Paradigms of Absence: The Writings of
Zulfikar Ghose

by

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Abstract

The primary objective of this thesis is to study the writings of the contemporary poet, short story writer, novelist and critic Zulfikar Ghose. In some respects Ghose is a "difficult" and "unclassifiable" writer who refuses to be confined to traditional categories. He calls himself "Indo-Pakistani" and "native-alien" -- terms which recall his experience of displacement and exile after the Independence and Partition of India in 1947. Although the trauma of marginalisation does not constitute the overt subject matter of the bulk of his writings, I have argued that the theme of native-alien experience underpins the entire corpus of his work.

The focus of this study is on evolving poetic and narrative patterns in Ghose's work and the complex relation between form and content. Chapter 1, which follows a biographical introduction, deals with the author's four volumes of poetry and traces a paradigm which reflects in microcosm the development of his fiction. Chapter 2 discusses three early works -- Statement Against Corpses, The Contradictions and The Murder of Aziz Khan -- in relation to the conventions of mimetic writing. I have analysed Crump's Terms, which is Ghose's only stream-of-consciousness novel, in chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the Brazilian trilogy and Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script respectively. The central issue in the chapter on the trilogy is the tension created by the subtle use of diachronic and synchronic patterns. Hulme is an antireferential work, and in chapter 5 I have concentrated on the notion of an autonomous construct as a possible vehicle for the experience of exile. The
recent novels -- A New History of Torments and Don Bueno -- are works of magic realism, and in chapter 6 I have studied the author's use of the possibilities inherent in this mode. Where necessary, I have referred to Ghose's autobiography, his critical works and an interview recorded on 14 Aug. 1984 (included as an appendix) to reinforce my reading of his poetry and fiction.

Ghose's experimentalism is at once the most fascinating and the most difficult aspect of his writings. I have argued in all the chapters, and in the conclusion, that his technical inventiveness, far from being a sign of waywardness, is a necessary consequence of a quest for a vision of home that can be found nowhere in the external world.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Memory and Artifice in Poetry</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Imagined Realities: The Early Phase</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Crump's Terms and the Metaphoric Mode</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Fabulous Picaro: The Incredible Brazilian</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Metafictional Mode: Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Magical Narrative: A New History of Torments and Don Bueno</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix: Interview with Zulfikar Ghose</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Introduction

Despite two decades of sustained literary activity, Zulfikar Ghose continues to remain relatively unknown in academic circles, hardly discussed in literary journals, and only tenuously linked to Commonwealth, British and American writing. His refusal to be circumscribed by national boundaries and "ethnic flavour," his willingness to experiment with new modes, and his propensity to create antireferential and "difficult" works may partly explain his consignment to that area of grey where neither the student nor the literary critic wishes to wander. I shall endeavour to demonstrate in this study that Ghose, far from being mediocre or obscurantist, has at least three major claims to recognition: firstly, his writings, despite their differences in narrative mode and style, possess a remarkable unity; secondly, his work reveals a complexity of texture and depth of imagination which makes him a contemporary writer worthy of serious attention; thirdly, the paradigms of negation that he demonstrates through his fiction could offer in the future the possibility of a new poetics for the fiction of native-alien experience.

The bulk of Ghose's writing is so far removed from his biographical circumstances that it would be useful to preface this study with a brief account of the author's life. In fact, in order to arrive at a unified vision of his writings, one needs to turn to biography and history, to the crucial years after the Independence and Partition of India, the years in which Ghose learnt to love and hate the country, and to recognize his predicament as an alien in the land of his birth.
The author himself remains the best guide to these significant years. After thirteen years of residence in England, Ghose, in his autobiography, *Confessions of a Native-Alien* (1965), looks back at the year 1952, the year in which he left Bombay, together with his parents and sisters, and sailed to England. For Ghose and his family, who had already courted exile after the Partition by opting for Hindu Bombay instead of Muslim Sialkot, the passage to England meant a double exile. Referring to this crucial moment, Ghose writes:

> When we left Bombay in 1952 for England, we were leaving two countries, for in some ways we were alien to both and our emigration to a country to which we were not native only emphasized our alienation from the country in which we had been born. This distinction between the two countries of my early life has been the schizophrenic theme of much of my thinking: it created a psychological conflict and a pressing need to know that I do belong somewhere, and neither the conflict nor the need has ever been resolved.² (pp. 1-2)

Ghose was born in 1935 and by 1952 he had spent ten years in Bombay, which was at that time, as it is now, a metropolitan, predominantly Hindu city. These ten years coincided with the last days of the British Raj, and with the possibility of Independence and Partition in the near future, the Hindus and the Muslims, who had lived for centuries in perfect harmony, were beginning to slaughter each other on a massive scale. For Ghose, a Muslim in a Hindu city, this was a period of fear and uncertainty, and he records in his autobiography the atmosphere of the time:
Walking down the street in the morning, one would find the hacked limbs of a man lying on the pavement. Lorries, collecting dead bodies, would pass by the streets as though they were collecting garbage cans.

(CON, p. 31)

In contrast to these ten years, the first seven years -- 1935 to 1942 -- were spent in Sialkot, in relatively prosperous circumstances, in the midst of an extended family. Ghose says that "several generations of a family lived and spawned in the same house" which, despite the irony, suggests a strong sense of continuity. Sialkot in the 1930s was an industrializing city, which the author remembers as an organic community untouched by modernisation. Ghose recalls a typical scene which, although probably coloured and idealized by the passage of time, is still sufficiently indicative of a way of life. He speaks of

an avenue leading out of Sialkot, gracefully lined with trees, which in my imagination look like poplars. A graveyard where an old man is praying in the shade of a tree. The tall profusely sweating peanut-vendors who chanted their presence in the streets. The potter at his wheel, his hands always in front of him, moulding clay.

(CON, p. 21)

The memories that Ghose speaks of are significant, for they not only underlie the thematics of exile and quest for identity that figure prominently in his writing, but they also contrast with his life in England, which was a period of shifting fortunes, combined with an increasing awareness of being an outsider. However, life in England -- from 1952 to 1969 -- was productive in many other ways. He studied at Sloane School, Chelsea,

Having spent seventeen years in England (interestingly, he spent the same number of years in India), he emigrated to the United States in 1969 to take up a teaching appointment at the University of Texas at Austin. The last sixteen years, from 1969 to 1985, have been extremely productive ones, during which he has read widely and has published seven novels: *The Native* (1972), *The Beautiful Empire* (1975), *Crump's Terms* (1975), *A Different World* (1978), *Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script* (1981), *A New History of Torments* (1982) and *Don Bueno* (1983). He also produced two volumes of poetry -- *The Violent West* (1972) and *A Memory of Asia* (1984), two critical works *Hamlet, Prufrock and Language* (1978) and *The Fiction of Reality* (1984), and several uncollected essays, poems and short stories.

Perhaps the first thing that strikes the reader is that Ghose's life and his movement from India to England and Texas have little ostensible bearing on his literary works. Most Commonwealth writers who have dealt with the problem of identity and exile have done so by recreating in their art a realistic or
sentimentalised version of the land of their birth. They have felt a need to create a model of what they think they have left behind or lost in order to explore the possibility of creating a new identity. In Ghose's early works, a correspondence along these lines could be established, but as he moves increasingly into antireferential writing, the continuities, though still present, become progressively difficult to detect. Hence, instead of attempting the self-defeating and ultimately futile task of establishing at each point a correspondence between biography and literature, I shall endeavour, for the most part, to trace submerged continuities at the level of theme in order to establish a framework within which the total body of work appears as an evolving continuum.

The primary focus of this study, however, is on changes in narrative mode and their appositeness vis-à-vis a body of experience. The first chapter, which deals with Ghose's poetry, draws attention to evolving patterns, at the level of tone, prosody and style, in order to create a paradigm which will also serve as a mirror to study and interpret the evolution of his fiction. Chapters 2 to 6, which deal with changing phases in Ghose's fiction -- in the order of composition -- chart the journey from realism to postmodernism and magic realism, drawing comparisons, where necessary, with nineteenth-century, modern and contemporary fiction. Motifs, image patterns and thematic concerns which surface in all the phases are dealt with in some detail, although I have tried to avoid the risk of repetition by the expedient of distributing emphasis and briefly alluding to patterns in certain chapters if they are more fully developed
elsewhere. Ghose's autobiography and his critical works have not been dealt with separately, but since they are an invaluable guide to his writings, I refer to them frequently in my discussion of the novels.

The study of form and the development of the theme of native-alien experience are not mutually exclusive. In fact one of the assumptions which underlies this study is that reading by form is both inevitable and necessary if one is to understand the thematic unity of Ghose's writings. For displaced and unhoused writers like Ghose the notion of "home" is often a shifting and evolving one, for the fictional models they create in order to satisfy their compulsive search for identity often appear distorted in their final form. It is the continual frustration Ghose experiences in his attempt to create an acceptable construct that prevents his writings from becoming end-stopped, and makes the reader pursue form in order to understand theme. Thus the movement from, say, realism to stream-of-consciousness, is not merely a matter of changing literary techniques; it also implies that the realistic model, in the process of incorporating a certain order of experience, reveals contradictions which can only be rectified by experimenting with another mode.

Although Ghose's writings raise several theoretical questions pertaining to the poetics of fiction, I have confined myself largely to a close study of his work. I have included a complete bibliography of Ghose's writings, including his sports journalism, and an interview recorded at the University of Texas at Austin on 14 Aug. 1984 to reinforce what is, in the final
analysis, the fundamental impulse behind this study: to establish Zulfikar Ghose, through a survey of his literary and critical works, as a significant contemporary writer.
Notes

1 An interesting parallel is the case of Salman Rushdie, another native-alien of sorts, who left Bombay and emigrated to England. Although it is yet too early to say what course Rushdie's writings will take in the future, it is of considerable significance that he too, like Ghose, appears to have felt the need to experiment with different narrative modes. His movement from the fantasy of _Grimus_ (1977) to the magic realism of _Shame_ (1983) reinforces the argument of this study that the thematics of native-alien experience is bound up with the quest for new narrative modes.

2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965). All references are to this edition, and page references are given parenthetically. The title, where necessary, is abbreviated CN.

3 The author points out in his autobiography (p. 6) that he came to adopt a Hindu surname after his father (Ghaus) suffered a boating accident with a friend called Bose, and their friends, who heard of this incident, insisted on calling the two "Ghose and Bose."

4 A city in East Punjab, close to the Indo-Pakistani border, which became part of West Pakistan after the Partition of India in 1947.
Zulfikar Ghose began his literary career as a poet with the publication of his first collection of poems, *The Loss of India*, in 1964; and, by a happy coincidence, his most recent work is also a collection of poems, entitled, significantly, *A Memory of Asia* (1984). The latter contains previously uncollected poems and a selection from his earlier writings. The selection was made by the author himself, and in an author's note Ghose declares that "the ones not included in this volume do not now strike me as worthy of anyone's attention." The author's disclaimer is not without its uses, for this volume excludes what is flippant, casual and imitative in his early poetry. However, the process of weeding out the weak poems appears to have been a hazardous one as several important poems, including the popular anthology piece "An Attachment to the Sun," have been excluded as well. For the purposes of this study I shall also pay close attention to the two earlier volumes — *Jets from Orange* (1967) and *The Violent West* (1972). Taken together, the four volumes reflect the changing phases in the author's poetic career, the movement from an autobiographical, didactic, referential and traditional verse to a personal but more discontinuous, open and contemporary poetry. The primary purpose of this chapter is evaluative, so by drawing attention to matters such as prosody, style, theme and poetic influences I shall try to formulate guidelines for understanding and interpreting his poetry. Also, the changing phases in Ghose's
poetry will constitute a paradigm which will then serve as a model for the extended study of his fiction, which runs a parallel course with his poetry, moving from realistic referential narrative to metafictional and magic realistic modes.

It would be inaccurate to pretend that each volume of Ghose's poetry reveals a self-sufficient phase or that the thematic and stylistic components of one phase do not spill over into the next. In fact, the thematics of native-alien experience surfaces, in various forms, in all his phases, establishing continuity and providing a basis for unity. Even structurally, some of the early poems, such as "Poem Towards Sanity," anticipate the complexity and obscurity of his recent ones. However, the emphasis in his first work, as the title The Loss of India suggests, is on poetry that draws its strength from biographical and referential material, and since these aspects constitute the strength and weakness of this phase, I shall look at the interdependence in some detail. While most critics and reviewers seem to agree on the primacy and relevance of autobiographical and social material in his early poetry, some have argued that the obsessive treatment of personal life is potentially damaging. Meenakshi Mukherjee, for instance, says that

this concern with the need to belong - even granting the conditions of his obvious uprooting - might well become a retarding factor in Ghose's development as a poet because it tends to turn most of his poems into an extension of his personal life. His autobiographical work, Confessions of a Native-Alien (1965), reveals an uncomfortably close correspondence between actual experience of life and their [sic] poetic
counterparts.²

Mukherjee draws her conclusions rather hastily, for *Confessions of a Native-Alien* is not always autobiographical. And even when Ghose draws on personal material, his use of metrical patterns and poetic techniques has the effect of establishing a distance between the poem and the persona of the poet. He records, for instance, in *Confessions*, an instance of stealing a box of crayons from a classmate, but this inconsequential incident becomes, in "The Kleptomaniac," a probing study of the relation between guilt and art, and the whole process of transmuting guilt into the creation of art. The subject of "Water-Carrier" recalls the many sociological and quotidian observations of *Confessions*, but in the poem the water carrier who traverses the desert to collect water while taking nothing for himself and the desert which tortures him but provides his livelihood are metaphors for the predicament of the artist who must suffer the pangs of self-denial and exile in order to create. The fact that in "Sialkot" Ghose combines in five stanzas two separate incidents recorded in his autobiography is a clear indication that *The Loss* should not be considered a re-working of *Confessions*.

However, in a general sense, Mukherjee is making a valid point in that the early poems are centrifugal rather than centripetal in their propensity for drawing the reader outward into the phenomenal world, rather than into the poems themselves. When, for instance, the reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement* says that Ghose in *The Loss* is "aware of the richness,
poverty, violence, tenderness of India in an earthy, exact way, there is no occasion to question the validity of the statement, although one may be concerned about the implications of the assertion. It must be remembered that Ghose's early and middle teens were spent in Bombay at a time when India experienced two major events, both of which were to change the destiny of the country: Independence and the Partition. The change of power meant political turmoil, intrigue and a scramble for leadership. The Partition meant mass murder, displacement and homelessness for thousands and a personal crisis for Ghose and his family. Since he lived through those tempestuous years, it is no surprise that Ghose focusses on violence, inhumanity and what Louis MacNeice calls in a different context "a culture built upon profit." Ghose's treatment of oppression, sterility, decadence, poverty and treachery recall, in their honesty and forthrightness, the works of V.S. Naipaul and Nirad Chaudhuri. The title poem of The Loss, for instance, records the failure of religion, of Gandhi, of the ideals of King Ashoka and the bewilderment of the poet in the face of this collapse.

In short, the poems in this volume invite the reader to interpret them in a manner which Veronica Forrest-Thomson calls "naturalisation"; which she defines as "an attempt to reduce the strangeness of poetic language and poetic organisation by making it intelligible, by translating it into a statement about the non-verbal external world, by making the Artifice appear natural." It is interesting that Ghose's "good anecdotes and unpretentious descriptions" do not always appear in the form of direct statement. Sometimes the symbolism is so carefully woven
into the poems and so carefully maintained that the reader has
to read the poems several times before he perceives that the
symbolism creates only a translucent surface through which the
political satire can be perceived. A case in point is the eighth
stanza of "The Body's Independence" which reads as follows:

A crow shifted from his nest to a branch,
pulled his black tongue at the sun and let fall
a splotch of white into the shade. A finch
flew out. The crow laughed. An eagle, appalled
moved to another tree. A snake looked, flinched. 7
(L1, p. 11.)

In the context of the rest of the poem the reader recognises
that the stanza is not simply a straightforward description with
a symbolic undertone. The birds and the snake are in fact
symbols. The four major arbitrators during the period
immediately preceding Independence were the British, Gandhi,
Jinnah and Nehru. Once this correspondence -- the British as
eagle, Gandhi as finch, Jinnah as snake and Nehru as crow -- is
established the sharp satirical thrust of the poem becomes
clear. Here again, despite the obvious artifice of the
allegorical structure, the poem draws its strength from the
objective world rather than from within.

The impulse to define objective reality by creating a range
of image clusters is a recurrent feature in the early poems, and
on occasion one finds the density of metaphor superfluous and
distracting. The second part of "The Loss of India," for
example, which seeks to establish the self-denying nobility and
martyrdom of Gandhi does so by drawing on a range of metaphors
which is redundant and disruptive. In fact, the relatively
limpid diction of the third part of the poem makes a much greater impact on the reader.

The insistence on biographical and social material during this phase would perhaps seem old-fashioned by present day standards, but one needs to remember that the poems are still effective and moving, and the overpowering need to express the predicament of exile need not necessarily be damaging to the worth of the poems. Even in the poems which do not adopt an overtly confessional mode, but deal with personal anecdotes, such as "To my Nephew" and "Friends," the reader senses the anguish of exile and the search for identity. Such poems often recall those of Derek Walcott, the Caribbean poet who continues to write with a "message," although that hardly diminishes the superb intensity of his poems. In the presence of such poems, criticism stands to gain by taking authorial intention into account.

E.D. Hirsch points out that

a text cannot be interpreted from a perspective different from the original author's. Meaning is understood from the perspective that lends existence to meaning. Any other procedure is not interpretation but authorship.8

Also, one needs to remember that the poetic influences on Ghose during this phase favoured the writing of poetry along personal lines. During his undergraduate days at Keele, the dominant influences were the Romantics and Browning. The poems he wrote in the late 1950s and published in Universities Poetry, namely, "Words and the Poet"9 and "Elegy: Keele Park"10 are feeble attempts by the "Byron of Bombay" to imitate the
Romantics. Ghose soon outgrows this phase of sentimental outpouring and naive posturing, and in the early 1960s the influences are more eclectic. Says Ghose:

My biggest influences at that time were Robert Browning, Hopkins, T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats. As for the Movement, I was quite attracted to it at the start. Before the Movement, Dylan Thomas had been an important influence and in the year '53 when he died, he was a strong influence on many young poets, and I was no exception. Similarly, I came under the passing infatuation with Auden.¹¹

The influence of Hopkins, for instance, is apparent in "Heath Morning" which attempts to imitate sprung rhythm. Eliot appears occasionally in the unconventional metaphors, startling juxtapositions and discontinuities. "This Landscape, These People" has the phrase "swift heels trail like ploughs," which, as Ghose remarks, "is an echo of Hughes's opening image in 'The Hawk in the Rain.' "¹²

But these "modern" influences are more the exception than the rule in The Loss. The dominant influence in a general sense is that of the Movement and the Group. The author points out that "Uncle Ayub" is "the kind of family poem many people were writing in the Movement manner."¹³ Ghose was also associated with the Group and came into contact with Peter Redgrove, George MacBeth, Peter Porter and several others, whose poems too appear to have strengthened the direction of The Loss.

However, the single most important influence during the early phase is Robert Lowell, whose Life Studies was published in 1959. In the early 1960s Ghose was an avid reader of Lowell and he records, in his autobiography, the significance of the
Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* had just been published and this was often the subject of our discussion; the coincidence of this book's publication and my meeting with Anthony [Smith] was for me a liberation from poetic adolescence. Two of my poems, which were later to win the admiration of many other poets, were written during this time.1

The author does not mention the titles of the two poems, but it is a safe guess that one at least was "This Landscape, These People." However, several poems in *The Loss* reveal an indebtedness to Lowell. The personal voice, the admiration for a past generation, the mixed feelings about parents, the selective and representative anecdotes from boyhood life which appear in *The Loss* bear comparison with the poems in *Life Studies*. For instance, the lines in "Beyond the Alps,"

... I envy the conspicuous waste of grandparents on their grand tours long-haired Victorian sages accepted the universe while breezing on their trust funds through the world'5

conjure up a world of stability and permanence which Ghose himself associates with his grandparents in Sialkot. One recalls the poem "To my Ancestors," for instance, in which the grandfather, the "one image of permanence," insists that "home is where you build."

Ghose's British and American influences, combined with the author's circumstances of displacement and marginalisation, result in a writing which could be called the poetry of double
exile. Although one does not wish to labour the obvious, it is necessary to point out that thematically the poems in *The Loss* fall into two groups, one which focuses on the personal, social and political aspects of his years in India, and one with his experience of exile in England. "Sialkot," "Flat Country," and "In Calcutta," for instance, draw attention to the Indian scene, while "The Alien," "Heath Morning" and "This Landscape, These People" deal with England. "This Landscape, These People" has won critical acclaim, and the first stanza of this poem is as good an example as any of the emotional thrust of exile and the sense of uncertainty behind the "English" poems:

My eighth spring in England I walk among
the silver birches of Putney Heath,
stepping over twigs and stones: being stranger
I see but do not touch: only the earth
permits an attachment. I do not wish
to be seen, and move, eyes at my side, like a fish.
( LI, p. 19)

While the poems in *The Loss* demand a process of naturalisation, they also draw attention to their poetic techniques. Ghose is, like his friend B.S. Johnson, an extremely metrical poet, and his poetry is self-conscious in a traditional manner. From the point of view of Ghose's career as a poet, this aspect of craftsmanship is significant, for it establishes a tension in his poetry between referentiality or naturalisation and conscious artifice. Ghose himself remarks: "Ottava rima, Spenserian stanza, terza rima, dramatic monologues, sestinas, villanelles, you name it, I did the lot." In "To my Ancestors," for instance, he uses iambic pentameter with
considerable skill, sometimes varying the stress pattern, interspersing the iambic with the anapestic, increasing the feet to alexandrine, playing off rhythm against meter to capture the tone of questioning and bafflement.

He also uses a wide range of stanzaic forms, both rhymed and unrhymed. The quatrain is often used with a definite rhyme scheme and a regular stress pattern. Sometimes a series of couplets or tercets acquires intensity through a process of accumulation. In "Visibility," for instance, which has two tercets, the mated form of abc of the first stanza rhymes with the three lines of the second stanza. Each line has ten syllables except the third line of the first stanza which has an extra syllable. The basic beat is anapestic with variations for emphasis. The first two lines of each stanza have feminine endings, thereby drawing attention to the variation in the final lines. Syntactic parallels work effectively toward establishing semantic opposition. The tone of melancholy and reverie are captured through the alliteration, the feminine sounds and the large number of unstressed syllables.

This brief review of prosody highlights the dual focus the reader experiences as he reads both The Loss and the next volume, Jets from Orange. On the one hand, the anecdotal quality and the syntactic regularity of the poems lead the reader to the referent, particularly when the referent is either exotic, autobiographical or historically significant. On the other hand, the formal patterning of the poems draws attention to themselves as artifacts, compelling the reader to shut off the external world and focus on the structure of the poems. Barbara
Herrnstein Smith, in a general context, draws attention to this duality from the point of view of the poet:

The poet is not a speaker addressing a listener, but one who composes a verbal structure that represents a natural utterance. The poem may represent the poet himself addressing a dead friend or an estranged lover, but the poet, as a historical creature, is not engaged in the task of addressing them.17

If one were to apply Smith's classification to Ghose's work, Confessions would be an example of natural discourse while the early poetry would be somewhere between natural and fictive discourse. Ghose himself maintains that the autobiographical element could well have been the impulse behind creating the poems, but that need not concern the reader. Says Ghose:

A poem succeeds because of its form and the power of its language and not because its subject matter is autobiographically precise. What may have tormented a poet that he was driven to write a certain poem is none of the reader's business, for the reader is looking at language, and not at life.18

This somewhat ambiguous statement was made in 1984, twenty years after the publication of The Loss, and is hardly applicable to all his early poetry. But at his best he certainly succeeds in drawing the reader into the artifice of the poem, thereby preventing the poem from becoming a prey to bad naturalisation. In "Across India: February 1952" (LI, pp. 1-2), for instance, the autobiographical element is quickly subsumed in the structure of binary opposites which is so carefully worked into the poem that the artifice exerts a centripetal
force, thereby not only establishing autonomy but also creating its own level of meaning. A brief analysis of the structure of opposites that informs the title and the first stanza would reveal the working of artifice of this poem.

The title has two parts, separated by a colon. The first half suggests movement and travel while the second draws attention to a fixed and verifiable moment in time. In short, along with an obvious referentiality, the title asserts a particular structure of which one half is kinetic and the other half is static.

The first stanza, which consists of five lines, contains five independent sentences. Of these the three lines between the first and the fifth are basically static in that they describe certain states. The two important verbs in the whole stanza are "descend" and "scratch," which occur in the first and fifth lines respectively. The car descends "the Western Ghats" presumably in the direction of water and the beasts "scratch" the ground, presumably in search of water.

The opposition thus established gains resonance as the poem proceeds. New dichotomies are introduced, such as village and town, the donkey and the car, the speaker and the villagers, mimicry and creativity, subjectivity and objectivity, and so forth. As the contrasts build up, the reader detaches the poem from all external contexts until he recognises in the last line that the literal and the symbolic merge to invoke the dilemma of being caught between irreconcilable opposites -- in other words, the native-alien experience.

However, the self-sufficiency of the poem is a tenuous one,
for the consistent narrative thread of causality keeps prompting the reader to turn to the autobiography for a fuller description. The reader does not know, for instance, the reason why the speaker loses his voice soon after hearing the news of the death of King George VI, and the structure of the poem hardly provides the information. At this point one needs the additional information provided in Confessions that Ghose's propensity to stammer during his childhood days earned him the "imperial appellation" King George.

"Poem Towards Sanity" (L1, pp. 23-24), on the other hand, is perhaps the only poem which, by adopting an imagistic mode and deliberately flaunting obscurity and discontinuity, demands an antireferential reading and anticipates the later poems. The poem begins with a simple command: "take them away." At the semantic level this instruction would seem perfectly ordinary if one were sure what unstated context "them" refers to. Just before the end of the second stanza when the poem asks "who can take them away?" the reader is still unsure about the pronoun reference, although the movement of the poem suggests that the poet is talking about "chasms" and "silences." What the poem presents is a collage of random observations -- a pear, the fridge, a gas stove etc., which distracts the reader but also the purpose of indicating how the mind distracts itself in order to avoid chasms.

The links between mid-February cries of birds, a car trying to start on a run-down battery and water streaming from a florist's window are so wilfully discontinuous and obscure that only careful analysis would reveal that the images are all
objective correlates for the atmosphere of pessimism and bleakness. The overall effect of this poem is close to what Roger Cardinal has to say about Symbolist Poetry:

When all hint of external context is censored, the verbal artifact will float as a watertight, anchorless object, sustained purely by the relations of its component parts and impervious to external pressures.¹⁹

The notion of a verbal structure asserting its autonomy which "Poem Towards Sanity" exemplifies is important in relation not only to The Loss but also to the entire canon of Ghose's writings. Ghose's work defies easy classification, mainly because he keeps exploring new forms and modes. For the purposes of The Loss, however, suffice it to mention that while the dominant thrust appears to have been towards expressing directly and subjectively the experience of exile and native-alien sensibility, there is also a strong attempt to move away from overt referentiality.

Wilson Harris is perhaps the first critic to have attempted a study of Ghose's poetry in relation to a large theoretical model, and since his views have a bearing on the tension between realism and artifice in Ghose's writings, they need to be looked at briefly. Before focussing on Ghose's poetry, Harris makes an interesting, even authoritarian, statement about cross-cultural imagination. He says that

Indians and Pakistanis, amongst other Asians, are rooted peoples; in cultural terms; their ancestral homelands still possess greatly unchanged, caste-oriented, institutional structures, underpinned by
Having formulated this thesis in his somewhat obscure manner, he goes on to focus on Ghose's nature poetry as a *sine qua non* for understanding Ghose's poetry as a whole. In his subsequent analysis of a few poems the concern is to prove that however much the poet may wish to dissociate himself from his roots, the cultural memory succeeds in finding a niche for itself in the poems. Speaking of "An Attachment to the Sun," which is essentially an "English" poem, Harris remarks that "however insistent the plea the poem makes for the laughter of love and for exact images of celebrative design, one begins to sense a hidden chasm of memory that persists in the soil of the newly-wed place." The comment is perceptive, but what persists in the poem is not so much "a hidden chasm of memory" as a careful and deliberate structuring of duality. Harris's argument, which imposes rigid terms on the poetic imagination, becomes increasingly difficult to accept when he says in relation to "The Lost Culture" in *Jets from Orange* that "church spires, Boeings descending, are in counterpoint to levitation rituals of the ancient East."

Harris's model, which strengthens a referential reading, appears unconvincing mainly because Ghose's poetry is not merely the poetry of exile but also the poetry of native-alien experience. The distinction is crucial, although in practice the work of the exile and native-alien have much in common. The exile is a displaced or uprooted individual who, under certain
circumstances, might still return home. The native-alien, on the other hand, has no home to return to. Harris's thesis, perceptive as it is, fails to take into consideration the full implications of native-alien experience. For instance, it is not without significance that no body of mythology underpins Ghose's work. Not once does he go back to, say, *The Mahabharata* or *The Ramayana* to provide a mythological superstructure for his poems. If he speaks of a Punjabi's racial memories in a footnote to "Rendered from the Punjabi" in *Jets*, the memories hardly go beyond his childhood days. The absence of myth is of crucial importance in Ghose's poems because he creates his own system of myth, an elaborate pattern of imagery, to explore the notion of identity.

The pattern of imagery which Ghose has developed so consistently over the last two decades centers on the image of a woman as a metaphor for the land. 23 Hence it follows that a satisfying relationship with a woman reflects a sense of identity with the land. The woman is sometimes an archetypal Mother, old and unchanging, or a young and passionate lover. To love her is to love the land. Conversely, whores and scheming women come to be associated with exploitation and alienation. This core image provides through expansion a whole moral system which is totally autonomous, which provides coherence to the work, and "contains its own proof of validity." 24 For instance, in the longish and emotionally intense poem "Of Land and Love," a description of the East Anglian countryside runs as follows:

... the fields, separated
lovers, blow their common fruit over hedges as though they blew kisses: a pear falls with a smack, breaks open, two lips, parted and wet. (LI, p. 36)

The language makes the identification clear. The "lover" here is narcissistic -- "the land is its own lover." Human beings, by loving each other, acquire a similar completeness and harmony. In his words,

we, loving the land, do not contribute to its pleasures. But, loving each other we possess the land's virtues. (LI, p. 38)

This is one level at which the imagery operates. At another, in poems such as "In Calcutta," which is a bitter parody of childbirth and copulation enacted by a hysterical woman, the imagery melts into the aridity of the land and the degradation, poverty and filth all around.

It has often been commented that Ghose speaks of an enduring love for the English landscape, not only in The Loss, but also in Jets from Orange and The Violent West. This is in fact true:

There is an empathy between the trees and me in England, an air between us that's constantly beneficent. (LI, p. 22)

As against the beauty of the English landscape, the Indian scenes are hot and oppressive. Neither of these is entirely
referential. Within the corpus of Ghose's poetry, at least the poems up to *The Violent West*, the author's love and hate for landscapes must be seen both as conscious artifice as well as a means of communicating the experience of a native-alien. Although it would be repetitious to reiterate this pattern of imagery as it appears in *Jets from Orange* and *The Violent West*, one needs to be aware that since the later volumes tend to move away from subjects related to India, the "image-complex" (Veronica Forrest-Thomson) performs the function of establishing a continuity of theme through artifice. In fact, all the love poems in the first three volumes are best seen not as recreations of the love affair with a girl called Gay described in *Confessions*, but as artifacts which exploit a pattern of imagery to probe the dimensions of native-alien experience.

As against the poems in *The Loss*, Ghose does not care very much for the poems in *Jets from Orange*, and he includes only six out of a total of thirty-eight poems in this volume in *A Memory of Asia*. Ghose says that

> there's not much to be said for my second book of poems, *Jets from Orange*, which has perhaps three or four decent poems .... There's too much posturing in it, a silly desire to make important statements."

The author is reacting against his didacticism in poems such as "The Incurable Illness," "Abbaye de Sénanque" and "The Preservation of Landscapes" which lend themselves to bad naturalisation. Similarly, poems such as "Decomposition," "Madam" and "A Short History of India" tend to become either sentimental or tendentious.
Perhaps one possible reason for the weakness of this volume is that the three years which separate The Loss from Jets have not significantly altered the author's poetic sensibility. Auden appears time and again, particularly in tone, gnomic utterances and the use of traditional metrical patterns. An interesting, though far-fetched, parallel is Ghose's "cruel India" which spurs him into song the way Auden claims "mad Ireland" hurt Yeats into poetry. "Abbaye de Sénanque" clearly recalls Matthew Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse." Both poems are set in France, both describe monasteries, the isolated life of the monks and the mixed feelings they generate in the poets.

More importantly, a significant influence in Jets is Philip Larkin, who, one remembers, was a major poet of the Movement and who produced his best poems in the 1950s and 1960s -- The Less Deceived (1955) and The Whitsun Weddings (1964). Andrew Motion points out that "it is difficult to think of a living English writer who has exercised a stronger influence on his own and the next generation." And Ghose is no exception.

In 1964, in Ambit, a journal with which he was associated for a time as a regular contributor, Ghose wrote a review of Larkin's The Whitsun Weddings. The review tells one as much about Ghose as it does about Larkin. Ghose's favourable review of Larkin springs from certain assumptions about poetry which the two poets shared. Ghose draws attention to three aspects of Larkin's poetry: skillful handling of verse, tone and language. Speaking of syllabic metre, Ghose writes: "I've always maintained that it is no use writing poetry unless one can skillfully handle verse." Referring to tone, he says: "that
sudden awareness that what we're hearing is not ourselves reading the poem, but the poet's voice which somehow creates itself within us — is a quality of style, and it comes clearly through in each of Larkin's poems." Finally, he adds a comment about language: "what makes a poet appear more important than another is the quality of his language. Technique and style without an original, or at least precise language does not make good poetry. Larkin is consistently precise, and often simultaneously fresh in his use of language." 27

All these observations are interesting partly because they reveal Ghose's own notions about poetry and partly because they express an almost unqualified admiration for Larkin's poetry. Thematically, the two poets have much in common: both are concerned with the ennui of modern life, with love, parting and death, and with war and violence. Structurally, both avoid loose associations, image combinations and typographical configurations and focus on the linear and the anecdotal. Even some titles have a similarity. Larkin's "Absences" in The Less Deceived recalls Ghose's short story, "The Absences." And Larkin's "Water" and "For Sidney Becket" recall Ghose's "The Surf-rider" and "For Mother."

An interesting comparison can be drawn between Larkin's "Here" which Ghose admires for its "clear and yet strangely ambiguous language" and his own poem "The Virtues of the Earth" which was first published in The Spectator on 27 Nov. 1964 (the same year as the review) before it was collected in Jets. In the final stanza of "Here" Larkin writes:
Loneliness clarifies. Here silence stands
Like heat. Here leaves unnoticed thicken,
Hidden weeds flower, neglected waters quicken,
Luminously-peopled air ascends;
And past the poppies bluish natural distance
Ends the land suddenly beyond a beach
Of shapes and shingle. Here is unfenced existence:
Facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach.²⁸

Now the first stanza of "The Virtues of the Earth."

Here cultivation and spontaneous growth
make a naturally civilized kingdom.
Here, artists, poets and composers come
to wander curiously through both
forms of nature; untended spaces divide
the vines, wild herbs grow along the roadside.
Here is creative willingness in the earth.²⁹
(JO, p. 8)

One sees the similarity in the handling of verse, tone and
language.

Before one concludes the comparison, it is useful to point
out that Larkin, despite his control over form and language, is
still very much a referential poet. Forrest-Thomson sums up the
overall achievement of Larkin perceptively:

Mr Larkin is not a bad producer of verse; his
technique is exact if unexciting; it fulfils the
reader's expectations, leading him out towards the
world and inviting him to think of it once more. But
it does no more than that. It leaves poetry stranded
on the beach of the already-known world, to expand and
limit itself there.³⁰

This could be said of several poems that are included in Ghose's
Jets as well.

However, in terms of the overall evolution of Ghose's
career, the significance of Jets lies in the fact of (as the title suggests) a widening of scope, a greater consciousness of the contemporary scene. One observes a parallel movement in Ghose's fiction as he moves from the Kalapur of The Murder of Aziz Khan (1967) to the England and Europe of Crump's Terms (written 1968, published 1975). In "The Incurable Illness," for instance, there is a sharp sense of atrophy as industrial culture, built on technology and mass production, begins to collapse; and the death of a friend comes to include the whole of civilisation.

"The Incurable Illness," despite its emotional urgency, parades its message so ostentatiously, that it ceases to be effective. In fact at times the revisions to certain poems clearly indicate that the didactic intent appears to have been uppermost in the poet's mind. "A Short History of India," for example, has undergone an interesting revision after its first publication in The Pakistan Quarterly in 1966. The words which read "look now at the earthen-pot people,/ their sun-dried clay" are subsequently changed to "look now at the enfranchised people/ the spoiled votes of a democracy" (Jo, p. 18). The change obviously suggests a desire to give the poem a political colouring.

It is surprising that Devendra Kohli, in a critical review of Jets, should remark that the poet

... is in great need of discovering his moorings for the sake of the stability of his Muse.
The assumption here is of course that Ghose is so totally immersed in presenting the exotic and unfamiliar that he fails to deal with what concerns him most. The criticism is unfair because no fewer than ten poems in Jets deal with the familiar Indian background. In any case, he cannot "rediscover his moorings," for he has none. But in one form or another, the native-alien experience forms a sub-text in almost all the important poems, and in that sense the setting, whether it is Europe or India, is a matter of little relevance. Julian Symons comes closer to a balanced overall assessment when he says that "the debate in Zulfikar's poems is one between the sense of movement and the sense of roots - having or needing them."  

While most poems in Jets follow the precedent of The Loss in their propensity for inviting naturalisation, a few are carefully constructed artifacts which demand an antireferential reading. Here again it is useful to recall the parallel movement from the mimetic mode of The Murder of Aziz Khan to the stream-of-consciousness mode of Crump's Terms. "The Lost Culture" is one such antireferential poem which is written in couplets and which creates a complex network of imagery. It is essentially a perspective poem, and as Nancy Sullivan remarks in a general context, "the metaphor becomes an essential girder in the perspectivist structure." The dichotomies are carefully juxtaposed to prevent external referents from encroaching into the structure, and the poem employs surrealist images in a manner that is reminiscent of Eliot: "London is an empty lift-shaft in a nightmare."

"The Lost Culture" is at least partly about the process of
writing poetry: "I am an old eagle, moulting/ my music is hybrid jazz of no tradition." Two other poems -- "Poem" and "Address to Sixth Formers" -- are specifically self-reflexive, and this clearly presages a change of direction, which becomes increasingly apparent in The Violent West. The translation of the pre-verbal stage to the verbal is the subject of "Poem," a piece which recalls in its imagery and organisation Ted Hughes's "The Thought Fox." Both poems consist of six stanzas, but while Hughes uses quatrains Ghose uses triplets. There are many such differences but both poems make the basic point that a poem is as much a product of the unconscious as it is of the conscious. Such a bald summary, however, hardly does justice to the extremely subtle and dense structure of Ghose's poem. The poem is best seen in relation to Alistair Paterson's comment about self-conscious and "modern" poems:

The logic of such work is the logic of the imagination - which means it follows the normal psychological processes of perception ... and both the conscious and subconscious operations of mind, inclusive of recall, association, insight and invention.

However, when Ghose attempts to become more explicit and to articulate the purpose of poetry and its function as a moral touchstone in "Address to Sixth Formers," he is at his flattest. Not even the consideration that he is addressing sixth formers in a secondary modern school extenuates the pat phrases and the naive generalisations which run through the poem.

If there is a positive factor in "Address to Sixth Formers" it is that it establishes a continuity between Jets and The
Violent West, the first collection to appear after Ghose's arrival in Texas. The idea of poetry, the function of the poet and the relation between the poet and outer reality become the concern of "The Poet at Lake Travis," the first poem in the collection and the only one which deals explicitly with poetics. This antireferential poem is made complex by its oxymorons, its imagery and its technique of leaping from idea to idea. The six six-line stanzas have a metrical complexity and consistency that give the poem a tightness of organisation and structure. Reading this poem, one recalls Anthony Thwaite's comment about the poetry of Dylan Thomas: "the thread of prose meaning, of paraphrasable content is usually simple; what is sometimes difficult is their thickly clotted verbal texture."\[37\]

The last three lines of "The Poet at Lake Travis" make a specific reference to Berryman:

> Ask Mr Berryman why his bones ache, why few faltering rise, why only a Maker makes.\[38\]
> (VW, p. 4)

These lines refer, intertextually, to Berryman's The Dream Songs. Ghose's admiration for Berryman is a long-standing one, as is evident in his review of 77 Dream Songs which appeared in Ambit in 1965. Referring to The Dream Songs, Ghose says that the book is extraordinary because it arouses a variety of emotions through ideas and incidents which the reader only partly grasps at first; it is funny, moving, charming, adorable, and in places stunningly memorable.\[39\]
Years later, Ghose still remembers these poems. Stylistically, *The Dream Songs* share little with those of Ghose, who does not use Berryman's colloquial idiom, typographical tricks or orchestration of voices. But both poets share a deep sense of disillusionment with external reality. Berryman writes in his 27th poem:

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the glories of the world struck me, made me aria, once,
- What happen then, Mr Bones?
- I had a most marvellous piece of luck. I died.
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The style is distinctly unlike that of Ghose, but the notion that Berryman's bones ache because he is beset by a profound feeling of disillusionment connects *The Dream Songs* with *The Violent West*. Speaking of the persona, Henry, that Berryman uses, Gary Arpin points out that "Henry is a man frantically seeking harmony and stability in a perversely inharmonious and unstable world." In this sense, the speaker of the poems is not different from the "I" of Ghose's poems.

Berryman is not the only poetic influence lurking behind *The West*. The poems in this volume were written after Ghose came to Texas, and the circumstance of his having to teach British and American poetry at the University of Texas explains Ghose's growing familiarity with a wide range of poets. He points out that "a greatly varied and enormously rich poetry suddenly opened to [him] when [he] came to America." The poets he read avidly included Roethke, William Carlos Williams, Bishop, Kunitz, Francis Ponge from France, Yehuda Amichai from Israel and Vasko Popa from Yugoslavia. However, in the interview in
which he mentions these names, he also adds:

obviously the new poems I wrote were very different from those in my first two books. With a few exceptions, however, they were still not the poems I wanted to write."

As Ghose moves further away in time and space from the source of his displacement and uprooting, the need to express his predicament unambiguously appears to become more insistent. And these poems, which constitute a significant component of The West possess an urgency which, despite their referentiality and centrifugal thrust, are effective. Alan Brownjohn, in a review of The West, observes that Ghose "is best when least roving and meditative and more concerned with subjects that really move him." On the other hand, the reviewer for The Times Literary Supplement, commenting on "The Remove," which is a hilarious piece of social satire, states that "Mr Ghose has lighter gifts which he should not allow his more solemn sense of deracination to smother."

But Ghose is not predominantly a social satirist or humorist. In fact his flippant poems, such as "Professors May Expect Tyranny," are among the weakest in The West. His obsessive concern is with the quest for a "home," and the Texas landscape appears to intensify this need. The fact that the landscape of Texas reminds him of the land of his birth has perhaps some bearing on the sense of urgency that permeates The West. In the title poem the poet remarks that

it would seem that here's the best
compromise, a land of my
childhood which speaks the language of my mind here.
( VW, p. 10)

Nonetheless, Texas is not home. In that remarkable poem "A
Private Lot," the poet re-enacts legend and uses the archetypal
motif of the journey to explore his own predicament. Texan lore
speaks of a trail which ends against massed boulders. It is a
dead end, but the trail is a well used one. Opposed to the trail
are the images of a river and an endless plain which suggest
movement and unceasing quest. The two images reflect two world
views and the poet finds the prospect of building a home "he
would not want to leave" unattractive. For the native-alien
there is no home:

From this lush
land, too, I must go
towards horizons which the jet-liners cross.
( VW, p. 9)

Or, as the poet phrases it in another poem, "I feel I am still
at the window/ searching the horizon for plants" ( VW, p. 33).

The need to persist in the quest is also intensified by a
dissatisfaction with Western life, with its façade of
respectability, its pollution and its fantasies. In a telling
stanza, he speaks of being surrounded

by polystyrene insulated walls and the objets
d'art picked up in a foreign market or on some beach;
we make spring-mattressed love with its
Kleenex anti-climax, hearing the planes descend.
( VW, p. 48)
To speak of the thematics of exile in this manner would imply that The West continues the referential mode of The Loss. In fact several poems do stress the referential aspect, although the anecdotal quality of the earlier poems now gives way to a more direct and personal statement couched in the framework of quest. But there is also in several poems an extremely modern sense of artifice which increases the complexity of the reader's response. In relation to the evolution of Ghose as a poet, the poems in The West mark a phase in which the author experiments with language, draws attention to it by dislocating syntax, and compels the reader to recognize the poems as verbal artifacts. One remembers that during this period Ghose was also writing his metafictional novel, Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script. Almost all the poems in the first section of The West, "Westward Flight" -- are deliberately obscure, the movement of the lines is often slowed down and the thread of meaning becomes increasingly difficult to follow. Metaphors are often used not for their referential value but for their centripetal roles in the context of the poems. Invariably such poems have little paraphrasable content, but the suggestions they generate acquire a disturbing power and intensity.

Take, for example, the first stanza of "The Pursuit of Frost:"

Wandering again, come
to this shore, observing the severe
disenchantment of water which remains
anonymous and clear:
cleanse what stains
here and trumpet which purity a welcome
through arches of the mind?
(VW, p. 5)

The end-rhymes, which seem conventional enough, hardly help the reader to piece together the highly idiosyncratic and dislocated syntax. Although each stanza creates the illusion of flowing into the next, there is hardly any narrative thread or continuity at the level of theme. It is basically a collage poem which invites the reader to share the responsibility of creating meaning. Speaking about contemporary poetry, Paterson makes a remark that adequately describes this poem: "the poet's constant and realistic awareness that the poem can never be complete without the creative contribution that comes from the reader."  

An equally striking example of this kind of poetry is the poem "The Butterfly" (VW, p. 15), whose five stanzas constitute one long sentence. The appeal is both visual and auditory, and the poem eventually takes the intellectually active reader into a series of dichotomies and areas of speculation regarding possession and perfection.

It is an important detail that at the time Ghose published The West he was also writing his trilogy, The Incredible Brazilian. The fact that the last poem in The West is entitled "For the Liberation of Brazil" not only draws attention to simultaneity but also suggests deeper affinities between the two works. Both works are referential and antireferential at the same time. The Brazilian trilogy ostensibly moves on a vertical axis but invites the reader to respond to the horizontal axis. The West explores familiar themes using traditional metrical and stanzaic patterns, but continually compels the reader to focus.
on the artifice.

If The West belongs to the phase of the trilogy, A Memory of Asia parallels the phase of A New History of Torments and Don Bueno. Like the fictional works, the poems in this volume are deceptively simple, but the reader soon discovers that the simplicity masks intricate and complex structures. There is very little that is daunting or what one would be immediately inclined to call "postmodern" in A Memory. Ghose does not write concrete poetry; neither does he use language in a highly eccentric manner. And yet the poems can only be classified as contemporary, or to use a current term, "open poetry."

Talking about recent trends in his poetry, Ghose says:

I write when I have nothing to say but have a desire to write a poem, a pressure of form within my mind, so that I look for images through which the form might emerge."

