close to each other.

think man! Show how thinking of individual think! think! Who approved this thesis? think! Who supports this guy?

At Leah's place there was little space compared to the number of people who stayed there. When Xuma came to join Leah's household, there was not enough space for all of them. Xuma had to use Eliza's room because she was not there.

Simple?

elaborate - you are too simplistic and naive.
am I? oh yes

From the description of the furniture that

²⁰ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.43

* Why reiterate the story
Analyze the novel!!

was in the room where the members of the house-hold were seated when Xuma arrived, it is obvious that the place was not properly furnished. In fact the only piece of furniture mentioned is only one long bench. Some of these people slept on the floor.

And in the other room the old one they call Daddy was sleeping against a wall with an open mouth and with nothing to cover him.²¹

Eventually Xuma got a room of his own.

It was small and it served as an all purpose room. On one side there was his bed, on the other, there was his belongings, his food and a can full of charcoal that served as a stove. The same applied to Maisy's room.

In winter, the inhabitants of Malay Camp endured extreme cold because many of them were not properly clothed. Xuma did not have enough clothing for the cold weather. His shoes were thip, and the cold got through. His room was also cold.

Some people walking along the streets were bare-footed and had no coats. Daddy at Leah's place lay on the floor uncovered.

These people were denied their/basic necessities by the society they lived in, (therefore) it was an unjust society. The blacks were discriminated against so as to exploit them better. Racism was prevalent, but Abrahams is not aware that this was

²¹Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.6

So!

This is not just a composition...
Min/Abraham

Why move
so cool?

reference to...
to...
to...

mere
formal
narratives!

What is wrong with this -> there are part of every society -> types!

in shags we were barefoot.

poor
interiors?

Go

see the need for running since he had done nothing wrong, he was struck by a police man and he had to run.

Just he for rehabilitated, fell the police and accompanied to his dear life.

Taking a walk towards Johannesburg in the evening, Xuma found himself in the midst of whites as he neared the heart of the city. He had to step aside for them now and again because they were white, and he was black, so he could not rub shoulders with them. White people were eating and chatting in warm restaurants while Xuma endured the cold outside. He could only watch from the outside. A policeman stopped him for a pass and warned him to behave himself.

with Paul

Migrant labourers were kept in compounds.

Here, people are restricted to filthy hovels from which they are driven out to work in the mines and taken back in the evening, just like animals.

Explaining this to Xuma, Johannes said:

They are not of the city, they come from the farms and some are from the land of the Portuguese and others are from Rhodesia. The white men fetched them. And those that are fetched must live in the compounds. It is the law here.²³

claimants
walk in double files like prisoners.
criminals
GO ON!
You are doing better now.
have they worked for it

Such conditions were very demoralising and the movements of these people were restricted. There were no recreation facilities and they had to stay away from their families for long periods. The lack of recreation facilities for the black population resulted in drinking too much and disorderly behaviour.

What drives them to become drunkards?

²³ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.34

John
.../38

There were no drinking places for blacks, except shebeens, but even these were not allowed, so people drank in shebeens at their own risk. Johannes' wife was arrested for being drunk and rowdy.

Lena's wife

"They have taken my woman."

"Taken your woman - Lena?"

158th a wife really

"Yes sonofabitch police. I will kill one!"

"Why?"

"Seven days or a pound."

"Why did they take her?"

"Drunk and noisy."²⁴

Johannes' resentment was prompted by the feeling of being treated unfairly, even though he could not clearly express the source of his resentment, when Xuma tried to find out why Johannes refused paying a fine, and yet he threatened to break the jail. Johannes could not find words for his feelings.

*1/11/19
Feelings*

"Then why do you want to break the jail?" Johannes flung his arm around Xuma's shoulder and smiled.

"I don't know, brother", he whispered.²⁵ *to clash the system that is symbolized by the jail!*

Even in his drunken state, which was almost permanent, Johannes was conscious of the forces that destroyed him.

Johannes is quite different when he is not drunk!

Daddy who was also drunk most of the time understood his environment. His drinking was a way of escaping from the painful realities of the situation.

When summarising the situation he says:

One day the city came to visit the custom, Xuma. And the custom was kind. It gave the city food and

²⁴ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.102

²⁵ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.102

it gave the city beer and it gave the city beautiful women ... The city didn't say "No thank you" and it didn't say "thank you". And the people said "Ah everything will be all right now, the custom and the city are friends." Hmmm They did say that and they went out into the fields to look after their crops. And when the sun was going down they came back and looked for their beer but their beer was gone. And they looked for the custom but the custom was gone too. And the city was there laughing at them. And now they go to jail if they drink beer.²⁶

Deprived

Burton

Retired

Daddy suggests that his condition and that of the blacks in general, is a result of deprivation by the system. The racist government instituted laws that excluded the black man from having any right or enjoying any privilege in the society. ^{racial class distinction} } 745

As a young man, Daddy used to fight against some of the discriminatory laws, for instance, the pass law.

And when there was trouble about the passes he stood at the head of the people and he spoke to hundreds of them and the police feared him.²⁷

Then what drives Daddy to become what he is? You are just giving a summary of the novel.

The old woman, Ma Plank, admired Daddy because of such exploits. This woman understood what Daddy stood for, and that this made him unhappy, yet he continued to fight against the unjust laws. He took Leah from the streets and gave her a home.

A good for nothing
Somebody
knew why he
had to die

²⁶ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.11

²⁷ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.81

Leah viewed the situation with defiance. She always strived to remain unchanged by it. Her man was in prison, serving a three year sentence, but she resisted being affected by this. This hardness was part of her mask of survival. She always assumed a hardness that defied any softness in her. When Daddy died, she did not cry even though she had loved Daddy very much. She discouraged Xuma from going to work in the mines. Leah was aware that working in the mines was a source of destruction for a man because no matter how strong he was, he ended up being reduced to nothing in a short time.

Leah beat the law at its own game by using one of the police as her informer who warned her each time there was going to be a police raid looking for the liquor that she sold for a living. When she was finally caught, she remained unchanged and defiant of the law.

Engaged in the game of economic survival -> she to remain alive -> another escapism.

Eliza on the other hand was an aspirant to the unfair advantages enjoyed by the whites, and because of the false consciousness, that is, her identification, of her social position with her blackness, she essentially hated herself. She wanted a man who could read and write, and one who could speak the white man's language.

This portrayal of Eliza is indicative of the fact that Abrahams sees racism as something that prevents people from relating well and freely. He does not view the whole problem as having its basis on the type of economy that is in the South African system.

Abrahams reduces racism to race misunderstanding.../41 and dysfunction and not as part of an economic structure (imperialist capitalism) that favours the whites!

Symbolize the text p113-114. All know this.

attention!

It is ironic that Leah's awareness through education lead her not to align to change the black to being black but to black out to white man's. The white man's segregationist economic exploitation which would lead to 5 Priv. lodge position

Leah's exploitation was a the alternative to being a woman in a male world.

OP 66

alienation why? (as she was educated beyond her time)

In actual fact, Abrahams advocates racial integration as a solution to the problem of apartheid. He is not aware that this would not be possible unless ① the economic system changes.

Abrahams makes the Red one and his wife, a white couple condemn the system they are part and parcel of. In a racist situation, colour determines class, so by virtue of being white the Red one and his wife were part of the white ruling class and therefore the oppressor, yet Abrahams makes them entertain Xuma, a black man in their home, and thereby breaking the racial law that the system enforced in order to protect the privileged position of the white section of the society.

The white couple argued that people are basically the same, that is why they crave for the same things. Eliza wanted to live like a white woman because of this. They insisted on one being a man first before being black or white. This is a clear indication of the fact that Abrahams sees the problem of racism in terms of colour only, that is why he believes that ignoring it would make it non-existent. He suggests the "man without colour" idea as a solution.

Abrahams overlooks the question of race and class in a capitalist society. Race is used for the exploitation of the black section of the society, so the concern for racial integration that Abrahams suggests through this white couple is a false one. The Red, being a white man was part of the ruling minority class, therefore he could not help being arrogant and condescending in the way he expressed his

And why the condescending .../42
can he be over.

✓

Confidence

Racism is a mental attitude
I think Thompson / write!

are they named?

South Africa
liberalism
imperialism
class system
on page
was probably
words used
as a
policy
of

liberalism

✓

concern for blacks. His whole attitude was commanding. He simply dictated what was good for the blacks as Xuma pointed out:

With the Red one, one felt that he wanted you to trust him and go to him when there was trouble. And it was hard to be friendly with a white person thus.²⁸

Liberalism → it is a racial interaction that leaves the white man on top!

This superiority complex on the part of the Red one was based on colour. As a white man, he felt he was entitled to judge what was good and what was bad for the blacks. - *Give us evidence for the fact*

Xuma could see the discrepancy in the idea of "man without colour" because he was aware that if the concept worked, his people would not suffer. As a black man, Xuma felt the pinch and had a personal experience of suffering, whereas Paddy, the Red one and his wife belonged to a different world of experience, and had only an intellectual view of the suffering of the blacks, as Xuma argued:

"You say you understand" Xuma said, "but how can you? you are a white man. You do not carry a pass. You do not know how it feels to be stopped by a policeman in the street. You go where you like. You do not know how it feels when they say "Get out! white people only." Did your woman leave you because she is mad with wanting the same things the white man has? Did you know Leah? Did you love her? Do you know how it feels to see her go

²⁸Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.70

to jail for nine months?
.... you understand with
your head. I understand
with pain".²⁹

*Not always
not anywhere*

Due to his liberal outlook, Abrahams over-looks the question of race and class. He ignores the fact that a white man in a racist situation has the consciousness of the ruling class even if he is part of the working class like the Red one. Abrahams makes the Red one launch a fight against the unjust treatment of the black miners and actually schooled them, since it was already assumed that being black, they were ignorant, He schooled them into revolting against the unjust treatment of the black miners.

*Abrahams was writing an
idealist novel not
realistic one*

2 Xuma is right! They pay you little! They don't care if you risk your lives! Why is that so! Is not the blood of a black man red like that of a white man? Does not a black man love life too? I am with you! Let them fix up the place first!³⁰

*Incredible - don't you think?
You should not tell Abrahams that
book he should have written
before the 1920s.*

This is all false idealism that results

from Abrahams' liberal outlook. He suggests that the fate of both the black and white miners is the same, yet the white miners enjoy a high standard of living. They get big salaries, and a job done by them automatically becomes a skilled job, but the same job done by a black miner is considered unskilled. Whites get more out of the super-exploitation of blacks.

*don't you think
Abraham
forgets the
condition of the
blacks in S.A?*

*white
40000
fancy!
-she's a
more
man*

²⁹ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.172
³⁰ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.181

Obviously, people of such different material conditions can never be said to have the same fate. Economic difference (class) is at the heart of the matter!

Food? Why the juxtaposition?

To further emphasize this point, Abrahams made a black and a white man miner die underground and the men who risked their lives going down to fetch the bodies of those who died were Paddy and Xuma. Paul and Gubuza in Wild Conquest died side by side after confessing to each other that they were for peace; again a black and a white man.

Can you reconcile these two?

Why false? Because by going down together Paddy & Xuma - and getting equal share of the mineral wealth in a mine

This false integration is a sign of not understanding the implications of imperialism on the part of Abrahams because he believes that mixed races will naturally solve the problem even if the material condition remains the same.

The Red one was the first to go to jail when the arrests were made as a result of the revolt in the mines. Paddy, a white man went to jail on behalf of the blacks. Incredible!

Xuma felt he had to go to jail too because the white man had sacrificed himself for the sake of the blacks.

The Red one is there. He is not a black man but he is going to jail for our people, how can I not go?³¹

SEEKING PATTY'S SIDE 0114

Abrahams does not even challenge the fact that Xuma and Paddy were going to be put in separate

³¹Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 183

What did you give
your premises?

