

SOME RESPONSES TO COLONIAL/NEOCOLONIAL EDUCATION IN *FUNNY BOY*, *PETALS OF BLOOD*, AND *IN THE CASTLE OF MY SKIN*

I will preface my paper by quoting from the work of two postcolonial critics. Diana Brydon states, in "Commonwealth or Common Poverty: The New Literatures in English and the New Discourses of Marginality," that

Caliban quickly tires of cursing Prospero. His speech is most compelling when he celebrates his own skills and love of place, and when he transforms himself from European creation into an autonomous indigene. (7)

The other extract is taken from Jo-Ann Wallace's "De-Scribing the Water-Babies: 'The Child' in Postcolonial Theory":

It is as 'primitive', then, that 'the child' represents to the West our racial as well as our individual past; the child is that 'ancient piece of history,' to quote again from Kincaid, whose presence has left room, if not for theories, then for the parent-child logic of imperialist expansion.

There is obviously considerable slippage between constructions of 'the child' and of the native Other under imperialism ... (175)

Brydon's point is well taken. Postcolonial writers and critics should eventually discontinue the practice of attributing all problems faced by the former colonies to the West, and instead celebrate their own locale and culture. But Caliban will surely persist in cursing Prospero until the latter ceases to be a threat to the world he once ruled. Given the power and influence that the West continues to wield in the "Third World," there is no evidence to suggest that the "indigene" is even now "autonomous."

Prospero remains especially influential in the sphere of education. And it is in examining the function of the West in this regard that Jo-Ann Wallace's

comment, and indeed her entire article, becomes pertinent to my study. If the "native Other" is in fact a child, this "child" must be taught how to become an adult by the "advanced," "civilized" parent. Prospero assumed this role in colonial times, and this function is now performed by his former charges some of whom can do no more than preserve the structures created by him. As the authors of *Shakespeare's Caliban* suggest, "[t]he dependency created during the early years of colonization also leaves Caliban hopelessly enmeshed in a system not of his own making but essential to his survival" (160). Small wonder then that writers and critics continue to be preoccupied by the deleterious effects of English education on colonies and former colonies. This paper, therefore, makes a focussed study of the theme of education as rendered in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994)¹ with special reference to its effect on pedagogue and scholar. The temporal and spatial divergences that are immediately patent in my choice of authors, enhance, rather than hinder, a comparative study. An analysis of three novels written over a period of forty years by authors from three different countries allows one to explore the goals that are shared by colonial and neocolonial educators, and to scrutinize the different ways in which those who were subjected to such systems of education reacted to the same. Students in Lamming's novels, for instance, are politically naïve and unaware of their own strength. Consequently, they do not even try to engage with the "enemy." Ngugi's characters, on the other hand, employ a frontal attack, but their success is only temporary. The Kenyan educators who replace their British counterparts prove to be equally myopic and tyrannical, and have no qualms about using the total power of the state to crush any resistance. Selvadurai's protagonist is smarter than the rest. Realizing that open rebellion is futile, he infiltrates into the system, and exposes the same only when he is sure that his actions will cause maximum damage.

Chris Baldick, Gauri Vishwanathan, and other scholars have established the "social mission" that was so much a part of the dissemination of English. Vishwanathan comments:

¹ The dates given in parentheses, here, indicate the years when the novels were first published and (excepting *Funny Boy*) not to the editions used in this study. Publication details of the actual texts employed are given in the "Works Cited."

British colonial administrators, provoked by missionaries on the one hand and fears of native insubordination on the other, discovered an ally in English Literature to support them in maintaining control of the natives under the guise of a liberal education. (1987: 17).

This social mission was not confined to the teaching of English literature and language, however. The "subject" people also "learned a conqueror's language and perhaps that conqueror's values" (Vaughan 145); in other words, this project required that the cultural baggage associated with British Public schools be transferred to schools in the colonies. These children were taught "leadership," "discipline," "teamwork," "service," and the importance of possessing "all round" ability in sport and scholarship. It was hoped that they would, in turn, set an example to their less fortunate brethren once they took on positions of responsibility. These "values," though not too problematic when taken in isolation, become pernicious when coupled with the notion of total loyalty to queen/king and country. This idea is spelled out unambiguously by the Inspector in *The Castle*:

The British Empire, you must remember, has always worked for the peace of the world. This was the job assigned to it by God, and if the Empire at anytime has failed to bring about that peace, it was due to events and causes beyond its control. But remember, my dear boys, whatever happens in any part of this world, what ever happens to you in this island of Barbados, the pride and treasure of the Empire, we are always on the side of peace. You are with us and we are with you. And together we shall always walk in the will of the God. (38)

As a sensitive observer of the effects of education on colonial subjects, Lamming has few peers. This sensitivity is especially patent in his portrayal of the head teacher to whose lot falls the task of ensuring that the colonial project succeeds at Groddeck's. The head teacher is indeed a challenge to his creator. Given the abhorrent system that he represents, Lamming could have chosen to make the head teacher the subject of a satirical sketch. But Lamming understands the complex processes that have created the head teacher, although this knowledge does not prompt him to hold back any criticism. It is true that the head teacher is privileged, but he has to play a duplicitous role to maintain this position. Consider the sequence in which the author describes the head teacher and the Inspector:

They made a striking contrast in appearance, but they seemed in a way to belong to the same thing. The inspector was white and smooth and cool like a pebble. The head teacher's face richer and stronger and burnt black in the sun. It was pleasing to watch them talk in that way the villagers called man to man, although it didn't seem altogether a case of man to man. They watched each other at times as a cat would watch a mouse, playfully but seriously. The inspector smiled and the head teacher smiled back, and the cat in each smiled too. It was not a reassuring smile. (39-40)