These remarks, like his recent poetry, have a double-edged quality. The negation of content is absurd, for, as Jonathan Holden points out, "contemporary poetry still strives to marry form and content." And certainly Ghose's poetry has a significant experiential component within it. But Ghose is right in that the desire to convey a message is not paramount in his recent poetry. Instead, there is a preoccupation with form, with different modes of perception, and a curiosity to see what would happen when a particular order of experience is enshrined in a mode. Hence it follows that the poems are open and inventive, though not ostentatiously so, and that they "flaunt their artifice" in order to enable the reader to respond to them as
verbal artifacts. Poems such as "A Dragonfly in the Sun" often seem traditional in their concern with description. However, as the reader recognizes the almost photographic exactitude with which the images are evoked, and the careful placing of internal rhymes, the centripetal movement of the poems becomes evident. As in magic realistic painting, the visual precision distorts the referentiality and draws the reader into the construct. In this sense the poems in *A Memory* are postmodern. They delight in their freedom from the burden of subject matter, in their sense of play. The sequence of the titles -- "Notes Towards a Nature Poem," "E.g.," "I.e," and "Among Other Things" -- are as good an example as any of the exuberance and distinctiveness of this phase.

A corollary to the notion of not wanting to parade a message is the questioning of objective reality itself. "The Enormous Hamburger" is perhaps the only poem which, in lines such as "A dying planet transmits/ capsules of sperm into space" (M, p. 33) remind the reader of the author's technique of using metaphor to lead the reader to naturalise the poem. For the most part, the poems deflect the reader's attention from external reality. A case in point is "A Young Girl Diving" which, in its title, deliberately recalls "The Surf-rider" in *Jets*. However, the significant difference between the two poems is that while "The Surf-rider" focusses on the individual "A Young Girl Diving" describes, not the diver, but the water. And water is important not as phenomenon but as a symbol of memory and the poetic process. This poem remains a clear example of the deceptive simplicity of this phase of poetry. What appears
almost cinematic in its concreteness has little concern with perception at all. That the poem takes an everyday occurrence and gives it an unexpected twist to subvert its referentiality is characteristic of Ghose's recent poetry.

Further, several poems in this volume proceed to question specifically the concept of reality itself. The title poem of the volume, "A Memory of Asia" begins with a description of "pot-bellied Ganapati" in a manner which prepares the reader for yet another poem of nostalgia and sentiment. But no sooner does the poet describe in sharply visual terms Ganapati surrounded by "Mangoes, papayas and jackfruit" than he declares:

But this is a revision: I've put some of these phrases together before ... Ganapati caught in the swirling mist of incense smoke like a hilltop in scattered fog, the fruit at his feet bananas and oranges ... so that what one composes as a definitive statement is only a memory of a memory

(M, p. 3)

Here the poet admits to a perspective position, thereby subverting the reader's expectations of nostalgic memory. Either the poet is experiencing multiple visions -- "one thing/ or another is changing position" -- or it could be that what the mind affirms as the truth might be nothing more than "a line from/ someone's poem."

In short, what passes as reality could well be an act of the imagination. Several poems in this volume draw attention to the power of the imagination to provide a gateway to reality. Dudek remarks:
Imagination has always been far more important that any exact or true perception of reality. The organism gains little from seeing things as they are, it gains a great deal from imagining something - as a new source of satisfaction.\(^9\)

The poem "Nasturtium Seeds," for example, is entirely constructed out of the opposition between the actual dwarfed flowers and the gaudy picture illustrated on the glossy packet of seeds. And in "The Oceans" the poet admits:

> one entertains the certainty of a world that's undeniably not there but insists upon existing in exhilarating detail, and indeed lives in the mind as imagery more credible than the clouds and the chickenhawks above the skyline.

(M, p. 30)

The primacy of the imagination in relation to the objective world leads, at one level, to the notion of a self-sufficient artifact; at another, it leads to the status of language which mediates between the imagination and the poem. In the first two volumes, for instance, language is used with considerable sensitivity, but since their objective is to present a certain order of experience, hardly ever does the language become the subject of the poems. And since this recent phase questions the idea of reality, and the relation between art and the objective world, the status of language becomes an important consideration.

Paterson observes that "one respect in which a poet can be completely "new" is in the way in which he exploits the language of contemporary society, and modifies it to suit the needs of
whatever work is at hand."\textsuperscript{50} Ghose certainly uses language with a colloquial vigor, as in poems like "Long Live the Weeds, Etc," and "Owning Property in the U.S.A." But beyond this, there is also the consciousness that "the felicitous epithet or the inspired metaphor/ is of no help." Language, the poet discovers, does not depict reality; it creates its own reality in a manner by which it can even run counter to traditional beliefs. As "A Memory of Asia" puts it,

\begin{quote}
so much is nouns and adjectives in pretty sentences even the hummingbird at the bougainvillea flower is made beautiful by grammar when its appearance is caught by words. \\
(\textit{M}, p. 4)
\end{quote}

The concern with the power and failure of language and with art in relation to reality are all aspects of the antireferentiality of this phase. In addition, poems like "Flying over the Extinct Volcanoes" possess what Paterson would call "openness of structure." They are "episodic and discontinuous" poems which are deliberately obscure and self-conscious.

The desire to eschew meaning or "message" altogether is a temptation for the poet. And this temptation becomes the subject of "The Mockingbird." In a world in which reality is elusive and communication often a failure, the desire to praise the mimicry of the mockingbird is strong:

\begin{quote}
he sings but with no insistence on meaning: his is a beautifully arrogant irresponsibility. \\
(\textit{M}, p. 16)
\end{quote}
However, the placing of the last word indicates that, attractive as the prospect may seem, the poet is committed to the world of experience. In the midst of all the flaunting of artifice, the experiential component remains a significant preoccupation for the poet. In Ghose's case, the experience is that of the native-alien. In *A Memory* the quest for "home" is not resolved by creating in the mind a sentimental model of what the poet has lost. In fact when the poet indulges in the fantasy of a "return" in the poem "In Praise of Hot Weather," the careful use of cliché -- "I long to be where I can be lazy, lying/ in a hammock, listening to a distant flute" -- negates the fantasy as untenable. In its place the imaginative conception of home is invoked through the metaphor of paradise. In Ghose's recent fiction, characters artificially create a paradise for themselves. In the poetry there is "the illusions of a permanent paradise." In three different poems in *A Memory* the poet alludes to the image of paradise, which, in the context of the native-alien experience, acquires a density of meaning.

It is of considerable significance that in a poem like "A Memory of Asia," which is almost entirely concerned with the demolition of nostalgia and sentiment, the poem ends by stating that the memory of the temple, however false or fictitious, continues to remain an obsessive presence. It is this presence that provides a thematic unity to the entire corpus of Ghose's poetry. But perspectives have changed with time and no longer can the author resolve his quest by re-creating the past through a realistic evocation of "home." Models, based on external reality, frustrate the quest by their inadequacy, and compel the
author to seek perfection and harmony through autonomous, fictional constructs. But the urgency of the quest remains as insistent as ever. In three memorable lines in "The Oceans," the author sums up his quest:

I want to see again what I have seen to confirm former convictions and to know that a certain vision is a continuing truth. (M, p. 29)

These lines bring together the memory of a harmonious past and the present search for a vision that would resolve the dilemma of native-alien experience.

Ghose's success in creating a body of poetry which consistently thwarts naturalisation but nevertheless expresses the complexity of double exile is perhaps his most recent achievement. Whether this eclipses the worth of the earlier poetry of direct and subjective statement is a matter of individual preference. What is undoubtedly important, however, is that the total corpus reveals an evolving continuum, which not only provides an interesting dynamic for the reader but also creates a paradigm for the study of Ghose's fiction.
Notes

1 (Austin: Curbstone, 1984). All references are to this edition, and page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated M.


3 23 April 1965, p. 327.


7 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964). All references are to this edition, and page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated LI.

8 The Aims of Interpretation (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 49.


11 Personal interview with Zulfikar Ghose, 14 August 1984.

12 Personal interview.

13 Personal interview.


15 Life Studies (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Gudahy,
This metaphor, admittedly, has its roots in pastoral literature. Annette Kolodny, who makes a study of the metaphor of "land-as-woman" in American literature, points out that one of America's "oldest and most cherished fantasies" is that of a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine — that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification — enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction. (p. 4)

Kolodny's study, however, is psychohistorical in that the metaphor combines psychological yearning with "the inherently feminine reality of the vast American landscape" (p. 150). For Ghose, the symbol of "land-as-woman" might have its roots in childhood memories of Sialkot, but for the most part he uses this metaphor to create a private body of mythology to structure his writings. For Kolodny's study see The Lay of the Land.


25 Personal interview.


29 (London: Macmillan, 1967). All references are to this edition, and page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated *JO*.

30 Forrest-Thomson, p. 59.

31 *Pakistan Quarterly*, 14 (Winter 1966), 11.


38 (London: Macmillan, 1972). All references are to this edition, and page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated VW.

39 Ambit, No. 23 (1965), p. 45.


42 Personal interview.


44 28 July 1972, p. 873.

45 Paterson, p. 29.

46 Personal interview.


48 Patricia Merivale, who originated this phrase, uses it to define certain self-reflexivities in the writings of Nabokov and Borges. See "The Flaunting of Artifice in Vladimir Nabokov and Jorge Luis Borges" in Nabokov: The Man and His Work, ed. L.S. Dembo (Madison, Milwaukee: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 209-24. I have used this phrase in all the chapters to denote writing that draws attention to itself by laying bare its devices.

49 Duđek, p. 21.
50 Paterson, p. 36.
Chapter 2

Imagined Realities: The Early Phase

Zulfikar Ghose made his debut in fiction with a collection of short stories in 1964, provocatively titled *Statement Against Corpses* and written together with B.S. Johnson. Two years later he wrote his first novel, *The Contradictions*, and followed it in the next year with *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. These three works, which belong to the first phase of his fiction, have several things in common: first, they belong to or invite comparison with two closely-related literary traditions -- the Anglo-Indian and the Indo-Anglian. Secondly, they are linked with the author's personal experiences, with the conditions which uprooted and exiled him, and with social and political trends in British India, India and Pakistan. Thirdly, they employ the realistic mode which is, as David Lodge defines it, "the representation of experience in a manner which approximates closely to descriptions of similar experience in nonliterary texts of the same culture."¹

The objectives of this chapter are to place these works against a backdrop of literary tradition, to explore the narrative mode they use in relation to their thematic concerns, and to analyse the author's struggles to exploit internal structure and the possibilities of language to provide for himself and the reader a vantage point which accommodates and builds on historical material but recognizes the limitations of the referential mode. A major characteristic of this phase is the quality of tension which arises out of the author's
struggles to match form with content. The realistic mode, which is perhaps as inevitable as it is necessary in the early writings, does not always suffice for everything the author wishes to communicate. Yet the realistic phase is not without significance, and several of the techniques he uses to good effect in this phase he takes with him as he moves into the next. The fetters he encounters he breaks in order to explore new directions. This chapter, then, will not only assess the achievement of his collection of short stories and his first two novels, but also try to formulate a rationale for his subsequent change in narrative mode and content.

While the common features which unite the early novels and short stories justify their inclusion in the same chapter, their obvious differences in genre make it both convenient and useful to treat them separately. The novel, with its "myriad ... characters moving through the same general environment and events,"² provides the reader with a latitude not easily available to the short story. On the other hand, the need for brevity and concentration creates possibilities for the short story not easily available to the more discursive novel. Also, the novels are more substantial in their achievement and they form a part of a larger corpus of novelistic writing. The short stories, both the ones discussed in this chapter and the ones I shall have occasion to refer to in chapter 5, are significant mainly because they parallel certain tendencies in the novels. Ghose has been least productive in the short story form, and although he has written some complex and perceptive stories, on the whole he has been more concerned with the novel and with
poetry than with short fiction. In order to preserve a certain consistency in the overall approach, the study of *Statement Against Corpses* will form a sub-section of this chapter.

*Statement Against Corpses* and *The Contradictions* recall the Anglo-Indian tradition while *The Murder of Aziz Khan* belongs to the Indo-Anglian tradition. Claiming kinship with these traditions in this manner is as hazardous as it is useful. The Anglo-Indian novel, according to Bhupal Singh, "includes any novel dealing with India which is written in English." Recognizing the need for greater specificity, he adds that "strictly speaking it means fiction mainly describing the life of Englishmen in India." Of course, one remembers that Singh was writing his seminal work in the 1930s when Indo-Anglian writing was still in its infancy. Today, after several hundred Indo-Anglian novels have been published, Singh's definition would hardly suffice. Anglo-Indian writing now refers specifically to the works of Englishmen writing about India or in an Indian context. In fact, one important rationale among critics for calling this species of writing Anglo-Indian is to carefully distinguish it from Indo-Anglian writing, which refers to works written by Indians in English. Ghose is neither British nor even Eurasian by birth. He is neither Anglo-Indian nor Indo-Anglian. He calls himself Indo-Pakistani, which is more an expression of a dilemma than an identity. The ambiguity of Indo-Pakistani writing places his work on the fringes of Indo-Anglian writing, although Indian literary historians hardly mention him. Also, as a British citizen and an American immigrant he has, perhaps, an equal right to be part of the British or American
tradition. The niceties of definition are problematic and need not detain us here, although one suspects that the difficulties in "placing" Ghose are at least partly responsible for his literary obscurity. However, my present concern with the two literary traditions lies primarily in relation to subject matter, and not with definitions based on nationality. As Ghose himself points out in a letter, "one's nationality -- as with writers like Conrad and Nabokov -- is really an irrelevance."

Anglo-Indian writing is an extensive field, in quantity if not in quality, stretching over a period of more than 150 years, beginning with writers such as Meadows Taylor in the early part of the nineteenth century through Kipling, Forster and Paul Scott in the twentieth century. A comprehensive survey of the period is beyond the scope of this chapter, and the unfamiliar reader may find Bhupal Singh's *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction* a useful introduction. Singh perceives at least three important phases in Anglo-Indian writing, with the emphasis falling on historical romances, satires and realistic works. The phases are familiar enough in the context of Commonwealth writing, but what needs to be stressed here is that certain common themes keep appearing in all of Anglo-Indian writing, regardless of the phase. Singh draws attention to the notion of exile, the concern with rank, cultural conflict, love and marriage, contempt for the natives, snobbery, the failure to sustain human relationships, the plight of English women in India, nostalgia and the spiritualism of India. Any representative work, say, Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) or Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* (1966) would deal with several of these themes. The
common motifs bind together a corpus of writing which, apart from a few notable exceptions, "show[s] little sense of style, [is] poor in characterisation and plot construction, and occasionally suffer[s] from a propagandist tendency." One of my concerns in dealing with *The Contradictions* will be to see whether it follows the line of stereotypical Anglo-Indian writing or whether the author uses the basic conventions of this body of writing for his own purposes.

Indo-Anglian writing is even more difficult to generalise about, despite its relatively short history. Several literary histories, of varying merit, have appeared in recent times, of which Syd Harrex's *The Fire in the Offering: The English-Language Novel of India* and Meenakshi Mukherjee's *The Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English* are perhaps the most perceptive. Mukherjee discerns at least three important stages in the evolution of Indian fiction, namely, "historical romance, social or political realism and psychological novels showing an introspective concern with the individual." These phases often overlap, and Indo-Anglian novels, too, contain several themes in common: peasant life, political conflict, the fragmentation of the nuclear family under social and economic pressures, the displacement of rural folk by industrial expansion, the conflict between Muslims and Hindus, the exile, the native-alien experience, cultural conflict, religious faith and renunciation.

The concern with themes and social documentary looms large in the Indo-Anglian novel, despite the fact that several major writers, such as Desani and Rushdie, have concerned themselves
with narrative mode, form and language. The rich fund of Indian material continues to interest the western audience and the Indian novelist writing with a foreign market in mind often succumbs to the temptation of crowding his novels with abundant historical and sociological material at the expense of artistic achievement. The Murder of Aziz Khan, in its concern with rural displacement and the conflict between agriculture and industry, belongs to a long line of similar novels, the earliest of which is K.S. Venkataramani's Murugan the Tiller (1927); a more recent example is Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve (1955). Whether Ghose's novel is a post-Markandaya work in its meticulous representation of external reality is an important consideration which needs to be explored.

At the time Ghose wrote his two novels, he had read very little Anglo-Indian or Indo-Anglian writing. He had read a little of Mulk Raj Anand and Narayan, but hardly any other Indian writer. He had read Forster, whose influence is evident enough in The Contradictions and "The Zoo People," but one often encounters Forster in the context of the English novelistic tradition rather than the Anglo-Indian. And, in any case, as Mukherjee points out, "since A Passage to India, no novelist writing in English, Indian or British, has been able to evade the shadow of Forster." While Apart from Forster, Ghose knew very little of Anglo-Indian writing, and when he wrote his first two novels his intention was not to align himself with these traditions.

In fact, the genesis of the first two novels was almost accidental, and the circumstances in which they came to be
written have a bearing on some aspects of this phase. Speaking of the early 1960s, Ghose says:

During these years, 1961 to 1966, ... I read an enormous number of new novels, and most of them were abominably bad. The moment had to come when I thought, Good God, how can anyone publish this kind of trash? And naturally the next idea is that you can do it better, and before you know it you are sitting down and writing a novel. In those circumstances, and at that age, one is possessed by the anxiety to impress the world with one's brilliance. And so I concocted the novel called The Contradictions.11

Thus The Contradictions came to be written in the context of the large number of mediocre books which came out in England in the early 1960s, and which Ghose read as part of his duties as chief reviewer for the arts page of The Western Daily Press. The irony is that Ghose, whose primary concern was with poetry at this time, had little experience with fiction himself. He had not read Sterne, Balzac, Flaubert, Joyce or Beckett at this time. The postmodern writing of the 1960s in America was largely unknown to him, although he had read the British novelist B.S. Johnson, who had already published Travelling People (1963) and Albert Angelo (1964), and was fairly well known in literary circles as an avantgarde writer. Apart from Johnson, Ghose's familiarity was with nineteenth-century British authors, particularly George Eliot and Hardy, and a few twentieth-century writers, such as Faulkner.

Although Macmillan accepted The Contradictions, the critical response was far from favourable. Stephen Wall says that "the lugubrious narrative tone of Zulfikar Ghose's first novel is not helped by his constant mulling-over of
abstractions."¹² Robert Taubman says that the philosophy undermines the work,¹³ and Venetia Pollock, who praises the tidiness of the work, deplores its lack of warmth.¹⁴ Ghose himself was unhappy with the novel and he "resolved to make amends by writing a solid, straightforward novel, [namely], ... The Murder of Aziz Khan."¹⁵ It met with better response, and at least one reviewer comments that it is written "in the best manner of an English nineteenth-century novel."¹⁶

The Murder of Aziz Khan lacks the thin experimental veneer of The Contradictions, but both novels in fact possess plot structures which resemble traditional realistic novels. The Contradictions deals with Christopher, a senior officer in the Indian Civil Service in pre-Independence India, who is confronted with an incompatible marriage and an administrative machinery that is determined to make a scapegoat of him. The novel records a series of harrowing incidents which leads to Christopher's resignation and return to England where, after a brief but successful business career, he dies. Sylvia, his wife, is very much like Dorothea in Middlemarch, idealistic and totally unconcerned with material aspirations. She is in fact the true focus of the novel, and it is through her that the dominant themes of the novel are explored. The Murder of Aziz Khan is Hardyesque in its concern with the disintegration of a feudal order, and the protagonist Aziz Khan is a Pakistani version of Henchard in The Mayor of Casterbridge.¹⁷ Although Ghose's ruthless determinism does not accommodate Hardy's evolutionary meliorism, both writers share the pathos of the collapse of the old order. The novel describes the futile but
determined efforts of Aziz Khan and his children to resist the forces of industrialization which threaten to engulf their farm, and their final defeat at the hands of the Shah brothers.

More than plot or characterization, Ghose's debt to the nineteenth-century novel lies in the choice of realism as the narrative mode. Both novels are basically mimetic, a fact which is understandable in the light of the author's major literary influences at that time. The narrative mode, combined with the subject matter, inevitably link the novels to the Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian traditions.

Realism lends itself to a kind of writing which Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian writers have often found adequate for their purpose. In fact, early Indian writers invariably took Victorian authors as their models, and even today mimetic writing continues to be the dominant mode in Indian fiction. The average Indian writer's penchant for recording in detail sociological material and for creating works which depend largely on their referentiality finds in realism a useful medium. Ghose remarks in conversation that his main focus was not British India in *The Contradictions*. Referring to *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, he says that the main intention was not to show how bad things were in Pakistan. The objective, which is not primarily sociological, is in a sense embodied in a narrative mode which is ideally suited for the portrayal of external reality. The dual focus leads to inventiveness, and also to a degree of uncertainty and unevenness. A sense of duality often characterises these works. On the one hand, the mode conveys a certain order of experience. On the other, the author's attempts
to exploit the possibilities inherent in the medium enlarge the dimensions of the novel. When the techniques fail to meld with the form, the movement of the novel begins to sag.

The struggle with referentiality is more apparent in *The Contradictions* than it is in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, but both novels contain moments when the conflict is clear. Conscious of opposing impulses in *The Contradictions*, Ghose creates a novelist-surrogate in Harding whose profession as a writer is of no real significance except that it provides the author with an opportunity to expatiate on his own views about the novel. The opportunity arises in a conversation with Christopher and Sylvia, where Harding talks about his novelistic aims:

> I could write a novel about India, meticulously and cruelly depicting its poverty; or bringing out the injustices of the British rule; or the silly superfluity which is the life of the British society there .... If I wrote about poverty, people would call me Dickensian. Or they would compare me to Jane Austen if I turned out soft ironies about the British society there. But listen, I'm not Dickens or Austen or anybody. I'm Harding and we're in the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁹ (C, p. 142)

Of course, this disclaimer has only a partial validity for *The Contradictions*. The lines seem more like a manifesto for Ghose's later works than for his first novel. In any case, Harding is talking about his own novel, although the correspondence between the two is evident. Ghose does not wish to be imitative, and he does not want to concern himself entirely with British India, but the narrative mode demands that the novel be written and read in a manner which recognizes the significance of historical
reality.

The Murder of Aziz Khan is much more traditional in its causality and sequential pattern, but in this novel, too, one encounters episodes which run counter to the dominant mode of the novel. A case in point is the sexual union between Afaq and Razia towards which the entire section set in England moves. It is a climactic point, one which has several implications within the structure of the novel. Yet the one-page description draws no attention to them, or even to the lust which underlies the action. The effect is almost incongruous in the light of the rest of the novel and the reader's own expectations. No names are mentioned, the narrator eschews all subjective words, and he gives us almost a clinical description of the union. The point of view is that of Afaq, but all emotional undertones are carefully avoided. Coming as it does from the consciousness of a character as sensitive as Afaq, the effect is all the more striking. The bold letters, the brief sentences, and the repetition of certain details such as the fingernails clearly alert the reader to the style. Like the coda in A Different World (1978), the passage seems to exist outside the plot, outside time and space, totally dependent on the density of its style. In his later writings, Ghose strives towards this autonomy and objectivity. Here the passage remains an experiment, a sign which points to the hidden layers of meaning in the novel.

The attempt to foreground style is familiar enough in the author's recent fiction. However, in Ghose's early novels it remains a hint, a promise which the author never fully realises.
The main thrust of this phase is representational, and the success the author achieves relies heavily on the structures he creates within the mimetic mode. Since the narrative mode becomes a central concern in the ensuing pages, a survey of the conventions of nineteenth-century realism which he employs and their function in the novels will be useful.

Erich Auerbach, in his classic study of the practice of realism in European literature, *Mimesis*, begins with Homeric and Old Testament texts and proceeds to chart the different faces of realism as they appear in different times. The work not only illuminates the areas it touches, but also demonstrates by its comprehensiveness the difficulties in attempting to formulate a Realist aesthetic for a single period. Realism as a self-conscious movement reached its apotheosis in the nineteenth century, but discussions about its tenets and conventions are as controversial today as they were then. I do not propose to address myself to the problems associated with the labyrinthine field of Realist aesthetics. Instead, I shall draw heavily, though not exclusively, on the broad definitions suggested by D.A. Williams in his admirable essay, "The Practice of Realism" in *The Monster in the Mirror: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Realism*, and use them as a means of exploring the narrative mode of Ghose's early writings.

Both *The Contradictions* and *The Murder of Aziz Khan* deal with contexts not totally alien to Ghose, although it is unlikely that he had first-hand knowledge of either Anglo-Indian society or Pakistani peasant life. However, he was twelve when India gained Independence, and the last days of British rule are
not unfamiliar to him. As a boy, he knew the Punjab landscape intimately, and he renewed his memories when he visited India in 1962 to cover the M.C.C. tour of India and Pakistan for *The Observer*. According to Ghose, the impulse to write *The Murder of Aziz Khan* came from a newspaper report which described the eviction of a landlord to make way for an industry. The novels, then, are imaginary creations which grow out of verifiable contexts. They are, to borrow a phrase from Calvin Bedient, "imagined realities." But they both avoid the strictly contemporary and go back a few decades, one to the late 1940s and the other to the late 1950s, a practice not uncommon among nineteenth-century novelists. Williams, who refers to this device in Verga, Turgenev and George Eliot, says that this existence of a temporal gap allows the distinction between now and then, hoc tempus and illud tempus to be underlined, the past to be objectified and the understanding between narrator and the reader who look back on it to be strengthened.

The choice of the 1950s in *The Murder of Aziz Khan* certainly helps the reader to see the present conditions as a logical culmination of the past, while in *The Contradictions* the movement to the 1940s gives the author a certain latitude in his portrayal of actual social and political conditions.

Avoidance of the strictly contemporary in no way diminishes the strongly felt sense of external reality which permeates both novels. The author evokes the landscape as precisely as he portrays the characters, their complex relations and the structure of society. Historical events are treated
perfunctorily, not only because, as Williams points out, "too much historical material ... can be an embarrassment," but also because Ghose's concern is with the individual, his ethical and cultural values and his search for a satisfying conception of reality. Having set his first novel in British India, he could hardly avoid political strife, but he treats it the way George Eliot treats the Reform Bill in Middlemarch rather than the way Scott depicts historical material in, say, The Heart of Midlothian. Individual characters are sometimes affected by historical events, but they are not participants; at least not within the context of the novels. Occasional remarks, brief descriptions and inconsequential anecdotes remind the reader of the political reality in the background. The brief description of the jingoistic rhetoric of a political agitator in The Contradictions brings home the political strife of a whole country. The communal riots between the Hindus and the Muslims, which explain the wealth of the new rich in The Murder of Aziz Khan, emerges, not through the plot, but in the narrator's occasional remarks or in brief pieces of dialogue.

Although the author treats historical material perfunctorily, he pays great attention to social structure, to the social milieu which gives flesh and meaning to the focal characters. In The Contradictions, we see the rulers, the ruled, the petty rivalry among the British, the poverty of the Indians, the slum areas, the arid landscapes, the commercial towns, the rhythm of Indian life, and the gap which separates the Indians from the British. In The Murder of Aziz Khan, we see the changing economy, the emergence of the new classes, the
ideological struggles between the industrialists and the workers, the corruption of the bureaucracy, the collapse of traditional values and the failure of religion. What emerges from both novels is, to quote Williams, "an understanding of the social and economic relationships which obtain at a particular juncture, together with an awareness of the main ideological differences separating generations and classes."²⁶

Each writer has his own way of coping with the mass of social and cultural material available to him as he begins to create his fictional world. Often the scope of the work is a determining factor. The Contradictions is smaller in scope than The Murder of Aziz Khan, which Ghose describes as a "solid" work. Granted that the "realism of modern times cannot represent man other than as embedded in a total reality,"²⁷ the author still has to be selective if the focus of the work is not to be lost in a mass of extraneous material. "The fictional world," says Williams, "cannot possibly capture or cover the whole reality but, skillfully designed and carefully structured, it can provide a paradigm of the conditions and circumstances ... which ... prevail in the 'real world.'"²⁸ In order to create a compromise between referentiality and the objectives of the novel, Ghose creates, among other things, a range of characters who are more types than individuals, and whose actions often reflect the representative rather than the unique. In The Contradictions, the Wickhams, the Prewetts, the Forsters and even Karim, the Indian servant, hardly possess qualities which distinguish them as sharply defined individuals. In The Murder of Aziz Khan, the foreman, the shopkeeper, the broker, the
District Commissioner and the Police Chief are quite clearly the typical products of the new economic structure. Their codes of behaviour, their values, their system of hierarchy and their ambitions reflect the dominant social structure.

Sometimes the writer creates a paradigm of a different kind by presenting an episode which the rhythm of the novel generates or which the randomness of everyday life permits. Either way it acquires a suggestive power which sheds light on the work, a process William Stowe calls "miniaturisation." A case in point is the Bakshi episode in The Murder of Aziz Khan, which occurs for no particular reason, and has no ostensible link with the immediate concern, namely, Faridah's shopping in Ferozekhan's textile shop. The narrator includes this description quite unexpectedly:

A little way down the street, outside a grocery, a small, dwarf-like man was being thrown about and kicked by a crowd which seemed highly entertained by the exercise. Punjabi obscenities accompanied each blow. Faridah did not care to look; nor hear. She decided she liked the colour and returned to the shop, paying no attention to the sufferings of the dwarf called Bakshi.
(MA, p. 104)

At one level the juxtaposition affirms the insensitivity of Faridah. At another the episode also reiterates the sadism of a whole community, its inhumanity and its intolerance. Bakshi, we later discover, is a harmless idiot. This incident also draws attention, analogically, to the plight of the Aziz Khan family who are victims not merely of the Shah brothers but of the whole society.
In the process of depicting a social structure in detail, the realist writer also draws on an ontological framework which underpins the novel. Writers do not often concur in the presentation of weltanschauung, and the ontological basis of Middlemarch can hardly be said to accord with that of Madame Bovary. Nevertheless, as Lukács points out in his discussion of nineteenth-century literature, "realistic literature, however violent in its criticism of reality, has always assumed the unity of the world described and seen it as a living whole inseparable from man himself."\(^3\) The world Ghose describes in The Murder of Aziz Khan is by the end neither fixed nor stable, but at least at the beginning it demonstrates a completeness, the memory of which remains throughout the novel. Aziz Khan's family, his household beasts, the land which surrounds him and the contentment which prevails are almost idyllic. The "sufficiency of existence" comes across in a beautiful metaphor of the land and the sky as a complete, harmonious cocoon within which man finds his peace:

> Yet, what seemed most satisfactory to Aziz Khan was the horizon, the sky touching the sprouting sugarcane stems, was a definite existence on his own land, that it was a dome which enclosed him and all that belonged to him. (\textit{MA}, p. 16)

Although Aziz Khan "had never observed the world as a separate existence from himself" (p. 221), the harmony of man, animal and nature cannot survive, any more that the magic circle of Middlemarch can survive. None of the major Realist writers portrays a world which is not torn asunder by divisive forces.
In fact, Auerbach argues that the *raison d'etre* of Realism is the disruption caused by the collision between the old and the new. He says that in *Madame Bovary* Flaubert sees the "coming crises with great clarity." Lukács says that the critical realist "analyses the contradictions in the disintegrating old order and the emerging new order." In *The Contradictions*, the rhythm of Indian life, its fecundity, its cycle of birth, love and death, represents the old order which the British, enmeshed in their rivalries and ambitions, can neither comprehend nor accept. In *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, Aziz Khan who, like Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, belongs to a feudal agricultural world, represents the old order whose slow efficiency is no match for the mechanisation and industrial expansion of the Shah brothers. The pathos of the declining order becomes one of the central concerns of the author. The theme is familiar enough for one who has read Hardy; the difference, however, is that the novels of Hardy carry a faint hope of evolutionary meliorism while Ghose's novel ends with little hope of renewal.

The deep pessimism of *The Murder of Aziz Khan* has considerable significance in relation to the author's personal predicament of displacement and his inability to create in representational terms a model that would compensate for what he lost in real life. Seen against the backdrop of a quest for identity it seems hardly surprising that the realist model, when it is created with fidelity, presents an altogether gloomy picture.

Evidently, in *The Contradictions* and *The Murder of Aziz Khan* there is very little doubt about the subjective stance of
the author. Yet the author is aware that the moment a
tendentious note begins to creep in the illusion which encloses
the reader disappears. The author creates a world in all its
complexity, underpins the world with an ontological framework,
presents the basic terms of opposition, but remains in the
background, letting the world he creates survive on the strength
of its referentiality. Alain Robbe-Grillet, in a general
context, sums up the effect of this practice when he says that

a tacit convention is established between the reader
and the author; the latter will pretend to believe in
what he is telling, the former will forget that
everything is invented and will pretend to be dealing
with a document, a biography, a real life.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus the suspension of disbelief becomes crucial to a realistic
work, which leads to one of the most significant conventions of
realism: impersonality. Particularly in third-person narrative,
as Wayne Booth reminds us, the author can choose to remain
detached but he cannot disappear completely. Not even Flaubert,
who among nineteenth-century novelists concerns himself most
with authorial detachment, succeeds in detaching himself
completely. The dramatic mode provides for objectivity, but
hardly any work survives entirely on the strength of its
dialogue. George Eliot, for instance, permits direct authorial
intrusion at important moments and still preserves a great
degree of objectivity. Williams rightly refers to the narrator
in Middlemarch as "an ideal blend of objectivity and subjectivity
beyond the reach of the majority of characters."\textsuperscript{34} Subjectivity
implies authorial point of view, but, as Williams points out, it
does not have to dispel the autonomy of the created world if it is used judiciously.

Ghose's omniscient narrator cannot always remain in the background, mainly because the characters he presents are sometimes too naive and almost inarticulate, and sometimes too complex. Neither Aziz Khan nor his sons have the benefit of a formal education. Aziz Khan reads "Lahore" as "Erohal," revealing his total incomprehension of what lies beyond the confines of his farm. When misfortune strikes him, he falls back on religious fatalism, although one part of his mind grasps the possibility of human treachery. At such moments he does not possess the language to express himself, and his unconscious gestures are all the reader perceives. Here the narrator provides the necessary commentary, thereby exposing his presence but insisting on his objectivity. In Sylvia's case, the opposite is true; she is too complex at times, and the narrator functions as mediator, explaining the workings of her mind.

Often the narrator presents not his own point of view but that of the characters. The description of Razia at the beginning of The Murder of Aziz Khan comes filtered through the consciousness of the frustrated and infatuated Afaq. The descriptions of the tea parties and social gatherings of ladies in The Contradictions, strongly reminiscent of eighteenth-century comedy of manners, comes from the perspective of Sylvia, who is best equipped to detect the shallowness and snobbery which underlies these gatherings. The point of view often shifts from character to character, thereby combining limited point of view with narrative omniscience.
Occasionally the narrator admits the limitations of his perception, as B.S. Johnson does in *Travelling People*. Olivia in *The Contradictions* is always enigmatic, but the narrator does not offer to help out the reader. Karim is devoid of all expression, and if at one point the reader suspects an agitation in him it is because the light catches the sweat on his brow and not because the narrator describes the feelings of Karim. At the Viceroy's party, the guests "[are] served by silent and expressionless Indian bearers who [keep] their thoughts within their turbans" (p. 64).

Sometimes the narrator falls into the temptation of introducing an ironic note or a subjective statement which savors of authorial intrusion and is detrimental to the realistic mode. Often the reader welcomes the assistance of the narrator, particularly to fill in the temporal gaps, to provide glimpses of the past and to give a detailed description of the setting. Generally speaking, Ghose's narrator who stands midway between objectivity and subjectivity, assisting the reader while preserving the autonomy of the work, comes close to George Becker's dictum that

the ideal position for the realist is that of the completely withdrawn third-person narrator, one who may be unobtrusively omniscient or who may confine himself only to that which a ubiquitous observer might see.\(^35\)

Ghose's use of these conventions gives his fictional worlds the ring of verisimilitude, the solidity one associates with the classic realistic novel. The conventions are common to all
practitioners of the mimetic mode, and to draw attention to them in relation to a particular writer is to use the term realism in a descriptive sense rather than an evaluative one. These conventions are essential for the writer to create his world, his major and minor characters, to indicate in broad outline the narrative thread and the basic pattern of conflict. The imagined realities differ widely but the structure which underlies them remains the same. What distinguishes one realistic work from another is not the structure but the texture. If structure refers to what is historical and general among realistic writers, texture refers to what is specific and unique in a particular writer. The distinction is often a fine one, particularly because texture, if imitated once too often, moves into the realm of structure. Nevertheless, the distinction is a crucial one when one wishes to use realism as an evaluative term and discover what is significant or complex about a particular writer. Ghose, for instance, is less concerned with social documentary and more concerned with themes of personal significance and their attendant complexities and ironies. He relies heavily on texture to move beyond the level of social documentary. Some of the techniques he uses have their origin in the nineteenth century while others belong to the province of the modern. They give the novels solidity and depth, but they also point to the difficulties associated with the mode.

The use of texture or internal structure in The Contradictions and The Murder of Aziz Khan becomes a technique of deflecting the reader's attention from the general and public issues the novel uses as part of the backdrop. The average
Anglo-Indian or Indo-Anglian novel skirts this problem by focussing on the public sphere and on the typical rather than the unique. Ghose tries to fuse the public and the private, and that carries with it certain attendant risks. David Lodge, discussing the achievement of *The Old Wives' Tale* says that in this novel "the imaginary and the historical, the public and the private, are blended together in a very stable mixture."\(^3\) Which is another way of saying that the structure and texture blend harmoniously in the novel. For the most part Ghose appears to be successful in exploiting the possibilities of internal structure to achieve density. When the density melds with and builds on the structure the reader perceives no discord. When it doesn't, the need for change becomes apparent. Cecil Jenkins, who comments on the "orchestral or suggestive structure" of the realistic novel, goes on to mention "the symphonic organisation of themes, the controlled parallelisms and oppositions of characters and events, subtle shifts in narrative tense ... a whole new range of new techniques which were to become part and parcel of the novel."\(^4\) In other words, when the author exploits internal structure successfully, referentiality ceases to be the sole criterion for interpreting the novel, and new dimensions of experience begin to emerge from what the novel enacts through its internal structure.

To turn our attention to the internal organization of the novels is to explore how Ghose complements, contradicts and completes the portrayal of phenomenal reality in his first two novels. *The Contradictions*, with all its obvious linearity, is also a cyclical novel, one which lays bare its circularity by
beginning and concluding with an invocation to the earth. We begin in autumn and end, two years later, in autumn. Sylvia who, like the heroines of so many Anglo-Indian novels, arrives in India at the beginning of the novel, departs when her husband is forced to retire, and is ready to return to India at the end of the novel. While the linear pattern asserts the significance of the public sphere of the novel, the world of objective phenomena, the cyclical pattern affirms the primacy of Sylvia who is the centre of vitality, the central consciousness and the thread that binds the novel. The experiences she encounters are carefully structured to reveal a pattern of comparison and contradiction, which we associate with the texture of the novel. The images arise out of the movement of the novel, but their similarities and their strategic appearance at the end of chapters clearly indicate that the reader is expected to take both a diachronic and synchronic view of the novel.

Sylvia's response to India is unconventional, more like that of Mrs Moore in *A Passage to India* than that of the Wickhams and Prewetts who represent the typical outsider's response. Mrs Moore wants to understand India. Sylvia seeks to change and rejuvenate it: "I would seek out the most barren parts of the country. I would command not people, but the earth. I would present the gift of creativeness to dry land by raising my hand" (p. 16). Sylvia's assertion reflects the area of doubt and despair in her consciousness, which she thinks finds a reflection in the vast and arid landscapes of India. Although Sylvia hopes to change the aridity of the land, she also needs it, and in the train journey experiences a feeling of
suffocation in the presence of green landscapes.

The conflict arises when India begins to assert its contradictions and harmonies which Sylvia can neither fully understand nor assimilate. She escapes from the tiresome overtures of Wickham into the comforting barrenness of the wasteland, only to find that it contains an oasis, and worse, it accommodates a peasant couple making love. India combines fecundity and barrenness in a manner which Sylvia, with her tradition of empiricist thinking, can hardly comprehend. Next, we have the Viceroy's party, the central event in the life of the British in India, which turns out to be an orgy. Soon after, we have Wickham's pathetic attempts to seduce Sylvia, juxtaposed with the birth of Karim's child. Finally, we see the fertility of Hyderabad, the splendour of the Golconda fort and the totally unexpected and violent death of the child, Aziz. In all these episodes Sylvia plays a role, at least a marginal one. Consequently, the focus of the reader shifts from British India to her quest and her absolute bewilderment in the face of these contradictions.

It is when the child is run over by a lorry that Sylvia is most conscious of the "nunnery of her mind.... For Sylvia, the whole of India had been killed" (p. 99). The rhythm of life, love, birth and death India enacts in the midst of its multiple contradictions is no more comprehensible to Sylvia than it is to Mrs Moore. The small, furry animal which darts across her path at the beginning of the novel and disappears before she can identify it is an image of everything that is elusive in India, and, by extension, in her own personality. She leaves India
without any enlightenment, and her quest, euphemistically captured in the refrain "where does the wind live?" is yet to find an answer.

The sections set in England continue the pattern of assertions and contradictions, with the main difference that Sylvia now enacts in her own person the rhythm of life which India demonstrates, while the events around her heighten or parallel what she experiences. She conceives in her Hampshire home when Christopher makes love to her brutally, an episode which recalls the peasant couple in India. Ironically, it coincides with her departure from the greenery of Hampshire to the concrete of London. The possibility of purposeful life offered by her pregnancy goes awry with her miscarriage, and Olivia, who is impregnated by Frank (significantly, called a "peasant"), procures an abortion. Finally, the death of Christopher, which could mean complete negation of life, leads to Harding's proposal and the possibility of renewal.

Sylvia's quest for a satisfying conception of reality which will accommodate the multiple contradictions life presents reaches no conclusive ending. She does not, like Mrs Moore, surrender herself to the ocean. She does not find meaning, like Dorothea, in a fusion of idealism and commitment to life. What matters is the fact of the quest which, the novel seems to suggest, will continue when Sylvia begins the cycle again. The notion of quest is central to Ghose's writing, and although he does not make use of it in The Murder of Aziz Khan, he returns to it in Crump's Terms in 1975.

What we have, then, is a series of episodes, each
functioning as a metaphor for a particular order of experience and acquiring density through comparison or contrast with similar episodes. The lacunae in the sequential pattern point to the focus on metaphor and patterns of imagery. The balance of assertions and contradictions, all of which have something to do with Sylvia, has the effect of arresting time and space and focussing on pattern or texture. Referentiality ceases to be a central concern and the reader is expected to focus on the synchronic instead of the diachronic axis.

Inasmuch as the novelist-surrogate reminds the reader of the movement away from the mimetic mode, the tapestry Sylvia creates alerts the reader to the significance of observing the pattern. A few days after her arrival in India Sylvia purchases, much to the amazement of the merchant, several yards of Indian cotton material in diverse colours. Out of these she creates a tapestry which she later drapes over a mirror in her Hampshire home. The combination of colours provides a pattern, an order of perception which is valid as long as the combination remains intact. Whatever the order of reality the tapestry provides, it is preferable to the narcissistic self-absorption of the mirror. What matters is the pattern:

The juxtaposition of brush-strokes created a picture, of sounds a harmony, and it would be an error to consider that art existed as revelation irrespective of meticulously wrought composition. (C, pp. 185-86)

Standing outside the rhythm of the novel, the tapestry reminds the reader of the contradictions and antitheses which make up
the novel and chart the quest of Sylvia.

The formal pattern the author superimposes on the realistic structure does not lead to counterrealism, although it foregrounds artifice. The co-existence of artifice and reality is not unusual in modern fiction, and Ghose certainly exploits this combination in his later works. In *The Contradictions* the fusion is not always successful, for a variety of reasons. In the process of writing a novel which deals with Englishmen in India, Ghose aligns himself with a whole tradition of Anglo-Indian writing. The reader responds to *The Contradictions* as yet another Anglo-Indian novel, and certainly the accumulation of background material invites the reader to see the novel as a referential work about British India. The shift of focus which occurs when the novel moves from the public to the private, from the diachronic to the synchronic, is often too abrupt for the reader. Also, the language functions at the level of referentiality, leading the reader to expect a realistic work which deals with public issues. The large chunks of metaphysical speculation serve as disturbing distractions rather than as signals to the internal structure.

*The Contradictions* is not without a measure of interest for the reader. It certainly marks a welcome point of departure from the conventional exploration of British life in India. The attention to technique is meticulous, almost excessively so. In fact, the careful chapter divisions and organization Ghose demonstrates in this novel he preserves in his later work. The use of incremental repetition continues to find a place in his recent fiction. Yet *The Contradictions* remains an uneven work in
its inability to bring together its diverse aims. It is at once the study of a period, of a sensitive individual and of the dimensions of alienation. The reader responds to the centrifugal pull only to be drawn abruptly into the artifice of the novel. If one claims that *The Contradictions* is more accomplished than the average Anglo-Indian novel, one also admits that it is a flawed work.

The gaps in the linear movement of *The Contradictions* at crucial moments are the first indication we have of the texture of the novel. In *The Murder of Aziz Khan* the title alerts the reader to the complexity of the work. Taken literally, the title is misleading. Rafiq is hanged by the state, Javed is killed by thugs, but Aziz Khan survives -- although Aziz Khan and the way of life he stands for perish at the end. Similarly, two of the three major divisions of the novel are titled "Afaq" and "Javed," when in actual fact Afaq and Javed are not as important to the movement of the novel as, say, the Shah brothers. The dichotomy between the titles and the content is perhaps the most obvious of all the techniques the author employs to heighten the complexities and ironies which run through the novel.

In *The Contradictions* the sequential movement breaks at several points, but the narrator preserves linearity by filling in the gaps when the need arises. The illusion of following "real life is created by the presentation of experiences ... in a 'natural' chronological sequence." Yet the movement implies a certain order of reality which does not always merge with the divisive forces in the novel. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* presents a transitional world in which old categories do not totally apply.
For the writer who depicts two worlds in conflict, linearity is as much a necessity as a constraint. One of the early symptoms of the dissatisfaction with realism at the beginning of this century is the disruption of time. Ghose circumvents the constraint by introducing flashback scenes which are in bold letters. The risk here is that the flashback scenes may well disrupt the illusion of reality within which the novel functions. Ghose contrives, however, to introduce them at moments when a character's mind compulsively reaches back into the past either to seek a parallel or to find temporary solace. Sometimes the memories are clear, sometimes confused, but either way it is evident that the crisis necessitates the movement into the past. A case in point is the court case in which Javed's mind, unable to comprehend the present, goes back to the past to recreate memories of shared faith and joy. Thematically, the past and present are linked. One is a battle against nature, the other against society. In one there is victory, in the other there is defeat. Unknown to Javed but clear to the reader is the author's careful juxtaposition, which goes beyond psychological necessity to artistry. A moment of stealth to capture a fowl comes together with the lawyer's cunning fabrication of evidence to incriminate Rafiq. The bold letters, italics and ordinary letters are carefully linked to achieve maximum suggestiveness.

The author manipulates time in order to suggest parallels between past and present. Similarly, he establishes a system of ternary oppositions to heighten disparities in the present. First, we have the Shah brothers who are rich, ruthless and have no moral qualms about destroying anything that threatens their
industrial expansion. Second, the Aziz Khan family which is traditional, naive and vulnerable. Third, we have Afaq, the exile in England. The three dimensions represent three worlds — the agricultural, the industrial and the exiled.