Abraham's
and just at the place
of the Xuma
Paddy → De Klerk

Stop it guys!
I can't concentrate

Give us love!
avoiding comments
you think logical inference
is self-defeating

Do you think there
any difference due to
them being jailed?
How do you know?

jails, that is, if Paddy was going to be jailed at all. The treatment he was going to get was going to be far more comfortable than the one Xuma would get. Paddy's racial position and financial standing put him in a better position to manipulate the law.

Abrahams treats Paddy like a Jesus in whom the salvation of the blacks depends. He is the one who gives the example and urges the blacks to revolt so as to force the law to give them better treatment. He is Xuma who started all this!

Abrahams suggests that this type of thing is going to change the situation in South Africa. If there is a white saviour who gives himself up for the black cause as the Red one does, the whole problem will be solved.

I personally believe that the situation will only change if blacks in South Africa unite against the white minority who own all the wealth, and then fight towards instituting a system whereby the economy of the country will be put at the service of the whole nation, and not just a small section of the society, otherwise the integration Abrahams suggests can never ensure political, social and economic equality.

D + +

you could do better

Socialist realism → revolution → to dismantle completely the whole system of apartheid!

Stop your silly, glib, third rate, unconvincing arguments at all you'll manage to secure M.A. scholarship

you sound half-baked spotted junkies/hoppers

This is your analysis I wonder how you feel about it you're kidding that you are writing the way we did things fall apart in force 1989

This thesis is a clear pointer to intellectual compromise inherent in most of the work in the series

CHAPTER TWO

Peter Abrahams took part in the Pan-African Conference held in London in 1945. Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, who later became Presidents of Ghana and Kenya respectively, were also present. Apparently, Abrahams was very close to these people who were directly involved in the fight for the liberation of their countries.

At this stage the literary field also began to reflect on what was happening on the political and cultural plane. African writers started writing about themselves.

Organised opposition to colonial rule increased significantly after 1945 which was also the year that saw the end of the second world war. The demand for liberation was to find its highest expression in the wars of liberation that took place in such countries as Kenya and Algeria in the fifties and very early sixties. And, with the granting of political independence to Ghana in 1957, the era of political independence was ushered in on the continent.

Abrahams wrote A Wreath For Udomo in 1956, just a year before Ghana attained its political independence. He uses

Ghana as a model in this novel. Ghana's independence was celebrated by the whole of Africa because it was the most concrete example of the successful realisation of their struggle against imperialist powers.

*How do you
know this?
Can you find
the text?*

*1956 - 1957
STOP making generalized unexplained
statements → this
is not history. We
are interested in facts
and not suggestions!*

In order to demonstrate the inequalities between blacks and whites in Pan-Africa in A Wreath For Udomo; Abrahams gives a description of the conditions under which the two groups lived.

The whites who were mainly civil servants had their residential area on the high lands, far from the sea. Here the weather was cooler, especially in the evenings.

These homes have a feel of English country about them. There are spacious lawns and wonderful flower beds. The rooms are large and cool. Almost, this little area of Africa where the civil servants live is a bit of England transported to the tropics.¹

Another part of this area was occupied by the black petty bourgeois, for example, doctors, lawyers and teachers. Indian and Assyrian merchants also lived here. Their houses were built of bricks and they were reasonably comfortable.

The majority of the people, that is, workers and peasants lived in squalor. The houses were huddled on top of each other in an unplanned way:

Once away from the main Centres, the houses huddled on top of each other any way you like. Mud and wattle jostled with timber or corrugated iron.²

There was also overcrowding of people, hence the place had to take more than it could hold. There was also an open drainage that men used as a public toilet and women used to empty night pots in it.³

¹Peter Abrahams, A Wreath For Udomo (London: Faber and Faber, 1950) p. 137

²Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.136

³Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.136

class
- racist
- violent.

The place stank and added to the squalid surroundings. It was a breeding place for flies that in turn crawled on the uncovered food that was sold in the streets.

The market, too, was extremely crowded and the sellers had to spread their wares on the piece of ground for which they paid rent, so the food was always exposed to dirt and germs.

Udomo's office was very tiny and filthy. The only furniture was just two benches, a chair and a table. These were very old. The building Udomo's office was found in, was old and rotting. The chairs were shaky from age. The floor was covered by a thick layer of dirt and the window panes were opaque due to the accumulation of dirt. The yard was filthy and stank of piddle. In fact the whole place was reeking with dirt.

Such an environment was not conducive to healthy living because dirt is a source of diseases. Dirty surroundings reduce individuals to a sub-human level of existence. ^{? explain}

The dirt could be symbolic of the unsanitary political climate existing at the moment.

Black passengers travelling by sea from England to Pan-Africa were put under similar conditions.

No lights of many colours here:
No cleanliness and Stewards. The music from the dance up there came through an extension. But there was no room for dancing down here, the heat of the tropical night was oppressive, stifling.⁴

⁴Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.125

Annual Report

The only music they had in the third class was what came through an extension speaker from the upper section of the ship where the whites and a few selected blacks had a dance. The third class passengers, who were all blacks, did not have full entertainment from the music. All they could do was to sit and brood. There was no variety of activities on their long journey.

One little cabin was shared by three people. It was stiflingly hot, and therefore people lay naked. There was no privacy in the cabins because there was more than one person in a tiny cabin and the heat forced them to stay naked. This part of the ship was nearer the engine and was therefore noisy, especially at night when the passengers were sleeping.

At the Pan-African port, all the whites were processed first. They all went through pass-port control while the blacks waited. Racism played a major role here. The whites did not only enjoy a high standard of living but took precedence when service was given. Like any other colonial group, they were lords and ladies of Africa. *lot of things that is Africa*

The same was happening in Pluralia. Colonialists were lords of that country. They used all sorts of means to suppress any uprising so as to maintain that position, like they did with the one Mhenäi had attempted to lead:

Now my friends, you've all heard about that place called Pluralia where five million whites are the lords and masters

40
50

over forty million of our fellow Africans. To-day our people have no rights ... they have fought for their rights and they have been ruthlessly crushed.⁵

Blacks lost their lands through displacement by whites if the land they occupied was fertile enough. Mhendi's wife and other women were shot down for revolting against injustice in Pluralia.⁶

Mhendi emptied his third glass. He said: "I have just heard from home that they shot my wife." "Oh God", Lois whispered.

"She and other women were victims of 'squatter A'. They've been trying to move my people from their old lands to a near-desert strip of land. The settlers don't like to see us on fertile land."⁶

To justify their occupation of Pan-Africa, the colonialists maintained that conquest and occupation are part and parcel of human history, hence it was not unique to the African situation.

"We in these lands, have ourselves been occupied. Britain was once a Roman colony, was once invaded by the barbarians from the German forests, and was conquered by the Normans But we gained from these conquests. They helped to make us what we are today."⁷

[That it was a divine mission]

And so even British Empire conquest will also have to go one day. It is a matter of time!

⁵Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 189
⁶Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 26
⁷Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 66

apostrophes
are missing
Abraham by
White
Race class
Other
Publ. in
We even
L. C. S. G.
D. C. S. G.
pre-1947

Well, Roman conquest was different from the colonial situation of Pan-Africa and Pluralia. The Roman conquered territories but they did not interfere with the life of the people. The conquered people continued to rule themselves. A Roman governor was put there to defend the interests of Rome, and Rome kept him in check so that he did not grow so powerful as to rebel against Rome. Tributes in form of taxes were paid to Rome by the conquered, and subjects of conquered territories were taken into captivity by Rome, but through valour and other recognised deeds, a slave could not only acquire his freedom, but could even become one of the rulers of the Roman empire.

They should know that.

Value
Power
Lack

Are you very sure of your History? Do you are unaware of historical dynamism and human development popularly known as Civilization? Conquer means to subdue by use of force! These ancient conquerors were never welcomed anywhere!

Materialism

Other conquests like the French, the British and the Boers were based on the direct exploitation of the conquered and subdued. That is why imperialists never bothered to know who the African was, and whether he had a culture or not. If anything stood in the way, it was the culture of the people whose land they occupied, because culture is a strong political tool. The colonial power's concern about the colonized people learning something from them is not applicable in this case. If they were as concerned as they sound, they would not have imposed themselves on the colony concerned in the first place because like any other human community, it was developing at its own pace. The coming of the Europeans disrupted this development, so the concern expressed by members of the colonizing group about the colonized masses is very hypocritical because they are the ones

- Colonialism/Imperialism is based on the assumption that one culture is superior to another. Such .../ 52 must be subdued.

- Assimilation - cultural superiority

who had exploited the masses and put them in a position where they can be manipulated by whoever is in power.

To hand over the masses to these individuals before the masses are sufficiently educated to control and restrain these individuals by the proper exercise of their rights would be to betray our own trust and responsibility to the colonial masses.⁶

The British should not have accused the African freedom group of wanting independence for their own ends, for example that these people were going to turn around and exploit the masses after independence, since the masses were not sufficiently educated to claim their rights if the new leaders decided to mistreat them. *The educated elite are a product of colonialism and they therefore copy their colonial masters!*

The petty bourgeois intellectuals were the creation of the English education system they had gone through. They were a sign of the English success in colonizing Pan-Africa and Pluralia.

- alienation

The colonialists also argued that they had spent big sums of money building roads, improving housing, and also on educational and health services:

We have spent enormous sums for the benefit of the colonial peoples, millions of pounds - the figures are on record for those who want to check them - on medical and educational services, on housing, on improving

⁶Peter Abrahams, *ibid.*, p.68

roads and rail services; on improving agricultural methods ... where did all this money come from? It came from the ordinary tax-payer in this country. We are no longer a rich country; we are no longer the first power in the world.⁹

you are very wrong
It is exploitation of the poor of the colonies
some even miss!

Exploitation of the poor of the colonies
At least lie told
At least years

This sounds good, but one wonders as to whose benefit this was done. The life of the majority of the people was adversely affected by such high sounding projects. They had to work like slaves to ensure that these projects were successful. *not only that they had to be exploited.*

Investment of capital in the colonies was calculated to draw profits, so the tax-payer of the colonizing power was actually being supported by the colonies, and not the other way round. This argument was simply a manifestation of the belief in the civilising mission of colonialism. *that was a total failure!*

At Lois' party, the young peer criticised the members of the African freedom party for attacking even those whites who were on their side.

The peer stabbed an unsteady finger at Mhendi's chest. "I agree. But you chaps aren't reasonable. You're always attacking those of us who are on your side."¹⁰ *How???*

⁹Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 67

¹⁰Peter Abrahams. ibid., p. 35

This argument is very similar to what transpired in the meeting between the African freedom party members and the colonialists. The young peer insisted on peaceful negotiations and co-operation between the colonialists and the colonized because as a member of the colonizing group, freedom is an abstraction. He had no personal experience of the sufferings of the colonized people, as Mhendi pointed out:

You don't understand, my friend. Look it's simple. I 'm black; my friend, Mike here is black. We don't have to be on our side. We are our side. We don't have to understand the problem: we are it. When you say "colour bar" they're words to you; to us they're an experience, a reality which you never have and never will enter into. It's easy for you to say be reasonable. It's an abstraction, so you can afford the luxury of reasonableness. ¹¹

Even though Abrahams still sees the problem of apartheid in terms of colour, his rejection of this white liberal is quite positive because such people only paid lip service to the Pan-African struggle. At least this argument makes Abrahams sound like he was no more carried away by the sentiments of some white liberals, who inspite of being members of the colonizing power, made themselves patrons of the African struggle against colonialism.

¹¹Peter Abrahams, ibid., pp. 35-6

Mhendi and Udomo rejected the peer's idea that a responsible and constructive approach by the Africans could form a basis for co-operation between the colonizers and the colonized in solving the problems of the colonies.

It's our business to be irresponsible! A slave's business is to get rid of his chains; not to be reasonable! Only the free can afford to be diplomats.¹²

This argument sums up the unworkability of any co-operation between oppressor and the oppressed because the two groups can only co-operate if they meet each other as equals. In other words, this argument could have been valid if Abrahams did not single out the petty bourgeois intellectuals as the only people who were in a position to fight for the liberation of Pan-Africa and Pluralia. Abrahams ignores the fact that even among the oppressed the class phenomena exist.