Soon after the narrator declares that the inspector's smile was smooth "like the surface of pus" which "... gathered and secreted so much so quietly and so stealthily" (40). The head teacher, on the other hand, "has the bright-black slouching carriage of the leech" (40). These words are chosen with great care to enunciate that some colonials are parasites who feed on a system that is rotten. The head teacher's posturing enables him to enjoy the power, position, and prestige that are reserved for such lackeys, but his position is at best precarious. The "ready response, the manufactured word or phrase, and the cultivated face" (66) do not always achieve the desired result because an unforeseen occurrence could easily undermine years of effort--witness his irrational response to the "loud giggle" during the Empire day celebrations:

His face was coarse and savage and sad. It was difficult to understand when he spoke. His voice was low and choked with a kind of terror. "I've never wanted it said that my boys are hooligans ... grinning like jackasses when respectable people are around. I've always wanted it said that the boys at Groddeck's Boy School were gentlemen. But gentlemen don't grin and giggle like buffoons, and in the presence of respectable people, people of power and authority." (42-43)

Embarrassed by this blemish to what he considers is a perfect performance, and painfully aware that this incident could affect his future, he victimizes a helpless child.

It becomes apparent, as the sequence continues, however, that the principal's problems are more complex than originally suggested. Not only is this self-righteous, moralistic man an alcoholic, but his chance discovery that his wife is cheating on him makes his position even more hazardous. The section in which the principal muses over his wife's infidelity is, as Boxill suggests, somewhat

overwritten (214), but it still captures "the extent to which the head teacher's integrity has been undermined on private and public levels by the precariousness of his social position" (Pacquet 18). On the one hand, his years as a teacher have taught him that one "couldn't trust a subordinate" (66)--consequently, his colleague's dalliance with his wife could not be brushed aside--on the other hand, "the village head teacher represented the unattainable ideal [to the villagers]. He had to live in a way which they admired and respected but did not greatly care to follow" (67). What makes matters even more complicated is that the Inspector, the most logical person to consult in such a situation, will not help him either because such individuals "would never admit confidence in a matter that related to their work. These English officials had an almost inhuman sense of the right distance to keep in human relations" (69). Partha Chatterjee's comment that "[t]he colonial middle class ... was simultaneously placed in a position of subordination in one relation and a position of domination in another" (36) only partially explains the dilemmas facing this representative of the middle class. The head teacher is hounded into immobility by these contradictory forces. After a long period of deliberation, the head teacher's "mind had become more undisciplined.... He was farther away from a decision than he was when he started to think of one" (69). Ngugi wa Thiong'o's observations about "middle men" in a colonial context are indeed very relevant here: "Rejected in the social world of the white rulers and alienated from the masses by their jobs and education, they turn their frustrations inward, against themselves, or else vent it on their own people" (1972, 117).

Ironmonger, Fraudsham, Chui, Munira, and Karega are just some of the educators introduced in *Petals of Blood*. Ironmonger, though presented as "... a different sort of white man ... a gentle old man who looked more a farmer than a missionary headmaster" (28), plays an important role in forming Chui's attitudes to the British. Recognizing Chui's potential for leadership and scholarship, Ironmonger and his wife treat him like the "son they had never had" (28). This preferential treatment surely seduces Chui into accepting the "subservient ideology of colonialist education in quest of libertarian education" (Amuta 147). Ironmonger's replacement by Fraudsham is reminiscent of Mr. Brown's replacement by the militant Rev. Smith in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Fraudsham, a "brilliant," Cambridge-educated, ex-serviceman, adopts a more rigorous policy in educating boys in Siriana. Munira recollects Fraudsham's policies thus:

Now, my boys, trousers are quite out of the question in the tropics. He sketched a profile of an imaginary thick-lipped African in a grey woollen suit, a sun helmet, a white starched stiff

collar and tie, and laughed contemptuously. Don't emulate this man. There was to be no rice in our meals: the school did not wish to turn out men who would want to live beyond their means. And no shoes, my boys, except on the day of worship: the school did not want to turn out black Europeans but true Africans who do not look down on the *innocence and simple ways of their ancestors*. At the same time, we had to grow up strong in God and Empire. It was the two that had got rid of Hitler. (29; emphasis added)

To achieve these objectives, boys are forced to participate in the "manly pursuits" that are so much a part of the British Public school: "The strength to serve: sports, cross-country races, cold showers at five in the morning became compulsory" (29). These are accompanied by morning and evening drill, the saluting of the Union Jack, and regular visits to the chapel where boys are made to sing "[w]ash me Redeemer, and I shall be whiter than snow" (29). The insidious nature of Fraudsham's ideology is lost on Chui, Munira, and the rest who take action to ensure that the privileges they enjoyed during Ironmonger's tenure are restored. By insisting on unshod feet and meals without rice, and by invoking the "innocence and simple ways of their ancestors," Fraudsham is at one level contrasting Africans unfavourably with their Western counterparts who are presumably "experienced" and "sophisticated;" at another level, however, Fraudsham is here providing an excellent example of a phenomenon that Bhabha refers to in "Of Mimicry and Man":

... colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (86)

Bhabha provides many illustrations to reinforce his argument, and one in particular describes how Charles Grant "... suggested ... a process of reform through which Christian doctrines might collude with divisive caste practices to prevent dangerous political alliances [in India]" (87). Although boys in Siriana are supposed to be given a liberal education based on the British model, Fraudsham realizes, perhaps, that the kind of educated African produced by Ironmonger's method could be dangerous. Consequently, he applies "the rule of colonial difference" (Chatterjee 18) through which he ensures that Africans will continue to

serve "God and Empire;" but as soldiers or underlings, not as gentleman. Such a practice preserves the distinction between colonial master and colonial.