Parallel actions in eating, in attitudes to dress, material advancement, liquor and sexuality reinforce the ternary system of oppositions. The family meal is a central image which defines the hierarchy, unity and simplicity of the Aziz Khan family. As the novel progresses and Aziz Khan suffers loss after loss the family meal begins to disappear until, at the end, "there was no one to eat and [Aziz Khan's] own stomach had refused" (p. 259). The meal for the Shah brothers is an ostentatious and formal affair which underlines their pseudo-western values. The "chapati" of the traditional meal gives way to toast and tea. Akram, we are told, drinks his tea "as if he were gargling" (p. 247) and Faridah has revolting eating habits, "her lips bursting open with a squelching noise every time her jaw moved" (p. 94). Razia takes every opportunity to draw attention to the gluttony of Faridah. As the novel moves forward the meals become occasions for petty bickering and then vicious arguments. Afaq's meals in England complement his concern with externals, and his shallowness, which the presence of Pamela so clearly reveals.

While the ternary system builds up the differences by treating the three components separately, the technique of bringing the different sides together and showing their responses to a common object heightens the differences almost immediately. Williams, who notes the use of this technique in some nineteenth-century novels, points out that a "staple
Realist procedure is to engineer telling contrasts between the reactions of characters to the same stimulus. An obvious example in The Murder of Aziz Khan is the brothel scene in which Rafiq, compelled to take liquor for the first time, passes out. Afaq, on the other hand, is perfectly at home, both with the girl and with the locally brewed liquor.

These structures perform the function of sharpening the basic pattern of conflict within which the novel operates. They complement what the author achieves by using the standard techniques of realism. Some others, however, reveal ironies which run counter to the basic oppositions in the novel. One of the techniques Ghose uses to good effect is that of simultaneity. It is a device that goes back to Flaubert, but has been used more often in modern writing. Mario Valdes observes that "the technique of creating simultaneity between events that are spatially separate has been one of the major formal innovations of the modern narrative." The three events that occur simultaneously in the novel are Akram's arrival at the Kalapur station, the murder of Javed on a deserted street and Razia's seduction of Afaq in London. Ayub is in a sense responsible for all three actions, and the irony is that the moment of triumph is also the moment of defeat. Razia not only commits adultery but also bears Afaq's child. By arresting time and exploiting the possibilities of space, the author makes the point that the destruction of Aziz Khan carries with it its own nemesis.

Razia's adultery is one of many incidents that build up a pattern of sexual imagery which, like the references to food,
adds to the texture of the work. The motif of sexuality figures prominently in all of Ghose's writings, particularly the Brazilian trilogy and Hulme's Investigatons into the Bogat Script (1981). In addition to defining the moral quality of characters, this motif merges with the larger image of "land-as-woman" to explore the notion of native-alien experience. Afaq is not only a philanderer, but also a rapist. Faridah's marriage is never consummated and she remains "a virgin at forty-three" (pp. 218-19). Akram has been ravaged by venereal disease. Ayub's love-making is "always abrupt and sometimes brutal" (p. 100). Zarina's sexual frustrations find expression in fantasy. She is also the illegitimate daughter of Akram. In this novel the primary function of sexual imagery is to focus on the inner frustrations, perversions and ultimate sterility of the Shah brothers. The sexual union of Afaq and Razia is in fact a form of incest, a motif which in A New History of Torments (1982) and Don Bueno (1983) not only looms large but also heralds total disaster.

The simultaneity and sexual imagery presage a common fate for the tyrant and victim. The effect is given a slightly different twist in the sparing, yet telling, use of parallelism. Rafiq, in a conversation with Javed at the beginning of the novel, says that he would like to have sex with a peasant girl on the banks of the stream which borders his father's land. One pays little attention to the fantasy of a young man. Later, Afaq does precisely that when he rapes a peasant girl on the banks. Afaq perversely fulfils what Rafiq innocently contemplates. The two meet on several occasions and have some qualities in common,
but the parallelism alerts the reader to the danger of simply assuming Afaq to be part of the Shah empire.

Afaq is very much an outsider in the Shah family, and he is perhaps the only member of the family who, despite his crime, is generous and sensitive. In him the author exaggerates and "displaces" the predicament of the exile, the native-alien. The author objectifies, concentrates and explores everything that is reprehensible, comic and pathetic in the native-alien experience. Unable to belong to the land of his birth, Afaq leaves with a profound sense of guilt. A fugitive from justice, he leaves a country to which he cannot return. He thinks he understands western culture, when in actual fact his tastes are as vulgar and as shallow as those of the emigrants in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1972) and Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971). He exemplifies the kind of exile who has neither a home nor a culture to call his own. All the episodes in England, particularly the ones in which he tries to impress the sophisticated Pamela, have the function of exploring, in exaggerated terms, the negative aspects of the native-alien experience. Afaq is not unlike the monkey in the story he tells Razia's daughters, crashing through the jungle, blind, bruised and without a destination or a sense of direction. Yet he is the only one with any hope at the end, the only character to escape the ruthless determinism of the novel.

*The Murder of Aziz Khan* is a more substantial achievement than *The Contradictions* mainly because the author's central themes emerge through a texture which builds on the structure of the work. The orchestral design does not run counter to the
linearity of the novel; instead, it complements the sequential pattern. In short, the portrayal of objective phenomena leads to the exploration of themes which coincide with the author's personal concerns. Whether the reader focusses on the linearity or the pattern, the result is a strong sense of coherence. Referentiality is thus far more integral to this novel than to The Contradictions.

Although Indian literary historians have paid little or no attention to this novel, it remains a work very much in the tradition of the Indo-Anglian novel. It delights in presenting sociological material, although the proliferation of detail sometimes exceeds the needs of the novel. Ghose's familiarity with the landscape and its people often becomes a hindrance, tempting the author to introduce intrusive comments. However, despite the minor blemishes, The Murder of Aziz Khan is a solid novel, which embodies several themes that continue to inform the author's novels. It also teaches him the value of sequential action, clear characterisation and of creating a world which is not overtly counterrealistic. He also learns from this novel the significance of maintaining dramatic interest, confirming Ortega Gasset's comment that "dramatic interest is a psychological necessity - not more [than that], but not less either."³

However, the novel is not without limitations. The reader remembers the novel not as an imaginary construct but as a reflection of the historical reality of Pakistan, or what he imagines to be the actual situation in that country. The advantages of exploiting this illusion are enormous, as every realist writer knows. Ghose departs from this mode because the
technical drawbacks of the mode do not permit the full expression of his vision. About The Murder of Aziz Khan Ghose comments:

When I finished it, I thought it solid enough, but a form in which I would not wish to work again. Having proved that I could write a traditional novel, I turned to what interested my imagination, I wrote Crump's Terms. 4

Both The Contradictions and The Murder of Aziz Khan are notable representatives of the Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian traditions, although Ghose appears to handle Pakistani peasant life with much greater skill than the lives of the British in pre-Independence India. To see a more successful portrayal of Anglo-Indian life and its cultural and emotional conflicts, one turns to the short stories, Statement Against Corpses, which, in addition to stories set in India, contains pieces set entirely in England -- a feature that anticipates Ghose's next work, Crump's Terms.

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Godbert, the protagonist of the short story of that name in Statement Against Corpses, remembers at one point a line from Hopkins: "Birds build - but not I build." The reference to Hopkins's poem sets the tone of quiet despair, of helplessness in the face of conflicting aims which runs through the story. A little later, Godbert accepts factually the absence of any real choice: "One chooses a way of life. Or life imposes its own
pattern despite oneself" (p. 121). Godbert cannot decide whether to remain "rooted" to the school and let life flow past him, or to reject the protective cocoon of the school and venture out into the uncertainty and dynamism of the external world. He is perceptive enough to recognize the dichotomies which confront him. At the beginning his eyes take in the fields, the Cotswolds and the horizon. At the end he sees the roll of honour -- the names of those who are dead and whose ranks he is destined to join when the sculptor makes his bust to be placed in the school hall as a tribute to his long service to the institution.

"Godbert" is the only story which uses a first-person narrative voice. Godbert as narrator continually affirms the value of the "complete world" that surrounds him, which he calls "a principality with its own government" (p. 111). Yet his mind registers images which run counter to his make-believe paradise. Simpson, Coldwell, the playboy "parading ... his bronzed body on Riviera" (p. 112) and the average husband who lives with his wife and children in a London suburb are all inhabitants of a world he has shut off and who remind him of the precariousness of his situation. He often wonders: "Have I become a ghost, consorting with an existence? Or am I a mere existence, consorting with a ghost?" (p. 112)

What we have, then, is a familiar situation of marginalisation and a traditional short story. Godbert is a version of Gabriel Conroy, who lives in a sheltered world but whose mind is perceptive enough to register what he does not wish to acknowledge. The conflict is between the individual and
a social structure, or the individual and a certain order of reality. The realistic mode in which the story is cast seems ideally suited to record the rhythm of the story, in which Godbert experiences an expansion of consciousness while the social structure remains static. The reader expects an epiphany of sorts and then a reconciliation when the individual and society re-establish a balance. In short, we anticipate a closed form, with which the realistic mode is often associated.6

Godbert, as mentioned earlier, shares similarities with Gabriel Conroy. Both Conroy and Godbert experience moments of heightened awareness at the end. The difference between "The Dead" and "Godbert" is that while the former is open-ended in its structure and texture, the latter is end-stopped. At the end, Godbert's mind juxtaposes his recognition by the school with the "weak-voiced ranting of a boy-Cleopatra" (p. 122), a reminder of his loss of stature and the mockery his life has been—yet the finality of recording the names in the roll of honour in tabular form gives to the story an effective closure. The inability to fuse the growing consciousness of the protagonist with the closed form accounts for the weakness of the story, at least at the end.

The author's failure to match form with content appears ironical in the light of the genesis of the short stories. The stories were written hastily -- in six months -- to meet a contract offered by Constable, Johnson's publisher. They were also written with a crusading spirit, to breathe new life into the dying short story. The authors make their objectives clear in the short and provocative preface:
These short stories have been written in the knowledge that the form is in decline, but in the belief that this is due to no fault inherent in the form.

The short story deserves, but seldom receives, the same precise attention to language as that given normally only to a poem.

This book represents a joint attempt, through demonstration of the form's wide technical range, to draw attention to a literary form which is quite undeservedly neglected.

Today Ghose admits that only total ignorance of the American and European short story could have made that statement possible. Also, as Ghose points out in an interview, he was living in a rather narrow-minded England in the 1960s, and it was only natural for him to take the decadence of the British short story to be universal. Still, it is a point of critical interest to see whether Ghose achieves any part of what he sets out to do.

Johnson foregrounds style and technique in his short stories, as he does in his novels. Ghose keeps technical inventiveness to a minimum, particularly in the stories set in England. He observes the standard procedure of beginning with a specific character and place and then moves backwards and forwards to create a sense of social milieu and context. Both the structure and the expectations it generates in the reader are familiar enough. We expect a character who is at variance with the norms of society and whose collision with social values leads to an epiphany of sorts and then a reconciliation or an affirmation of a social pattern or an ethical concept. When a writer wishes to go beyond this pattern he either seeks a
different mode or creates an elaborate orchestral structure as Joyce does in "The Dead" or Lawrence does in "Odour of Chrysanthemums."

The failure of "Godbert" is largely due to the absence of an internal structure which could accommodate the growing consciousness of the protagonist. We see this failure again in "The Corpses" which, despite the significance of its theme and the effective evocation of context, does not succeed. The structure of the story works admirably. Each episode, random as it may seem, builds up the sense of a society composed of metaphorical "corpses" who survive on the strength of their illusions and fantasies. Several episodes are forceful, perhaps because they are, in a sense, autobiographical. Speaking about the cultural climate of the early 1960s, Ghose says:

It seemed to me that the values that I had acquired through a love of learning and a love of literature, values which had become central to my life, were being mocked by my contemporaries. I saw no correlation between what my former undergraduate friends had studied and what they were doing in London in their jobs in advertising and journalism. They were contributing to the destruction of the very values that we had acquired at the university."7

"The Corpses" formulates itself in the context of personal experience and the collapse of values. The protagonist moves from job to job in a quest for something which transcends the commercialism he sees around him. All these aspects emerge through the structure of the story. The story reaches an epiphany with the death of Greg, the dying patient with whom Bob makes some kind of contact. At this point, the story begins to
flounder. We are told that "Bob walked down and left the hospital. Outside he walked in the isolation of his own few square feet of vision" (p.161). Bob, at the end, has no enlightenment. Neither he nor the society he comes into contact with changes one bit during the story. The last lines appear to hint at an open-ended story, but nothing in the internal structure warrants that movement. Bob's quest is a personal one, although it arises out of a social context. In order to sustain the ongoing quest, much more than a gesture of open-endedness at the end is needed. The absence of an internal design tilts the story toward referentiality, within which the personal quest of Bob fails to function effectively.

The only exception in the stories set in England is "Amy," which flaunts a collage of styles and occasionally foregrounds language to achieve depth. A case in point is the description of Amy:

Amy did not know what to do with the children except to feed them and occasionally kiss them.
Amy loved George Curtis.
Amy could stand for hours at a window of her house and look at the cars parked in the square.
( SC, p. 134)

In the absence of adequate background material, the description provides an insight into the shallowness and puerile qualities of Amy. Yet the attention to style hardly matters in the total achievement of the story. The author captures effectively, and sometimes bluntly, the basic terms of conflict. But nothing changes in the cyclical pattern as the protagonist jettisons wife after wife at regular intervals. At the end, when we "watch
the lonely figure recede down the street" (p. 137), we realise that George is not another Paul Morel walking away with a heightened consciousness. George is the same as ever, and so are all the others. The subject matter requires a closed form, and the movement of the story, which strives towards open-endedness, fails to merge with the content.

The stories set in England hardly justify the ambitious claims of the preface. The stories set in India are different, and here one sees at least the partial validity of the claims Ghose makes about language and technical range. The choice of the familiar theme of the young man leaving a village to seek his fortune in the metropolis in "The Departure" is a happy accident in that it brings to mind a host of such stories in the Indo-Anglian tradition. To provide the story with a detailed social context and a range of representative characters would be to run the risk of repetition. Ghose remarks in conversation that he had no desire to repeat what had been done *ad infinitum*. In short, the author who has no desire to create a referential framework is in a much better position to arrest time and space, focus on a single image and explore the possibilities of language. The extreme brevity of the story almost necessitates a foregrounding of style and extreme concentration of technical devices.

No one speaks in the story; there is very little authorial intrusion, very little progress. Freed from the constraints of time and space, from the need for specificity and context, the story acquires an autonomy which provides for considerable suggestiveness. The style, the image combinations, the syntax
and the insistent reference to silence are all that makes for the power of the story. The linguistic complexity of the story is evident from the opening sentence:

His belongings were laid out on a white sheet by his mother on the eve of his leaving his native village for Bombay. (SC, p. 162)

The metonymic function of the sentence is clear: the son is ready to leave the village for the city, presumably to earn money and support the impoverished family. The use of "native," which is almost a tautology in the context of the story, reinforces the sense of rootedness and impending displacement. The time is evening, with its sense of closure. The belongings, which are few enough, are "laid out," significantly, on a "white sheet." Symbolically, the mother is laying out the corpse of the boy.

The feeling of despair leads to the silence which the narrator points to several times. The mother has "less to say," the father has "nothing to say," and the son "remained silent." Only the nonhuman (the stars) and the inanimate (the grasses) seem to possess the power to speak. The son is poised between the status of "native" and the uncertainty of "alien," a condition symbolised by his involuntary act of standing by the door, uncertain whether to walk in the field or shuffle back into the house, to look at the stars or at the dust track.

We watch for gestures which are emotionally suggestive: the father sat with his "throat knotted," and "the mother cracked her knuckles." The inversion of normal syntax, the piling up of
subordinate clauses add to the sense of failure, the collapse of the traditional system. The total effect is one of extreme precision, of lyricism and poetic intensity.

"The Departure" is as metaphoric as it is literal. The author appears to move away from his dependence on objective reality. The story has little by way of structure, except what is implied. It survives on its ability to foreground style, and the language gives the story an autonomy which the other stories lack.

Nevertheless, "The Departure" is limited in scope, and merits attention mainly as an experiment. It demonstrates the power of language rather than the significance of theme. "The Zoo People," on the other hand, marks a high point in the realistic phase. W.H. New, who singles out this story as "the glorious exception," adds that it is "thematically complex, linguistically assured, subtle in its evocation of character, delicate in its responses to landscape [and] provocative in its approach to time." This story too belongs to a familiar tradition -- the Anglo-Indian. It recalls at various points A Passage to India and it anticipates The Contradictions, although it is more successful than the latter.

The distinction between "The Zoo People" and The Contradictions lies mainly in the treatment of historical material. "The Zoo People" is meticulous in its evocation of the referential framework. We see the racism, the snobbery, the underlying tensions and the missionary activity of the British. Even trivial incidents have a sociological and literary interest. The description of Wilman and Nicholson on furlough
trying to seduce Emily and Dorothy recalls Bhupal Singh's incidental comment that in Anglo-Indian fiction "there is no lack of bachelors making merry away from the discipline of their regiments." The accumulation of historical material thus constitutes the structure within which the personal quest of Emily takes place. The historical framework is integral to Emily, whereas it appears incidental to Sylvia. The Independence of India means little to Sylvia; for Emily it means a re-adjustment of her missionary activity and her objectives. Without British India, Emily cannot exist; and without the complex internal structure, Emily's story would have no significance.

Soon after the death of Dorothy, Father Oliver offers a plot in his churchyard for the burial, which Emily refuses. The narrator recalls: "But Emily had said no, offering him a cup of tea" (p. 168). We observe the balance in the sentence, which suggests the mixture of firmness and hospitality which characterises Emily. Linguistic complexity is one of the many devices which alerts the reader to the texture of the work. The most noticeable of all the techniques is the movement backwards in time, decade by decade, until we reach Emily's young days. Any other movement would have disrupted the effect of peeling layer after layer until we reach the core that explains the present. Once we reach the core, the pattern of opposites, one example of which is Emily's response to Father Oliver, begins to emerge.

The core appears unexpectedly and briefly, introducing the idea of vision and paradise. Back in 1922 we see Emily flitting
through the woods in Cannock Chase, like Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*, until she comes upon a valley. The vision is idyllic. The search for a perfect world is crucial to Ghose's work, particularly his later novels, and we catch a glimpse of this in "The Zoo People." Arthur's amorous overtures seem antithetical to the vision and Emily implores: "Stay where you are. Let's not spoil it" (p. 200). The assertion of passion and the vision of beauty become opposites in the context of the story, leading to a whole pattern of imagery which includes the sea, the rocks and the zoo.

The vision fades and we have Emily's quest to tear down the cage of self-deception and to pursue beauty at the cost of self-denial. For the others, life means the assertion of passion. The imagery of the sea and the rocks which constantly appear reiterate the conflict between passion and self-denial. They constitute the texture which co-exists with the realistic framework. While the structure provides the framework, the texture asserts the significance of Emily's quest, her gradual recognition that she is "a branch on the outward extremity of a tree whose trunk transmitted no nourishing juices" (p. 165), that the faith with which she seeks to free the Indians who "pace the earth with their usual hungers" (p. 165), now form a cage around her "bounding her within a tight space" (p. 203). The vision of paradise leads to disillusionment and sympathy with the barrenness of rocks. But there, too, the narrator points out, the situation is paradoxical:

Absolute sympathy was a reality with which she now felt a sympathy. There were rocks and rocks: each,
whether a pebble or a boulder, was a complete, homogeneous, self-sufficient mass of matter in itself; each stood or lay in the dust at perfect peace with the universe ....

( SC, p. 204)

Emily does not possess even the self-sufficiency of rocks. Her quest for identity in the midst of an alien race fails. The reader, however, remembers her conflict and her vision of paradise, for they constitute significant and recurrent motifs in all of Ghose's writings.

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"The Zoo People" and The Murder of Aziz Khan are perhaps the two major achievements of Ghose's realistic phase. In them the author combines the formal demands of the realistic mode with a complex internal structure which enables him to explore the experience of exile against a personal and verifiable historical backdrop. However, significant as it is, this phase looks backward rather than forward both in its involvement with India and Pakistan, and in its concern with the mimetic mode. Ghose's departure from the personal and the referential coincides with an awareness of disturbing changes in European culture, with the appearance of what seemed anarchic forces. For Ghose, the late 1960s and the early 1970s were also a period of intensive reading, of increasing familiarity with the New Novel and postmodern writers, the influence of which become evident in the next phase of his literary career.
Notes


6 Bhupal Singh, p. 4.

7 (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1978).

8 (New Delhi: Heinemann, 1971).

9 Mukherjee, p. 19.

10 Mukherjee, p. 27.


15 Personal interview.


political work -- but Don Gamaliel's apothegm-like statement, "fortunes are not made in the shadow of divinity" (p. 44) could well serve as an epigraph for The Murder of Aziz Khan.

Although realism has always been the dominant mode, one also needs to be aware of a smaller tradition of counterrealistic writing which begins with R.K. Narayan and runs through Raja Rao, Desani, Desai and Rushdie. In terms of quantity, however, the counterrealistic works are insignificant in relation to the total output of realistic novels.

(London: Macmillan, 1966). All quotations are from this edition, and the page references are included parenthetically. The title is abbreviated C.

(London: Macmillan, 1967). All quotations are from this edition, and the page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated MA.


Quoted in David Lodge, p. 53.

Williams, p. 275.

Williams, p. 277.

Williams, p. 268.

Auerbach, p. 463.

Auerbach, p. 258.


Auerbach, p. 487.
David Lodge in his *Modes of Modern Writing* draws attention to the descriptive and evaluative uses of the term realism. According to him, "realism in the neutral sense indicates a fictional text's approximation to history, while realism in the qualitative sense may indicate a historical text's approximation to fiction" (p. 25). I have adopted the basic distinction but used the terms "structure" and "texture" to refer to the neutral (descriptive) and qualitative meanings of realism. For a full discussion, see Lodge, pp. 22-27.

[Lodge, p. 38.]


[Williams, p. 265.]

[Williams, p. 267.]


[See Chapter 1, p. 24.]


[Personal interview.]

[(London: Constable, 1964). All quotations are from this edition, and page references are given parenthetically. The]
title is abbreviated SC.

46 I have used the distinction Alan Friedman makes between the closed form of the standard nineteenth-century novel and the open form of the novels which appeared at the turn of this century. For a full discussion see The Turn of the Novel (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 15-37.

47 Personal interview.


49 Bhupal Singh, p. 25.
Chapter 3

Crump's Terms and the Metaphoric Mode

Crump's Terms was completed in 1968, a year after the publication of The Murder of Aziz Khan. Had the novel been published in that year instead of in 1975, by which time the author had published two volumes of the Brazilian trilogy, the distance between the two early novels would have been more apparent than it is now. For the purposes of this study, which deals with the evolution of narrative mode, the order of composition acquires a greater significance than the order of publication. That Ghose had to wait seven years to find a publisher leads to several interesting questions which need to be explored in some detail. The immediate tasks, however, are to measure the distance between The Murder of Aziz Khan and Crump's Terms, to account for the change of direction, to assess the possible gains or losses that result from this movement and to study in some detail the narrative techniques which control the structure of this novel.

If one were to look for an analogy one might say that the rapid transition from the realistic phase of The Murder of Aziz Khan to the stream-of-consciousness phase of Crump's Terms is like Joyce's movement from Dubliners to Ulysses.' The movement is obviously from a referential mode to one in which the centripetal movement begins to take precedence. Yet the two works by Joyce still deal with Dublin, and that provides a point of contact between them. In Ghose the dichotomy is even more marked mainly because the transition involves a break with a
literary tradition as well. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* belongs in the Indo-Anglian tradition, locates its action in the Punjab, depicts Pakistani characters and adopts the mimetic mode. *Crump's Terms* belongs to the English tradition, locates its action in England and Europe, depicts characters who are either British or European and adopts the stream-of-consciousness mode. It deals primarily with Crump, a cynical and disillusioned teacher in London, whose frustrating attempts to impose a sense of order and discipline at the Pinworth School are juxtaposed with the memories of his ex-wife Frieda, with whom he spends several vacations in Europe but who finally deserts him to seek asylum in East Germany. In a sense, the title, with its emphasis on "terms," melds together the public life of school semesters and classroom experiences with the private life of Crump's emotional experiences with Frieda. Labels such as "Indian," "Indo-Pakistani" or "Commonwealth" hardly seem relevant to *Crump's Terms*, which belongs directly to the line from Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson.

At the level of narrative mode, Ghose's movement from realism to stream of consciousness follows the familiar pattern of British fiction, although the author did not set out to provide in the corpus of his writings a microcosm of the evolution of narrative modes in fiction. The similarity breaks down, however, when one remembers the collapse of traditional values that accompanied the coming of modernism. Although Ghose was becoming increasingly sensitive to the burgeoning of a counterculture at the time of writing this novel, his immediate concern was not to deal with social problems but to break away
from a form which he had, to some degree, exploited successfully in his first two novels and in his short stories. The Murder of Aziz Khan is arguably a well-made novel, but to pursue that line would be to re-write the same novel and to experience once more the limitations of the realist model as a vehicle for the native-alien experience.

The desire not to repeat a form which had been tried does not fully explain the choice of the stream-of-consciousness mode; nor does it explain the continuity of theme, however tenuous, between the two phases. In order to formulate a rationale for the change of narrative mode, one first needs to stress the exploration of the experience of exile which unites The Murder of Aziz Khan with Crump's Terms. In the former the main concern is with the notion of belonging, traced through the fall of the eponymous protagonist. Within the large framework provided by the conflict between Aziz Khan and the Shah brothers, Afaq plays a peripheral role by illuminating an aspect of the experience of exile. Since Crump's Terms explores different aspects of the notion of exile and alienation, it would be useful to take a closer look at Afaq.

Afaq's case is obviously not that of a displaced or uprooted individual. He is a fugitive from justice who is hardly concerned with the question of identity. Still, in an objective sense, he is an alienated figure, an exile, although he never really comes to a full realisation of his predicament. Both the narrator and the reader are aware of the extent of the alienation which makes him a pathetic figure in the presence of Pamela. Afaq has a greater affinity with the unself-conscious
characters of, say, George Lamming's "A Wedding in Spring" rather than, say, with the introspective characters portrayed by Achebe, Naipaul or Balachandra Rajan. Rajan, for instance, portrays in the hero of The Dark Dancer (1958) the typical figure who does not belong anywhere. But while Rajan's hero is self-aware Afaq is not. However, both are alienated from specific social and cultural backgrounds. The feeling of exile in these novels has its origin in the physical movement from one country to another and can often be understood in relation to historical or social circumstances. Given the circumstances of Afaq's exile, the choice of the realistic mode is adequate and inevitable. Afaq is not a complex character, and the best possible way of understanding him is to see him in relation to external objects and events. To compare Afaq with Frieda would reveal not only the thematic continuity between the two novels, but also why the portrayal of Frieda calls for a different narrative mode. Frieda in Crump's Terms is also an exile, but of a different order. She presents a perspective which calls for a re-definition of the notion of exile and a different narrative mode to understand it.

Frieda, the enigmatic wife of Crump, faces a situation that appears on the surface to be the reverse of the Naipaul/Rajan depiction of the experience of exile. Instead of travelling from the colony to the metropolis as is the case in Naipaul's novels, Frieda leaves Germany just before the Second World War in order to avoid anti-semitic persecution and goes, with her parents, to Johannesburg. After more than two decades in South Africa and Europe she returns compulsively to East Germany in the 1960s.
For the most part the reader believes that she follows the example of her mother who deserts her husband and disappears, presumably to Germany. Frieda's "return" turns out to be disillusioning and her highfalutin claims about her motives are met with cynicism. At this point, confined to a room, Frieda reflects that

the most difficult feat of all is to remain in the same place and in psychologically the same time without needing surrogates to live the lives for us which we can't. In such a situation, we accept the notion that we could possibly be going mad.³
(CT, p. 170)

This somewhat obscure passage introduces a new angle of vision not only on Frieda but also on the notion of alienation. Here the concept of "home" comes to be associated not with a geographical location but with a state of mind. In short, the literal sense of home merges into a larger metaphorical definition. The metaphorical aspect portrays alienation as a subjective phenomenon, a state of consciousness. Andrew Gurr, who explains this process, says that "this sense of home is the goal of all the voyages of self-discovery which have become the characteristic shape of modern literature."⁴ Frieda's quest thus becomes a complex affair. She admits earlier in the novel that her mother's disappearance was followed by rumors that she had deserted her husband in order to live with a black man, a speculation which gains credence by the fact that the authorities confirm that she did not leave South Africa. If she had chosen to live with someone from a lower stratum her act would not have been different from that of Connie's in Lady
Chatterley's Lover in its assertion of passion. Frieda's theory about her mother's return to East Germany could well be a figment of her imagination, a fantasy concocted by her mind in order to displace and objectify her quest and her decision to desert Crump and seek asylum in East Germany. In the absence of adequate evidence the reader can never really deduce the truth, and the narrator does not take the trouble to enlighten the reader either. What is important, however, is not the literal truth about her disappearance but the dilemma that confronts Frieda.

Frieda's quandary is simply that she could either resort to fantasy and invent a situation in order to justify her battle against the feeling of exile, or she could succumb to the immediate, objective conditions around her which, by their inability to resolve the inner turmoil, could lead to a negation of consciousness, i.e., insanity. Frieda attempts to bridge the gap between fantasy and fact by returning to East Germany, and her subsequent disillusionment is a measure of her difficulty in resolving her dilemma.

Frieda's problem of balancing the objective and the subjective is not unlike that of the author himself, who is no longer dealing only with the empirical and the verifiable. The life he presents is not that of individuals pitted against society in a world which is underpinned by a coherent ontological framework. He now depicts a chaotic world in which the old sense of order has disappeared. "Life is not," as Virginia Woolf points out, "a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope
surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end."\(^5\) Woolf also draws attention to the blurring of the objective and the subjective which characterises so much of modernist fiction. David Lodge reiterates that "modernist fiction is concerned with consciousness, and also with the subconscious and unconscious workings of the human mind."\(^6\) Since Ghose brings to the novel a typically modern sensibility, *Crump's Terms* inevitably involves new angles of vision and a new approach.

Ghose's dominant concern with the phenomenon of alienation as a subjective state in *Crump's Terms* links the novel with the moderns rather than with the realists or the postmoderns. Woolf mentions that "for the moderns ... the point of interest lies very likely in the dark places of psychology."\(^7\) So it is for Ghose in *Crump's Terms*. In short, the argument of this chapter is that the intricate pattern of the novel invites the reader, though not always successfully, to focus more on the psychological quest of Frieda and less on the objective societal conditions in Europe.

To say this is not to ignore the numerous allusions to contemporary society which give rise to so much of the humour and vitality of the novel. In fact reviews have often been content to focus on the portrayal of objective phenomena. Michael Thorpe comments that "godless Crump" spends his time "speculating on the meaninglessness of his and all other lives in what is at once the most technologically sophisticated and the most illiterate and amoral of civilisations."\(^8\) *Crump's Terms* was written in the context of the 1960s, against the backdrop of growing materialism, vast industries and the explosion of pop
culture. Ghose saw the changes as harbingers of anarchy. He considers *Crump's Terms* as a version of Eliot's *The Wasteland*. Speaking about the climate in which the novel was written, Ghose says:

> At that time I was conscious of the decadence that was settling over Europe. 1960s is a time of the coming of the Beatles, the coming of an intense popular culture, and, above all, the adoration of a popular culture by the intellectuals. It was smart to be praising something of passing interest."

*Crump's Terms* is filled with shrill denunciations of various aspects of contemporary society and the values it treasures. The author creates the intellectual manqué Henry Laval at the end for no other reason than to vilify the hypocrisy and wrong-headedness of what Ghose calls the "adoration of popular culture by the intellectuals."

In addition to the social criticism, the novel also possesses an obvious autobiographical dimension. In the 1960s Ghose was a teacher in a Secondary Modern School in London. Also, as he points out in an interview, he was "sufficiently affluent in a lower middle class kind of way to have a car and drive off to Europe every summer" with his wife. Crump is not Ghose, but they do meet at various points. At times the author deliberately provides clues for the reader to make this connection. A case in point is the long sermon about the significance of the year 1952 (p. 174), the year in which, one remembers, Ghose went to England.

To labour this aspect of intentional or biographical fallacy does not serve much purpose in an overall interpretation
of the novel. But it certainly helps to identify the various strands of meaning in Crump's Terms. The novel, then, is a fusion of the social, the personal and the psychological. This fusion does not lead to multiplicity. It brings together the verbal, external and objective with what lies below the surface, with what Robert Humphrey calls "prespeech levels of consciousness." The objective situation of the classroom is the "present" which holds together the diverse layers of experience.

One has to make a careful distinction at this point between the various levels of, say, The Murder of Aziz Khan and the structuring of Crump's Terms. The former, too, cannot be confined to a single meaning without damaging the texture of the work. But all the possible meanings in The Murder of Aziz Khan become evident to the reader who stands close to the position of the narrator. The point of view is static and omniscient. In Crump's Terms the reader is called upon constantly to adjust his point of view and to change his perspective in order to perceive connections and patterns. Jonathan Culler mentions that "the first strategy when confronted with apparent chaos is to adopt a perspectivist position." The technique is a familiar one in modern writing and several of the critical positions adopted by readers to understand modern writing are equally applicable to Crump's Terms. Culler goes on to speak of the "Modernist claim that unity and wholeness need not be lost but can be preserved if one adopts a perspective through which the heterogenous elements can fall into place, as elements of a system." Among other things, one of the concerns of this chapter will be to see
whether the various perspectives available to the reader finally lead to a sense of artistic unity in the novel.

Several critical questions begin to assert themselves in the face of the author's attempts to explore an area of experience which includes the non-verbal and the verbal. Put another way, what does the author do when he wants to portray a reality which cannot be fully articulated, which is not entirely a result of external causes, but which nevertheless must be seen in relation to a network of social relations and memories which are determined by time? The technique of narratorial omniscience proves inadequate in the presence of a need for a perspectivist position. These questions are not peculiar to Crump's Terms. They have been asked, in different ways, by both modern writers and critics of modern writing. In his interesting discussion of Mrs Dalloway, Hillis Miller states that "the most important themes of a given novel are likely to lie not in anything which is explicitly affirmed, but in significances generated by the way in which the story is told." Here Miller draws attention to the complexities of language, narrative voice and structure which go into creating a modern novel. In short, when the reader can no longer bring to the work a coherent framework of values, and when referentiality ceases to be an important touchstone, the work must create its own sense of harmony and unity. The modern writer recognizes that the order that life denies may be achieved through art. Lodge explains the transition from realism to modernism by stating that "from the position that art offers a privileged insight into reality there is a natural progression to the view that art creates its own reality." In a modern
novel, then, the focus falls on form instead of on the meanings it explicitly affirms. "Form," B.S. Johnson rightly counsels, "is not the aim, but the result." But by making a study of the form one moves towards the aim.

The basic mode of the novel is, as Frank Pike points out in a review, "a sophisticated variant of stream-of-consciousness." At the time of writing Crump's Terms Ghose had read Ulysses, and he comments that "some of [the] compound words and neologisms in Crump's Terms are influenced by Joyce." He had read A Room of One's Own, but had not read Woolf's major stream-of-consciousness novels. Faulkner, he says, "is perhaps unconsciously there because [he] read Faulkner ardently as an undergraduate." Golding's Lord of the Flies and Burgess's A Clockwork Orange, although they do not adopt the stream-of-consciousness mode, are obvious precursors of Crump's Terms. The text acknowledges the presence of Beckett when Crump remembers that his actions echo those of a Beckettian character (p. 19). Yet another influence, one which needs to be dealt with in some detail, is B.S. Johnson's Albert Angelo, which was published in 1964.

Albert Angelo concerns itself with the eponymous protagonist, a supply teacher in London whose sessions with the unruly students of his school are juxtaposed with the memories of Jenny, his beloved who deserts him. The plot is close to that of Crump's Terms, and so are several of the techniques, such as repetition, collage and experiment with language. Ghose, who was at this time "being attracted to the new" must have found in the work of his friend a welcome departure from the realistic form.
The relation between Crump's Terms and Albert Angelo invites analysis mainly because the latter is modern in sensibility if not in narrative mode. Charles Sugnet claims that "in the jargon of the American academy, Johnson would probably be called 'modernist' rather than 'postmodernist,'" which is valid only if one stubbornly refuses to recognize Johnson's attempts to subvert the reality he creates. Albert is an alienated figure who observes in Cable Street "a place for outcasts, misfits, where we feel something in common." The alienation surfaces at various levels -- the social, filial and personal -- all of which not only relate to modernist fiction but also to Crump, who is cut off from the other teachers, Frieda and his parents. The materialist ethos of Albert Angelo not only alienates Johnson's protagonist, but also destroys his sense of unity. The author/Albert admits that the novel "attempts to reproduce the moment-to-moment fragmentariness of life." The sense of reality is so sharply felt in the novel partly because it is so heavily autobiographical. Johnson mentions in an interview that along with Trawl and The Unfortunates this novel "demanded to be written out of sheer personal need, psychotherapy if you like." Yet Albert Angelo is in some ways a postmodernist work. The constant shifts in narrative tense, the collage, the rapid transitions, the linguistic experiments and the self-reflexivities place Albert Angelo in the company of Beckett, Barth and Pynchon rather than with Woolf, Joyce and Faulkner. A novelist who makes his protagonist go through almost the entire novel talking about his ex-lover Jenny and then admits, "I've
had no girl called Jenny, whereas hers was Muriel.\textsuperscript{24} can hardly be called modernist. The self-reflexiveness of exposing and satirising the very process of writing the novel is basically a post-Beckett phenomenon.

The extended description of \textit{Albert Angelo} clearly suggests that at least thematically this novel could well have been a starting point for Ghose. The basic metaphor of the classroom as a microcosm of society is something which has its origin in \textit{Albert Angelo}. Midway in the novel, Albert, in the midst of a discussion with Terry about the hypocrisy behind his attempts at teaching, thinks:

\begin{quote}
There was this tremendous need for man to impose a pattern on life, ... to turn wood into planks or blocks or whatever. Inanimate life is always moving towards disintegration, and man is moving in the opposite direction, towards the imposition of order.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

Albert's thoughts reveal a methodological principle which holds good for both Johnson and Ghose. They both create by means of a classroom a paradigm for society on which a sense of order must be imposed. Ghose appears to have been interested in the value of this metaphor, as one encounters a fair number of "classroom" poems in which order is juxtaposed with potential violence and anarchy. The content of "A Difficult Child" in \textit{Jets from Orange} recalls Jim Sutton in \textit{Crump's Terms}. Likewise, "Two Sec. Mods" is an echo of the boys who call themselves the "Corps" at Pinworth School. In both these poems the disorder threatens to engulf the fragile discipline. "The Remove." which was first published in 1968, provides another satiric example of the
tenuousness of the imposition of order. Set against the backdrop of bitter communal hatred and violence in India, the poem describes Mr Iqbal (who could be either Muslim or Sikh) attempting to foster harmony between the Muslims and the Sikhs in a London school. With superb irony, the poem says:

Mr Iqbal has come to London to teach
English to Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims
and has pinned up in his class pictures
of Gandhi and Jinnah, Nehru and Ayub
in case the parents come to ask in Punjabi
how the kids are doing in English.  

Mr Iqbal's efforts are pathetic; Crump's attempts are futile. His students, like Alex and his friends in A Clockwork Orange, harbour a deep grudge against society, against the teacher and the school, which are extensions of the social structure. For the students Crump is a symbol of order and oppression, and by defying him they take their revenge on society.

Had the novel concerned itself solely with the Pinworth School, Crump's Terms would have been a different work, perhaps a realistic, satirical novel. It would still have been cast in the same mold as The Murder of Aziz Khan. In Crump's Terms, however, the classroom is part of a framework which includes the social and the personal, the past and the present, the real and the imaginary. The figure of order is himself an alienated individual who is constantly battling to cope with the disintegration that threatens him. The society which provokes the anger of the students is itself in a state of disorder. Social relations do not offer stability and traditional values turn out to be extremely fragile. Alienation is a condition
which affects everyone, from the homosexual teacher who lives alone, to Mr Davies, the teacher whose pile of papers collects dust in the staffroom.

The significant aspect of *Crump's Terms* is not merely the consciousness of disintegration but also the perception of the breakdown as something atemporal, relational and essentially private. It is this manner of perception that Woolf claims "refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide," meaning the realistic form. The writer then faces the need to discover an alternate form which can cope with the new sense of reality. Says Woolf:

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.  

Here one observes the basic impulse of modernist fiction, which Ghose adopts for his own purposes. In *Crump's Terms* the author tries to bring together in one continuum (this novel, unlike the earlier ones, has no chapter divisions) at least four different dimensions of space. First there is the Pinworth School, the realistic backdrop, the context from which Crump's mind travels to other regions. Second, there is Europe which the reader glimpses through the travels of Crump and Frieda. Third, there is East Germany which emerges mainly through the consciousness of Frieda. Finally there is the realm of fantasy into which Crump's mind wanders whenever he cannot cope with the awareness that his expectations of the ideal do not correspond with the
reality that confronts him. Here again one sees the widening of scope which impels the novel to take on a narrative mode that is other than that of the straightforward realism of, say, *The Murder of Aziz Khan*.

David Daiches, in his discussion of the temporal and spatial dimensions of *To the Lighthouse*, speaks of the two principles Woolf adopts in order to overcome the constraints of time and space. He notes that either time is static while the minds of the characters range in space or space is fixed while the mind travels back and forth in time. Either way, this technique "for representing the nonstatic and the nonfocussed" helps the writer to present "the inner life simultaneously with the outer life." Ghose uses this mode, which Humphrey calls time and space montage, as a major ordering principle. The actual "present" of the novel takes two days, but the memories go considerably back in time, placing layer on layer of experience, until the temporal movement becomes increasingly difficult to follow. From the present of the classroom one slips into the past with Crump and Frieda to Europe. Crump, being an inveterate raconteur, relates classroom anecdotes to Frieda, thus making some of the classroom situations predate the association with her. Frieda speaks compulsively about her parents, which takes the reader a few decades back to Johannesburg. The fantasies of Crump go back to an indeterminate past. Since Ghose does not signal the fluctuation of time by introducing italics as Faulkner does, or ellipsis or illative conjunctions as Woolf does, the reader is often caught unawares when the transition occurs. In fact as Hillis Miller
indicates in his discussion of Mrs Dalloway, "so fluid are the boundaries between past and present that the reader sometimes has great difficulty in knowing whether he is encountering an image from the character's past or something part of the character's immediate experience."\(^3\)\(^2\)

In Crump's Terms the time montage is deliberate and functional. As in all novels which deal with the privacy of consciousness or the inner life of characters, experience cannot be seen as a linear cause-and-effect movement. "Modernist fiction" Lodge rightly maintains, "tends towards a fluid or complex handling of time, involving much cross-reference backwards and forwards across the chronological span of action."\(^3\)\(^3\) In Crump's Terms the fluidity of time stresses the significance of a synchronic perspective while reminding the reader of the importance of the past and its impact on the present. Also, the novel not only defines the past and the present as empirical data, but also as structures of experience embedded in the consciousness of a character. The social criticism of the novel may have a universal validity, but within the structure of the novel the reader sees the decadence of society as the viewpoint of Crump. In other words, time and space montage work together in order to present images filtered through the individual's consciousness. Culler explains that "in order to achieve understanding one must escape time, defeat the chaos of temporal succession ... [and] postulate a point of view which subsumes and neutralises chronology."\(^3\)\(^4\)

The notion of a limited point of view is as important in Crump's Terms as it is in the major modernist writers. The novel
employs indirect interior monologue, which is basically the point of view of the third-person narrator. The function of the narrator is, however, vastly different from that of the omniscient narrator of The Murder of Aziz Khan. In this novel, too, the narrator sometimes steps back to permit the point of view of a character. Such instances, however, are more the exception than the rule. For the most part one encounters the guidance of the narrator in the assessment of characters and events. The world of The Murder of Aziz Khan invites such a narrator. The world of Crump's Terms, on the other hand, is one in which "God sulked in the dark corners, having been booted out of the centre, publicly disgraced, the decorations stripped from his breast" (p. 9). In this Godless world an omniscient narrator would be almost a contradiction in terms. Hence the third-person point of view becomes in effect the voice of one or more characters. In such circumstances indirect interior monologue "retains the fundamental quality of interior monologue in that what it presents of consciousness is direct." Except for the East German sections which present the point of view of Frieda, the consciousness of Crump dominates the novel.

Even when one speaks of limited point of view in a non-realistic work one needs to stress the different possibilities within it. Ford Maddox Ford's The Good Soldier is obviously limited, but one still sees a certain consistency in his angle of vision because the level at which the narrative operates does not vary. The level of consciousness remains static throughout the work. In Crump's Terms the narrator is in greater control of his thoughts at certain times than at others. On page 55, for
example, at a moment of sexual fulfilment Crump's mind unexpectedly and irrationally thinks of a girl in Hiroshima. Since this kind of free association signifies a level somewhat below that of rational consciousness, the onus of making the necessary connection falls on the reader. In the context of the novel the juxtaposition has several possible meanings: the idea of the Second World War, the anarchy in Europe and the emigration of Frieda's parents. It also has a personal significance for Crump. The moment of fulfilment triggering off thoughts of destruction indicates that, deep down, Crump seems to anticipate the separation from Frieda.

The choice of Crump rather than Frieda as the controlling consciousness admirably suits the purposes of the novel. The obvious reason for this choice is that Crump brings together the various dimensions of the novel, thereby providing a kind of unity to the work, at least until the end. More importantly, however, Crump is an English teacher whose cynicism and alienation are combined with a great sensitivity to language, and whose mind is a reservoir of quotations. This paves the way for an exploration of language in order to suggest clues to the design of the novel.

Crump is sufficiently perceptive to be aware of the gap which separates his language from the reality he seeks to describe. He comments at one point that "all perceptions one records are indicative of nothing more than the particular language one has learned, the habits of speech one has acquired within that language" (p. 217). This Wittgensteinian notion ties in with John Weightman's observation that "language, instead of
being the rational instrument of the mind, is a quasi-independent medium whose relationship with reality is more doubtful than ever in the past." The language of Crump's Terms is sometimes expressive and sometimes not. The consequence of this duality is that the language often draws attention to itself.

The novel virtually begins with a list of neologisms, such as "shitette," "turdle," and so forth, invented by the boys of Pinworth School. As the novel progresses one realises that the boys speak almost a different language, like the boys in A Clockwork Orange. Crump's inability to communicate with his students arises partly from his failure to understand their language, except at the most superficial level. At best he records their neologisms, at worst he ridicules them. Either way there is very little communication. The letter that Ronnie Andrews writes to Crump is a classic example of the manner in which the fracturing of language reflects a fracturing of reality. The author places a very articulate man in a classroom of students who fail to understand him and who invent their own language. Whenever Crump tries to impose order, the class rebels, often successfully. Significantly, the collapse of discipline does not manifest itself, except on a few occasions, in an actual demonstration of disobedience. The breakdown is linguistic, and this reiterates the pattern of order and disorder which permeates the novel.

In a less obvious manner the conversations between Crump and Frieda also highlight problems in communication. The two often resort to crowded cities, beaches, hotels and roads in
order to avoid emotional contact, although they are aware of the vulgarity that surrounds them. Frieda admits that the "empty road makes one so self-aware; it becomes so oppressive to hear one's own breathing" (p. 117). Their discussions are often frivolous, their language full of clichés, indicating that they conceal more than they express. Ghose, in his critical work, *Hamlet, Prufrock and Language*, explains:

If only we could hear or speak or arrive at the words which explained, we would know; and having the illusion that there is a necessary correspondence between language and reality, we are driven to despair when our words seem to reveal nothing.  

