

W THE VISION OF ROGER MAIS: AN INVESTIGATION INTO
THE HILLS WERE JOYFULL TOGETHER AND BROTHER MAN 9

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

by

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED FOR
THE DEGREE OF MA (1991)
AND A COPY MAY BE PLACED IN THE
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

Shadrack Adalo Moga

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN SUBMITTED FOR EXAMINATION
WITH MY APPROVAL AS UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR.
A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for
the degree of Master of Arts in Literature,
University of Nairobi

12/6/1991
Wanjiku Mukohi Kabira.
1991

CONTENTS

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

Dedication

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Introduction

Shadrack Adalo Moga

Chapter One: Roger Kaine - A Literary Biography

Chapter Two: Major Concerns of Roger Kaine

Chapter Three: An Analysis of Roger Kaine's Style

Chapter Four: An Evaluation of Roger Kaine's Vision

Conclusion

Bibliography

This thesis has been submitted for examination
with my approval as University Supervisor.

Wm Kabira : 10/6/1999
Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira.

CONTENTS

Dedication	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Roger Mais: A Literary Biography	22
Chapter Two: Major Concerns of Roger Mais	46
Chapter Three: An Analysis of Roger Mais' Style	86
Chapter Four: An Evaluation of Roger Mais' Vision	128
Conclusion	149
Bibliography	153

Dedicated with Love to my father
and Mother -- Mr. Jafeth Moga Ayero
and Mrs Ester Khasoa Moga.

Acknowledgements.

To Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira I am indebted for pointed arguments and valuable suggestions; to Dr. Indangasi and Mr D. H. Kiiru for recommending me for a University scholarship; to my classmates -- Kamau, Flora, Onyando and Serah -- for warm company; to Odhiambo P.Z. for exemplary patience and understanding; to Mr. Onyango Ogutu for his love for books; to Evelyne Ayoti for typing. To all I am most grateful.

- iii -

Abstract

This thesis identifies and clarifies the vision of life portrayed in Roger Mais' novels, namely Brother Man and The Hills Were Joyful Together. It is built on the premise that artists discriminate in the choice of subject matter and manner of writing. This bias is informed by something more fundamental -- their outlook on life -- which is in turn imprinted on their works.

In written texts vision penetrates both form and content. Vision can hence be deduced by a systematic analysis of an author's creative products. Such is the approach used in this study.

Employing the above interpretive strategy, this study offers a detailed analysis of Roger Mais' major thematic concerns. Character, theme and incidents are studied so as to help us explain the emergent visions of society in the novels. In the process we highlight the importance of surrounding to both perception and vision. Similarly the

study elucidates on variation in the outlooks adopted by various characters. It is provided that some of the points of view taken are built on conceit, ignorance and contraries that plunge the individual into trouble.

This study also evaluates Mais' style and how the author uses style to enhance vision. The main argument advanced here is that style is not something accidental, rather it is "social experience solidified" (Fischer 152). We hence link various artistic strategies at work in the texts to both vision and theme.

Working on a summation of findings in earlier chapters and using them as a basis for evaluation, this study lastly assesses the central vision in Roger Mais' novels. We see an emergent vision that blends all aspects of the novel. The study holds that whereas Mais adopts a tragic view of life, this tragedy is part of a transient result in a process of change either in the material or social conditions of man. It could be both. These two aspects, however, form the social basis of the misfortune suffered.

INTRODUCTION

Roger Mais occupies a significant position in West Indian Literature. Despite his substantial creative output, Mais has not been adequately studied. The immediate witness to this neglect is in the small number of critiques written about his works, most of which are brief introductions to his published novels.¹ At other instances Mais has been treated as a fragment in studies or critical anthologies that are defined by time-periods.²

By their nature both the above approaches are handicapped. One is tied to the text being introduced whereas the other lumps together literary activities of a given historical period and is either dictated by historical events or it ends up being an overview of these activities. It is impossible, for instance, to give Roger Mais or any other writer for that matter a definite focus when summarizing happenings of the 1950s as Sandra Pouchet does (King 65-70). Such limitations suggest a shortcoming in interpretation because mere mention gives very little room for meaningful analysis.

While the above suffices as a general cause to arouse an interest in Mais' Works, this study however takes as

its specific point of departure the fact that Mais' vision of life has not been clearly understood. Critical opinion on Roger Mais' works so far has not fully explored the specific perspective from which the author views situations, evaluates his fictional world and paints or depicts incidents. There exists a gap in the study of Roger Mais: establishing the vision that underlies and informs his creative enterprise. It is this gap that this study seeks to fill.

The aim of this thesis therefore is to investigate into the nature of Mais' vision. The study sets out to discuss issues that preoccupy the author and to analyse aspects of his style in the hope that this discussion and analysis will reveal Roger Mais' vision. Similarly, the study aims to show how context relates to vision.

In an endeavour to achieve the above stated aims, this study formulated two basic hypotheses. First is that a discussion of issues handled in Mais' novels and the style adopted will reveal the vision that guides the author. Second is that the view of life in Roger Mais' fiction is tragic. By tragic we mean a creative consciousness that portrays man's "tenacity of sufferings, (his) limitless aims, (his) conflicts and suffering" (Trotsky 244).

In effect these hypotheses arise from our central assumptions about the nature and function of literature. The general assumption of the study is that literature inasmuch as it reflects man's activities and his relationship to this environment, also embodies an angle of vision. Literature mirrors reality not only for the purpose of explaining it but also, and of equal importance, to shape it. Thus each writer has a way of looking at reality. Reality forms the substance of all art but vision is shaped by circumstances, choice, social experience, time and place.

Vision in art is a natural extension of the traditional aims and functions of art. The artist's duty, in the words of Ernest Fischer, is to

expound the profound meaning of events to his fellow-man, to make plain to them the process, the necessity, and the rules of social and historical development, to solve for them the riddle of the essential relationships between man and nature and man and society ... to enhance the self-awareness and life awareness of the people ... to liberate them ... to guide individual life back into collective life, the personal into the universal (42).

To be able to carry out the demand of this formidable task the artist needs to have a clear vision of his

surroundings. He needs to understand all the intricacies of life -- "the profound meaning of events" -- in order to competently advise his audience. Vision seen thus is an approximation of life and an attempt to comprehend its nature.

In ordinary usage the term "vision" denotes the "act of seeing". It is, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, the

psychological and physiological function in which the eye and the brain together assess information transferred from the environment by a form of radiant energy called light (23:60).

Vision in this case is specifically used to mean the visual sensation registered when the retina is stimulated by light. It also entails the whole process of "seeing".

This study, however, employs "vision" as a critical term to refer to the viewpoint assumed by a writer in his creative activity. As with the human eye, vision here also involves a reaction to stimulus (society) and the capacity to discriminate, assess and order the author's raw material. Vision therefore becomes central to literature because it is the principle behind artistic structuring. It governs narrative pattern and also

influences the presentation of character because it embodies an author's view of and insight into the wholeness of life.

Much as it influences how a writer expresses the tendencies contemporary to his time, vision is of "overriding importance" because, as George Luka's outlines, it determines the course and content, it draws together the threads of the narration, it enables the artist to choose between the important and the episodic (Contemporary Realism 33).

Vision in the light of the above is equatable to a cohesive tool and to a criteria by which artists choose their details, "a principle of selection" (53). Luka's makes it clear that vision embraces both the thematic and stylistic dimensions of the literary text. It determines content just as much as it influences form. In fact theme and style are portions of the aesthetic wholeness of a work of art.

Our approach towards establishing Roger Mais' vision is premised on the above postulations. This study therefore adopts a framework of analysis that takes into account the fact that vision underpins both thematic and

formal aspects of art and that none can be discussed in isolation from the other.

A stylistic approach becomes useful in the understanding of the meaning and vision of an author's work. Its one advantage is that it acknowledges the mutual co-existence of form and content. Emmanuel Ngara in Stylistic Criticism of the African Novel writes that in addition to identifying a writer's peculiarities, stylistic criticism is also concerned with the "effects of his manner of presentation and the relationship between language and content" (35).

This approach is applicable to a study such as ours that takes the text as both a linguistic structure which can be subjected to analysis and as the basis of any judgement. This is because an author's vision is infused with his concerns and how he brings them out. Vision might be incongruous with what an author professes to be his ideology. It might similarly be at variance with common beliefs of the community in which the novels are set. It is, on the contrary, a viewpoint realised in the work of art. Hence beginning with the text, and after careful textual analysis, it is possible to deduce the vision that informed that particular text.

Consequently, this study was on the major a product of library research. It involved the reading of primary texts and then subjecting them to critical evaluation. Descriptive analysis was our method of analysis. Information was sought from relevant written records, books, articles and journals. Biographical data was used with a sense of distinction and this was only in so far as it illuminated the texts under study.

Roger Mais wrote in the social realism tradition about Jamaica's yard life. His writings have attracted moderate critical attention in which they have been variably analysed. Readings of Mais' novels range from an emphasis on his histo-cultural context, his style, to his world view and language. Although this is not by any means intended to be a rigid categorization, it is a fair summary of critical statements on Mais and can also serve as a guide in our review of the existing body of literature about Mais' novels and short stories.

Working on the basis of Mais' historical background and social context, some literary critics have sought to either establish folk vitality or the African nexus in his works. The latter portion means a search for vestiges of

African culture or African linguistic influences in West Indian art. Such an analysis is not confined to Roger Mais. It partly springs from a conviction that writers should be models for their respective societies.³ Thus Edward Brathwaite finds reason to describe Mais as an "intellectual committed to the cause of social justice" (Introduction to Brother Man vi).

When Brathwaite alters his approach he reads Brother Man as a jazz novel deeply rooted in the black folk music. In the article "Roger Mais' Brother Man as a Jazz Novel" (Baugh 103 - 111) Brathwaite looks for basic structural and thematic features that justify a musical interpretation of the novel. He aims to argue that Mais' form, like the New Orleans Jazz, is an "expression of West Indian creole experience: a structure taking its form from the pressures of West Indian social reality" (103).

Brathwaite's thesis is that the rhythms and themes of Brother Man are a manifestation of Jamaican folk vitality and that they subsequently emerge from the psychological pressures of the West Indian socio-cultural experience. The novel, he argues, has specific relationships to jazz in that both exhibit a "sense of union and unity" (103).

Such an analysis is unique because it studies the musical form of Mais' novel in aesthetic relationship to its urban setting. But equally important is that Brathwaitean audacity serves to show the structural richness of Roger Mais' art.

Brathwaite's approach has its own logic and advantages. For one, it concretely grounds art in its context by giving valuable background information about the author and his environment. However it does not use background to pierce the inner essence of the writer's novel. Of relevance to us is the realization that the approach, in spite of elaborating on the alienating urban environment Mais' art captures, has not educated us about the peculiar angle of vision discernible in his art and how it consequently dictates his style of presentation. Its major shortcoming is that it does not give a systematic evaluation of Roger Mais' vision.

Unlike Brathwaite, other critics have approached Roger Mais with the simple aim of identifying similarities and differences between his novels. Such is the comparison Gerald Moore undertakes in his discussion of The Hills Were Joyfull and Brother Man. Moore also highlights the

social context of the novels and declares the author the "first writer to plunge us into the stream of West Indian city life" (85). This is not particularly true because the West Indian ghetto novel can be traced to as far back to H.H. De Lisser's Jane's Career (1914), Alfred Mendes' Black Fauns (1935) and C.L.R. James' Minty Alley (1936). Nonetheless, the most important point in Moore's study is the correct identification of Mais' characters as outcasts living "at a double remove from Africa or India of their forebears (and) the city soon imposes upon (them) jerkier tempos, its depersonalised environment, its apparatus of exclusion" (96).

The identification of similarities and differences in Mais' books does not lack advantages. It allows a comparative study of the author's novels and in the process enhances a clearer understanding of his creative repertoire. But it similarly has its own pitfalls depending on how it is used.

Kenneth Ramchand's study titled "The Achievements of Roger Mais" in his The West Indian Novel and Its Background testifies to some of these shortcomings. The irony is that Ramchand's title has very little to do with

the concerns of the essay. In the essay he adopts a dismissive stance towards The Hills... and Brother Man because he is most interested in exposing Mais' weakness in these two novels so as to maintain the argument that it is in Black Lightning that Mais' "art and understanding are in the greatest harmony" (179).

Ramchand draws clear distinctions between Black Lightning and the other two novels. Whereas Black Lightning "transcends local situation" (179) and tackles "inner private world", Brother Man and The Hills... ooze with "social density" and deal with "outer pressures" (185). Ramchand hereby implies that local colour and universal appeal are mutually exclusive. It also remains unclear as to whether Ramchand uses material and not the author's artistic usage of the same to determine a book's literary merit.

Ramchand's article despite the above has the potential of pointing to the ground swell of Roger Mais' vision but this is not explored. For instance he concludes that

unemploye Mais' sense of the tragic life, and
book's or his compassionate understanding were
biggest a stimulated by the society in which he
scenario, attained the genuine tragic vision by
separating the stimulus from its special
context (188).

Ramchand does not explain what he means by Mais' "sense of the tragic life" nor does he illustrate how or where the writer attains the "genuine tragic vision". It becomes much harder to relate the above words to the philosophies Ramchand says underlie Mais' fiction, namely Mais' "social protest intention" and the philosophy of chance or the indifference of the universe" (180). At the worst these two are abstractions whose relationship to Mais' novels is vague.

However so long as one establishes sound parameters or a criteria of comparison, comparative study is a viable approach and can be used to equate vision in various novels by the author. This is part of our procedure in this thesis.

Jean D'Costa's Roger Mais: The Hills were Joyfull Together and Brother Man is the most extensive study so far written about style in Mais' novels. In the introduction to the book the author states his aim as "to look at the world created by Mais' novels". Like Moore, D'Costa rightly identifies Mais' world as that of the unemployed, the poor, criminals and prostitutes. The book's treatment of structure in Mais' novels is D'Costa's biggest achievement. He discusses Mais' techniques of scenario, inner monologue, dramatic juxtapositions and

stream-of-consciousness. Primarily, D'Costa's discussion centres on the group-as-hero technique and how Mais uses it to explore the fate of man.

D'Costa's emphasis, however, tends to lean towards a study of Mais' experiments in form at the expense of his earlier stated sphere of interest: Worldview. This is not to say that he neglects it altogether, rather it means that he does not bestow upon it the treatment deserved. For example, D'Costa's last chapter titled "style and worldview" has an explicitly stated objective of relating Mais' "copious, undisciplined and sometimes calculatedly vulgar" (60) style to the "central vision" which influences every shift of style.

But hardly does D'Costa tell us about Mais' vision. The chapter indeed turns out to be a continuation of the structural study that was begun in the previous chapters. D'Costa's opinion about Mais' worldview, however, is expressed, albeit belatedly, in the last paragraphs of the book where he writes:

the importance of fatalism, as well as the callous indifference felt by so many of the protagonists illuminate the strange, dissociated moral framework of a world lacking its own inner controls ... in such a world free will and responsibility certainly exist ... but their nature is warped. (71)

This is the furthest D'Costa goes. He does not clearly relate the "dissociated moral framework" to vision. We hope to proceed from where D'Costa stops and appreciate man's great potentials even amidst irreparable loss.

Mais' characters do not exist in a "posture of defeat" (D'Costa 14). They are not portrayed as helpless victims or in a manner to suggest that fate and some superior being had a special dislike for them. Their dilemma is attended by a complex of factors which do not justify the belief that there exists an arbitrary author to their woes. Only such a realization can enable us to read beyond despair and thus have a clear understanding of Mais' vision.

At times D'Costa contradicts himself. He in one instance describes The Hills... as "pessimistic and deliberately ambivalent" only to later acknowledge Mais' "creation of symbolism of psychic collapse and psychic rejuvenation out of the same tradition" (8). What constitutes ambivalence to D'Costa can possibly be removed were one to take note of both the loss and the optimism instead of looking at them as irreconcilable opposites. Consequently the "ambivalence", the volatility in life and

the implied vulnerability of Mais' characters as identified by D'Costa can give an important side light to vision in Mais novels.

Sandra Pouchet Paquet's brief review of the events on the literary scene in the West Indies in the 1950s gives useful information about the socio-historical background to the literature produced in that decade. She relates literature to the then "new sense of history and search for alternatives to colonial rule" and finally designates it as a "literature sensitive to social conditions" (King 65).

Although Paquet locates Mais in this wider time-period and explains the stunned, frustrated life of his characters, she, like D'Costa, sees The Hills... as a novel in which "all is ultimately futile" (68). While comparing Mais to George Lamming, Paquet notes: "While Lamming explores the anguish of change, Mais explores the tragic dimensions of stasis" (68).

Such statements give a false impression of inactivity and to a great extent deny the human and the novel's inner impulse or dynamism. The yarders in Mais' novels are dynamic in their limited sense, and this is because their

environment is limiting. These are relevant details which must be appreciated. Notwithstanding the aforesaid limitations, the tragedy of their life emerges less from "statis" than it does from attempts to change their condition. They may be awful, fragmented or frustrated but they are by no means contemptible. They, like Lamming's characters, shimmer in and battle with the "anguish of change".

Sandra Pouchet Paquet hints at the essence of the narrative in Roger Mais' Black Lightning. The novel is the tragic story of Jake, and it traces what Paquet calls the "tension between an independent spirit and the need of supporting personal relationship" (69). As we had observed earlier, Paquet's study is an overview of happenings in an entire decade and hence she does not fully elucidate on Jake's tragedy. She does not give an elaborate assessment of the authors she handles although the little she writes about Mais is well grounded and raises some fundamental aspects about him.

One can, however, expand the brief tragic dimensions Paquet lists with regard to Black Lightning and broaden its origins to include the inevitable sequence of misfortune that arises from a dysjunction between idealist

pursuits and reality. Similarly it could include the tragic end of an artist as a type or his relationship to his community. These approaches are applicable to Mais' other novels and can be of importance if related to the novel's central vision of life.

