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PARALLEL PATTERNS OF THE DIVINER IN RITUAL AND DETECTIVE
FICTION: AGATHA'S AFRICAN HERCULE POIROTS

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Abstract: There are archetypal parallels between the shamanic African, and 'diviner detectives' like Hercule Poirot, when it comes to tracking down homicidal sorcerers, and witches, on the one hand, and direct Western-style murderers on the other. The Ndembu diviner uses the fall of symbolic figurines or images, and the canny questioning of his clients and suspects to pierce the veil of deceit and reveal the sorcerer or witch. Hercule Poirot uses chance clues, questioning, and his intuition to identify the murderer. Both processes culminate in the binding up of an evil, or at least the yearning for revelation of its source. As such they supply a form of purgation or cure to their respective congregations or guilds of readers. When the practices of diviner and detective are compared at an archetypal level, a universal dramatic pattern or model emerges which reveals that the adventitious clues commonly powering the modern detective narrative along, could have developed from what was, or still is in Africa, the old axiomatic belief that an African god is manipulating the images of divination.

Key Words: shamanic African, diviner detectives, archetype, magician, ritual, Hercule Poirots, Agatha Christie

V. W. Turner aptly describes the North Zambian, Ndembu diviners or magicians, and the manner in which they work at an archetypal level. This work can be seen to resemble that of their Western counterparts: the 'diviner detectives' as I shall call them in this paper. The latter are the prestigious detectives of fictional texts who show seemingly clairvoyant powers when running down their killers. I refer, quite arbitrarily, to figures like Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes; to Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, and P.D. James' Inspector Dalgliesh, among what are scores of others. Of the three, I shall concentrate solely on Hercule Poirot, in what will be a micro-focussing on the eccentric little man as he conducts his investigation into the deaths which take place in Christie's thriller: *Taken at the Flood*. (Henceforth referred to as *TF*: a fictional text which poses the key poetic and mythic entities for my comparative analysis. The latter, I hope, will ultimately support the legitimacy of my theory that the detective novel: its typical plot as exemplified by our chosen text, might well have had its origins in shamanic myths.

Initially, I would like set my analysis in the compass of myth and ritual by reference to Christine A Jackson's *Myth and Ritual in Woman's Detective Fiction*. This work introduces a wide spectrum of opinion as to what myth is, and the more pertinent of these, I would briefly cite. As Jackson, herself, observes: 'Most people consider myths to be a collection of stories from ancient cultures...Because many myths involve magical events impossible in the real world...people often consider myths to be 'untrue' or 'mistaken concepts. However, these same untrue and impossible magical events were believed in by the cultures that created them.¹ Is it not possible, then, that today's ever more popular detective text- duly retransformed into a profane form- is just another part and parcel of present day 'healing 'fiction' like Carlo Castaneda's *The Teachings of Don Juan*, described by Andrei Znamenski. This genre of literature, he notes, typically portrays the narrator: 'overcivilized', or individuals shattered by misfortune, meeting 'an indigenous spiritual teacher who immerses them in the ocean of spiritual wisdom. This involves an 'initiation' for the narrator: a spiritual quest involving physical and moral tests which the candidate usually passes. 'The end result is usually a total transformation of the apprentice's conscience. Eventually the shaman/spiritual teacher tells the candidate that he has become a chosen one endowed with esoteric wisdom'.² In other words, after the 'meeting' or 'separation' of what appears to be a passage rite; after the ordeal of the 'middle' or 'threshold', the novice, or 'initiant' will rejoin or be 're-incorporated' into society with his status enhanced.

Peter Brooks would seem to support the notion of the detective text as 'spiritual' literature. Thus in his discussion of what transpires to be a hermeneutic text: 'The Musgrave Ritual' by Conan Doyle, the contents of a small wooden box, the priceless mess of metal and glass found in the bag

in the lake: its origins and how it came to be there, poses the question that permeates the whole text, and becomes 'a guide to plotting, and which at the last is restored to its- (the texts's)- meaning as rite of passage'.³ Later he notes: 'The detective story, as a kind of dime store modern version of 'wisdom literature' is useful in displaying the double logic most overtly using the plot of the inquest to find, or construct, a story of the crime which will offer just those features necessary to the thematic coherence we call a solution'.⁴

Jackson moves from her general notions of myth to other scholarly commentators like Mircea Eliade, who notes, in his *Myth and Reality*: 'It is impossible to find one definition that will cover all the types and functions of myths that would be acceptable to all scholars and at the same time intelligible to non-specialists...'⁵ This rather negative position is, however, gainsaid by Eliade in one of his earlier earlier publications: *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Here, he sees included in the religious life of any human group at the ethnological level: 'elements of theory (Symbols ... genealogy-myths and so on).' These contain 'truths' and constitute hierophanies, help man protect himself against the meaningless nothingness; to escape from the profane sphere'. This escape is brought about by the repetition of a 'primeval action- a ritual, for instance- accomplished at the beginning of time by a divine being, or mythical figure. An act, he argues, which only had meaning in so far as it repeated a transcendent model; an archetype...The object of that repetition being also to ensure the normality of the act'.⁶ Later in the work he develops this idea of hierophantic time: *illo tempore*, when the creation took place, and all was flux and everything was possible.⁷ A notion I shall return to below.