Colonial people are oppressed in the sense that they are being exploited by a colonial power, but within the colonized group, there are individuals who through education or wealth have risen above the majority of the colonized people.

The nationalists who were preparing for the struggle against colonialism in Pan-Africa and Pluralia consisted of a few intellectuals who

¹²Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 36

were studying in England. This kind of education was not relevant to the conditions at home because they were being prepared to think in line with their colonial masters. The English education system created individuals who were inculcated with a bourgeois mentality, just as the Franco-phone system resulted in assimilation, which created a minority that approximated the colonial group, so independence for these people was the taking over from the colonial masters and not the change of the system..

The group that was preparing to go back to Africa to launch a struggle against colonialism consisted of a few intellectuals who were far removed from the majority of the people, yet the success of a struggle depends on the participation of the majority of the people.

As soon as Adebhoy returned to Pan-Africa, he initiated the struggle through chiefs and elders. These people were involved in the colonial government, hence they had no reason to fight against it.

Having failed to get the chiefs and elders to support the struggle, the next group Adebhoy turned to were the merchants. These people had money and could give financial assistance to the struggle, but this put them in a position to dictate to the leaders of the liberation group. This was another class that had a lot to lose, and therefore could ^{only} give their support in so far as their position was not threatened.

Udomo thought it would be possible to make

use of their money and still control them.

Promise them positions like patron or president or even treasurer of the party when it is formed, but don't promise them anything on policy.¹³

If these people were going to finance the party, they were going to have a strong grip on it, whether they were involved in policy making or not, because they could easily cripple the liberation movement by withdrawing their aid, so there was no way of avoiding their dictating to the party. The majority of the people were mobilized in the end, though Abrahams keeps them in the background, they are the ones who helped in the distribution of the paper and they carried out the strike. Abrahams concentrates on the participation of the University and merchant classes who were a minority, and therefore confines the struggle to a few people who had no access to the majority of the people.

This class distinction even among the oppressed is indicated by the attitude of the Council and elders. The chiefs and elders were oppressed in so far as they were colonial subjects, but unlike the majority of the people they had been incorporated into the colonial government and they enjoyed certain privileges. They rejected Udomo's request of meeting them partly on the grounds that none of his family ever held any position of authority, either as chief or elder, so they were not ready to listen

¹³Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 106

Handwritten notes:
Abrahams
University
Merchant classes
minority
confining the struggle
to a few people
no access to the majority
of the people

Handwritten note:
Party members

to an ambitious nonentity.

This class felt threatened not only by Udomo's rising as an individual, but they were also threatened by the idea of a liberation movement because that suggested the possibility of a revolution which could change the present order in the society, and therefore endanger their position.

Having given their financial support, the merchants were always on Udomo's heels and controlled the local paper, the Queenstown paper that Udomo used in order to reach the people. They ordered him to stop supporting the strike for instance, and his hands were tied because the existence of this paper depended entirely on the merchants.

As Fanon argues, besides its financial barrenness, the nationalist leaders only mobilize the people with slogans of independence, but they are completely ignorant of the economy of the country. After rallying the people, Udomo in prison had no other message for them. He sent his lawyer to tell the people that he had wept.

... go to the people and tell them I wept. Say: "Udomo stood at his prison window and held the bars and looked out. And then he saw the flames and knew they were taking the oath. And Udomo wept. Tell them that."¹⁴

¹⁴Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 186

Having rallied the people, Udomo does not seem to know what to do next. Selina had done her bit by making sure that the majority of the people got the message by smuggling the paper to all parts of the country, and had actually formed a party. It was at this crucial stage that Udomo should have made a good follow-up by giving a well thought out and definite plan as to what was to be done since the majority of the people had given him and the party their support. Instead, all he told them was that he wept. By so doing, he only made an emotional appeal to the masses so that they could sympathise with him without knowing why they were doing it.

Don't be so superficial? Many-mindedness?

Lanwood intends to write

During the welcoming of the three other leaders of the African freedom party who had remained, Lanwood who had fought for the liberation of Pan-Africa from outside for a long time, was so impressed by the developments in Pan-Africa that he made up his mind he was going to write a book on this occurrence. "I must write the history of this bloodless revolution."¹⁵

the intellectual part of the party

Lanwood, like any other intellectual had a bookish idea of the revolution. He thought of a successful revolution without blood. Malcom X makes it explicit that there is nothing like a bloodless revolution. A real revolution involves blood.

This emphasizes the gap between Lanwood

¹⁵Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 186

need Khendi's whites so desperately.¹⁹

Udomo would discard "tribalism" later because he regarded it as a stumbling block to "progress". In other words, when he started fraternising with the whites, the people who elected him to office would be silenced if they criticised him for having lost sight of the goals for which they had elected him.

Udomo seems to dismiss everything African as "tribal", and he accepts everything western as representative of "progress". In fact Abrahams paints a gloomy picture of what he terms "tribalism". People who stand for African traditions in Patriarchal societies, like Selina are depicted negatively. Selina is portrayed as a "male" chauvinist, who, besides making it possible for the men who had been abroad to take over the running of the country, dishes out women to these men to take care of their physical needs while they are involved in the struggle.

The women Selina uses are very stupid, subservient and well trained only in the part Selina makes them play, that is, the part of pleasing the men in bed. → Abraham's portrait of African women is very negative. Not worthy of study?

Though Selina is a revolutionary, she is depicted as having no feelings or warmth. Lois, the English woman is portrayed as very warm, sympathetic

¹⁹Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 242

and understanding. She is not just a sex tool, she provides some spiritual and material comfort, and acts as a uniting factor for the members of the African freedom party while they were abroad.

what's wrong with making a woman masculine?

Abrahams has nothing positive to say about African women. He makes them either crude and masculine or simple to the point of being stupid. Selina, the only woman in the Pan-African struggle for independence sits with the leaders and makes plans. She is the one who actually formed the party and made sure that Udomo became the leader of the country. She is the one who organised for the removal of Udomo because he had betrayed the trust of the people. She is ruthless and she puts everybody at her mercy, just like Leah in Mine Boy.

Remember, she is well educated. How could she have gotten that dumb = Romantic fantasy!

There is no where in Abrahams' works where African women are portrayed positively. Both Leah and Selina are portrayed negatively by Abrahams except that for Selina there is no justification for what she is. There are no circumstances that lead to Selina's ruthlessness. She is just presented as being like that by the author. > Asante's Tea hedge

Leah is portrayed as physically a giant. Her structure is so imposing that no man can challenge her in a fight. She is depicted as a beautiful amazon. When her man went to jail, she took Dladla to care for her physical needs..She is the one who arranged the love affair between Xuma and Eliza. Leah found men for women. Unlike Selina, Leah's environment demanded that she had to fight for her survival,

Do you know Leah?

so there is cause for sympathising with her.

Eliza is depicted as ^{eh?} ~~man~~. She would like to live like a white woman, and have all the things the whites had. Even the affair she had with Xuma did not satisfy her. Abrahams suggests that apartheid stands in the way of human relationships. Instead of seeing its economic implications, Abrahams feels that people would love freely if it was not for racism. *Does one wanting the human things "whites" want one to be mad? you've mad yourself to think that! - the mistakes of whites*

X Maisy is depicted as too simple. Her whole ^{As a} life is centred around having Xuma as her man. *think things human*

In Wild Conquest, the faceless Ndebele women are there to comfort their men ^{emphatically} emotionally. They do not contribute constructively to the circumstances that threatened the society, namely, the intrusion of the whites.

In A Wreath For Udomo, Mhendi's wife is depicted as a mere object in the house:

She liked to sit on the floor then, near me, not saying a word. I felt the quiet of her presence then. At first when she did this, I used to open a book and read aloud. ²⁰

This woman had no ideas of her own, according to Abrahams. She was just timid and docile.

The drama of Udomo's killing makes Selina not only ugly but a backward savage wallowing in

monstrous killings.

The man who had been at the window shrieked, dipped and hacked at Udomo's body ... the second man dipped and hacked at Udomo's neck. Blood spurted into the man's face. Udomo died. They hacked at the life-less body in a frenzy that kept time with the drums.²¹

Abrahams suggests that this is an African traditional ritual killing, but so far there is no African society that kills people this way. ^{who made Abraham the spokesman of African values} Abrahams also feels that the greatest crime of "tribalism" is the stifling of human personality. This is the illusion of individual "freedom". He feels the western bourgeois way of life would be ideal if it was without racism. He laments the fact that these people do not put their values above colour, otherwise he would make a wholesale acceptance of their way of life at the expense of African traditional life.

At this stage, Abrahams had discarded the idea of man without colour, and had become aware that racism excludes the blacks from full participation in the western culture.

Abrahams' negative attitude towards African traditional practices is demonstrated by the apprehensions Mabi had when he had to meet the mountain people. He longed for his mother yet he did not like the ritual that surrounds such a meeting. This so-called ritual turned out to be no ritual at all

²¹ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 306

but a hand-shaking in order of seniority:

A wave of bitterness welled up in Mabi as the chief and elders left their stools and came to him. The real evil of tribalism in this day and age was that its ritualistic code of fear and authority had robbed man of his individual man-hood.²²

The ritual of washing of feet in blood was obviously reserved for Udomo. Such a ritual must have had a special significance in the society concerned. It was performed on Udomo, not just anybody, so it must have been reserved for people in high authority.

As far as I am concerned, there was nothing wrong with the ritual as long as it did not require human blood. - what if it did? They can't have used chicken blood! Don't be stupid! Of course they must have used an animal's blood.

Blood plays a very important role in African societies because it is regarded as a symbol of life.

I personally do not see why Abrahams should be so negative towards what he calls "tribalism". First of all the term itself is inappropriate. Abrahams views these things from the point of view of the imperialists. Like the western novelist he views African exploits as savagery and bloody and devoid of any respect for human life.

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines a tribe as a social group of a simple kind, whose members have a common dialect, a common way of life and a single government. This term does not apply to

²²Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 237

But why about

We've been
arrived every
Nov 1st

How can you
+ come to African
values?

Sure
Abraham
should
know

Define what is tribalism!
What's Abraham's definition?

Who made spokesman
of African values?

societies that have achieved a strictly territorial organisation in large states. Its application is confined to social groups whose unity is based on kinship.

Who is referring to Pan-African part as tribal? Hey! Go by what is in the book - it is our point of departure!

The Pan-African society cannot be referred to as "tribal". Like any other nation it had some language groups, so the term "tribal" should be a white racist term that whites use when referring to African societies.

Abrahams confines the term to African traditional practices during the patriarchal stage in the development of societies.

Are you referring with this practices = they had a meaning!

As far as I know, there are both positive and negative things in such practices, so dismissing them completely is unfair. Some of these practices are very harmless to human life and also to "progress", and yet their meaning form the back-bone of the society. After all, every society has its own practices and rituals; it is only fair to criticise what is bad in them without dismissing them completely.

Udomo rallied the people by promising to get rid of the whites, but at the same time he wanted the whites for their expertise and capital.

Neo-colonialism

Even Lenwood who was very much against the white man's presence in the country felt the need for the destruction of imperialism without going back to "tribalism". Like Udomo, Lenwood wanted the country to be 'modernised'. The modernising process implied

white control of the economy of the country.

Abrahams makes the Pluralian whites offer financial assistance and expertise because he advocates the idea of a constellation of states.

By accepting the necessary help from Pluralia, Udomo betrayed another African cause, that is, the struggle of Pluralia against a racist regime. By inviting the Pluralian business men and technicians, Udomo denounced his support of Mhendi. The choice he made put him in no position to continue his support of Mhendi because the Pluralians could easily withdraw their assistance and bring the economy of Pan-Africa to a standstill. In fact when Mhendi's sabotage of goods trains and power plants succeeded, Udomo became very worried because Mhendi had come in through Pan-Africa. This alone was a very sensitive spot because the Pluralian government could easily accuse Pan-Africa of bringing in Mhendi. More-over, the de-railing of goods trains and cutting of power could then have direct effects on the Pan-African economy.