Of all the remarks made about Roger Mais' fiction, Dalphine Morris's introduction to The Hills... despite its brevity, comes closest to comprehending Mais' vision of life. Her insights are seminal in the study of Mais' vision. Morris comments about The Hills... as below:

Mais' vision of human condition as expressed in The Hills... shows man trapped in a world of suffering. It is not a vision without hope, however, for while emphasizing the tragic nature of the world in all its realistic details, Mais is equally insistent that there is hope, that besides darkness there is always light (vii).

Dalphine Morris succinctly captures the true spirit of Mais' novel, The Hill... She further relates this vision to the imagery used in Mais' text. To her the yard in the novel is a "metaphor for human condition" (vi) and the "vision of the novel is of humanity confined within a pityless universe that turns all questions into purely theoretical questions as there are never answers forthcoming" (vi).

The metaphorical interpretation of the yard is appropriate. But Morris does not explain why man is trapped. What are the causes of this incarceration? Neither does Morris explain what the entrapment means for the vision. As for the tragic vision, her two views oppose one another. The first quoted is hopeful, the second pessimistic. While dealing with the hopeful, Morris insinuates that the hope is imposed on the characters by the artificer to whom literary consciousness (was) "part of the nationalistic struggle" (iv), and not hope and resilience as intrinsic human attributes. Nonetheless it is possible to undertake what Morris has omitted: to concretise the tragic vision she identifies in The Hills... and relate it more closely and consistently to Mais' novels in general.

Dalphine Morris raises opposition towards the "social protest" approach to Mais works. Although we cannot use the yardstick of social utility as the only criterion of evaluating Mais' novels, we cannot, conversely, dismiss it altogether because this would be equivalent to craving for an aestheticism that frowns on social relevance and function. To limit ourselves to social protest would be compromising the universal significance of Roger Mais and has the danger of subordinating art to social context. If

one, however, avoids looking at art as a quarry for sociological data he stands to benefit from knowing how context influences the preoccupations of an author. It will be to our advantage if we read Mais' novels not in a vacuum but if we relate his heroes to the fictional and social and historical environment when need arises.

Morris, despite the above stated inconsistencies gives a fairly excellent exposition on the vision in The Hills... This is more particularly so because she brings to the foreground elements of suffering and hope which are at the centre of Mais' vision. We shall build upon these findings when assessing Mais' vision later on in this study.

The above review has shown varied ways in which Mais' novels have been studied. Some of these studies have been shown to be very enlightening to the understanding of the author and his works. In spite of their areas of strength or weakness all fail to concretely identify Mais' vision of life. This justifies the present study. It can therefore be hoped that the current study will enrich not only our understanding and appreciation of Mais in particular but will also be a contribution towards the growing critical opinion on the West Indian novel in general.

ENDNOTES

1. There are: Edward Brathwaite (Brother Man), Jean D'Costa (Black Lightning), Dalphine Morris (The Hills Were Joyfull Together) and Kenneth Ramchand (Listen the Wind and Other Stories).
2. See Bruce King's West Indian Literature, Louis James' The Island In Between, Edward Baugh's Critics on Caribbean Literature and Dabydeen and Wilson Tagoe's A Reader's Guide to West Indian and Black British Literature.
3. The demand that a writer ought to be faithful to social truths -- and hence a social model -- is illustrated in the debates that have characterised West Indian writing. See for example Kenneth Ramchand verses Edward Brathwaite about the "basic theme" of V.S. Naipul's A House for Mr. Biswas in The West Indian Novel and its Background (192) and Bim (No. 37 July - December, 1963) respectively, or Gordon Rohlehr -- "The Folk in Caribbean Literature" (Baugh) and "Ironie Approach" (James) -- versus George Lamming in Pleasures of Exile and "The Roots of the West Indian Novel" (Baugh) -- over the preoccupation with peasant societies in Caribbean Literature. While Lamming argues that Caribbean writers are basically of a peasant background, Rohlehr calls for a "more pliable theory which can accomodate the interplay between country, town and big city, between artisan and slicker or factory worker and between the ill-defined classes of the West Indies" (Baugh 28). See also Figueroa's introduction to Edgar Mittlehozer's A morning at the office in which he asserts that West Indian writers are "to be praised, not because they deal with the local ... but that they deal with it so well" (xii). Consider also Wilson Harris's critical essay, Tradition, the Writer and Society or N. W. Manley's essay "The creative artist and the national movement". (110 - 112)

CHAPTER ONE

ROGER MAIS: A LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

Roger Mais' literary biography in our context is necessary for two basic reasons. First, it serves to introduce Roger Mais, the man and his works, to an audience that has made very little acquaintance with him. Second, and of greater importance to us, it will provide insights into and a background to discussions that follow later on in this thesis. Such information will be useful in the ultimate evaluation of Roger Mais' vision because vision is in part a product of one's experiences in life.

Biography is one of the "oldest and best-established methods of literary study". (Wellek and Warren 75). But we do not intend to compile an exhaustive biography of Mais' life. The aim of this chapter is to briefly introduce the author. It is hoped that this goal will be achieved by making an enquiry into Mais' time, his literary career and its shaping influences, and finally, by introducing his major works. Owing to the fact that a complete biography on Mais has yet to be written this chapter shall for its sources draw heavily from Mais' personal correspondence, writings of his close associates and sketches by his critics.¹

Roger Mais, a fourth born child in a family of eight, was born on August 11th 1905 in Kingston, Jamaica. His father, E.C. Mais, was a businessman, a farmer and a druggist whereas his mother, Ann Louise, was a school teacher. When Roger Mais was seven years old the Mais family moved to Blue Mountains in St. Thomas Parish. They lived on an old coffee farm and, later, on a smaller estate, New Monklands. In these formative years Mais was privately tutored by his mother. Apart from reading, Mais' youthful curiosity also sought satisfaction in nature, in her mountains, plants and animals.

In 1918 Mais entered Trinity Ville Government elementary school. Mais' parents were devout members of the Fundamentalist Brethren movement, a non-conformist group. Religion therefore played a big role in his early life. The impact of this social environment on Mais was long lasting and manifests itself in his works. For instance, the hero of his short story "The Month of the Beautiful Stranger" recalls what is akin to Mais' experience in the parish. The hero of this story attended a parish school, and Mais writes about him as below;

He had been brought up all his life
in the country. What time he did not
spend on his father's property he had been

at boarding school. A particularly cloistered one this, intended principally for the sons of parsons. No doubt the idea being to bring up boys the way parson's sons ought to be brought up (Listen the Wind ...154).

In 1919, and at the age of fourteen Mais enrolled at Calabar High School (Kingston) where three years later he obtained the senior certificate. On the strength of this certificate Mais got a clerical job in the civil service. He however worked for hardly a year with the Department of Education before he quit for the reason that (he)

hated the discipline, the people, the futility, the waste, the stupidity. I went into the government service. I think if I had stayed there long it would have driven me crazy (L.T.W. ...vii).

Sensitivity and anger were attributes inseparable from Mais' personality. Creary called him "this volcanic prophetic figure" (James 50), and this is well demonstrated by his life. Mais' sensitivity meant that he analyses situations rapidly and this attribute contributed to the vision that guides his art.

Dissatisfied with the civil service and enraged by its bureaucracy Mais embarked on a long search for what would be suitable to his malcontented soul. He tried his hands

on numerous jobs. These included being a timekeeper with a fruit company, a reporter with the Daily Gleaner and a staff writer for Public Opinion, the current affairs journal and mouthpiece of Norman Manley's People's National Party (PNP).

It was in Mais' contributions to Public Opinion that he outrightly portrayed himself as a radical thinker informed by a rigid sense of moral and social uprightness. On the fourteenth of July 1944 an article titled "Now we know" appeared in the Public Opinion. This article made public Mais' profound political awareness and his courage. It revealed his deep-seated resentment against colonial manipulation and exploitation. Mais expressed his outrage at colonial policies regarding Jamaica's "New Constitution" as follows:

The authors of that particular piece of hypocrisy and deception are the little men who are hopping about like mad all over the British Empire implementing the real official policy implicit in statements made by the Prime Minister that man of brave speeches has told the world that ... he doesn't mean to yield an inch in concessions to any one, least of all to the people of the colonial system which permits the shameless exploitation of these colonies across the seas that is aimed at (Public Opinion 14th July 1944).

In The aftermath of this vigorous polemic on the author was twofold. Through it he secured for himself a place in public limelight, the bold national hero. But it also earned him a six month jail term at St. Catherine Prison for seditious libel.

On his release from prison Mais remained exceptionally reticent. He turned his attention and energy to horticulture, painting and creative writing.² None of these seemed to satiate the ultra-sensitive Mais. From his behaviour it is self-evident that there was always in Mais an excess of power desperately seeking an outlet. Just as he despaired with his clerical job in 1922 and as he was dismayed by Churchill's policies in 1944, Mais, in 1952, was disillusioned with life in Jamaica and left for Europe. His departure was caused by his untiring detestation for what he saw as a complacency, conceitedness, among those of his own middle class. In a farewell speech entitled "Why I Love to Leave Jamaica", Mais, in the bitter tone of a man betrayed, wrote -

there is in this country, alas, a moated tower of mediocrity close and unassailable and it holds such sway, it has acquired such a body of mediocre opinion about it that it is useless to try and make a dent in its smugness and its exclusiveness, and its indifference to anything that does not come entirely within its limited scope and compass of influence (L.T.W. ...x).

In the above vehement sallies Mais justifies his departure as an act of rebellion. Indeed, he wishes it to be seen in every bit as an escape from the class's false satiety and sordidness. Further, the act is in tune with Mais' well established attribute as an inveterate proponent of honesty and liberty in their most serious terms. One is not then surprised that such rigidity and intolerance in opinion plunged Mais into conflict with both the prevailing order and his peers. Mais' novels adopt a similarly serious outlook on life.

During his brief stay in Europe, Mais visited Paris and Barcelona. He returned to Jamaica in 1954 and died the following year, a few weeks prior to his fiftieth birthday.

The growth of Mais' literary career runs analogous to his life. We have hinted that Mais' creative instincts were excited at an early age by the geography of Blue Mountains region. Nature and specifically the countryside environment inspired the artist in Mais. The adventurous youth was a keen observer of nature's varying faces and the cycles of her rejuvenation (L.T.W. ...vii). An outcome of this is the key place given to elements in nature such as hills, the moon, mountains and the sun in his fiction.

Nowhere is the above influence most clearly noticeable than is in Mais' short stories. In the short story "Jungle" Mais uses the jungle as a metaphor for the precarious city. The image is further extended and covers a wide range of animal imagery that represents the dehumanised urban dwellers and the insecurity which pervades city streets.

"The Miracle" and "Listen the Wind" are two other stories that reveal nature's influence on Mais' writing. In both stories elements of nature are in fellowship with man; they either merge with his consciousness or are parallel to his thought, or alternatively they offer an interpretative framework for his actions. The narrator in "Listen the Wind" establishes a mysterious relationship between character and environment in these words:

And the wind spoke to her ... telling her wild and terrible things ... telegraphing them to the sounding board of her unconscious self that translated those ominous whisperings and noises into words, heavy with portent (L.T.W. ...72).

In the quotation above the stubborn wind and the Lady's inner state of mind are in communion. The wind acts as a medium through which the writer reveals character. The

same applies to other elements of nature incorporated in the body of Mais' art. To what precise end Mais puts natural elements is a concern chapter three pursues in detail.

Where the influence of puzzling nature stops, Mais' Christian upbringing takes over. Mais was nurtured by the teachings of the Fundamentalist Brethren Movement and he greatly exploited Christian mores, putting them at the service of his art. From this surrounding he also borrowed motifs and entire episodes. In the short story "The Miracle", Mais models the character of Sarah and her husband Henry on the biblical archetypes of Abraham and Sarah. The fictional couple, like their biblical counterpart, stays childless for a very long period of time, and when Sarah does conceive she interprets the conception as a spiritual blessing: "the light of a miracle ... the voice of God had spoken to her in the night ... 'Sarah, arise now, and go here'" (117).

Numerous examples of scenes of worship abound in Mais' novels. In fact Brother Man ostensibly testifies to Mais' sense of history with respect to religion. Black Lightning is developed from the biblical legend of Samson.

In addition to religion and nature, the historical reality of his time shaped Mais' character and art to a great extent. Mais was a creation of his own time who, following the overwhelming influence of that period, grew up into an extremely sensitive individual. Norman Manley, a former Jamaican Prime Minister and a close associate of Mais, rightly described the writer as "a product of that moment of history" (111). There exists an undeniable historical dimension to the person and art of Roger Mais.

The 1900s - 1950s were turbulent decades in Jamaica. These opening decades of the century witnessed widespread hurricanes and droughts (Hall 3-6). These phenomena adversely affected the sugar industry and in part led to the mass unemployment of the thirties and forties. Unemployment was such a "matter of serious and constant concern" (Platt 2) that the colonial office felt compelled to institute two commissions to investigate the problem in 1938.³ Reports by both commissions revealed deplorable social conditions throughout the Caribbean islands.

Unemployment was the culmination of a series of socio-economic miseries dating back to the early 1800s. These include the decline in the sugar industry in the

wake of the abolition of slave trade. Colonial policies such as the 1897 Sugar Equalization Act that ripped Jamaica of her tariff advantage not only discouraged monoculture but also led to large scale labour migration.

At first the Panama Canal (then under construction), banana plantations of Costa Rica, Honduras and other Central and Southern American republics were favourite destinations (Norris 7; Platt 1-4). After the war large numbers of these emigrants returned to the Caribbean islands. At home unemployment was already high and was aggravated by attacks of numerous crop diseases (Platt 4). These returned labourers, among other victims of unemployment, are the people who eventually filled the slums of Kingston and provide the subject matter of Mais' two novels: The Hills....and Brother Man.

Most ironical is the fact that political awakening and an upsurge of creative energy throughout the islands can analogous to the above economic problems and natural calamities. Having begun in the late nineteenth century, the labour movement in the West Indies had in the 1920s blossomed into a crucial and powerful tool for agitation. Part of the manifestations of this growth were the 1937

strikes in the oil fields of Trinidad, the riots in Barbados following the deportation of Clement Payne, a labour leader, and the 1938 Kingston riots (King 13-17; Nicole 243-56).

Political agitation spearheaded by the middle class and the demands for greater representation and complete adult suffrage did not happen independent of Mais. West Indian nationalism matured as Mais advanced in age. Roger Mais, as we have already outlined, was a practical nationalist whose involvement in Manley's PNP right from its foundation was an act of will.

In relation to the foregoing, Mais' life easily lends itself to being read as a social document reflecting the cross-currents and the tempo of his time. The view of life he professes is in part an interpretation of these difficult moments. Mais was born and bred in the fatigue of an epoch characterised by the rapid changes indicated above. These upheavals form a basis within which he lived and worked. Hence it becomes even easier to comprehend the varied interests Mais pursued against such a background.

Mais' volatility, his unpredictability and temper were an indication of the despair of his age and the attempts to transcend it. Edward Brathwaite in his introduction to Brother Man has correctly pointed out the intimacy between the writer and his time. He notes that Mais' "restlessness and diverse interests were not only an intimate aspect of his personality but a reflection of the times in which he lived" (vi).

We do not need to over-emphasize the political component to Mais' art. In his books Mais writes realistically about life as it is concretely lived. His observant eye penetrates the grim realities of Jamaican urban life and his senses respond directly to the world around him. This keenness is a product of an eventful life.

Mais' novels distinguish themselves amongst West Indian literature by their urban setting. They, as Williamson has observed, are about "a stratum of society in which colour is of minimal importance: the predominantly black lower class" (139). Mais' characters in The Hills... and Brother Man are on the general a

been economically and socially marginalised. Their lives are tales of the misery that accompanies economic deprivation. These frustrated slum dwellers are also the victims of the roaring 1900s. But at the time Mais wrote these people were considered "untouchably low" (James 5) and undeserving of an artist's attention. Mais' novels implicitly protest the socio-economic conditions that condemn man to despair, and he advocates for a psychological and economic re-orientation of the oppressed. The immediacy of Mais' books to Jamaican reality prompted Norman Manley to recommend them as

compulsory reading for every student and worker in our country. They are compulsory reading throughout the West Indies and all the islands where England once ruled... The politician should brood over them the educators, the social scientist, the angry young man, the reflective thinker among us, all these would do well to look at what is in this volume (112).

Although Manley was more inclined to an artist's involvement in nationalistic awakening than literary merit, he nonetheless correctly acknowledges Mais' irrepressible sense of artistic mission and his captivating realism.

With the publication of The Hills... in 1953 Mais' career as a writer was established. Before then Mais had written about nine plays and two novels. Little however remains of these early works. The Hills... is one book to which the author was most attached. In his notes he confesses that it was "conceived out of a desire that grew ultimately to a compulsion, lean and hungry and remorsefulness until it was fulfilled "(qtd in Williamson 144). The novel has everything to do with what Mais perceived his role as a writer to be.

In The Hills..., Mais is concerned with the plight of a people he calls the "submerged nine-tenths" (qtd in Williamson, 142). The novel, set in a yard in Kingston, uses the yard as a microcosm of the broader Jamaican working class community. The country by this token is meant to be approached as the yard writ-large. Mais passionately noted the novel's scope - and in the process revealed his enthusiasm about it - as follows:

Brother this is a novel about Jamaica. It deals with the submerged nine-tenths of the population... The book is concerned with setting objectively the hopes, fears, frustrations of these people and tells of their laughter and their tears (Williamson 142).

Mais' subjects in The Hills... are the urban poor, and the novel tracks down the actions of this spectrum of humanity.

But in the filfth and poverty of this suffocating environment Mais presents a group of human beings vibrant with life. The yard is a home for couples, concubines, spinsters, frustrated lovers, cuckolded spouses and restless youth. The Hills... has as many tales as it has characters. A common denominator to all the varied experiences in the novel is, however, provided by the shared yard and a near similarity in some of their encounters - quarrels, fights, frequent pairing and erratic partings, sudden merrymaking etc.

The Hills... was written in the trend of the west Indian ghetto novel. In his second published novel, Brother Man, Mais maintains the slum setting of the first. The characters are the same poor, unemployed, prostitutes and religious faithfuls and fanatics.