Fraudsham's resolution that his pet dog, Lizzie, be given a funeral in which boys from Siriana too would participate, of course, discloses a weakness in a man who had proved indestructible thus far. Not only do they refuse to carry out Fraudsham's demands, but they increase their demands, when Fraudsham and the establishment, realizing that the students are intransigent, appeal for compromise. Fraudsham's defeat, is thus inevitable.

In *Decolonisation of the Mind*, Ngugi gives the following extract from the recommendations of a working committee that was set up after the conference on "The Teaching of African Literature in Kenyan Schools" which was held in 1974:

That Africa as a continent has been a victim of forces of colonial exploitation, oppression and human degradation. In the field of culture she was taught to look on Europe as her teacher and the centre of man's civilization, and herself as a pupil. In this event Western culture became the centre of Africa's process of learning, and Africa was relegated to the background. Africa uncritically imbibed values that were alien and had no immediate relevance to her people. Thus was the richness of Africa's cultural heritage degraded, and her people labelled as primitive and savage. The colonizer's values were placed in the limelight, and in the process, evolved a new African who denied his original image, and exhibited a considerable lack of confidence in his creative potential (qtd. in Ngugi 1986b, 100).

If such a system of education (which was common to most outposts of the empire) created colonial stooges like the head teacher in *The Castle*, it produced even more dangerous, neocolonial educators, like Chui, who are prepared to sacrifice the legitimate aspirations of Kenyans for personal ends. Chui is one of the "walking lies" that Sartre refers to in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (7); he is, in fact, more of a "fraud" and a "sham" than Fraudsham--although he was a colonialist to the core, Fraudsham believed in his cause and worked hard to ensure its success. The much vaunted public school system which was transplanted in the colonies to produce "men of character" who would take on the burden of ruling the empire could scarcely have created a better colonial than Chui. Ngugi's portrayal of Chui is very interesting in this regard:

He was neat with a style all his own in doing things: from quoting bits from Shakespeare to wearing clothes. Even the drab school uniform of grey trousers, a white starched shirt, a blue jacket and a tie carrying the school motto, *For God and Empire*, looked as if it was specially tailored to fit him....

He was the star in sports, in everything: Chui this, Chui that, Chui, Chui, Chui everywhere. The breezy mountain air in which the English settlers had found a home-climate had formed his sinewy muscles: to watch him play football, to watch that athletic swing of his body as he dribbled the ball with sudden swerves to the left or to the right to deceive an opponent, that was a pleasure indeed. Shake, shake, shake the ball, the looking-on crowd would shout themselves hoarse. He was a performer, playing to a delirious gallery. (27-28)

This description, which seems to be taken straight out of the pages of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, establishes that Chui is the "whitewashed native" *par excellence*. Of course, he organises a strike against Cambridge Fraudsham, the principal. But as has already been mentioned, this strike was not undertaken against colonial education *per se*. Chui and the other leaders conduct the strike because the new headmaster discards the notion that Africans should be made into "gentlemen," and, instead, wants to make them fit for the army. They object to this new system which would "make them grow up strong in God and the Empire" without rewarding them with the privileges that had previously accompanied colonial education.

Chui, a folk hero to generations of Siriana students, was made headmaster to fulfil an "African dream" (173). As Karega says, "We wanted to be taught African literature, African history, for we wanted to know ourselves better. Why should ourselves [sic] be reflected in white snows, spring flowers fluttering by on icy lakes?" (170). Although Karega and others are devastated by Chui's subsequent deeds as headmaster, Chui's actions are predictable indeed. Like the "whitewashed" colonials in Sartre's preface, he can only "echo" the pronouncements and principles of his English predecessors. Chui, furthermore, is smart enough to realise that he needs a power base if he is to maintain control over affairs. He has to choose "between the two mutually opposed forces in Africa today: an imperialist tradition on [sic] hand and a resistance tradition on the other" (Ngugi 1986b, 2). Chui settles for the established force and betrays the emerging, Africanisation movement that had forced the authorities to bring him to

Siriana as Headmaster in the first place:

... whoever heard of African, Chinese, or Greek mathematics and science? What mattered was good teachers and sound content: history was history: literature was literature, and nothing to do with the colour of one's skin. The school had to strive for what a famous educator had described as the best that had been taught and written in the world.... He would never have a school run by rebels and gangsters and the European Foreigners would have nothing to fear. (172)

Rather than take the opportunity to make the school more acceptable to the aspirations of the young Africans who were trying to break out of colonial bondage, he sets about restoring the status quo, and in the process, destroys the momentum that Karega and the other enlightened students had achieved. As the previous quotation shows, he even invokes a dubious, "universalist" doctrine to appease the Europeans. When his reactionary methods meet with resistance, he retaliates with a chauvinism and a brutality that far outstrips the actions of Cambridge Fraudsham:

We waited for words that would somehow still the doubt and the fear. He spoke and announced a set of rules. He thanked the teachers for the high standards and world-wide reputation of the school. It was his desire, nay his fervent prayer, that all the teachers would stay, knowing that he had not come to wreck but to build on what was already there: there would be no hasty programme of Africanisation, reckless speed invariably being the undoing of so many a fine school. There had been a recent breakdown in discipline and he vowed that with the help of all he would resolve it. Far from destroying the prefect system, he would inject it with new blood. Obedience was the royal road to order and stability, the only basis of sound education....

We went on strike and again refused the divide-and-rule control tactics. Down with Chui: up with African populism: down with expatriates and foreign advisers; up with black power.