*Crump's Terms* is, then, among other things, about the failure of language, about silence. The vast array of linguistic styles within the novel are not intended primarily for verisimilitude. In *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, too, one observes a range of linguistic peculiarities, but here the language helps to define character. The correspondence between language and reality remains intact. Language also becomes an instrument of power, and as Ghose points out, "our knowledge of the world is a measure of the language we understand." In that sense the movement from *The Murder of Aziz Khan* to *Crump's Terms* is a journey from speech to silence. In *Crump's Terms* it is obvious that Ghose foregrounds style not only to show its inadequacy but also to suggest that his characters are in fact playing language games. The teacher who inspects Crump's class makes statements which, as Crump notes, are intended to mask her ignorance. When there is a moment of heightened emotion, there is silence, or
minimal use of language. Crump rightly thinks that "there can be silences, a little silence, surely, when the breast has room enough for a Sahara?" (p. 24) When Jim Sutton stands outside the class shortly after he is called a bastard by Crump, there are no words, only tears. At such moments, "the intensity of vision is measured by the failure of rational language."  

Yet language is all that Crump has to reveal his isolation, and if the reader is to understand a structure of experience through his consciousness, language must communicate, at one level or another. A linguistic feature which stands out in the novel is Crump's propensity to spout quotations or invent verse himself. His own verse is often doggerel, invented spontaneously to suit the occasion:

When my love's on the seaside
she's a sailor true;
she wears a white sweater
and her skirt is navy blue.
(CT, p. 39)

Crump is capable, one is inclined to think, of something better than this. Still he delights in inventing these quatrains in order to distract himself or Frieda when disturbing thoughts threaten his consciousness. For the reader the doggerel contrasts sharply with the quotations which come to Crump with considerable frequency. Shakespeare, Marvell, Browning, Tennyson, Hopkins, Yeats, Joyce, Eliot and Beckett are perhaps the authors he most often recalls. He quotes "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," for example, when he thinks of the atmosphere of decadence and alienation around him. He remembers
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" when the notion of quest enters his mind. This technique is a familiar one in modernist writing. Humphrey mentions that "verse quotations, usually in the form of incomplete snatches of either doggerel or great poetry, are used ... by both Joyce and Virginia Woolf."0 One line in particular draws attention to itself in Crump's Terms by refusing to surface fully until Crump, like Beckett's Molloy recalling his name, suddenly remembers the line: "O Heart: this is a dream I had, or not a dream" (p. 134).

This line from Stanley Kunitz's "Poem" comes as a kind of epiphany. Crump experiences almost a physical shock as he remembers this line, providing for the reader the effect of synesthesia:

Just then the little room he was in seemed to give way under him, and holding on to the door-handle, he stopped himself from being knocked against the little aluminium basin.
( CT, p. 134)

At an unguarded moment the quotation surfaces, breaking through the pretences he carefully nurtures, to remind him of his own desolation, the possibility of a broken marriage, and his inability clearly to distinguish fact from fiction.

Since the language of Crump's Terms constantly asserts its autonomy, it hardly serves the purpose of providing a sense of unity to the novel. Yet the stream-of-consciousness novel, too, needs a unity if it is to communicate. Having dispensed with linear pattern, cause-and-effect movement and the referentiality of the mimetic mode, the stream-of-consciousness writer needs an
alternate mode to hold the work together. However chaotic the experience of the novel may be, the reader "demands pattern, discipline and clarity ... in order to have his own disciplined consciousness focussed and in order to be able to understand and interpret." The modernist writer arguably commits himself to the exploration of consciousness rather than the workings of the conscious mind. In the process he adopts the metaphoric mode (which is based on similarity) rather than the metonymic mode (which is based on contiguity). And the metaphoric mode, as Lodge observes, "though it offers itself eagerly for interpretation, it bewilders us with a plethora of possible meanings."

Thus the problem of finding a basis for unity becomes a central concern for the stream-of-consciousness writer. Joyce's multiple patterns which contain the vastness of Ulysses have been dealt with often enough to need no further elaboration. Faulkner in The Sound and the Fury depends heavily on what Melvin Friedman calls "the erection of decisive centers of consciousness." In general terms Friedman adds that "the sections of the stream of consciousness novels are knit together not by progress of some action but by continual cross reference of symbol and image which must be referred to one another spatially."

The structural unity of Crump's Terms comes from the technique of repetition, which is the most important formal principle in the novel. Repetition functions at several points like a motif, but not always so. A motif involves the repetition without variation of an image, a phrase or an idea, which in the
course of the novel begins to acquire a special kind of meaning, depending on the context in which the repetition occurs. Ghose's repetitions accommodate variation, thus demanding what Alain Robbe-Grillet calls the "active, conscious, creative assistance" of the reader. Also, the repetitions often vary in kind, and one needs to be aware of the distinctions in order to understand how the author attempts to embed his themes in a unified structure.

The notion that modern life lacks variety and that predictability and monotony are recognizable aspects of life in a materialist society is perhaps the impulse behind the repetitive pattern in *Crump's Terms*. Ghose appears to have toyed with the idea of a novel which would repeat itself until the end. He remarks in conversation that "one of the ideas [he] had at that time was a novel which was absolutely repetitive." Although *Crump's Terms* does not try to realise it, one sees in the novel a tissue of repetitions which not only expresses or suggests thematic concerns but also links what is spatially or temporally disparate.

The least important pattern of repetition is that which occurs in the "present," namely, the classroom. Whether the classroom situation is downright funny or relatively serious does not really affect the sense of repetition. Whether Crump acts the clown or whether a student displays the centrefold of *Playboy* during a test, the basic point the situation makes is one of disintegration, of Crump's inability to control the chaos. Since the pattern is basically metonymic in that it rises out of a verifiable situation, there is no difficulty in
interpreting the classroom as a synecdoche for the social condition. The boys of the Pinworth School underline one aspect of Crump's alienation, which not only sets the mood for other kinds of alienation but also provides the impetus for Crump's mind to slip into the past.

Once Crump withdraws into the past the repetition occurs at a more important level. Now Crump is not totally in control of the workings of his mind, and hence what he imagines is probably what he would like to imagine. Sometimes the images are metaphoric and sometimes they are metonymic, but either way they form part of a larger pattern which requires careful analysis.

Hillis Miller, in his perceptive critical work *Fiction and Repetition*, says that

> in a novel, what is said two or more times may not be true, but the reader is fairly safe in assuming that it is significant. Any novel is a complex tissue of repetitions, and ... in each case there are repetitions making up the structure of the work within itself, as well as repetitions determining its multiple relations to what is outside it: the author's mind or his life; other works by the same author; psychological, social or historical reality.*

Seen in the light of Miller's broad classification, the repetitious pattern in the consciousness of Crump falls broadly into two categories: images that occur within a specific context and possess a contiguous relation to what is being narrated, and images which enter the consciousness for no apparent reason. Since the novel does not foreground artifice in the manner of postmodern works, the pattern of repetition takes on the force of obsession and acquires a certain thematic significance. In
Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, for example, the *deja vu* is part of the artifice and hence the author's expectations and the reader's responses are in some ways different from those of in, say, *Mrs Dalloway* or *Crump's Terms*.

Even the metonymic repetitions sometimes function in different ways. There is, for instance, Crump's willingness to immerse himself in the water, as against Frieda's half-hearted attempts and final refusal to enter the water. At its most superficial level the scene enacts a kind of tourist sensibility, a blind acceptance of what the fashion magazines promote. At another level, Crump obviously retains this image as an indication of his capacity to participate in life as against Frieda's withdrawal. The reader, however, discovers at the end (the narrator does not help much) that the image is probably a product of wish-fulfilment, and that it is really Crump who shies away from life and hides behind his rhetoric.

A similar, though less complex, image is Crump's obsessive concern, both in England and in Europe, with lavatories and defecation. It is possible to argue that by concerning himself with such details he is in fact presenting a truthful paradigm of reality. An interesting and relevant comparison is B.S. Johnson's comment in *Albert Angelo* that "Albert defecates for instance only once during the whole of this book: what sort of a paradigm of truth is that?" More important perhaps is that Crump's concern with defecation indicates his disgust with himself and with life in general, in the manner of Beckett's Molloy.

In these instances the pattern does not vary and the effect
it achieves depends heavily on the consistency of the repetition. Sometimes there is deliberate variation, and the change imparts meaning through contrast. The sexual imagery, for instance, is pervasive in the novel. The Pinworth School boys, predictably, are always looking for sexual puns. Although Crump pays little attention to the boys, his mind, triggered off by the sexual innuendoes of the boys, often reaches back to his sex life with Frieda. The reader then sees a somewhat libidinous Crump and a reticent Frieda. Until the end, the pattern is of Crump demanding sex at every opportunity and Frieda acquiescing, but always making sure she does not conceive. Only after the visit to East Germany does she initiate sex, and this time she ignores preventive methods and conceives. Here the variation stresses the importance of the recurring pattern. As Robbe-Grillet states in the novel Jealousy, "these repetitions, these tiny variations ... can give rise to modifications - though barely perceptible - eventually moving quite far from the point of departure." The notions of home and fulfilment which Frieda associates with East Germany are manifested in her desire to bear a child. The ideas of creativity and new life are woven into the pattern of sexual imagery, which for the most part expresses only the mechanical quality of Crump's sex life.

The two dominant metaphoric images to be repeated are those of two old ladies leaving a museum and a naked, frightened girl being whipped by soldiers. The latter could well be a manifestation of latent erotic sadism, but it could also be a distorted version of what Crump thinks could happen to Frieda in East Germany. The connection, however, is essentially
metaphoric, as there is no indication in the novel that Frieda is subjected to physical torture. The image of the two old ladies leaving the museum is a peripheral one which is embedded in Crump's consciousness, but which really has the function of leading the reader to the museum that Crump and Frieda visit. At this point the metaphoric image becomes metonymic, but it still possesses a symbolic value. Crump and Frieda rush through the museum, thus symbolically traversing the history of mankind in five minutes. As soon as they emerge from the museum they spot the two ladies leaving for home. They are perhaps objective correlatives for the emptiness and weariness of modern life. Juxtaposed with the tour of the museum, the old ladies become symbols of the human condition of alienation itself.

The metaphoric and metonymic dimensions of repetition sometimes blend so harmoniously that the reader can hardly tell one from the other. Ironically, Crump (who lets these repetitious patterns enter his consciousness as reminders of his past) is also aware that what his mind enacts could well be metaphors. In one of the "present" moments when his rational mind asserts itself he thinks of the choir rehearsals which take place year after year, and adds that

after the event, when images recur it is only a conceit of the mind which presumes that they are accurate representations of what was observed for a moment once or twice or many times, successively or separately, recently or a long time ago, everything, after all, is metaphor.

(CT, p. 106)

Once the reader picks up the clue that Crump provides, examples
immediately present themselves. A case in point is Crump's memory of Frieda getting dressed after she gets up from bed. At first the image looks metonymic, quite unlike Crump's numerous fantasies of being a professional athlete, a professor or a director of a firm. A closer look, however, yields different results. Several times in the novel, this description appears:

For a moment he saw her standing naked before picking up a bra, and he observed her with objective detachment, as he might a painting, enjoying the particular disposition of form and colour during the second or two in which her body seemed still, stooping in the pose of being just about to pick up the bra. (CT, p. 84)

In the context of the novel, the image appears probable enough. Yet the language suggests other possibilities. The long compound sentence, the piling up of subordinate clauses and the parallelism in the syntax warn the reader that Crump could be describing a figment of his imagination. The critical stance he takes and the statuesque pose he imagines are in all probability attempts to sublimate the experience of betrayal, to remember Frieda in a manner which preserves the detachment of art. This memory is simply a fantasy. A somewhat similar episode occurs at the beginning of The Murder of Aziz Khan when Afaq thinks of Razia in her room dressing for the evening. Here too the reader is given the description of Razia as a product of fantasy. Afaq thinks of Razia as a result of sexual frustration. Crump recalls the erotic image of Frieda for the same reason that he remembers quotations from the past: to fight off the pressure of reality.

What needs to be stressed here is that the technique of
repetition provides a structural unity to the novel on a synchronic axis. To explain the novel entirely along a diachronic axis would be to misunderstand and misinterpret. Arguably the classroom scenes, the episodes in Europe and Frieda's defection to East Germany are not totally discrete. They are not like, say, Clarissa Dalloway's life as against that of Septimus. Mrs Dalloway can only be understood by adopting a metaphoric mode of analysis. In Crump's Terms the temptation is to sift the various layers and impose a pattern of contiguity. This method leads, for instance, to establishing a relation between Crump's married life and Frieda's desertion. Lorna Sage says that Frieda "puts frontier posts and border guards between them as a final damning comment on [Crump's] narcissistic ironies and compromised 'awareness.'"59 This is an attempt to create a causal movement which appears inadequate to explain the structure of Crump's Terms. Both Frieda and Crump are involved in an elaborate game of self-deception, but there is no indication that they do not, in their own ways, love each other. Frieda's defection is an act of faith, an act of self-fulfilment which has little to do with social relations. In fact one would hardly expect Frieda to carry Crump's child if she disliked him. For Frieda, quite simply, "a home has no identity except through self-knowledge,"50 and she defects in order to gain that knowledge. Yet she moves from one country to another, which asserts the primacy of linearity and referentiality that the pattern of repetition tries to eclipse by superimposing circularity and antireferentiality. While the emotional trauma Frieda experiences demands the flexibility of stream of
consciousness, the quality of her choice invites the centrifugal quality of realism; the need to balance both explains the uncertainty at the end of the novel.

However, Ghose's movement from *The Murder of Aziz Khan* to *Crump's Terms* is a shift from the metonymic mode to the metaphoric mode, in the manner of Joyce and Woolf. To quote Lodge, the "logically articulated plot and solidly specified setting, melts away," and "the unity and coherence of the narratives come to inhere in the repetition of motifs and symbols, while the local texture of the writing becomes more and more densely embroidered with metaphor and simile." For Ghose, this phase is an experimental one, an attempt to explore the possibilities of a nonrealistic medium, which does not totally succeed. Certainly towards the end the novel weakens considerably and the unity begins to dissipate when he tries to arrest the inconclusiveness of continual repetition.

The liveliness and exuberance of *Crump's Terms*, which John Mellors in a review calls the "pleasure of playing with words," has a seductive power that often prevents the reader from spotting the shortcomings of the novel. Reviewers are often vague about the problems, but the adjectives they use, such as "self-indulgent" and "arbitrary" often suggest a lurking dissatisfaction with the novel. Ghose himself mentions the difficulties in finding a publisher for the novel. Says Ghose:

> What happened to *Crump's Terms* was that when I finished it in 1968 and sent it to Macmillan, they rejected it. Several other publishers rejected it, too, ... nobody wanted it. Everybody said that I was wasting my time.
The publishing history is not always a valuable guide to the quality of a work. The publishers in all probability expected another work like *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. Still that does not eclipse the novel's few but conspicuous weaknesses. The major defect is that it goes beyond its logical conclusion in order to achieve an effective closure. The novel should have concluded with Frieda's defection to East Germany. At this point the various dimensions of alienation come together as one unified structure. Everything that precedes Frieda's defection now falls into proper perspective. The novel, however, does not conclude here but goes on, with further classroom episodes, leading to a gratuitous party which serves no other purpose except to denounce the sham of contemporary life and pop culture. The notion that "Europe is dying and its peoples play at being alive" (p. 200), is developed so fully in the early part of the novel that the last part appears redundant. In fact the party reads so much like an appendage that the author has to introduce Frieda's name arbitrarily in order to preserve a continuity with the rest of the novel. The novel's failure to sustain itself at the end raises questions not only about the unity of the work but also about the narrative mode.

Individual episodes in the novel, read in isolation, have several synecdochic features. The minute descriptions of dress and food in the episodes in Europe are either metonymic or synecdochic. They do not lie beyond the reach of the realistic medium. Social criticism, one remembers, has been the special province of the mimetic mode. In the Frieda episodes, however, there is a necessary plunge into the consciousness of a
character, which requires a medium that is more fluid than the realistic one. Here too the reader gathers sufficient information to provide a realistic context for Frieda's sense of dissatisfaction. Although the realistic medium could not have achieved the fluidity that *Crump's Terms* demands, the question which asserts itself is whether the content of the novel justifies the form. In *Crump's Terms* the "present" and the travels in Europe are evidently referential. Frieda's despair, on the other hand, is a subjective one which "might be called an alienation from the self, a loss of faith in the unity and consciously rational self-management of the human personality." Yet the solution she decides on to dispel her emotional trauma is the realistic one of returning to the land of her birth. In these circumstances one sometimes wonders whether some other mode, perhaps the Proustian psychological mode, would have been a more suitable one for the purposes of this novel. That Ghose himself appears to have entertained some doubts about the narrative mode is evident at the end of *Crump's Terms*.

Towards the end there is a long, indirect interior monologue in which Crump talks to an imaginary Bill Whiting and tries to reconcile all the conflicting forces in his mind. The collapse of logic ("I neither know nor care. Damn it, of course I care" [p. 218]) reveals the mind sinking lower and lower below the level of consciousness, until it suddenly moves into the realm of fantasy. The fantasy (which is described in realistic terms) leads his mind into the past, into a forest echoing with the sounds of hunting, and he eventually becomes the prey.
This episode is unlike anything else in the novel, and its inclusion at the end reinforces the conviction that the thematics of native-alien experience needs to be looked at from yet another perspective. The stream-of-consciousness mode, useful as it is for probing subjective states and to draw the reader into the artifact, flaunts its techniques to the point of distracting the reader and destroying the balance between the objective and the subjective worlds that the treatment of native-alien experience seems to demand. And this final section creates in microcosm another model in which a causal movement of events and a realistic backdrop coexist with a metaphoric, nonrealistic underpinning. In short, at the end of Crump's Terms the author appears to glimpse the genesis of The Incredible Brazilian.
Notes

1 Despite the fact that A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man comes between the two, the transition is still significant.


3 (London: Macmillan, 1975). All quotations are from this edition, and the page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated CT.


7 Woolf, p. 108.


9 Personal interview with the author, 14 Aug. 1984. Ghose is very explicit about his reaction as a writer to the English scene in an article written on the eve of his departure to the United States. In this he says that "London, like Paris or Amsterdam or Berlin, or whichever segment of the same metropolitan mosaic I looked at, became a culture which began to smell of polythene. And the situation of the writer, my situation at any rate, became more and more that of one who has unwittingly put his head in a polythene bag and begun to suffocate." See "Ghose's London: A Valediction," The Hudson


12 Culler, 16.


14 Lodge, p. 48.


17 Personal interview.

18 Personal interview.

19 An interesting parallel between Crump and Molloy is that the former uses The Times Literary Supplement to light a fire while the latter uses it to wipe himself.


22 Albert, p. 169.

23 The Imagination on Trial, p. 85.

24 Albert, p. 171.

25 Albert, p. 133.


27 Woolf, p. 105.


29 The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago: Univ. of

30 Humphrey, p. 50.

31 See Humphrey, pages 57, 58, 71 for detailed analysis.

32 Miller, p. 184.

33 Lodge, p. 46.

34 Culler, 17.

35 Humphrey, p. 29.


38 Personal interview.

39 Hamlet, p. 17.

40 Humphrey, p. 40.

41 Humphrey, p. 86.

42 Lodge, p. 46. The distinction Lodge makes between metaphor and metonymy is crucial to his interpretation of modern literature. He states in the preface that "the distinction between metaphoric and metonymic modes ... suggested the possibility of an all-embracing typology of literary modes." I have adopted the principles he formulates in relation to the two terms. For a perceptive analysis see pages 74-124.


44 Friedman, p. 24.


46 Miller, pp. 2-3. Hillis Miller's book-length study of the function of repetition in fiction is probably the first of its kind. Although I have not adopted his methodological
principles, I have benefitted immensely from his comments and insights.

47 Albert, p. 170.
50 Gurr, p. 15.
51 Lodge, p. 177.
53 Mellors, p. 518.
54 Frank Pike, p. 461.
55 Personal interview.
Chapter 4

The Fabulous Picaro: The Incredible Brazilian

The narrator of Ghose’s recent critical work, The Fiction of Reality (1983), while propounding a series of intellectual propositions about fiction in general, has this to say about the relation between narrative mode and content:

Sometimes I’ve begun a new novel because a certain way of writing attracted me while composing my previous novel, which new form, however, did not suit the inner necessities of the work in progress so that I’ve had to invent a new work in order to satisfy an irrational craving to see what the new form looks like when it appears out of its own necessity in a context natural to it.

The context in which this passage appears offers no clues to the work the narrator may have had in mind. However, the publication record of Crump’s Terms, combined with the unmistakable attempt to counterpoint stream-of-consciousness with a sequential mode at the end of the novel, make this statement applicable to the genesis of The Incredible Brazilian.

To say what the Brazilian trilogy excludes is perhaps less challenging than to describe what it actually does. The strikingly referential surface and the consistent linearity of the three novels which constitute The Incredible Brazilian completely detach this work from the company of the earlier stream-of-consciousness work, Crump’s Terms. Thematically, I shall argue later, the two works are linked, but the link lies below the surface and emerges only under careful scrutiny. If
one looks for continuity, the novel which offers itself for comparison with the trilogy is not Crump's Terms but the earlier and more traditional novel, The Murder of Aziz Khan. In addition to the realistic surface, notions of land, ownership and power which inform both works tend to shrink the obvious differences between Kalapur and Brazil. In fact, the reader could well suspect that in the Brazilian trilogy the author is re-writing -- in more extended form -- the earlier novel. This view would seem plausible enough in the light of the luke-warm reception of Crump's Terms and the relative success of The Murder of Aziz Khan. Tempting as it is, this interpretation hardly does justice to the overall conception of the trilogy. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the dichotomy between "story" and "discourse" and to demonstrate that far from re-writing the earlier work, the author is experimenting with a different mode in the trilogy, a mode which enables him to express his obsessive concerns with greater complexity. I shall argue that a major challenge for the reader of the trilogy is its elusiveness, and its propensity to frustrate the reader's attempts to provide a convenient taxonomy that facilitates explication. Whatever the critical problems posed by the earlier works of Ghose, taxonomy was not one of them. The reader's task in the earlier novels is not to identify and classify the mode so much as to explore the author's exploitation of the resources available to him within a given mode. In the Brazilian trilogy classification becomes a central concern, without which explication would appear incomplete. If one contends that Ghose no longer works the realistic vein, and is no longer interested
in stream-of-consciousness, then it is essential that an attempt be made to understand the new narrative mode he employs.

Ghose's own comments about the decision to chronicle in fictional terms the history of modern Brazil are deliberately ambiguous. He states in conversation that the trilogy was written at least partly for commercial reasons; it was a fun book to write, and it amuses him that people continue to read it. Talking about the intellectual preparation which preceded the writing, he says in an interview that he "read a lot of history at that time," and "was writing a novel which encompasses the history of Brazil"; but "he knew very little about Brazil" and the trilogy is "is not a historical novel although it uses history." Facetious, paradoxical and dismissive as they may seem, the comments hint obliquely at the submerged complexities which are of greater significance than the compelling sequentiality and the mimetic surface of the trilogy.

The most conspicuous feature of the trilogy, and perhaps the most misleading one, is the narrative strategy of knitting together a string of incidents by the simple expedient of making the protagonist the focal point of all of them. The narrator/protagonist Gregorio carries the narrative thread with him as he moves through the three bulky novels, encountering one adventure after another. Evidently Gregorio belongs to the company of a long line of illustrious figures, the most famous of whom is perhaps Don Quixote. The author, in creating this picaresque figure, offers to the reader an order of experience which demands that he confront the suspicion that the author,
weary of the experimentalism of Crump's Terms, is reverting to a mode which not only pre-dates nineteenth-century realism, but also adopts what is perhaps the earliest and easiest mode of fictional writing, namely, the picaresque mode. Put simply, is the trilogy, coming as it does in the 1970s, an anachronistic work which destroys the evolutionary pattern of Ghose's literary career, or does it mark yet another important and successful phase? Beatrice Stoerk asserts that "with the trilogy, Zulfikar Ghose, besides being a prominent poet, takes his place among our most contemporary and notable writers of fiction." One of the major objectives of this chapter is to test the validity of this claim.

Critical opinion on The Incredible Brazilian has been varied, from enthusiastic admiration to total disapproval. But all critics have been unanimous in identifying the trilogy as a version of historical narrative. Anthony Burgess calls The Native "a wildly funny adventure set in seventeenth-century Brazil." About The Beautiful Empire, Bilqis Siddiqi states that "the novel is also the story of the utterly selfish and depraved world of the affluent European rubber merchants who ruthlessly exploit the natives by virtually killing them with labor at starvation wages." Anthony Thwaite observes that "A Different World is dominated by Brazil itself, a vast corrupted paradise in which sexual politics, revolutionary politics and the brutal machismo of military dictatorship contend." None of these statements is wrong, as the ensuing summary indicates, yet to stress external reality seems to propel the trilogy into a niche where it does not fully belong.
The narrative of the first part, entitled *The Native*,\(^9\) begins around 1650 and ends in 1710, when the protagonist Gregorio dies of a heart attack while making love to a young French transvestite. Born the son of a plantation owner, his adolescence is spent whipping slaves, drinking, and experimenting with sex. In his teens he accompanies an expedition to hunt Indians and soon finds himself the sole survivor. He has a variety of experiences, returns home, and becomes the master of his father's land. Later he is thrown into jail, sold as a slave, escapes to join a Negro colony, leaves again and establishes a brothel. He acquires considerable wealth and dies at a time when the French are on the offensive against the Portuguese.

The second part, *The Beautiful Empire*,\(^{10}\) begins around 1850 when the rubber plantations were beginning to attract immigrants from all parts of Europe. Gregorio is born to a Brazilian father and an English mother. He joins the army in a battle against Paraguay, later goes to England to visit his parents, and then returns once more to Brazil. In the course of time he acquires a large fortune by establishing several floating brothels. At the end of the novel luck deserts Gregorio when the rubber boom fails, and he is arrested for a crime he committed fifty years earlier as a soldier in the Brazilian army.

*A Different World* \(^{11}\) brings the narrative to the present (the 1970s), when Brazil is caught in a vortex of political activity and revolutionary fervor. Gregorio is once again the son of a farm owner, but this time while his father is Brazilian his mother is French. He goes to the United States and receives
a smattering of education. Before he takes his degree his parents die in an air crash and he returns to Rio de Janeiro. He then gets involved with urban guerillas, and is eventually arrested and briefly incarcerated. The novel ends with Gregorio helping to save the U.S. Secretary of State from being kidnapped.

The summary of events which constitute the narrative thread of the trilogy reiterates the "forward-moving pressure" (Robert Scholes's term) and the sequentiality of the trilogy. Generically this amounts to a combination of the mimetic and picaresque in a manner which stresses individual destiny and public (historical) events. Biographical and literary influences support this reading of the novels. At the time the novels were written Ghose had made several trips to Brazil and had acquired what he calls "a fascination with the imagery of the country." He had also discovered a seminal anthropological work, Gilberto Freyre's *The Masters and the Slaves*, which apparently fascinated him so much that it triggered an entire world within him, and resulted in *The Incredible Brazilian*. The significance of Freyre's perceptive study of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Brazil in relation to the trilogy can hardly be over-emphasized. In fact, Gregorio pays a public tribute to Freyre in *A Different World* by stating that the accidental discovery of Freyre set in motion the whole process of inherited memory (*DW*, p. 193). The class structure, social habits, religious practices, sexual life, in short the entire Weltanschauung the trilogy so meticulously constructs owes so much to Freyre that had *The Masters and the Slaves* been a less voluminous work one would
recommend it as essential pre-reading for the study of the Brazilian trilogy.

The purpose of gradually accumulating evidence to support a referential, diachronic reading of the text is not to create an impressive edifice whose fall will be all the more effective when it occurs. The realistic surface is not merely the "story" which needs to be brushed away in order to perceive the "discourse." Such a scheme would make the trilogy an allegory, which it is not. Unless one accepts the validity of the portrayal of external reality, one can hardly understand the synchronic countercharge which combats the sequentiality in order to generate an antireferential meaning. In order to understand the complexity of the narrative mode, one needs to concede that the Brazil Ghose presents is in fact Brazil.

Geoffrey Harpham, who encounters somewhat similar problems in the writings of E.L. Doctorow, points out "that although meaning cannot be determined until sequence is established, sequence does not produce meaning, but actually seems to struggle against it." In the trilogy the sequence produces an order of meaning which both complements and counters the meaning generated by the non-sequential movement.

Except at certain self-conscious moments, the language appears to encourage a metonymic reading of the text. Particularly in the first two novels, the prosaic quality of Gregorio's mind, and the choice of adopting the first-person narrative voice make the metonymic diction almost an automatic choice. Although Gregorio adopts a somewhat mannered prose in order to achieve verisimilitude, the syntax is largely
conventional, and the choice of words is dictated by a need to eschew the advantage and wisdom of hindsight. All these factors combine to produce a diction which, for the most part, operates on the level of contiguity rather than contrast. Gregorio's description of Singleton's home, for instance, serves to illustrate the quality of his diction:

He led me through a wide hall which had a floor of white marble; a gilded mirror hung on the wall to my right and opposite it a painting of two horses standing in a meadow with a barn in the distance. (BE, p. 113-14)

This passage is clearly a straightforward description. The marble, the mirror and the painting serve the metonymic or synecdochic function of pointing to the wealth, ostentation and perhaps the foppishness of the Singleton home.

The language reinforces the action, which takes place on a diachronic axis, a fact authenticated by the constant mention of dates in the trilogy. Despite the fact that Gregorio occasionally recalls his past lives, very few attempts are made to dislocate the chronology of the re-telling. When there is a dislocation, as in the episodes in The Beautiful Empire in which Gregorio remembers his previous life as Tiradentes, the break in the chronology is set apart, so to speak, so that it hardly affects the narrative thread. Also, strict causality determines the chain of events. The picaresque mode enables Gregorio to bring into his narrative a wide range of characters who in turn create a realistic social milieu. The interaction between Gregorio and his society, at one level, would conform to the
requirements of the standard nineteenth-century novel; or, at another, according to Claudio Guillén, to the requirements of the picaresque novel. ¹⁴

Gregorio, however, is more than an individual who makes his fortunes in the New World. He is both an agent and victim of historical process. Not only does the personal life of Gregorio run a parallel course with the history of his country, the two strands intersect at various points, with the consequence that Gregorio is constantly called upon to alter his life and, at the same time, the history of Brazil. Even the choice of the protagonist's name, Gregorio Peixoto da Silva Xavier, is not simply a gratuitous or representative one. Beatrice Stoerk points out that

> the name of the man who had joined a conspiracy against Portuguese colonial authorities and had been hanged, quartered and then beheaded in 1789 was Joaquim da Silva Xavier. ¹⁵

Ghose does not leave it to the reader's knowledge of Brazilian history to discover the correspondence for himself. By involving Gregorio in a series of bizarre and ritualistic adventures in *The Beautiful Empire*, the implied author not only underlines the correspondence between the two, but also insists that Gregorio is in fact the reincarnation of the historical figure. This piece of information has the obvious function of filling in the hiatus between the first and second parts of the trilogy. Since the identification is not elaborated upon, Gregorio's claim can neither be proved nor disproved. But structurally and thematically the identification performs a crucial function, for
it establishes Gregorio as ruler and ruled, agent and victim. Gregorio's career as a master of slaves and women, far from running counter to the rebelliousness of Joaquim, complements it when the reader recognizes that Gregorio is in all the novels, at some point, a rebel. In The Native Gregorio becomes the chief of a runaway Negro colony for ten years. The actual existence of such colonies validates the referential half of Gregorio's narrative, and consequently lends credence to the whole. Freyre observes that "many a Negro had in fact left the coast or the sugar-raising zone to take refuge in a quilombo, or fugitive-slave settlement, in the backlands," 16 a statement which lends plausibility to Gregorio's claim. In the second novel Gregorio is at least briefly a rebel when he runs away from home to enlist in the army. In the final novel he is for the most part nothing other than a rebel, an urban guerilla and a preacher or revolutionary ideology.

Of course, one can hardly refute the view that the primary impression of Gregorio in the first two novels is that of a member of the ruling class, an owner of lands, brothels, money, and so forth, rather than a rebel. However, the duality of ruler and ruled offers no real contradiction in the narrative. Such are the vicissitudes of colonial life that Gregorio's movement on the wheel of fortune seems convincing enough. Further, it equips him to be the person who could "portray the kind of individual destiny that can directly and at the same time typically express the problems of an epoch." 17

Gregorio as reincarnation of Joaquim is one of the many instances which gives to the trilogy the status of
historical/relistic fiction. Whenever something of historical significance occurs, whether it is the discovery of gold, the transplantation of rubber, the battle of the Triple Alliance against Paraguay or the kidnapping of an ambassador, Gregorio is at least tangentially involved in it. When he claims that he has "been present to witness the most significant events that have shaped the destiny of Brazil" (BE, p. 297), there is more than a germ of truth in it. In addition to claiming his own role in the destiny of his country, Gregorio introduces into his narrative a liberal sprinkling of historical data, ranging from minor expeditions to major coups d'etat, all of which serve the purpose of situating the trilogy in a historically verifiable context rather than an imaginary setting which uses the trappings of verisimilitude.

One needs to stress the specificity and historicity of the trilogy not only to explore its intricate structure but also in order to clearly distinguish this phase from a later one in which the external features of Spanish America are underplayed to such an extent that one can hardly locate the setting with any degree of specificity. A novel which achieves this effect by juxtaposing realistic description with unspecified setting draws attention to several implications which affect narrative mode and ontology. A case in point is Raymond Roussel's Impressions of Africa in which Africa per se hardly possesses any significance. Ghose himself points out the detail that Roussel travelled round the world, but hardly made use of what he saw in his fiction. Roussel's title becomes, then, both a hoax and an indication of a nonrealistic imaginative structure. The
conceptual basis of such a work suggests that the mind "turns to the world of pure fiction to see if reality may not be discovered through the formulations of fiction." \(^{21}\)

Such a conception of fiction is what Ghose eventually moves towards, but the trilogy remains a work "whose root and branch have been nourished in the rubber country, Brazil." \(^{22}\) Whether one attaches the label historical fiction, realistic fiction, or, in the case of A Different World, political fiction, does not in the final analysis matter for the reader who is concerned with a particular order of reality. At this level, in terms of taxonomy, the Brazilian trilogy would take its place alongside Leonard Woolf's A Village in the Jungle (1913), V.S. Reid's New Day (1949), Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas (1961), Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges (1964) or any one of the several hundred novels which deal with the reality of colonial experience in realistic terms. Despite the fact that Gregorio is the "incredible" Brazilian, he meticulously provides for the reader an "imagined reality." When Gregorio, in the prologue to The Native, claims that he is "an honest man" and that he presents a "profoundly truthful narrative" (p. 9), the reader, inevitably reminded of Conrad's Marlow, is wary and expects a reversal. In A Different World when Gregorio asserts that through his "recreated body, again and again, Brazil has revealed the elaborate pattern of its history and of its destiny" (p. 14), the text at least partially validates the claim.

As realistic works which depict the colonial experience, the trilogy brings together a variety of familiar themes, of the
suppression of the natives, the rape of the land, the struggle for power, and so forth. Linked to them are notions of language, identity, and conflict of cultures. At the level of theme it is easy to perceive why the trilogy looks at times like a reworking of *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. Both works traverse the same territory, although the trilogy, by virtue of its larger scope, provides more comprehensive treatment. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* encapsulates the past by dealing with its impact on the present, while the trilogy takes the reader back to the sources of corruption. Both works, finally, stress the politics of ownership.

The link between the trilogy and *Crump's Terms* is less apparent, but still visible when one goes beyond the garrulousness of Crump to the predicament of Frieda and what she comes to represent in the novel. What Frieda illustrates through her life are the politics of Germany, the experience of expatriation, exile and the need for identity. Frieda's interrogation in East Germany obviously parallels the interrogation episodes in *A Different World*. Amalia's statement that "life changes when a political system changes" (*DW*, p. 142) could well be that of Frieda recounting her experiences in East Germany. More importantly, Frieda's history is also a metaphor for the experience of expatriation and exile. The details which make her case peculiarly her own hardly mask the fact that her experience is, in its basic pattern, a familiar and typical one in a Third World context, as applicable to Brazil as it is to South Africa.

The experience of Brazil is also in many ways a paradigm
for the colonial experience. It is no wonder that Ghose says: "in The Incredible Brazilian in a way I am talking about myself." Many incidents recorded in the Brazilian trilogy, such as harsh rule, cheap labor, plantation economy, missionary zeal and the sacking of cities are not experiences unknown to India. In fact Brazil is, like India, very much a "melting pot."
The Indian experience as analogous to the Brazilian one is not unintentional in the trilogy. References to India are sprinkled through all three novels, making the relation a conscious one.
The epigraph of The Beautiful Empire which speaks of the "Ganges [which] irrigates all India" goes on to link the Ganges metaphorically with the Amazon, thereby providing a clue to the reader to bear in mind the universality of the Brazilian experience. It is not without significance that when Gregorio in The Beautiful Empire informs his father that he is leaving England for Brazil, the father advises him to "be careful," for "India is a barbarous place" (BE, p. 86). 

To demonstrate that the Brazilian trilogy possesses a certain universality enhances the texture of the work; but it hardly refutes the charge that it is an anachronistic work of naive realism, marking a regression in the literary career of Ghose. Also, to insist on the primacy of the referent above the text is to ignore the clues the text provides to compel a different reading of the novels. If one agrees with Gregorio's own contention that "all reality is only a construct of the imagination" (DW, p. 75), then one needs to find a critical approach which places the narrative above the referent.

At the time the trilogy came to be written Ghose was
becoming increasingly disenchanted with novels that stressed subject matter or were solely concerned with didactic intent. His comment that writers like "Hemingway and Graham Greene, who travel in search of subject matter or for an exotic setting ... are the makers of consumer products and are of no enduring value to the history of human imagination" seems a fair indication of his stance vis-à-vis the process of writing realistic fiction. It must be remembered that Ghose placed referent above art in The Murder of Aziz Khan, consciousness above design in Crump's Terms; now he appears to have reached the conclusion that "truth is to be perceived not by looking at the world, but by looking at the way in which images have been structured to complete the internal, imaginative order of the work."

Ghose's formulation of the objectives of fiction leads eventually to the door of the postmodern anti-narrative which dislocates narrative to such an extent that it foregrounds its own mechanism. Such anti-narratives, as Robert Scholes observes, are "metafictional because they ultimately force us to draw our attention away from the construction of a diegesis according to our habitual interpretive processes." Ghose reaches this phase in Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script (1981), but one would hesitate to call the trilogy an example of anti-narrative. Perhaps the closest one comes to defining the trilogy is by calling it a "modern picaresque," a phrase which needs to be carefully analysed before it is accepted.

Modern picaresque, as defined by Scholes, seems to belong to a grey area, somewhere between the traditional picaresque and the metafictional anti-narrative of recent times. Scholes
concedes that picaresque, whether traditional or modern, shows "a special relish for the grotesque details of contemporary life," but insists that the modern adaptation of the picaresque a "more verbal kind of fiction." What, according to Scholes, differentiates the modern picaresque from the eighteenth and nineteenth century version and connects it with more ancient forms, is the element of fabulosity. He adds that "modern fabulation, like the ancient fabling of Aesop, tends away from the representation of reality but returns toward actual human life by way of ethically controlled fantasy." The fiction of Joseph Heller, Terry Southern and John Hawkes becomes the basis of Scholes's argument about the notion of a modern picaresque. All these writers move away from the traditional picaresque so consistently that the reader often loses track of the faint picaresque underpinning of their writings. Catch-22, for instance, is loosely episodic in the manner of, say, Joseph Andrews, but the linearity is so often deliberately confused that tracing the time scheme becomes an arduous task for the reader. Hawkes's The Lime Twig, on the other hand, has a greater sense of plot, and moves forward in a stumbling kind of way, but its affinities with the traditional picaresque are obviously muted. Scholes himself admits that Hawkes "has accepted some of the dark premises of the picaresque attitude, but he had moved very far indeed from the loose and episodic picaresque form, with its simple chronological string of events in the life of a roguish individual." Not only is the linearity distorted and causality blurred in Hawkes, the characters no longer seem to be functioning in a clearly definable social ethos.
The purpose of this long digression is not to discuss the validity or usefulness of Scholes's classification so much as to demonstrate that the Brazilian trilogy, despite its modern characteristics, does not quite belong to this category of writing. On the contrary, several traditional descriptions of the conventions of the picaresque mode appear to fit The Incredible Brazilian readily enough. Harold Weston's definition of the picaro as "a cheerful opportunist ... seeking in the daily round for a chance to turn the affair of the moment to his personal advantage" captures the essence of Gregorio's life. In the confused, selfish and avaricious world of Brazil one sees "the whole world of Picaresque heredom with its thievery, its adultery, its debauchery, wasting its splendid vitality in grasping at baubles in Vanity Fair." Even beyond the elements of plot, setting and events, the overall intellectual conception of the trilogy shares something fundamental with the traditional picaresque. From the very beginning the picaresque form carried with it an element of social protest, of destroying the myths perpetuated by the most articulate class of society within which the action of the novel takes place. Irving Howe rightly maintains that "the picaresque novel, through the figure of the rogue-hero, obliquely suggested the new possibilities for social mobility." At one point in Don Quixote, the narrator admits that his "object has been to arouse men's contempt for all fabulous and absurd stories of knight-errantry," thereby establishing his work as a protest against a certain order of myth. The Brazilian trilogy too destroys a myth, the myth of civilisation and progress. Beginning with faint intimations of
the completeness and harmony of Brazilian Indian life, the novels then place layer on layer of so-called civilisation in the form of a palimpsest, until at the end the reader is convinced that the New World has regressed to a form of barbarism. Gregorio's comment in A Different World -- "I wept for myself who had seen the world begin to be taken over by barbarians," (p. 116) -- clinches the myth-breaking process of the novels.

However, despite these undeniable affinities with the traditional picaresque, the Brazilian trilogy refuses to fit comfortably into the old mold any more than it does into the modern counterpart. The more one reads the trilogy the more one is convinced that Ghose adapts rather than utilises the conventions of the traditional picaresque. The distinctly modern quality of the trilogy arises from the fact that Ghose arouses in the reader certain expectations by giving the appearance of conforming to tradition, and then sets up another structure based on technical inventiveness which runs counter to the traditional mode. Guillén provides the authority for this process when he observes that "a genre has stable features, but it also changes ... with the writer, the nation, and the period."36 Basically, Ghose attempts a horizontal structure, then takes a portion of it and gradually creates a vertical structure until the latter foregrounds the narrative without dispelling or eclipsing the horizontal structure. In a sense, this duality has not been totally absent from the picaresque novel. According to Guillén, "the picaro in his odyssey moves horizontally through space and vertically through society,"37 a
comment which fits Gregorio, who is constantly moving from place to place while climbing and slipping on the social ladder. Beyond this Ghose takes the dual movement of the hero and applies it to the entire narrative structure.

The context of the New World experience, with its constantly expanding horizons, its limitless possibilities, and its promise of an uncorrupted world, invites this duality. While the realities of colonial experience are often harsh, primitive and selfish, the intellectual and emotional drive which prompts the coloniser is often an ideal one. Writers, the foremost of whom are perhaps Joseph Conrad, Patrick White and Wilson Harris, have been quick to exploit the possibilities inherent in such a context. Heart of Darkness, Voss, and Palace of the Peacock are all novels which employ the dualistic model to provide a diachronic and synchronic perspective to the reader. All three novels, like The Incredible Brazilian, are concerned with the notion of quest, with the possibility of re-discovering a lost Eden, or experiencing what Ghose calls "a comprehensive vision," a point to which I shall return later. What needs to be stressed at this point is not what binds the four works together, but what detaches the Brazilian trilogy from the company of the other three novels.

White bases his narrative on an actual expedition -- the 1848 expedition of Ludwig Leichardt to cross the Australian continent. Conrad and Harris had apparently no such specific incidents to build on, but they too rely on personal experiences and on verifiable reality -- the Belgian exploitation of the Congo and the European quest for gold in the sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries. In all three novels, however, no sooner does the narrative begin than the reader is aware of the departure from the mode of expressive realism. The opening paragraph of *Palace of the Peacock*, abounding in the inversions and oxymorons so characteristic of the prose of Harris, warns the reader against the expectations of a realistic journey. In all three novels the texture reinforces the allegorical structure, and insists on the synchronic movement. The deliberate exclusion of the linear movement as a possible approach to the text constitutes a crucial difference between these three novels and the Brazilian trilogy. In addition Ghose appears to have found White's techniques too traditional and cumbersome for his liking. Says Ghose:

Patrick White's novels, from early to the most recent, are bounded by the limitations of the traditional novel. His method is so stereotyped as to be embarrassing at times. He creates a gallery of characters, the lesser ones among whom are types we recognize as belonging to the nineteenth-century novel. In short, his entire approach is repugnant to twentieth-century sensibility.\(^39\)

In saying this Ghose obviously challenges the reader to discover the methods he employs, which, on the surface, appear to be more traditional than anything White has written.

In fact, Ghose's immediate literary influence, both in terms of overall conception and narrative voice, came from Thomas Berger's work, *Little Big Man*, which was published in 1964, and which deals with the Wild West in the nineteenth century, as seen through the experiences of the narrator, Jack Crabb. The association between the writers, which began with
Ghose's review of Berger's *Reinhart in Love* in 1963,"^60 became closer over the years, and in some respects *The Incredible Brazilian* is a tribute to the inventive genius of *Little Big Man*. Several aspects of Berger's work find an answering echo in the Brazilian trilogy. First, there is the notion of a perfect world, which is crucial not only to the Brazilian trilogy but also to the later works of Ghose. In Crabb's accounts, the Indians (significantly called 'Human Beings') are "the greatest people on the face of the earth, the bravest warriors, have the most beautiful and virtuous women, and live in a place that is perfect."^61 Ghose depicts the Indians of Brazil, one remembers, in precisely the same manner. Also, *Little Big Man* effortlessly fuses the real and the fantastic in its narrative. Several of Jack's accounts, including his escape from the Battle of Little Bighorn and a number of the feats of the Indian chief, Old Lodge Skins, belong to the realm of the fantastic. As Ghose points out in relation to Berger's fiction: "reality confounds expectations, and not only are ends unpredictable but the causes themselves are mysterious."^62 Or, as Stanley Trachtenberg rightly maintains, "Crabb's account is no more real than the myths it parodies."^63 Here again the parallels with the Brazilian trilogy are obvious.

Apart from general fictional objectives, Ghose found in this "wonderful picaresque work" the possibility of an interesting narrative voice. Berger has a narrator who is a hundred and eleven years old and Ghose has one who is four hundred years old."^64 The notion of a narrator or character whose longevity flouts the laws of probability has interesting
implications and possibilities for the writing of modern fiction. García Márquez, for instance, in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude* uses this technique in a complex manner to serve the needs of magic realism.

Although Berger strains credibility by introducing a narrator who has lived over a hundred years, he offsets the effect of fantasy by attempting, albeit facetiously, to create a context which makes the assertion plausible. When the reader encounters Crabb he is an old man confined to a wheelchair. The inclusion of a prologue and a narrator, Ralph Fielding Snell, serves the purpose of providing for the reader the framework of a believable narrative. The reader may not believe in everything he is told, but that is a different matter altogether.

Ghose employs a much older narrator, whose claims of reincarnation, coming as they do in a predominantly Catholic context recall the metafictional practices of recent writers. As in *Don Quixote*, Ghose introduces a prologue, but the prologue is written by the reincarnatee himself, thus making his claims all the more fantastic. Gregorio insists on the authenticity of his narrative, but also admits that he is "vulnerable to fantasies" (N, p. 9) and goes on to assert paradoxically that "the reader can only believe in [his] story if he first accepts the proposition that everything [he has] to say is unbelievable" (N, p. 10). The linguistic verve of the opening pages of *The Native*, combined with the capacity to present syntactic regularity together with semantic distortion is clearly a counterrealistic convention. The sentences promise linearity while the meaning distorts chronolgy, thus confirming Gregorio's
assertion that he has made "incredibility a kind of literary
convention" (N, p. 10).