It is this 'normality' of the act, along with the notion of a repetition of 'an archetype' that can be seen as a prime quality of the plot. It is the latter, as analysed by Claude Levi-Strauss, and then re-examined from an Aristotelian standpoint, that will be seen to share this same exacting 'normality' and repetition: the sense, for me as I read my detective text, that similar acts of murder could well play out in our own household tomorrow; or at least, in the country house over the way. The feeling of certainty, for instance, professed by so many readers, that all these thrillers are, at base, the same- could this be a feeling that arises because the basic pattern of the actions: the plots, in parallel with that of passage rites, which are so persistently present?

By way of an answer we must now turn next to Claude Levi-Strauss whose notions of myth with their paradoxical qualities, are set out in his chapter: 'The Structural 'Study of Myth'. Hence, in the course of these myths 'anything is likely to happen. There is no logic or continuity ... everything becomes possible'. On the other hand, how is it that myth throughout the world is so similar?⁸ For him, it is because, among other things, 'myth is language: to be known, myth has to be told; it is part of human speech'.⁹ This is clear enough, but from hereon are interlarded

propositions about Saussurean distinctions between *langue* and *Parole*; which lead us away from our theme with what Peter Brooks sees fit to describe as Levi-Strauss's interest in the 'atemporal matrix structure of narrative. The basic set of relations which underlies and generates any given mythic narrative¹⁰ is exemplified in the latter writer's approach to the Oedipus myth, which will be treated like a 'musical score', 'as a unilinear series. As succinctly as possible he will- like a street pedlar-explain , 'the functioning of the mechanical toy he is trying to sell'.¹¹ What literally this means is- among other departures- the furnishing of a highly complex compiling of vertical columns referring to the individual actions of Cadmus, Laios, Oedipus, Jocasta, etc., in the myth, from which, in the first column, for instance, we see the 'common feature' is 'the overrating of blood relations, while, finally all the above named involved in the story appear ultimately, to refer to difficulties in walking'.¹²

For our purposes this kind of ingenious, though somewhat singular description is not, at this point, something we can go forward on. Rather more interesting for our thesis is his notion of the differences between myth and the ritual it appears to evolve from.¹³ As a preliminary he happens on Eliade's notion of repetition as a means of ensuring the 'normality' of the ritual act; only he argues: 'The function of repetition is to render the structure of the myth apparent'.¹⁴ The question at this point, then, would seem to be: how did tribal man fashion their myths so that they are both normal seeming and apparent?

I would propose he did this, over time, by contriving a plot: the imitation of an action according to principles which would create the 'make believe' necessary for a performance of a myth on a ritual space before a congregation. This playing or reciting of the story is what Aristotle would call 'the 'imitation of the action, and it would have seemed quite 'normal': apparently a 'slice of life' clearly acted out so the congregation could identify with it as they do with people and events in real life. He saw early and unswervingly into the exact nature of the archetypal plot and the laws necessary to effectively and irrevocably bind it together. My cursory summary of these is taken from S. H. Butcher's *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts*.

Thus, Butcher notes Aristotle's declaration that the first requirement of Tragedy which is the form of drama he is analysing, 'must have unity of action' or the concept of limit. Only by this means 'does the plot become individual and intelligible...at the same time it will gain in universality and typical quality'.¹⁵ A fuller understanding of these general requirements will be obtained if we apply these principles to an actual myth. At hand for this purpose, is Levi-Strauss's version of the N. American, Pawnee 'Myth of the Pregnant Boy' as used in his analysis of the differences between this myth and the episodic contradictions of the ritual it is derived from.¹⁶ The first thing one remarks about this myth is that- as Aristotle insists in his outline of the Unity of Action- the plot or story has a beginning, middle,

and end. But first, the myth:

An ignorant boy becomes aware that he possesses healing powers. An old medicine man, an established shaman, visits him on several occasions with his wife. Enraged that his teaching of the boy draws no secrets from him about his healing powers, he offers the youngster a pipe filled with magical herbs. Bewitched by this, the boy finds himself pregnant. Full of shame he seeks death among the animals. The latter, commiserating with his fate, decide to cure him. They extract the foetus from the body, and teach him their magical powers. With these the boy kills the evil medicine man and becomes himself a famous and respected healer.¹⁷