Brother Man depicts the longings, flirtations and other experiences of the urban slum dweller. The novelist captures the predicament of the poor and alienated victims of urbanization to whom suffering portends to be a regrettable necessity of human life.

As opposed to in The Hills... the religious element plays a dominant role in Brother Man. Brother Man's principal character is a Ras Tafariite. He embodies all the qualities of humility, goodwill, and has a strong humanist philosophy. Mais builds up the character of his Christ-like figure in the context of social decay and economic ruin. He traces the rise of Bra' Man's fame, the growth in firmness of his faith and his catastrophic fall.

Roger Mais' third novel, Black Lightning (1955), differs considerably from the first two both in setting and concerns. Central to Black Lightning is the protagonist's desire to keep an independent spirit both in art and life. The novel is significant in the catalogue of West Indian writing because it was among the first books to artistically consider the tension within the artist and that between the artist and his society.

Black Lightning unlike Mais' other novels is set among a self-sufficient mountain community. The novel's serene country setting is a suitable background upon which Mais constructs his story. The novel is primarily the story of Jake, a village blacksmith and sculptor.

Jake craves for a fulfilling self-centred life and attempts to sever all ties that may commit him to the goodwill or mercy of others. He "resented with all a strong, whole man's resentment any thought of being dependent upon anyone for anything" (61). Indeed, to Jake a reliance on others is an overt and despicable manifestation of weakness. He

used to take long walks by himself into the woods and he knew it was that Amos got from that feeling of being withdrawn from the world. He got the same feeling from being alone with his carving. Healing went with it, and a sense of stillness and peace. And a feeling too that a man is alone in the world and sufficient, and not dependent upon anyone (75).

Jake gives thought to this idealism, this philosophy of selfhood and is consumed by it. He is contemptuous of all human relationships because he believes they hinder man's independence. Hence he withdraws into some sort of confinement, scoffing at those who pity him, and exhausts his energy on carving Samson, his symbol of strength.

Jake acts as a recluse who though not retiring to nature in Rousseau's fashion, ideally withdraws from a society which deters the attainment of his ultimate goal - to be

"alone ... and sufficient" (75). Jake's vision of life contrasts the traditional view of art as the means of merging the individual with society. Art in his case pulls the two apart.

Jake's story becomes more complex with the introduction of Samson. The protagonist's attachment to the story of Samson broadens the imagery of Samson and Jake's own ideals to an even mysterious search for the underlying causes and issues beneath the surface (56). The ideal of the secret beneath prods Jake to investigate into what may have gone on under the surface between Samson and Delilah. Samson's story both contributes to Jake's inquisitiveness and also arms him with certain "virtues" that he attains later in the novel. The idea of noble suicide (63) is included among these virtues. Jake's ideals wreck his marriage. His wife Estella, burdened by the sense of neglect, leaves him for Steve.

Jake's tragedy is consummated when the idol of his dream - Samson - turns out blind on completion and Jake is struck by lightning into blindness. This handicap demands that Jake, now an invalid but he who was so much repelled by dependence, has to rely totally on Amos and Bess.

Mais is pursuing three issues in Black Lighting.

First is the idea of the creative process and how it relates to the society. Second, he guides his readers into an individual's inner being and surveys the predicament of unresolved yet alienating thoughts. These thoughts have an external manifestation in the character of the individual. Third, Mais makes efforts at explaining the dilemma of one who wraps up the above two issues within himself. The novel leaves it up to the reader to resolve the riddles surrounding each of these issues.

Nonetheless, the lightning that blinds Jake can be read as a form of retribution, be it poetic justice consciously dished out by the author or as an affliction proportionate to a moral-guilt in the religious sense. Both positions find backing in the text: The first in the complaint by the old cronies - Massa Butty and Tata Joe - that Jake was throwing himself away cheaply despite being destined for bigger things (80-82). The second option is adopted by a section of Jake's community:

there were some people in the district who held that God had sent his lightning to strike Jake and blind him for life because he was too proud ... Jake had set himself against the Almighty, and now he had brought down the vengeance of God upon himself (90).

Jake is a character wholly given to an idea. The irony of Jake's story is that whereas he tells Amos "your quarrel is with life itself" (62), it is him (Jake) who has a bigger and bitter quarrel with life than Amos. Jake triumphs in his beliefs and over his doubts when he shoots himself to avoid being aided by Bess and Amos. This is an act of daring in the tradition of his idol (Samson) and it comes as an appropriate denouement in a tragedy ensuing from idealism.

Told together with Jake's story is the love story of Glen and Miriam and a story of George's maturation into manhood. These two stories act not only as deviations from Jake's consuming thoughts but are also suggestive of youth's innocence and naivette that casts an ironic light on Jake's extreme seriousness.

A sizeable number of Roger Mais' short stories appear in the anthology Listen the Wind and Other stories (1983). This volume is a valuable complementary to Mais' novels and helps whoever would like to understand fully the depth, variety and essence of Mais' writing. The short stories contained in this anthology cover almost all topics that Mais ever wrote about. And they are set in a wide range of settings that the author set his novels in.

Notwithstanding the diversity, Mais in his short stories as in the novels is concerned with the fate of the individual. Mais constantly ponders about the lonely man in society, about the tyranny of society and about human relationships.

A great number of Mais' short stories focus on the depressed lonely individual.⁴ Mais' characters are lonely because they are either weighed down by poverty, thoughts, an absence of warm human relationships or are persecuted by some unnamed feeling of insecurity. The story "Tramp" for example, captures the entrapment of a character in the directionlessness and vanity of life:

the meaning of life, the meaning of direction, of purpose lost in the ceaseless procession, the endless burden of footsteps ... a man's soul contained in the sordidness of adjacents surrounding him, ... weighed in on all sides by rotting walls, barbed wire and the unsightliness of corrugated iron sheets (10).

To the Tramp life is a burden. It is uncomprehendable. The Tramp also lacks the ability to renew and recreate himself. In an astonishingly appropriate analogy, he compares himself to a fruit hanging from its branch in "ripeness and richness but unable to fall to make the

necessary sacrifice ... the eternal fruition" (11). Tramp and Old Ben ("The End of the World") typify a frustrated lot to whom life is the "inexhaustible tale of ... loss - like a man relating the end of the world" (59).

Ever present in the experiences of Mais' characters in the short stories is an indifferent universe that confronts them from all angles. The callousness of city life in "Jungle" is brought out in the simile: "the city like a great monster lay heavily on its side in an uneasy slumber" (8). On one part it is the indifference and on the other the natural dynamism of the world which creates an impression of the tyranny of the environment over the individual in the stories. While the city dwellers brood over their pains, society

must go on. The world must go on. It does not matter about individuals, as individuals ... It just naturally turns a cold shoulder to all who rebel against this and talk about their individuality, for who the hell care about one man's individuality or whether anyone individual is free inside himself, inside his own heart or not (5).

Also conveyed in the words above is a mild reference to alienation or the individual's inability to stay within the demands of his social structure. This estrangement constitutes a thematic concern in Mais writings, and will be developed in coming chapters.

While preoccupied with their specific problems, Mais' characters have also learned to guard against being destroyed by the forces within their social milieu. For example, most of his female characters are described as "women with a secret" ("Listen the Wind", "Just a Little Love, a Little Kiss"). A philosophy of endurance underlies such a defensive stance.

We observe this in the saying of the laundress ("Gravel in your shoe") that "It's not the mountain you're climbing that wears you down, but the gravel in your shoe" (75). Apart from sheer folk witticism this statement contains an affirmation of a readiness to endear stern realities of life. This position will be developed later in the thesis.

In this chapter we have briefly outlined Mais' life and made introductory remarks about his major writings. Some of Mais' major concerns have been mentioned without elaboration in this chapter. Chapter Two will take us into a more detailed discussion of Mais' major concerns and how they relate to the author's central vision. In the following chapters we refer specifically to Brother Man and The Hills... Reference to other texts will be

minor and only when utterly necessary. The bias towards these two novels is due to the fact that they have strong similarities in setting. Secondly, it is in the two books - when they are seen side by side - that Mais' concerns are given full expression. Lastly, they demonstrate more strongly Mais' vision of life. Evaluating these assertions is, in part, the concern of subsequent chapters.

ENDNOTES

1. Valuable sources include Thorpe 3-4; Creary in James 50-51, Brown in Walsh 151ff; Ramchand's introduction to Mais' Listen the Wind and Other Stories and Williamson in Journal of Commonwealth Literature (2:138-147).
2. Among Mais' early writings were two novels - "Blood on the Moon" and "Storm Warming" - and the plays included "Atlanta at Calydon", "George William Gordon", "Apollo in Delos", "General Joshua" and "Good Neighbour".
3. These were the "West Indian Royal Commission Recommendations" presented to Parliament in February 1940 and the "Labour Conditions Report" by Major Orde Browne presented to Parliament in July 1939. For specific details refer to Platt et al (1-4).
4. For example "Look where you Going", "Jungle", "The Tramp", "The Crooked Branch", "The Little Cobbler", "Black Magic", "The World's End", "Listen the Wind", "The Miracle", "The Month of the Beautiful Stranger" and "Just a Little Love a Little Kiss".

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAJOR CONCERNS OF ROGER MAIS' NOVELS

In the preceding chapter we briefly introduced Mais and a number of his works. A cursory mention of some of his concerns was also made. The current chapter seeks to explore in detail Roger Mais' thematic concerns. The objective of this enquiry is to establish a context favourable to discussing questions of man in society and his destiny that the author raises. Within the same context we shall assess emerging visions of society prophesised by specific characters.

For the purpose of this chapter, the primary concerns of Roger Mais in both The Hills... and Brother Man will be summarised to be poverty and deprivation, fear, search for fulfilment, individualism and religion. Not only do these concerns dominate Mais' novels, they also interact with other minor concerns to make up the overall meaning of the texts. It is the position of this chapter that through these concerns Mais' vision and that of his characters are best illustrated. The reason for this is that each of the concerns grows naturally from the context in which the novels are set.

The Hills ... opens with an outline of the physical poverty of the setting. Structures in the yard are described as old "termite-ridden" ram shackles and shacks with "dilapidated and crazily-leaning fences" (9). Mais enhances the drabness and deprivation of the yard by the manner in which he describes nature. The trees in the yard are "scraggy and scarred" whereas the sky is "anaemic-looking" (9). The yard and all it contains hence make up an ailing environment dominated by images of dirt and the predatory termite figure.

This description serves as an appropriate background against which Mais' slum dwellers are introduced. Following the painting of a weary environment is the mention of Ras whose entire being is but a mere extension of the sterile environment. When we first meet Ras, he is stirring among a "bundle of rags on the floor that was his bed" (10). His woman, Cassie, at the same time prepares breakfast on a "borrowed coal pot" (10).

Through carefully chosen adjectives and phrases Mais makes known to the reader characters and their inadequacies. Characters, such as Zephyr, a prostitute, by virtue of their occupation also help us to locate the novel's setting. Mais uses physical details to advance

themes. He, as in Ras' case, establishes a diabolical harmony between character and the environment. Therefore the physical features of the yard also reflect the yarders' deprived economic condition.

Brother Man, like The Hills..., also introduces the slum world against which the story is built. Through the chorus of the people of the lane, the author describes buildings that "lean precariously, teetering across the dingy chasm of the narrow lane "(7) and the lean-to pit-latrines. The ceaseless clatter of the tongues, with equal force and clarity, also points to the inner disharmony that torments the yard's occupants. The chorus "clarks eternally telling of their own hunger and haltness and lameness and nightness and negation "(9). From a bare beginning therefore a reader is introduced to a monotonous, restless and chaotic environment.

Mais' yard is an umbrella beneath which all sorts of people meet. The urban situation imposes a mechanism of cohesion on the yarders. It compels them into a solidarity that arises from a shared environment, although not necessarily experiences. For as long as they are at the yard, they have common fears and longings. The chorus in Brother Man rightly comments:

all (are) caught up between the corners of the same book of living; they look with shuddering over the shoulder past the image of their own secret, terror, feeling the shadow of it over them in another's fate (8).

The poverty, fear and squalor of Mais' setting is expressed in the lives of the persons who occupy it. In response, most occupants resort to crime. For instance in Brother Man, Jonas is arrested for "ganga", Shine is serving a six year jail term for drug peddling, Bra' Man takes Minette from the streets where she was a juvenile whore, and Papacita is an accomplice in a counterfeiting syndicate. Hence Corporal Jennings and his special Flying Sauce Squad are but a symbolic reminder of the crime rate in the yard.

Crime makes a prominent presence in The Hills.... Here Surjue and Flatters rob a lottery bank in Chinatown. Ironically the two simply actualise the dreams of Mack, a marginal character. Mack was "one of those eternally discontented men who wanted something to fill their lives but didn't know what "(45). To contain his vague yet compulsive longing, Mack "lived from day to day in the sustaining hope of winning of lump sum of money "(46). That Surjue and Flatters should realise Mack's dream only

shows how "eternally discontented" all yarders are. Added to Surjue's activities is the story of Bajun man who carries on an "adulterous" relationship with Shags' woman.

Crime links up with the spectre of poverty in the yard to worsen the insecurity that cuts across the world of Mais' novels. Scenes of violence and the resultant fear are numerous in these novels. What amazes the readers, however, are not the scenes of violence *per se* but rather Mais' immense descriptive abilities, his knack for giving detailed accounts of these chilling scenes. His depiction of pain and suffering is phenomenal. He gives a photographic coverage of the prison scene in The Hills... where one of the inmates who attempted to escape is being whipped by the Butcher.

The prison is a conspicuous casement of social rejects--murderers, rapists, arsonists, cutthroats etc. The author, however, uses Butcher as a symbol of the violence that is meted out in the prisons and as a premise to question the entire penal system. Butcher is presented as a callous beast whose first whip brought out blood from his helpless victim. After the sixth lash, the narrator comments: "the man on the frame stopped screaming, his back looked like a slab of raw meat in a butcher's stall at the market "(261).

Such incisive details make the brutality involved in the punishment very explicit. But more importantly they explain the author's choice of the name "Butcher" in relation to character. The name signifies the unfeeling and ruthless nature of the warder and the whole prison setup. Together with the imposing image of the high prison walls the name testifies to the terror and dread prisoners have to contend with.

Mais' detailed account of scenes of violence is also visible when he describes Shag's killing of Euphemia. He captures the incident so vividly, so frankly - to the point of being crude - that it affronts all the senses of the reader:

She put up her hand as though to ward off the blow. Three fingers were shorn off clean. They fell into her lap. She screamed again long and high-pitched. And that was the last time. The very next blow severed her windpipe, and the point of the matchette traveled diagonally in a straight line across her right breast... She was still alive, and her eyes stared at her with the matchette... One blow chopped off the left arm clean, above the elbow and laid her abdomen open. Her entrails spilled out upon her lap (265).

This is Mais' way of highlighting the human misfortune involved in the action. Partially he sets out to show how

violence permeates all aspects of life--including lovemaking. But Mais' ultimate aim is not to chronicle scenes of brutal violence. Primarily, the author wants to record the hostile urban environment and to evaluate or hint at the impact of crime on human consciousness. Thus when Shag kills Euphemia Mais also shows the crowd's repulsion for and shock at the act by their instant singing of hymns (265).

Mais also attempts to explain the subtle force behind crime and violence. In the Butcher's case is implied an institutionalised bestial instinct that blinds one to human feeling by imposing upon him an unquestioning sense of duty. Shag's case is even more subtle. When under a rare spell of poetic inspiration Shag muses about women in this manner:

a woman was like a tree. They were full of sweetness and fruitfulness. And if the tree got out of hand and did what it ought not to do, like a grape fruit tree bearing sour oranges, you cut it down at the root and made an end to it (179)

This poetry occurs before Shag murders Euphemia. In it is discernible a sub-conscious logic that impels Shag to commit murder. The warped allegory of a tree suggests a shared belief

about the low status of women in the yard, and the treatment reserved for them in case of non-conformity. For Shag murder is a natural expression of an inner grievance. His musing is compounded with a conviction that through the murder he should acquire some form of liberty.

Manuel Castells, in a detailed sociological study on the urban question, has explained the social locus of crime. Crime, Castells explains, is

clearly linked to an individual reaction to the situation of structural oppression coupled with the absence of stable mass-based political alternative... the lack of a broad collective movement leads individuals to seek personal solutions to social problems (403).

Crime thrives because of a missing yet fundamental link in society. Whereas it is in part a response to the "oppression" in society, crime by itself circumvents the vital question of the causes of this oppression. Instead it unleashes yet another discomfort within society.

In the light of Castells' observation and the foregoing analysis, Shag's killing of Euphemia is a personal "solution" because the yard in which he lives lacks a communal fibre and inbuilt channels that can

relieve him of tormenting thoughts, especially the one about Bajun Man having an illicit affair with Euphemia. As with all crime, the killing openly demonstrates Shag's inability to overcome his frustration and anger. The irony of all these is that he hoped to gain a new sense of freedom and fulfilment : "a feeling of bigness and strength" (179). Shag's simulated "bigness" does not by any chance mitigate his narrowness of vision. Neither does it go beyond illusion.

Mais does not portray crime and violence as special extremes. They are part and parcel of the general uneasiness that looms over the urban slums. Crime walks the paths of the yard in both The Hills... and Brother Man with extreme surety. For this reason a majority of Mais' characters live under perpetual fear; fear of their neighbours, fear of the uncertain future, and a fear of the unknown malignant forces assumed to be lurking and ready to pounce on and maul them. Since Mais' aim is to expose the implications of crime and violence on human consciousness, it becomes pertinent for us to consider in relative detail the bearing of the entire setting on character.

In an endeavour to portray the impact of the urban environment on the inhabitants in its entirety, the author takes a special interest in the dispossessed yarders' experiences. He goes to extremes to portray the perversive sense of hopelessness that spreads across the yard. In both Brother Man and The Hills.. the author shows the connection between physical reality and the inner state of his characters. Incidentally, just as poor and deprived as the physical environment is so are a majority of the yarders spiritually malnourished and socially desolate. Mais qualifies this parallelism artistically.

