ABSTRACT

A recurring theme in much of African and Caribbean writing is the theme of 'exile' and release from the sense of exile into what is called in the present study, 'homecoming'. While some critics have examined the theme of exile, the theme of 'homecoming' has not received the attention it merits. The present study attempts an analysis of the theme with reference to Edward Brathwaite, a Caribbean poet and dramatist, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan novelist, and Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist and poet. A further justification for the present study lies in the approach adopted. The analyses offered here do adopt a traditional literary approach in that they evaluate the works as 'literary' works - for their literariness. But the analyses do not end here. The endeavour is always to relate the treatment of the theme to its significance in the wider context of the cultural scene that prevails in these newly independent colonies. (This approach is in keeping with the present-day trends in literary studies, particularly in the case of ex-colonial countries, to treat literature, with utmost seriousness and with regard for its literary value, as an important witness of socio-cultural change.) There have been several studies of the problem of identity formation (e.g. Erik Erikson) and of the problem of the impact of colonialism on the mental make-up of the natives (e.g. Mannoni, Memmi and Fanon). The useful insights provided by these works have been used in the present study.
This approach, it is felt, is more conducive to a better and fuller understanding of the significance of the works of the writers discussed here. The fact is never lost sight of that the writers discussed here are 'committed' writers and that each of them has announced a special role for himself in his culture. To make explicit the significance of these roles with reference to the theme of homecoming is, I would claim, the contribution of the present study.

In chapter one I define the term 'exile', which for this study is an important socio-psychological category as well as a literary theme. The term is meaningful only in the context of the concept of identity. Here I have made use of Erik Erikson's definition of 'identity' in his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. I have also made use of the writings of eminent psychologists and psychiatrists like Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Octave Mannoni and Erving Goffman and sociologists like Ashis Nandy to investigate and elaborate on the various aspects of the "loss of self". The chapter also presents in detail how the colonizer-colonized relationship, which produces the 'colonial psyche', comes into existence.

The second chapter is devoted to a discussion of the possible ways in which the identity crisis can be resolved leading to a new vision. The resolution of the crisis involves a progression, a journey from the state of the 'loss of self' and the resulting 'anomie' and aimless and destructive violence to a constructive examination of what is to be retained from what one has inherited and acquired.
and what is to be discarded. I have shown with reference to Brathwaite and Ngugi that the journey back home goes through three phases: culture shock, dispossession of the shock and homecoming.

The third chapter offers a detailed analysis of Edward Kamau Brathwaite's trilogy 'The Arrivants'. It traces his journey from rejection to acceptance of his homeland i.e. the Caribbean Islands. Analysing in detail the three books of the trilogy 'Rights of Passage', 'Masks' and 'Islands', I bring out the characteristic features of Brathwaite's style and the significance of his use of the 'epic' form and the content of the poems. His creative insights are supplemented by an analysis of his non-literary writings to clarify his views on the role of the poet and the need to create a tradition if there exists a vacuum in this respect.

A detailed study of the five novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan novelist and playwright to trace his psychological journey from exile to homecoming is offered in the fifth chapter. His first three novels (The River Between, Weep Not Child and A Grain of Wheat) trace the history of Kenya from pre-colonial times to independence and the two later novels, 'Petals of Blood' and 'Devil on the Cross' (The last one was written in Gikuyu and translated in English by him) depict the deplorable conditions of the masses who struggled for Kenya's freedom but who actually became victims of their own people. Ngugi's non-literary work also discusses this problem and puts the blame squarely on 'the colonial mentality,' the legacy of colonialism. His
efforts in 'Devil on the Cross' and Matigari (his latest novel) are directed towards his total identification with his own people and towards their awakening to achieve 'decolonization of mind'. Ngugi is a political writer with an idealistic vision combined with Fanon's anti-colonialism. I have also offered a critique of Ngugi's modified Marxism which actually develops into Nationalism of a fiery kind.

In the fifth chapter I discuss briefly the work of Chinua Achebe and how he also is engaged with the analysis of the creation of 'colonial psyche'. Achebe's latest novel Anthills of the Savannah celebrates the role of women in seeking a solution to the political crisis and the resultant anarchy. The last hope of humanity seems to be the 'woman', the 'feminine principle' or the 'Mother-Creator'.

The study concludes with a reference to the cultural contexts in which Brathwaite, Ngugi, Achebe and other writers discussed in this study operate. The writers, it is pointed out, assume an additional role and responsibility. Literature plays an important role in solving the problems of the loss of identity at individual as well as collective levels. The writers whose works are analysed here reveal that they have come 'home' to themselves as well as to their own people. They have turned to literature with a deep sense of reverence and commitment. As a part of their psychological journey back home, they have accepted themselves as part of their own communities. They have rejected the Eurocentric attitude of modern western writers who discuss such issues as whether the novel is dead, and
who look at themselves as 'alienated' and 'isolated' souls. In discussing the works of the colonial writers a purely 'formal' approach and dogmas like 'art for art's sake' become irrelevant. Only a literary study which takes into account socio-cultural or historical dimensions of their work can establish how they have truly come home and have achieved decolonization of their psyche for themselves as well as their own people. It is, therefore, imperative to consider these literary works from this perspective and thus widen our conception of the function of literature under the colonial and neocolonial ethos.