Sure

*

Udomo is a beast. He should be made not to see blue skies again.
is mi this work
Jomo did it
the Murrin
against

In self justification for handing over Mhendi to the Pluralian government, Udomo argued that he did it because of a sense of duty to Africa and her people. Udomo's greater duty to Pan-Africa was not to plunge it into exploitation by Pluralia, but to fight exploitation whenever it occurred. If he had supported the Pluralian struggle against colonialism he could have done the greatest service to Africa by helping in the liberation of a nation from colonialism

Abraham

Udomo

at

Political-economic
policies

Eight years after Udomo had become Prime Minister, nothing had changed. The only change was that there were more black faces among the ministers, but colonialism still persisted. The whites were not only dictating economic terms but political policy as well. The blacks who were supposed to be in power were just stooges.

"The Cabinet's ours. We sign the laws. But the white man run all the big industrialisation and construction projects. They control us with their money, and you know it. That's why you have clubs for whites only. Everywhere in the land, in factories on building and construction projects, where roads are being made, whites give orders and blacks do the work ..."²³

Obviously, conditions in Pan-Africa were similar to conditions in racist Pluralia. Colour bar was still practised shamelessly. There were still clubs set aside for whites only. Whites were mere supervisors while the blacks were doing the work.

When condemned by the people for betraying Mhendi, and for betraying their trust, Udomo found comfort in thinking of Lois, the white woman in England. This is indicative of total alienation from his people. He was even thinking of bringing her to Africa.

→ Udomo - a male prostitute. No, Abrahams is not Kwame Nkrumah was.

²³Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 229

Udomo was still bent on bringing more whites because he felt more at home with them.

After the death of Udomo, Mabi also found comfort in thinking about the same woman. He condoned Udomo's exploits, even developed personal admiration for him. In other words, he saw no other alternative given the same circumstances.

Another shit of hard

Mabi-Jack

binds of a system

Shit-product of Simba education system

The essence of neo-colonialism is the country's experiencing political independence in theory. In other words, a country has all the outside signs of being independent, yet in practice its economic system and its political policy is directed by an imperialist power.

Abrahams, therefore, sees the liberation of Africa from colonialism in terms of neo-colonialism. According to him, lest Africa sinks back to "tribalism", neo-colonialism provides that something which is African but not primitive. In other words, neo-colonialism perpetuates the values of the colonial period when the leadership has shifted from whites to blacks.

is the solution? The problem still remains!

*

In A Night of Their Own, the society consists of the hunters and the hunted. The division is based on race. There are the whites who enjoy all the privileges in the land on one hand, and on the other, all those who are discriminated against, on the basis of colour, and who are denied not only privileges but bare necessities of life.

Most of Doctor Nankhoo's patients were poor, small and shrivelled up. This is a clear sign of lack of proper feeding. Their bodies were almost drying up because of starvation. Numberless political prisoners, in some instances both father and mother were in prison and there was nobody to look after their children and pay for their food.

The young man who drove Nkosi-Dube to the Nankhoo farm was very thin and sickly:

It was driven by a thin young man from the settlement, who was tall and willowy. He had a sickly ashen sheen over his skin and coughed nearly all the time.²⁴

The colour of his skin suggested that there were important food substances lacking in his body. This lack of proper nourishment denied the children the chance of growing into healthy individuals. This did not only underdevelop them physically but mentally as well because a sound mind exists in a healthy body. The adults were denied their capacity to do work because a hungry man cannot do as much work as when he has had enough to eat. Man realises himself through work, so if his capacity to work is frustrated he feels useless.

The area between the white and Indian residential areas consisted of a squalid strip where a few blacks of mixed blood lived. As one approached the Indian quarters, the surroundings were drab and ugly.

²⁴ Peter Abrahams, A Night of Their Own (London; Faber & Faber, 1961) P. 107.

Only the main street was surfaced; the others were dust-bowls in the dry season and muddy pools in the wet. The houses were equally drab and ugly and unpainted. ²⁴

As Dicky Naiker smuggled out Nkosi-Dube from the Nankhoo house to their farm, they passed filthy back yards where dirty bits of food had armies of flies feeding on them.

Filthy conditions are a health hazard, so the blacks were exposed to all the diseases that are connected with dirt. Since they were surrounded by filth, they were deprived the chance of living like human beings, hence such conditions reduced them to the sub-human level of existence.

Coetzee-Westhuizen in A Night of Their Own after years of being a white man was declared black by law.

To be white one day in a world where being white is the most important thing there is and then have that whiteness taken from you is enough to create bitterness and desolation in any man. ²⁵

It is this bitterness that prompted Coetzee-Westhuizen to work for the underground movement to revenge himself and those like him on the white racist government, now that the struggle had gone underground, since, the platform had proved dangerous to the movement.

²⁴Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 71

²⁵Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 25

"They're going to pay for it. They're going to pay dearly for their foolishness. I'm only one of a number, you know. And if all those people decide on revenge as I'm now doing, they are going to be in real trouble. Deciding who is and isn't white! It's something you see and know and feel! But they'll learn and then they'll come begging!"²⁶

Even though Coetzee-Westhuizen did services to the black movement for money and to revenge himself on the whites, he also contributed in a small way by using his double identity to help the movement.

Dee, the Indian girl, worked hard for the underground movement, but suffered an enormous psychological deformity which was symbolised by her physical handicap. This was due to her experiences with both Africans and whites. Her London University lover had exploited her both materially and emotionally. He made her pay his bills, cook and clean for him, and then turned her into a mistress who had to keep away if he wanted to have another woman. Her failure to finance his tour elicited his true feelings about her. He was repelled by the fact that she was deformed, but above all he resented her being an Indian, and therefore sent her packing.

Abrahams' calling such a man a marxist is indicative of his negative attitude towards marxists. Instead of seeing a contradiction of marxist beliefs

²⁶ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 27

in this man, Abrahams claims that the lover's behaviour is typical of marxists.

The 1949 race riots between Indians and Africans, where many Indians lost their lives in the hands of Africans created an unbreakable wall between Dee and Africans. Nkosi-Dube's arrival and stay at the Nankhoo house aroused these deep-seated painful experiences in Dee.

First of all Nkosi-Dube had stayed abroad for almost ten years, and as far as Dee was concerned, he had imbued the individualistic, detached middle class attitude of that society.

"Like you are, uncommitted, detached, objective - any of those words would do: you know what I mean."²⁷

Nkosi-Dube was also a black man and therefore according to Dee, accountable for the race riots between Indians and Africans in 1949.

Pogo, the extremist African group that initiated the struggle along racial lines insisted on the policy of open terror. This group was rallying Africans and excluding other blacks. By so doing, though unconsciously, they were responding to the attempts by the racist government to make blacks discriminate against one another, so as to weaken their resistance. The race riots between Indians and Africans were due to white incitement to effect

²⁷Peter Abrahams, *ibid.*, p. 47

this, so the participation of Indians in the movement was a very positive step because it made the movement a truly black movement, not only in the racial sense, but also in the sense that it was now oppressed groups joining forces against a common enemy.

Karl Van As, a deputy head of the Natal Bureau of Internal Security was a backbone of the system. He had served it faithfully and successfully. He had travelled extensively in the service of the regime. Such travels put him in contact with South Africans who were fighting the system from outside the country. He had met Nkosi-Dube abroad, hence he had a clear knowledge of the man, and had all the details including his physical features. This contact had enabled him to know Nkosi-Dube's belief that South Africans should get out of the limiting environment of their country if they are to see their situation in proper perspective. Van As with-held this information when Nkosi-Dube was locked for. This information could be enough to make it possible to track down Nkosi-Dube, but Van As did not release it.

Abrahams wants to make us believe that Van As with-held this information because he was in a dilemma. Van As is depicted as somebody in a tragic situation. Abrahams is just being idealistic. Van As might have had his moments of having a bad conscience because of the apartheid system, but Abrahams distorts this and makes it appear as if

Van As was different from the rest of those on the white side of the colour line.

Abrahams makes Sammy Naidoo argue that apartheid was all stupidity, only the "enlightened", the educated keep it going.

But you work the system: in fact you are its brains. Without people like you, without your brains and your talents, the wild fanatics of apartheid would not be able to operate for long. You and I know that the genuine believer in apartheid is a curiously stupid and gullible creature. But it is you, Mr. Van As, people like you who keep the system alive and strengthen it. ²⁸

This argument ties very well with *Abrahams'* faith in intellectuals. He believes they are the people who are in a position to bring about change.

Abrahams depicts Van As as somebody who was aware of the brutality of the apartheid system and at the same time Van As believed that one's life is embedded in one's society, and that this makes it difficult for one to make an independent decision, or a decision that is against one's society because he would be ostracised by that society:

You can't walk alone. Many have given the illusion but none have really walked alone. Man is not made that way. Each man is bedded in his people, in their history and their culture and their values ... and so each man wants and works almost automatically for the approval of his people. ²⁹

²⁸ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 193

²⁹ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 172

Abrahams apologises for the apartheid system and persuades us to see it as being a stumbling block to human relationships. As a result Van As could not marry the woman he loved, and from whom he drew so much comfort. This woman was black and therefore, the love affair was unlawful according to the South African racial standards. Van As therefore was in no dilemma as Abrahams would make us believe. By virtue of his class position, he did not have to make a choice but to serve the system, just as he was doing so, through the administrative work he did for it.

I personally find Van As very sincere within his context. He is more in keeping with what he stood for because as a member of the white bourgeois class, his relationship with blacks was based on exploitation.

Van As' love for Mildred, the black high school mistress was important in so far as it gave him some emotional satisfaction. This love affair never created a real conflict in him, if it did, Van As took the easiest option out of it, that is, he chose to conform with the expectations of his society.

Mildred's final rejection of the love between Van As and herself consolidates the black forces in the sense that all the underprivileged groups, namely, the Africans, the Indians and the blacks of mixed blood fought against the white racists in one form or another.

Abrahams distorts the race factor though, because these different black groups have always fought against the apartheid system in isolation. Abrahams is being idealistic.

Abrahams makes Nkosi-Dube cure Dee's psychological deformity so as to solder the relationship between the Indians and the Africans. Dee's desire to have Nkosi-Dube's children points to Abrahams' belief that if race did not stop people from loving each other, the off-springs of such love would neutralise the colour problem and lead to complete integration:

Even if he died ... I'd be
in the most awful mess ...
But it won't be like before ...
I'll always know where I am
going and what is right. It
is like having your way through
the jungle. You may not get
through, that is chance, but
you know the way and that
whatever happens you can't
get lost. I hope we get through.
I'd love to have his children ... 30

Abrahams makes Dee the symbol of the continuation of the struggle, and her whole attitude towards it, is very positive. She believes that the struggle will finally be a success even though many will die in the process.

Dawood, her brother shares the same belief by maintaining that the absence of stars in the sky does not mean that the night will last forever.

³⁰Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 201

Dee too believes in the coming of the morning after a long night.

... And so our men must leave us. Some to die, some to go to prison; some to hide, some to far lands. And we must be alone in the land, waiting and working and fighting and scheming for the day of re-union, that day must follow this terrible night ... For that morning will come: a good morning after the terrors of this night. It is for this that Sammy died; for this that they have just slipped across the skyline of the sea; for this that we must do many things, endure many things, and see our men leave.³¹

Unfortunately, Abrahams makes rich Hindus like Old Nanda and the Nankhoos, Mildred, a high school headmistress and Nkosi-Dube, the artist who stayed abroad take part in the resistance. The rest of the majority of the people are completely left out. The middle class interests are contradictory to those of the people, so the interests of the people who are involved in the fight against apartheid are not representative of the interests of the majority. More-over, this is just another nationalist movement that would result in the few educated and the rich taking part in governing of the country if majority rule was attained.