Well the rest is common knowledge. Chui called in the riot squad which came to our school, and would you believe it, led by a European officer. We were all dispersed, with a few broken

bones and skulls. The school was closed and when it reopened I was among the ten or so not allowed to sign for re-admission. (171-73)

In his early fiction, Ngugi had posited education as a means whereby the Africans could defeat the colonialists. Here, however, education plays a very negative role. In an article entitled "The Robber and the Robbed," Ngugi explains this phenomenon, thus:

If the robbers of wealth are able to instil images of defeat, unsureness, division, inferiority complex, helplessness, fawning, abject humility, slavishness in the minds of the robbed, then they can eat their loot in comfort and sleep in peace. Thus, it has always been in the interests of a robbing minority to control the minds, the consciousness of the working majority--the true producers of wealth--by all the educational, literary, communicational, cultural and aesthetic means at their disposal. (Ngugi 1981, 123-24)

This is exactly what Chui succeeds in doing at Siriana. Himself a product of colonial education that had practised the principle of "divide and rule" and created in his mind the notion that European culture was superior, he gives even more prominence to this public school culture, and strengthens the prefect system when he is given the opportunity to administer Siriana, for experience has shown him that this is one way that vested interests can reinforce and perpetuate their power. Thus an institution that could have been transformed to counter neocolonialism, is used, instead, to restore the *status quo*.

Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, is situated in the Sri Lanka of the late 70s and early 80s, a Sri Lanka that had enjoyed Independence for around thirty years. The island had severed yet another tie with Britain by becoming a republic in 1972. The educational system as portrayed by Selvadurai is little different from those described by Lamming and Ngugi, however. In *Black Tie*, Selvadurai presents a character who is reminiscent of the head teacher in Lamming's novel. Selvadurai informed Afdhel Aziz during an interview that "Black Tie ... is actually a compilation of various masters I had at school" (21). The same could be said for *The Victoria Academy*. Although the author has given it a fictitious name, it is apparent from the evidence given in the novel that *The Victoria Academy* is a conflation of Trinity College, Kandy; St Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia; and Royal College, Colombo--perhaps the most "prestigious" boys' schools in the

country. The first two are private schools (the Sri Lankan equivalent to the British public schools) with Christian connections, and the third was founded by the British as the premier government school in the island.²

In describing Black Tie and life at the Queen Victoria Academy, Selvadurai has made maximum use of his artist's licence. Arjie encounters a man with "a sola topee, that white domed hat I had only seen in photographs from the time the British ruled Sri Lanka" (214). Black Tie, furthermore, "wore a carefully pressed white suit that also belonged to another era, a white shirt, and, of course, the black tie" (214). Consider also Diggy's description of the kinds of punishment given by Black Tie:

Once, he slapped a boy and broke some of his teeth. Another boy got caned so severely his trousers tore. Then he made the boy kneel in the sun until he fainted. (211).

That Diggy was not exaggerating Black Tie's severity is confirmed when both Arjie and Shehan become one of the principal's "ills and burdens" and suffer the consequences of his cruel punishments. Mr. Sunderalingam rationalizes Black Tie's conduct by informing Arjie that "... the old principal, Mr. Lawton, raised him, and educated him. The values he was taught are the ones he still holds on to, so you must not blame him too much for what he did to you" (246). One of these values, he explains, is that "you can beat knowledge into a student" (245). By describing Black Tie's eccentric, outmoded attire, Selvadurai's creates an image of the proverbial "Brown Sahib." The punishments he ascribes to Black Tie, however, are more problematic. Although these forms of "correction" were commonplace in a previous age,³ it is improbable that any principal serving in such a "high profile" Sri Lankan school in the period under review could give the

² Trinity's school song is entitled "The Best School of All," the song that Argie is made to recite; St. Thomas' is situated "on the sea side of Galle Road" (212); and old boys, parents, educationalists, and others associated with Royal college (Selvadurai's old school) in the 70s and 80s were indeed "divided into two factions" (220). Some wished to retain the name given by the British, and others insisted that the school be renamed to honour the educator who had introduced "Free Education" to Sri Lanka.

³ Carl Muller's, *Once Upon a Tender Time* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1995), which is situated in pre-independence Sri Lanka, describes punishments that are equally severe.

kind of extreme punishment Diggy describes without being taken to task by the Parent Teachers Association, the Press, the National Educational Authority, or the police for that matter. To state that such excessive treatment was "improbable" in the 70s and 80s is not to say that it was impossible or that less extreme forms of punishment were not practised in these schools, however. Moreover, The violent beatings described in *Funny Boy* have intertextual parallels with a similar caning in *The Castle*. One could add that violence affects most areas of school life in this novel in a way it never did *The Castle* and *Petals of Blood*. The head teacher in Lamming's novel birches a student because he has been embarrassed in front of the white inspector. In such a context, any scapegoat will suffice. Fraudsham and Chui resort to violence (in the form of riot squads) when their positions are threatened by "rebellious" students. Violence and brutality, however, are endemic to the Victoria Academy. Arjie encounters violent behaviour in the quadrangle, in the classroom, in the toilets, and of course in the principal's office.

Selvadurai's fascination with violence has other ramifications, too. In Lamming's novel, there is a marked difference between the schools and the world "out there." Karega and others students in Siriana are more aware of social forces outside, but the educational system at Siriana continues "to obscure racism and other forms of oppression" (165), despite all their efforts to bring about change. What the text of *Funny Boy* discloses, however, is that a school, even a privileged school, can no longer be an ivory tower. It is compelled to react to, or is affected by, nationalist and other forms of pressure faced by other institutions in the country. "The Best School of All," in fact, prepares the reader for the carnage and destruction in the chapter that follows. The strains between Sinhalese and Tamils in school, for instance, is reflective of similar tensions in the country.