Here we have a myth shaped so that it could be either recited or performed. Its beginning comes with the boy's awareness of what he is, a healer; the visits of the old shaman and their aftermath follow convincingly according to probability and necessity. The end comes with his enhanced status of healer. The surprise effect of the herbal pipe, the boy's pregnancy and his subsequent shame and retirement into the animal kingdom with its resulting cure, constitutes what for Aristotle is the ideal instantaneous 'recognition and 'reversal'. The first, being the movement in drama from ignorance to knowledge. The second, being a reversal of the situation by which the action veers round to its opposite'.¹⁸ In the case of the youngster, recognition comes when he recognizes both the old man's treachery and the fact that he is pregnant. Simultaneously, his sex change, with its shame and accompanying lack of status constitutes the reversal. These movements occur simultaneously and are arranged according to probability and necessity, while at the same time producing either pity and fear or both, such as we see aroused in the animals, and suppose will affect the congregation as well. The arousal of these emotions and their effect, Aristotle seems to think of as 'catharsis', which he sees as a form of emotional purgation or cleansing.¹⁹ Further, this myth, in accordance with Aristotle's unities of action, adheres, as it should, to an imitation not of men but of an action...for it is by their actions men are happy or the reverse. Thus it is what the boy *does* in the story that ensures a happy end for himself. It is his shame, on the other hand, as emanating from his character, that motivates him to those actions which lead to his good fortune.²⁰ The myth as given, has, in fact, two final denouements or reversals, in the irrevocable killing of the old man, and the boy's attaining to the role of a respected healer in his stead.

I will not attempt here to elaborate on further of Aristotle's unities of action, only to note that these few essentials we have indicated would hardly be extant today, and coincide with those of Greek Tragedy, by chance. Rather would it seem that the archetypal form of plot remains always present, ready to be drawn on when there is the need for 'make believe'. As for instance, when the belief which holds the episodic fragments of ritual together begins to wane and the action or plot calls for profaner dramatic forms with which to identify. It is possibilities like

these, and the locating of them in order to understand them, that I see as legitimizing the assembly of the ritual and fictional parallels which follow.

In this typical novel of her middle period, Christie imbues him not only with the attributes of a great detective, but, quite inadvertently, with a fair number of the analogous archetypal qualities of his particular detective counterpart: the shamanic Ndembu diviner.

The owning of these common qualities should not be surprising, as both men are usually engaged in playing their traditional roles of saving the community from evil: from murders, or ongoing-attempts to kill or sicken people by sorcery.

The only difference between these and the crimes depicted in fictional texts lies in the fact that the Ndembu sorcerer or witch will usually employ an indirect mode of sorcery to kill or disable a person. Western man, on the other hand, both in the world and in detective fiction, tends to use more direct physical means like a knife, gun, or poison.

This could well be because in his western familial environment relatives are not apt to take one another out in revenge for a killing of one of their own; while with swift means of transport and ready cash, the murderer at large has a greater possibility of escaping from what- in Africa- is/or would likely be the swift revenge taken by the victim's family and friends.

As it is, the fictional depiction of such crimes and their detection by Poirot, is a process with which the reader identifies himself; just as in the Ndembu diviner's ritual the clients family and friends will identify with the sacred figure of the possessed diviner engaged in locating the sorcerer, witch or malign spirit which has returned to threaten or tie up the life in the victim. If this intervention of the typical African diviner can be seen as a process of exorcism: a cleansing, an undoing of a spell; so, too, do the detective texts and drama support the *denouements* or 'unknottings' which produce what Aristotle broadly suggests is a catharsis or cleansing of the reader or spectator through pity and fear. A process, many view as a kind of cure.

Archetypes and Their Workings in Diviner-Detective Texts and Ritual

Such archetypal patterns in literature have long been recognized as facts of life. There is, for instance, the Shakespearian use of such a pattern in *The Tempest*. The *Wikipedia*, in its entry on archetypes, notes that the plot of this play is taken from William Strachey's account of an actual shipwreck in 1609 on the island of Bermuda. Elements of Prospero's character are drawn from Ovid's speeches in the *Metamorphoses*, so that finally we have the unique combination of a 'sage magician' as a 'carefully plotting hero, quite distinct from the wizard-as-advisor archetype of

Merlin or Gandalf. Both of these are likely derived from priesthood authority types, such as the Celtic Druid or ... biblical figures like... Moses'.

Detective plots, or actions, can finally be seen take their place in the traditional line of inspired 'thoughts', 'dreams' and 'visions' which act as vehicles through which these archetypes can appear and inculcate- among other things- their wisdom to the reader or spectator at large. It is in this sense that Poirot is a modern, immensely relevant image of the Jungian archetype of the 'wise old man' whose perennially-bearded, Methuselah-like guise, the modern reader would likely find it hard to identify with.