CHAPTER THREE

Neo-colonialism is when a state has all the outward signs of being independent, but the economic system, and therefore its political policy is controlled by foreign investors from outside.

There are various ways in which foreign capital can continue to exploit poor countries even after political independence. The government of the neo-colonial state may be controlled by the troops from the imperial power, and civil servants who have the interests of the imperial nation at heart can be put in positions where they can easily dictate policy.

The imperialist power or any financial body can impose a banking system in order to have control over foreign exchange. Aid and loans given at high interests only help to drain more money from the country instead of helping in its development. When giving loans and aid, capitalist countries are the ones that dictate terms, which might be in contradiction with national plans. In this case, foreign capital is used for exploitation and not development.

The monopoly of the press and magazines

contribute in exploitation because apart from being expensive, they, in conjunction with other mass media like the radio and television help to propagate values that do not have the interests of the nation at heart. This media also help in promoting propaganda directed against those countries which are involved in the struggle against the different manifestations of imperialism.

The United States of America, for instance, has succeeded in using aid to have the monopoly of information agencies in developing countries, threatening to withdraw aid unless monopoly is assured by renouncing other information centres, particularly those by socialist countries. Neo-colonialism therefore, is just colonialism at a more sophisticated level, having the comprador and the ruling classes acting as vassals for the international bourgeoisie.

In This Island Now, the economy was in the hands of people like the Isaac "crowd", who were only acting as middle men for foreign investors, they owned no industries of their own. The compradors and the national bourgeois class invested their money outside the Island. The press, the radio and television were controlled from outside too. After the death of Moses Joshua, the first President of the Island, Josiah who took over the Presidency still relied on foreign aid. Josiah actually made a deal with the Isaacs, by getting them into partnership with the government.

The majority of the people in This Island Now lived in the hills and cultivated the hillsides for a little corn. The hills were their only source of food production, and the harvest was never good, so the food they grew never covered their needs.

Independence had not brought running water or electric light or more food and better homes or schools; it had been around for a long time and it had changed nothing and so it was as it was before it had come.¹

The working class and the peasants did not benefit from the political independence that the Island had attained. They still lacked basic necessities like food, shelter and clothing.

The palace staff lived in a group of buildings behind the palace. The place where these buildings were situated does not suggest that they were good enough to be seen from the entrance to the palace.

If those people who were privileged to work for the palace lived under such conditions, those who were not so privileged must have been living in more miserable conditions.

The people of the hills had earth stained clothes, and the people Josiah used as his security were poorly dressed.

Very late that night a non descript, poorly dressed black

¹ Peter Abrahams, This Island Now (London: Faber & Faber, 1966) p. 79

man appeared in the palace gates.²

The people of the Island were deprived of their basic necessities. The lack of these three things, food, shelter and clothing can be seen in the way Abrahams describes what the people ate, wore and lived in.

The basic needs of these people were not taken care of, which means the society they lived in was an unjust society. The material condition of the majority of the people was still the same as during the colonial period. The economic and political power remained in the hands of a few.

Moses Joshua, the first President never attempted to change the exploitative system of the colonial period. He manipulated and turned the people into puppets. The running of the Island remained virtually the same. The only difference was that the leaders were then black. This is an important feature of neo-colonialism, race plays a minor role.

In Moses' whole Cabinet, there was only one Minister, Ralph Smith who had been an ordinary working man before joining politics as a Minister of Labour Relations. It is ironic that a former worker should be a Minister in a bourgeois system. It is actually buying out the workers' consciousness by token rewards for their leaders. Moreover, there

²Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 190

is no evidence that Ralph had a worker's consciousness. F.F. Freeways, the Prime Minister and Minister of Financial Affairs was a white Islander from the comprador class. K.E. Powers, Minister of Works, Posts and Telegraphs, Richard Young, Mabel Anderson and Albert Josiah belonged to the petty bourgeois class.

The comprador bourgeois act as vassals for the international bourgeoisie. This class depends on imperialism for its existence and development. As a result it always sides with imperialism, and it is extremely reactionary towards a positive social change.

The petty bourgeoisie vacillates between being revolutionary and anti-revolutionary. When its position is threatened by the revolutionary proletariat, it becomes very reactionary. When their chances of becoming the big bourgeoisie are hampered by the comprador bourgeoisie, members of this class support a "revolution".

A bourgeois system is based on manipulation and misuse of power. The Prime Minister and Minister for Finance was chosen by the President not because he was particularly suitable for the position, but on the basis of his colour. President Joshua believed that this man was going to be a bait to the white merchants, since all the merchants in the Island were white, this man would have to speak to his fellow whites and ask for money for the benefit of the state. He argued:

It is better if we send a white man to ask other white men for money. And all our merchants here are white too and they like to deal with their own kind. So I let them have their own to speak to if it means we will get the benefit. It is like using a good rubber stamp³

This was part of the manipulation Joshua was doing in the Island, but in this case he thought he was using the bourgeoisie when in actual fact it was them who used him. Whites in this case are the property and business owners.

After independence the economy of the Island remained solely in the hands of the whites. Moses Joshua confirmed that the whites had the money, so the Island depended on the western controlled economy in the sense that the local comprador acted as middle men for the international bourgeoisie.

In justification for this, the President maintained that white men respect and understand one another more than blacks and whites would. This advocates racism in the sense that, first of all, it depicts the whites as superior beings who have attained the monopoly of respect and understanding; which the black men cannot be party to. This means that according to Joshua, blacks are inferior.

The Minister of External Affairs was chosen on the basis of his black colour because the World Assembly where he represented the Island was predomina-

³Peter Abrahams, *ibid.*, p. 104

ntly black. Again colour is being used to manipulate human beings. Moses Joshua squandered state money through expensive dinners entertaining minority comprador and petty bourgeois members, while the majority of the people went without essentials. He found it necessary to entertain the petty bourgeois people so as to win their favours so that they would not see the comprador as their enemy.

The gift of a road to Clara Sterning was one of the abuses. Using the best materials to build a road that would serve the Sterning's home was one of the instances of state machinery being used for the purpose of rewarding friends, and thereby helping them in their personal accumulation of wealth.

The opposition party initiated by individuals of the petty bourgeois class tried to challenge this misuse of state machinery. They used a high class hotel as a venue for rallying members of their own class who could attend.

This "black tie affair" could not accommodate the majority of the people, in fact Abrahams does not indicate that the majority of the people could be consulted. The majority was conveniently left out because their involvement would have implied the sharing of the benefits that would come later.

When the matter came up in one of the sessions of parliament, the President made a big

joke out of it and was dismissed without having been discussed.

The old man had appeared at the door of the chamber, wriggled the index finger at the members on the government benches, laughed out loud and poked out his tongue at the opposition benches. The government ministers had risen and solemnly marched out of the chamber followed by their back benchers. The Chairman of the chamber had been forced to adjourn the session for want of a quorum. And that was the end of the opposition.⁴

Joshua was virtually an absolute ruler, even though there was a parliament and also the opposition party. He ruled unopposed, so when the one party state was declared, it was only endorsing what had been happening since Joshua became President of the Island. Even though this is not necessarily correct, the idea of a one party state, as long as this party is in a bourgeois system, is a system of dictatorship because such a system does not allow opposition, which means it has no room for criticism. That is why Joshua had become such a bully and sat on the people till he died.

In a socialist system, the one party state, that is, a workers and peasants' party becomes an instrument that will help towards the creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is a

⁴Peter Abrahams, ibid; p. 24

the man who had been running the Island was dead, so a substitute had to be found to ensure that the masses did not get out of hand. When Josiah took over, it was merely a substitution of one dictator by another. He took advantage of the moment of confusion and rallied the majority of the people into voting him for power. It is interesting to note that some of the strongest fascistic regimes in history like Mussolini's, Hitler's had a popular base.

When Josiah became President, his interest in the welfare of the masses became less and less real in each step he took. He knew the masses had been terrorised into accepting who-ever claimed to be the symbol of power. This is what made Josiah turn to them at this time, and the very fact that he did it when everybody was confused strengthened his position.

Since he had already assumed the role of being the symbol of authority, his fellow Ministers simply fell into line and allowed him to go ahead even though they had not elected him.

After Josiah was unanimously chosen as a Chairman of the Cabinet meeting, even before he became President, he immediately embarked on the reviewing of the policy and progress of each Ministry. As soon as he took the President's seat as Chairman of the Cabinet meeting, Josiah declared that:

democracy of the people who actually work.

The history of power in the Island had been based on one individual's caprice for half a century, and therefore a way to dictatorship had been prepared. Josiah, who was both a descendant of the bourgeois class and a Minister in Joshua's Cabinet could not be any different, despite his aiming at creating a plausible power structure that would cater for the majority of the people. His petty bourgeois class position made him condone the very things he was trying to change.

The circumstances that led to Josiah's becoming a President were indicative of the fact that conditions were conducive for the struggle for power in a dictatorship. There was no definite procedural elections after the death of Joshua. In fact as soon as it became known that Joshua was dead, the whole Cabinet was thrown in such a confusion that they could not come to any decision as to what had to be done next.

After the death of Joshua, the Cabinet Ministers, for the first time, had to make decisions for the smooth running of the Island, but they were thrown off guard. They had never made decisions. They had only been rubber stamps, and when the person who used them died, the rubber stamps could not find a will of their own.

The Presidential Secretary called in the military for no apparent reason. It was just that

... I suggest we each cancel our other business and convert this into an extra-ordinary session to review policy and work of all Ministries from top to bottom. The drift must come to an end. The country needs directing and expects it from us. The problems are immense and a start in tackling them is long overdue.⁵

As soon as Josiah was given the reigns, he started to work towards entrenching his own dictatorship in the Island. He worked till late, fixing files. He made it explicit to John Stanhope, the Presidential Secretary, that from then on, both private and public associations with members of the mercantile community was to come to an end because government policy was soon going to be in conflict with this group. Stanhope could either conform or resign his job.

In the final analysis, Josiah was going to be in conflict with the mercantile community as long as it was not ready to co-operate with him. Being a product of the bourgeois class, he could not survive without imperialism, that is, the foreign economy on which the Island depended on.

Josiah could only sack Stanhope through manipulation of the law, otherwise he could not do it legally, that is, if there was law in the Island.

⁵Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 115

The law that governed the Island had been made by the colonial power to suit its purposes, and could be manipulated comfortably by those in power. Therefore such laws were made without the participation of the majority of the people of the Island, so Josiah could easily adopt these same laws to suit his purposes. Josiah had manipulated the petty bourgeois and succeeded in getting himself in power, and this did not necessarily make him the elect of the people, he was only a representative of a certain group, that is the petty bourgeois intellectuals, that is, people who were prevented from being the elite by their colour, the type of schools they attended, and did not have the right social connections.

Most of them were senior public servants stationed at key administrative posts all over the Island.⁶

Josiah's supporters were senior officials put at key positions all over the country. The blacks were in the majority, but they had not attained higher positions because of the colour of their skin, and the fact that they did not have the right connections and had not gone to the right schools. As a result, they had remained in the fringe of the elite. These were not people who were necessarily going to change or improve things once they took over from the pale skinned comprador bourgeoisie. It is not because they cared for the people that Josiah wanted them

⁶Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 134

to replace the pale skinned people. In fact they were aspiring to be the black skinned comprador, so they would not be any different. This was going to be mere replacement prompted by nationalistic feelings as Andrew pointed out that:

I think they care but that isn't the important thing. What is important is to shift the balance of power and responsibility.⁷

Andrew Simpson, the young diplomat maintained that whether this move changed the situation or not, was not the issue. The important thing was that it was a beginning of something positive because power was going to shift from the white minority and the light skinned people who were in control of the whole Island.

This was only positive in so far as the running of the Island was going to be done by blacks but unfortunately, it was still going to be in the hands of a black minority. As can be seen from the above quotation, Abrahams considers this as completely positive, he does not see that the bourgeois system uses any colour to exploit, hence it is the system that needs changing. Abrahams on the other hand sees the opposition to the system in terms of select blacks changing everything.