There is yet another factor which distinguishes *Funny Boy* from the other novels. The educational "establishment" in *The Castle* is represented by the head teacher and the inspector, and in *Petals of Blood* by Fraudsham and Chui. The institution is under no threat in the former and demands for Africanisation in the latter are made by students. It is significant that educational authorities, old boys, the Press, and the government collude in defeating the students in *Petals of Blood*. There are two "establishments" in the educational system in Selvadurai's novel, and these are represented by Lokubandara and Black Tie. Many private schools were taken over and "indigenized" between 1956 and 1965. This was consequent to the cry for "Sinhala only" and the other programmes of nationalization instituted by the Bandaranaike government of 1956. Still, some of the most "distinguished" schools in the country retained their identity by appealing to influential old boys in the cabinet of ministers whenever such a move was mooted. Resistance to change

became difficult with the passage of time, however, because the "nationalist lobby" could for its part expect support from a new generation of parliamentarians and ministers who had studied in "Swabasha" schools.

There is no doubt that Ngugi supports the students in the battle for supremacy between the students and the establishment in *Petals of Blood*. Although Black Tie's principles and those of Lokubandara are also placed in binary opposition, Selvadurai, unlike Ngugi, subscribes to neither position. Black Tie is forced to take desperate measures when Mr. Lokubandara tries to change the name, tone, and character of the school from one that is "too British" to one that is more indigenous in outlook. But Lokubandara's policies do not inspire much confidence either. The reader does not need Sunderalingam's comment "and if he [Black Tie] is overruled, Tamils like us will suffer" (246) to realize that the kind of nationalism being preached by Lokubandara is a form of jingoism. Lokubandara, who is a "political appointee" (212), tries to achieve his objectives by politicizing ruffians like Salgado who "can do whatever they like" (219) because of his patronage. The text implies that Lokubandara even approves the beating up of students like Cheliah. The principal, therefore, has some justification in fearing the new dispensation. Unfortunately, he stands for an old order that is equally reprehensible--hence Arjie's decision to "defeat" him.

To study parallels and contrasts in the attitudes and actions of these head teachers/principals is a rewarding exercise. But to focus exclusively on the teachers is to present a monolithic account of education in these regions. Students in Barbados, Kenya, and Sri Lanka were exposed to similar but not identical forms of colonial/neocolonial education, and their reaction to this received educational system demonstrates equally fascinating points of convergence and divergence. To Michel Pousse

Lamming describes the school as a definite product of colonialism, geared to keep the pupils in ignorance and to ensure that the few who will fight their way up will be segregated from the rest of the herd, so that they can become modern overseers and not leaders who might advocate social upheaval. (55)

To this end, therefore, the schools deliberately insulate their students from having access to the kind of information that would have enabled them to question the liberality of these so-called liberal institutions. In *Petals of Blood*, the effects are reported and described, in *The Castle*, individual characters try to reconcile the misinformation and the irrelevant knowledge that is imposed on them at school

with the knowledge of their own history that they gather by chance:

And it would appear that when this good and great queen came to the throne she ordered that those who weren't free should now become free. It was beginning to make sense. Now they could understand what this talk about freedom meant. One boy said that he had asked the teacher, but the teacher said he didn't know what the old people were talking about. They might have been getting dotish. Nobody ever had to make him free. (56-57)

Surely there is something wrong with an educational system which deliberately distorts or ignores crucial phases of a country's history? These children are at best groping in the dark. None of their teachers bother to inform them about their African heritage, Marcus Garvey, slavery, or the slave revolt in Santo Domingo. The educational system, on the whole, is sterile and irrelevant. All it does is to prepare children to become good colonial subjects.

The chapter in which Lamming focusses on G's life in his secondary school is perhaps the most disappointing in the whole book because it promises much and produces little. Lamming is here pithy to a fault. If the novel is to be read as G's *Bildungsroman*, one would expect the author to dwell at length on G's experiences in an institution which nurtured him during his formative years. The little he reveals, however, is most instructive. Lamming claims, in *The Pleasures of Exile*, that his secondary schooling "had one intention, that it was training me to forget and to be separate from the things that Papa was: peasant and alive" (228). G faces this predicament when he wins his scholarship. As a boy, G was rooted to his home, to his friends, and to Pa, yet this harmony is threatened as soon as he joins a secondary school, "which seemed a ship with a drunk crew" (218). Consider the following passage:

Gradually the village receded from my consciousness although it wasn't possible for me to forget it.... They didn't mind having me around to hear what happened in the High School, but they had nothing to communicate since my allegiances, they thought, had been transferred to the other world. If I asserted myself they made it clear that I didn't belong ... Whether or not they wanted to they excluded me from their world, just as my memory of them and the village excluded me from the world of the High School. (219-20)

As G subsequently declares, "[i]t was though my roots had been snapped from the

centre of what I knew best, while I remained impotent to wrest what my fortunes had forced me into" (220). There is indeed an ironic parallel in the dilemmas faced by G and the village head teacher. If the latter is victimized because of his subservience to the British officials and by the high standards of conduct demanded of him by the villagers, G is equally frustrated by his village background and (despite his friendship with the enlightened teacher)⁴ by the realization that he "didn't belong" (225) to his High School. As a consequence, G is rendered as impotent as the head teacher: "From the malaise of the High School I had drifted into the despair of the first assistant's world. Soon I found it difficult to cope with what I wanted" (226). He is so bewildered by the kind of education he has been subjected to that he is on his way to becoming what Philip Mason would call an "Ariel [who] is ... the good native, the moderate nationalist, the gradualist, usually content to wait until it pleases Prospero to give him his freedom" (qtd. in Vaughan 161).