The Need To Know *All* And To Be *Sharp*

As Turner reports, the ultimate wisdom communicated to his clients by the Ndembu diviner, is the identity of the shade, sorcerer or witch whose spells are threatening their lives. His ability to reveal or to recognize the culprit is conferred by the spirit of a divine ancestor known as *Kayong'u*, or 'man-slayer, because sorcerers and witches maybe slain when identified. 'Before becoming a diviner he must have been afflicted by this spirit, which causes the diviner to tremble and shake his basket. Many of the symbols of the *Kayong'u* initiation ritual stand for the 'sharpness' which he must display as a diviner. These include needles and razors, the former being ritually embedded in the hearts of a sacrificed cock and goat.'²¹ As he maintains: 'Diviners working within the framework of their beliefs, are extremely shrewd and practical men...the way they interpret their divinatory symbols reveals deep insights both into the structure of their own society and human nature.'²²

In *TF*, Poirot's 'sharpness' is depicted on a number of occasions- but also his lack of it. The last is exemplified, when, at the shortest notice, he manages to produce a witness who can identify the corpse of the man called Enoch Arden. The Cloade family hope it will be identified as Robert Underhay, the man Rosaleen was married to in Africa until he left her,; going off into oblivion and supposedly dying of fever. Should Arden be Underhay, then Rosaleen's marriage to Gordon Cloade, the family benefactor, would automatically be bigamous and void. Poirot, helped by a chance memory, produces a witness in the person of Major Jackson. Rowley appears to be awed by Poirot's lightning adroitness in accomplishing this and 'looked at him with awe and incredulity.' Poirot's sees fit to leave him with this impression that he is a wizard. He shows off. 'His vanity was pleased to impress this simple Rowley.'²³

But his pride goes before a fall. Rowley has previously colluded with the impecunious Major Jackson, and gets him to falsely identify the corpse as that of Underhay. Poirot then misses a verbal clue as to the secret liaison when he introduces the men for what he thinks is the first time. '...Major Porter produced a cigarette case. 'Smoke?' Poirot accepted a cigarette....'You don't, I know,' said the Major to Rowley. 'Mind if I smoke

my pipe?"²⁴

Only later does Poirot divine the true import of the remark: a salient clue as to the deceit of the two men. Much put out, Poirot exclaims: 'Eh bien, I perform my conjuring trick. I flatter myself that I impress you and really it is I who am the complete mug...he says to you, 'You don't do you?'...Imbecile that I am, I should have seen the complete truth then' ...He looked round angrily.²⁵

In this situation Poirot has failed to bring "into the open what is hidden or unknown". The process of cure being essentially what the Ndembu call 'ku-solola': 'making known and visible, the unknown and invisible agents of affliction'.²⁶ Poirot may also work his cure by a process of revelation; working like the diviner, 'from a *chidimbu*: a definite point of divination': a set of premises from which he 'can deduce logical consequences' as they pertain to the case in question.²⁷ In our Western detective texts this process often culminates in the identification of the murderer in what- in TF- is the characteristically prolonged denouement (or reversal and recognition) towards the end of the novel.²⁸

The need to *know all*, is an imperative the Ndembu diviner must follow. Turner's shaman informant, Muchona, tells him about his shamanic initiation rites, *Kayong'u*. 'If he (referring to himself) goes along a path he must know beforehand the proper place to go. ...That is ordinary knowledge. But the diviner goes between the paths. He knows what everyone else does not know. He has secret knowledge.'²⁹ This 'between' movement, driven by 'sharp pain and the sharp wits it creates', aptly describes Poirot's otherwise consistent correction of other people's erroneous interpretation of the events which make up the fictional narrative of TF.

As Muchona observes, 'If the future shaman guessed wrongly where the things are hidden, he would be laughed at by the doctors'. This is because his own god *Kayong'u* tells him about them or gives him power³⁰ In the business with Major Jackson, Poirot, much to his annoyance, finds his informing god of second sight and 'sharpness' has deserted him. Consequently he, too, is laughed at.

Archetypes and Character; Their Unchanging Nature

On the 'sharper', positive side we have Poirot's sound insight into Lynn's dilemma early in the novel; her outcry concerning the two young men in her life; both of whom wish to marry her. One of these young men is Rowley Cloade; a member of the family which for too long has relied on Gordon Cloade, the rich benefactor of them all; the man who always, perhaps too readily, helped them out with their financial commitments. But, as luck has it, during the Second World War, he chances to have the beautiful Rosaleen as a housemaid in his household. He falls for her, marries her, and she, in turn, inherits the interest from his fortune when

he is killed in the Blitz. David Hunter, her reputed brother, but really her lover, begins to manipulate her for his own financial ends. It is this David, a debonair war hero who Lynn is attracted to; finally ending her engagement to Rowley, who she feels, has not been changed by experience of the war like she has. Her outcry to Poirot concerning her two young men is: 'It's all so difficult. It isn't a question of David rather than Rowley at all. It's *me*! I've changed...'