The motif of reincarnation has several implications in the
context of the Brazilian trilogy. First, its obvious ontological
implication is that of circularity, which is at odds with the
linearity the trilogy so painstakingly insists on, not only
through its narrative mode but also by providing an abundant
number of dates and references to specific, historically
verifiable events in a linear fashion. Second, the motif of
reincarnation is inextricably bound up with Hindu mythology
(after all, Gregorio is indebted to a Hindu professor for the
knowledge of his previous births), and this involves the
successive avatars of Lord Krishna, and, like the cycle of
seasons, a recurring pattern of regeneration and triumph of good
over evil. One of the salient features of the Brazilian trilogy
is the relentless movement towards anarchy, until at the end
Gregorio is increasingly convinced that Brazil has moved into a
barbaric age. In fact the promise of regeneration is never felt
strongly in The Incredible Brazilian.

Obviously the author introduces a reincarnated protagonist
for a purpose that is more significant than merely knitting
together the three novels in one continuum. Julian Barnes's
comment that there is some "underplayed stuff on reincarnation
to justify the trilogy's structure" seems hardly acceptable in
the face of so much evidence to the contrary. Basically, the
theme of reincarnation, by laying stress on circularity,
counterpoints the ostensible linearity of the novels. Further,
Gregorio is in many ways the "incredible" Brazilian. Quite
gratuitously, the author points out in *The Native* that all the gods contributed to the birth of Gregorio (p. 199), thus throwing the mantle of nonrealism on both the narrator and his narrative.¹⁶

It is significant that the author uses the first-person narrative voice to recount the events in the trilogy. In all the realistic novels Ghose employs the convention of the omniscient narrator, thereby not only exercising overt authorial control and objectivity, but also providing a certain ontological underpinning for the novels. In the Brazilian trilogy the narrative comes filtered through the consciousness of Gregorio, thus providing a limited point of view. In deciding to adopt this mode Ghose conforms to a traditional convention of the picaresque mode. Speaking in general terms, Guillén observes that "the narrator's view is also partial and prejudiced. In this wilful limitation are to be found some of the virtues and drawbacks of the form."¹⁷ Certainly the first-person narrative voice is often restricting and the author has to think of various means to link discrete episodes, but in the trilogy the narrative voice is central to the conception of the work. Since Gregorio does not use the benefit of hindsight and since his narrative begins at an early age, what emerges is the viewpoint of a immature and often capricious mind. Gregorio is often a consummate liar, and here again the author adopts the sanction of convention; for, as Guillén points out, "the picaresque novel is, quite simply, the confessions of a liar."¹⁸ And it is also the relative immaturity of Gregorio which enables him to say the most outrageous things, such as that "[he] was convinced that
slavery was the greatest gift bestowed upon the African" (N, p. 308). It is an interesting point that except in A Different World Gregorio hardly ever gets a decent education. His limited point of view, together with his flexible moral standards, eventually lead the reader to the narrative design of the trilogy.

Gregorio's main drawback is not simply that he has several blind spots so much as that he often succeeds in alienating the reader by his indifference to moral or ethical standards. For instance, he admits to killing a man in The Native (p. 305) to save his own reputation. He has very few qualms about triggering off a civil war in order to make his fortune by supplying arms to both parties. With hardly any prick of conscience he sets up Hermann against Singleton in The Beautiful Empire, so effecting suicide and murder. In fact Gregorio's last act in A Different World is an act of revenge directed against his benefactor.49 This is, of course, not the whole truth about Gregorio, but his malicious streak recurrently prevents the reader from identifying totally with him, and hence with the compelling sequentiality of his narrative. And Gregorio is not alone in his cunning, grasping qualities. Very few characters in the trilogy win the total approbation of the reader. Those who do, like Father Prado, Vianna and Cardovil, are minor figures who prefer to withdraw into obscurity. That the whole trilogy lacks a figure comparable to, say, Aziz Khan, is significant in that, as in picaresque works in general, it places "a general stress on the material level of existence, or of subsistence, on sordid facts, hunger, money."50 The consequence, of course, is a
gradual distancing of the reader from the preoccupations and subjective lives of the characters.

The narrator and the narrative voice, then, not only warn the reader of the anti-referential dimensions of the trilogy, but also suggest the possibility of a circularity that is diametrically opposed to the ostensible linearity of the three novels. Read in this light several aspects of the trilogy begin to fall into place. For example, the suspicion that the author is re-writing *The Native* in the other two works not only becomes evident but manifests itself as part of the design of the work. As one reads the three novels successively, the effect, although not as distinct as that of *deja vu*, is still akin to re-reading the same novel. This technique has to be carefully distinguished from the works of writers who use different characters and different settings while working with the same conventions and ontological perspectives. *The Contradictions* and *The Murder of Aziz Khan* share similar assumptions, which in no way denies each novel its individuality. In the trilogy the author's intention appears to be the opposite: to deny the novels their individuality, to convince the reader that although he is offered the illusion of moving in time, he is in actual fact circling back to the point of departure. Thus the reader is either bored by the lack of variety or made aware of the effect of deliberate design, of a palimpsest.

The repetitive pattern appears not merely in the general movement of the novels, but also in specific incidents, characters, motifs, and so forth. Here again, as Guillén remarks, "the use of recurrent motifs, circular patterns, and
incremental processes is particularly frequent in the picaresque. In traditional picaresque, however, repetition (usually within a single novel or one period of time) serves the interests of the ontology which governs the narrative. It affirms the philosophical conception that despite the vicissitudes of time, human emotions and actions do not change. This dimension is certainly not absent in the trilogy. Several repetitive patterns affirm this angle of vision. For instance, the Gregorio-Jari relationship later becomes Gregorio-Alfredo and finally Gregorio-Capistrano. Aurelia, Gloria and Amalia are born centuries apart, but all of them become entangled with Gregorio and suffer physical or emotional torture in the end. Heloisa treats Josephina the way Augustina treats Aurelia. All these repetitions confirm that successive waves of colonisation hardly change the conditions of Brazil.

Some repetitions, however, perform a different function. They have neither the authority of history, nor even the semblance of verisimilitude. For instance, in the first two novels, Gregorio begins his narration at the age of fourteen and concludes at the age of sixty-four. In A Different World Gregorio begins his narration a few years earlier but he has his first sexual experience at the age of fourteen. Here the repetition quite clearly stresses the artifice of the work. As in so many contemporary works, repetition becomes a technique of pointing to the imaginative construct and the synchronic perspective. Ghose, in his critical work, describes the effect of this principle:
Certain realities are only to be perceived in carefully placed mirrors, and if the reflection before our contemplation is ablaze with a riot of brilliant images it is probably because the angle in that moment excludes all shadows.\textsuperscript{53}

The "riot of brilliant images" refers presumably to the perspective of the reader when he no longer has the comforting presence of a vertical axis.

Accepting the circularity entails questioning the sequentiality of the novels as well. In retrospect, several sequences in the novels could be switched back and forth without doing serious injury to the trilogy. In The Native, for instance, it is imperative that Gregorio meets both Father Prado and Father Boscoli, but it hardly matters whom he meets first. In any event, the plottness of the novels is often so transparent that the author obviously intends it to be recognized as such. The central compositional process in the three novels appears to be one of creating several telling episodes and then linking them in the most expedient manner. The Native, despite its length, has no more than a handful of scenes which possess a certain resonance. For example, after Gregorio's hedonistic existence in the Big House, he needs to become the chief of a Negro colony. Ghose accomplishes that by the simple strategy of making Gregorio overreach himself so that he could be incarcerated and then sold as a slave. The more one ponders the transparency of the sequentiality, the more one is convinced of its significance as technique.\textsuperscript{54} In short, from the position of wanting to conceal the technique in, say, The Murder of Aziz Khan, the author now draws attention to it. Consequently, the
author frees the reader from the "story" and gives him the opportunity to focus on the "discourse." The plot thus becomes secondary. As Ghose says in a general context, "those who will praise the remarkable plot will never realize that all that a novelist does is to create difficulties for himself and then he seeks solutions for them. It has nothing to do with reality."\(^5\)\(^5\)

To create a synchronic structure does not necessarily entail creating a fictive or counterrealistic work. *Crump's Terms* is evidently a synchronic work, but it concerns itself with the reality of Crump's consciousness. In *The Incredible Brazilian* the "unclassifiability" arises from the paradoxical but pervasive metafictional properties it incorporates. The first clear indication of this dimension occurs at the end of *The Native* when Gregorio makes love to a girl who he thinks is more beautiful than anyone he has met, and who turns out to be a transvestite. The narrative juxtaposes this setback with the death of Gregorio and the conclusion of the novel, thereby establishing its significance. The structure of reality and illusion this incident sets up now acquires a certain applicability to several incidents in all three novels. The friars who are vocal about their piety turn out to be sanctimonious; Tavares, the famous leader of expeditions, proves to be insane; the green emeralds that Gregorio's party discovers are later shown to be worthless tourmaline, and so forth.\(^5\)\(^6\) In all three novels Gregorio's and the reader's expectations are confounded so consistently that the relation between reality and fiction becomes a central concern in the narrative. If what is presented as reality suffers a dramatic change, then the whole
narrative too could be an illusory, fictive construct. Either all phenomena are illusory or reality needs to be discovered through a different structuring of experience.

The dichotomy between illusion and reality goes beyond warning the reader of the dangers of adopting a referential perspective regarding the novel. In specific incidents it becomes a means of exploring the possibility of plumbing fantasy in order to confront reality. The whole episode in *The Native* involving Verissimo (a useful name) and his expedition is an illustration of Ghose's assertion that "we lend credence to one more fiction to see if it will not create that impression of reality which will convince us of its truth." The logic of Verissimo's expedition is obvious enough, as the picaresque depends heavily on a "chain of situations." For its first sixty pages *The Native* remains static spatially and temporally, and the author needs an invention to establish the forward movement. Verissimo's suggestion of a hunting expedition as a measure of revenge against the Indians seems logical. What surprises the reader is that Verissimo is no warrior at all, and he actually attempts, like his erstwhile model, Don Quixote, to translate fantasy into fact. But unlike Don Quixote, in the process of projecting his fantasies onto the phenomenal world, he finally confronts his own reality. The distortion of what could well have been a straightforward hunting party appears to affirm the validity of fantasy as a gateway to the perception of reality.

Seen against this backdrop, several episodes the novels present as straightforward narration take on the colouring of
fantasy or myth. The description of Gregorio's hedonistic life in the Big House after the death of his parents in *The Native* hardly seems plausible, even when one grants the excesses Gregorio is capable of, and the pleasures that the seventeenth-century plantation owners regularly indulged in. Gregorio's rescue of Claire in *The Beautiful Empire* is again thinly veiled re-enactment of myth with Gregorio as the knight who plunges into the misty garden (leaving behind a trail of flowers to return) in order to save the trapped heroine.\(^5\)

Despite such fantastic episodes, *The Incredible Brazilian* is not pure fantasy. If it is fictive it certainly carries with it the trappings of reality. The challenge of the trilogy lies in the manner in which these two disparate elements are brought together. In the Tavares episode, which is clearly metafictional in intent, the author comes close to providing a model for the process of writing his fiction. The encounter with Tavares can hardly be justified, thematically or structurally. Tavares is not another storyteller whose account becomes a story within a story. Yet the narrative goes on for several pages, and Gregorio and Jari, like the reader, are completely absorbed by it. Tavares mentions historical facts, assumes the name of a historical figure, and there is no occasion to doubt his narrative. Yet he is fabricating a lie which cannot be identified as such until the reader achieves both a distancing and a proper perspective. The reality of the tale remains elusive until the spell of the linear narrative disappears. The process by which Tavares concocts the tale is, in short, a fair approximation of the process of writing the trilogy.\(^6\)
Having hinted at the process of writing the novel in The Native, the author in A Different World presents an image of the reader together with the expectations he brings to the text. The surrogate reader is Lucio, who reads for the purpose of eliciting the surface meaning of the text. Significantly, Gregorio, the author-figure who is engaged in writing his work, encounters Lucio. Lucio begins reading in the hope of "seeing a description of erotic passion" and gradually matures to the level at which Gregorio sees his "eyes lighting up when he remembered the life of some fictive character" (DW, p. 195). Lucio is not a naive character, but a naive reader. By making this distinction the author quite specifically draws attention to the problem of reading rather than intelligence. Also, Gregorio makes Lucio a product of the racial mix of Indian, Portuguese and Negro. In short, as an embodiment of the land, Lucio is at once the reader and the experience of the text. Thus Lucio's incomprehension reflects his inability to understand his own heritage.

The laying bare of the mechanism of writing and the process of reading leads to the notion of artifice and authorial construct. And the construct, one recognizes through the circularity and repetitious pattern, is by its most complex definition a synchronic one. That still leaves the problem of meaning. In other words, the process of "reconstructing" the trilogy entails discovering a scheme which facilitates the task of explication. Evidently the trilogy does not eschew meaning, although it constantly meditates on the problematic nature of meaning. At one point Gregorio speaks of the need to concern
himself "with truth without being bothered by the realm of
fact." Ghose points out in his critical work that a "writer's
dreams and buried memories go into his novel along with the
recognizable objective subject matter." Siddiqi, discussing
The Beautiful Empire, speaks of "the deeper theme of the search
for one's identity which recurs frequently in Ghose's works." Thus an important task for the reader is to discover a
methodology which would complement and enrich what the linear
movement and referential reading affords.

A convenient point to begin would be the "interlude" and
"coda" in A Different World, both of which stand apart from the
rest of the text, spatially and temporally. They are not spoken
by anyone in particular, and the quality of the prose suggests
that they are probably not spoken by Gregorio. Despite their
being discrete units which could be excised without damaging the
narrative line, they draw the themes of the trilogy together and
alert the reader to the nuances of language. They create what
Ghose calls "an accumulation of brilliant details." He adds:
"I sometimes tend to write very long and complicated sentences,
a kind of Proustian sentence, filled with vivid matter until the
language releases a subtle thought." The trilogy is admittedly
not the best example of Ghose's linguistic subtlety; still,
there are indications of a growing concern with language which
becomes manifest in his later works.

The absence of the realistic context for the "interlude"
and the "coda" appears to have bothered critics. Anthony
Thwaite, for instance, makes no attempt to conceal his
impatience with the digressions (which include the prologue)
when he says that

some editor, if not Mr Ghose himself, should have realised how indulgent and unnecessary such a prologue was, together with a brief "interlude" partway through and a "coda" - though by the time these have been reached the book has taken on its own momentum.

Thwaite is not dismissive of the novel. He is simply annoyed at what he considers extraneous material. Ghose, however, has a different opinion altogether. He remarks in conversation that he was attacked in the British reviews for having had these parts because they seem irrelevant to the story; but these were the most important for him.

The subtitles of the two sections are a clear indication that they were not the products of a whim. The interlude carries the subtitle "Soliloquy of the Alien Heart in its Native Land," and the subtitle of the coda reads "The Undiscovered Country." Both captions suggest the themes of exile, of native-alien experience and the quest for a satisfying conception of reality, which not only underpin the trilogy but also inform the bulk of Ghose's works.

The interlude is one long sentence going on for one and a half pages which conjures up a variety of images -- of majesty, storm, calm, love, tyranny, silence and violence, leading to a sense of suffocation and death. The entire section reads like a prose poem, drawing attention to a dense, carefully structured, metaphorical language. The images of serenity and love ("the air trembles with a lover's hesitations and the land coyly withdraws behind veils of shadows, and the air floats as a perfume from
lavender bushes") juxtaposed with images of unexpected elemental violence ("and then the sunset over the land with its bloody hands and the wind kicks up its heels once more" [ DW, p. 217]) bring to the meditating mind the memory of something that transcends the immediate and the ephemeral and grants an intimation of the inevitability of the native-alien experience. The interlude is a distinctly modern piece of writing in its mode of bringing together a series of objective correlativewhich are in no way linked to one another, but which form syntactically one complete sentence. The passage works through a series of contrasts (sky-land, heat-ice, black-white, scream-whisper) which confound the linearity of the sentence and establish an order of meaning which encompasses the past and present and which exists by virtue of its independent structure.

The coda then picks up the sense of primeval memory enacted through a series of images and projects another set of images, this time of arrival and departure, of oceans and dark interiors. The number of oxymorons ("kindled darkness," "blind and glitteringly visionary" [p. 315]) builds up a gradual sense of people looking and not perceiving, of arriving and not comprehending, of fructifying rituals and "ache's for comprehension" until a sense develops that "the country is still undiscovered and is only a secret dream in your soul." As in the interlude, the syntax provides a tenuous link, but the actual unity of the coda comes through a series of images or slides which build up a sense of meaning through the structure. Each image is carefully chosen to reflect on the others thematically, until the reader realizes that every sentence and even the
paragraph divisions have a functional role in the passage.

Taken together the "interlude" and the "coda" provide a clear basis for erecting a vertical axis which provide a coherent understanding of the submerged meanings of the text. Such a unifying pattern is an important aspect of a text in which causality plays a peripheral role. The movement away from linearity often involves the reader in a closer inspection of form in so much recent fiction. As Ortega Gasset observes in his discussion of modern writing, "a work of art lives on its form, not on its material; the essential grace it emanates springs from its structure, from its organism." What the "interlude" and the "coda" point to are the basic themes, the image patterns and the language which organise the synchronic elements in the text.

The focus on the language is not as intense in the trilogy as it is in his later works. Yet it is surprising how often attention is drawn to the language and the possibilities inherent in it. From the beginning of The Native the reader is made to understand that Gregorio ingratiates himself into the favour of his father and others by his capacity to use language effectively. Hence it is no surprise that his narrative provides numerous examples of different uses of language. The priests in the runaway colony and Gregorio, for example, carry on an insane dialogue in which both parties observe the rules of grammar but dispense with logic in favour of mystification. Gregorio is sharply conscious of the double-edged quality of language, and in The Beautiful Empire he warns the reader that "the language of description pursue[s] its own conventions,
rejecting the confusing phenomena of experience for the clear line of narrative" (p. 41).

In a work which has a wide range of characters and spans a period of more than three centuries, there are possibilities for presenting a number of linguistic variations, from the down-to-earth diction of a Negro slave to the cliché-ridden rhetoric of an urban guerilla. They often serve the primary function of linking the spoken word with the referent, but they also focus on the problems that lie in the space between language and referent. The most erudite characters are often conscious of the power of language to create its own reality by observing its own laws. Capistrano, who often succeeds in drawing admiring crowds of youths around him, maintains that "all you have is only a language game in which words are used as things in themselves, merely as signs which reveal the tribe's allegiance, there's no meaning, certainly no relevance whatsoever to the reality of existence" (DW, p. 202). There is no consistent attempt to dislocate language from meaning in the trilogy, but one often encounters the notion that one has to "to look at language to discover new thought" (DW, p. 132).

Strangely enough, the mannered prose of the trilogy has often bothered critics. Anne Barnes, for instance, speaks of "Zulfikar Ghose's windbagging style which involves a heavy use of double negatives, dislocated syntax and paradoxes, which do not always make sense." The inflated style is in keeping with the character and historical background of Gregorio, but if the language at times fails to make sense it is simply because the reader expects only a referential reading of the language. In
fact, even at its simplest level of descriptive prose the language at times acquires a remarkable degree of complexity. Often the subordinate clauses are carefully chosen either to shift the meaning of the main body of the sentence or to add a fresh intensity to it. There is, for example, the poignant moment when Amalia is confronted with the knowledge that Gregorio is aware of her infidelity. Says the narrator:

She had sat down, leaving the stalks of dead flowers on the table but having restored fresh life to the arrangement in the vase, and was weeping quietly. (DW, p. 189)

The duality of death and rebirth, which surfaces metaphorically in the nonrestrictive clause, is at one level discontinuous with Gregorio's growing conviction that he not only has been betrayed but also, at another level, it would be almost impossible to continue a relationship with Amalia. In this context one recognizes that either the sentence lacks direction or it serves some other purpose. In actual fact Gregorio's description draws attention to Amalia as a possible symbol of the land, a symbol which in turn is linked to a series of such images. The apparent duality of the sentence thus performs the function of drawing the reader away from the immediate context to the larger theme of native-alien experience.

Sometimes such sentences are introduced so casually that the reader tends to ignore their significance. For instance, here is Gregorio speaking of a plane flight:

Sitting in the sleek jets which, even over the darkest
jungle, within which some tribe might still use stones for arrow-heads, proclaimed the twentieth century as a sort of immanent spirit, I lost the will to be part of the living world. (DW, p. 189)

Here the opposites link the present with the past, neutralise chronology, and point to a dimension of reality which transcends the immediate context with which the novels are concerned. At this point the reader responds, not to Gregorio's present predicament, but to the wider perspective of timelessness in human history.

The language of the trilogy lacks the overt density of, say, White or Harris. Much as Ghose appears to have liked the peculiar cadence of White's prose at its best, he does not set out to emulate White's metaphorical mode of writing. Any attempt to shift the quality of language to a purely metaphorical axis would have amounted to tampering with the conception of the work. A language that wilfully dis locates syntax and pre-empts conventional modes of reading would have immediately destroyed the understanding between Gregorio and the reader. In the strategy of the trilogy the implied author and the implied reader must communicate without smothering the mundane relation between narrator and reader. The coexistence depends heavily on the artful use of language.

A minor aspect of the use of language is the element of intertextuality that runs through the trilogy. Obviously the level of Gregorio's education makes literary allusions a more difficult technique than in, say, Crump's Terms, where the protagonist is an English teacher. Hence the references have to
be more veiled and have to operate at the level of implied author rather than at the level of the narrator. Machado de Assis is the only author who is actually referred to by name, but often the language recalls the writings of Cervantes, Fielding, Defoe, Sterne, Berger and Conrad. The description of Gregorio's wedding in The Beautiful Empire, for instance, reads like a lively parody of the description of Cleopatra as she goes splendidly attended to meet Antony in Antony and Cleopatra. The allusions have thematic functions available to the average reader. More importantly, the literariness makes the trilogy a self-conscious work, and consequently, as Robert Alter says in a different context, "there is a consistent effort to convey to us a sense of the fictional world as an authorial construct set up against a background of literary tradition and convention." 71

In addition to intertextuality, the language often sets up a pattern which merges with the imagery to reveal possible ways of reading the novel. At such moments the referential aspect of the language slows down, and lets the metaphorical function take over the text. There is, for instance, Tavares's description of his imaginary adventures in the interior: "Now we were in swampy desert land and now in a thick, dark jungle where the Indians would appear as suddenly as a swarm of insects when you unwittingly disturb them in a bush" (N, p. 219). Tavares unconsciously presents an analogy of what happens to Gregorio's hunting party at the beginning. Apart from the fact that Tavares and Verissimo are linked thematically, the language takes the reader backwards rather than forwards, thereby establishing a contrary pattern of reading the novel. Tavares, in his
enthusiasm to provide a good story, recalls the bizarre incident in which he saw a woman who suckled her baby at one breast and a snake at the other (N, p. 221). Substitute Gregorio for the snake and one has a re-play of what happens when Gregorio visits Aurelia in her room early in the novel. Here again, as in the previous episode, the reader goes back in order to re-interpret what has already been narrated.

The language in the trilogy, instead of foregrounding itself by dislocating syntax or indulging in typographical tricks, also creates a system of imagery that links the three novels together and provides an order of meaning which becomes all the more complex by transcending the context within which it occurs. The use of imagery in this manner is not uncommon, particularly in works which do not fit comfortably into conventional categories. Geoffrey Harpham, who encounters this practice in Doctorow, has this to say:

Images are also cause for worry because they have an uncertain relation to the narrative that binds them. As the "data of fiction," images are the building blocks out of which the whole is constructed, a small unit of duration that can combine with other such units to produce a narrative representation of change over time. But curiously, the image can also encompass an entire narrative, washing it clean of temporality.72

The web of imagery in the Brazilian trilogy creates a complex pattern, involving notions of land, woman and love, which in turn are linked to the notion of quest for a perfect world. Curiously enough the imagery which helps to link the three novels on a synchronic axis then converges toward the quest
motif, which has a linear structure. The basic difference between the two structures, however, is that while one supports a referential reading the other demands that the work be read as an imaginative construct.

The notions of land, love, woman and the possibility of a harmonious world have always been present in Ghose's fiction. They are present because they point to the obsessive and unifying concerns of the writer. In The Contradictions when Sylvia, frustrated and diminished by her husband's impotence, sees a peasant couple making love on a barren heath, she unconsciously makes a connection between land and love. But at this point in The Contradictions the narrator points to an obvious paradox, for the assertion of love is juxtaposed with the heath, with sterility. The contradiction then becomes the basis for understanding and linking the discrete units of the novel. Sylvia's quest, however, takes on an abstract and intellectual coloring, in keeping with her education and background.

In The Murder of Aziz Khan the reader begins with a complete, harmonious world in the farm of Aziz Khan. Aziz Khan, the innocent Adam in this self-sufficient paradise, is linked emotionally, not to his wife (at least at the beginning) but to the land. The sensuous diction describes Aziz Khan walking out of the house in the night and "making love" to the land. Thus at the very beginning the imagery draws attention to the presence of a complete world. The rest of the novel concerns itself with the displacement of Aziz Khan from this paradise. What distinguishes the trilogy from The Murder of Aziz Khan is that
in the former the reader is conscious of the absence and not the presence of this complete world.\textsuperscript{75}

In \textit{The Murder of Aziz Khan} the notion of a paradise emerges through the familiar process of contrasting the dehumanising process of urban life and industrialisation with the rustic, simplicity of village, agrarian life. In metaphorical terms the Garden is already present while the conflict arises from the attempts to destroy it. In the Brazilian trilogy the contrast is between the Old World and the New World. Despite the fact that the Old World remains a nostalgic presence and a source of culture and refinement in the three novels, what the reader glimpses of the Old World is far from satisfactory. Several of the characters who come from the Old World, like Gregorio's grandfather and Verissimo, bring with them a sense of guilt and sin. Singleton, the narrator says, had a record of perversion in the Old World.\textsuperscript{76} No wonder that, as in Naipaul's \textit{The Mimic Men} (1967), the New World refuses to accommodate such figures. The Old World is thus a negative force which works counter to the quest for a complete world. It is interesting that Gregorio's father in \textit{The Beautiful Empire} loses both his identity and his sanity in the Old World.

At the very beginning of \textit{The Native} when Gregorio is given a cake in the shape of Brazil and asked to carve out a piece for himself, the quest motif begins to enter the novel. Periodically, the notion comes to be reiterated in the trilogy, in the words of Roderiquez in \textit{The Native}, the words of Father Feijo in \textit{The Beautiful Empire}, and so forth. At this level the trilogy has much in common with New World writing, particularly
Caribbean literature, in its concern with "an Arcadian Utopia wrested from a savage hag-ridden wilderness by the power of white magic, that is to say, by the civilizing power of knowledge." It is ironical that Father Boscoli (as against Father Prado who is content to leave things as they are) attempts precisely this in *The Native* and ends up by sleeping with his housekeeper's daughter.

For several characters the idea of Brazil is associated quite literally with the concept of paradise, not always because Brazil provides spiritual insight, but because it provides avenues for material advancement and sensual indulgence. Wickham makes a florid statement about this in *The Beautiful Empire*:

> What is life then, only a continuing consciousness of the compulsion to leave, an ache in the breast that is only temporarily relieved when the eye witnesses a new landscape, in a moment of exhilaration, and then the ache returns once again when the ecstasy is over? (BE, p. 182)

And he adds, a few pages later, that "this land" has been a "vision of paradise" (p. 184). The reader who believes for a moment that at least one person has found his paradise is quickly disillusioned when he discovers that Wickham is an agent of the British government, sent to Brazil for the purpose of smuggling out rubber seedlings. The notion of material prosperity and the vision of paradise go together in the trilogy. Gregorio claims in *The Beautiful Empire* that with the splendours of Manaos "we had Utopia in our grasp," a claim which subsequent events prove to be hollow. For those interested in sensual indulgence, as Baron Aikmann (again a significant name
which recalls Adolf Eichmann) is, the floating brothel "is quite a paradise ... in the middle of the jungle" (BE, p. 205).

Aikmann's gruesome suicide at the end of the novel is an indication of the extent to which his claims are false.

Gregorio is not free of the quest, but his search for the most part is an unconscious one. He calls his floating brothel in The Beautiful Empire Eros, thereby aligning himself with this motif. In all three novels, it is significant that he feels the compulsion to travel, which takes him through the motions of the archetypal quest. In the first novel he walks, in the second he goes on horseback, and in the third he traverses the length and breadth of the country by plane. Sometimes he has a rational reason for the need to travel, and sometimes not. Either way the quest springs from a feeling of restlessness with the conditions around him. Amalia's comment that "we belong to a disfigured generation" (DW, p. 254) is complemented by Gregorio's assertion that "there was nowhere [he] could arrive at and feel the conviction that [he] could live there at peace with [himself]" (DW, p. 188).

Except in A Different World, Gregorio is very much a man of the world, unconcerned with anything other than day-to-day affairs and keen on securing material advancement. Yet he is also the principal vehicle of the implied author for communicating his concern with the idea of paradise as "the country [that] is still undiscovered and is only a secret dream in your soul" (DW, p. 316). Ghose's concern is with the landscape of the mind, with the attempt to re-capture the paradise of self-contentment. Cardovil's assertion in A
Different World that "freedom from the self is the greatest struggle of all" (DW, p. 202) is an oblique reference to the kind of quest that Ghose is trying to probe in the trilogy.

In his preoccupation with paradise as a landscape of the mind, Ghose is at one with Harris and White. In fact Ghose's comments on White's fiction centre on this preoccupation, which Ghose calls a "comprehensive vision." Speaking about White, the author says that

there is in Patrick White's characters a terrible desire to witness truth in one comprehensive vision; they are constantly turning their gaze towards the interior as if to enter some timeless zone of space which would stifle the self, and the soul thus freed would at last be in a state of readiness to receive that vision."

However, if for instance in Riders in the Chariot Himmelfarb or Mrs Godbold receive intimations of that vision, it is left undefined except in the vaguest terms. In short, there is no attempt to translate vision in terms of objective reality. Ghose tries to fuse the subjective (visionary) and the objective (historical), which accounts for the vertical and horizontal structure of the Brazilian trilogy. When Ghose's characters have intimations of a vision, the author provides for the reader at least an objective correlative as a bridge between the two levels. For example, regarding the episode in which Gregorio sees a crowd of flamingoes in A Different World, Ghose says, "the context is that I am ... trying to create the idea of the human soul seeing a glimpse from time to time of paradise and longing to be there."
This notion of paradise is linked with a network of imagery which begins with the familiar identification of land as woman. Brazil is always described in terms of a woman, sometimes young and beautiful, sometimes old and tear-stained. Gregorio speaks of Brazil's "present wrinkle-browed, grey-haired, tear-stained face" (N, p. 14) and Roderiguez reminds Gregorio at one point that "the way [Brazil] goes, whether she becomes a grand old lady or an obscene slut, will be our doing" (N, p. 173).

An extension of this line of imagery is that whoever possesses this "woman" possesses the land and the paradise she comes to symbolise. Father Boscoli asks, "is not Brazil like the most beautiful woman you ever saw, waiting to be matched to the most eligible young man in the world?" (N, p. 150) Boscoli, of course, thinks he is being merely eloquent, but the text provides a context for the development of this line of imagery.

In the first two parts of the trilogy the notions of paradise come to inhere in the Indian woman and the world of the Indian. Each time the narrative describes an Indian settlement, the dominant impression is of a community of people who lead a harmonious, unambitious life, who are naive and gullible, but who are protected by nature. Father Prado's claim that "the Indian is generous but not extravagant. His generosity is an instinct; what he has must be shared by the community," (N, p. 140) finds a demonstration in the second volume when Gregorio and Hofman visit an Indian settlement and witness the manner in which the chief distributes the gifts to all the members of the community. In making this claim Ghose has the backing of Freyre, who points out that "the communistic Indian"
had "practically no notions of individual ownership."\textsuperscript{84} The destruction of this world through force is the equivalent of the Fall, and as Neil Hepburn observes, "our hindsight tells us these atrocities made Brazil more green hell than paradise."\textsuperscript{85} The Indian has the protection of nature, but that is hardly a match for the cunning and brute force of the colonizer.\textsuperscript{86}

The extermination of the Indian is not the central concern of the trilogy, but it provides a basis for the understanding of the pattern of imagery, and also accounts for the retributive force that hangs heavy in the novels. At unexpected moments the narrative provides intimations of a profound sense of guilt and sin enshrined in a particular character. Gregorio's father in The Native is perhaps the first person to be visited by an overwhelming sense of sin, which leads to his death from a broken heart. Heloisa's guilt further on in the novel requires a purgation, and the subsequent burning of the brothel, which recalls Ibsen's Ghosts, underlines the retributive power of sin. Interestingly the sense of sin is not commensurate with the realistic cause which occasions it, with the consequence that the reader grasps the notion that sin is metaphorically linked with the themes of identity and displacement.

Quite specifically the relation between land and woman is embodied in the Indian woman, whose Edenic innocence and physical beauty the reader glimpses from time to time.\textsuperscript{87} Here again Freyre provides the realistic base for the evolution of the metaphor. Says Freyre:

Long contact with the Saracens had left with the Portuguese the idealized figure of the 'enchanted
Moorish woman,' ... and the Brazilian colonizers were to encounter practically a counterpart of this type in the naked Indian women with their loose-flowing hair.8

In the context of the trilogy the Indian woman is both an idealized figure and an emblem of the land. In an obvious but nevertheless effective episode in The Beautiful Empire this dimension of meaning is affirmed. When Gregorio returns to Brazil from England and spots from the deck of his ship a naked Indian woman bathing in the river, Hofman adds unwittingly, "that is Brazil" (BE, p. 91). It is an interesting point that the only time Gregorio possesses an Indian girl, it is in a brothel, and the experience turns out to be a negative one. The only other way in which to possess the Indian woman is through rape, as it happens when two young Indian girls are raped on board the Eros. Even the rape, as Baron Aikmann finds out to his dismay, is a far from pleasant experience.

Gregorio's involvement for the most part is with Brazilian women, and the manner in which these relationships are presented provides the basis for a metaphoric and metonymic understanding of the trilogy. In a literal sense Gregorio is from time to time rich and presentable, and is therefore a welcome match. But the language and the repetitious pattern in his relationships keep the metaphorical dimension alive. At the beginning of The Native, during the festivities to celebrate the marriage of Gregorio's father, Roderiguez, the father-in-law, who is presented as an enlightened man, points to a lady and tells Gregorio, "the lady, Gregorio, is yours" (p. 52), in a manner which reiterates the symbolic undertone. When Gregorio proceeds
to the spot where the lady stands in order to introduce himself, the lady disappears, leaving Gregorio staring at a blank wall. Later on in the evening Gregorio finds a lady all right, but she proves to be a well-used slave.

Gregorio's associations with women invariably have disastrous, destructive endings. In an eloquent sentence, Gregorio says that "the eyes of the Brazilian women are flames and their voices are the oceans calling. I swear it. How else do we burn and drown in their arms?" (DW, p. 11) The negative and destructive suggestions of this sentence manifest themselves in different ways in the novel, all of which contribute toward the pattern of imagery which links the synchronic structure of the novels.

In all three novels whenever Gregorio commits himself to a woman the results are unpleasant. In The Native he loves Aurelia, only to find that she has been the mistress of his father. He commits himself to Alicia, only to discover that she is a deaf mute. His lovers betray him, and his wives are either burdened with guilt or they are sterile. And Gregorio is not alone in this. Hardly any man-woman relationship survives in the trilogy.89 The motif of sterility is very strong in The Incredible Brazilian, particularly in The Beautiful Empire, in which much of the domestic tragedy of Gregorio hinges on Claire's inability to conceive. Even when finally she does conceive, the narrative voice, by focussing on sexuality, deflects the attention of the reader from the significance of the moment to the physicality.

The inability to enjoy a satisfactory relationship has
negative reactions, both in men and women, all of which are stressed repeatedly to reinforce the notion of quest at a metaphorical level. The evidence, of course, appears not only in a realistic context but also in the realm of empirically verifiable data. In the women the failure of love manifests itself in extreme forms of sadism. Freyre refers to the prevalence of these practices when he says that the Portuguese women "kicked out the teeth of their women slaves with their boots [or] had their breasts cut off." He adds that "the motive, almost always, was jealousy of the husband." 90 Augustina's mutilation of Aurelia and Heloisa's treatment of Josefina are perhaps the most obvious illustrations of Freyre's observations.

Among the men, the failure of love leads to sexual perversity. Particularly the first two parts of the trilogy are replete with examples of perversion, ranging from sodomy and promiscuity to suggestions of incest. In fact this constant indulgence in extensive descriptions of various forms of sexual perversity has met with the disapproval of at least one critic, who is willing to admit that "such things happened in 18th century Brazil," but adds that "when these scenes are the most conspicuous feature of the novel, then the total impression is regrettably close to Frank Yerby." 91 If sensationalism is what Ghose is after, then it is of a particularly cloying kind, when it comes to be repeated novel after novel. If the hints provided not only in the trilogy but also in the earlier works are anything to go by, then the sexuality has a greater purpose than titillation. Often the descriptions, as in the short stories of Frank Moorhouse, serve the function of alienating the reader
from the characters, and drawing attention to the imagery that links land and woman.

That sexual indulgence carries its own nemesis is evident in the motif of venereal disease. Intimations of this motif come as early as in The Murder of Aziz Khan, in which Akram is the victim of venereal disease. In the trilogy the mention of syphilis appears to be perfectly logical, considering the historical background. Freyre's translator humorously points out that "it is customary to say that civilization and syphilis go hand in hand, but Brazil would appear to have been syphilized before it was civilized." While the context provides for the prevalence of syphilis, it does not explain why Gregorio must contract it in all three novels. That the purpose is more metaphoric than metonymic is evident in the degree of emphasis given to venereal disease in the trilogy. It cannot be without significance, for instance, that in A Different World Gregorio and Capistrano meet in a clinic to which both have gone in order to cure themselves of venereal illness.

The expanding centrifugal dimension of the core imagery of land and woman may appear formless and indistinct, but carefully plotted, they form the basis for understanding the trilogy as a purely authorial construct, not dependent totally on historical context. In the first two novels the image pattern floats somewhat formlessly, hinting at the possibility of a synchronic reading rather than actually providing the reader with a solid basis for it. In A Different World the images take on a greater clarity, which explains why the third novel possesses a somewhat different tone. Beatrice Stoerk is right in her judgment that
"this last volume is rather heavy and perhaps more abstract than the previous ones." One possible explanation for this density is that the novel takes place in the present, when Gregorio is not only more intellectually more alert but can also take advantage of the benefit of hindsight. The consequence is a novel of greater depth than the previous two works.

In this novel Gregorio is far more emotionally involved with a woman than he has been with anyone in the previous two novels, notwithstanding his love for Claire and Gloria in *The Beautiful Empire*. Also, Gregorio is now aware that in some obscure way his desire to consummate his relationship with Amalia is linked with his sense of identity as a Brazilian. Even as he flies from city to city as a fugitive from justice, he claims that

> when I flew on and on in my maddened journey ... to Sao Paulo, to Brasilia and finally to Goiania, looking down at rivers and mountains and vast plains, everywhere on the shifting contours of Brazil was imprinted the face of Amalia. (DW, p. 189)

The long catalogue of names and cities, and the context in which this passage occurs clearly illustrate that the description is more than a lover’s obsession with his beloved. Whatever fictions Gregorio tries to create for himself in order to forget the past, the image of Amalia keeps appearing in his consciousness.

Significantly, when Gregorio is hiding at a ranch he remembers his previous births, and this makes him all the more frantic to seek Amalia. And so when Moniz says that "in a sense,
[Amalia] is still waiting" (DW, p. 224), Gregorio abandons all his caution and returns to Rio.

Gregorio's relationship with Amalia in A Different World is difficult to understand or interpret along conventional lines. That the two love each other is never very much in doubt. But Amalia's involvement appears to be a shifting one, almost as if she needs Gregorio as a base to return to after her escapades. Not only is she unfaithful to Gregorio, she also bears the illegitimate child of Capistrano, and if Rubirosa's comments are anything to go by, she virtually courts multiple rape. When all these facts become known to Gregorio, the two seem to drift apart, and Gregorio at the end has the choice of joining Amalia in London or remaining in Brazil. In short, the choice is between the New World and the Old World, depending on whether Amalia is the embodiment of Brazil or merely a capricious whore.

The difficulty in explaining this relationship along realistic lines arises from the fact that Gregorio is always aware, from the first days when he sees Amalia, that she is attracted to Capistrano. Later when Amalia disappears for three years without any plausible explanation, both Gregorio and the reader are aware of Amalia's possible reasons. Yet the love persists, presumably because Gregorio loves her well enough to forgive her. But when Amalia leaves the country, Gregorio finds himself unable to follow her. In what appears to be almost an irrelevant episode, Gregorio suffers almost a loss of memory in an airline office, which prevents him not only from joining Amalia but also from gaining his freedom. The relationship is uneven simply because it is symbolic, and the reader must turn
to parallel episodes to explain its significance.

The technique of parallel episodes is an interesting one in that it encapsulates both on a synchronic and a diachronic axis not merely the movement of *A Different World* but also the rhythm of the trilogy as well. One such episode relates to the farm owned by Gregorio's father at the beginning of *A Different World*. The description of the farm, which stresses harmony and completeness, presents almost an Edenic state in which even the panther is described in terms of its grace rather than its ferocity. Gregorio, who is blissfully unaware of the corruption within, comes close to calling the farm a paradise when he says that

> someone travelling the world in search of the most beautiful landscape and coming to the spot where we stood might have wondered, as his heart missed a beat, whether he had not at last found it. (DW, p. 22)

This "complete world of the farm" disappears soon enough as it acquires an efficiency and orderliness that usurps its former spontaneity and natural state. By the time Gregorio returns from the States the farm has a barbed-wire fence around it, a detail which recalls the ending of *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. The landscape is now completely altered and what is present is a cooperative farm along Communist lines. The fence around the farm, combined with Gregorio's sudden realization that he has no claim to the land, create the sense of the loss of a paradise. At another level, this change is perhaps an allegory of the political situation in Brazil. Interestingly, Gregorio weeps
uncontrollably at this point, and it is outside his farm that he
decides to become an urban guerilla. What affects him so
poignantly is not the loss of property (he has enough left, in
any case) but the symbolic exclusion from what constitutes a
paradise in his mind, and the conviction that he is in many ways
homeless.

When Gregorio returns to the farm for the last time it is
the possession of New World Properties, a branch of an
international organization which has its head office in Florida.
At this point the farm loses all sense of its identity. Also,
the fact that the farm, after several changes, is now virtually
a brothel ties very neatly into the reader's awareness that
Amalia too, after adopting a range of roles, is virtually a
whore. In terms of the symbolic movement of the novel, Amalia
and the novel merge at this point. It is not surprising that now
Gregorio must decide where his allegiance lies, to the farm as a
part of Brazil or an organ of the international organization, or
to Amalia as embodiment of Brazil or as a whore in the Old
World. After a period of indecision and trauma, Gregorio decides
to stay; for him, still, "Brazil is the free improvisation of a
dance to the throbbing, primeval music of an earthly paradise" (DW, p. 283).

Gregorio's final act is one of revenge, although an
unconscious one. It is almost as if he is driven into a
difficult situation despite himself as he fails to take
advantage of the opportunities that come his way to avert the
catastrophe of the plane crash. He causes the death of
Francisco, the son of the man who took away his paradise, the
complete world of his boyhood. And the coda, which erases the past, begins the cycle all over again, and "the voice of the tribe calls the exile home" (DW, p. 316).

Thus the significance of the trilogy is not that Ghose re-writes, on a much more ambitious scale, The Murder of Aziz Khan, or that he brings together the themes of alienation, exile, and native-alien experience more insistently than he ever did before. The trilogy remains a turning point in the career of Ghose because here he appears to have come close to finding the right direction for his writings. Here he discovers a medium that teases and absorbs the reader by providing an illusion of referentiality but remains a work that draws attention to its artifice and retains its freedom as an authorial construct. The insistent duality of story and discourse distinguishes the trilogy from the author's previous works. Seymour Chatman describes the effect of this species of writing:

The story undermines the discourse. We conclude, by 'reading out' between the lines, that the events and existents could not have been 'like that' .... The implied reader senses a discrepancy between a reasonable reconstruction of the story and the account given by the narrator. Two sets of norms conflict, and the covert set, once recognized, must win. The implied author has established a secret communication with the implied reader.

The trilogy is, then, essentially a contemporary and experimental work which holds in balance a metonymic narrative with a metaphorical mode. It possesses the virtue of appealing both to the reader who is interested in the referent and the reader who focusses on the text. As historical fiction, the
novels demonstrate that the efforts of the colonizers to create new futures were ultimately futile, for they finally achieved nothing more than a re-play of old patterns. Nothing changes in Brazil, and, by extension, in other countries which are subject to the same process. As self-conscious fiction, the trilogy creates the effect of a palimpsest, and the reader who responds to the intricate body of imagery and the pattern of repetition sees the quest for a perfect world as a compulsive inner drive, not entirely dependent on historical circumstances. And the failure to realise a paradise becomes a consequence more of conflicts within a character than without.

The advantage of reading the trilogy as an authorial construct rather than as a re-telling of history is not simply that the reader enjoys the pleasure of understanding the texture and the artistic unity of the work. Reading by form suggests why Ghose's ongoing quest for new forms is both important and inevitable. The author's native-alien experience and his quest for perfection are subjective preoccupations which require him to create constructs to see if what is created would capture in imaginative terms what external reality denies. And the artifacts that are created by the author/ego, once they are created, seem inadequate. Jacques Lacan, who speaks about the frustrations of the ego, asserts that it is not the "frustration of a desire of the subject, but frustration by an object in which his desire is alienated and which the more it is elaborated the more profound the alienation from its jouissance becomes," that is significant. In the light of Lacan's statement it is clear why the search for new forms is inevitable
for the author; and why reading by form is important for the reader. The trilogy possesses the distinction of not only creating its own form but also of telling the reader how it should be read.
Notes

1 The Fiction of Reality (London: Macmillan, 1983) is a curious work which stands midway between fiction and criticism. The "I" who narrates is in a trance-like state in which he permits various fictions/critical statements to invade his mind. Although the numerous quotations and apparently random statements are carefully controlled to advance an argument, the intellectual conception of the book sets it apart from traditional critical works. I have used the term "narrator" rather than "author" to draw attention to the distinctiveness of this work.

2 Fiction, p. 67.

3 Generally speaking, I use the two terms in the sense that Seymour Chatman has defined them in his work Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1972). "In simple terms," says Chatman, "the story is the what in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the how" (p. 19). I have used discourse to mean not only structure but also the level of meaning that exists beyond the story.


7 Rev. of The Beautiful Empire, by Zulfikar Ghose, World Literature Today, 51 (1977), 159.

(London: Macmillan, 1972). All quotations are from this edition, and the page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated N.

(London: Macmillan, 1975). All quotations are from this edition, and the page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated BE.

(London: Macmillan, 1978). All quotations are from this edition, and the page references are given parenthetically. The title is abbreviated DW.

Personal interview.


I wish to acknowledge my immense debt to Claudio Guillén, whose perceptive comments on the picaresque mode in his Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971) have enabled me to study the conventions of the Brazilian trilogy. In his discussion of the role of the picaro vis-à-vis society, Guillén says: "the picaresque novel, then, offers a process of conflict between the individual and his environment, inwardness and experience, whereby one element is not to be perceived without the other" (p. 78).

Beatrice Stoerk, p. 4.


20 See *Fiction*, p. 9.


22 Beatrice Stoerk, p. 3.

23 Personal interview.


26 *Fiction*, p. 10.