For instance, the squalor and insecurity in the yard of The Hills... is also firmly imprinted on such marginal characters as Tansy. We have chosen Tansy because she is the novel's symbol of innocence. Tansy is the daughter of Bedosa and Charlotta. In spite of her naivete, she has already been socialised into regarding all human relations with fear and mistrust. The narrative voice partly explains why this is so:

in her home the meaning of love was never apparent. She knew such things as the need for security in the terms of a bed to sleep on, a roof over

your head, a full belly, and knew you had to do what you were told in order to secure these things, but there was always that underlying fear that at any time these things may be withdrawn without notice and with it come the knowledge of fear (45).

Tansy's case is important to the theme of fear for a number of reasons. First, through her the author deliberately affirms the extent to which this slum malaise contaminates and corrupts all those within its borders, even the most ignorant or pure. Second, it is through her that fear in the sober, less-hysterical, mode is captured as a key participant in the affairs of the yarders.

Consequently Tansy not only offers a new sidelight to the various shades of fear in the novel but also passes for a meaningful contrast to wildly frightened characters such as Rema. Thirdly, Tansy's case helps to bring out the disruptive power of fear. We need to mention in passing that fear was a "fifth member" of Bedosa's family.

Fear and uncertainty are pet themes in Mais' writings¹. The two emerge from the nature of the world and people he writes about. The absence of spiritual stability and the sterility with which Mais'

characters approach social interactions make them live under a permanent state of uncertainty. Fear also blossoms in the hostile social environment that abates crime and violence.

We cannot therefore isolate Tansy's predicament from the fear that grips the entire yard community or her father's shortcomings. Despite the proximity between Tansy and her father as members of one family, the fear each suffers assumes an independent life. This is so because Mais perceives in the incoherence of Jamaican urban life the individual - the isolated individual in the crowded slums - and gives him ample treatment. But for the sake of analysis we shall stick to one case and establish the chain of fear in Bedosa's family, for it has a symbolic significance to the theme of fear in the whole novel.

Fear is an off-spring of the insecurity that fills Mais' fictional world. Bedosa's phobia, for example, is an extended product of the emasculating yard. Bedosa is cowardly and treacherous. But since these are not virtues in the yard, he dodges his weaknesses and, in the process, infects others with the same:

Bedosa was a timid man and he made up for it in two ways: bullying Charlotta and making life miserable for her was one; the other was the sneaking underhand way he went about poisoning everybody's mind... He was an incorrigible gossip with a mean tongue and the ferocity of a rat (30-31).

Although the above are Bedosa's ways of affirming himself, he does not transcend his entrenched fear; especially that for Slocum who had vowed to kill him. To hide his helplessness, Bedosa develops a habit of feigning indifference to Manny's belligerency and Charlotta's suffering. He obscures his problems by sheer neglect.

Bedosa's case demonstrates how far fear is conveyed from outside his own household and sweeps each and every member within it. Using one family unit Mais has brought out the vicious cycle of fear in The Hills... In the novel fear sneaks like a contagious malady from one character to the other. The author suggests that evasive flights cannot rid society of fear but can only lead to catastrophe as exemplified by Bedosa. Mais, however, falls short of endowing Bedosa with the ability to triumph over fear. Neither does the character fully understand the causes of his fear.

Like Bedosa's, Cordelia's fear in Brother Man has (to the reader) clear social origins. In terms of intensity Cordy's fear is equatable to Rema's. Cordelia was jilted by her man, Jonas. This precipitates the formation of her now solid conviction that men are evil:

Women trust a man she is a fool... say
him love you, no? All him want is somebody
work of 'him. Work of 'him, all a
man ever want - an' pleasure him in
bed (16).

Cordelia's man is later arrested for "ganga". These two events mark the beginning of Cordy's dilemma because she never recovers from the shock and shame they impose upon her. Cordy's story is a witness to the absence of lasting relationships in the yard. Going by her example, most relationships in the novel are undermined by mistrust, fears, and petty hatreds that frequently flare up into bloody brawls and murders. If anything, they are all ill-fated, short-lived, and this tells a lot about their shallow foundations.

In its maturity Cordy's fear merges with the religious rivalry between Bra' Ambo and Bra' Man. Cordy at first had faith in the latter's healing powers but is later disillusioned and seeks desperate assistance from

Bra' Ambo, the Obeah man. We need to point out that Cordy's soul acts as the arena within which the tension and hostility between Bra' Man and Bra' Ambo are demonstrated and fought out. The two warring positions are however irreconcilable and Cordy's bid to marry them leads her to distraction. Mais makes the following observation:

with all her troubles, the loss of her man, sickness, Cordelia would be unable to provide for herself and her child ... this was the real reason for Cordelia being driven out of her mind. And now she had turned to Obeah ... It was the ultimate turning down the road to tragedy and horror (124).

Through Bedosa and Cordy, Mais presents fear and uncertainty as two essential ingredients in their final tragedies. Bedosa is crushed by a train as he runs away from Slocum and Cordy commits suicide. However, Mais still maintains man's interaction with his wider environment and how this embrace affects an individual psyche. Cordy's fear is converted into a volatile fury that "fails to find an outlet and it turns into a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creature "(Sartre qtd in Fanon 16).

Themes of poverty, deprivation, crime and violence, and fear advance a bleak picture of Mais' novels. We

identify in them visions of moral decadence, a vicious cycle of poverty, and widespread physical decay. Mais reflects on how man reacts to common human experiences such as love, death, suffering, and belief, and the manner in which he does this reveals his character's vision plus the depth of the author's own insight into human life.

char Mais' characters we have so far discussed appear to be mere puppets under the dictates and mercy of unfathomable forces or dark fate. To them life is a series of inexplicable accidents that are both alien and mesmerising. Bedosa for example, cannot grasp the real causes for his predicament. This removes from him any ability to work out true, lasting remedies. Hence the resultant vision is what Bill Carr calls a "humanity confined within pitiless universe that turns all questions into purely rhetorical questions, as there are never any answers forthcoming" (Caribbean Quarterly: XIII).

thro In Mais' novels it is not that no answers are forthcoming. On the contrary, wrong answers seem to be constantly offered. A realistic and operational vision grows out of an honest reflection about the world. It demands an investigation into events according to their proper socio-historical, economic and political

perspective. Contextualization makes vision clearer and more realistic. Since Bedosa, Cordy and Tansy, among others, do not comprehend the truth underlying the facts of their misfortune, their vision is marred and their dilemma persists with undiminished intensity.

Partly, the above state of affairs exists because the characters' own individual visions are but a confused miscomprehension of reality. But to a larger extent, Mais' novels lack an explicit historical perspective upon which individual visions could have been hinged and projections undertaken.

So far we have discussed how setting minimizes happiness and condemns the individual to crime and pain. This is only one side of the scale because the world of Mais' novels is not overly mournful. There are moments of hilarity and festivity in both The Hills... and Brother Man. The moments are part of a large body of activities through which the characters, either instinctively or consciously, seek to enrich their lives.

The above search presupposes an awareness of basic inhibitions in the yard order and its life style. These activities therefore make up what in the context of the

novels can be called the theme of search for fulfilment. They are a search for fulfilment because through them characters endeavour to make the totality of human conduct and life more humane and decent. Whether the characters succeed or not is subject to discussion.

the Social clubs in Brother Man provide the needed refreshment centres for Papacita and Girlie. While here the two momentarily forget their combative romance and strained friendship. Papacita's sense of humour is excited as he joyously tells riddles and jokes. Similarly Girlie's vivacity and hidden talent are aroused and exposed. The frustrations and inhibitions in their normal relationship melt away. For example, the dance gave Papacita a

drop of ecstasy and romance and excitement and sheer bliss and agony of loving ever again her physical passionate jealous love for him ... this warm maternal yearning that searched out the very springs of her being where it took its issue of life (78).

write A similar but more intense scene of overt excitement is the big fish fry in The Hills... For once all members of the yard triumph over their problems and can sing, dance and laugh. The big event is a moment for diversion and entertainment. An abundance of jokes consummate the general gaiety of the

occasion. It nevertheless remains evident that the shared anecdotes (Wallacy and Susu) and the songs sung ("De Ribber Ben come Down") have a profound bearing on yard life. Their subtle commentary remains that even amidst the merrymaking there lurks a hidden expression of the struggle to survive in life.

The occasion is also a source of irony because it was made possible by a natural disaster: lack of oxygen at the sea shore. To the yarders this occurrence is just one of the many mysterious workings of the hand of providence: "Big Massa tek pity 'pon we poor, him don' let we go auta him han' together ... is like de quail birds he sen' de children of Israel in de wilderness" (38-39).

Aside from being jovial and escapist moments, this reaction of Mais' characters can be analysed more seriously. In The Pedagogue of the Oppressed Freire writes that "an act is oppressive only when it prevents men from being fully human" (33). We have established reasonably well that Mais' characters function in circumstances which hinder them from realizing their fuller potential as human beings. Such circumstances are, in Freire's word, "oppressive".

Having established that we also need to add that it is an intrinsic human tendency to run away from restricting or enchainning circumstances. Galloway's The Absurd Hero is an examination of the exiled individual in a meaningless universe. In this book the author touches on the essence of man's survival instinct and further identifies possible avenues through which man seeks refuge. Galloway writes,

When faced with loneliness and lack of values of the modern world, man can do one of these two things: He can seek an escape through sensualism; he can attempt to find reconciliation with his fellow through some form of humanism; or he can break from all conventional ethics and systems and pursue new ones (37).

Mais' characters take recourse to practically all the possibilities listed by Galloway. Some of their remedial measures such as crime have already been discussed. These and many others are some of the means through which they hope to find a consolation and a meaning in life.

The reactions of Mais' characters are less of an escape from reality - their levels of success notwithstanding - than they are an inborne craving for genuine satisfaction. Indeed, as noted earlier with regard to

shag, they are in a way an affirmation of the resourcefulness of the human spirit and the ability of man to flee from scourges he lacks the courage to face or endure so as to preserve himself.

Mais, however, differs slightly from other Caribbean writers who have handled the theme of escape. Whereas the fundamental issues are the same to all (the economic and psychological need for a "better break"), other Caribbean authors (Lamming, Selvon, Reid, Marshall, Clark, Mackay) formulated the theme in terms of an actual physical departure to other lands. Mais' characters are entrapped in the yard from which they seek their solace. This does not lack reason. Gerald Moore has explained the primary cause of the apparent immobility of Mais' characters:

the more literal modes of escape to Panama, New York or Wolverhampton usually involve the scrapping together of more funds than Mais' characters ever seemed possessed of (35).

By keeping his characters within the yard, except for periods spent in prison, Mais maintains a consistency between character and their setting. The character's economic position corresponds directly to their limited vision and even mobility. This is one of the greatest

achievements of the author in both The Hills... and Brother Man. Having established a setting in both novels, the author permits his characters to live, dream and die within the realistic boundaries of possibility². The truth of both novels is that part of the yarders' dilemma is how to bear with a consciousness of their own insignificance and the overwhelming powers that make their plight.

Working on the basis of character-reaction-to-surrounding, Gerald Moore has also divided Mais' characters into two distinct groups. First are those who accept their condition with a given piece of philosophy. And second, are those who look for escape through drink, evangelical religion, crime and sex. Although interesting and illuminating in parts, the rigidity in Moore's division can be a hindrance to explaining fully the reaction of characters in Mais' novels. This is because each character offers at least an explanation - what Moore would call a "philosophy" - for whatever action he undertakes, although none can pass for a philosophy in the strict sense of the word. Thus even those who "escape through drink" (Moore 87) such as Papacita still explain their action. For Papacita it is a simple matter; "everyman had to scuffle for himself that was the law of existence" (43).

Papacita's indifference is part of the wider corpus of explanations given by the yarders in their attempt to comprehend themselves. Zephyr in The Hills... for example terms suffering as an inescapable occurrence ordained by the arbitrary laws of existence. She tells Rema, "life has got a stick to beat us with - every last lonesome suffering mother's son" (123). Zephyr's stance and that of Papacita differ markedly from the position held by the Chaplain. To the Chaplain each human action is determined by social and economic forces in society. He therefore takes criminal tendencies among yarders to be a product of the economic deprivation that has dumped them into slums.

The manifestation of the impact of the urban environment on Mais' characters is as varied as the explanations of and reactions to it are diverse. Mais sets out to study, among other things, the intricacies of human behaviour. He follows the individual even in the most private of times because, as the narrator observes,

(43).

A man might go mad in the
stillness, in the darkness, ... a man,
come to the end of his dream, alone ... a
man might go mad with terror (The Hills... 50).

The suffering afflicting the individual person is part of the subject of Mais' novels. In their underlying longing

to avoid the belittling environment, Mais' characters draw upon the power of the self.

This is a logical outcome of their surroundings which lack well laid social networks, what Castells called the moderating "broad collective movement" (403). An inward-looking reaction to one's neighbourhood forms the premise for the theme of individualism. We shall use the characters of Papacita and Manny to illustrate this point because the two are the most outstanding cases of individualism in the two novels.

Papacita is first introduced to the reader as a restless loverboy. He later consolidates his image into that of a drifter in society. Papacita firmly believes that "work never made a man rich, man was a fool to work" (43). The idea that guides him is that "everyman had to scuffle for himself-that was the law of existence... it was a matter of individual survival, each man for himself" (43).

Papacita adheres in both thought and practice to what Swingewood has called the "ideology of individualism":

the ideology of individualism is organically bound in the novel's portrayal of the hero as an individual freed from the constraining fetters of society, of a hero who, rather than accept his fate and ascribed social position challenges their basis in the social order, the conflict between the individual and society is thus seen as one of the basic structure of the novel form (4).

Compared to Swingewood's hero, Papacita's challenge to society is undeniably mild. But we get a clearer picture of his hubris when we compare him to the selfless and caring Bra' Man. In contrast Papacita is flamboyant, carelessly confident. He prefers his individuality to anything else. He is the embodiment of a futile search for excitement.

Papacita enters into relationship for self-appeasement. Although Girlie is his girl, he is a total stranger to her in that he does not know her at all. It is much later that the author observes that "for all the time he had lived with her he never knew Girlie would sing" (78). The big gap of ignorance between Papacita and Girlie is similar to that between Tramp and Jane in Mais' short story, "Tramp". Both pairs are

sharing the same banalities, the same bed, but are as far removed from each other as though divided by oceans and continents, living in different planes of consciousness (L.T.W.11).

Papacita's selfishness is further seen when, out of malice, he mudslings Bra' Man so as to estrange Minette from him (92). He also capitalised on Bra' Man's misfortune to entice Minette. When Bra' Man is arrested Papacita bails him out. This is not in the least a genuine desire to assist, rather it is a trick aimed by Papacita at earning him Minette's admiration and gratitude.

Papacita's view of life as purely a matter of individual struggle explains his individualistic spirit. The idea of harsh survival is grounded in the atmosphere of that yard. Here human relationships are utterly fragile and dishonest. Papacita, like Benoit in C.L.R. James' urban novel, Minty Alley, is a personification of an undefinable and restless passion that is always yearning to be fulfilled but is never satisfied. Papacita's death marks also the failure of this quest and the apathy of erratic pleasure. Mais invites the reader to laugh at his excesses and at the same time evokes our sympathy for his misfortune. Papacita's life is a riddle about the fickleness of fame.

Ch. Manny in The Hills... displays individualistic tendencies more elaborately than Papacita. One possible reason for the clarity on Manny's part is that he is

undergoing the process of maturation and his idiosyncracies are hence more noticeable. Like Papacita, Manny channels his zeal and inertia to adventure and crude romance. Manny derives from each successful escapade "a new sense of devilry"(19).

Most of Manny's pranks can best be understood in the light of the process of growth. He is struggling for acceptance in yard-life with acceptable vigour. His ultimate goal is to acquire the man image of the yard. Manny chases after the half-Chinese girl, and it gives him untold pleasure to learn that he had contracted a venereal disease. The way he describes the illness - "man-sick ... the sickness men get (and) real man-size dose" (19,20) - helps the reader to see the height of his pride. Manny also forcefully takes Patpo's knife, fights Euphemia and teases Tansy with a scorpion.

The above activities point to a ghetto image of manliness that advocates for strength and struggle. Hence Manny longs and strives to be the masochist, the superman of the slum who is ever zealous and indefatigable. Charlotta, Manny's mother, comes closest to diagnosing her son's condition when she observes that in all his undertakings "he don't mean a harm ... he's just full of life" (16).

Manny is therefore not a misfit. He is passionately wedded to yard life and its peculiar ethos. He seeks to embrace and not reject what is socially acceptable. Manny's actions can be interpreted from two angles. Firstly from the perspective of his immaturity and in which they appear as mere youthful idiosyncracies. Secondly, as a struggle for self-identity, and self-assertion. The latter is also a journey to consciousness.

Manny's own ideals, however fanciful, are dependent on his society. Most often he is not aware of this but at one instance he comes to terms with himself and finds the cause of his behaviour in his upbringing, especially in the character of his father:

He (Bedosa) never did things like other men ... I guess I wanted to be proud of my old man ... I couldn't. It got so I wanted to act opposite to him all the time. He was scared to do things. I went out and did them. It got so I wanted to act like a man before my time (149).

The yard's image of manliness informs Manny's behaviour. He acts the way he does so as to exorcise mistakes and shame left behind by his father.

Whereas Papacita and Manny seek for their salvation in individual exploits that boost their egos, there are other characters in Mais' novels who reach out to an eternal and superior being to help them salvage their problems. We have already mentioned the special place Christianity as a shaping influence occupies in Mais' writing. Religion, as a belief in the superior beings that control man's life and the order of things, is both a theme and a coordinating device in Mais' novels.

The Hills... exploits the religious element to a less degree than Brother Man. Nonetheless, the novel demonstrates in its own right the spiritual value of religion in an economically and morally problem area. In the novel Charlotta is one character who has wholly given in to religion. However, the critical reader is bound to realise that her religion is a route of escape from her despotic husband and a hostile environment. Because these two create within her a deep sense of insecurity, Charlotta seeks to fill the emptiness within her by turning to religion. Her religion is no more than a gimmick. It is narrow, and meant to

cover up her insufficiencies and
escape her gnawing fears in that
way Years of ceaseless toil and

suffering had made her become narrow-minded and religiously bigoted, and the fact that she was deep-down insecure (31,70).