'You're wrong,' said Poirot, 'The tragedy of life is that people do not change.'³¹

The point gains profundity as, further in the action, David proves he is as able a killer in civilian life as he was in the commando raids of World War Two. In his particular case he cannot spring loose from his archetypal frame. Accordingly, his daring, and disregard of the *value* of human life were at a premium during the fighting, in which he was distinguished for his courage. However, the award he hopes for in civilian life is not a medal, but money, and to get this, he is quite prepared to employ the same terroristic means he used in war. Hence, the situation may have changed, but not his character. The unchanging archetypal nature of his ilk is confirmed by Superintendent Spence: 'I know this type... It's a type that's done well during the war. Any amount of physical courage. Audacity and reckless disregard of personal safety. It's the kind that is likely to win the V.C. But... in peace... usually end up in prison'³²

Echoes of what we know about such archetypes can, on occasion, be recognized in the frenzied bravery of a V.C. on the battlefield. I refer to Eliade's description of a type of tranced, shamanic warrior called the berserker. These are Germanic warriors who, in the Nordic *Ynglinga* saga, undergo a process which turns them into 'dreaded warriors whose initiatory ordeals cause them in war to act like beasts of prey'. The kindred *Volsunga Saga* reveals the ordeals of the hero, Sinfjotli, whose mother it is, submits him to these ordeals. As part of these, 'she sews his shirt to his arms through the skin.... Joti remains imperturbable. His mother then pulls off his shirt, tearing away the skin, and asks him if he feels anything. The boy answers that a Volsung is not troubled by such a trifle'.³³

An echo of such extreme stoicism in the face of what are defining setbacks, is evoked when David, unmasked by Poirot as the murderer of Rosaleen, and arrested by Superintendent Spence, is able to exclaim coolly, recklessly and unrepentantly that he has '... had a good run for his money...'. When cautioned he cries: 'Cut it out man. I'm a gambler, but I know when I've lost the last throw.'³⁴ Given that this 'last throw' means he will almost certainly be hung by the neck for his unashamed murder of Rosaleen, there is, as David turns at bay, something in him approaching the berserker's feral nature and fearlessness in the face of death.

As a clearly archetypal figure, David moves at a lively pace through the narrative. It is one that does not give us time to ask questions about him, for instance, his stagey manner of dissociating himself from the

murder of the so-called Enoch Arden, dressed and made-up like a woman, and speaking in a woman's voice; or his imposing of himself as prospective, if somewhat dodgy husband, on Lynn, in so short a time. Then again, in establishing an alibi, there are his adroit tricks with the phone, and his lightning conning of Lynn, as to what the time is, when they accidentally meet a short while after Enoch Arden's death. All these moves in the novel come off because we have unconsciously recognized the hero-berserker status by the 'signs' the author provides. The hero's lively paced actions are ticked off unquestioningly against this archaic, ever-enduring image tethered in our unconscious mind, rather than consciously questioned. Caught up in his dauntless swathe, we also tend to gloss over Rowley's bullying and finally homicidal behaviour. He did, after all, kill Enoch Arden, even if accidentally, and when Lynn gives him notice that she will marry David and not him, his immediate reaction is to prevent any such union by attempting to strangle her. Nor do we question the wisdom of Poirot's intervention, until later, when he, in fact, has succeeded in manipulating Lynn back into Rowley's rather questionable arms.

The Archetypal Underpinning as It Is Signalled in the Title

I refer to the Shakespearian title of the novel. It is lifted from his *Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, from Brutus' speech in Act IV: 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune'. It is a drama linked to the archetypal theme of power and its dehumanizing of those who pursue it. Brutus and Caesar in the play, treat their wives: Portia and Calpurnia, respectively, as hindrances to what they see as the prior urgency of their public duty. This means, in effect, ignoring their responsibility to their own mortal bodies and their private responsibility to their wives and friends. These recurring motifs can be tied to those of David's listed above: to his dare-devil prowess on the battlefield, and his bravado in unnecessarily confessing his guilt to Inspector Spence. The former also shows a reckless disregard for his own life, and, indeed for that of the impostor, Eileen Corrigan, who poses as Rosaleen. She is a woman David has tired of, and so quietly murders, lest she 'crack' and spoil his 'game'. This, of course is his pursuit of power through money.