Ironically, the only person who presents him with a counter discourse is Trumper who after his sojourn in the United States insists that "... barring learning to count and write your name there ain't much in these school that will help you not to make a blasted mess of your life" (288). There are some critics who regard Trumper's role positively, and without many reservations.⁵ Lamming remarks, in his introduction to the 1983 edition of *The Castle*, however, that colonialism remained after the exodus of the British from the West Indies in the "new colonial orchestration" (qtd. in Taylor 196) of the Americans, and Ramchand was one of the first to observe that "there are warning signs in the presentation of the newly-returned Trumper" (54). He is, indeed, something of a braggart who is almost too self-assured. He returns with a fascination for material possessions, which is evident not only in his dress, but also in sequences like the following:

⁴ The first assistant who is "versatile, sensitive, and cultured" (226) could have conceivably provided G with a counter discourse. But he is an insubstantial character who never fulfils his potential in the novel.

⁵ See, for instance, Ngugi, "George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*," *Homecoming* (New York: Laurence Hill, 1972) 110-23, and Charles R. Larson "Towards a Sense of Community: George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*," *The Novel in the Third World* (Washington: Inscape, 1976), 89-108.

There ain't much to say ... except that the United States is a place where a man-can-make pots-of-money.... 'Cause 'tis what they call high life ... Seems a next kind o' world. When I tell you I use to have two telephones and three 'lectric fans in a small place o' mine, you can sort o' get my meaning clear. (282)

Still, Trumper is deeply committed to the cause of the "Negro Race" (295). His volatile pronouncements on this subject shatter G's complacency. Living in a world in which the blacks are in the majority, and having been exposed to a public school education which had insulated him from many issues that involved people of his colour, G possesses only a vague idea of what it means to be black:

I had nothing to say because I wasn't prepared for what had happened. Trumper made his own experience, the discovery of a race, a people, seem like a revelation. It was nothing I had known, and it didn't seem I could know it till I had lived it. (298)

Trumper's advice, furthermore, allows G to take another look at his own identity. Daizal Samad states throughout his thesis that "finding a sense of self" is a major motif in Caribbean novels, and especially in Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*. All the references to "the castle of my skin," the pebble that G once hid in the sand, and the many conversations among G, Trumper, and Boy Blue, as children, are part of this exploration for an authentic self. Even though Trumper's dictates might not be the final answer for G, his assertions alert him to a perspective that G had thus far ignored. Given Lamming's predilection for the "open-ended" novel⁶ it is most unlikely that he would completely endorse a character, who as G concludes, "had found what he needed and there were no more problems to be worked out" (298). On the contrary, G, even at this stage, questions some of Trumper's dogmatic statements (296-98). Trumper's most important contribution is to create a sense of awareness in his intelligent and sensitive friend so that he could learn for himself--and even learn from Trumper's mistakes--"[t]o be part of something which you didn't know and which *if* Trumper was right it was *my* [G's] duty to discover" (299; emphasis added). Troubled by Trumper's pronouncements, and dissatisfied with what he had learned in Barbados, G chooses the typically West Indian "solution" of exile, where he could "start with a clean record" (252).

⁶ Consider Lamming's comments in an interview with Birbalsingh, *JCL* 18.1 (1988): 186.

Students and graduates from Siriana are more alert politically than their counterparts in Barbados. They are quick to see the dangers inherent in colonial and neocolonial education. But as Karega so rightly observes, in a moment of realization, "the three [Munira, the lawyer, and Karega] had seen different Sirianas and different Fraudshams and maybe they were not moved by the same things" (166). He feels at this moment that he "might have been unfair to Munira" for judging his conduct. One of the strategies Ngugi often uses is that of showing the reaction of different people to an important event or institution. In *A Grain of Wheat*, he shows how several individuals respond to the prospect of Independence. In *Petals of Blood*, he examines how Munira and others reacted to Siriana education.

The omniscient narrator notes, in explaining Munira's inability to achieve complete sexual satisfaction with Wanja, that "even with Wanja he found that he was still a prisoner of his own upbringing and Siriana missionary education" (72). Munira is effete, insecure, and even irrationally vindictive; but all this is the result of his being "haunted by the past that had always shadowed him" (270), and the social conditions that had influenced him from childhood.

Munira is the son of an individual who had betrayed the revolution and become a supporter of the British. By ruthlessly exploiting the peasants and by adopting a very harsh, puritanical brand of Christianity, Munira's father had become wealthy, powerful, and influential. The tyranny that he demonstrated to the villagers was also carried over to his home, and his attitude ensures that Munira's personality never develops. Munira is temperamentally unsuited to follow in his father's footsteps, and the open contempt that his father displays towards him gives Munira a sense of insecurity which later degenerates into an inferiority complex. His problems increase at Siriana, an institution which promotes subservience among students. However, this self-confessed mediocrity, cannot even become a true lackey:

I could never quite lick anybody's boots. I could never even shine dishes to brightness brighter than bright, or out-Jesus ... ehh ... Mr Christ. To be sure I was never prominent in anything. In class, I was average. In sports I had not the limbs--I had not the will. (27)

Munira, Chui, and Karega are all victimized in school. But while the latter two find some concrete means of recovering from their plight--one becomes a

capitalist, the other embraces socialism--Munira has neither the intellect nor the strength of character to take a definite stand. He leaves school as an adolescent, and it is this adolescent attitude to life which prevents him from succeeding in the adult world. Siriana then had produced an individual who insisted on "depersonalizing" (30) himself, one who wished to remain "burrowed into the earth" (30).