In spite of the narrowness of faith one thing is certain: That is, Charlotta's faith is absolute and it sustains her through a tenacious life. It facilitates her ability to withstand Bedosa's harrassment. Charlotta draws her fortitude from the recurrent dictum that "the Lawd knows everything ... only the Lawd knows why" (69,70).

Charlotta differs from her husband and Surjue, who have nothing to lean back to and are crushed by circumstances, because religion gives her the power to endure reality and also to explain it.

Undeniably religion is an essential point of reference in Charlotta's life. It is a gadget through which she interacts with reality. But her overall vision despite being aided thus is limited in the sense that it denies her access to the right of critical perception. Her own estimation of the role of religion is corrupted from the beginning by the fact that she debases it to the level of a mere excuse for all the shortcomings and unpleasant incidents around her.

Thus instead of liberating her from the cloisters of the yard, religion weds Charlotta to the mediocrity of her life. It becomes the sugary part with which she swallows the bitter pill of poverty and suffering. In the context of the novel, however, what might pass an for escape mechanism is an institution of survival. For Charlotta religion is only a fable to help her endure. But such is the hypocrisy of her faith. It consequently blurs her vision of the world.

There was the potential of expanding the religious theme in The Hills... but Mais did not exploit this possibility fully. This would have been through the charity sisters and Chaplain, all who believe in the existence of a divine and superior being in charge of man's life in the world. Although Ras generously uses the salutation "Peace an' love", he "was not a religious man" (39).

It is in Brother Man that Mais exhaustively depicts the theme of religion. The principal character from whom the novel got its title is a religious faithful. John Power alias Bra' Man has a pre-meditated and more profound understanding of religion than Charlotta. Religion to

Bra' Man needs not alienate one from her or his reality. In addition to raising man's awareness of himself, religion's greatest function is to offer him inner tranquility.

Bra' Man is conscious of all these and, in one of his many meditations, observes:

what a man need above all was
a clear vision ... A man must
go closer inside himself and
search himself earnestly, and
after that he should stand and
wait What a man needed most
was to be quit of himself, and be
still (56-57).

The above is a sober and functional approach to religion. Faith here contributes towards self-knowledge and not self-deception. Bra' Man is practical. He is a healer and a selfless man. He is patient, unembittered, and of infinite warmth. Indeed, he assumes a special role in the yard: the only source of solace to the woe-be-gone yarders. He soothes and calms souls bereft of comfort. For example, he consoles Jesmina when she loses her trinkets, and assists invaluablely in the event of Cordy's illness.

Mais, to a large extent, portrays his protagonist as a messianic figure - the comforter. Bra' Man is a man with

a "call" (75-76) and who, after three days of fasting, astonishes the yarders with his healing abilities:

People came to him in the crowd
and touched their handkerchiefs against
his clothes, and came away again and
laid their handkerchief on their sick, and
they became well (109).

The analogy between the biblical Christ and Bra' Man as sources of miraculous healing powers is very clear in the above statement. But prior to joining the Ras Tafari Movement, Bra' Man was not different in character from Papacita. He jots in his memoirs of his intermittent journeys and preoccupations. The new religious Bra' Man has more inner calm than any person in the yard.

Within the body of Bra' Man's story Mais introduces the sub-theme of the suffering Messiah. Bra' Man grows steadfastly in faith and becomes a trustworthy arbitrator in yard disputes. His wise and sound judgement settles differences besetting his fellow yarders (122). Because he has transcended trivialities, his immediate concern is with "things above and beyond petty envies and covetousness and hates, and desires and all the gossip that went about from day to day" (121). The new Bra' Man

is a "channel through which life flowed" (135). Here we see a portrayal of religion, in the deeper sense, as a life-affirming agent.

Bra' Man suffers catastrophe in the pursuit and practice of his cherished ideals such as honesty. Despite protestations from Minette and Corporal Jennings ("all his training as a criminal investigator told him that this man was innocent", 162), Bra' Man insists that his house must be searched. Consequently he is arrested and charged with being in possession of and passing out counterfeit coins.

Amidst all the public ridicule that ensues, Bra' Man remains strong in faith. Through him Mais has developed the theme of religious suffering to its logical conclusion. Religion in such a case is an all-sweeping conviction, a way of life, which is easily distinguishable from Charlotta's perception and use of it. For Charlotta religion was that which could enable her to dissemble and escape reality. To Bra' Man, apart from satisfying inner quest, religion also courts tragedy for him:

Bra' Man's tragedy was that
the people whose sick he had
healed carefully avoided him ... and
shouted insults after him up
and down (174)

However, Bra' Man's distress neither rose from the invectives nor did it come from outright rejection. It emerged from a feeling of betrayal, a treacherous abandonment by a people he had lived for and in whom he had vested a special confidence: "he had such faith in people, and knew that people had such need of faith in something, if the world were to be saved from poverty and disease and suffering"(174).

The above statement explains the tender core of Bra' Man's tragedy. He is the best example of suffering in the novel - an isolated sufferer whose ideals and those of the larger community cannot be reconciled. It hurts Bra' Man to see people reject "a ray of hope" that would reveal to them their "innate dignity as man" (174). And this forms the climax of the tragedy of an earnest but neglected healer.

Roger Mais approaches the theme of religion in Brother Man from a historical point of view. It is not by accident that Bra' Man is a Ras Tafariite. In some respects the protagonist's life is a symbolic recreation

Jean Creary writing in James' The Islands in Between hints at the broader manner in which Bra' Man could be read:

in a sense the personality of Brother Man is a work of art beyond the levels of normal literature, explaining the artistic pattern of life itself (58).

Creary certainly means that Bra' Man is a symbolic character. The figurative dimension of this character is an issue we can pursue further. Bra' Man's memoirs indicate that he joined the Ras Tafarians in 1938. The date coincides with the historical period when the movement flourished (Smith et al). Historically the Ras Tafari Movement was a response to the hopelessness of social and economic conditions in Jamaica, particularly in the low class zones.

Basing on findings of a research carried out on the Ras Tafari Movement, M.G. Smith makes this comment about its membership:

It is the unemployed who are most easily attracted to the movement. Much of the psychology of the brethren is the psychology of the unemployed in any

The movement, part cultural, part religious, gave its adherents a hope in man's ability to transcend his dislocated surroundings. As seen in Bra' Man's case, the movement's ideals are utilitarian because they elevate the faithfuls to a human position and give them something to look forward to. The movement's humanist philosophy is evident in the character of Bra' Man. He also upholds some of the common beliefs of the Ras Tafarians. These include spotting a beard and keeping a long hair³.

Inasmuch as he is a distinct individual, the trend in Bra' Man's life is a movement from restlessness into a faith, then into social acceptance and admiration, and, finally, into rejection and condemnation. Such a narrative flow coincides amicably well with the growth of the Ras Tafarian Movement until its eventual resentment by a section of the populace and the authority (Smith et al, Lacy 43). In that light Bra' Man embodies the changes, tensions and varied experiences in the life-span of a religious movement.

In this chapter we have discussed select thematic concerns of Roger Mais novels. We have shown how the concerns are not only related to character and setting but also to the emergent visions. The themes discussed were poverty and deprivation, fear, search for fulfilment,

individualism and religion. But our discussion has clearly shown that there exists a casual relationship between these themes. Each runs into the other and hence they ought to be seen as complementary and not distinct parts of a whole. Individualism and religion for instance do illuminate or even fall under the theme of search for fulfilment at certain moments. Each theme also contributes to the shaping and explaining of the visions held.

Various visions of society have emerged in the discussion. They range from that of desperation, the confused and false visions to a groping towards an enlightened vision of Bra' Man, Zephyr or the Chaplain. A definitive statement on the nature of the novel's central vision is the subject of chapter four.

In the next chapter we move to an analysis of Roger Mais' artistic strategies. We shall discuss the extent to which stylistic devices crystallize vision or strengthen the positions held by the author and his characters.

CHAPTER THREE
ENDNOTES

1. In addition the two novels discussed here see Mais' Black Lighting and his short stories.
2. For detailed discussions on the nature of realistic writing see Wellek and Warren (213ff), Ian Watt (1 - 20), Luka'cs' Meaning of Contemporary Realism and Fischer (101-7).
3. Other common Ras Tafarian beliefs are that: Ras Tafari is the Living God and that salvation can come back to the black man only through repartration (Lacy 42-44, Smith et al 1-4); Ras Tafarians are "basically vegetarian ... outlawing the use of swine's flesh in any form, shell fish, scaleless fishes, snails etc ... (they also) "strongly object to sharp implements used in the desecration of the figure of man" (Brown 39-40); "Black men are reincarnations of the ancient Israelites and have been exiled to the West Indies because of their sins; the way of the whiteman is evil especially for the black man" (Thorpe 2). See also Dabydeen and Tagoe (54 - 57).

CHAPTER THREE

AN ANALYSIS OF ROGER MAIS'S STYLE

This chapter will analyse some select artistic features of Roger Mais' The Hills... and Brother Man. The term "style" shall be used to denote the artistic strategies and conventions Mais, as a writer, employs to convey and enhance his message. But this chapter goes beyond mere identification. It will evaluate the effectiveness of the artistic elements used and how well they advance the author's vision, and how they integrate with his major concerns.

The province of the term style is expansive¹. Owing to this fact, we have room in this chapter to discuss only the salient artistic features of Mais' novels. These are narrative technique, language, imagery and symbolism. Our preference for these is prompted by the important role they play in enhancing our appreciation of the writer's art.

Language, for instance, is the raw material of art and is hence of primary importance. Narrative technique

defines an author's individual style. Imagery and symbolism, on the other hand, are essential artistic strategies in Mais' novels by virtue of their wide occurrence. But all the four put together are excellent vehicles through which Mais conveys his ideas, both directly and figuratively. Since we wish to understand the crux of Mais' vision and thought, this can best be realised by studying his literary style.

No single phrase can exhaustively explain Mais' art. Neither does a given stylistic item dominate his art. Supportive evidence for this assertion is found in the existence of numerous interpretations so far given to his writings². All these standpoints show that Mais' books exploit different aspects of style with varying degrees of success.

If, however, there should be anything to learn from the above then it is not the shocking revelation of an abundance of interpretations but rather the "richness of (Mais') literary and linguistic background as well as his own uninhibited manipulation of this cultural wealth for his own ends" (D'costa 60). Mais' art was influenced by a combination of socio-political and linguistic traditions.

it grew from a fusion of his own culture, English-American literary traditions, Jamaican creole and dialects, plus the Kingstonian slum register.

The most prominent artistic feature in both The Hills... and Brother Man is the narrative technique adopted by the author. Being the general manner in which an author renders his account, narrative technique is an important aspect of style because through it the author can control and illuminate his intended interpretation of his work. Similarly it gives clues to the author's vision because it is influenced by the perceptions he upholds.

Under the broad area of narrative technique Mais incorporates several devices. The story in both novels is told from various points of view. In addition to the omniscient narrative voice that tells the story in most sections of the novels, both novels also present us with a chorus (Brother Man) or lyrical preludes (The Hills...). On the strength of its widespread occurrence the chorus qualifies to be an important aspect of Mais' style.

Brother Man is divided into five sections each beginning with a "chorus of the people of the lane"

(7, 59, 105, 138, 172). Like the chorus in classical Greek theatre, Mais' chorus is an important artistic feature charged with two tasks; namely, be a lyric interlink between dramatic scenes and to offer staccato comments on the unfolding story. Mais' chorus is hence not just a refrain but a narrative device with a great bearing on the meaning of the novel.

The chorus in Brother Man is a composite of properties. It is replete with variety and tension. In a telling self-description the choric voice says that it is

full of human emotions, human folly,
ignorance, suffering, viciousness, magnanimity,
weakness, greatness, littleness, insufficiency,
frailty, strength (7).

This draws us nearer to unveiling the true identity of the chorus. It is more than a literal union of voices.

Portrayed in it are tensions within the body-cooperate.

The nature of its composition suggests strongly that the chorus is a collective voice that reflects a collective experience. The sets of dialogue it contains are of different people and cover a big range of concerns. It is therefore correct to call it a "social ensemble"

(Brathwaite in Baugh 111) because it imitates human voices trapped in the sordid lane.

Mais puts his chorus to various uses. First and foremost, he uses it to introduce the novel's setting - both visual and aural - to the reader. Thus the first section of Brother Man gives the location of the ice-sharp, yam seller's barrow, coal vendor, and the Chinese grocery. On top of setting the scene, the chorus also introduces characters. It goes ahead to supply the reader with minute details such as time (59) and descriptions of natural phenomena-breeze, waves, moon etc.

Although the chorus is a relatively independent entity, it does not introduce scenes from a detached position. It constantly maintains a duality of character. At one given time the chorus is both a participant in the drama of the lane and also a distant commentator on the happenings in the yard. In both capacities the chorus functions as an anticipatory device that heralds action. At times this is in the form of jerky gossip within which is mirrored the life pattern in the yard and the fears of its inhabitants.

Mais, through the gossip, suggests the idleness of the yarders. Theirs is an idleness that can only be consumed in gossip. Casual and idle chat is an essential part of

yard life. It is an indicator of the yard's level of awareness. Just as cheap as the gossip shared is so is the yarders' vision limited. Irrespective of the seriousness of the discussions captured, the chorus monitors the temper of the story because the mood in the lane is manifested in the chorus. A brief look at the five parts of the chorus can make this role of the chorus elaborate.

In the first part, the chorus introduces areas to be re-enacted in the main narrative: "Cordy's man get tek-up of 'ganga" (8); "Bra' Man show de gospel way" (8); and "Papacita beat up him gal" (8). The three central characters, Bra' Man, Cordy and Papacita, grow from this cursory statements. Part II and III entail the actualization of the words of the chorus in Part I.

A change is, however, noticeable in Part IV. Here the mood varies and the variation is imprinted on the chorus. The chorus shows a "feeling of excitement in the air" (138) following a revivalist gathering in the yard. But in Part V we find a different mood. The chorus here is ill at ease "like ships dragging with anchors" (172). This results from Cordy hanging herself, Bra' Man being framed and arrested, and the horrible murder at Palisadoes road.

The apprehensive mood of the chorus at the beginning of Part V points forward to Bra' Man's tragedy later in the novel. The chorus of the people now speaks

as though they are afraid their tongues might trip them and their words discover them in a fault... They are like people who have the defacement of an image and they are afraid (172-173).

The chorus is a coarse blending of such incisive commentary and the general gossip in the yard. The above observation puts the chorus more on the side of a register upon which changes in the mood of the yard are both weighed and recorded.

As a commentary, the chorus in Brother Man fulfils the same function as the lyrical preludes in The Hills... . The only major difference between them could be that whereas the chorus in Brother Man symbolises and records ephemeral situations - the ever changing life of the yard dwellers-, the lyrical interludes in The Hills... are broadly speaking philosophical speculations about life and the story.

Nonetheless, as it is true of the chorus so are authorial meditations in The Hills... a springboard from

which the story emerges. They, unlike the chorus, do not introduce character despite making statements that anticipate action. Their function includes foretelling catastrophe in a more figurative sense than the chorus. For instance, Surjue's suffering in prison and his eventual death are implied in the prelude's reference to "dark shadows" that wait in silence, "they are the dark company that keep eternal vigil over life unto death". (150).

The preludes in The Hills... are as much a commentary on life as the chorus is a reflective statement on the yard. The chorus termed itself a "tale of man's woes" (Brother Man, 9). This means that it is a reflection of communal suffering and hardship. The preludes are similarly a record of communal experience. Both record and interpret the story either overtly or covertly. In attending to the latter, the preludes in The Hills... at one instant comment:

this is the story of man's life on earth
that formed him ... it shudders throughout
from cover to cover with pity... the demons
of light and of darkness inform all his
days and nights ... it has been attested
that he is of threefold dimensions ... all of
his being is encompassed about from birth with
dying ... his separate death matters nothing ...
It matters all that he has turned his back upon
life (184).

On the surface the above comment emphasizes the subsequent element of suffering and death in the novel: the murder of Euphemia, Surjue's and Rema's deaths. At a deeper level they are a postulation of a vision of life, especially its brevity and futility. The major purpose of the preludes in The Hills... is to articulate such views about life.

Karina Williamson has rightly described the choric passages in The Hills... as

a kind of prose-poetry charged with symbolism, and their function seems to be to direct the reader to the wider significance of the events, to hint at a 'universal' dimension of the story (144).

Although Williamson finds them arbitrary, the point seems to be that lyrical preludes constitute an essential body of statements that when closely analysed indicate specific outlooks on life. One example is the view of life as a struggle between life and death given above.

Lyrical preludes in The Hills... are at certain times attributed to a character within the story. The Chaplain is used whenever this is done. The Chaplain is a conscientious man who permanently questions the institutions and practices within his society. His

deep-seated concerns lend themselves easily to use as preludes because they are outcomes of deep thought and genuine concern. It is him who asks the central question in the novel, "what happens to people when their lives are constricted and dwarfed and girdled with poverty?" (197).

The use of the Chaplain's words as lyrical preludes arises from the fact that he embodies a significant amount of the novel's moral vision. He stands out as a informed opponent of moral decay and social injustice. In his incessant indictments of the penal system, the Chaplain emerges as the voice of moral conscience in the novel. He is the only representative of the underdogs of society.

Nevertheless, the Chaplain is modest enough to agree that he shares with the rest of the society a communal responsibility for the crime prevalent in the slums. "We are all guilty", he says and explains further,

We make criminals out of men and women and children in the kind of society we put up with. We are just as much criminal in a sense, as they are (238).

The Chaplain's case illustrates that there exists a kinship between lyrical preludes and the main body of the story.

Lyrical preludes are more than just philosophical outbursts. They have a symbolic bearing to the flow of the story. Their singlemost significance is that they introduce the strand of imagery that we find in the novel. For instance, the first authorial meditation introduces the image of "night":

the night speaks with a thousand
whispers, but a single voice .. the wind
comes and questions and passes on .. the
acclamation of the stars does not disturb
the stillness. So it is with the night.
(131-132).