Through Martha, the political writer in "The Voice of the Island" Josiah manipulated the press, he told her what to write and what to omit. He also

⁷Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 134

warned her against her associations with Sterning and Stanhope. Josiah was therefore beginning to use the press for his own ends. The fact that other groups, for instance, the "margin gatherers" had always used it, did not justify any other group using it for its own ends, not even if it was said to be in the name of the people.

Andrew Simpson, who was Josiah's follower maintained that in order to do something good, one could not help making somebody suffer. He argued:

It is you who make it sound very easy; it is you who talk about the small beginnings of tyranny. Tell me how can we do a job, which I know you agree needs to be done, without soiling our hands.⁸

Apparently, Josiah and his supporters believed in the over-ruling of certain institutions as long as it was done under the guise of having the people's interest in mind.

The values of free speech and free institution are relative. There are people - not only here but all over what has become known as the third world - who will happily trade free speech and free institutions for three square meals a day, a roof over their heads and reasonable health services.⁹

⁸Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 144

⁹Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 144

This argument implies that the only way the people in the third world can get material freedom is by selling their free speech. This is the sort of argument that prejudices Josiah's motives because the first step towards exploiting and de-humanising a people is denying them their freedom of speech. This renders them incapable of having a say in their own fate, and therefore somebody else takes upon himself the task of making decisions in matters affecting their lives. They would never be able to claim their rights if somebody decided to take them away from the people. This is the limitations of bourgeois freedom.

Andrew Simpson maintained that Josiah would only interfere with the press when forced to do so, but the fact is that Josiah would expect the press and all other institutions in the land to serve his purpose, indirectly he still controlled them. The press therefore would censor itself to suit Josiah. By so doing, Josiah was going to inherit the paper from the "margin gatherers" and make it become a voice of one man. One man can never be an embodiment of all the people. Putting the fate of a whole people in the hands of one person can never work because that would be exposing such people to the whims of one particular person, whose personal interest need not be the best for the society.

As part of his campaign for the elections, Josiah made pronouncements as to how he intended to localise the economy. Localised capitalism does not

change, it still remains capitalism. In fact localising capitalism is not a possibility because a case of capitalism being localised for the use of the local people has never existed.

Free-hold property was going to be confined to Islanders only. Foreigners could only lease property for a limited period. This may sound very positive, but it is not clear if there was going to be any criteria to ensure that land did not remain in the hands of a few Islanders, since the set up was still bourgeois.

Islanders were to declare money, shares and property deposited outside the country. Education was to be integrated, and schools would be directly under the government. Primary education was going to be free and compulsory. This sounds good, but it was still going to be bourgeois education.

Freeways, a white man was running against Josiah and this programme, not because he saw any discrepancies in it, but because of personal interests. Josiah, on the other hand was asking the Isaacs mercantile community to co-operate with him or else he threatened to localise the economy, make use of racialism, drive all capitalists out of the Island and ask for help from communist countries as Andrew pointed out:

He said if it happened, he would simply be forced to go further than

he wants to. He would have to nationalise everything, beat the racial drums, drive all capitalists out of the country, and ask for help from the communist world.¹⁰

In other words, Josiah would be forced by circumstances to do this, he does not consider it as a possible attempt for the change of the power structure in the Island.

It is very significant that Josiah knew what capitalism was all about and what communism meant, but proceeded to refuse to genuinely serve the interest of the people by merely reforming capitalism instead of looking for an alternative that would release the people from the clutches of capitalism.

Reformed capitalism is not an answer. Josiah was allying himself with the mercantile community of the Isaacs in his attempts to fight the rest of the mercantile community. By so doing, he was actually forming a business monopoly with the sanctions of the state. The Isaacs enterprise was to become the government advisor in economic matters, and they were going to make a profit out of it. This was going to make the "Isaacs crowd" maintain their economic power in the Island even though Josiah thought he was using them to destroy other foreign businesses. Old Nathan pointed out that:

In business; you must eat
your rivals or they will eat

¹⁰Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 150

you. This is nothing new. And this minister Josiah comes to us not because he likes us but because he wants to do something, he looks for skills and know-how to get the job done. If we don't do it, he will find others to do it.¹¹

In actual fact, Josiah had no choice. He could even go to the light skinned Islanders for help.

The Isaacs enterprise turned down Freeway's request for financial support in his campaigning, not because they supported Josiah out of moral concern, but just for their own security. Josiah had offered to use them against other foreign investors, and as a reward, they would be able to have the economic power in the land.

Josiah recommended three appointments to the Public Service to be made whether it was constitutional or not. He argued that Stanhope as a Chairman of the service Commission could easily put pressure on the Commission and made sure that the appointments were made.

The Constitution of the Island had been made under the influence of colonial power and was made to suit particular circumstances and time. It was not made with the interest of the masses in mind, so it only served the ruling minority that manipulated and used it against the people.

¹¹ Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 153

Moses Joshua had merely used the constitution without assessing whether it was in the interest of the people or not, so the type of constitution that operated in the Island served only a minority.

As Josiah argued, change was necessary, but the problem was that there was no constitution that catered for the majority of the people, therefore any positive change was impossible because Josiah was definitely going to make changes that suited individual feelings and ideals, and those would not be representative of the majority of the people whose interest he claimed to uphold.

Since it was in the nature of the constitution to be manipulated, Josiah recommended the three appointments because that was a sure way of winning the elections.

The breaking of Freeways and Stanhope was a way of demonstrating Josiah's strength, so as to frighten everybody into submission.

We can side-step Stanhope and still carry on with our plans. But if the Isaacs crowd dug in their heels and refused to co-operate everything would be undone. At the moment there is nothing I can do to force them into line were they to defy me. Then why have they not defied me? I'll tell you Andy. Because at the critical moment of confusion I took

over the palace and acted decisively; because when old F.F. defied me the Cabinet broke him and he resigned; so in their eyes I am a strong man!¹²

Obviously, Josiah was intending to use everybody for self interests, which he called progress. Stanhope had to be forced into retirement because he refused to be used by Josiah.

Josiah worked his strategy so well that by the time the elections took place, he automatically took the President's seat unopposed. Freeways, the only candidate who was running against him was supported by a white minority and the elite. Josiah had the support of most of the mercantile organizations as well as the masses he had succeeded to rally.

Martha Lee, the political writer in "The Voice of the Island" wrote a very long article campaigning on behalf of Josiah. In this article, she argued that Freeway's running for the presidency was illegal because the Island was a one party state, and its legal candidate was Josiah. She argued that the presence of any other candidate implied the presence of a rival party.

First of all, it is not clear how Martha Lee arrived at the conclusion that Josiah was the only legal candidate of the ruling party because the question should have been how Josiah became the sole candidate in the first place. Even in a one party state

¹²Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.165

there can be more than one candidate. It is true that the situation of a one party state implies bourgeois dictatorship, but candidates from the same party can run for elections.

Freeways had resigned being a Cabinet Minister but he remained a member of the ruling party, so his running against Josiah was no indication of the presence of an opposition party. Freeways was at liberty to run for the presidency.

After having been summoned by the President, Max Johnson, the editor of "The Voice of the Island" made sure that Martha did not get in touch with him while she was abroad. This was a way of avoiding commenting critically on the leadership in the Island. Even during Martha's home coming party, they never exchanged ideas as journalists. All that was accomplished was that everybody had enough drink and was happy. Commenting on this, Martha said:

And all you have to do is
supply liquor and food and
everything is made right. Even
the best of you whites cannot
help being arrogant and
patronising with us.¹³

Max Johnson had become very defensive and evasive, and each time Martha wanted an explanation about his behaviour, he dragged colour into it in order to evade the issue. He completely ignored their commitment and shared ideals as journalists.

¹³Peter Abrahams, ibid., p. 180

He made it plain to Martha that:

If you or anyone else try to use this paper in a manner that goes outside the scope of getting and presenting of the news I shall stop it in any way I see fit, all your charges of racial arrogance notwithstanding. If you don't like it you are free to get out or use the influence of your friends to get me fired.¹⁴

Despite his long stay, his love for one of the daughters of the Island, Johnson could never have that total inborn commitment to the Island because, being part of the bourgeois class, he was an agent of imperialism, and his reason for being in the Island had always been exploitative.

Josiah argued that the paper was the strong weapon in the society, and that since it was directed from outside, it was an instrument of neo-colonialism, and therefore an enemy of the people.

It was while Josiah was posing the question of what was to be done about "The Voice of the Island", that the Prime Minister and Minister of Financial Affairs came to report how his attempts to raise money had failed.

The former colonial power was only ready to give aid after the Island had paid off its membership

¹⁴Peter Abrahams, *ibid.*, p.185

arrears. While Josiah was condemning the paper as an instrument of neo-colonialism, the Minister of Finance was busy looking for aid and loans. This is ironic because these are pure instruments of neo-colonialism. If Josiah was ready to accept such help, it would mean that the economy of the Island was going to be controlled from outside.

The former colonial power, for instance, would only help after having assessed the development plan. Such interference with the plan would definitely affect the political policy of the Island.

Josiah had ordered the tightening of the exchange control regulations, so as to stop capital from leaving the Island. In the long run, it is likely that all the bodies the financial Minister approached would demand that Josiah should abandon the provisions he had already made in regard to foreign investment in the Island.

Josiah turned to these bodies for financial help and at the same time he was launching a fight against neo-colonialism. This contradiction is due to Abrahams' petty bourgeois position. This class criticises the bourgeoisie as long as it is denied the opportunity to become the bourgeoisie.

Josiah was critical of the paper on the basis of its being a neo-colonial weapon; yet he was busy looking for aid from the bourgeoisie. In the final analysis, Josiah was not against capitalism

and its evils. All he was aiming at was that he should be able to manipulate every organization and every institution in the Island and also benefit from capitalism.

The paper, for example, was to him a negative element in the society as long as he was not in a position to dictate to it. The Isaacs were enemies as long as they had not offered to co-operate with Josiah.

When Freeways and others, two of whom were Islanders were reported to be plotting against the government, the news about the arrests was communicated through the government controlled radio and television. The minority that questioned this act was quickly silenced by a programme in the radio tracing the Freeways back to the slave days to demonstrate that the Freeways had always been the enemy of the people.

If the plot was successful, another dictator could have taken over the running of the Island. Josiah stopped it in time but still this did not stop Josiah's dictatorship either, so Abrahams seems to suggest that the present power structure of the Island could not be changed. It was inevitable.

The embassies that requested audience with the President were turned down. Andrew Simpson, the acting Presidential Secretary made it explicit to the American Embassy official that:

All people in this land, native and foreigner alike, are subject to the laws of the land and to the same process should they violate these laws; anything else would be a denial of national sovereignty.¹⁵

President Josiah in a telephone conversation with the American Ambassador insisted that the law was supreme in the land, so there could never be any negotiations for the arrested American citizens. This argument seems to imply that Josiah and the law had become synonymous, which is a sign of dictatorship.

Josiah argued that it would be possible to negotiate with Joshua, the late President, because he manipulated the law.

It is ironic that although Joshua and Josiah used different methods, they both ended up manipulating the law for their own selfish ends. Abrahams is actually showing that Josiah and Joshua are basically the same, and that there is no salvation for the Island.

The informer who warned Josiah about the plot for instance, told the sergeant that the President and the informer and others like him were now in charge.

The police force in general and this sergeant in particular had never had much time

¹⁵Peter Abrahams, *ibid.*, p.204

for these symbols of wasted man-
hood of a nation. And this
man had told him that they
were running the law now, and
the man who sat in the Presi-
dent's office seemed to agree.¹⁶

Without condoning the foreign law that still operated in the Island even after independence, in order to refrain from manipulating the law, Josiah should have started off by getting rid of the colonial law, and then united the people into making their own laws, so as to set up a standard law with which to assess the wrongs in the society. The random change of the law that Josiah practised boiled down to outright manipulation, and this destroyed any positive step that Josiah could have taken. It is the author who wants us to see Josiah in this light.