29 *The Fabulators*, p. 12.

30 *The Fabulators*, p. 11.


33 Weston, p. 264.

34 *Politics and the Novel* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957),

Guillén, p. 73.

Guillén, p. 84.


Fiction, p. 80.


That Ghose considers Berger a major novelist is evident in his remarks in *The Fiction of Reality*: "Berger is a novelist, and nothing else. That is why Bellow appears important to intellectuals while Berger's most ardent admirers are some other novelists. And that is why twenty or thirty years from now Bellow will be one of those obscure funny names one sees who were mistakenly awarded the Nobel Prize, like Pearl Buck, and Berger will be read seriously, like Henry James" (p. 65).

"Neh?" rev. of *The Beautiful Empire*, by Zulfikar Ghose,
An interesting parallel here is Rushdie's technique of making Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism converge at the moment of Saleem's birth in *Midnight's Children*.

Guillén, p. 82.

Guillén, p. 92.

Also, see *The Native*, p. 77, p. 208.

Guillén, p. 83.

Guillén, pp. 84-85.

The repetition of names performs a similar function. In the first two novels the elder brother is called Antonio. The name Alicia occurs in the second and third novels. The name Alfredo occurs in the first and second novels. The reference to the ship *Amazonas* occurs twice in *The Beautiful Empire* (p. 21, p. 177) drawing attention to a similarity between Commander Barrosa and Wickham. It is also interesting that in all three novels Gregorio is associated with brothels.

*Fiction*, p. 33.

Similarly, at the beginning of *The Native*, the need to make Gregorio leave the Big House results in the expedition to hunt Indians.

*Fiction*, p. 75.

Father Boscoli in *The Native*, Wickham, Gloria, Alfredo and Gama in *The Beautiful Empire*, and Capistrano and Monica in *A Different World*, to name a few, turn out to be very different from the images they project. For a more sophisticated treatment of the motif of illusion and reality, see pp. 298-315 of *The Beautiful Empire*. 
See also The Native, pp. 310-20, which deal with the story of Du Clerc, and The Beautiful Empire, pp. 65-66, which deal with the rescue of Mrs Lynch. Both have the aura of fantasy.

See also the ritual of sacrifice in The Beautiful Empire, pp. 94-95. The ritual has no direct link with the narrative, but could be interpreted as a symbolic enactment of the process of writing fiction. The ritual combines active participation with objective detachment.

Fiction, p. 72.

Bilqis Siddiqi, p. 159.

Personal interview.

Personal interview.

Anthony Thwaite, p. 35.


See The Native, pp. 28, 50, 51.

See A Different World, pp. 210-212.


See Chatman, chapter 4.


Harpham, p. 83.

See Chapter 1, p. 24.
An interesting parallel here is Ghose's description, in his autobiography *Confessions of a Native-Alien* (1965), of his own ambivalent attitude towards Bombay. Says Ghose:

> For me Bombay was going to be like a woman who takes up a youth and leads his hand through the openings of her dress, granting little felicities of love but denying consummation, till he is maddened by her prolonged denial. (p. 21)

Of course, the Indians are spoken of as having possessed a complete world, but the reader never gets an inside view of the rhythm of their life. The farm at the beginning of *A Different World* functions more as a symbol than as a real world of harmony.


Voltaire's *Candide* contains a good many motifs which can be compared with those in the Brazilian trilogy. The concept of evil, the promise of a bright future, and the quest for El Dorado are all motifs that find an echo in *The Incredible Brazilian*. Significantly, Gregorio, like Candide, is a naive wanderer who seeks, not a clearly defined individual like Cunegonde, but the "woman" that is Brazil.

*Fiction*, p. 78.

Personal interview.

See *The Native*, pp. 13, 172, 173, *The Beautiful Empire*,

> Those Indians, whom I had always seen through more or less imaginary reports that looked upon them as beings beyond the pale of man's real existence, gave me the feeling here, in their own setting, in their own surroundings, they were complete masters of their culture. Nothing could be more remote from their reality than the absurd concept of savage. (p. 173).

The Negros attempt a similar experiment in their runaway colony in *The Native* (pp. 238-64), and the biting satire unleashed upon their organization is a measure of how short they fall of the ideal they set out to achieve.


See *The Native* p. 105 and *The Beautiful Empire*, p. 280 where nature takes revenge on Verissimo's party and Hofman for the injury they contemplate inflicting or actually inflict on the Indians.

For example, in *The Native*, Gregorio-Heloisa, Barballo-wife, in *The Beautiful Empire*, Gregorio's parents, Gregorio-Claire, in *A Different World*, Adolfo-Monica, Basilio-Odila.

Freyre, p. 351.

92 Freyre, p. 71.

93 Beatrice Stoerk, p. 6.

94 The fact that Carvalho had earned Gregorio's gratitude by providing him with a hiding place at his ranch and then by securing his release from the police make the episode all the more complex and symbolic.

95 Chatman, p. 93.

Chapter 5

The Metafictional Mode: Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script

In the early 1970s (after completing The Beautiful Empire and before commencing work on A Different World) Ghose wrote, almost compulsively, Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script. It is a work which, together with "The Waxahachie Coincidence" and "With Music by Dmitri Tiomkin," mark a transitional phase, a phase which affirms an active interest in postmodern, metafictional writing. That the period of metafictional inquiry should exist simultaneously with The Incredible Brazilian is an interesting detail, for it signifies that while the author was experimenting with the "unclassifiability" of the Brazilian trilogy he was also aligning himself with another mode which, although eminently classifiable, was an ideal medium in which to conduct a meditation on the process and epistemological status of fiction. In the evolution of Ghose's literary career this phase perhaps remains more valuable for its theoretical speculation than for its probing of the thematics of exile and quest.

Despite the fact that the intellectual grasp behind Hulme's Investigations is quite unlike anything that Ghose has demonstrated before, at the level of theme (if one could speak of theme in a work which stubbornly resists conventional categories) there is a clear sense of continuity between this work and the novels which preceded it. Alamgir Hashmi points to other areas of contact. Speaking of Hulme's Investigations he
says that

as [Ghose's] three-part novel The Incredible Brazilian gave us exemplary historical romance, and in the sense in which Crump's Terms was his English or European novel, the present book is his American novel, combining the best of both.¹

Certainly the historical context of Hulme's Investigations is the United States, particularly the Southwest, although to labour this point would be to consign the novel to the realm of mimetic writing where it does not belong. England and Brazil are historical contexts which are integral to the earlier works, whereas America remains a frame for Ghose's fictional world in Hulme's Investigations. Ghose asserts that this novel "[was] written without any preoccupation of subject matter" and "is concerned with its own language."² In other words, Hulme's Investigations lacks the referentiality of Crump's Terms or the Brazilian trilogy, but insofar as "the most extreme autonomous universes of fantasy are still referential"³ this novel conforms to the pattern of varying geographical locations that one consistently encounters in Ghose's fiction.

Speaking of technical similarities, Hashmi adds that Crump's Terms is very much a forerunner to Hulme's Investigations. Says Hashmi:

Fluid camera-eye narration, literary quotations and allusions, and the anguish of self entangled in a web of unredeemed personal, social, and ideological frames, are all common features to be discerned between Crump's Terms and Hulme's Investigations.⁴
There is no occasion to take issue with Hashmi's observation, but it needs to be remembered that the conceptual basis of Hulme's Investigations is essentially postmodern and not modern. Modernism, as David Lodge remarks, "continues the ... critique of traditional realism" but "for all its formal experiment and complexity [holds] out to the reader the promise of meaning if not a meaning." This does not imply, of course, that postmodernism is all wordplay devoid of significance, but the meaning reaches the reader only after he recognizes the fictionality of the created world. And this is precisely why Hulme's Investigations, as Hashmi rightly maintains, "marks an advance in story-telling and gives all [Ghose] touches a contemporary focus."

Hulme's Investigations has to be seen primarily as a verbal construct, a text which flaunts its own artifice and, like most metafictional novels, is concerned with "the construction of a fictional illusion ... and the laying bare of that illusion." In the context of this novel Ghose asks,

why not have a text that is simply a structure of language, which is based not upon preconceived ideas, which is not trying to put forward ideas that the writer has, which does not have a story or plot, but which is still fiction?

This framework for creating an alternative world is not an unfamiliar one in contemporary fiction, and with Hulme's Investigations the author steps into yet another room in the house of fiction, this time into the company of Sterne, Unamuno, Borges, Nabokov, Pynchon, Barth and the ever-increasing number
of postmodern writers. Also, in this work, more than in any other, Ghose comes close to the fictional practices of his friend B.S. Johnson. Further, Ghose, together with Salman Rushdie, now become the latest recruits to the counterrealistic tradition of Indo-Anglian literature.

Postmodernism is at best a vague term, referring to writers as widely different as, say, Barth and Fowles, or Borges and Johnson. Apart from the common premise of departing from the tenets of expressive realism, these writers are not linked together by common theoretical principles, and terms such as surfiction, irrealism, new realism, metafiction and fabulosity do not always perform the function of providing insights into subtle distinctions among the various writers. For the purposes of this chapter, suffice it to make a few broad distinctions in order to focus on the principles governing Hulme's Investigations. First, there are the writers who, like Barth in Lost in the Funhouse, create autonomous inner artifacts which make no attempt to reflect the external world. These works assume that the hiatus between signifier and signified can never be bridged, and hence the text should not concern itself with the reflection of external reality. Lodge speaks of Beckett's Molloy, ... Alain Robbe-Grillet's Le Voyeur and Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 along these lines and calls them "labyrinths without exits."

Second, there are the writers like John Fowles and the early Barth who create fictive worlds but do not deny their commitment to the real world. Patricia Waugh brings out these two attitudes perceptively when she says that
there are two poles of metafiction. One that finally accepts a substantial real world whose significance is not entirely composed of relationships within language; and one that suggests there can never be an escape from the prisonhouse of language and either delights or despairs in this.\textsuperscript{10}

Within the first broad category there are two significant variations: one which fuses the real and the imaginary without the mediating presence of the author, and leaves it to the reader to make the necessary connections in order to interpret the text. García Márquez, Günter Grass and Salman Rushdie adopt this mode, which reveals, as Waugh puts it, "a reduced tension between technique and counter-technique."\textsuperscript{11} The other group of writers not only creates fictive "heterocosms" (Linda Hutcheon) but present continually self-reflexive observations or metacommentary which not only draw attention to the mechanism of writing but also to the problematic relation between the fictive world and the real one. This probing is a crucial one, and as Waugh puts it, "metalingual commentary is thus foregrounded as the vehicle of that enquiry."\textsuperscript{12} Unamuno, Fowles and Ghose, to name a few, belong to this category.

It is the distinction between metafiction and fabulosity which underlines the difference between Rushdie and Ghose, although the two of them are the leading exponents of counterrealism in Indo-Anglian literature. Rushdie, both in \textit{Midnight's Children} (1981) and in \textit{Shame} (1984) fuses effortlessly the historical context (or frame) with the fantastic or nonrealistic dimension. In this sense he belongs to the tradition of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Anita Desai. \textit{Hulme's Investigations}, on the other hand, belongs to the tradition of
All About H. Hatterr (1948), which not only works at the level of parody but also includes a measure of self-reflexivity as well. The richness and diversity of Indian counterrealism and the contribution of Ghose and Rushdie to this tradition, fascinating as they are, fall outside the scope of this study. Since the main objective of this chapter is to consider how Ghose's dominant thematic concerns emerge as they appear through the filter of postmodernism, literary context becomes secondary to analysis of the text.

The publication of Hulme's Investigations was preceded by two short stories, "The Waxahachie Coincidence" and "With Music by Dmitri Tiomkin," both of which significantly anticipate the more ambitious Hulme's Investigations. The intertextuality established by names such as Gary and Dolores, and specific incidents such as beauty contests, bank robberies and film scripts clearly indicate the importance of these two stories for the purpose of understanding the metafictional phase. Both serve not only as prolegomena to the novel but also suggest crucial differences between themselves and the novel.

"The Waxahachie Coincidence" is primarily a parody of the realistic novel, the detective thriller and the western movie. This again is familiar territory, for metafictional writers, as Waugh mentions, "experiment ... commonly with the formulaic motifs of popular literary traditions which have often passed into cinematic form of representation in the twentieth century: science fiction, ghost stories, westerns, detective stories, popular romance." The opening paragraph which describes the protagonist asking the stewardess for a bottle of claret is an
amusing parody of the expectation of a significant opening paragraph in a realistic work. As in the detective thriller, there is a flashback which gives the reader the necessary background information regarding the guest, and the story/movie begins to proceed. Inconsequential episodes like the beauty contest are introduced for exotic appeal, a generous sprinkling of coincidence is brought in to keep the plot moving, and finally the detective solves the case by providing a series of idiotic and irrelevant answers.

Basically the story attempts to juxtapose the conventions of the western movie with the detective thriller so as to foreground the conventions to the the point of revealing their inadequacy to present a certain order of experience. In short, the author creates an illusion and then destroys it as untenable, thereby raising fundamental questions about the validity of that illusion and its capacity as a fictive heterocosm to reflect the objective world.

"With Music by Dmitri Tiomkin," written in 1978, is a more sophisticated effort along the same lines. It is a more "overtly narcissistic work" (to use Linda Hutcheon's phrase) which from the beginning parades its artifice. The opening paragraph (which anticipates the chapter entitled "The Lady on the Staircase" in Hulme's Investigations) describes a solitary horseman riding across the desert against a backdrop of the setting sun and an isolated cactus, and thereby clearly establishes the author's parodic intent. Soon after the visual scene the plot comes to an abrupt halt and the author provides multiple endings in the manner of B.S. Johnson in Travelling
People (1963) or Fowles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). Or, as the narrator says in Hulme's *Investigations*: "various obvious possibilities. Just take out the cards from the pigeonholes and shuffle them." The technique draws attention to the fictionality of the text and also the freedom of the reader as co-creator. Whatever ending the reader adopts does not in the end matter, for what is significant in this story is the process and not the product.

Significantly, the story does not end at the point of the illusion of the opening scene or the imaginary ending provided by the reader. A flight of birds, suggestive of a self-generating text, go across the picture unexpectedly and the illusion breaks. Now the director (author) becomes hysterical, for he did not anticipate this intrusion. The scriptwriter, cameraman, makeup man and set designer (all versions of literary critics) advance several opinions (interpretations). In the meantime, unnoticed by the author, reader and critic, the text goes ahead on its own volition and what it enacts is not just unexpected, but totally contrary to the possible endings suggested at the beginning.

This overtly narcissistic and self-generating text not only parodies the roles of author, reader and critic; it avoids deliberately the problematic relation between text and referent. At best it offers a perspectivist position, thereby providing for the reader "an awareness of the reach and limitations of his own perceptions, and a disillusioned understanding that things are and are not what they seem." The two stories are not significant in their own right so much as in being springboards
for the more ambitious Hulme's Investigations, which, by way of its metafictional properties, explores the concerns of the author and the contemporary scene.

Hulme's Investigations is a difficult novel to summarise, for it consciously eschews the forward movement one associates with the traditional realistic novel, or, for that matter, several postmodern novels, such as Lolita (1955) or The French Lieutenant's Woman. It is in that sense a quintessentially postmodern work. "Postmodernism," Lodge rightly maintains, "is suspicious of any kind of continuity." In its overall conception the novel is plotless, or as one of the characters in Unamuno's Mist says, "there is no plot, or rather, the plot will unfold. The plot is going to create itself." The nine scripts which constitute the novel are linked tenuously, sometimes through repetition of scenes, sometimes through intratextual references. Five characters -- Hulme, Walt, Poker Hortense, Rosemary and Jerry Biderman -- constitute a link by appearing in several episodes. But beyond this link, the reader sees no unity along traditional lines. Certain chapters are more partial to linearity and causality than others, and in such cases the historical context, such as the scramble for gold in the nineteenth century, provides a thematic underpinning which could be related to the notions of quest and alienation. In general terms, however, the reader perceives discontinuity rather than unity. In fact the epigraph from Malcolm Lowry, "... what the story is all about, who the protagonist may be, seems of small account beside the explosion of particular moments" draws attention to the change of focus in fictional practice in this
novel. Ghose's own words about Hulme's Investigations seem to confirm this angle of perception. Says Ghose:

[the novel] is really a series of explosions that takes place. Of course it uses certain images to do with this country; it takes something from popular culture, from films, and I use Bogart as a kind of mythical figure.  

The "images to do with the country" offer a useful starting point, although their referentiality has a limited function in the novel. The novel is an entertaining collage of popular culture, from cliff-hanger detective thrillers to sentimental soap operas. Ewing Campbell sums up the effect when he says that Ghose sifts the detritus of popular culture and genre fiction ... for the materials with which to construct his novel: cowboys and Indians, gangsters and detectives, the clichés of uncounted movies, paperback novels, television series, and radio dramas ....

The collage provides no illusion, but neither does it totally eclipse the sense of referentiality or of contemporary life. Throughout the novel, and particularly in the opening paragraphs of individual chapters, the author is at pains to evoke a historical context that the reader would recognize as American. Place names such as Brooklyn and Texas are obviously referential, unlike, say, Tralfamadore in Slaughterhouse-Five (1969), and the reader is constantly confronted with images which point to the referent. In fact Hashmi goes so far as to speak of Hulme's Investigations as "a novel with the ambition of
discovering historical truth and contemporary relevance ...."\(^{22}\) 

The picture of the East River and the image of "a tugboat on the river, hauling heaped-up trash" (p.5), Rickie's emotional comment "Jesus, the planet stinks" (p. 97), or Miriam's complaint, "a girl has to keep hoping, there are too many disappointments in this life" (p.131), the description of the desert, the highways and even of Rosemary's accumulated mail, have the function of mediating between the fictive world and the referent. That does not, in the context of the novel, constitute a contradiction. As Hutcheon remarks, "self-informing narrative does not signal a lack of sensitivity or of humanitarian (or human) concern on the part of the novelist."\(^{23}\)

In the larger context of the writings of Ghose, however, the significance of this phase lies not so much in its mimesis as in its antireferentiality, not in its continuity but in its dislocation. This phase is in many ways a retrospective one, prompted by Ghose's re-reading of Wittgenstein. This novel is as much Ghose's investigations as it is Hulme's investigations. The metafictional intent of the novel is evident in the title itself. Hulme (with its obvious suggestions of T.E. Hulme and David Hume) investigating the Bogart script amounts to an inquiry into the status of art. T.E. Hulme's comment that "enlightenment comes when we first see that literature is not a vision but a voice, or a line of letters in a black border"\(^{24}\) for instance, has interesting implications for this novel. And according to Ralph Cohen, "art was not, for [David] Hume, a form of deception, a diversion from truth, but an enhancement of man's values."\(^{25}\) The precise nature of T.E. Hulme's or David
Hume's inquiries or the interaction between them do not matter, for the intention of the author is to test the validity of fiction and language vis-à-vis referent and society.

It is interesting that Ghose chose to investigate the Bogart script, rather than fiction per se. The scripts are not authentic and Ghose points out that "all but one are bogus." The scripts often recall Bogart movies, sometimes specifically as the Betty episode (p. 74) recalls "The Petrified Forest," or more often in a general sense. More importantly, Bogart is a contemporary legendary figure, one whose individual image is perhaps more important than any single role he ever played. The notion that "Bogart was an individual of great authority and strength, who bowed to no man or cop" or that "he grew up in the turbulence and insecurity of the twenties and the thirties - tough times that required tough men" is at the conceptual core of Hulme's Investigations. In short, Ghose attempts to test the validity of the myths that have fired the American imagination, and in the process lead the reader to notions of quest and alienation.

The title, then, raises questions about the status of fiction in relation to the everyday world of human experience. In the text the questions are pursued primarily by showing up fiction as products of the imagination rather than as reflections of reality. The defamiliarisation begins at the level of parody, which is perhaps the most obvious fictional device in the novel. Hulme's Investigations is a parody of the traditional novel to the same extent that Tristram Shandy is a parody of the eighteenth-century novel and The French
Lieutenant's Woman is a parody of Victorian conventions of realistic writing. Waugh suggests that "parody in metafiction can operate at the level of style or structure." In Hulme's Investigations it is both. The stylistic aspect is an important one in Hulme's Investigations, for in this novel the author pays considerable attention to the intricacies and possibilities of language. In his critical work, The Fiction of Reality, Ghose points out that "the writer's struggle is not with his subject matter and not with form, but with style," a statement which is clearly applicable to this novel. In fact Campbell points out that in Hulme's Investigations "language qua language becomes the objective correlative of the work, suggesting the protean nature of both the novel and the so-called real world that contains the novel...."31

At the very beginning of the novel, in what begins very much like a realistic description of background information, the alliteration and consonance point to the parodic intent. For instance, the description of

the middle-aged middle-brow with their package-tour processed information of the world's focal points for the Polaroid snap
(p.3)

foregrounds style in order to parody middle-class vacations in exotic settings. Similarly, when the reader expects a semi-erotic description of a woman, the language once again undercuts the expectation. Thus Kathy becomes "the citrus-growing neighbor's daughter who's grown into a ripe cliché with a couple of banalities bouncing in front of her ..." (pp.23-24). Stock
situations in soap operas are transformed by language into versions of unreality. The opening of "Marriage and Settlement" is a case in point:

When I returned to the house, Rosemary was sitting on the steps of the back porch, a young man was holding her hand in both of his and looking at her with what one was supposed to understand was 100% love. (p.61)

The overuse of jargon has the similar function of foregrounding fictive roles characters (and by implication people) take on for themselves. Jargon performs an important role in the novel, for as Hulme says, "language perceives but jargon explicates. And one might add meanings are communicated through expletives" (p.102). And jargon is not simply the fanciful language of cowboys, criminals and detectives. Hulme adds: "language equals vision. But you will have noticed that its the cunning jargon-mongers who misinterpret the visions who sit in professorial chairs, not the poets" (p.103). What is stressed here is not the failure but the abuse of language.

Sometimes typographical tricks, wordplay and puns enhance the parodic intention of the novel, insisting on reality as a construct of language. The spelling of "Marruj DizZolvers," for example (p.67), is strongly reminiscent of the practices of B.S.Johnson. Both writers foreground language and stress the shifting relation between language and reality. In this particular instance it is ironic that "Marruj DizZolvers" is a company which specialises in divorce but gives out seemingly harmless leaflets at weddings. Wordplay parodies the genre of
detective fiction when the symbol MESA turns out to be an acronym of a name: "M Meredith Sampson. Me-redith Sa-mpson. There it was M.E.S.A" (p.49). The short sentences add to the effect of the logical process of detective writing. Santa Anna becomes Santayana (p.115); reminding the reader playfully that Bogart's sailing yacht was called "Santana." What the reader encounters, then, is "various forms of ... wordplay ... which calls attention to the fact that this text is made up of words." However, Hulme's Investigations is as much about the power of language as it is about its ambiguity. While the novel questions the role of language in relation to reality, there is no despair, or lapse into mere gibberish. As Ihab Hassan says, "if the fall of human consciousness is into language, then redemption lies in puns and metaphor, holy derangement, the re-sexualisation of speech, babble or silence." In fact at the beginning of the novel there is a conviction that language is the only available vehicle if one is to avoid the twin poles of scream and silence. Walt points out that "the scream has become such a cliché that art has turned toward silence"(p.5). Or, as the Indian Chief remarks, "if you're not going to use words correctly, then we might as well use sign language, at least with that one never knows how absurdly one has been misunderstood" (p.126).

Language is vitalised by creating a precise and dense pattern, of which there will be reason to speak hereafter. The other is through the process of intertextuality, which not only affirms the linguistic status of the text but also helps to reinforce theme. As Hutcheon says, "quotations from one text,
when inserted in the context of another, are the same and yet new and different." The allusions in Hulme's *Investigations* are numerous, from Shakespeare to Henry James, Eliot, Frost and Wallace Stevens. Invariably the reference is double-edged, cutting both the source and the present context. The title "The Lady on the Staircase," together with what goes on in this chapter, recall both Isabel Archer and Prufrock. If Poker Hortense as Isabel has the function of parodying the source, Walt as Prufrock becomes a damning indictment of the narrator. An interesting parody of Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* occurs in "Notes for Hulme on Sexual Symptoms" where the pastoral atmosphere and the pervert carrying the woman to the river echo Angel Clare's somnambulistic walk with Tess in his arms.

The language, however, is one aspect of the overall objective of parody. The other aspect is the structural element which creates an edifice and then destroys it as untenable. As Waugh puts it, "contexts are ostentatiously constructed only to be subsequently deconstructed." Discussing metafictional strategies in general, Hutcheon points to four broad ways in which postmodern writers structure their texts:

Detective plots, fantasy, games, the erotic - all these function as self-reflective paradigms, making the act of reading into one of active "production," of imagining, interpreting, decoding, ordering, in short of constructing the literary universe through the fictive referents of the words.

Each writer has his own speciality. For example, Rushdie uses fantasy as the fundamental paradigm for *Midnight's Children*
while Nabokov employs the erotic as the strategy in *Lolita*. In *Hulme's Investigations* Ghose accommodates all four paradigms to a greater or lesser degree. The frame is that of a detective novel, with both Hulme and Walt being detectives of sorts. "The Elimination of the Mexican Woman" has all the trappings of the detective thriller, including drug-trafficking, car chases, hidden transmitters and code language. An interesting and useful parallel with "The Elimination of the Mexican Woman" is Thomas Pynchon's novel *The Crying of Lot 49*, which charts Oedipa's surrealist and paranoid encounters with a secret organization. The parallel between the symbol WASTE that confronts Oedipa and Walt's discovery of MESA has several implications at the level of structure and theme. Both Ghose and Pynchon, significantly, employ the framework of the detective thriller to probe notions of alienation and the failure of communication.

Fantasy operates in *Hulme's Investigations* at least at two levels, at the level of structure and the level of ordinary discourse. When Poker tells Walt, "Remember, you met me at the airport in your white Lincoln, you were wearing a white linen suit and white panama hat you'd bought on a trip to Florida" (p.17) it comes across as the fantasy of an individual. When in "Notes for Hulme on Sexual Symptoms" the highway turns into a vast field and then gives way to a farm house and images of merrymaking, the fantasy operates at the level of structure. In this instance the fantasy has three functions: it captures within a few pages the rhythm of the seasons; it creates a frame for the realistic action which takes place; and it parodies the western-movie gunfight of the good guy versus the bad guy in the
encounter between Walt and Fingers Dawson. Fantasy here not only parodies the action but also establishes the status of the chapter as a fictive construct. The marriage between Rosemary and Jay in a later chapter quite blatantly belongs to the realm of fantasy. Fantasy as a way of coping with the pressures of reality is a motif to which the reader keeps returning. And, as the narrator says, "a little fantasy hurts no one" (p. 141). But when fantasy begins to usurp the place of reality, then, as the novel seems to suggest, distinctions between fact and fiction get increasingly blurred. In a note to Walt, Hulme refers to Disneyland and adds: "Every image a representation of unreality. Pilgrims come there by the millions. Not one single incredulous soul among them. The question then is not one of belief. What then?" (p. 65). And later in the novel Walt tells Rosemary:

This is California, sweetie, it's the end of the world. Their fantasies, reality and scripts are all mixed up and become more and more infantile as the sun seems increasingly distant beyond the thickening smog. (p. 148)

Games are perhaps the least noticeable feature in Hulme's Investigations, although the overall conception of the novel has a lot to do with the notion of play in a larger sense. The erotic is present in various forms in the novel. As Hashmi points out, there are more than two dozen different names for the female breasts. However, with all its perversity, the novel is hardly ever pornographic, for, as Nabokov maintains, in pornographic novels, "style, structure [and] imagery should
never distract the reader from his tepid lust." In that sense the erotic scenes are parodic, and they often serve the function of alienating the reader.

Parody has at least two major functions. First, a novel could parody another in order to set up its own standards. If Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* parodies the gothic novel, it does so in order to advance a different mode of story-telling or another set of values. Second, a work could parody another without setting up explicitly an alternative model. Ghose's work belongs to the second category in that its main objective is to test the validity of fictions which claim to be reflections of external reality. Although *Hulme's Investigations* does not eschew meaning, its significance is dependent on the effective demolition of the fictions created by popular culture. And, like all metafictional writers, Ghose employs several strategies to disorient the reader.

One of the standard features of the traditional novel is the careful employment of time, which preserves the illusion that the reader is experiencing a version of the real world. And one of the first things that the modern novel attempted was to destroy this notion of time. As Alain Robbe-Grillet says, "in the modern narrative, time seems to be cut off from its temporality. It no longer passes. It no longer completes anything." It is not without significance that in the second chapter of *Hulme's Investigations* Poker and Walt have a discussion (p.16) about a faulty clock, thereby drawing attention to the difficulties in computing time. Time functions illogically in the novel, pre-empting realistic explanations.
Between the act of getting onto the roof of a car and getting down the time could change from broad daylight to darkness (p.35). Walt, as drifting cowboy, Poker's lover and New York detective, belongs to both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The dramatic changes in time have the same function as contradiction, confusion and discontinuity. Campbell refers to the narrative strategies of this novel as "scenic parataxis" which he explains as the fusion of disparate elements while not necessarily destroying the possibility of meaning. The opening line of the novel, "Finally we arrived in the desert" is contradicted in the next page when Walt admits that "it was much later that [they] reached the desert" (p.4). Sometimes the contradiction occurs in the same paragraph. In the first paragraph, for instance, the narrator presents a series of unclear, hypothetical possibilities and then adds: "I had a beatific sense of conviction that I knew the precise place of each fact in the phenomenological cubicles ... in my brain" (p.4). Similarly, there is the disorientation caused by deliberate confusion, which recalls Victor's sage advice to Augusto in *Mist*:

> And it's also necessary to confuse. Above all to confuse, to confuse everything. To confuse sleep with being awake, fiction with reality, the true with the false.\(^2\)

Among other things *Hulme's Investigations* stresses the confusion of names. Paltry-Smith, for example, becomes Poultry-Smith and Coterie-Smith. Hulme is Hume, Hamm, Humble and Helmsley. Estelle
quickly becomes Miriam and then Alice. Charlie appears twice, first as a glutton with a salacious past and then as a pimp. The dislocation caused by the change of names is further enhanced by the functional naming of characters. As Waugh remarks, in metafictional works, proper names are often "placed in an overtly metaphorical or adjectival relationship with the thing they name." Fingers Dawson, Poker Hortense, Jackie Gross, Dagger and Hulme belong to this category.

One feature most postmodern writers share, whether metafictional or not, is the technique of discontinuity. A classic example of this technique is B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* where, apart from the first and the final sections, everything else could be shuffled at will by the reader. Similarly in Hulme's *Investigations*, apart from "A Transatlantic Prologue" with which the novel begins and the "Terminal Scripts" with which it concludes, all other scripts could be arranged in any order without seriously disrupting the perspective of the reader. The discontinuity occurs at the level of chapters and paragraphs, and sometimes even within a single sentence. The transitions are often so arbitrary that the reader is frequently called upon to reorient himself to an entirely new situation for a period of time while not forgetting the significance of the earlier section. At times Ghose's interminable sentences interpolate so many subordinate clauses between subject and predicate that the reader can hardly keep track of the main content of the sentence.

The total effect of these diverse techniques is evidently to highlight the artifice, the fictionality of the text. In fact
so strong is the sense of a verbal construct that even precisely articulated straightforward sentences take on the quality of unreality, or, perhaps, emphasize their own reality. It is almost as if the nonrealistic frame throws its shadow on the obviously mimetic. The inherent danger of this mode is the sense of formlessness, of experiment for its own sake. As Robert Alter remarks, "one of the great temptations, however, of the self-conscious novelist is to content himself with technical experiment...." In the more successful works the carefully structured text invites the reader to participate in the creation of meaning, to abandon his traditionally passive role and function as co-creator. Waugh defines this admirably well:

The "Dear Reader" is no longer quite so passive and becomes in effect an acknowledged fully active player in a new conception of literature as a collective creation rather than a monologic and authoritative version of history."

Part of the pleasure of reading the novel comes from the challenge experienced by the reader in sifting what appears to be a discontinuous mass of material to arrive at a structure which reveals a certain order of meaning. In short, for the reader, understanding the novel becomes a "cooperative, interpretative experience." However, when the language and narrative structure continually point to a dichotomy between the actual world and the fictive heterocosm in a manner that disorients the reader rather than providing a logical alternative model, metacommentary becomes an important source of assistance to the reader. In Hulme's Investigations the presence
of the author-surrogate Hulme and his intrusions into the text and his conversations with Walt often provide the opportunity for metafictional commentary.

Ghose does not at any point introduce himself as the author in the manner of Unamuno in *Mist* or Fowles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. But he creates a surrogate in Hulme who is omnipresent in that he is always a shadowy presence on the horizon, and although he does not interfere with the text in any overt manner, he cannot be mistaken for any other person than the implied author. He is, as he himself points out, "an inspector of men's souls," one who puts "on elaborate masks to look behind the common masks of mankind" (p.25).

Perhaps the most significant metafictional comment occurs at the beginning of "Dialogue with Hulme" in the form of Walt's memo to H.:

You saw it yourself in the Petrified Forest. The story can develop complications, twists, surprises, while pursuing the mule's-track of clichés down the narrow ravine of public taste.... You predicted the alternative, those terrible bifurcations in the mind that the New England hack, R.Frost, wrote a rustic-voiced poem about. The hoe and the hay, but nothing to say. However, you might want to investigate the what else and the unspoken but heard and the not there but seen, for there's this other dimension surely without which there wouldn't be sparkle in water or haze above the sand of the desert.

(p.85)

Walt scorns both the plots of popular fiction/movies which masquerade as fact, and the overt didacticism of Frost, who, in poems like "The Road not Taken" imposes a logic on individual choice and the external world. Neither approach seems convincing
to Walt who is nevertheless willing to admit the reality of the "other dimension."

The "other dimension" constitutes a knotty problem, and the novel, at various points, attempts diverse means by which to arrive at a definition of it. Different propositions are put forward, all of which warn the reader of possible modes which may operate within the context of the novel. One proposition that occurs early in the novel (p.34) is the Wildean notion that life imitates art, a theory Walt dismisses with an expletive. The process of deductive logic is evoked and then abandoned (p.59) for the simple reason that solving the puzzle does not necessarily "get us anywhere" (p.59). Presenting total unreality is sometimes self-defeating, for the reader/viewer mistakes the unreal reel for the unreeled real. At times the creation of unreality takes on the dimension of reality through the inclusion or juxtaposition of reality. In these instances to assume the whole picture to be real only falsifies the context. Hank Howarth reveals himself to be a fictional construct through his alliterative name. But the moment he introduces the name of Lou Anne as his wife the reader is confused. As Walt points out, anyone who called himself Hank Howarth could possibly be using an alias. And the story of Lou Anne had clearly been fabricated to lend credence to Hank's reality which could be discoverable only in absurdity. (p.80)

This line of inquiry, sometimes helpful but often deliberately ambiguous, permeates the entire novel. In fact questions such as "why in a context of interminable motion are
conclusions necessary?" or "why cannot words function without interpretation which necessarily involves chimeras?" are more characteristic of the novel than straightforward answers. A suggestive statement along these lines comes, ironically, from Jackie Gross, who insists that "this business can only move forward if we get away from reality" (p.151).

However, having granted that "journals, diaries, public records, letters" are "words that interpret words" (p.138), the novel speaks of the need to "recollect and re-arrange the images while observing what's going on" (p.138) as a possible way of exiting through the labyrinths of the novel. If as Walt points out "something endures in spite of the imbecility of conception" (p.141), then perhaps "a mind trained differently will turn obvious facts into phenomena of extraordinary meaning" (p.142).

All these comments lead to the reader to reorient himself to a text which releases its meaning when approached synchronically and antireferentially. The task is not a self-defeating one, for, as Hutcheon remarks, "since fiction is not a way of viewing reality, but a reality in its own right, the fictive heterocosm will have its own rules which govern the logic or motivation of its parts."

Notions of land, woman and quest are repetitive and unifying features in Ghose's works, and in this novel the parameters include an unfamiliar treatment of the male. Again and again there is the sense of the diminution of the male. Jay, for instance, is a totally synthetic character, a "duralon hero" (p.62) with a "polyester nose" (p.62) and a "perma-press mouth" (p.61). The males are horribly obese as Charlie is (p.37) or
total perverts like Jay's father or the man who is involved in a bizarre travesty of lovemaking (p.41), or the aging Jackie Gross who expects perverse sexual favours from those whom he hires. Everett Simpson is perhaps the most perverse of the lot, lending credence to Rosemary's assertion that "now all you get is guys with hairy chests, a gold chain hanging from the neck, and the first proposal they make to a girl is of some perversity" (p.149).

Not only are they perverse, they are often incapable of sexual performance. Rosemary breaks off her marriage with Jay on the grounds that he is incapable of providing sexual satisfaction. Walt, despite all his bravado, can never bring himself to make love. Despite the opportunities offered by Poker, Rosemary and Estelle, Walt fails to respond. In a devastating tirade against Walt, Poker brings home the notion of the diminution of the male:

Round baby-face with pink rubbery cheeks, glistening hairless chin, Jesus, what a prospect for American womanhood! Narrow rounded shoulders, flabby tits and a stomach the size of a Buick's trunk, fold upon fold of fat ... here is Walt of the amazing prickette. (pp.26-27)

Counterpointing this image of the diminished male is that of the woman, who is perhaps no less perverse, but definitely endowed with considerable vitality. It is a woman who serves as a crucial link in MESA and it is the women who defeat the Indians who launch an attack on Chenoweth's party. More remarkable, the antireferentiality of the novel enables the narrative to transform the woman into a glittering princess, the
archetypal object of quest. The baby princess whom Chief Cedar Bark refers to (p.134), the Rosemary who dresses seductively for Hank (p.81), the woman in the barn (p.43), and Poker at the end of chapter two are linked by the language, the dress they wear and the beauty they possess. The white gown, as it repeatedly appears on the page, begins to establish vital connections. As Campbell says,

unsuspected connections and distinctions, which have eluded us because we are hindered by habit, appear suddenly to the reader as the wordless insights of felt life.68

Poker Hortense is in a sense special, for she is both the princess and the land. As Hashmi puts it,

Poker is at once the pioneer heroine of a Bogart film and the "beautiful princess" (Ophelia/Cordelia) invented by Chief Cedar Bark's priests (V11), in whose search Walt has been riding.49

As Poker is transformed through "scenic parataxis" into the princess figure, the language acquires a density which makes her an emblem of the land and the ocean. "There was the swelling of oceans within her, the loneliness of mountain peaks" says Walt, and adds "I dropped upon a knee and bowed my head" (p.32) which is evidently a symbolic gesture.

The transcendental figure of the princess is also a whore, which explains her name. As Walt explains, "men came and loved her, and she let them come, smiling. Out in the cotton fields, or deep within the timber forests ... she didn't mind the man
who took her" (p.15). Although Walt asserts that Poker was accommodating, the text also brings in the idea of violation -- the violation of woman as violation of the land. Ghose remarks,

in Hulme's Investigations ... there is the idea of Poker Hortense as the woman who is being violated. The love of the land has become a gross perversity. All over America there is this outrage of what Americans have done to their landscape.\(^5\)

The tying together of land and woman, as in The Incredible Brazilian, leads to the notion of quest in Hulme's Investigations with Walt as the quest figure. Archie Mozzer riding with "the conviction of a new America" (p.31), Charlie riding west "looking for the security and the terror, the peace and the turbulence that only the prairie could give" (p.37) are both in a sense versions of Walt. The reader makes these connections, for he recognises, as Campbell maintains, "their object is to shape a vision ... and direct ... the reader in experiencing the unsaid and the not there."\(^5\)

Walt, whether as nineteenth-century cowboy or latter-day detective, is unconsciously involved in the quest. As Cedar Bark tells Walt:

> You will always be looking for her whatever you do, that is the burden you must live with from now, in fact you will live it from now on, for you have no choice.

(p.129)

 Appropriately enough, Walt as detective in another place and time thinks "about the princess [he] was destined to meet ...." (p.31).
The land takes on two dimensions in the novel. On the one hand there is the pervasive image of the desert, of dust and barrenness. The context of the various scripts provides for the description of "a hard land with sparse stunted trees that gave no shelter from the sun" (p.104). The Mexicans digging the unyielding land in the middle of nowhere (pp. 104-05) are a powerful image of what appears to be a perennial but futile quest. On the other hand, there is the imaginative perception of a green world. Walt describes this vision as "the imagination daring to believe in its own stubborn formulations, those dazzling landscapes, dreams of apple orchards in late summer" (p.5). It is this vision of the "dense and secretive" (p.31) forest that makes Walt ready "to take on the inevitable desert" (p.31).

There is at least one instance in which an attempt is made to create this perfect world. Significantly, Colonel Wit, who undertakes this effort, calls his pleasure resort "El Dorado." Walt inspects this green world, only to be given a vision of corruption and perversion; not only is the sexual act described in a manner which gives to the man a passive role, but the performance is put on display for the benefit of voyeuristic tourists.

The quest is presented in the novel as unattainable, inevitable and archetypal. Walt mentions that "others had pursued the same journey and had somehow endured its trials" (p.134). Walt's journey ends in "Terminal Scripts" when he and Rosemary undertake a symbolic journey and reach the mythical forest. Here again the foregrounding of technique clearly
reminds the reader that the journey is a fictive one. Here, looking into a clear stream and splashing the water in his face, Walt comes close to his vision. In response to Rosemary's predictable question, "what have you found, gold?" (p.158), Walt replies "maybe" and then reminds her of the story of the Indian princess, thereby subverting the material dimension of the quest. As Hashmi remarks, the gold Walt finds remains "a figure of speech." In short, the novel seems to suggest that the quest for Eden could resolve itself only through a pattern of language. It is hardly surprising that a novel that flaunts discontinuity and continually detaches itself from external reality should posit the form-creating use of language as a solution to the search for perfection.

The reader who is familiar with the corpus of Ghose's writings would probably find the exploration of theme in Hulme's Investigations less engaging than the technical inventions and the metafictional commentary. He would probably find in this novel a necessary experiment to bridge the gap between the "unclassifiability" of the Brazilian trilogy and the magic realism of A New History of Torments and Don Bueno. It is almost as if the author distances a fictive work as far as possible from objective reality to test its strength as a vehicle for expressing the native-alien experience. Whether the reader responds to this novel as a probing study of exile and alienation or not, he will hardly deny the possibilities inherent in the narrative mode. Also, the questions the author raises about language, the text and the referent are increasingly relevant at a time when theoretical speculations...
regarding the parameters of the novel are urgent and topical. In the context of modern writing Hulme's *Investigations* remains a notable example of a work in which a strong sense of play and entertainment is combined with linguistic inventiveness and defamiliarization in order to create an artifact that achieves a remarkable degree of autonomy. In the context of Ghose's writings the novel anticipates and paves the way for the next phase by providing the theoretical basis for it. In its own right, *Hulme's Investigations* is a dynamic work of fabulation, which recalls Robert Scholes's interesting observation:

> the joy that goes into the fabulation is returned to us in the reading. And it is for this that we must be grateful, even to the darkest of fabulators.\textsuperscript{53}
Notes


4 Hashmi, p.157.


6 Hashmi, p.161.


8 Personal interview.

9 Lodge, p. 10.

10 Waugh, p.53.

11 Waugh, p.16.

12 Waugh, p. 37.


14 Waugh, p.81


16 (Austin & New York: Curbstone Press, 1981). All quotations are from this text, and page references are given parenthetically.


18 Lodge, p.11.

20 Personal interview.


22 Hashmi, p. 18.

23 Hutcheon, p. 18.


26 Personal interview.


28 Hyams, p. 172.

29 Waugh, p. 72.


32 Also see Hashmi, p. 162.

33 Hutcheon, p. 101.


35 Hutcheon, pp. 24-25.


37 Hutcheon, p. 86.
38 See Hashmi, p.165.


41 Campbell, p.225.


43 Waugh, p.93.


45 Waugh, p.43.

46 Hutcheon, p.154.

47 Hutcheon, p.90.

48 Campbell, p.225.

49 Hashmi, p.158.

50 Personal interview.

51 Campbell, p.225.

52 Hashmi, p.158.

Chapter 6

Magical Narrative: A New History of Torments and Don Bueno

"Experience" says Zulfikar Ghose, "is a comprehension of a previously obscure form: a novel begins because I do not see and ends because, and only if, I have seen."¹ This statement by the author could well serve as an epigraph for the two novels, A New History of Torments (1982) and Don Bueno (1983), which constitute his most recent phase. Written in successive years, the two works grow out of the same imaginative thrust, a fact which the author acknowledges implicitly in his critical comments about this phase. Not only do the two novels possess the same intellectual grasp, narrative mode and ontological underpinning, they often claim kinship through barely concealed intertextual references. In other words, they constitute two versions of the same myth. What makes this phase a crucial and valuable one is that it not only accommodates significant aspects of the author's previous novels but also represents an important growing point in his literary career. The purpose of this chapter is to test the implications of this fusion and evolution, for here Ghose not only explores new territory in thematic and structural terms, he also completes a cycle of evolution which begins with the realism of The Contradictions and The Murder of Aziz Khan. It is also of more than passing interest that with this phase the author concludes in microcosm the evolution of the novel, thereby raising interesting questions not only about his own writing but the possibilities inherent in the genre of the novel as well.
In many respects Torments and Don Bueno owe much to the theoretical speculations and linguistic experiments of Hulme's *Investigations into the Bogart Script* (1981), although the latter is overtly narcissistic while the former are concerned with human experience. Ghose himself points out that "the intellectual grasp behind those two novels is different" and that he is "no longer talking about human language but about human experience."² Also, it is important to recognize that while both phases tend to steer away from what Northrop Frye calls "the tyranny of the representational fallacy,"³ they employ different narrative modes altogether and demand different modes of reading. If Hulme's *Investigations* moves close to fantasy writing, Torments and Don Bueno move in the direction of magic realism. If the earlier phase brings to mind the writings of John Barth, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut, the later one evokes memories of Alejo Carpentier, Garcia Márquez and Günter Grass. The distinction is a crucial one, although one admits that fantasy literature cannot totally dispense with reality and magic realism invariably borrows from the fantastic. T.E. Apter, who contends that the fantastic is the appropriate medium for the treatment of the unconscious, explains that

in bearing the mark of unconscious processes -- timelessness, fragmentation, mutual contradiction, exaggeration, distortion, displacement, condensation -- [fantasy literature] tempts the critic to read such literature as an exhibition of unconscious processes.⁴

In short, fantasy predominantly operates at a level below or other than referentiality, and draws on realistic details to
strengthen its exploration, while magic realism tries to realize the goal of exploring the real by accepting and accommodating the unreal. Seymour Menton explains that

whereas magic realism injects a touch of magic in reality, it should not be confused with fantastic realism, which portrays the magic, the imaginary, the fantastic in a somewhat realistic manner.²

The difference between the two is the difference between, say, Salman Rushdie's *Grimus* (1977) and his *Midnight's Children* (1981). Also, it must be noted that the distinction between Hulme's *Investigations* and the recent novels is also one of attitude. *Hulme's Investigations* is essentially a fun-book which delights in its energy, in its capacity for verbal and structural ingenuity. The exuberance that *Hulme's Investigations* reflects on every page is close to what Robert Scholes would call the spirit of fabulation.⁶ Keith Maillard establishes this dichotomy effectively:

The spirit of fabulation is something like this: Nothing important can be said, so why not have fun? The spirit of magic realism, in contrast, is: Something tremendously important must be said, something that doesn't fit easily into traditional structures, so how can I find a way to say it?⁷

While these distinctions remind the reader of the salient differences between the two phases, it is equally important to recognize that the phase of *Hulme's Investigations* provides a springboard for the evolution of the later phase. In general terms, *Hulme's Investigations* marks a watershed, separating the
author's writing during the 1960s and 1970s from that of the 1980s. Its interest, as the previous chapter suggests, lies in its theoretical speculations about fiction vis-à-vis reality, about the role of fantasy and language in novelistic writing. Among other things, Hulme's *Investigations* demonstrates the viability of a text that flaunts its artifice and then makes it the means of exploring reality. It establishes that the fictionality and literariness of the created world, far from distracting the reader, could serve to probe submerged depths of human experience, a point which figures prominently in *Torments* and *Don Bueno*.