The meaning of "night" above is embedded in the texture of the novel. It stands for yard life with its general similarities and specific individual experiences. By commenting on the story, lyrical preludes also formulate certain conclusions. The above is a re-affirmation of the view that in the absolute sense, fate is universal although it is variably made manifest.

A fuller analysis of imagery will be undertaken later on in this chapter. But at the moment, will do well to observe that the chorus and the preludes are not elements divorced from the mainstream of the story in Mais' novels. The device and the main narrative interpenetrate

because the former is a tool used by the artist to weave the latter. In fact, Mais, establishes a dialectical relationship between narrative device and main story: The chorus/preludes draw their content from the main tale just as much as the main narrative springs from the prologic comments.

It is common of Mais' fiction for stories of characters within the main narrative to interpenetrate, one into the other. The impression given to the reader is that the author is tracking down different lives of people at the same time. For example, as Bra' Man writes his memoirs, Girlie and Papacita are engaged in a bitter quarrel and Cordy pays Bra Ambo a visit by night (111 - 114). All these events take place at different places but at the same time. The author maintains the narration using a cinematic interchange from one scene of action to the other.

Similar scene shifts and interpenetration abound in The Hills... The novel gives a parallel narration of Slocum's chase after Bedosa and Shag's meeting of Bajun Man with Euphemia in his bed (126 ff). Similarly Surjue's escape attempt from prison is told simultaneously with Rema's preparation for suicide.

Gerald Moore has identified this aspect of Mais' narrative technique and attributes it to Mais' experience as a photographer. Creary's already mentioned comment that The Hills'... plot is "uneven and episodic" also arises from both the existence of many subsidiary characters and the habit in the narrative flow for stories to interpenetrate. Creary saw in this an artistic fault.

D'costa, however, has discussed the technique in relative detail. He comments,

this weaving back and forth from different focal points establishes the independence of the members of the group-as-hero (40).

D'costa is right in as far as he means that the rapid shifting from one sub-plot to the other helps in the creation of a sense of community because it draws the characters 'close' to one another. He, however, proceeds to formulate another structural pattern - the group-as-hero. The gist of D'costa's argument is that the fluidity evident in the structure of Mais' novels implies a fluidity in the world portrayed.

Hence for D'costa, Mais' efforts are concentrated towards portraying a communal not an individual life:

"the group is unquestionably the centre of interest, the true hero" (5). D'Costa's position leads one to ask whether the group-as-hero technique means that the individual's position as the object of authorial discourse is minimised. Alternatively, how solid is the group as a character? D'Costa made his conclusions principally because of the apparent absence of domineering, fully fledged heroes in Mais' novels.

But Mais' interest is basically in the individual, be he in society, in the solitude of turmoil (Cordy), in a prison cell or in a meditative mood alone at night (Bra' Man). The yard only comes into being from a conglomeration of partially individuated characters brought together in the pursuit of some human event. For this reason, and as Brathwaite rightly writes, the chorus distinguishes itself as the "only obvious instance of this sense of community "(Baugh 111).

Underlying all the above is, in our opinion, the point that Mais' novels are by virtue of their sub-plots, some kind of underdeveloped polyphonic novels.³ Mais' inability to formulate real polyphony is grounded in the fact that the slum setting he uses does not provide for

the realization or development of individuated and fully valid consciousness because it lacks concrete social ties upon which character is developed and ideals are erected. These circumstances weaken the inhabitants' vision and general abilities.

It is not our purpose here to establish the ideal hero in Mais' novel. We, on the contrary, wish to propose an approach to Mais' technique of parallel narration and to relate it to the inner form of his novels. Mais juxtaposes stories purposely to achieve a cumulative effect. It is noticeable that parallel sub-plots occur at the most tense, revealing or explosive moments in the text. For instance: Slocum pursuing Bedosa/the cuckolded Shag chancing upon Bajun Man and Euphemia in his bed; Bra' Man jotting down his testimony/Cordy visiting Bra' Ambo (119); and Surjue's escape/Rema's preparation for suicide.

Mais works out his simultaneous storylines so that they reach their respective climaxes at the same time. This then stands out as one of his means of cultivating dramatic effect. But it is also a device of unifying the fates of his characters. In addition, parallel narration enhances the novel's touch of paradox.

Paradox is both a visionary channel and an ironic device in Mais' novels. The manner in which interlocking storylines are rendered has strong indications of Mais' sense of pattern. Some of the paradoxes are expressed in terms of contrasting images such as light and darkness (The Hills...). Others emerge from ironic twists in scenes that are in close proximity. For example, as Rema agonizes, "outside the sun shone brightly ... the birds were on spree "(21). Apart from being a simple irony of situation this observation highlights the contradictions in life. Specifically here is nature's unequivocal indifference to human suffering. Partly such contrasts inform the author's view of life as a pattern of tragic happenings.

The best illustration of ironic twists is the big fish fry. This moment of pleasantness is juxtaposed with one of great terror. Soon after the hilarity, Euphemia lives under great fear of Shag. Other yarders cannot sleep for either one reason or the other (80).

The above are but two instances of ironic twists in The Hills... In their wholeness, paradoxical situations in Mais' novels augment the author's efforts to evoke the

paradox of life. His use of juxtaposition expressed his understanding of the tragic vision of life; the view of life as a dynamic system of contradictions. Georg Luka'cs has explained this riddle of life in these words,

life is an anarchy of light and dark;
nothing is ever completely fulfilled in
life, nothing ever quite ends; new
confusing voices always mingle with
the chorus of those that we have
heard before (Soul and Form 152 - 153).

Luka'cs' words overstate the dynamics of life but they, at the same time, introduce the element of chance, an element in which Mais' novels are rich. Every step taken by Mais' characters is confounded by "trifling springs of chance" (The Hills... 242). The narrator further comments,

We pursue our personal history
without the niceties of punctuation ... and
set up a few stone images in the
likeness of our image along the way (242).

At times Mais' characters explain this chance in terms of superstition. But whatever name they give it it remains a primary pointer to the uncertainty and mystery that surrounds their lives.

Mais' narrative technique has thematic significance: It shows the motions in the life of the yarders. It is

worth mentioning that the rise in tempo and the cross-cuts in the story are correlative to the narrative flow. The build-up to a climax in The Hills... for instance neatly corresponds to Surjue's preparation for escape and Rema's death. Paradox in Mais' novels hence relates to vision in the sense that it exposes the author's tragic feel of life. This is done by the manner in which he renders the basic conflicts in the life of his characters. The interaction of these opposites either moves life forward or is responsible for man's problems.

Earlier in this chapter it was mentioned that the chorus and the lyrical preludes introduce major strands of imagery in the novels. A thorough discussion of imagery and symbolism in both novels should preferably begin with a definition of terms, followed by an explanation of the source of the images and the symbols Mais uses.

It is not easy to differentiate an image from a symbol because both terms have underlying allusions to an object or word suggesting a larger reference than themselves. While discussing the sense in which "symbol" differs from "image", Wellek and Warren write,

an image may be involved once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol, may even become part of a symbolic system (189).

Wellek and Warren intimate that the difference between image and symbol is one of degree or level of prevalence and not type. They even establish a pattern of transfer from one to the other. This is an important observation, and it will guide our use of the two terms here.

For our purpose, we shall, borrowing from Johnson and Danzinger, use symbol to mean "an object which embodies special significance as the result of the way it acts or is acted upon by other objects "(30). "Image" will denote an object or word that can be equated with some larger meaning than itself.

We shall use the two terms as two levels of a scale and not clear-cut distinctions. There are common properties to both image and symbol that need to be emphasised. One is that both embody meanings beyond their denotative value. The other is that both are units of artistic structure and can be identified and isolated for critical scrutiny. In part our analysis aims at explaining the figurative meaning of the unit.

The use of imagery and symbolism in Mais' two novels has social correlatives. The symbols used are a product of a conscious artistic response by the author to his surrounding, both human and natural. Irrespective of their area of origin, imagery and symbolism in Mais' books interlock with incidents in the entire text with artistic precision. Take the example of the yard in Brother Man. Its implications or semantic sphere is not confined to the geographical stretch that makes up a home for the urban castaways. On the contrary, it is as Bill Carr has pointed out, "a metaphor for human condition" (Caribbean Quarterly XIII).

In the context of the novel the word "yard" transmits a particular sense impression. It conveys and is synonymous to the picture of human relations dwarfed by but still struggling against misery. Some of the forces in the yard are recondite yet the author humanizes them by drawing them into close conduct with man.

Apart from physical objects Mais uses his characters symbolically. We need not mention the obvious example of Bra' Man who is a distinct messianic symbol. Bra' Man's name implies a mystical force (John Power) and humanism

(Brother Man) which tacitly convey specific ideas and qualities that compel the reader to draw an analogy between him and other members of the yard. The success of Mais' symbolic structure is that it is a complete system within which comparisons and contrasts are abundant.

If Bra' Man is a messianic figure, Buju and Crawfish (The Hills...), stand for opposite and unrelated qualities. Without any specific reference to a character D'Costa has written that names in Mais' slum world

express the alienation and social vacuum in which they are born (names) are type-markers rather than identifiers: labels for those cut off from the past and future, lacking the supportive ties of stable family and social structure (2).

The above general statements finds tangible evidence in the likes of Crawfish, Flitters and Papacita. There is a tinge of beastiality in the names of Crawfish and Buju. These animal associations are partially illumined by their chase after Flitters. The latter's thoughts are similar to those of a victim whose escape from pursuing predators is futile. But the animal link is ultimately articulated in Flitters' musings:

those men were wolves. They were wild beasts. They knew no law but the law of the jungle. He had betrayed one of them. He had been weighed and found worthy of death (223).

Mais uses the above thoughts to advance another idea. Both Buju and Crawfish are an external manifestation of Flitters' fears and the guilty consciousness that harrass his inner peace following his betrayal of Surjue. The two are in fact mature versions of an intense guilt that begun as disturbing thoughts, an unsettled mind, and were later transformed into unfathomable shadows and finally into human beings. As seen in the cases of Bra' Man, Buju and Crawfish, Mais effects name or character symbolism by placing his characters' names and their attributes in perfect harmony.

An overriding majority of Roger Mais' images are drawn from nature. It has already been attested that nature was one of Mais' shaping influences. However, we need to add that Mais does not merely transplant raw nature from the wild into his novels. What he presents us with is a selective and imaginative blending of natural phenomena within the framework of the tale, and this is so only when it is artistically prudent. In other words, natural elements are a source of sustained commentry on yard life in Mais' novels.

Through natural events Mais' characters are also able to interpret their dilemma. Rema's madness for example and her entire psychological essence is integrated with the cycles of the moon (274). In Rema's and in other cases, nature transmits messages of suffering or terror to character (The Hills... 57; L.T.W 72). Nature provides a viable approach to understanding the inner state of Mais' restless characters. It helps the author to tap something psychologically deep, such as fear.

In The Hills... Mais uses the image of the river to symbolise yard life. The image is introduced dramatically at the fish-fry through Lenrie's song: "De Ribber Ben Come Down". Here is a combination of two artistic devices (image and song). This distinction is however absent in the novel because Mais subsumes technique in the mainstream of the narrative. But for the sake of analysis, the river symbolises life, and the re-enactment of crossing flooded and bridgeless rivers signifies the precariousness of yard life. One would thus be right to suggest that beneath the dramatic act is a celebration of life. At the end of it, "all laughed and bright tears stood in the eyes of some to witness that they still understood the meaning of miracles" (52).

The image of the river and the songs that embody it also enhance the yarders' limited vision. Although the floods are imagined, it is quite clear that the yarders cannot tame the wild river. This not only testifies to their helplessness at the force of nature but also how narrow their interpretation of phenomena can be. Mais here uses the theme of nature renewing itself against the loneliness and weakness of the human being.

Like the river, the image of the hill recurs in Mais' novels. The Hills... got its title from a hymn sung by a revivalist group: "They clapped their hands alleluya and the hills were joyful together" (109). This was a song pierced together out of some lines from one Psalm. That it should bestow to the novel its title is a comment on the significance of the image of the hill.

To fully understand this image we need to look at its occurrence in both The Hills... and Brother Man. While at the acme of his spiritual possession, the protagonist in Brother Man retires to Warrieka hills for three days and nights (109). Another important thing to note is that he is commanded to write down his autobiography while in meditation on the hill. The hill in this instance is imbued with religious significance. It symbolises a

spiritual fulfilment that transcends mundane standards. This is illustrated physically by the vertical remove of the hill from level land. The hill is a symbol of hope and life.

A similar meaning of the symbol is expressed in a poem titled "All men come to the Hills", written by Mais. Part of its lines are:

All men come to the hills
Finally,
Men from the deeps of plains of the sea -
where a wind - in the sail is hope
that they desire, and long weariness fulfills -
All men with dusty broken feet
seeking again the souls deeps -
far from the tumult of wave
come to the hills
come over finally (in Figuiroa, Caribbean
Voices 98).

As the hill marked the apex of Bra' Man's religious experience and the height of the revivalist's spiritual excitement (The Hills) so does it, in the poem above, become the ultimate resting point for the physically weary and those starved spiritually. The poet uses the modal word "finally" to forcefully bring out the sigh of relief that accompanies the hill as a symbol of that ultimate satisfaction of man's yearnings.

Bro In Mais' art one image does not have a permanent meaning to every character in the novel. The image of the "hills" in some sections of The Hills..., for example, has an absolutely different meaning from the above stated. While Rema agonizes, the writer reintroduces the hill image: "they were joyful, they were dancing. They came prancin' down from up yonder with a thunder-roll" (207). What was a source of joy and everlasting hope to the revivalists, the sisters of charity and Bra' Man is now a fountain of dread for Rema. This is a significant variation because it helps us to appreciate Mais' use of imagery.

San Mais, as we had noted earlier, appropriately marries his images to situations. In the above case, he uses the hill image to enable the reader take notice of Rema's madness. In fact the meaning of the hill to Rema portrays to the reader her paranoia and confusion. Her unsound mental state turns the image upside down to correspond to it. It is noticeable that the image here ties up with other fear-transmitting images such as darkness and night. All these have a bearing to the trauma of Rema's consciousness.

In addition to commentary, all images and symbols in Mais' novels have thematic importance. With regard to

Brother Man, Brathwaite has given an excellent analysis of the image of the bird and how it thematically penetrates all sections of the novel (Baugh 107-109). For him the trapped bird is Minnette, Bra' Man's spirit, and it also symbolizes hope of life and the fact of death. Unlike Brother Man in which an image cuts across the whole expanse of the novel, images in The Hills... vary in response to the story's shifts. They vary with the mood of the participants, with time and place. The images, however, are more pronounced and have certain themes woven around them.

The prison wall (The Hills...) has been described by Sandra Pouchet as "the dominant image" in the novel (qtd in King 68) and by Williamson as "the central image ..., both physical and figurative" (143). Although a late entry in the novel, the prison grows into an imposing aspect of the novel. It is described in terms of unfeeling walls:

Walls, walls and all that passed
between them a man unmanned,
un-countenanced, given over to the
naked stare of self-pity society,
and the cankering, unyielding sore enclosed
within these walls a man was shut
from light like a seed struggling towards
sunlight between stones All men
enclosed within these deadening walls,
within this sightless, unfeeling darkness
stayed here with generations of lost
men. (208, 209)

The image of the wall in The Hills... operates at two levels. First is the level above where it is directly tied to the prison and its immediate shortcomings. The image is used to reinforce the degrading conditions of the prison. Both Surjue and the Chaplain help to highlight the wanton negation of life in the prison. Thus the walls in their defiant callousness represent "torture, bitterness and degradation of the whip and the bludgeon" (209). The debasement symbolised by the walls dominates Surjue's definition of a prisoner:

a prisoner, criminal was a man who had lost his right to be considered a man, he was just an animal; but they treated animals better there was no law protecting criminals as such, and nobody had ever heard of a man being jailed or hanged, or even fined for something he had done to a criminal under his charge (139).

Surjue's position would have been dismissed as a prisoner's bitterness blown out of proportion were it not for the backing given by the Chaplain. The latter observes that "there is absolutely no parole system in this country. It is not provided in the penal code" (236). Hence a prisoner becomes a distant victim of judicial loopholes in his country; and thus a victim of injustice.

At a second level Mais turns the image of the wall around to signify a whole society - the yard. The Chaplain acts as the most important character through whom the journey to this interpretation is made possible. On contemplating about the prison he finds it "a very interesting institution ... it provides a curious sidelight to the human character" (198). And in this observation is provided a vital bridge between the prison and the wider human society. The walls have a catalytic effect on the Chaplain's conscience: "walking between the wall and the wall we come to a question with the baffled wind ... we listen to the jangling laughter of our chains" (164).

Upto this far Mais' walls have been transformed from mere concrete barriers around a prison to a metaphor of a humanity trapped and confined within a socio-economic cage. The wall is an appropriate metaphor because

it is an essential feature of a metaphor that there must be a certain distance between tenor and vehicle. Their similarity must be accompanied by a feeling of disparity; they must belong to different spheres of thought. If they are too close to one another, they cannot produce the perspective of "double vision" peculiar to metaphor (Ullmann 214).

The ground of comparison between prison walls and Mais' society are the common qualities of confinement and discomfort characteristic to both. Once this bond has been established Mais' image becomes effectively operational. The walls, enlarged beyond the prison scene, now symbolise the barriers that tether the yarders to the malnourished yard and inhibit their vision.

Mais also relates the image of the wall to the inner make-up of his characters. This is best illustrated in the person of Rema. One is bound to notice that the more the wall image is concretised and made clearer, the worse Rema's insanity becomes and the nearer to catastrophe she draws. But Mais also exploits the occasion to expose the subtle irony of imprisonment. Through the Chaplain it is submitted that "they are punishing an innocent, helpless woman, much more than they are this guilty man" (237).

When functioning at the second broader level, the wall-image is strengthened by other supportive images. These are images of darkness, night and moon which intersperse the narrative, adding up to the novels' sense of uncertainty, decay, suffering and incarceration. They also tell of and even transmit the subliminal fear that

attacks the yarders. Such a technique is an economical yet powerful way of showing the bond between social depravity symbolised by walls and the anguish within the individual.