Common Archetypal Characterisation of the 'Diviner-Detective', Turner's 'Diviner' and Zidan's 'Magician'

Jung notes that Archetypal patterns 'can erupt autonomously...or show the most striking connections with the poetic'¹³⁵. It is in this latter sphere where one would see the linkage of archetypes with detective literature. Jung's theory of archetypes in its later development is quoted by Jackson: 'Archetypes are dynamic forms that manifest themselves in

impulses, just as spontaneously as instincts. Certain dreams, visions and thoughts can suddenly appear and however carefully one investigates one cannot find what causes them'.³⁶ As Jackson observes: 'It is little wonder that critics have skimmed over this latest development of the theory, as it places archetypes below conscious control and beyond rational thought'.³⁷

However, in this particular case, this dismissive approach to the entities is surely misguided; rather does it suggest that archetypes are not so much 'caused' as *they are there* as simply existing images waiting to be chosen by- among others- the authors and plotters of diviner-detective texts.

Jung, in his earlier work cited above, brings in his notion of 'the collective unconscious' in an attempt to better define the origin of archetypes. As he says: 'This collective unconsciousness does not develop individually, but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily, and which give definite form to certain psychic contents'³⁸. Thus this rather vague 'secondary form of consciousness' in *Taken at the Flood* could well describe the implicit confidence most readers have in Poirot's form of greatness: his preternatural ability to solve crimes which remain puzzling to other people; and to remove the many masks that conceal the real identity and truth about the characters in the story.

The clients of the Ndembu diviner and other African shamans, who Dominique Zahan refers to as 'Magicians', will entertain similar expectations. 'The magician is a *personage* who centralizes in ...himself ...all the tendencies of the group...in a single direction...By his knowledge of them he is a sort of central organ towards which converges all the information concerning them. He is master of the public stage whose background is private'.³⁹

The latter's diametrically opposing definitions of the 'sorcerer' and 'magician' convincingly describes the differences between these two archetypal African offices. The 'sorcerer' is classed on the side of 'evil, the night, destruction...while the magician belongs to goodness, light and day'. (1979: 93). Turner's *diviners* clearly line up with the *magicians*.

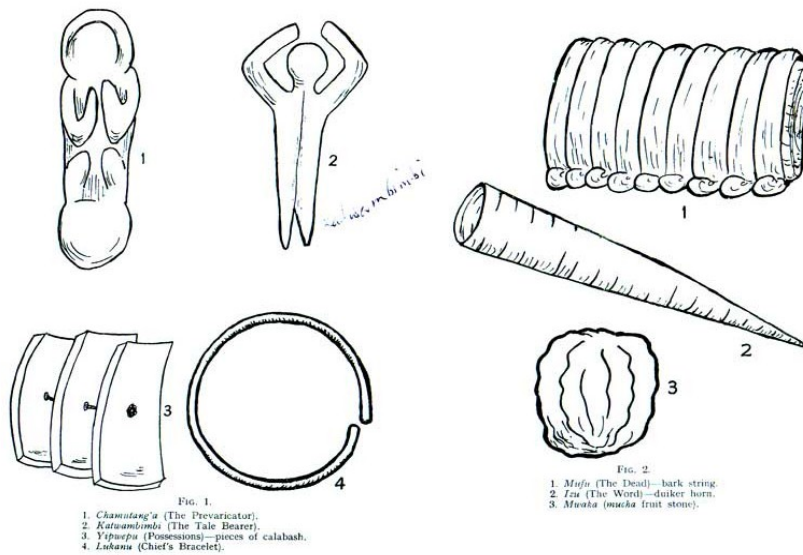
Junod's description of the arrival back from the desert of a great Nkuna magician gives us an idea of the charisma of these shamans. 'A splendid creature, his eyes beaming with a certain supernatural light...is said to have disappeared from his village for months, and to have come back emaciated but full of new magical powers'.⁴⁰

How analogous this is to Poirot with his inclinations to appear from nowhere; with his ability to draw and comprehend the elusive strands which lead to the heart of the crime and the identity of the killer! How easily, too, he is able to dominate the stage, even though 'his background and right to do this can only be sensed before we surrender to it. The manner he intervenes, for instance, in the row between Lynn and the thuggish Rowley in which, 'they were all under the sway of this absurd

little man'.⁴¹ This, as he smoothes out the violent disorder of the scene in preparation for his delivery of the *denouement* of the case: a convincing, healing recapitulation that fills the terroristic gaps of the family tale and spirits us to its final edifying closure.