Significantly, the shadowy implied author of Hulme's *Investigations* is one who "looks the picture of G.K. Chesterton." The detail is an interesting one, for it places the literary inquiries of Hulme's *Investigations* in the same category as the speculations of G.K. Chesterton. Also, Chesterton, the author of several essays on magic and fantasy in novel fiction, on fairy tales, and of the *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), is perhaps the earliest of the magic realists in English literature. By making this reference Ghose not only anticipates the phase of *Torments* and *Don Bueno*, but also opens up a fruitful field of intertextual reference. The points of contact between *The Man Who Was Thursday* (subtitled "A Nightmare") and Ghose's recent phase are many, although Ghose eschews Chesterton's larger-than-life characters and surreal landscapes. But both authors are concerned with the notion of alternate reality and the tenuous link between fiction and the objective world. Although one could argue that the detective story
underpinning of Hulme's Investigations has affinities with Chesterton's novel, the emotional experience of The Man Who Was Thursday is close to that of Don Bueno. In both novels the reader experiences an epistemological uncertainty which Tzvetan Todorov, in general terms, defines as "that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event."¹⁰

Thematically and structurally, however, Torments and Don Bueno often recall the author's earlier novels. Often a trivial detail, like a name, will trigger off a connection which then becomes increasingly clear. Oliva in Torments for instance, when she undergoes an abortion, recalls Olivia in The Contradictions. The idea of landowners which figures so prominently in The Murder of Aziz Khan appears again in Torments where Rojas and Oyarzún are landowners. Gregorio joining expeditions to explore the depths of Brazil is no different from Jason attempting to cross the Amazonas in search of El Dorado. Similarly, Gregorio as urban guerilla in A Different World anticipates Simon as revolutionary in Don Bueno. Frieda as exile in Crump's Terms bears comparison with Don Bueno who is born in Venezuela and lives in Santa Rosa. In terms of overall conception, the notions of identity, alienation and quest for a satisfying conception of reality which unite the earlier novels surface again in the recent ones, albeit with a slightly different focus.

A critical problem arises, however, with regard to narrative mode, which requires careful analysis. The Murder of Aziz Khan, Crump's Terms and the Brazilian trilogy employ, as the previous chapters suggest, three different narrative modes,
and their differences are central to Ghose's evolution as a
writer. The shift from realism to stream-of-consciousness, for
instance, has several far-reaching implications in relation to
style, organization and ontology. Once the author changes the
conception of time he inevitably alters the reader's sense of
the space-time world. Nevertheless, both modes are realistic
to the extent that they strive in different ways to capture the
essence of human experience in relation to the objective world.
Analogically, George Eliot and James Joyce may not agree on the
manner in which human experience should be presented in
fictional terms, or on the kind of reality an individual
experiences, but both would agree on the reality of the external
world. Similarly, Aziz Khan's Kalapur and Crump's England cannot
be considered other than as verifiable geographical entities.
Even in the more ambivalent Brazilian trilogy, the fabulosity
does not eclipse the colonial experience of Brazil. Gilberto
Freyre's *The Masters and the Slaves* (1946) needs to be within
reach for the serious reader of the Brazilian trilogy. The
critical dilemma for the reader of *Torments* and *Don Bueno* is the
degree to which these novels adopt the realistic mode, a
difficulty that has led to both misunderstanding and adverse
criticism. A brief summary of the narrative thread of the two
novels would indicate how easy it is to succumb to the
temptation of a purely referential reading.

A New History of *Torments* has at least three distinct
narrative threads, all of which are brought together at the end.
Jorge Rojas Jiménez, a South American ranch owner, after two
decades of married life, decides to bring home a new mistress
called Margarita, thereby causing his wife to leave her home rather than face the humiliation of having to confront the mistress. The two children, Rafael and Violeta, escort a stranger called Mark Kessel (the owner of a golden Lincoln) out of the farm and are involved in a car crash and a series of adventures which separates them. Rafael finds his way to a paradisal ranch owned by Oyarzún and subsequently marries his daughter Oliva, whose hand he requests in exchange for the Lincoln, which is transformed into a sheep by a sculptor, to be preserved in the middle of a lake, along with other sculptures. Violeta, after escaping the clutches of a rapist, finds refuge with a family which lives not far away from Oyarzún's land. In the meantime, Kessel goes to Pernambuco and takes over his brother's business, which his brother relinquishes in order to embark on a spiritual quest. The business is entrusted to Kessel who is expected to hand it over to his nephew Jason once he finishes his education. Kessel, not wanting to part with his new-found wealth, sends Jason on a quest for a lost land which eventually leads him to Oyarzún's land. Finally, Kessel and Oyarzún are shot by urban guerillas, Oliva deserts Rafael, Violeta commits suicide after an incestuous union with Rafael, and the paradise that Oyarzún once created is taken over again by nature.

*Don Bueno* too is set in Spanish South America, and begins with Calderón as he goes away from Santa Rosa, after having unwittingly been responsible for the death of his father by stabbing him in a bar. The narrative then presents a flashback of the father, Don Bueno, who had killed his own
father several years earlier in a bar under similar circumstances and then lives in ostensible respectability in Santa Rosa until he encounters his son, who generates a self-destructive impulse in him. At the time the novel begins Calderón has deserted his pregnant wife Leticia and he goes looking for a place that might soothe his troubled mind. He finds his haven in a paradisal village in the middle of the jungle and there he adopts a daughter who later grows into a beautiful girl. In the meantime his son, whom he abandoned, becomes an urban guerilla and arrives at this village in order to submit a report regarding the blowing up of a hotel. Here he falls in love with Calderón's daughter Sofia, but the courtship is abruptly terminated when Calderón, in a fit of maniacal lust, rapes his daughter, who commits suicide. Calderón confronts his son Simon in a bar, abuses him the way his father once swore at him years ago, and then runs into a machete held by his son and kills himself.

Although the repetitious pattern in Don Bueno creates a shadow of antireferentiality, the dominant temptation in this novel, as well as in Torments, as the reviews amply demonstrate, is to read them as realistic novels with a touch of the exotic about them. Admittedly, the two novels are set in Spanish South America, and the use of place names, although infrequent, helps to place the characters against a verifiable setting. We know, for instance, that Kessel is probably a Brazilian and that he has been to London several times (HT, p.43). In Don Bueno the reader is aware that Simon is involved in guerilla activities in Uruguay and that he seeks refuge in Rio de Janeiro (p. 183).
However, unlike in the Brazilian trilogy, historical events are scrupulously avoided, thereby circumventing the reader's propensity to attribute the verifiability of historical events to the characters themselves. Nevertheless, names such as Palmira, Bogotá, Lima, Sao Paulo, Andes and Cuba do establish a sense of place in the manner of the traditional realistic novel. This is done deliberately in order to accommodate some of the tenets of realism for a specific purpose. But to read these two novels as straightforward realistic works, as some critics have done, would be as disastrous as to read Nabokov's *Lolita* as a novel about child abuse. Alexandra Johnson strikes the right note when she says of *Don Bueno* that "although [it is] set in South America, the fictional territory is Conrad's," but adds that "too often Mr. Ghose's psychological drama becomes a glorified potboiler. Like his wilfully unreflective fathers and sons, the author confuses action with depth."  

About *Torments*, Jeff Clark is equally unsympathetic: "His novel is a sophomoric mélange of romances ... hollowly peopled, clumsily prosed, and without real dramatic sense, despite some silly charm to his inventions." In short, the reviews often seem to berate the novels for failing to become what they deliberately seek to avoid.

The author's own words about the genesis of the two novels are instructive. Says Ghose:

> Actually the setting has nothing whatsoever to do with anything. With these novels, I entered a phase of pure invention. There are images in them that come from direct observation .... But I am not concerned in them with common reality. I create the illusion of reality when in fact I have no reality at all, except that of
the imagination.  

Asked specifically about the use of names, both of places and characters, which refer to South America, Ghose asserts:

You could take *A New History of Torments* and change all the Spanish names to Indian names, substitute the Himalayas and the Ganges for the Andes and the Amazon, but the novel itself would not alter the slightest.  

The author's insistence on the antireferentiality and the inventiveness of the two novels only confirms what the novels themselves demonstrate. In any event, it would seem unlikely that a writer who values change as Ghose does and who produces a novel like *Hulme's Investigations* would return to the mode of traditional realism. In this respect Ghose's dismissal of "all that rotten social relevance" reminds one of Nabokov's statement that "it is childish to study a work of fiction in order to gain information about a country or about a social class or about the author." The two novels do not divorce themselves from human concerns; on the contrary, they project a vision of almost unredeemed misery and alienation. But they insist on their freedom as verbal constructs. They exemplify George Steiner's dictum that "the paramount responsibilities of literature, its ontology or *raison d'être*, lie outside immediate utility and/or verifiability."

Attractive as the narrative thread of *Torments* may be, it calls for no feat of imagination to recognize that the plot closely parallels the myth of the Golden Fleece. The author provides the clues by calling the quest-figure Jason and by
converting the golden Lincoln into a sheep. The riddle on the map that Jason carries and Osorio produces draw attention to the golden sheep, thereby providing the reader with a sufficient number of clues to begin the comparison. Change Rojas and Manuela to Athamas and Nephele, Violeta and Rafael to Helle and Phryxus, Oyarzún to Aetes, Carvalho and Kessel to Aeson and Pelias, and the pattern becomes clear enough. Once the correspondence has been established, the novel comes close to what Frye identifies as the tendency in the romantic mode "to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experience."²¹

In Don Bueno the parallel is less specific but equally insistent. The repetitious pattern of sons killing their fathers or the notion of a curse being handed down from generation to generation is evidently mythical, even Oedipal.²² Perhaps more than the Oedipal myth, the novel constantly alludes to Hamlet, which includes the idea of revenge as well. The acting of Hamlet in Simon's school (pp. 202-203) is perhaps the most obvious clue, although one often notices the similarities between Sofia and Ophelia, particularly towards the end of the novel. Also, linguistic references, such as the one to "the voice from some backstage gravely speaking the lines of an invisible ghost, the distorted sounds with their hushed cadences swirling upon the darkened stage" (p. 83) or Calderón's witch-like grandmother's curse, "how can you call yourself a man until you have killed the monster that created you?" (p. 73), among many others, are obvious echoes of passages in Hamlet.

Apart from references to specific myths, the two novels
abound with examples of rituals, vegetation myths, apocalyptic and demonic imagery, superstitions, seers and cyclical patterns which lend credence to Ghose's assertion that "the thinking that was going on in [his] mind had to do with the recurrence of myth in human experience." In the author's note in Torments, Ghose acknowledges his indebtedness to Pablo Neruda for the titles of the two parts of his novel, and he quotes a stanza from "Rapa Nui" which, in translation, reads as follows:

Only the eternity in the sands
knowing the words:
the sealed light, the dead labyrinth,
the keys to the submerged bowl.

This stanza, like the rest of the poem, celebrates the timelessness of myth. The "kuarup" log which Captain Afonso presents to Jason and Bob is, as Afonso points out, "a representation of a human being. The idea is that you're symbolically bringing a dead person back to life" (HT, p.174). The myth occurs again at the end of Torments when Matarainha places a "kuarup" in a pool of water (p. 302) but is uncertain whether it ought to be placed in the water or in the underbrush. The repetition of this myth has considerable thematic significance in the novel, but it also affirms the overall mythical quality of the work. For, as Frye points out, "in the divine [mythical] world the central process or movement is that of death and rebirth, or the disappearance and return, or the incarnation and withdrawal, of a god." 

The descriptive passages, of which there are many, despite their richness of texture, do not often provide the reader with
the sense of particularity that one associates with the realistic novel. At times a whole paragraph is devoted to the description of a passing scene, a technique which, until it is perceived, gives the appearance of superfluity. Alain Robbe-Grillet points out that "description once served to situate the chief contours of a setting, then to cast light on some of its particularly revealing elements; it no longer mentions anything except insignificant objects; or objects which it is concerned to make so." Ghose appears to stand at a remove from both categories. His descriptions are often a splash of colour, an evocation of a particular atmosphere rather than a graphic delineation of a particular scene. Frequently the description is either apocalyptic or demonic (Frye's terms in *Anatomy*), either way it is mythical and symbolic rather than specific. A case in point is Calderón's perception of San Clemente de los Andes:

_There were little squares of cultivation, and here and there patches of pink, purple and yellow suggested a profusion of wild flowers. The air was so dry and the light so clear that a tiny speck in a field could be seen to be a house; above this valley, a range of snowcapped peaks and a long plateau of ice formed a wide oval skylight, and the sky seemed to be one solid sheet of brilliant blue._

( *DB*, p.134)

At one level the passage is extraordinarily graphic in visual terms, reminding one of Menton's comment that "ultrasharp focus is probably the single most dominant feature of magic realist painting." At another, it is mythical in that it hardly establishes the place with any degree of particularity, but creates the vision of an archetypal paradise. Similarly,
there is the depiction of what is essentially negative:

The river below him was dark and thickly overhung with trees. But within a quarter of a kilometer from the bridge, the jungle suddenly ended and the land before him was rocky and desolate. It looked as though some great granite mountains had been shattered and now lay in vast heaps of broken rock, tiny points of light glittering from the dark gray boulders and smaller fragments. (DB, p.122)

Strongly reminiscent of Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," this passage, rather than defining an identifiable landscape, conjures up a vision of evil. Both kinds of description seem particularly suited to Torments and Don Bueno, which not only search unceasingly for a paradise, but also come close to the point of admitting the impossibility of finding one. Frye's comment that "apocalyptic imagery is appropriate to the mythical mode, and demonic imagery to the ironic mode in the late phase in which it returns to myth" fits Ghose's recent phase, which is both mythical and ironic at the same time.

To identify the mythical dimension of the two novels certainly helps to shed light on obscure corners and establish a level of structure, but it hardly provides for a total critical appraisal. Perhaps the most useful function of the mythical parallel is to establish the futility of paying attention to plot and at times to character. A comment like Jay Goldberg's that Torments "is a book in which the tail of plot often seems to be wagging the canine of character" is not really unacceptable; it is simply not relevant. Particularly in
Torments, as the reader peruses the novels, he recognizes, rather than follows, the plot. As Alan Bold rightly maintains, "plot, in such circumstances, is secondary to artistic performance, and character is a pretext for a text full of allegorical significance."  

The notion of a world of invention, which accounts for the insistent mythical pattern of Torments and Don Bueno, implies a movement away from traditional realism. Although critics have not often chosen to pursue this line of inquiry, they have recognized an antireferential dimension in the novels. Speaking of Torments, Goldberg mentions that "realism is not what Ghose is after."  

About the same novel, the reviewer for Publishers Weekly remarks that "this spacious novel with its freewheeling, constantly surprising, surrealistic plot, is like a fairy tale in the grand manner - or at least like a dream you can't shake (and don't want to)." Terms such as "fairy tale" and "dream" are useful insofar as they refer to a degree of stylization which surfaces time and again in the two novels, but they hardly help to identify with any degree of precision the overall narrative mode which informs the two works.

Neither Torments nor Don Bueno is metafictional in the manner of Hulme's Investigations, and rightly so, for an important strategy in the two novels is to preserve the illusion of representational narrative. And the narrative voice, of which there will be reason to speak later, hardly permits the latitude that overt metafictional commentary demands. Nevertheless, episodes of a self-reflexive character are woven unobtrusively into both novels; and when they appear they serve as important
signs for the reader in grasping the narrative mode.

In chapter three of *Don Bueno*, Calderón, during a conversation with Leticia, narrates the story of his boyhood friendship with Xavier Urquiaga, who had pretensions to writing poetry. One day Xavier produces this poem:

> I come closed in an envelope of silk.  
> Honey my words, my intentions pure as milk.  
> What can I be in this secret disguise  
> Who come to you at night and leave at sunrise?  
> (p. 74)

The riddle is perhaps thematically related to Sofia's appearance later in the novel, but what is important here is the hilarious parody of literary criticism that follows the poem, which drives Xavier to tears and which recalls the satiric intent of Machado de Assis when he writes two lines of a sonnet in *Dom Casmurro* (1899) and requests the reader to complete the rest on a Sunday morning. The fact that Ghose draws attention to Assis's sonnet in his critical work, *The Fiction of Reality,* makes the parallel more than coincidental. In different ways both Ghose and Assis are making similar points about the process of reading and writing. In *Don Bueno*, Xavier is less than a poet manqué, but that hardly exonerates Calderón, who insists on the most literal and absurd reading of the poem. Oliva makes a similar point in a superfluous episode in *Torments* in which she not only scorns Rafael's absorption in a novel about eighteenth-century Brazil, but advises him to read Catullus and Ovid instead (p.104).

In both instances, a point is being made about mimetic
writing, a point which is reinforced obliquely when Rafael in Torments misses the turning which would have directed Kessel to the highway. The narrator explains:

he was looking with such alertness to see a sign that a picture of one was vividly present in his imagination, putting him in that peculiar state of mind in which one does not see the thing one is looking for because one is seeing it too clearly in one's fancy. (p. 63)

In short, Rafael's failure points to one of the possible limitations of realistic writing. The reader, like Rafael, begins with a preconceived image of the referent, and the text is recognized if, and only if, it conforms to the preconceived image. The alternative to this mode is provided in Torments by the charlatan Afonso, whose glib utterances are often perceptive. Speaking in general terms about Indian myth, Afonso says: "There is no mystery in that world except the mystery of the imagination's capacity to invent fantastic stories. From where does it come, this intuition of truth from fantasy?" He then adds: "Interesting isn't it, that their fantasies lead them straight back to reality?" (pp. 174-75) Afonso's fusion of fantasy and reality is a close approximation to the author's notion of an invented world, a world constructed according to its own laws, although linked experientially to the objective world. The author does not state explicitly either in Torments or in Don Bueno how to read his novels, but in an obscure manner, he provides a paradigm for the reader. Midway through Don Bueno, Calderón, in Mrs Sonstroem's hotel, glances through a
German journal and sees a drawing of an archaeological site, which he can hardly comprehend. The narrator describes:

The drawing showed an excavation of the foundation of a city long buried in human history. It looked like an enormous crossword puzzle without clues, the eye followed a passage, turning it this way and that, and then came to a dead end .... If he knew German, all would be clear to him, and he would know what the passages meant, understand the inevitability of directions inherent in any structure. (P. 118)

The presence of this journal in the hotel needs no explanation, for the late Sonstroem was an archaeologist. But one hardly needs to make heavy weather of the fact that Calderón's bewilderment in the presence of the drawing is an obvious metafictional technique.

The reader, thus warned, becomes increasingly perceptive to the hints of artifice that are woven into the realistic fabric of the novel. The overall conception of the two works demands that the artifice not disrupt or ruffle the mimetic surface. As Ghose puts it, "the pretense of reality is carefully maintained, but if you read carefully you will probably find out that it is flawed." 35

At its most obvious level in Torments, the artifice emerges through improbable incidents, parallel episodes, juxtapositions and coincidences. Whenever the mythical parallel demands a course of action, the author accommodates it, but provides a reason which is deliberately unconvincing. For instance, it is necessary for Carvalho to leave the business in the care of Kessel so that Jason's quest could commence. Hence the naive
story of Carvalho's wife's untimely death due to leukemia and Carvalho's obsessive spiritual quest, a sub-plot that a much lesser novelist would have scorned. Similarly, at the beginning of Torments, the myth demands that Rafael and Violeta part. Hence, after the automobile crash, Rafael conveniently falls asleep to let Violeta disappear. Sometimes episodes are introduced specifically to reinforce the fairy tale element. Rafael requesting a wish from Oyarzún in return for the car and then asking for Oliva's hand belongs as much as to the realm of fancy as Violeta's agreement with Madeleine to exchange partners on their first nights. These two conditions determine the tragedy of the novel. Commenting on such arbitrary but binding occurrences in fairy tales, Chesterton writes: "This great idea, then, is the backbone of all folklore - the idea that all happiness hangs on one thin veto; all positive joy depends on one negative." At least in part, Torments and Don Bueno are fairy tales.

In fact, parallelism, juxtaposition and coincidence are all aspects of improbability in these two novels. That Oyarzún's wife deserts Oyarzún, Oliva deserts Rafael and Rojas deserts Manuela is as much a product of artifice as Rojas and Oyarzún having two children, both of the same age. That Kessel's car should be made into a shape to conform to the maps that Jason and Osorio possess is another such coincidence. At the end of the novel, Rafael returns to his father's land only a day after his mother returns, despite the fact that several years have lapsed since his departure. Sometimes one detects a deliberate flaw in the logic, as in the dichotomy between Kessel
effortlessly repairing the refrigerator for Rafael and then not having the presence of mind to check the engine of his car after the crash.

In Don Bueno the reader is first alerted to the artifice of repetitious patterns, the most obvious of which is the notion of three sons killing their fathers in an identical manner. Not only events, but also names repeat themselves in a very Márquezan manner. Father and son come to be called Don Bueno. Don Bueno seduces a girl called Alegria and years later his grandson decides that if his wife were to give birth to a daughter, she would be called Alegria. More importantly, the handling of time in Don Bueno, which demands considerable critical attention, helps to establish the fictionality of the text. It is strange that this should occur in Don Bueno, for, unlike Torments, this is predominantly a diachronic novel, spanning almost five generations. The handling of time could well have been conventional as it is in Torments. However, the technique of continually moving backwards to bring the narrative to the present and then abruptly moving ahead by several years, only to start the process all over again confuses and perplexes the reader in order to establish the fictionality of the text.

The notion that "there is no reality outside language that can be said to have meaning"\(^3\)\(^7\) and that art feeds on itself are central to Ghose's recent phase. Frye, who contends that "the possession of originality cannot make an artist unconventional, [that] it only drives him further into convention,"\(^3\)\(^8\) advises the reader to "stand back" from a text in order to see beyond the brushwork and into the conventions which govern it. When one
stands back from Torments and Don Bueno one sees the mythical pattern; when one stands close to it one sees, among other things, the intertextuality that establishes the artifice. Admittedly, the intertextual references are not flaunted in the manner of Hulme's Investigations, but they do surface at various points. Ghose himself draws attention to this technique when he says that "people don't notice that my prose echoes with many references and images deliberately taken from some of the poets." Torments makes reference to Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, T.S. Eliot, Neruda and Shakespeare. Don Bueno refers to Catullus, Ovid, Shakespeare, Wallace Stevens, Patrick White and indirectly to Machado de Assis and Cervantes.

References which take the reader to another text often have a thematic relevance. Sometimes the literariness emerges as a quality of language, and at such times the function is to reveal the inventiveness of the text, as Machado de Assis does through his references to the theatre in Dom Casmurro. A classic instance of the use of language for such a purpose occurs in Torments when Jason, after a most harrowing journey across the Amazonas, finally arrives at the object of his quest -- the golden sheep in the perfect world. The narrator describes:

Keats, on first looking into Chapman's Homer, could not have felt more wonder than Jason did when he stood in the courtyard on the island and found himself staring at the golden sheep. (p. 270)

In what could have been the most revelatory or disillusioning moment of the novel, the intertextual reference draws attention
to the artifice, to the status of the text as an imaginative construct. Similarly, towards the end of the novel, Madeleine's suggestion to Rafael that he come to the cottage in the night and her intention to substitute Violeta for herself inevitably reminds the reader of parallel situations in Measure for Measure. Only, the consequence is disastrous in Torments. During the quest Jason once comes close to total despair, and finds himself beleaguered by the maddening laughter of monkeys: "It was a maddening, vicious sound. A whole theater full of monkeys laughing at some crazy comedy" (p.216). The linguistic strategy adopted here is repeated later when Jason narrates the story of his adventures to Violeta and Madeleine: "the two would sit for hours listening to Jason's accounts of his experiences, and in this they were two Desdemonas listening to Othello" (p. 246). Like the sustained imagery of Hamlet in Don Bueno, the function of language here is to focus on the stylization.

"Realism," according to Frye, "connotes an emphasis on what the picture represents; stylization, whether primitive or sophisticated, connotes an emphasis on pictorial structure."¹ Ghose's recent phase belongs neither to one nor to the other, but lies somewhere between. The artifice asserts the creative function of the imagination and affirms the notion that the text is nothing more than a structure of language. As Ghose points out in his critical work, Hamlet, Prufrock and Language, "there is always the possibility that the next combination of words might be the formula of revelation."² But the novels remain structures whose objective is the exploration of a truth or a vision of human experience. And however much the artifice is
displayed in *Torments* and *Don Bueno*, the staple features of realism that the novels incorporate make certain that the reader is emotionally committed to a degree that is hardly possible in a totally metafictional work like, say, Hulme's *Investigations*. The combination of a strong sense of realism with an equally strong sense of artifice is a distinguishing facet of this phase, and an attempt to place this narrative mode in precise terms takes one close to magic realism.

Despite the examples of García Márquez, Alejo Carpentier, Günter Grass and several others, magic realism continues to remain a somewhat elusive narrative mode and the critic who contends, for instance, that Salman Rushdie's *Shame* (1983) and Susan Kerslake's *Middlewatch* (1976) are both works of magic realism would be hard put to explain their differences and still unite them under one heading. Perhaps something of the inherent complexity lies in the paradox of the term itself. Seymour Menton, who deals with magic realism in relation to its origins in painting, makes the interesting remark that

> the oxymoronic combination of realism and magic captures the artists' and the authors' efforts to portray the strange, the uncanny, the eerie, and the dreamlike ... aspects of everyday reality.\(^{43}\)

This fusion is perhaps inescapable in magic realistic writing, but the extent to which one aspect dominates over the other is crucial to the response of the reader. In *Torments*, for instance, as Violeta and Rafael leave the farm in Kessel's car, the familiar roads begin to disappear, and until Violeta reaches Madeleine's home and Rafael reaches Oyarzún's ranch, the
atmosphere is dreamlike, fragmented, unrecognizable and sometimes surreal. This episode, however, is flanked by episodes which are meticulously representational and which make the surreal episode more the exception than the rule. In Rushdie's *Shame*, for instance, the description of contemporary Pakistan is constantly juxtaposed with techniques of fantasy -- exaggeration, fragmentation, distortion, larger-than-life characters, and so forth. The novel demands that the reader sustains both the verifiability of the historical perspective and the fictionality of the text at the same time. One responds to the artifice as one responds to a dream -- not to dismiss it as idle fancy so much as to interpret and decode the signs in order to understand with greater perception the waking, everyday world. As Geoff Hancock puts it, "magic realism creates a new reality for language, a self sufficient world of language that stands alongside the real world, indifferent from it, but capable of invading it." In an earlier article Hancock points to the episode in Robert Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man* (1969) in which a herd of runaway horses stray into a Woodward's department store, and comments that

magic realists place their extraordinary feats and mysterious characters in an ordinary place, and the magic occurs from the sparks generated between the possibilities of language and the limitations of physical nature.

This effect is obviously not what Ghose attempts, which makes the task of identifying the narrative mode of *Torments* and *Don Bueno* increasingly complex. Although Ghose does not share
the fictional practices of Márquez or Rushdie, he appears to suggest in *Torments* and *Don Bueno* that the mythical and the unreal are still very much a part of reality. The Golden Fleece does not merely provide a mythical underpinning to *Torments*. While the reader recognizes the quest as archetypal, he also gives credence to the individual destinies of the characters in the novel. The characters are in that sense real. As Ghose explains:

> Our actions are charged by the force of compulsions unknown to our conscious minds and those mythical elements recurring in our actions that might have served a regenerative function are perhaps instead a curse, an unbearable torment.  

Thus it would be possible to argue at a theoretical level that Ghose's recent phase is at one remove from the conventions of magic realism. Jorge Luis Borges, while discussing the role of magic in narrative art, remarks that

> magic is not the contradiction of cause and effect but its crown, or nightmare. The miraculous is no less strange in that world [of primitive savages] than it is in the world of astronomers. All the laws of nature as well as those of the imagination govern it.

Here the reader of *Torments* and *Don Bueno* would agree that Borges's comments are applicable to these novels as well.

Ghose himself is as dismissive of the title magic realist, as he is of the term postmodern. Asked if he is interested in magic realism, he responds:
I am never interested in any -ism and would hate to be confined to a category. My recent novels might contain elements of magical realism, but then they also contain elements of Balzac, Tolstoy, Proust, Machado de Assis, and ten thousand others.48

Which is true, although to make such a generalisation does not always take the critic any closer to the narrative mode. Admittedly the influence of Flaubert is evident in the scrupulous quest for objectivity in the two recent novels, a feature which distinguishes Torments and Don Bueno from the previous works. Here the author comes close to total self-effacement, and the narrative often appears to move under its own impetus. Characters' names, for example, are suppressed until the point of view of a character demands that the name of a character be divulged. Thus, at the beginning of Don Bueno the reader has to wait until Dona Carla speaks in order to discover Calderón's name. Similarly, descriptions of places often come filtered through the consciousness of characters. A striking example of the manner in which this method operates occurs in the second chapter of Don Bueno when Don Bueno jogs along the streets of Santa Rosa and in the process looks at various scenes. This technique, reminiscent of Joyce in Ulysses, not only gives the reader a sense of the central locations in Santa Rosa, but also provides an insight into the character. That Don Bueno's roving eye spots an old toy plastic tanker, for instance, becomes significant later when the image of the oil tanker comes to be associated with the notion of death and desertion.

This technique is a difficult one to sustain, and that the
author endeavours to do so is not merely to demonstrate a degree of competence in the control of narrative voice. The Flaubertian technique, which has its origins in realism, serves more than one function in Torments and Don Bueno. At one level it creates an autonomous world, free from authorial intrusion. At another, it stamps a certain authority on the narrative, thereby demanding from the reader a suspension of disbelief. In contrast to the Brazilian trilogy, the reader implicitly trusts the narrative voice in these novels, and that is of considerable significance in a work which straddles the magical and the realistic. If, as Angel Flores says, "the practitioners of magical realism cling to reality ... as if to prevent their myth from flying off, as in fairy tales, to supernatural realms," one of the characteristic means of achieving this balance is by creating a reliable narrative voice. García Márquez in One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) and Susan Kerslake in Middlewatch succeed in creating this balance, at least partly, by adopting a point of view that wins the confidence of the reader.

Thus, in some respects, the influence of Flaubert comes to serve the interests of magic realism, as does the influence of Machado de Assis. Ghose admires Assis tremendously, and writes about him in his critical work; he subtly acknowledges his admiration of Assis by calling his novel Don Bueno, which evokes the memory of Dom Casmurro. "For years" says Ghose, "I've been telling my friends among American writers that Machado de Assis is a genius who simply must be read; not one has read him, however, but several of them have read Solzhenitzyn." At least
three characteristics of Assis, as seen in *Dom Casmurro*, appear in *Torments* and *Don Bueno*. First, there is the idea of a broken promise, a transgression which leads to the tragedy of Casmurro and Capitu. Casmurro's mother's failure to keep the promise of giving her son to the church is at least partly responsible for the course of events. In both *Torments* and *Don Bueno* it is again one moral flaw, whether it be a husband deserting his wife or a father deserting his son, that sets in motion a series of destructive events. Second, there is the fusion of the tragic and the comic in a manner which evokes a complex response from the reader that one also observes in Assis. Ghose himself draws attention to this aspect of Assis's writing, and referring specifically to the episode in which Bento, returning from Escobar's funeral, pauses to watch a barber playing on his fiddle, comments:

> It is a perfect example of the way reality operates. A fiction narrating a tragedy is obliged to pause and to observe the larger human comedy of which even a tragedy has to be composed.\(^5\)

Such episodes abound in *Torments* and *Don Bueno*, and in both the effect is quite clearly unlike similar episodes in, say, the Brazilian trilogy. A case in point is Rafael's wedding night in *Torments*, which is both uproariously funny and deeply moving. Rafael's puzzlement is funny, but the disillusionment, simply because it is undeserved, borders on the tragic.

Related to this point is the technique of including irrelevant episodes in *Dom Casmurro*. Ghose's reading of the function of such episodes is perceptive,\(^5\) and it is no wonder
that he chooses to experiment with this technique in a significant manner in the two novels. An example of this occurs in *Don Bueno* when Calderón visits the shrine soon after deserting Leticia. The so-called shrine is surrounded by huts put up by charlatans who masquerade as people endowed with supernatural powers. The narrative lingers over various events and spends considerable time on a monk who tries to seduce a young girl, and on a woman with six breasts who knows the secret of fertility. The description appears erotic or exotic until one recognizes that Calderón's consciousness, through which the episode is seen, is a selective one which picks out episodes which deal with sexuality, perversion and procreation. It is not surprising that Calderón is drawn compulsively to the woman who promises fertility when he himself is running away from Leticia's pregnancy. In short, all the images are related, one way or the other, to the notion of passion which governs the narrative of *Don Bueno*.

Assis is hardly a magic realist, but could well be called a forerunner of magic realism. His art, at its best, is extremely complex, and the fictive world he creates is deceptively simple. As Waldo Frank points out, "within the quiet, courses a complex fugue." Ghose does not model himself on Assis, but he learns much from him in the process of creating his recent fiction.

As one traces the diverse influences, one becomes increasingly aware of the difficulties involved in identifying Ghose's last phase. The term magic realism would still be valid if one were to adopt Keith Maillard's flexible but nevertheless perceptive definition of magic realism. Says Maillard:
Three characteristics appear to me necessary for magic realism. The first is the acceptance of most or all of the realistic conventions of fiction. The second is the introduction of a "something else" which is not realistic - the "magic" of the genre - which may be at the level of plot ... or at the level of narrative itself .... The magic element is not juxtaposed with the realistic for shock value, as in surrealism, but woven in seamlessly. The third characteristic is that the impulse for the writing of magic realism arises out of the desire to transcend the form of the realistic novel not as form but as expression.⁵⁵

Maillard makes these general comments by way of a preface to his reading of Susan Kerslake's novel Middlewatch. Surprisingly, Middlewatch has several affinities with Torments, although it appears highly unlikely that Ghose had read Kerslake's novel. Although set in the maritime provinces of Canada, the novel is deliberately vague about geographical location. It too includes a character called Jason and quite self-consciously creates a narrative structure which parallels the quest for the Golden Fleece. The parallels between this novel and Torments are many, but for the present purposes suffice it to mention that both novels fail to fit comfortably into the Márquezan mold of magic realism. For instance, Maillard, attempting to pin down the magic realism of Middlewatch, claims that "the tension between the realistic surface narrative and the deeper levels creates the shimmering, multi-dimensional effect symptomatic of magic realism."⁵⁵ In this sense, Torments and Don Bueno clearly belong to the category of Middlewatch.

The dichotomy between the "realistic surface" and the "deeper levels" in Torments and Don Bueno draws attention to a host of techniques which need to be looked at in some detail in order to comprehend the thematic and structural significance of
this phase. The two novels share several similarities, and both possess features of what Hugh Hood calls "superrealism." Hood mentions that "prose fiction might have an abstract element, even though it continued to be strictly, morally realistic." He adds that "it might be possible to think of prose fiction the way one thinks of abstract elements in representational painting, or of highly formal music." Both novels possess intricate structures, and it would perhaps be useful to look at them separately for purposes of convenience and clarity.

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It is not without significance that Rojas meets Margarita for the seventh time in Torments when he decides to make her the mistress of his home. Similarly, at the end of the novel the elements unleash a relentless assault on Oyarzún's land for seven days, and at the end of it the man-made paradise succumbs totally to the forces of chaos. At the beginning of the novel, Rojas, after having secured "an essential and a fructifying harmony" (p. 12) in his magnificent farm, destroys this perfect world to indulge a compulsive passion. The clandestine liaison provides an ostensible purpose but the seeds of destruction are already present. The stench of beef that pervades the farm at the beginning is a manifestation of the repressed impulses within the characters. When, at the beginning of the novel, Rojas glances at Violeta's profile and thinks of his mistress, the suggestion is one of incest (p. 13). This motif becomes more insistent as Rafael, a little later, has a fantasy of sexual
union with his sister (p. 23). Obviously, Violeta is the sacrificial lamb, and her name (an anagram of "violate") suggests her eventual fate. Violeta herself is not entirely blameless, for she not only steps into Kessel's car uninvited, she also makes her presence felt. Also, we are told at the end, Violeta submits to a "seduction" by Bartolome and later wanders into the public square in the hope that she would be picked up. Missu's prediction that the curse of the family could be washed away only with Violeta's blood is fulfilled at the end of the novel. One observes the tragic irony of Violeta scattering rose petals on her bed and claiming that she would repeat it on her wedding night, and then unknowingly sleeping with her brother on a bed sprinkled with rose petals. What we have through this subtle pattern of interrelated images is a frightening parody of marriage. As Frye puts it, "the demonic parody of marriage ... may take the form of hermaphroditism, incest (the most common form), or homosexuality."

This, then, is the intricate framework within which the novel operates. A framework which looks at man not as a social animal, not as one whose actions govern and are governed by social life, but as one who is driven by destructive and uncontrollable instincts, but who is nevertheless condemned to search unceasingly for a lost paradise, for a satisfying vision of reality. In this world, the experience of alienation becomes a universal feature. "As long as a culture remains homogeneous," says Robert Scholes, "a particular myth will continue to have validity for it, and new versions of the myth will be simply aspects of the same message." In the world of Torments the
myths have disappeared, and what is left is only a series of torments.

The motif of torment first appears in the title, and its link with destruction becomes apparent in the poem from which the title is taken. The first seven lines of the poem run as follows:

The butchers laid waste the islands.  
Guanahani was the first  
in that history of torments.  
The children of clay saw their  
smiles smashed, battered  
their stance slight as deers,  
all the way to death they did not understand.  

The sense of mindless violence and bestiality and the consequent torment which the lines draw attention to is carried on in the novel with unceasing insistence. The torment could be sometimes physical, as when one Indian tribe exterminates another, or when Oyarzún's sculptor is beaten up by the guerillas, or it could be the mental torment of Rafael when he discovers that his wife is a whore or when Kessel discovers that a parcel delivered to him contains the finger of his child. There is also the torment of the Indians in the presence of supernatural violence. Either way the operative word in the novel is "torments," which occurs thirty-three times in all, always stressing the fact that human activities are mere distractions, "allowing one, while one longed for a particular pleasure or cried aloud how much one suffered, to forget the simple fact that existence was indeed unbearable" (p. 257).

In all of Ghose's earlier works, the quest for identity
resolves itself, at least at a theoretical level, by establishing an identification between man and the land. In Ghose's world of displaced characters the identification is rarely achieved, but it always remains the ideal and despair for the perceptive characters. In Torments, on the other hand, the division between man and the land is complete. When Rojas tells Margarita, "I loved my land more than any woman" (p. 31), or when Margarita tells Rojas "when I kiss you ... I kiss your land also" (p. 148) the statements ring hollow, for both of them abandon the land for their sensual pursuits. The land in its turn is pitiless. As Ghose puts it, "man is seduced to go into a ravishing landscape and the landscape destroys him."60

In a novel like Torments, as against a mimetic work, one does not seek causes; instead one watches the effects. One does not analyse deductively why the people are alienated or displaced; instead, one observes them enduring the pain of alienation. Missu, the seer, is the only surviving member of his tribe, which was exterminated somewhere beyond the mountains. Now "the memory of his own tribe which appeared to him in his dreams filled his mind during his waking hours with images with which there was no correspondence in the world around him" (p. 27). Margarita is an exile from a neighbouring country. Manuela laments that "the children would become outcasts" (p. 36). Jason, who returns home after a period of study abroad, is a classic case of a native-alien who cannot help "seeing his countrymen as members of a remote tribe" (p. 157). The Indians who work in Oyarzún's land hardly remember the rituals of their tribe.
It is no surprise that this novel which is so obsessively concerned with identity constantly draws attention to the notion of names. Rojas does not care for his mistress’s name; instead, he gives her one. Afonso has, as Jason and Bob discover, several names. Rafael loses his name when Oliva calls him Alberto. The concern with names in this novel, as in Don Bueno, implies both a sense of fragmentation and a desire for a sense of identity. As the narrator puts it, "nothing guaranteed a satisfying vision of the self as a real and whole identity, for consciousness was a kind of corruption of history. The more one knew of oneself the more one saw all the other people one really was" (HT, p. 290).

The dichotomy between the consciousness of disorder and the desire for order provides the opposing forces of the novel. In The Educated Imagination Frye points out that literature "is not a dream-world: it's two dreams, a wish-fulfilment dream and an anxiety dream," an observation which fits Torments admirably well. Appropriately enough, several characters in the novel are engaged in a quest, in some form or the other. Kessel begins the quest with his romantic notions of a perfect social order. Oyarzún's quest leads to his artificial paradise. Jason embarks on a quest for El Dorado. The jungle entices Jason until he is convinced that "he must, if necessary, lose himself in the pursuit of the vision which had revealed itself so briefly and yet with such compelling force" (p. 190). The quest is as important for Jason as it is for the author, who points out that "we keep looking expectantly in case the next bend in the road will bring us an astonishing revelation."
Unfortunately, caught as they are in a destructive pattern, the quest of the characters is doomed. The quest, as the title of the second part of the novel suggests, is a "dead labyrinth." What could be life-giving and regenerative is nightmarish and sterile. Even Oyarzún's "paradise" is doomed to destruction, for it fails to recognize the validity of procreative sexuality, and it attempts to escape time by detaching itself from social and cultural realities.

Significantly, in a powerful and symbolic scene (p. 224), Jason regretfully strangles the two girls he could have loved under different circumstances, and as he strangles one he spills his semen on her. It is a climactic scene and at the conclusion of the murder the narrator asks, in a manner that recalls Eliot, "after such knowledge, what could he do?" (p. 224) None of Ghose's earlier works has the pervasive gloom and pessimism of Torments. Alamgir Hashmi rightly points out that

the novel's "torments," the reversals in human relationships and the ironies of circumstance, European and Indian, are chapters in the history of an increasingly somber vision.63

The threads that weave the novel are the stuff of fable or tragedy rather than the realistic novel. The parallel structures, the ironies and the motifs are brought together so self-consciously and yet so subtly that it is often possible to misread the novel. To say, as Eve Ottenberg does, that in order "to subject his characters to their wretched destiny," Ghose "has resorted to extremely transparent tricks, which make the plot mechanical and numbing"64 is as unfair as to claim that
Lear should not have asked his daughters for their preference in the first place. The transparency and improbability are part of the magic or superrealism of the novel, for, as Maillard remarks in relation to *Middlewatch*, "the interweaving of realistic convention with magical elements is not done for its own sake but to produce that symptomatic eerie shimmer which must be seen as an attempt to express what is nearly inexpressible."65

If "torment" is an operative word in *Torments*, passion is perhaps the quality that best defines *Don Bueno*. It is a force over which characters have little control, and, as in *Wuthering Heights*, it drives the characters inexorably to their destruction. In the previous novel there is at least the semblance of causality and self-determination. In this novel the characters have little choice. As in Hawthorne's *The House of Seven Gables*, they are condemned to suffer until the force that drives them spends itself. Frye talks about the theory of tragedy according to which "the act which sets the tragic process going must be primarily a violation of a "moral" law, whether human or divine."66 In *Don Bueno* one observes the moral failings, but one hardly analyses causes or origins. What we see and concern ourselves with are the effects of destructive passion. As Mrs. Sonstroem says in her unceasing monologue, "it is terrible to be afflicted by hideous passions, to be touched by some sinister finger at birth" (p. 127).

Examples of unbridled passion proliferate in the novel. *Don Bueno* is an inveterate philanderer, and, apart from all the women he seduces earlier, we are given the names of two women he seduces in Santa Rosa, and the name of one he would like to
possess. The brothel he visits keeps appearing several times, reminding the reader of the passions that drive the characters who people the novel. Calderón's passion leads to the rape of his daughter. Simon takes after his grandfather in his pursuit of whores. The monk who guards the shrine demands perverse sexual favors from a young girl. Leticia's maid carries on an adulterous relationship, presumably with the janitor. Sonstroem, we are told, in an underground passage of an excavation "held [an] Indian girl's slippery body ... pinning her to the ground, panting when he discharged his semen in her womb" (p. 128).

The language and the imagery reinforce the passion (or the repressed id) that pervades the novel. The opening paragraph of the novel, which is also an interesting example of narrative style, is an extremely suggestive one, revealing the manner in which the language creates another level of meaning. To quote:

Ferns covered the banks of the river that flowed in a dark, narrow channel, with the arching limbs of the tall trees forming a canopy above it. Light filtered in diagonal streaks through the thick dark green leaves and fell on the water in spots of different sizes; the progress of the boat, with its diesel engine sending a ceaseless vibration across the deck, caused the river's surface to ripple, creating the impression that the spots of light on the water were twinkling. Dragonflies, caught by the light here and there, darted from point to point on the water or on a fern, several of them in couples, attached to one another.

(p.5, underlining mine)

What is a description of a boat on a river is also suggestive of the womb, of passion and copulation. The phallic symbolism of the dragonflies is interesting, for it leads to imagery concerned with the butterfly, which occurs several times in the
novel. Don Bueno sees this image thrice during a day, and each time the butterfly is associated with sexuality. When we encounter the butterfly ten pages from the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes it in words that are evocative of destructive sexuality: "A butterfly with dark blue underwings floated past in front of him and alighted on a white geranium ..." (p. 16).

The contrast in the colour is significant, for it introduces the essential connotations of passion in this work. It is more often than not destructive, repulsive and associated with death, except in the paradisal hamlet, where love is spontaneous and natural. The imagery of spiders, which complements that of the butterfly, is again associated with sex, but also with death. When a spiderweb first breaks across Don Bueno's face its importance is hardly evident, but when Zuazo tells the story of the Indians who transformed themselves into spiders in order to weave webs across women's vaginas (p. 111) so as to prevent their having children, the significance becomes obvious. Long years later, when Leticia seeks Dona Bustamante to arrange the torture of her husband for having deserted her, we see a calendar with the picture of a butterfly, and in the corner of the room, a spiderweb (p. 164). In a frightening scene, Calderón's grandmother, we are told, "was spread above him like an enormous spider ..." (p. 73).

The destructive aspect of passion manifests itself as a loathing and fear for the fact of procreation. In fact the pattern of sons killing their fathers is linked to the idea of desertion which stems from the inability to face the prospect of
procreation. Hence follows the obsessive references to the womb. On each ritualistic occasion of killing, the father's abusive language expresses a loathing not for the son so much as for the womb. Calderón's sexual life with Leticia is a failure because he "did not experience the blind, overwhelming pleasure of the act but instead found himself staring at the interior of an enormous womb" (p. 81). Even the mouth of a mine recalls the womb (p. 123). And when Calderón tries to think of Leticia in endearing terms, his mind conjures up a surreal image: "For the woman he saw in his mind lay naked on hot sand, her legs parted and raised, with a greenish-yellow slime flowing from her vagina" (p. 119).