Mais' novels have numerous images. But from the few that we have analysed, it is, we hope, clear that the images in his novels operate like a set of mirrors superimposed on each other and the picture in one having a bearing on the reflection in the other. That is to say that they have a causal relationship. Each relates to one another. And through each of the resultant impressions Mais strives to appeal to the reader in ways far beyond the predictable sphere of words. He tasks our imagination and excites our probing into the inner meaning of his novels.

A discussion on Mais' style would be incomplete without a mention of his use of language in the ordinary non-figurative sense. Language is a writer's tool of trade and the raw material out of which he shapes his artifice. In the caribbean islands, language is a sub-set of the wider socio-political and economic Milieu.

Katrin Noris has described Jamaica as a "schizophrenic society" (10). Noris aptly identifies the dilemma confronting West Indians. The writer in such a society is bound to tell the culturally confused masses the truth about their reality. His is a process of re-education and its success wholly depends on effective communication. Yet the plight of the writer is aggravated when it is acknowledged that the West Indian is a heir to a multiplicity of cultures, languages and thought systems.

The linguistic problem is one of the biggest problems haunting the West Indian writer today.⁴ Little surprise then that his crucial role has continued to be a question of how best to represent Jamaican speech forms in written style while at the same time, retaining their authentic sound associations. Even in his best attempts, the West Indian writer is weighed down by the near-impossibility of evoking or building up desired linguistic responses in print.

Mais' novels are written against this background, and the author grapples with some of these impediments. Mais struggles to give a truthful picture of the yard.

Painting the solidity of the setting is one virtue of the

realistic tradition Mais exploits. The use of local colour to re-state the Jamaicanness of the objects of his art is the other. This is necessary because Mais' books are concerned with an alienated people who lack the advantage of a comprehensive sense of community. Largely, however, this is Mais' own response to the language question.

In both The Hills... and Brother Man Mais alternates the popular slum idiom with standard English forms. Formal English is reserved for the descriptive narrative voice. Dialect, on the other hand, is used mainly in dialogue. Mais also distinguishes individual ways of speech. For example, Papacita's "jargon of the smart man-about town" (Thorpe 5) differs from Bra' Man's simple manner of speech.

Dialect is a major way through which Mais imitates the speech patterns of the slum dwellers. For instance Jesmina addresses Cordy:

Don't 'fraid nuttin', don't mek
nuttin' 'fraid you, don't mek
nuttin' fret you, everyt'ing going'
be alright (16).

We notice from the above that Mais resorts to phonetic spellings that imply creole speech forms. The constrictions, lexical and grammatical features in the speech quoted above give a conceptual sense of the spoken words and tend to be as faithful to natural speech idioms of the people as possible. In the dialogue the verbal meaning "'fraid" is used where English would demand the preposition "be".

Both The Hills... and Brother Man are full of examples of the author's use of dialect. Realistic novels in practice effect a "correspondence between the literary work and the reality which it imitates" (Watt 11). Mais' use of language, in the same vein, reflects more on his social environment and experiences. Dialect in fact provides the yarders and the author alike with more than a linguistic need. It constitutes, particularly for the yarders, part of their spiritual and imaginative insulation against a hostile surrounding.

We need to elaborate on the statements above. Our argument is that language is both a mode of communication and also a testimony to a people's social, economic and cultural background. It is also the most handy tool that

man uses in his response to his environment. Although Mais as an artist uses it as a functional tool, dialect in his novels can best be appreciated if put in its socio-historical and economic context.

There are two possible approaches to the above. One is language from the writer's viewpoint and whereby the case is reducible to identifying a suitable medium of communication, what Le Page calls the "bridge between personal language" in which the writer is most fluent and the "common language" of the reader (Baugh 123). Two, is dialect as a social enterprise, a shared speech form. Taken both ways, dialect has sublime implications of social currents that have come together to produce it. The shared grammatical structures are sustained by the existence of some social consensus; a shared way of life, thinking and of talking. Thus when it is communicated at the fish fry that "Big Massa tek pit" 'pon we poor" (The Hills ... 39), the basic and immediate concern of the yarders is not with the correctness of the wording but rather with the sense being put across.

Dialect in this perspective illuminates our understanding of Mais' yarders. Being a class far-removed from the well-off Kingstonian community, the yarders are

also linguistically set apart. Their speech forms are as different from standard English as their economic status is low. Bailey in Jamaican Creole Syntax writes about creole thus;

compared to the source languages from which they draw their lexicon, their inflectional content is exceedingly meagre, so that the grammatical information is carried almost entirely by the syntax system (6).

Bailey's statements apply to the dialogue in Mais' novels. What strikes us is the dialect's apparent limited vocabulary. In Brother Man the chorus comments: "Little star dem a-peep out one-one" (56). This sentence illustrates the lexical "poverty" of dialect. The speaker hence resorts to tactical devices to express his message. The duplications of this kind-"one-one"- in part enlarge the functional power of a limited vocabulary. Dialect speakers make wide use of such increament words.⁵

There is a correspondence between the language of the yarders and their vision of life. Both have deeply ingrained shortcomings. As the yarders strive to take command of their surroundings by enlarging dialect's communicative potential so do they struggle to expand

their meagre earnings and sense of achievement. Similarly the yarders need a language to express their predicament. This explains the use of dialect because, as Creary writes,

in cases of great distress West Indians either revert to dialect or find themselves without a language for the situation. Their use of standard English is formal and non-emotional. It is external to their deepest feeling and thinking, and its meaning pattern are liable to break down at the most surprising times (qtd in James 18).

The truth in Creary's statements becomes clear when a closer textual look is made at the dialogic sections in Mais' novels. The "language of the situation" for the characters range from the use of euphemism (e.g. Manny's reference to venereal disease as "man-sick" or the community's description of adultery as "wearing another man's jacket") to the exclamations and swear words used.

Mutually incorporated in the language of Mais' novels are biblical idioms. Mais' deep religious upbringing is one possible explanation for this. But it should be added that the biblical allusions in his novels also emerge from his own keen observation of Jamaican peasantry to whom the "sixteenth century prose of King James' Bible is part of their speech" (Creary in James 56). Mais' third novel, Black Lightning was written under the influence of a

sacrosanct biblical legend - the story of Samson, Delilah and the Philistines. His books have numerous biblical allusions and archaisms.

In The Hills... and Brother Man Mais makes use of a big number of the above. In Brother Man for instance a lot of attention is given to Minette's reading of the story of David, the Armonites and the Syrians (45-48). But it is the hymn - with all its religiosity-that Mais exploits to the maximum. In these two novels the hymn has ritualised wording and a mystical force which make it a significant device. Although located in the mainstream of the story, the hymn also makes insightful comments on the narrative.

At times the hymn is an extension of a character's mind or of the chorus. In Brother Man, Hortense sings,

nobody knows de trouble I've seen
nobody knows but Jesus,
nobody knows de trouble I've seen -
Glory hallelujah (33).

Hortense is an extremely marginal character whose appearance in the novel hardly exceeds a mere mention. But her song is perfectly merged with the temper and

enhance our understanding of Mais's
concerns.

texture of the novel. In meaning it sweeps across the yard before being concretised in Minette. The hymn articulates Minette's secret longings: to have Bra' Man as her man. It also gives an adequate expression of the weight of her experiences on the streets as a whore.

The major function of the hymn as a stylistic device in Mais' novels is to concretise experiences and feelings and aspirations of the yarders. It captures Tansy's tiresome and laborious chores (21), and Charlotta sings to "keep from breaking down and weeping" (141). When used by the most religious the hymn creates a solemn mood in the novels. Most importantly, however, is that it links up with the broader theme of religion and clarifies how religion is used to subjectivise reality and make it arbitrary.

In this chapter we have analysed some of the stylistic features used in Mais novels. Our analysis was aimed at evaluating the function of each feature. Mais' novels use a wide range of artistic strategies. But the few that we have analysed point to a careful choice on the part of the author and an even careful integration of the feature with the entire work. We have hence indicated how features of style enhance our understanding of Mais' vision and thematic concerns.

In the next chapter we shall undertake a critical evaluation of the author's vision of society. The previous chapter identified the fictional world Mais' novels deal with. In the next chapter we hope to identify the central world view, the vision that influences Mais' preference for particular settings. We also hope to see in what respects the author's vision informs his style.

ENDNOTES

1. For discussions on style see Murray's The Problem of Style, Enkvist's Linguistics and Style, David and Ann Modern Literary Theory (54-61) and Wellek and Warren (174ff).
2. A brief summary of some of these positions will suffice to illustrate our point. In his study on style and worldview in Mais' two novels, D'Costa termed Mais style "copious, undisciplined ... calculatedly vulgar ... unconsciously banal, very often poetic ... sometimes elegantly simple and sometimes a discord of ill-chosen modes" (59-60). D'Costa's comment constitutes a vital caution to the problem awaiting any student of Mais' style: Mais' novels are characterised by a multiplicity of artistic strategies. Edward Brathwaite (Baugh 103-112) has, with commendable success, given Brother Man a musical interpretation. Gerald Moore (85-92) on the other hand identifies and discusses theatrical tools used by Mais in The Hills... Coulthard describes Mais' two novels as "crudely realistic" (McLeod 194) while Creary finds the plot in The Hills ... "uneven and episodic, diverted by a multiplicity of subsidiary characters" (James 58).
3. "Polyphony" is a term borrowed from music where it refers to "a number of more or less independent melodic lines performed together" (Georg Herzog in Maria Leach's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend New York: Funk and Wagnalls 1950 Pp 1031-1050). Polyphonic novels are characterised by a multiplicity of unmerged consciousnesses and voices. Each voice in the novel has its equal rights and its own identifiable world. For further reference see Michael Holquist's "The Politics in Representation" in Allegory and Representation: Selected Papers From the English Institute 1979 - 1980 (New series No. 5) ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press 1981) pp 172-173.

4. James' introduction to The Islands in Between addresses this issue. See also Le Page, Gordon Rohlehr, Mervyn Morris, John Figueroa and Gerald Moore in Baugh (121-161). In addition consider Taylor, Todd, Bailey and Hymes.
5. Todd (9-10) lists the following among the uses of increament words or reduplications: (a) cut down on the number of homophones in the language (b) intensify or modify the meaning of a single form (c) imply repeated or protracted action. See also Cassidy in Hymes (208-215).

CHAPTER FOUR

AN EVALUATION OF ROGER MAIS' VISION

The last two chapters have shown the mutual interlink between theme and vision and style and vision. They have also made clear varied visions held by different characters in Roger Mais' novels. The visions projected include the religious and moral vision embraced by the Chaplain and Bra' Man, a vision of despair demonstrated in the physical decay of the setting, Bra' Man's selflessness and an aesthetic that encourages individualism witnessed in Manny's and Papacita's search for spurious glory. What is common to all these positions is that each is a commentary on the deficiencies of the barrack-yard.

The current chapter seeks to assess Mais' overall vision. First, however, we ought to recapitulate certain ideas about vision. Vision is more than just the stance adopted by an individual character in a novel. We have, in our earlier discussions, already equated it to the underlying principle in any artistic structure. It is, in fact that unifying thread and a framework that guides an author's perception of reality. Accordingly, vision influences the manner in which details of an artifact are patterned.

Vision can further be seen as a system of meaning with whose help events become coherent to an author. In all the instances listed here vision is built upon certain assumptions. These assumptions are a result of an individual's effort to approximate the nature and meaning of life. It must be added that vision in fiction is interiorised in the work of art.

But vision in Roger Mais' novels confronts us with a situation which at first sight seems contradictory. There appears to be a problem of diverse and often times conflicting viewpoints. Great temptations are imbedded in this. They include the possibility of isolating a character or passage and using this to generalise about the author's vision. Further there is the risk of surface visions blurring the more transverse and basic vision. Equally high is the possibility to dismiss the novels as lacking in a definite vision.

Given that this chapter argues together with Morris Dalphine that "what seems like formlessness is actually part of Mais' technique to contain his vision in his art" (xvii), the primary questions to be resolved become: Can we establish the overriding vision behind the motley and variegated surface of viewpoints at work in Mais' novels?

Alternatively, who or what within the compositional structure of these novels is the vehicle of Mais' vision? These are crucial questions to be answered if one hopes to identify the overall vision in Mais' writings.

The most viable approach to identifying and discussing Roger Mais' vision needs to begin with a recognition of the existence of sets of opposed positions in the texts. These can be reduced roughly to positions of decay and renewal. This duality is manifest in Mais' choice and use of both imagery and character, most of which are paired opposites. Thus we have day and night, light and darkness, death and life, Bra' Man and Bra'Ambo or Surjue and Flitters. Kenneth Ramchand in an introduction to Listen the Wind and Other Stories identifies this patterning and explains it in these words,

a major impulse in all his work is to give expression to contraries even while seeking to raise a consciousness of the underlying or essential harmony (vii).

The above is true of Mais' writings. Mais constantly reminds his reader of both the subtle contradictions in life and a certain basic unity. The recurrent image of death in The Hills..., for instance, also implies that death is but one side of the coin of being; life is the

other and these two need to be considered side by side if each has to be well appreciated. For this reason there is always something mysterious, terrifying yet suggestive about Mais' imagery, and it boils down to this: that individual detail in Mais' novels points out to a general significance.

Let us take the example of "night" and "death". The narrator in The Hills... comments;

the night speaks with a thousand
whispers, but a single voice ... do
not be deceived by a multiplicity
of sounds ... do not be dismayed
by the myriad murmurs ... death
speaks with a thousand whispers
but a single voice (131 - 132).

This passage elaborates on the novel's vision. Like the numerous "whispers" of night and death, positions held by individual characters in the novels are outer manifestations of the basic vision. The basic mystery built in Mais' imagery implies a tension life. Life as created in The Hills... and Brother Man is erected upon internal conflicts as well as attempts to reconcile these conflicts. There is here in the very fact of human existence a paradox. And this is a significant tenet of Roger Mais' vision of life.

Mais highlights this paradox through parallel narration examples of which have been discussed in chapter three. He also enhances these contradictions by use of coincidence and foreboding. A striking example of coincidence is the climactic ending of both novels. In Brother Man the pendulum of public opinion suddenly swings against Bra' Man. The novel's hero, now a victim, is destroyed by the wrath of his own society. He pays for crimes he did not commit, (conterfeiting and murder) because of the misfortune of coincidence. Happenings in the yard, the mischief of Bra' Ambo and Cordy, and Bra' Man's own practical innocence are all married only to explode.

Closely related to coincidence is the mysterious force of foreboding. Rema, in The Hills..., has a prior, instinctive but vague fear that Surjue will be arrested. She confides in Zephyr that she "felt it coming for weeks. I had dreams, I was scared, I begged an' begged ... He wouldn't lessen to me" (121). It is most probable that Mais through Rema's premonition, intimates that man has a remote sense which predicts catastrophe. Mere sensation, however, does not guarantee any ability to avert disaster. As evidenced in the novels, this is an instinctive affair that lies outside the governance of reason.

Nonetheless these techniques enhance the contradictions in human life. On the surface they might appear to be sheer contrivance. But when looked at closely they are found to be an illustration of the intervention in human affairs by what George Steiner has called "forces which can neither be fully understood nor overcome by rational prudence" (8). That these forces exist is not reason enough to deter man from trying to "fully understand" himself and his environment. Therefore Mais continues to highlight the "indomitable will of the people" (Dabydeen and Tagoe 18) of the yard.

From the foregoing we can deduce that the mystery at work in Mais' imagery partly results from a vision of life informed by the author's observation of the tragic nature of life in the broad sense of the word. This is because his novels emphasise ideas of suffering, tensions and convulsions, contradictions and fruitless endeavours to evade that which cages man. Mais' characters are enclosed in a context of suffering. The author mirrors their struggle to survive, which efforts are inescapably tragic. Such an outlook is tragic.

There is need to expound on the nature of a tragic vision so as to be in a better position to discuss Mais'

novels. Tragic vision¹ takes special notice of man's unrealised and continued search for a purpose and meaning in life. It also parades calamities likely to arise in the event of this quest not being fulfilled. Crucial to the tragic outlook is the paradoxical position of man in the universe. Danziger and Johnson have explained this tragic aspect of life in these lines:

tragic vision gives attention to the most problematic parts of human life and presents these in the most serious form. The themes that seem to recur... have to do with the terrible precariousness of human existence, ... tragic vision gives a much more complex appraisal ... seeing man in Pope's phrase as the "glory, jest and riddle of the world" (95).

Tragic vision mirrors the above ambivalence and contradictions in human life. This makes irony its essential component because conflicts in human tragedy seem to result from positions apparently predisposed to remain irreconcilable. The lifeblood of the tragic vision, however, is not to harmonise but to define and illuminate the tensions, ambiguities, imbedded in man and, in showing them, bears witness to the richness and diversity of human abilities and endurance.

Apart from conflicts, human suffering is a significant ingredient of the tragic vision. The suffering is a logical consequence of the tragic conflicts in life. For that reason, the combatants in the conflicts are usually human beings, human emotions and aspirations. The special role of suffering in tragedy is that it enhances the conflicts and highlights the break between character on the one hand and values aspired to or hopes on the other.

On top of revealing man's vulnerability on earth tragic vision also makes man responsible for his own predicament. Therefore the series of conflicts observed in a tragic view of life are partly conflicts instigated or abated by man. They arise from human error, either of thought or character.

In the light of the observations made above a relevant question to consider would then be: Does Roger Mais posit the view of the tragic destiny of man in his novels? Or, is the trend in his books a movement towards an irreversible catastrophe in spite of assurances of hope? Answers to these questions will determine how faithful Mais' novels are to the model outlined above.

The most outstanding aspect of Mais' novels is the widespread disorder they capture. This is clearly shown by the author's descriptions examples of which include "weary trickle of water", dilapidated brick step", obscenely grinning ... green and white gate", "anaemic looking sky" and "little dowdy shops".² Setting is a powerful force in the lives of the yarders. Its starkness and insecurity breeds fear. Mais' description of the setting is an indicator of its socio-economic dislocation.

Whereas the point of fact is that Mais' vision is sharpened by such deliberate portrayal of details, we shall modify this slightly and agree with Raymond Williams that

the tragic action in its deepest sense is not a confirmation of disorder but its expression, its comprehension and its resolution (83).