When discussing the role of the press in the society, Josiah clearly articulated the part that should be played by the press in the liberation process.

For us, for our needs, the press must be involved in the struggle to bring into being a completely new pattern of social and economic and political relations in the society.¹⁷

In order to enable a paper to fulfill its role properly, it would have to be completely free

¹⁶Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.193

¹⁷Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.211

from all forms of manipulation either by government or directors. Without necessarily becoming neutral, the paper would form a third alternative, in other words, it would stand aside so as to view the situation critically.

Josiah's need for backing by the paper would not necessarily make it serve the society positively, all it meant was that instead of being manipulated by its foreign owners, it would be influenced by Josiah's government, and this would not make it serve the interests of the society better.

The editor of the paper, Max Johnson was a white man and whiteness in the Island represented the bourgeois class. His insistence on the independence of the paper was valid, except that being a member of his class, he viewed the freedom of the press from a bourgeois class position, and therefore could not be free from self interests.

Martha Lee and Johnson are said to have been sharing ideals and commitment as members of the staff of "The Voice of the Island", and they conflicted because of colour differences. This is because Abrahams does not see the material or economic implications of the conflict, hence he sees it only in terms of colour.

Despite his having been in the Island for a long time, and married an Islander, Johnson still maintained his superior attitude towards the Islanders because of his colour.

When Martha tried to discuss the prospects of what would happen after Moses Joshua's death, Max accused blacks of looking for solutions outside themselves.

It is this white superiority complex that made Freeways propose that Josiah be disciplined for usurping power after the death of Moses Joshua. Freeways was not necessarily concerned about the welfare of the state. He just thought that his whiteness was going to earn him the privilege of being right.

In fairness to Mr. Josiah let me say now that my proposal is that we strip him of his portfolio, expel him from the Cabinet and deprive him of all political rights for the statutory period decreed by the law on the charges of gross violation of the Constitution. ¹⁸

Freeways was unaware that the Constitution and the law he based his argument on could be easily manipulated and be used against him. It was the shock of discovering that he under-estimated the situation, and was proved wrong that made him resign. As his name suggests ironically that there are no "free ways", whichever step one takes, he is bound to pay dearly for it.

Josiah manipulated the law for the sake

¹⁸Peter Abrahams, ibid., pp.110-111

of punishing his personal enemies. When the conspiracy was discovered, the accused who were willing to give evidence against their fellow conspirators were used against Freeways. The trial of the conspirators had clearly defined aims. Josiah demanded that Freeways have a very strong case built against him, and the penalty be a death sentence. The trial of the rest of the conspirators would only come when Freeways was condemned and done away with.

Freeways' name is very significant in the events that take place in the novel, in the sense that it seems to suggest that the freedom of the Island was on trial. The final breaking of Freeways points to the gloomy fate of the Island.

This indicates Abrahams' negative attitude towards blacks achieving freedom and stability. He does not believe that blacks are capable of governing themselves.

The aim of these trials was meant to be a show of strength. First of all, Josiah wanted to assert the authority of his government, secondly, Josiah wanted it to mark the break with neo-colonialism, and lastly, to demonstrate that money was no longer in a position to manipulate power. It was also a way of asserting the position of the poor as against the rich and fair. He aimed at changing the power structure. Unfortunately, Josiah contradicted these aims by losing sight of such aims and ended up aligning himself with the forces he set out to destroy. In fact, Abrahams is merely ridiculing Josiah as a black head of state

whose aim was to change the power structure. In other words he is saying there is no alternative to the present power structure in the Island.

The very fact that the trials had specific aims prejudices Josiah's stand, because if the accused were guilty, and their trial was a way of bringing about justice, there was no reason for those aims. It would be through the justice with which the case was going to be handled that would make Josiah achieve his aims. A trial with pre-conceived aims is "rigged", and therefore not just.

Another aim of the trial was to make the people aware that Josiah's government had accommodated individuals from a class of people that had been in the periphery, that is, people who did not have the required qualifications to be absorbed by the public service. This was meant to give the impression that Josiah's government was an assertion of the interests of the masses, when in actual fact these people were not necessarily representative of the majority of people.

People who had not passed the schoold examinations that would get them admitted into the Island's vast, cumbersome and over staffed public service, but who were sufficiently educated to impress the mass of their fellow-men who were neither totally illiterate or semi-literate and who put great store by the ability to read and write and speak in the

pseudo-accent of the
Island's great northern
neighbour.¹⁹

I do not think the presence of such people in Josiah's government necessarily made it the government of the down-trodden. This was a class which had more of the petty bourgeois consciousness that they had acquired while going through the western education. They had no working class consciousness, therefore it was the authority of the petty bourgeois class that would be asserted if the objectives of the trial were achieved.

Josiah had done away with the unnecessary cocktail parties, receptions and stag parties that Moses Joshua indulged in. At first sight this act could be applauded as an attempt to cut down on the misuse of state funds, but Josiah also had his informal dinners now and again. It was a matter of substituting one by the other. He used these dinners to pave his way to dictatorship. He used them to keep informed about the feelings of his supporters, and the problems they had. Party people who were the link between Josiah and the people discussed issues and solved problems. It was also through these people who supported him that Josiah explained policies for future action.

This sounds positive, but Josiah was only more open to these party members than he was with

¹⁹Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.192

the whole nation. The Parliament, the press and the mercantile community were left out.

By dealing with a group that supported him, Josiah was creating a special privileged group, which in itself could be easily manipulated. The press could have enabled him to communicate his plans to the whole nation, but since everything was based on manipulation he could only use the press if it was in a position to co-operate with him.

The creation of dictatorships involves identification of power with an individual. This is why all aspects of the Island's power had to be grabbed by Josiah. A dictator does not think that any part of the state or nation can function without him.

All the people in the presidential staff were personally committed to Josiah. Judge Wright was going to be useful only if he saw things the Josiah way. Josiah argued that a show of strength is necessary for a man in authority because, having shown it to strengthen his position, only a show of strength would be enough to elicit conformity from the people.

Now in order to make them
work for the good of the nation,
in order for them to accept
directions of labour, compulsory
shifting of populations, controls
and taxes on wages, there
must be a series of more stri-

king and impressive shows
of strength.²⁰

Basically, Josiah believed in the manipulation of certain institutions like the police and the law to accomplish his aims. Simpson argued that Josiah was forced by circumstances to manipulate. He said the fact that the poor were black and they were in the majority was the driving force behind his manipulations. Simpson also believed that it would be better if the faces of the rich and the poor were of the same colour. In other words, Andrew would condone the fact that the wealth of the Island was in the hands of a few if this minority was black, most probably because he happened to be black. This is a limitation of nationalism. Andrew was not challenging the fact that only a few owned everything while the majority starved, but the fact that the wealth was in white hands.

Andrew's attitude towards the arrest of the conspirators was that Josiah's manipulations of the police, security and the law was a lesser evil than the economic inequalities in the society, Trying to convince the judge he said:

You talk about manipulating the police and the civil service and the law and you imply it is something new. But these forces have been manipulated first to run the slave state, then to run the colonial state, then to run the independent state which

²⁰Peter Abrahams, *ibid.*, p.221.

was handed over not to the mass of the people but to the descendants of the slave-owners and the heirs of colonial state. Is it such a crime then for us now to manipulate the police and the civil service and the law in the interest of the majority of the people?²¹

It is true that the bourgeois law that operated in the Island was based on manipulation, but Simpson also believed in the stepping into the former masters' shoes regardless of whether this improved the condition of the majority of the people or not.

Andrew quoted very negative examples to illustrate his point. Obviously the slave state, the colonial state, and the type of independence that served the interests of the heirs of the colonial state were all forces working against the interest of the majority of the people. By using the same tactics, and this is exactly what Abrahams wants to point out, Josiah's exploits become negative and, therefore, his intentions become similar to those of his predecessors, as judge Wright pointed out:

How do we know what those interests are? How are they expressed after he has destroyed all opposition and criticism? and how do the people remove him if the day ever comes when they want to get rid of him? These are the things that worry me, young man. And it worries me that you,

²¹Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.231

the people around the President accept him as infallible.²²

In fact since the Island depended on a system that was based on manipulation, that is, the perpetuation of the bourgeois system, it is even ridiculous to talk of the interest of the majority of the people because in such a system there is nothing to guarantee this interest. The masses were actually at the mercy of the whims of whoever was in power.

The judge's insistence on the independence of the law on the other hand would only be valid if the law had been made with the interests of the majority of the people in mind. The judge maintained that:

The rule of the law must never depend on the strength or weakness of the position of any ruler. It must be constant, above person and position.²³

Law serves definite class interests. The judge's refusal to be manipulated could have been positive only if the law he was defending guaranteed the interest of the people, otherwise his argument becomes naive because it shows how uncritical of the law the judge was. If the law is independent of the wishes of the people, then the law is inimical

²²Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.232

²³Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.237

to their interests. The idea is not to have an independent system but rather that system that will have the interest of the down-trodden majority at heart.

It is on this basis that the bourgeois system becomes the system of convenience for the bourgeois class. The directors of "The Voice of the Island" sent Max Johnson away in order to appease Josiah, so that they were sure of a stronger grip on the Island, just as the Isaacs 'crowd' had decided to co-operate with Josiah for their own ends.

At the point of departure Max Johnson confessed that he had to leave because he felt guilty of the part he and his fellow whites had played in the Island. He declared that:

The real reason why I am going, is because I feel guilty. Josiah made me see it. I am part of that white crowd that was in control for so long that it could have made the necessary changes gradually. Think what we could have done with this Island over the past fifty years. Then think what we did do. And if my board had said stay and defy him I think I would have; they didn't and for the most disreputable reasons.²⁴

Max was part of the bourgeois system that had brought slavery centuries earlier, and whose

²⁴Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.241

influence had persisted since the Island had attained its political independence fifty years back. Both Joshua and Josiah were direct descendants of such a system. The similarity of names of the two Presidents is very significant because it points to the fact that both Joshua and Josiah were to play the same role in the Island.

Abrahams depicts Max Johnson as a man of conscience. He is the only one to ever resign on grounds of his conscience, and also admits the damage colonialism had done to the development of the Island. Abrahams makes Johnson a hero.

Again Abrahams has his facts mixed up as regards the question of class position. Max was the conscious or unconscious tool of the bourgeois class of people who had come to the colonies with clearly defined aims, such as exploitation and subduing the colonial peoples.

Abrahams makes Max contradict these aims by resigning because his conscience bothered him. Max condemned colonialism for having retarded the development of the Island, which in my opinion is precisely what colonisation is all about.

Through Max, Abrahams suggests the salvation from above type of solution, which can never work. Max accused the board of directors of "The Voice of the Island" of sending him away for the most disreputable reasons. It is surprising as to what Max was doing in the Island for all these years if he considered the white presence as negative. It is

not clear why he only realised this at the point of his departure.

Another character that is obsessed with guilt is Joel Sterning. As far as I can see, his guilty feelings were prompted by the inferiority complex that the Isaacs instilled in him. When arguing with his wife Clara, about the oppressive, patronising attitude of the Isaacs towards him, he said:

Isn't it enough? Isn't the taking of my manhood enough? What else would you like? Would you now invade my last privacy and tell me which of my thoughts are good and which are bad?²⁵

His loveless married life also made him feel guilty because according to Judea - christian western values, sex relationships in such a marriage are purely animal instincts. Abrahams makes it appear as if Sterning was critical of Isaacs' using their wealth to oppress the masses, and also for allowing themselves to be manipulated by those in power, for instance their co-operating with Josiah in order to gain more influence in the Island. This is a distortion on the part of Abrahams because Sterning's problems actually arose from his class position, in other words, he was suffering as a result of the idiosyncracies of his class as regards marriage and sex.

After seeing Max off, Martha Lee realised

²⁵Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.26

that he was going into a lonely life which nothing could compensate.