Cynegetique Approaches as Facilitated by the Diviner's Figurines and the Diviner-Detective's Clues

The Ndembu diviner of high repute will inspire precisely the same confidence in his clients and spectators by his creation of a cogent plot in which the sorcerer or witch can finally be identified. This action is forged by manipulating small symbolic figurines (*tuponya*) (in his winnowing basket. See sketches of these in Figs 1 to 4.



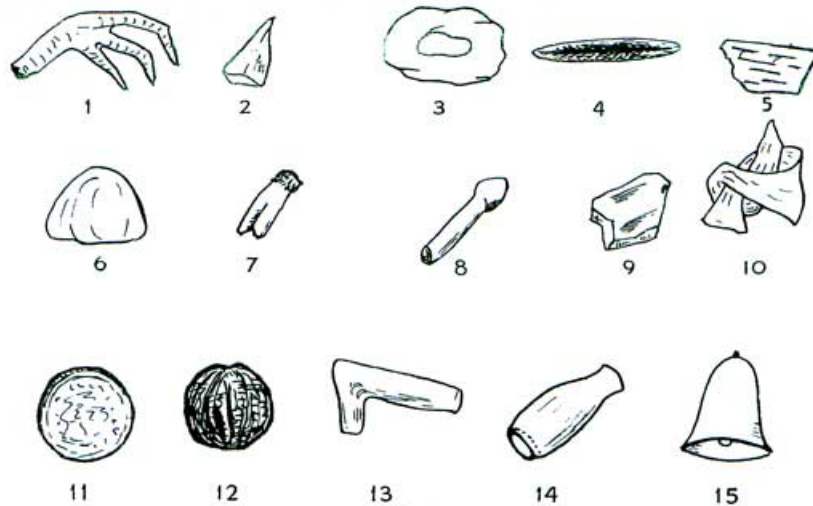
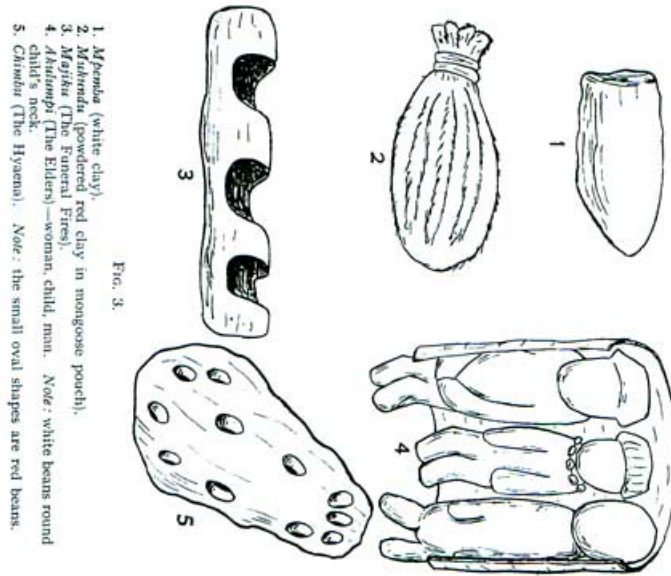


FIG. 4.
1. Kaneng'a (cock's claw). 2. Chipaji (piece of hoof). 3. Ng'oji (Carrying Cloth)—hide. 4. Njila (Path)—grooved wood. 5. Wutali (Smelted Iron). 6. Itung'a (The Country)—piece of red gum. 7. Duiker Hoof. 8. Ilomu (The Penis). 9. Madihi (Tears)—green glass. 10. Mafang'isha (twisted leather). 11. 50 centavos—Angolan Money. 12. Mpuku (Fame)—black withered fruit. 13. Muhinyi (Axe Handle). 14. Mufu (The Drum). 15. Bell.

This object, itself, is sacred: symbolic as something used to separate the chaff from the grain; the good from the bad. Thus the thirty or so symbolic images juggled about by the diviner after he has addressed his questions to them, will provide the clues he needs in what is his sacred quest to find a sorcerer, witch or shade who is plaguing his clients.⁴² Shaken up by the diviner two of these figurines or bits of substance may

be seen to have fallen high up on the pile and in juxtaposition with one another. The dominant image of the pair can take on many different meanings in a given situation; while the knowledge necessary to interpret these the diviner will have learnt from another shaman.⁴³ Both the image and its symbolism, and its juxtaposition with another, will constitute part of the truth the diviner will wish to reveal: what is causing the misfortune or death. And ultimately, which sorcerer, shade or witch is wreaking a revenge on the living. Whatever, in Ndembu society, even for the diviners, the figurines can never become true signs. 'This is because their meanings rest ultimately on axiomatic beliefs in the existence of mystical beings and forces'.⁴⁴ Entities, that is, as perceived in a particular place and time.