Mais' detailed descriptions have to be seen thus; as aids in the evocation of a world of oppression. They enhance the author's intention to portray aberrations of slum life, the desperation, self-delusion as well as possibilities of regeneration. Largely, however, the

tragic action in Mais' novels arises from the manner in which characters assume positions and live up to them to the point of self-annihilation. Because there is little room for personal exploration, these assumed positions master and corrupt the characters' free will. Usually these positions arise from false consciousness. This is applicable to both Cordelia and Rema whose consciousness caused them pain. Their tragedy comes at their moment of recognition: Cordy of her helpless situation and Rema of the fact of Surjue's absence.

It is, however, Bra' Man and Surjue who fully illustrate the point at hand. Bra' Man has an excessive sympathetic understanding of the predicament of others. He is extravagantly generous, "always giving money to people who didn't need it" (31). He saves "so little for himself and so much for others, that he could give that little he had to succour another whose need he thought greater than his "(23). Although a consistency of purpose is noticeable here with regard to his self-conceived role, Bra' Man absolutises faith and this brings about his tragedy.

Like Bra' Man, Surjue has a capacity to choose whether or not to take part in the robbery. Let us point out that

choice is part of a character's effort to survive inescapable fate, and this therefore makes tragedy a kind of conspiracy between choice and fate. Because of his pride Surjue falls prey to Flitters' allurements. The latter needed only a little confidence to win over Surjue's inflated ego. He entices Surjue with a promise of wealth:

Jesus, a man should have to
live in a yard like this! ...
A guy like you ought to get
on, 'stead of being 'stuck
down on one place ... you
were born lucky Surjue,
(24, 96, 97).

Rema correctly terms Flitters the Anancy, the hero-spider of trickster tales; "Smooth and trickfied". In spite of her protestations, Surjue is lured into crime. Although Flitters is the path that leads Surjue to his doom, one can rightly say that Surjue is not only a victim of Flitters' cunning but also of his own pride. Surjue suffers in a bid to better his life through robbery.

The core of Surjue's downfall is comparable to Papacita's careless confidence and pride. However, it is clear that in both cases, as in Bra' Man's case, Mais considers "limitations and obsessions of humanity" (oates

14) as factors that precipitate and at times define tragedy. Both characters lack a questioning instinct or are too trusting, one in his innocence, the other his imaginary courage.

There is in all the cases above a bitter conflict within the individual. Surjue is suspended between Rema's caution and Flitters' persuasion; Bra' Man between showing his innocence and taking Minette's warning. Either choice is a choice between selfish motive and spiritual obligation. Each of the characters fails to strike a balance between the two and gives in to one. The spiritual triumphs in Bra' Man and the selfish in Surjue. Neither ends in fulfilment. This imbalance and tension within the individual is part of the basic contradictions confounding man that Roger-Mais captures. But what is tragic about both characters is that the suffering they undergo surpasses the cause and guilt by an excess of pain.

Mais' novels move towards an irreversible catastrophe. They show how basic contraries are tearing the individual apart. This happens irrespective of certain promises of hope. The near success of Surjue's escape attempt is an overt instance of a hope nibbed in the bud. In Bra' Man's story the hope is symbolised by

Nathaniel's visit and a "great light (that) glowed across the sky" (191). The two represent his vision of promise. Bra' Man can entertain thoughts about hope in the very midst of bad experiences.

The fact that these characters are hopeful somehow enobles them and spells something positive about the novels. Bra' Man's boundless determination that draws its strength from religion and a burning sense of right and Surjue's courage are two distinct virtues in the novels. And so are Zephyr's and Minnette's ceaseless yet honest concern. The two dramatise the words of Zephyr: "We got to help one another its just natural for people to help one another" (123). Dabydeen and Tagoe have written that the "degraded woman of the slum for all her poverty and constriction, often possesses a generosity of spirit" (44). These words apply to no other female character in Mais' novels better than they do to Minnette and Zephyr.

Mais' novels are arranged in such a manner that not even the above are permanent grounds of hope. Mais' vision of life is that man's activities, on top of his own doing, are also determined by forces beyond his control. The essence of the tragic in Mais' novels can be explained in Orr's words:

the tragic lies in the irreparable loss occasioned by the experience the hero has undergone the loss lies initially not in the character or hero but in the events themselves. It is embedded in the web of social relationships of which the hero is the focal point (15).

Mais' characters are simply the "focal point" of a tragic experience that eclipses a whole community. Individual experience in the novels is but a symptom of the yard's missing sense of harmony. Not even the natural world is spared. Everything in Mais' novels seems set on edge and awaits its own moment of explosion. We have already discussed Bra' Man's symbolic significance which illustrates what sort of focal point a character can be. Using characters as a tangent we can safely say that the "irreparable loss" in the context of Mais' novels is estimated in terms of human effort, life and hope gone to ruin.

The overall picture in Mais' novels is that of Man's losing struggle against social and natural forces. This goes on in defiance of the glimpses of hope that are offered. Mais hence depicts man's tragic "inability to transcend his fate" (Oates 18). We shall illustrate this point using the example of Flitters. Flitters' escape

from his trackers is a comment about inescapable fate. Mais records the futility of Flitters' escape attempt as follows:

they know where he lived the places he went everything about him. They knew he had gone to the Cuban consul for a visa they had been shadowing him, checking up on him for weeks. They sat in judgement on him, according to their own code of justice, and had found him worthy of death (222).

The repetition of "they" emphasizes the overwhelming presence of doom for Flitters. That "they" is anonymous also stresses the mystery of fate, although felt it is unknown. Flitters' escape like Surjue's becomes a defiance against the inevitable.

The imagery used in Mais' novels also throws light to this position. An image such as "yard" transmits a sense of confinement comparable in terms of restriction only to the prison walls. The "river" implies the precariousness of life in the alley. And "hills" represent some of the yarders' lofty aspirations. At times Mais uses imagery as a matter of psychological mutation to enhance the sense of tragedy in the novels. When applied thus tragic experience is portrayed in terms of an interplay between

the psychological and the physical worlds. Mostly this is done in scenes that depict intense grief, neurotic fear or madness. For instance, there is a fusion of image and destiny in Rema's case. One such image is that of "night". The author writes about it in these words:

the night overlaid her. She was defenceless like one in a deep sleep manacled by the terror of the dream (170).

The night and images like "moon" and "darkness" are to Rema's mind what the prison walls are to Surjue. They are bold external marks of an internal problem. Nature hence becomes a backcloth to and a reflector of Mais' vision.

Mais' characters, it can hence be argued, are caught up in the movements of yard life as though they were in a net. Each of their actions is restricted. T.R. Henn has written on the sense in which a net works as a metaphor for the tragic experience. Henn writes,

there is no escape above or below though there may be for a time, an illusion of freedom, of space to manoeuvre, even a sense of companionship with others in misfortune and a strengthening of courage thereby (37).

The confining net in Mais' case is the yard. The moments of gaeity are the time of "illusive freedom". However for Mais' characters the freedom is real for as long as it lasts. Mais broadens his net to include forces of circumstances.

Fate in Mais' novels is imposed upon character through the use of chance, coincidence and foreboding: That Nickoll should wake up at the last possible moment to shoot Surjue, that Bra' Man's house is searched soon after his narration of the velta story and how she had betrayed him, that Papacita's death is heralded by a broken mirror whose superstitious associations Papacita believes in, that Euphemia is killed after the wallacy - susu anecdote and that she must die in similar fashion. The list is undoubtedly much longer than this but these serve to illustrate Man's encounter with that which is both coincidental and inevitable.

In spite of the obvious futility of human effort, Mais' novels are both realistic and tragic. What is realistic yet tragic about them is that they depict man's unrealised but continuing search for purpose in life: Bra' Man, Surjue, the dying Bedosa, Charlotta, Bra Ambo - all

do not surrender. This vision originates from the urban tension plus the author's overall assessment of human destiny.

As with Henn's metaphorical net, there is innate optimism in both The Hills... and Brother Man. Henn states his optimism thus:

Man's struggle with himself
and with circumstances (has) its
own virtue; whether in the hope
that the net may one day be
broken or in the good
that accrues from the suffering (41).

Hope in Mais' novels could be seen in the light of the above. Accordingly the resilience of Bra' Man's spirit, Surjue's indefatigable determination, and Charlotta's hope are all shades of subtle hope in the decay and poverty of the yard. Like the unflagging Manny, these characters are hardly overwhelmed by suffering. Hope in this context is inseparable from the impulse - however minor - to move or the will to be free. Granted that some of Mais' characters possess a compelling impulse to be free from the chains of the yard it is plausible to argue that this attests to their individual value.

Vision affects the presentation of character and structure. Mais' tragic vision also explains the characters in and structure of his novels. His characters are chosen and depicted in circumstances that precipitate tragedy, the deprived slums. But Maisian tragedy engulfs man in a much broader way. The author, as earlier stated shows the relationship between character and concrete reality so as to widen the base of tragedy. This relationship can be expressed in the words of Lukacs:

and life. Similarly the contradictions and paradoxes of

image and

of personality are interdependent: the stronger the one, the stronger the

other. Underlying both is lack of a consistent view of human nature.

Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated experiential fragment; he is as inexplicable to others as to himself (26)

This is the truth of the association between man the the physical world in Mais' novels. Individual limitation and that of place inspire characters into actions which in turn catapult them into tragedy. The disparity between ultimate human aspirations and the social system can also be seen at group level whereby the yard becomes incompatible with wider urban practices. Most important is the fact that the parallelism between inner disintegration of personality and breakup in the outer

world enhance the sense of tragic doom fostered by the novels.

END NOTES

In addition to character delineation, Mais' style is tuned to the tragic tension apparent in the character. The interpenetration of subplots for instance, helps in the creation of a cyclic movement of life that continuously runs one into the other. Indeed this has mild suggestions that Mais is detailing a cyclic of death and life. Similarly the contradictions and paradoxes of images and the symbols discussed have to be seen in this light. All are keyed towards the tragic in the yard.

This chapter sought to briefly establish and clarify the basic vision in Roger Mais' novels. It has been argued that Mais' view of life is essentially tragic because the author perceives man in terms of struggle. It has been further argued that what at first looked like disparate visions of individual characters are not symptoms of lack of an overall vision. On the contrary, they are multiple aspects of the tragic vision. This chapter has pointed out that the pressures of urban life influenced the formation of such a view of life. But Mais develops his vision into fully fledged novels where both concerns and style illuminate this vision.

END NOTES

1. A considerable amount of literature has been written on tragic realism, especially under the umbrella theory of tragic realism. The term "tragic realism" is a coinage of Erich Auerbach (Mimesis trans. Williard Tresk, Princeton, 1953) but theoretical views on tragedy go as far back as Aristotle's classical Greece. The historical development of the tragic form and vision had principally centred on two areas: character and action. In our brief survey, we use ideas from Draper, Oates, Williams, Orr and Steiner.
2. See The Hills... (9 - 11) and Brother Man (7).

CONCLUSION.

This study set out to identify and discuss Roger Mais' vision in both The Hills Were Joyfull Together and Brother Man. From the onset we acknowledged the fact that writers usually hope to offer essential insights into human condition. Granted this, their works are in the main pictures of society. These pictures, however, are inevitably shaped by what their creators perceive life to be. This perception, this vision, is also a guiding force in any work of art.

The major themes discussed in this study -- poverty, deprivation, fear, search for fulfilment and religion -- correspond well to the setting of the novels. Mais' novels are set in a squalid environment. The monotony of slum life and its poverty breed fear, crime and despair. The words of the preludes in The Hills... articulate this despair:

twenty centuries of Christ had
not assured the world of violence...
We have walked the ultimate ways
of annihilation to the last (164).

Despair, like the prevalent crime is an external manifestation of an underlying grievance or problem in the life of the yarders. To the characters, the basic worry is in part an encounter with a grim reality. The reaction of Mais' characters to their reality, it was argued, is under the law of existence merely an urge to satisfy either an economic, social or psychological need. Whatever the specific factor might be to individual characters, it is clear that both environment and response foreground the misfortune of living captured in Mais' novels.

If the slum constitutes an impasse for some characters in the novels, Mais, on the contrary, saw in the slums creative possibilities that could enable him to explore a people's frustration, pain, fantasy and brutality; their whole essence as human beings. For Mais the novel was in fact a suitable means of exposing social and personal dilemma.

This study also analysed Mais' style in relation to theme and vision. Most of Mais' images, it was established, highlight ideas of fate and suffering. Other techniques used such as parallel narration imitate the movement or build up to catastrophe. Our evaluation of these was that Mais uses technique in general and imagery in particular to illuminate basic contradictions in life. He uses the same to advance the vision of life as both transitory and unpredictable. Cutting across Mais' novels is a preoccupation with human suffering and the inexplicability of certain aspects of human experience. Whereas Mais is a sensitive artist, he does not idealise the tragic experience of his characters.

Both themes and aspects of style evaluated prove that Mais wanted to capture the tragic strain of slum life and a whole range of its inbuilt subtleties. His novels emphasize tensions and surprises, man's paradoxical and vulnerable position in the universe, his psychic torment and sheer irony. This is portrayed in the novels as a struggle to belong.

This thesis has hence demonstrated that what sustains tragedy is not the genre, or the structure, nor is it the type of characters involved, neither is it the kind of flaw or brand of misfortune suffered, but rather it is the tragic vision of life. Accordingly, Mais' vision is in a sense an expression of the social tendencies of his time, especially the waste and the mystery of being.

Whereas this study showed that artists select an appropriate idiom to convey their message, it has also argued that the chosen idiom embodies an author's vision. In fact vision is wrapped around every item in the novel. It is in this way that this study has yielded some insights into the properties of Mais' art that will contribute towards a critical understanding of Mais' writing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bailey, B. L.

Jamaica Creole Syntax.
Cambridge: C.U.P, 1966

Baugh, Edward, ed.

Critics on Caribbean Literature. London: George Allen and Uwin, 1978.

Brathwaite, Edward.

Introduction to Brother Man.

Castells, Manuel.

The Urban Question: a marxist approach. London: Edward Arnold, 1977.

Dabydeen, D and Tagoe, Nana Wilson.

A Reader's Guide to West Indian and Black British Literature. London: Rutherford-Press, 1987.

D'Costa, Jean.

Roger Mais: The Hills Were Joyfull Together and Brother Man Longman, 1978

Figueroa, John

Introduction to Black Lightning.

Caribbean Voices Vol 1.
London: Evans Brothers, 1966.

Fischer, Ernest.

The Necessity of Art: a marxist approach Baltimore: Penguin, 1963.

Freire, Paulo.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
trans M.B Ramos.
Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972.

Frye, Northrop.

Anatomy of Criticism.
Lexington; D.C. Heath and Company, 1961.

Galloway, David.

The Absurd Hero in American Fiction. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1970.

Henn, T. R.

Harvest of Tragedy. London: Methuen and Co., 1956.

Hymes, D. ed.

Pidginization and Creolization of Languages. Proceedings of a conference held at the University of West Indies, Mona, Jamaica April 1968). Cambridge: C.U.P, 1971.

James, Louis, ed.

The Islands in Between. London: O.U.P, 1968.

Johnson, Stacy and
Danziger, Marlies.

Introduction to Literary Criticism. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1961.

King, Bruce, ed.

West Indian Literature. London: Macmillan, 1979.

New English Literature: Cultural nationalism in a changing world. London: Macmillan, 1980.

Luka'cs, Georg.

Studies in European Realism. London: Merlin Press, 1950.

Soul and Form. London: Merlin Press, 1974.

Mais, Roger.

The Hills Were Joyfull Together. London: H.E.B, 1955.

Brother Man. London: H.E.B., 1974 rtp.

Black Lightning. London: Heinemann, 1955.

Listen the Wind and Other Stories, London: Longman, 1986.

Manley, Norman, W.

Norman Washington Manley and the New Jamaica: Selected Speeches and Writings 1938-68 ed. with notes and introduction by Rex Nettleford. Kingston: Longman, 1971.

MCleod, A. L., ed.

Commonwealth Pen. New York: Cornell University Press, 1961.

Moore, Gerald.

The Chosen Tongue. London:
Longman, 1969.

Morris, Dalphine.

Introduction to The Hills Were
Joyfull Together.

Nicole, C.

The West Indies, their peoples
and history. London:
Hutchinson, 1965.

Norris, Katrin.

Jamaica: The search for
identity. London: O.U.P, 1962.

Oates, Joyce Carol.

The Edge of impossibility:
Tragic forms in Literature. New
York: The Vanguard Press, 1972.

Orr, James.

Tragic Realism and Modern
Society. London: MacMillan,
1977.

Platt, Raye et. al.

The European Possessions in the
Caribbean Area. New York:
American Geographical Society,
1941.

Ramchand, Kenneth.

The West Indian Novel and its
Background. London: Faber and
Faber, 1970.

Steiner, George.

The Death of Tragedy. London:
Faber and Faber, 1961.

Smith, M. G. et el.

The Ras Tafari Movement in
Kingston Jamaica. Institute of
Social and Economic Research,
Univ. of West Indies, 1960.

Swingewood, Allen.

The Novel and Revolution.
London: Macmillan, 1975.

Taylor, D.

Languages of West Indies.
Baltimore: The John Hopkins
Univ. Press, 1977.

Thorpe, Marjorie.

Roger Mais: Brother Man.
London: Longman, 1979.

Todd, L.

Modern Englishes: Pidgins and Creoles. London: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

Trotsky, Leon.

Literature and Revolution.
Michigan: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1971.

Ullmann, Stephen.

Style in the French Novel.
Cambridge, 1957.

Watt, Ian.

The Rise of the Novel.
Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1962.

Walsh, William, ed.

Readings in Commonwealth Literature. London: MacMillan, 1978.

Williams, Raymond.

Commonwealth Literature.
Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949.

Williamson, Karina.

Modern Tragedy. London: Chatto and Windus, 1969.

"Roger Mais: West Indian novelist" in Journal of Commonwealth Literature no. 2, nov 1966 (pp. 138-147).

1950 Colonial Reports on Jamaica. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1951.-