She knew that at bedrock,
when stripped of all the jingoistic rubbish of race and class and colour and nationality, all humans were plain people; made richer and more beautiful by their variety, but still only people; the same under the skin.²⁶

Abrahams still maintains that people are basically the same regardless of their colour and class. In other words, he is saying all these are artificial barriers that we can easily break by ignoring them. The truth is, colour and class are very real, so to try and ignore them would be to do the impossible. This is the same idea of Abrahams, that of man without colour. It is actually an act of refusal to face up to reality. Abrahams implicitly supports the bourgeoisie.

Martha is one person who was very aware of the colour issue, that is why her affair with Sterning never worked. She could not marry him because of the colour barrier. Again Abrahams treats colour as something that stands in the way of human relationships. It is in fact Abrahams himself, who due to his petty bourgeois class position, believed that having overlooked the problem of class, colour and nationality, people would live happily there-after.

²⁶Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.242

The outcome of the trial enabled Josiah to drive the expatriates out of the Island, this was positive enough. Josiah found himself having to use force against the people of the Island in his attempt to solve the economic problems. Abrahams implies that Josiah had actually turned into the monster he was fighting. Abrahams is actually using Josiah to point out what he considers the "evils" of reconstruction of the economy.

Abrahams condemns violence. The people revolted against voluntary service. In the riots that followed, two hundred people lost their lives. Force was used to make the people vote for Josiah once more.

So at the beginning of the fourth and final year of Josiah's first term of office there has been a referendum and the people had voted under pressure of a massive and vigorous party campaign to suspend all further elections until the economic revolution was completed.²⁷

The military, the police, the press and the radio were being manipulated to drive the people. Seeing the hostility in the people, Josiah concluded that there was no way out of the situation because he did not believe in easy ways.

The exploiters do not suffer a change of heart and cease to exploit. The great powers do not

²⁷Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.250

suddenly discover the morality that tell them it is wrong to manipulate small countries and use their lands as base and battlefields and their people as living targets in the power game showing muscles. If this way is wrong then there is no way for the people of the so-called underdeveloped world. The people of that other world were lucky; they had countries in which to work out their institutions and grow rich and strong and stable; and of course they had the sources of the underdeveloped world, human material, at their ready disposal. And inspite of their lip service today they are still bent on exploitation. Subtler and more sophisticated it is true, but no less real for that.²⁸

Abrahams is refusing to give all the premises. It is true that developing countries had their development retarded by the great powers for their own enrichment, but Abrahams has left out the communist alternative. There is a false assumption that the western world is good, stable and civilised. This is a false assumption because as long as there is no dictatorship of the workers themselves, which communism can provide, it is not true that there is no way out.

As an attempt to regain the people's favour, Josiah organized a massive occassion for feeding the people in the country side. Though he was apprehensive,

²⁸Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.252

Josiah was trying to revive a positive kind of emotional interest that they had towards him when he first took over.

Abrahams suggests that the post-independence period has its own problems, and that colonialism and those that have taken power, after it, have committed the Island to a future that have to be obtained through hard experiences, and everybody has to bear the consequences because all have played a part. Abrahams blames the masses who never had a chance to voice their interests.

Josiah's limousine passed out of sight along the winding road. The man lowered his head over the beautiful precision instrument with which he could have ended so much. He burst out crying; he wept with the desperate abandon of a lost child for whom there was no comfort. A lost child alone on an Island over which the long shadows were creeping.²⁹

This failure to kill the dictator is indicative of Abrahams' belief that Josiah was not the only one to blame, the whole population was responsible for the hopelessness of the condition of the Island. Abrahams disregards the fact that the masses are a positive element in a positive social change, so by ignoring them, he aligns himself with the powers that be, this is negativeⁱⁿ itself because by so doing he

²⁹Peter Abrahams, ibid., p.255

evades pointing a finger at the wrong people, so he resorts to blaming both the victims and those responsible for the evil. In fact Abrahams presents the whole problem sympathetically from characters who comprise the ruling class, which is the enemy of the people. His refusal to involve the masses in solving the problems of the Island indicates his lack of faith in their ability to express the problem coherently. In other words, he regards them as stupid.

Abrahams paints an extremely gloomy picture of the fate of the Island. Andrew's helplessness indicates that there is no way out of the situation.

In this chapter we have attempted to prove that Abrahams' attempts to change the power structure in the Island, so as to create a situation whereby the majority of the people take part in the running of the Island are self defeating. He leaves out the majority who are a positive element in a positive social change. He does not view capitalism as the root cause of the Island's exploitation by foreign powers, therefore, he advocates the localisation of capitalism as a solution to foreign exploitation.

CONCLUSION

Liberalism is a political ideology for the middle class of capitalist societies. As a result, it fails to accommodate the majority of the people. Since it ignores the majority, it cannot therefore be an effective tool in solving the problems of imperialism and colonialism for the benefit of the people.

Writers writing within this tradition are bound to come up with very superficial alternatives when trying to solve the problems of imperialism.

Using liberalism as a frame-work, Abrahams suggests racial integration and humanism, that is, the idea of people coming together as human beings and learning from each other. He believes this would be enough to solve the problems of imperialism.

In seeking to arrive at more effective solutions, we have viewed issues from the point of view of the majority of the people, when analysing Abrahams' novels.

In our analysis we discovered that Abrahams views imperialism positively. He believes that it is a source of "enlightenment" for the colonised. As a result, he dismisses African customs and behaviour as primitive. He actually goes out of his way to

down-play and distort life among the Africans before the coming of the white man.

Abrahams distorts the social consciousness of blacks and makes them appear helpless in the face of imperialism. This, he does purposely so as to evade the attaining of freedom from imperialism through national and class struggles, since violence makes the ideal of loving one another impossible. Abrahams advocates peaceful negotiations in solving the problems of imperialism.

Abrahams' anti-people attitude is manifest in the way he depicts blacks, particularly the masses. Blacks are depicted as savage and superstitious, as morally inferior and primitive. This can be seen from the way he portrays blacks in Wild Conquest.

Abrahams portrays imperialists, particularly the Boers, as human beings who suffered and endured lots of deprivations. They are depicted as people of faith, who embarked on the long and dangerous journey to the interior of a strange country that was inhabited by hostile people. Abrahams undermines the economic and cultural impact of this on the black people. He is not aware that the slavery instituted by the Boers was an earlier form of apartheid. He views imperialism as a question of individuals. In other words, he does not regard the whole idea of imperialism as having been harmful to the blacks, but he sees it only in terms of certain evil individuals.

Likewise, he sees the rectification of the

situation in terms of kind hearted individuals and not through class struggles.

Abrahams does not see apartheid as an institution whose destruction is the only answer, instead he believes that if there are individuals who, regardless of their class position fight side by side, the whole problem will be solved, but even in such co-operation he makes the white man take the lead. This implies that according to Abrahams, the whites know better, so they have to take the lead. He further implies that the blacks need the white man.

Abrahams handles the whole question of imperialism with great sympathy for the imperialists. Any wrong they did to the blacks is considered as something that was inevitable, and as the only way the imperialists could survive. Abrahams does not view their killing of blacks as part of their conquering mission. He believes it was a means of self protection. Blacks on the other hand are portrayed as having been engaged in killing for pleasure. Abrahams considers any killing by blacks as a manifestation of savagery and superstition. He sees no bravery in it. In fact he blames the blacks for resisting white invasion because according to him this attitude is a stumbling block to the civilising mission of colonialism.

Abrahams does not attack institutions of exploitation, in fact he does not understand them. He only views evil at the level of individuals. This would be positive if he did not only show how indivi-

duals are affected by imperialism on isolated issues like love, because it is the whole society that experiences imperialism. It is every aspect of the society that is affected.

As a result of his isolating individuals and moralising on issues in solving the problems of imperialism, Abrahams comes up with very distorted solutions like having both the imperialists and the colonised coming together as human beings and learning from each other. He is not aware that racism was instituted and used for purposes of exploitation by the imperialists, that is why Abrahams sees integration as a possibility. He disregards the economic basis of apartheid and insists that people are the same, all they have to do is to co-operate in solving the problems of imperialism.

He views the coming of the whites as positive and not as the beginning of the exploitation process. He condones imperialism and cannot visualise Africa progressing without it. Abrahams consistently implies that the white man is "superior", so he has to teach and guide blacks, which means that according to him, blacks are ignorant, therefore they need the white man.

Abrahams also suggests that the blacks can only stand on their own if they have gone through western education, in other words, they can handle their problems only after they have been imbued with a bourgeois consciousness. Again he implies that

it is the white man's education that can better prepare blacks to run their own affairs. As a result Abrahams sees the struggle against the evils of imperialism in terms of the petty bourgeois class. This is why he always places liberation struggles in the hands of the petty bourgeoisie in his works.

Abrahams completely ignores the majority of the people because since they have not had such an education it is assumed that they have no social consciousness. Abrahams also believes that even the "enlightened" blacks, that is, the petty bourgeoisie can never manage their affairs without white influence. For example, Abrahams cannot visualise the blacks progressing without capitalism, that is why even when he realises its exploitative side, he suggests localising it with the hope of taming it for the benefit of the local people. As a result, Abrahams tries every possible way to make it appear less evil because he regards it as indispensable, more especially because he uses it as a yardstick to measure the extent to which blacks have progressed.

Abrahams' failure to understand that the only way of getting rid of the evils of imperialism is doing away with capitalism as a system, and look ^{let} for a second alternative makes him a very unprogressive ^{in terms of} writer. He does not see the fight against imperialism ^{Weeks} beyond the nationalist outlook, and nationalism as we have seen has its limitations.

Alex la Guma who deals with the same situation for instance, has succeeded in involving the masses

in the fight against imperialism with the aim of instituting a system whereby the means of production would belong to the people.

Sembene Ousmane and Ngugi wa Thiong'o have done the same when tackling the problems of imperialism in their respective environment. Ngugi in particular has shown a systematic development from the nationalistic outlook of his earlier works, and has actively involved the masses in the fight against the evils of imperialism. This is very progressive.

Abrahams is not only unprogressive, but a negative writer because he leaves out the masses who are a positive element in a positive ^{social} change. Since he attacks imperialism within its confines, he ends up condoning it, and thereby siding with the oppressor.

Despite these limitations, Abrahams is so subtle in his presentation of situations and characters that he can be easily misinterpreted. *maybe*

It is through looking at issues from the masses' point of view that we have been able to expose his negative attitudes towards blacks, particularly the masses.

Scholars who have worked on Abrahams have not used this method of assessment.

However, our study has been limited by the fact that in order to avoid making this work too

wide and not easy for us to have control over the material involved, we had to leave out making references to other writers in our analysis. This would not only make our work too big and lacking in direction, but would even divert us from our original intention.

Any one study of an author cannot be exhaustive, so critics who are interested in Abrahams could study him at the level of form, that is, through making a language analysis of the author's works, they can better illustrate Abrahams' attitude towards the different racial groups he deals with.

An analysis of the type of marxism Abrahams got involved with while in Britain would enable a critic to establish how far Abrahams has been influenced by this.

Writing
A comparative study of Abrahams and other critics would enable us to establish the extent to which Abrahams has contributed to African literature, particularly in relation to the theme of imperialism which most African writers have treated.

Writers like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka have dealt with this theme mainly at the cultural level, so they could form a good basis for comparison with Abrahams who accepts cultural imperialism.

A comparative study of Abrahams and some progressive writers like Alex la Guma who deals with the South African situation would enable us to see Abrahams' short-comings better.

Also a comparative study of Abrahams and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Sembene Ousmane can clearly bring out Abrahams' stand on the question of imperialism because these writers suggest a direct attack of imperialism. They have the interest of the majority at heart, and they have faith in them, whereas Abrahams does not believe in them, and his sympathies go for the imperialists.

A study of the way Abrahams successfully portrays bourgeois characters would enable us to see how far Abrahams can be categorised as a bourgeois writer.

In this thesis, our wish was to contribute to the understanding of Peter Abrahams' novels at the thematic level.

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