Since the lawyer is a peripheral character in this novel, his experiences in Siriana are not treated in any great depth. But his contribution is valuable for two reasons: he articulates the evils of Siriana that characters, like Munira, sense but are unable to give expression to, and he also places the last strike at Siriana in another perspective. The lawyer's experiences in America and his realization on returning to Kenya that his countrymen were "serving the same monster-god [money]" (166) make him conclude:

And now I saw in the clear light of day the role that the Fraudshams of the colonial world played to create all of us black zombies dancing pornography in blue hills while our people are dying of hunger, while our people cannot afford decent shelter and decent schools for their children. And we are happy, we are happy that we are called stable and civilized and intelligent! (166)

In keeping with his socialist principles, he establishes a practice in indigent regions hoping to use his learning and skills to alleviate the lot of the poor. He realises eventually, however, that he too is perilously close to serving the same monster god of money, despite his intentions. His depression is relieved only when he hears about the strike in Siriana. He sees in the actions of the strikers, "a new youth emerging, a youth freed from the direct shame and humiliation of the past and hence not so spiritually wounded as the those who had gone before" (167). He concludes that "Fraudsham and all the black Fraudshams ... have had it" (167).

Karega, of course, is in the vanguard of this movement. Of all the individuals in this novel, he comes from the most indigent background, and, like Abdulla, he soon learns that there is no "room for all of us at the meeting point of a victorious struggle" (104). Independence has not led to any change in people's thinking. The Chuis of Kenya remain secure in their lyceums where they continue to convert the youth into "black zombies." Karega's efforts to counter strength with strength had resulted in defeat "with a few broken bones and skulls" (173). He feels, therefore, that his mission is to teach rural students what he was not taught in Siriana:

He was concerned that the children knew no world outside Ilmorog: they thought of Kenya as a city or a large village somewhere outside Ilmorog. How could he enlarge their consciousness so that they could see themselves, Ilmorog and Kenya as part of a larger whole, a larger territory containing the history of African people and their struggles? (109)

At this stage of his development, then, he finds in teaching a "possible vocation, a daily dialogue with his deepest self" (252). But by the time Munira engineers his dismissal, Karega "had already started to doubt the value of formal education as a tool of a people's total liberation" (252). Nevertheless, he retains the belief that his future as a leader of the people must in some way be involved with teaching. All he is concerned with is "what kind of education it should be" (Killam 108).

At one point in his career, Karega, deeply influenced by Nyakinyua, pins all his hopes for a brighter future on a return to Africa's glorious past. Karega sees in ancient Kenya a social system where land was distributed equitably, and where wealth was the possession of those who had worked to produce it. He soon realizes, however, that a wholesale return to the past would be a reactionary step. There comes a time when Karega "moves beyond Nyakinyua's communal memory of times of grandeur and struggle and confronts this community as a creation of 'the twin cruelties of unprepared-for vulgarities of nature and the uncontrollable actions of men'" (Gikandi 139). Even when he is seemingly enraptured by Nyakinyua's songs of the past, Karega sees its limitations: "It was really very beautiful. But at the end of the evening Karega felt very sad. It was like beholding a relic of beauty that had suddenly surfaced, or like listening to a solitary beautiful tune straying, for a time, from a dying world" (210).

When the past fails to provide adequate guidance, Karega turns to political science and Literature. But here too he is disappointed. It is only when he becomes a trade union agitator that Karega finds a way to lead the people. Even at this juncture, Karega's actions are in keeping with his earlier career. As Killam comments, Karega's

Mission as a union leader will be as a teacher since he will have to convey the truth to the peasants and workers that there has to be a choice between capitalism and socialism and, more important and more difficult for him, what and why that choice must be. (1980, 109; emphasis added)

There is no guarantee, of course, that Karega will eventually succeed. Although Munira's act of arson has killed Chui and some other exploiters, and the workers in Ilmorog are on the verge of rising up against their masters, the neocolonialists are too entrenched in their power to give up without a considerable struggle. There will be other neocolonialists to replace Chui, just as Joseph replaces Karega and Abdulla. The most he can do is to keep to his task and to show the way towards a millennium when the "kingdom of men and women [would] really begin," and all the peasants would be "joying and loving in creative labour" (344).

Students in *The Castle* are not sufficiently awakened, politically, to agitate for reforms although Trumper, and to some extent, G, are conscious of many drawbacks in the schooling system in Barbados. Karega and others in *Petals of Blood* succeed in driving out Cambridge Fraudsham from Siriana, fired as they are by a growing awareness of their black ethos, but can do little against the neocolonial power of Chui. How then does Arjie combat an abhorrent system in *Funny Boy*? Consider the following comment by Florence Stratton in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*:

Adversarial interaction takes a number of different forms, including straightforward denunciation. Such confrontational tactics are, however, much less prevalent than are strategies of negotiation or intervention. Of these, the one which women writers most frequently employ in their attempt to subvert patriarchal ideology is inversion. (173)

Funny Boy, of course, is not a novel in which a woman writer tries to subvert patriarchal ideology, but the author certainly employs similar strategies in rejecting the kind of neocolonial education imparted to Sri Lankans in The Academy. There are some instances of "straightforward denunciation" when Arjie and Shehan "hold up for ridicule all that was considered sacred by the Queen Victoria Academy" (240). More often, however, Selvadurai uses the strategy of inversion. Arjie had been sent to The Academy because his father did not want him "turning out funny or anything" (210); his father is confident that "The Academy will force ... [Arjie] to become a man" (210). The move turns counter-productive when Arjie shuns the cricket pitch and the rugby grounds, and finds a companion who is, in fact, a homosexual. Arjie's own latent homosexual tendencies that had emerged during his childhood game of "Bride Bride," are confirmed in school. He was sent to the Academy to become "a man," but he is ironically transformed into a "funny boy."