In a symbolic episode, the kind of scene that the magical narrative mode permits and uses to good effect, the narrator brings the ideas of passion, revulsion and quest together. At the end of chapter five, Calderón enters the garden of a church which he perceives to be a place of perfect tranquility. No sooner does he relax than a couple disrupt the idyllic atmosphere when they enter the garden furtively and make love, the sounds of which cause Calderón to vomit uncontrollably in a fit of revulsion (p. 132). The image of the garden that this episode introduces is important, for it suggests the notion of quest and the desire for a perfect world. Not inappropriately, the quest motif appears most forcefully in Calderón, who goes through a series of adventures looking for this garden. What Frye has to say about romance is equally applicable to the quest motif in Don Bueno: "The quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind
Calderón eventually finds a paradise in a hamlet called San Clemente de los Andes. It is a paradise in which he lives but does not fully belong, for the notion of paradise in his mind excludes the pleasure-principle and sexuality. After fifteen years his son has no difficulty in spotting Calderón as an outsider. It is not without significance that in the symbolic ritual in which Calderón is obliged to participate soon after he reaches this paradisal hamlet, the effigy he sets afloat sinks (p. 141). Lucila (strongly reminiscent of Mrs Godbold in Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot*, [1961]) looks at him at this point with deep compassion, a moment which suggests to the reader that Calderón cannot participate successfully in the myth because he has denied the fact of passion and procreation in his own life. Soon after, when Calderón is given a child to adopt, the reader does not question the moment, for the narrative mode allows for such "magical" episodes which have allegorical significance. The village, which encourages sexuality and procreation, does not give Calderón a wife; instead, it gives him a child. And the child comes with a verse hidden in its basket:

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My name is Sofia, by no man chosen.
I am the daughter of ice and fire.
Only he can love me who is frozen
On the burning lips of desire.
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The paradox implies the fusion of dormant passion and ostensible frigidity in Calderón and presage the final, disastrous incest.
It is at once both improbable and convincing that Simon should come to the village and fall in love with Sofia. In this magical and doomed world in which one has no choice except to “follow what was destined for him by his invisible masters with their grand scheme for ruling the world” (p. 229), it is cruelly ironic that Calderón and Simon, both basically well-meaning, should confront each other with such negative consequences. But, then, Don Bueno, unlike a comedy, traces the working out of a cruel destiny. As Frye remarks, “comedy works out the proper relations of its characters and prevents heroes from marrying their sisters or mothers; tragedy presents the disaster of Oedipus or the incest of Siegmund.” Calderón's rape of his daughter is a violation of a taboo which no tribe would accept; as Afonso points out in Torments: "Your uniformed soldier is no different from a painted warrior. Your primitive may eat his enemy's flesh and your civilized man will do the same thing, though only metaphorically, but neither will sleep with his sister" (p. 175). The cruel irony of Don Bueno is that if Calderón had not violated Sofia, Simon would have possessed her, which too would have been, at least metaphorically, an incest. The bewilderment in the face of this inevitability is beautifully captured through the words of Mrs. Sonstroem: "who invents the extraordinary circumstances ... that force a man to wander ... among winding passages ... until he must come - ah, the catastrophe of creation!" (p. 128)
In relation to the whole canon of Ghose's writings *Torments* and *Don Bueno* represent a phase in which the narrative mode of magic realism resolves admirably well the tension between the diachronic and the synchronic axis to advance the theme of native-alien experience. The author does not intrusively remind the reader of the created world; and the reader who immerses himself in the linearity, verisimilitude and psychological probing, never forgets the presence of the autonomous artifact. The balance between the reality and magic is so subtle that it is hardly perceived. While the reader responds subjectively to the characters who desperately search for a paradise that is regenerative and satisfying, he is also conscious of the careful signposting that insists on the artifice and the structure. Reading by form is important because it alerts the reader to the process by which the author creates an alternative world -- a fictive world -- which creates its own set of conventions, but which is nevertheless determined by and inextricably linked to the external world. The reader who recognizes the subtlety and balance of this mode also responds, from yet another angle, to the search for identity and the relentless and hopeless quest for a paradise that constitute the core of the native-alien experience.

*Torments* ends with the line: "Here dreams, and the divinity that resided in them, were only silent shadows." In its deliberate use of "dreams," "shadows" and "divinity," this line recalls Wallace Stevens's poem "Sunday Morning." One is reminded not only of the lines
What is divinity if it can come
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?

but also of two other lines which echo the metaphysical
questionings of Torments:

But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields
Return no more, where, then, is paradise? 

The bleak vision with which Torments ends is somewhat
redeemed at the end of Don Bueno. This novel has nine chapters,
a number which, in the careful patterning of the work, has
considerable significance. One observes an approximate parallel
in the magic realistic work Middlewatch, which has eleven
chapters; responding to Kerslake's structure, Keith Maillard
points out that "in a book so carefully linked to the seasons of
the year, we would expect twelve." He adds: "In the silence left
behind is Kerslake's twelfth chapter." In Don Bueno, which is
concerned with birth and death, with procreation and sterility,
there appears at the end of the ninth chapter an unnumbered
page, almost like an appendix. On it, the narrator records the
birth of Simon's son, Jose de San Martin, who bears the name of
the Liberator. The birth of Jose de San Martin does not redeem
the tragic vision of the novel, but it certainly transforms the
"no" of the ending to a vaguely hopeful "not yet."
Notes

2 Personal interview.
8 Hulme's Investigations, p. 10.
9 This observation was made by Patricia Merivale during a conversation.
11 A subtle distinction pointed out by Ronald Hatch.
12 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982). All quotations are from this edition, and page references are given parenthetically. The title, when necessary, is abbreviated HT.
13 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983). All quotations are from this edition, and page references are given parenthetically. The title, when necessary, is abbreviated DB.


Personal interview.

Personal interview.

Personal interview.


Frye, p. 139.

The notion of Oedipal complex could be expanded to provide a coherent psychoanalytical reading of the novel. In fact both Torments and Don Bueno contain several features which invite the reader to analyze them against a Freudian model. Jiménez's infatuation with Margarita, Violeta's attraction to Kessel and the incestuous union between Rafael and Violeta could easily be explained in relation to the pleasure principle supplanting the reality principle, and the upsurge of the repressed id. The suggestions of homosexuality and the presence of an all-female colony in Torments are perhaps manifestations of a reaction against procreative sexuality. The destruction of Oyarzún's paradise is probably a consequence of creating a passive Utopia that does not accommodate instinctual gratification. In Don Bueno the dislike of children is obviously an expression of loathing for procreation. And the pervasive death instinct recalls Herbert Marcuse's comment that "the death instinct is destructiveness not for its own sake, but for the
relief of tension. The descent toward death is an unconscious flight from pain and want" (Eros and Civilization [London: Beacon, 1966], p. 29).

I have not adopted a psychoanalytical approach mainly because the Freudian model would only strengthen and consolidate the thematic concerns that emerge from a diachronic reading of the novels. The thematic aspects, admittedly, are crucial to the novels. However, my primary concern in this chapter is to study the narrative mode of magic realism and its function in communicating a certain order of experience.

23 Personal interview.

24 A New History of Torments is also a very Borgesian title. Compare Borges's Historia Universal de la Infamia (1954).


26 Frye, p. 158.


28 Menton, p. 20.

29 Frye, p. 151.


32 Goldberg, p. 214.

35 Personal interview.
37 Personal interview.
38 Frye, p. 132.
39 Personal interview.
40 See Fiction of Reality, p. 104.
41 Frye, p. 131.
43 Menton, p. 13.
46 Personal interview.
48 Personal interview.
50 Fiction of Reality, p. 73.
51 Fiction of Reality, p. 115.
52 See Fiction of Reality, pp. 112-116.
54 Maillard, p. 12.

57 Frye, p. 149.


60 Personal interview.

61 (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1963), p. 43.

62 Personal interview.


65 Maillard, p. 12.


67 See also pp. 19, 36.

68 See also p. 236.

69 Frye, Anatomy, p. 186.

70 Frye, Anatomy, p. 219.

72 Maillard, p. 20.
Conclusion

At the beginning of the previous chapter I suggested that with the publication of *Don Bueno* Ghose's writings recapitulate, paradigmatically, the evolution of the novel -- from realism to magic realism, or, to use Robert Alter's admirable terms, from the consistently illusionist to intermittently illusionist writing. That this claim could well be true is evident from the order in which the novels were written, and in the manner in which I have endeavoured to analyse them. Interesting as it is, to stress the creation of this paradigm as an achievement in itself would not only confer on the author's canon nothing more than the dubious credit of technical dexterity; it would also imply conclusions about the future where none is intended. To attempt even the most tentative predictions about the future, particularly when the author's next novel, *Figures of Enchantment*, is likely to be published in the not-too-distant future, would be unwise. Hence, I shall look back at the entire corpus of Ghose's works and attempt to answer some of the questions which arise, inevitably, from the preceding chapters.

In each chapter, apart from the first one which deals with poetry and serves as a structural prolegomenon for the remaining chapters, I have focussed primarily on narrative mode -- mimesis, stream-of-consciousness, picaresque, metafiction and magic realism -- and its appositeness in carrying the weight of a particular order of experience. Consequently, I have paid attention, to a lesser or greater degree, to the tension between form and content and its impact on the author's writings. In the earlier novels, particularly the representational works, the
rigorous attempt to preserve the conventions of a narrative mode while working with somewhat recalcitrant material results, one observes, in moments of weakness and uncertainty. *Crump's Terms*, by adopting the stream-of-consciousness mode, accommodates some of the centrifugal tendencies of the earlier works, but encounters problems of a different kind which become increasingly apparent towards the end of the novel. From the Brazilian trilogy onward, the dominant pattern is one of flexibility and experiment, whereby the framework of the chosen narrative mode is constantly reshaped and modified to probe and express complex modes of perception. For the reader, the trilogy and the novels which follow it are "difficult" mainly because they appear to insist on their unclassifiability. The inventiveness of these novels offers the biggest challenge and reward to the reader, while it also explains, at least in part, the author's literary obscurity.

In order to make a distinction between inventiveness as technical legerdemain and inventiveness as a necessary consequence of complex perception in Ghose's writings, one needs to remember that Ghose is an expatriate, a voluntary exile, or, as he defines himself, a "native-alien." Although biographical and historical factors are not always helpful in understanding the texture of Ghose's writings, one "should not fail to question," as Claudio Guillén points out in a general context, "the historical and social circumstances underlying the realities of banishment and emigration and, above all, whether these circumstances coalesce in the form of historical structures." ² Ghose's experience of exile was a peculiar one in
that it combined displacement and alienation with a consciousness that there was no home to return to. And these aspects have left their mark on his writings. His early poems, and some of his later ones, are clearly what Guillén would call the poetry of exile, in which "exile becomes its own subject matter."\(^3\) These poems fit easily into the taxonomy of "Commonwealth literature," which contains a sizeable quantity of works which deal with "an emptiness that awaits restoration" and with an "absence that compensates itself by nostalgia and hopeful anticipation."\(^4\)

Speaking of Third World literature in general, Yasmine Gooneratne speaks of the "search for cultural identity" which "is at the heart of most Third World creative literature ....."\(^5\) The experience of exile is a version of this search and had Ghose chosen to work this vein of cultural identity consistently, he would easily have earned for himself a permanent niche in Indo-Anglian literature, or could have perhaps become one of the elder statesmen of Pakistani literature. However, Ghose was not merely displaced so much as rendered homeless by the Partition, and that fact was to some extent instrumental in nurturing in him a different kind of literary development. In the process of detaching himself from the "centripetal nationalism" of his early writing he also courted banishment from the field of Commonwealth literature as well.

Guillén, in his admirable essay on the literature of exile, draws attention to two kinds of writers: "A certain kind of writer speaks of exile, while another learns from it." About the
second category he says that "exile is the condition but not the visible cause of an imaginative response often characterized by a tendency towards integration, increasingly broad vistas or universalism." Defining this species of writing as the literature of counter-exile, he remarks that this category "can offer wide dimensions of meaning that transcend the earlier attachment to place or native origin." That Ghose moves from one pole to the other is evident not only in his poetry but also in structural pattern in his novels, which move from linearity to circularity. As Paul Ilie points out,

linearity and concavity are figures that signal the processes which determine the dynamics of exile. The linearity of a particular journey may denote, in metaphorical language, irrevocability or expulsion, whereas a labyrinth or a hollow may insinuate other displacements.

As Ghose moves from the linearity of Aziz Khan to the repetitiousness of Crump's Terms and the circularity of The Incredible Brazilian, the vision that informs them changes from displacement in a referential sense to homelessness in a philosophical sense. Inevitably, this leads to a fiction "in which the problems of style and construction will be lucidly considered," and which relies increasingly on the imagination to create its artifacts. Thus location, whether it is the Texas of Hulme's Investigations or the Spanish America of Don Bueno, becomes secondary to the fictionality of the text, which could explain why Ghose, despite sixteen years of residence in Texas, is yet to be recognized by American critics or admitted into the American literary tradition.
That Ghose's consciousness of the native-alien experience, combined with a growing loss of contact with the historical circumstances of exile, should result in a mode of writing which is both antireferential and intermittently illusionist is not surprising. The imagination that grasps and records the objective world is also fired by the conception of a home that could only be realized in art. Czeslaw Milosz, who dismisses realism as an unviable mode for the literature of exile, argues that "the condition of exile, by enforcing upon a writer several perspectives, favours other genres and styles, especially those which are related to a symbolic transposition of reality."\(^9\)

Which is another way of saying that the more philosophical a writer becomes in his awareness of marginalisation, the more non-realistic and experimental his writing is likely to become.

The "difficulty" or obscurity confronting the reader of Ghose's fiction disappears to some extent when he recognises the philosophical underpinning that unites the author's works. Milosz makes the perceptive comment that "after many years in exile one tries to imagine what it is like not living in exile."\(^10\) And this is precisely what informs Ghose's writings. The idea of home, whether it appears as a farm, a ranch, a man-made paradise or an Arcadian village, remains a central preoccupation and a unifying force; and different narrative modes, with their diverse locations and characters, are multiple ways of approaching this artistic quest for "home." The quest is a never-ending one in that the objective conditions which generate it are irreversible, but the irreversibility of the predicament of exile does not sterilise creativity; instead, it
"negates its own permanence by feeding a belief in provisionality."\textsuperscript{11}

The search for new forms is thus inevitable in a writer like Ghose, and this search involves coming into contact with a wide range of literary figures and traditions. Ewa M. Thompson's observation about exile fits Ghose precisely: "exile need not be disastrous to the writer's power of vision ... it can have a salutary effect, even if this effect is achieved by means of the writer's personal misfortune."\textsuperscript{12} Ghose's development is at least in part a consequence of his exile. But the trauma of exile is sterilising only for those who are banished from a cultural "centre" to the "periphery." Guillén, who advances an argument along these lines, cites the cases of Ovid and Han Yū to point out that for them "to be expelled from the centre of the circle amounted to the danger of being hurled into the void or doomed into non-being."\textsuperscript{13} For Ghose, the loss of India was considerable, for he was in fact severed from what could well be called a "centre," but the consequence was an exposure, not to a void, but to several "centres" of equal worth. Hence one hears, as one reads Ghose's works, the echoes of numerous authors and diverse literary traditions. The echoes are deliberate and willed by the author, but not binding for him because his quest is fundamentally experiential. To limit a writer whose sensibility is an evolving one to a preconceived taxonomy would be both futile and frustrating. On the other hand, to recognise the thematic unity which underlies all the writings of Ghose, is not only to understand the complexity of the works themselves, but also to speculate on the possibility of a new poetics for
the literature of native-alien experience.
Notes


3 Guillén, p. 272.


7 Ilie, p. 60.


10 Milosz, p. 282.

11 Ilie, p. 61.


13 Guillén, p. 275.
Appendix

Interview with Zulfikar Ghose

Recorded on 14 August 1984 at The University of Texas at Austin

K: I have been interested in the wide range of forms you have used in your fiction and in the relation between form and idea. You have been moving from one form to another, and that appears to be a crucial aspect of your work. Don Bueno, for instance, is not like The Murder of Aziz Khan.

G: No, not at all. This might become clear if I retrace the history that led to the writing of Aziz Khan.

Except for some occasional pieces of prose, I wrote nothing but poems as an undergraduate at Keele university -- I was there from 1955 to 1959 -- and I had the expectation at that time that I would continue to write poems and that one day I would be a poet of some worth. When I came down from Keele, I was involved with a group of writers in London, all of them poets. In my last year at Keele, I had undertaken to edit Universities' Poetry and had invited Anthony Smith at Cambridge, John Fuller at Oxford and B.S. Johnson in London to be my co-editors, and the four of us began to meet in London in the summer of '59. Fuller faded away, but Smith and Johnson became my close friends. We met often, wrote letters, showed one another our poems, talked endlessly of poetry. Then, through Smith, I became associated with the Group which met on Friday nights at Edward Lucie-
Smith's house; the next wave of British poets came from the Group -- Peter Redgrove, George MacBeth, Peter Porter, several others. At the same time, I became associated with Howard Sergeant who ran monthly poetry readings at a pub in Dulwich and with Martin Bax who edited Ambit. In short, every aspect of my literary life centred on poetry.

B.S. Johnson became my closest friend and although he was to make his name as a novelist, he called himself a poet, even described himself as such in his passport. We were all poets in those days. Anthony Smith went to Bristol where he began to edit the arts page of The Western Daily Press and made me his chief reviewer. That is when I began to read a lot of new novels. During these years, 1961 to 1966, I also reviewed occasionally in the TLS and The Guardian and one or two other places. I read an enormous number of new novels, and most of them were abominably bad. The moment had to come when I thought, Good God, how can anyone publish this kind of trash? And naturally the next idea is that you can do it better, and before you know it you are sitting down and writing a novel. In those circumstances, and at that age, one is possessed by the anxiety to impress the world with one's brilliance. And so I concocted the novel called The Contradictions. Of course, I had no experience of writing fiction, I had very little reading of serious fiction behind me.

K: But you did some reading of fiction for your degreee?

G: I took George Eliot as a special subject and her novels were
the only ones I read for my degree. There were huge gaps in my reading. I had not read Joyce, Beckett or Sterne. I had read little Dickens and hardly any James. I had not discovered Chekhov, Balzac or Flaubert, without whom I do not think it is possible to write fiction. So, my first novel was written out of horrible ignorance. When Macmillan published it, I was distressed to appear in the world with such an inferior work and resolved to make amends by writing a solid, straightforward novel before allowing myself the indulgence of attempting experimental fiction. That is why I wrote *The Murder of Aziz Khan*.

This was the time when the *nouveau roman* was making its mark -- Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, etc., were being translated into English. I did not read any of them at that time, in fact I did not come to them till the 1970s. However, it was a climate in which the new was being valued and I was attracted to it. I already had notions of new forms but I deliberately sat down for a couple of years and did this solid thing, *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. When I finished it, I thought it solid enough, but a form in which I would not wish to work again. Having proved that I could write a traditional novel, I turned to what interested my imagination, I wrote *Crump's Terms*.

K: Did this mean that you were disappointed with *The Contradictions* or was it the publishers ... ?

G: No, nothing to do with the publishers. I was disappointed with *The Contradictions*. I think it is a terrible piece of
writing. I don't know why but I can't bear to read any of my work again. I keep it in front of me to remind myself that I have not done too well and I ought to do better.

But to go on with my narrative: I became a school teacher in London in 1963, I got married in 1964 and *Crump's Terms* was begun in 1967. By then, I was sufficiently affluent in a lower middle class kind of way to own a car and to drive off to Europe every summer with my wife. At that time I was conscious of the decadence that was settling over Europe. 1960s is a time of the coming of the Beatles, the coming of an intense popular culture, and, above all, the adoration of a popular culture by the intellectuals. It was smart to be praising something of passing interest. It seemed to me that the values that I had acquired through a love of learning and a love of literature, values which had become central to my life, were being mocked by my contemporaries. I saw no correlation between what my former undergraduate friends had studied and what they were doing in London in their jobs in advertising and journalism. They were contributing to the destruction of the very values that we had acquired at the university. I felt rather disgruntled by the degeneration around me and began to withdraw into myself. *Crump's Terms* formulated itself in that context.

When I first wrote *Crump's Terms*, I had not read a single work by Robbe-Grillet, nor any Beckett. *Crump's Terms* remained unpublished for eight years during which time I did read Robbe-Grillet and Beckett and some of their influence must have come in when when I revised the novel but actually the final version is not very different from the first complete draft. I seem to
have discovered their preoccupations as my own even before I read them.

K: But at that time you had read the stream-of-consciousness writers like Virginia Woolf.

G: No, I had not read anything by Virginia Woolf, except for *A Room of One's Own*, which I had read as a schoolboy. But I had not read *Mrs Dalloway* or *To the Lighthouse*.

K: How about Joyce?

G: Yes, I had read Joyce. I wrote *Crump's Terms* after my first visit to Brazil and I took *Ulysses* to Brazil and read it while I was there. So, I had read Joyce. I think some of those compound words and neologisms in *Crump's Terms* are influenced by Joyce.

K: How about Faulkner? He uses the technique of repetition.

G: Yes, Faulkner is perhaps unconsciously there because I had read Faulkner ardently as an undergraduate.

What happened to *Crump's Terms* was that when I finished it in 1968 and sent it to Macmillan, they rejected it. Several other publishers rejected it, too, and when I came to the States in '69 I brought it with me and spent another six months or so rewriting it. I wrote about three or four drafts of it and sent it back to the agent. He submitted it to a number of publishers and they all rejected it. Nobody wanted it. Everybody said I was
wasting my time. Then it was finally accepted by Macmillan because I offered them the Brazilian trilogy. The trilogy had what seemed a commercial prospect and Macmillan hoped to make a lot of money with it. I made the acceptance of Crump's Terms a condition of giving them the trilogy.

K: But you did not consider Crump's Terms an inferior work, did you?

G: No, I thought that was the direction I should be taking. If Macmillan had accepted it in 1968 when it was first offered to them, I would have progressed from there instead of spending the next eight years on the Brazilian trilogy. Who knows what I might not have discovered? The trilogy was amusing to write but it did not involve me in artistic growth. I suppose I began writing Hulme's Investigations before finishing the trilogy in order to console myself that I was not merely the writer of commercial fiction.

K: But you did not think of going back to the Aziz Khan style?

G: Never. Once that was done it was done. One changes, one's point of view is constantly moving into new regions. Experience is a comprehension of a previously obscure form: a novel begins because I do not see and it ends because, and only if, I have seen.

You know there is a plot or a story in a novel. Something is going on. All that is made up to keep the writing going. My own interest is in something else. There is an imagery going on.
These are simply diversions. The real thing is going on somewhere else, in the language itself. I aim for an accumulation of brilliant details to get to that language. The most important thing in writing fiction is what Conrad calls the shape and ring of sentences. I don't know whether you've noticed I sometimes tend to write very long and complicated sentences, a Proustian kind of sentence, filled with vivid matter until the language releases a subtle thought. It doesn't always work, no thought might emerge at the end, but at least there will be a richness of texture, a pleasing cadence.

K: But unless you have various dimensions of experience which must come through in the language you wouldn't have an interest in constructing such sentences.

G: As soon as you use words you are referring to reality; indeed, there is no reality outside language that can be said to have a meaning; and it must follow that you cannot perceive a complex reality without creating a complex language. Flaubert put this precisely when he said that style is a very manner of seeing things. He also said that he wished to write about nothing, a book about nothing that was held together only by its style. He said that in the context of writing Madame Bovary, and of course he did not succeed in writing about nothing. But it seems to me that subsequent generations of French writers, especially Raymond Rouss@l, have come very close to writing about nothing.

The difference I am trying to get at is that if one were to
sit down and say, I am going to write a novel called The Incredible Brazilian for which I will draw upon history and some of my own experiences, then one would write a novel with a largely predetermined subject matter. Contrast to that the writing of Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart script which is composed without any preoccupation with subject matter. I find it much more interesting to write the latter kind of novel; in it I record not a perceived world but create a perception of the world. Of course, the perception is not going to be empty of matter. In the act of creating a language, inventing a form, shaping a style for such a novel one is engaged in a simultaneous attention to multiple factors; you concentrate on the sentence but your memories, background, reading, experience, everything that constitutes your identity charge that sentence with a current that comes out of your unconscious mind.

Hulme's Investigations Into the Bogart Script began by itself. I just found myself writing it one day. I soon realized that what I was trying to produce was a text which was simply a structure of language, which was not based on preconceived ideas, which was not trying to put forward the writer's views, which did not have a story or plot, but which was still fiction. As with Crump's Terms, it was universally rejected when it was offered to publishers.

K: This was in the early seventies?

G: Yes, this was in the early seventies. I rewrote it a number of times. It went on from '72 to '78 while I was writing A
Different World and Hamlet, Prufrock and Language. Finally, however, a small press in Austin published it.

K: So the order of composition has been quite different from the order of publication?

G: Yes. Unfortunately it takes publishers years to respond to a work of the imagination. Sometimes even when they like it, they reject it because they have convinced themselves in advance that it won't sell. My editor at Macmillan admired Hulme's Investigations and showed me a reader's report on it which was quite ecstatic; even so, Macmillan turned it down. By then I had become extremely philosophical and instead of being dejected was rather amused that what I considered one of my better works should be rejected. I enjoy being published, of course, and would be overjoyed with a real success -- who would not? -- but failure doesn't depress me. I quietly go on with the next work. Perhaps it comes from being born in the Orient, I'm very patient and consider ridiculous an obsession with the self.

I seem to be giving you an intellectual and chronological biography and I might as well finish it.

K: You have left out your collections of poems.

G: We will come to the poems later perhaps, because we now come to the more recent novels A New History of Torments and Don Bueno. These are set in Spanish South America, though there are a few pages of Don Bueno set in Brazil. But actually the setting
has nothing whatsoever to do with anything. With these novels, I entered a phase of pure invention. There are images in them that come from direct observation. The Equator, the Andes, the Amazon. But I am not concerned in them with common reality. I create the illusion of reality when in fact I have no reality at all, except that of the imagination.

K: But not in the manner of Hulme's *Investigations*?

G: No, not in the manner of Hulme's *Investigations* because the intellectual grasp behind these two novels is different. I am no longer talking in these novels about language but about human experience.

K: So you did conform to a linear movement and realistic framework in certain ways.

G: Yes, there is a linear narrative and the pretense of reality. The pretense of reality is carefully maintained but if you read carefully you will probably find out that it is flawed.

K: Yes there is a strong element of artifice.

G: Yes

K: But both seem to co-exist in a way -- the artifice and the reality.
G: Well, I hope so. The thinking that was going on in my mind had to do with the recurrence of myth in human experience. I sometimes wonder whether we are not driven by a mechanism in our brains which contains memories not our own but of the human tribe, memories that compel an unpredictable behaviour. Call these memories the recurrence of myth, a force that respects neither time nor place, but is universally present in the human psyche. It strikes me that these memories are partial memories because with the passage of time many of these images have become eroded, confused and distorted, the original myth has become surreal. Our actions are charged by the force of compulsions unknown to our conscious minds and those mythical elements recurring in our actions that might have served a regenerative function are perhaps instead a curse, an unbearable torment.

K: In your autobiography you talk about the native-alien experience and you talk about the psychological conflict and the pressing need to know that you belong somewhere. You say that this has been the schizophrenic theme in your writing. This was in 1965. Since then you have not made any critical statements about your writing.

G: The need to belong was perhaps strongly felt in 1964. I had been writing on that theme since 1959, almost all the poems in The Loss of India are to do with the idea of roots, of displacement and the desire to belong. But by writing so many poems and by writing the autobiography, I worked that out. As
one grows older one realizes it's no use sitting and lamenting one's fate. After one has worked out that particular aspect of fate in a number of texts, then surely one has exhausted the theme and goes on to others. There is nothing of me really in The Incredible Brazilian and Hulme's Investigations and the other novels that have followed because in them I was simply making up stories or pursuing some compulsion of the imagination. Then I realized one day that even in The Incredible Brazilian I was talking about myself. In a sense, I was talking about the idea of place. The attraction of the self to a certain landscape. Certain images in it have to do with memories of having been to particular parts of Brazil, but one can say that I was unconsciously trying to create the idea of the human soul seeing a glimpse from time to time of paradise and longing to be there. The people in A New History of Torments are also seeking a paradise, Oyarzún has created one in the middle of the jungle. But it is a sterile paradise because his wife has left him and his daughter is a serpent of a woman. The paradise that has been created refuses to accommodate the soul in all its desire for beauty. In Don Bueno, too, the character finds himself at a place that gives him a glimpse of a beautiful, Arcadian, idyllic world with a hamlet at one end and a waterfall at the other. Man is seduced to go into a ravishing landscape and the landscape destroys him. The landscape will not tolerate his presence. While each of these landscapes was created in the novels for specific reasons particular to each novel, one cannot deny that the unconscious mind of the writer was also doing something else, intruding an obsession which belonged to himself. I seem
always to be searching for a paradise.

K: Does this search involve the notion of a quest?

G: Yes, and I think the quest is universal. The present is always a torment. We keep looking expectantly in case the next bend in the road will bring us an astonishing revelation.

K: Despite the quest, there appears to be always a sense of gloom.

G: Yes, I am a gloomy man. A wonderful quotation comes to mind. I think it's from Paul Valéry. "Optimists make bad writers."

K: But some people have had some kind of faith to fall back on.

G: Did not Tolstoy destroy himself as a writer when he fell back on faith? Hopkins was not consoled by his faith -- the "terrible" sonnets are the cry of a man wrenched by sexual desire which his faith dictates he suppress. And Donne is a great poet when he is celebrating sexuality and when, confronting his death, he becomes repentant and writes the "holy" sonnets, even there the climactic imagery is sexual -- "Batter my heart, three-personed God ...." That poem ends with Donne calling God to ravish him. An awful despair seems to permeate great writing.

K: In that sense the last ten years have not been any different?
G: No, I've got quite gloomier. In fact, if you notice in *A New History of Torments*, I end by destroying the world I had created. Incidentally, there's an echo from Wallace Stevens in the closing lines of that novel. People don't notice that my prose echoes with many references and images deliberately taken from some of the poets. If a reader were to reflect upon them, he would see something he had missed.

K: Certain things seem to run through your fictions. The sense of guilt is very strong and the relationship between parents and children becomes a very important issue. One tends to see this in relation to what you have said in your autobiography about betraying your parents' expectations.

G: It could well be, although I'm not aware of it. I don't consciously feel any guilt, or maybe I do. Maybe it comes in various disguises. My behaviour towards my parents was ruthless, even cruel. But had I remained the dutiful oriental son, I would never have been a writer. The close-knit structure of Indian and Pakistani families looks beautiful from a distance, but the price you pay for it is the loss of individual liberty. And without that liberty, you cannot be a writer. My breaking away from the structure, with its implied cruelty to my parents, was a deliberate act of self-preservation.

G: The other important issue is your treatment of sexuality and your treatment of perversity. Are you trying to make a point through your treatment of sexuality? In all your works there is
hardly any conventional relationship.

G: I have no idea what constitutes a conventional sexual relationship. The secret fantasies of people are probably a lot more extravagant than anything I have made up in my novels.

K: Don't you use an image pattern in which the land gets associated with the woman and the violation of the land is like the violation of a woman? Has this something to do with the notion of belonging?

G: In Hulme's *Investigations* there is the idea of Poker Hortense as the woman representing the idea of the land; she appears in several disguises -- Indian princess, a statuesque figure, an old woman; and she is loved and brutalised. There is a vision at the end of the novel of the land in its sealed beauty, but before that there are many images of violation, for to a certain degree the act of possession is always destructive. There are images in the other novels, too, where the land-woman association is deliberately suggested.

K: Over the years you have changed your form but there are certain threads which run through your work. But you have changed your form because the meaning is dependent on form. Was there any reason for abandoning the realistic form and going into other modes?

G: I think it's very boring to take the realistic form and keep
working at it again and again. Surely, I'm aware of what has happened and what is happening in the literary world around me and I am very excited by the new and one of the enjoyments of life is to contribute something to the new. The desire is always to create that perfect masterpiece which has a hardness of matter, which is going to be enjoyed at several levels, and which is going to enchant everyone with the beauty of its form. Every time I finish a novel, I am filled with a sense of failure that I've not caught that elusive beauty, and so I start another one. A lovely foolishness, or an exquisite lunacy, fills my hours pursuing the unattainable.

K: In *The Murder of Aziz Khan* one can only read the novel in relation to social reality. But that is not true of *Crump's Terms*.

G: *Crump's Terms* is more like *The Waste Land*. Fragments shored against ruin. *Aziz Khan* comes from a deliberately restrained imagination and may be compared to the work of such second-raters as Steinbeck and E.M. Forster. All that rotten social relevance which never did anyone any good.

K: When we come to the Brazilian trilogy it is obvious that you are not going to write the history of Brazil. Were you using Brazil as a metaphor?

G: I had no deliberate design to do so, but surely there are unconscious patterns. It is not a historical novel although it
uses history. I know very little about Brazil and do not speak Portuguese. It would be a bit too clever to say that having been uprooted from India I replaced India with Brazil and saw in it, too, the despair of the dispossessed. A writer can only say: I wrote it because I felt like writing it and the images it contains are the ones that happened to strike me as interesting while I was writing it.

K: But is there any reason why you didn't want to write about India?

G: I have not been back to India or Pakistan for twenty-three years. Neither country has given me the slightest recognition. But this has nothing to do with writing. As it happens, I wrote a short story a few months ago, called "The Savage Mother of Desire," which is set in India. Perhaps I might go on to do a larger work with an Indian setting. I don't know. But settings in my recent fictions are only an illusory reality, a semblance of a believable world, the truth I'm after is not to be discovered on that surface.

K: There are several references to India in The Incredible Brazilian and I wondered whether Brazil is a metaphor for India.

G: The Portuguese when they discovered Brazil thought it was India. They had simply lost their way, as I may have mine.

K: Are you interested in magical realism?
G: I am never interested in any -ism and would hate to be confined to a category. My recent novels might contain elements of magical realism, but then they also contain elements of Balzac, Tolstoy, Proust, Machado de Assis, and ten thousand others. The creation of a new text is an investigation into those possibilities of language that have not yet been exhausted; one assimilates past and present -- all the -isms, if you like -- and hopes to be astonished by the new shape that emerges. Valéry said: "A lion is made up of assimilated sheep."

K: You have moved from place to place but you have stuck to Latin America in five novels. How would you explain that?

G: Because it does not really matter where a novel is set provided its internal structure works. You could take A New History of Torments and change all the Spanish names to Indian names, substitute the Himalayas and the Ganges for the Andes and the Amazon, but the novel itself would not alter the slightest. Seeing that it's set in South America, reviewers have immediately perceived a comparison with Jorge Amado, Márquez and Vargas Llosa; I suppose if I'd set it in India, they'd have seen a comparison with Tagore, Narayan, and the films of Satyajit Ray. People are eager to drop names and to put one into a category, and I have yet to see any evidence that anyone had read the book carefully. To give you an example of sloppy reading, several reviewers both in America and in England called Mark Kessel an American when it's clearly stated that he's a South American, with the precise implication that he's a
K: I believe that there are several patterns of negation which are associated with different forms. Would you agree?

G: Negation of what?

K: Of various things, social and cultural values for instance.

G: I suppose that's true.

K: One other thing. Have you any specific interest in numbers? You have a pattern of three sections in your first two novels. Then you have a trilogy.

G: It comes from playing cricket. If I publish a book and it comes to, say, two hundred and ninety-nine pages, I feel depressed about it and wish that the printer had drawn it out to be three hundred. I would like to be the Bradman of literature, each book a triple century!

K: Does it have anything to do with artifice, to make the reader conscious of the artifice as in The Contradictions.

G: Not at all. I am never out to make the reader conscious of anything, in fact the reader does not exist in my mind. I suppose what you call artifice is a desire to have a text that is pleasingly complete, to make Parts I and II, if there are two
parts, equal, mirror reflections at the surface, one of the other. This might well come from a study of poetical forms. I play a lot of games to amuse myself.

K: You have also changed the narrative voice from the third person to the first person and then back to the third person. Is there something about the narrative voice you find important?

G: First person is always restricting and I think I had not studied Flaubert as well as I did after finishing the Brazilian trilogy. My reading of the novel until that time was not very wide. It was about this time that I began to read with much greater care and in great quantity and I certainly had not read Flaubert thoroughly and certainly not his letters until after The Incredible Brazilian. Flaubert, Chekhov, Machado de Assis -- all that's important in the tradition -- I acquired somewhat late. To say that I have changed my narrative voice is to imply a sort of premeditation, a firm decision to exclude a particular voice. I don't work that way. I listen to the language that comes. Either it sounds right or it doesn't. Technique is something a writer learns in his instincts, it is not something he needs to think about while writing.

K: Are you trying to develop something like a central intelligence, a kind of reflector technique?

G: I do not know what those terms mean. The best example I can give you of what I have been trying to do is the first chapter
of Don Bueno. A concentration of imagery. Sharply visual matter. Objective description that can be charged with meaning. The writer himself is nowhere to be seen, only the world of his imagination coming into shape. It's not an easy style to maintain, for unfortunately in a novel there are moments when one needs to condense and generalize, these are inevitably weak moments in a novel.

K: How about the description of certain characters?

G: I try to describe them in such a way that it doesn't appear that the writer is giving information to the reader. Sometimes a character is revealed through the perception of another, sometimes through the action. I aim always for objectivity.

K: Is this something you have developed after the Brazilian trilogy?

G: This kind of tightness perhaps first comes in A New History of Torments. But I think I have it in Crump's Terms. Even in The Contradictions there must be certain passages which are very precise. I have a natural facility for that kind of writing but I did not have the rationale for it until I read Flaubert, and that made me see what I was capable of doing.

K: You mentioned that Hulme's Investigations is a book you like very much. It has a style that's very different from the other novels. It's very postmodern. Why did you give up this style?
G: I didn't give it up. I had done it. Why should I repeat it?

K: In Don Bueno and A New History of Torments there is a change.

G: That is because my imagination was looking at different matter. Perhaps I was also trying for a more easily readable style than in Hulme which demands an educated reader.

K: Isn't this the kind of writing that so many postmodern writers use?

G: I do not know what postmodern means or who the postmodern writers are. Sounds like a firm of undertakers performing post mortems. Bodies being carved up for some dark purpose known only to the initiates. There are only good writers and bad writers. Anyone who gives himself a label is only seeking publicity; if the label is given him by a critic, it is usually because the critic wishes to advance his career and only way of doing that is being noticed as the originator of a new -ism.

K: You refer quite often to Beckett in The Fiction of Reality. His view of the world is essentially absurdist. That is not something you believe in.

G: I don't believe in anything. As for Beckett, I derive considerable delight from his prose. Watt, the trilogy, How It Is -- there is rare music there.
K: But there is this quest motif in your work.

G: I am simply searching for that lovely landscape where I can settle down and not think of reality again.

K: Have you any connection with Patrick White? You have written an article about him and you refer to him quite often.

G: I like his prose. I don't care for some of his subject matter, and then, after A Fringe of leaves, I lost interest in him. That novel has many weaknesses, failures of style, and it made me see that all his work has been beset by an insufficient attention to form. But I admire his imagination and am thrilled by many passages. He could have been a very great writer; he's only barely a good one, but I dare not re-read him to test even this opinion.

K: You also make a reference once to Malcolm Lowry. Has he influenced you?

G: Not really. I took a quotation from him for Hulme's Investigations. I enjoyed Under the Volcano; I don't think it's as great as it might have been, but it's quite wonderful.

K: One more thing about fiction. In your collection of short stories you begin with the prologue that makes certain statements. Why did you make such a statement and what were you trying to do?
G: Statement Against Corpses, the collection of short stories, is only half mine, the other half is B.S. Johnson's. You must remember that when the book was produced, Johnson and I were two young men with rather an inflated idea about ourselves, out to make a name for ourselves. Therefore, we made up that provocative statement. Also, we were -- certainly I was -- ignorant of what was going on in the U.S., Europe and South America where the short story was a much more vital form than it was in England. So, you have to see that statement in the context of the narrow world in which the two young men lived at that time.

K: What did the narrow world consist of? Surely you must have had something in mind when you made the statement?

G: A world that praised such nonentities as Larkin and Amis had to be a narrow world. English writers in the first half of the twentieth century are a sorry lot; there is only one poet after Hopkins -- Basil Bunting; only one novelist after George Eliot -- Virginia Woolf. Yes, I know there were D.H. Lawrence, Robert Graves, E.M. Forster, but I think literary history will put them all into a sack full of others of the sorry lot and dump them into the already polluted English Channel. Were it not for a few Irishmen, a couple of Scots and a Welshman, English literature of the first half of the twentieth century would be almost exclusively American. The interesting English writers began to emerge in the 1960s, and twenty years later I see more imaginatively exciting things coming out from England than from
here, from America. The English seem to me to be doing again what they've always done when they produced their best literature -- opened their eyes to the rest of the world and taken from it what they can plunder and transform, a process that the English language is so good at accommodating. No more of that horrible domesticity with its kitchen sinks and small back gardens that prevailed in the '50s. I shall be surprised if a really eminent writer doesn't emerge from England before this century is out. There is a great deal of fertile evidence, writers now in their forties are doing some remarkable things. There was none of this vitality in 1963 which was a dead, a narrow time, when Johnson and I put our pretentious statement together.

K: Did you have any previously written stories?

G: None of my stories in Statement Against Corpses had been written before Johnson and I decided to make a book together. My part of the book is awful, atrocious. The stories are naive, written out of ignorance, without any experience of an informed reading of fiction, a very juvenile work.

K: Does the term "corpses" refer to the situation of short stories?

G: You can say that I suppose.

K: What was the kind of relationship you had with Johnson? I
noticed that you have dedicated a book to him.

G: We were very close. We used to see each other almost every day. We went to a lot of plays together, we gave many poetry readings together. We took long walks in the streets of London in winter when the pubs were closed. We played squash on Sundays. No sooner did we write a poem than we posted it to the other and received a letter full of criticism a day later. When we both got engaged, we agreed to have the two weddings on the same day, 31st March 1964, but my arrangements got delayed by a couple of months. Afterwards, the four of us went on European holidays together. In the early days, when we were poor, we drank half pints of beer; later, it was fine wine and oysters.

K: Johnson turned out to be a different kind of writer.

G: In his fiction, he was self-consciously an experimental writer. His poetry, however, is very traditional.

K: Your collaboration was incidental?

G: It was simply a result of our friendship. We were in fact very different kinds of writers.

K: You have not been writing too many short stories in recent times.

G: That is because I have been writing novels and I find it
difficult to write another kind of fiction at the same time.

K: It is not because you feel that the genre has certain limitations?

G: A really well written story, a masterpiece like Faulkner's "Barn Burning," is a terrific imaginative experience. But with lesser minds, the form encourages dullness and triviality. There must be thousands of stories about adolescent problems, the tensions of middle-aged couples, and other common sociological matter, all deadly serious and excruciatingly dull.

K: Would you like to say something about your poems?

G: What would you like to ask?

K: How about the autobiographical element which critics have drawn attention to. I find that sometimes you take two or three incidents from your autobiography and fuse them in one poem.

G: A poem succeeds because of its form and the power of its language and not because its subject matter is autobiographically precise. What may have tormented a poet that he was driven to write a certain poem is none of the reader's business, for the reader is looking at language and not at life.

K: You started writing at a time when lots of things were happening in England -- the Movement, the Group poets -- and you
were in some ways associated with them. I am interested in what they were doing and how they influenced you.

G: My biggest influences at that time were Robert Browning, Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, and W.B. Yeats. As for the Movement, I was quite attracted to it at the start. Before the Movement, Dylan Thomas had been an important influence and in the year '53 when he died, he was a very strong influence on many young poets, and I was no exception. Similarly, I came under a passing spell of infatuation with Auden. I was greatly impressed by him and went around reciting "In Praise of Limestone," and obviously that flowed into some of my own work. But by the time I wrote the poems in The Loss of India, I had outgrown both Thomas and Auden, although some of the poems might still have a lingering echo of these poets.

K: When you say outgrown is it because you find something wanting in them?

G: No, it's just that I realized that I was only mimicking their voice. That's how I suppose every poet begins. My earliest poems when I was a school boy in Bombay were a mimicking of Byron. Later it was Browning.

K: Did you also try to imitate their forms? Some of the poets you mentioned were difficult poets who were experimenting with language, form, and so forth.
G: Yes, I did that. Ottava rima, Spenserian stanza, terza rima, dramatic monologues, sestinas, villanelles, you name it, I did the lot. Very exciting it was, too, at that time. It was useful training, I suppose, even though the modern poet doesn't always need these techniques and traditional forms.

K: In what sense would you define modern?

G: In the sense that Eliot, Pound and Ashbery are modern. I wouldn't want to attempt a definition, however. A slightly pompous procedure, uttering definitions.

K: Would it be right to say that your poetry is more in the tradition of Larkin rather than Ted Hughes?

G: Neither, I would hope! But I can't disagree with your statement for part of my work. The poems in The Loss of India have something of both the Movement and also Hughes. For example, "Uncle Ayub" is the kind of "family" poem many people were writing in the Movement manner. Neat little portraits with bits of exquisite irony attached to them. And "This Landscape, These People" has the phrase "swift heels trail like ploughs," which surely is an echo of Hughes's opening image in "The Hawk in the Rain." But there is also Robert Lowell lurking over The Loss of India, perhaps a stronger presence than either Larkin or Hughes. The earliest poem in that book was written in 1959, the year in which Life Studies was published in England, a book that made a very strong impression on me. There's not much to be said
for my second book of poems, *Jets from Orange*, which has perhaps three or four decent poems but the rest deserve to be burned. There's too much posturing in it, a silly desire to make important statements. Since then I've discovered that I write best when I have nothing to say but have a desire to write a poem, a pressure of a form within my mind, so that I look for images through which that form might emerge.

K: In terms of form, you seem to be getting more complex in *The Violent West*, more difficult to understand. Is this a new trend?

G: The poems in *The Violent West* were written after I came to Texas in 1969. The first course I taught at the University was in contemporary British and American poetry. I had met Theodore Roethke in London some years earlier and he had encouraged me to read a number of American poets who were scarcely known in England -- Kunitz and Bishop, for example. I had read some and of course had a smattering of the major American poets -- Stevens, Williams, Roethke himself. But when I began to teach at the university, I undertook an intensive study of some of these poets. Also, in 1968, I had visited New York where I had been invited to give a reading at the Poetry Center and had met Eugène Guillevic of France, the Chilean Nicanor Parra; and several American poets; and in 1970, I was invited to read at the Library of Congress where I met Francis Ponge from France, Yehuda Amichai from Israel, Vasko Popa from Yugoslavia. I drop all these names to make the point that a greatly varied and enormously rich poetry suddenly opened to me when I came to
America. All these poets were available in London but the literary groups that I moved in uttered not a word about them. So, reading the European and South American poets, and studying the Americans more carefully obviously the new poems I wrote were very different from those in my first two books. With a few exceptions, however, they were still not the poems I wanted to write. That is the condition of the poet, to write so many poems in which his own voice is only a nearly inaudible whisper; they might look like genuine poems but in his own mind the poet is not deluded, he's the first to spot his own artistic failure. It is by rare good fortune that all the elements that constitute a beautiful poem come together but one cannot hit upon that combination as an act of will. I suppose it's a gift reserved for the very few. No writer can ever presume that he has it or will be given it. He can only continue to live in that misty area of tense apprehensions where he has always resided, where mysterious forms beckon him to capture their elusive appearance which is both luminous and opaque; and there, his fate might be to suffer lasting torment or, with luck, to experience ecstasy.
Bibliography

The main objective of this bibliography is to compile, for the first time, all the writings of Zulfikar Ghose, including the sports journalism. Part I of the bibliography lists works by and about Ghose. The primary sources are given chronologically and the secondary material is arranged alphabetically. Part II contains an alphabetical listing of additional sources not directly related to Ghose, but which have been useful in the preparation of this thesis.

Although I have endeavoured to make this compilation as inclusive as possible, I am aware that omissions are inevitable, particularly in the listing of reviews. I have made every effort to provide complete citations; however, in a few instances, the photocopied material I had access to did not contain all the relevant information. Nonetheless, I have included the citations in the belief that partial information would be better than no information at all.

Part I

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