Selvadurai, more than Lamming and Ngugi, is interested in the many ways that the colonial mentality continues to be inscribed in the minds of postcolonial students. His extensive use of Henry Newbolt's compositions "The Best School of All" and "Vitae Lampada" is particularly effective in this regard. Poems like these and others like "Casabianca" and "The Charge of the Light Brigade" were taught to generations of colonial students to inculcate British values. The pieces referred to in *Funny Boy* are ironic for two reasons; first, they espouse values that are alien to Sri Lanka. One of the verses in "Vitae Lampada" draws a parallel between the predicament faced by "the last man in" and a crisis in an outpost of the Empire where soldiers have to continue the battle (against "natives," presumably,) although their "captain is dead." By valorizing this poem, and by making students internalize its contents, Black Tie and others force students to identify with the soldiers and not with the "natives." Then again, the schools fail to uphold the values expressed in these verses, despite the prominence given to them. Consider Arjie's ruminations on "Vitae Lampada" and the spirit in which cricket is actually played at The Academy:

It said that through playing cricket one learned to be honest and brave and patriotic. This was not true at the Victoria Academy. Cricket, here, consisted on trying to make it on the first-eleven team by any means, often by cheating or by fawning over the cricket master. (233)

All the students in the novels under review have been "... open ... to an alienating cultural indoctrination that is out of step with the historical moment" (Spivak 277). But Arjie is one of those rare persons who becomes a "resisting reader" as an adolescent. He is able to achieve these insights by placing himself in the margins of society. This distancing not only allows him to see the hypocrisy inherent in the school, and the anachronistic nature of its values, but it also creates in him a deep feeling of injustice at the manner in which he, Shehan, and others of their ilk have been treated by the school, and by the entire patriarchal world. In such a world, "[r]ight and wrong, fair and unfair had nothing to do with how things really were" (273). Arjie enunciates:

How was it that some people got to decide what was correct or not, just or unjust? It has to do with who was in charge; everything had to do with who held power and who didn't. If you were powerful like Black Tie or my father you got to decide what was right or wrong. If you were like Shehan or me you had no

choice but to follow what they said. But did we always have to obey? Was it not possible for people like Shehan and me to be powerful too? I thought about this, but no answer presented itself to me. (274)

Although Arjie does not realise it at the time, an opportunity for empowerment offers itself very soon. This study has already shown that G cannot fully comprehend the workings of the educational system in Barbados because he is emphatically a colonial. Action must necessarily be deferred until he returns "educated," *a la* Trumper. Karega and his colleagues bring sufficient pressure to bear on Fraudsham to hasten his departure, yet their combined strength is insufficient to remove the neocolonial educator, Chui. Arjie becomes aware of Black Tie's vulnerable position after his conversations with Shehan and Sunderalingam, but he employs subtlety whereas Karega and others use the more traditional forms of resistance. Karega and his peers can act in this fashion because they are guaranteed the support of all the students; Arjie, who is an "outsider" at the Victoria Academy, has no such power base. What he does under the circumstances is to pretend that he belongs to the centre; that he recognizes, respects, and supports Black Tie's cause. Arjie engineers matters in such a way that the embattled principal is dependent on him for his survival--rather like the Empire relying on the colonies for support in the great wars. Once this objective has been achieved, Arjie has but to wait for the correct moment to strike a blow against this offensive system.

The strategy Argie uses to achieve this end is both apt and effective. He realises that the ideology expressed in "The Best School of All" and "Vitae Lampada" is not only irrelevant to Sri Lankans living in the last quarter of the twentieth century but also inchoate. Then again, he senses, though he is not able to fully understand, the colonial/neocolonial impulses behind formal recitations which Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin articulate thus:

Texts, as a number of cultures recognise, actually enter the body, and imperial education systems interpellated a colonialist subjectivity not just through syllabus content, or the establishment of libraries within which the colonial "could absorb the lesson of the master," but through internalizing the English text, and reproducing it before audiences of fellow colonials. Recitation of literary texts thus becomes a ritual act of obedience, often performed by a child before an audience of admiring adults, who, in reciting that English tongue, speaks as if s/he were the imperial

speaker/master rather than the subjectified colonial so often represented in English poetry and prose. (426)

Arjie rejects this "ritual act of obedience" by giving a garbled recitation of the poems in the presence of the old boy whose support Black Tie needs so desperately; in the process, he not only succeeds in making Black Tie leave the hall "tired and defeated" (283), but by deliberately distorting the lines he reveals, symbolically, that the principles governing the school are nonsensical indeed.

It would be simplistic to make too many generalizations about education in the colonies and the former colonies by examining just three novels. That Lamming's, Ngugi's, and Selvadurai's texts present just some approaches to the issue and do not constitute a definitive paradigm for colonial education is revealed by comparing and contrasting their novels with a novel like Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* which subverts received forms of education in a more devastating way, and foregrounds substantial alternatives. What a focussed consideration of these three novels confirms, however, is that colonial forms of schooling will remain even in the 21st century. Despite all efforts to dismantle this colonial structure, or at least to remodel it, very little has, in fact, been achieved. The birch that is administered so mercilessly in Groddeck's is wielded equally violently in the "postcolonial" world of the Victoria Academy, as Head teachers and principals vent their frustrations on students on the pretext of instilling discipline, values, and knowledge. The methods of instruction, too, show little change. Students are not encouraged to learn for themselves. They are either circumscribed by the canon of English Literature (*Petals of Blood*), forced to commit to memory nonsensical lines like "ab ab catch a crab" (Lamming 1973, 36), which according to Pousse are "a parody of learning" (55), or asked to recite poems that perpetuate and revitalize the values of the former masters (*Funny Boy*). The forty year period has seen acculturation being replaced by some forms of resistance, of course. The "passivity" of the colonial, Barbadian schoolboy is followed by the militancy in Kenyan schools, and the more subtle forms of protest in contemporary Sri Lanka. Caliban has learned to speak/write back to a centre that is now occupied by the "white washed" elite. Still, efforts to decolonise the educational establishment have just begun; consequently, it will be many moons yet before Caliban could stop cursing Prospero and declare unreservedly that he is an "autonomous indigene."

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