As ritual symbols they give a visible form to unknown things: they express '...in familiar terms what is hidden and unpredictable. They enable men to domesticate wild and wayward forces'⁴⁵. What Turner calls 'the process of cure' is, as I have mentioned, bringing into the open what is unknown, 'exposing deception and secret malice'. This Ndembu *ku-solola* process is also a term associated with hunting and particularly with the finding of game.⁴⁶ In a similar way the significance of the clues picked up by Poirot, and what he deduces from these, helps in the apprehension of the murderer and the containment of criminal impulses in Western Society. The reading of these signs will also rest on the belief system as comprehended in Western Religion, Science, and its Philosophic Logic. Hence it will tend to encourage more concrete, empirical evidence in putting together its plot than will the Ndembu version, which of necessity must concentrate on the elusive, magical aspect of tribal offense.

These components are well caught in Carlo Ginzberg's passage on the 'cynegetic model' in detective stories. This derives from the French *cynegetique*, after the Greek word for hunting. It is a paradigm, as Ginzberg relates, 'which goes back to the set of signs in which the skilled hunter reads the narrative of the beast's passage – footprints, droppings, broken twigs... the tracking of which is like reading a narrative.'

As a renowned predecessor of Hercule Poirot, we have Gaboriau's detective, Monsieur Le Cocq, tracking the criminal. 'Monsieur Le Cocq, who felt he was crossing unknown territory, covered with snow, marked with the tracks of the criminal, like a vast white page on which people we are searching for have left not only footprints, ... but also prints of their innermost thoughts... here we see filing past us the authors of treatises on physiognomy, Babylonian seers intent on reading the messages written in heaven and earth, and Neolithic hunters.'⁴⁷

Rather than have a corpse to render up clues leading to the arrest of those responsible for it being one, the Ndembu diviner will likely have the task of finding an aggrieved shade that is responsible for the death of the victim. In the absence of concrete clues as to the cause of this, the diviner must, after questioning those who have had to do with the man in his

lifetime, question the figurines about the case. If after throwing these several times, 'the same object comes uppermost three successive times, one of its various senses is reckoned to be certainly part of the answer the diviner seeks. If a particular combination, stratified in a particular way, comes to the top three times running, the diviner has the greater part of his answer', His skill as an individual consists in the way he adapts his general exegesis of the objects to the given circumstances⁴⁸ Poirot demonstrates this latter skill to an inordinate degree towards the end of TF.⁴⁹

Black Magic, *Ku Solola*, Eliade and Cole's *Illud Tempus*

In Ndembu ritual, part of the diviner's 'sharpness' will be tested as he arrives on the scene. Although the clients will identify with the possessed diviner who is engaged in unmasking the sorcerer or witch responsible for the sickening or death of their kinsman, they will endeavour to catch him out when he first approaches them. They may, for instance, deny they have asked him to take on the case, or 'try to deceive the diviner by giving incorrect answers to his questions, feigning to agree with him when they really disagree...' ⁵⁰

There is a great deal of etymologizing with substances and word association; and what amounts to sympathetic magic. Thus a head pad for carrying heavy loads is made from a grass called *kaswamanb-wadyi*. Etymologically this derives from the Ndembu word to 'hide' because birds hide in this grass. In this case it stands for the witch's attempts to conceal vital matters from the diviner. The head pad symbolism as set up for the diviner is to remind him neither to forget nor be 'ignorant of anything.' An edict which relates back to the *ku solola*, the need to bare all the facts to the light.⁵¹ To help in this divining, the Ndembu diviner may use a nerve from the root of the elephant's trunk. This is called *nsomu* in a ritual context, and will help pronounce on a case where this object- likened in form to a limp penis- has been used for dark, evil purposes. As Turner's informant relates:

A pregnant woman unexpectedly gave birth to a stillborn child. Some old women took that child to bury...Before...they cut off part of one of its fingers. These women are witches. They use the finger with *nsomu* to kill people. The child was just like *nsomu*, it came suddenly and unfortunately died. As Turner observes, this interpretation reveals how 'readily and explicitly the diviners are able to offer interpretations of their symbolic items'⁵²

Clearly this is a statement which will arouse some scepticism in the reader of modern detective texts, for what we have here is black magic, and 'black' it is, working evil as it does; even though it forms the basis of what is a *ku-solola* episode; a laying bare of facts which most of the Ndembu congregation will, or would have accepted at their face value; and

who would 'suspend their disbelief' in the performance of magic ritual accordingly.

However, as we have argued above, an analogous process takes place when, totally engrossed, we absorb Poirot's final interpretation of the 'signs' in a detective novel. The only difference between the two interpretations, as I see it, is that in the African one, a believing-other remains rooted in the mythical time of the *illud-tempus*, which, according to David Cole, is the place of origins, the Cosmogony, 'just after the gods walked the earth- unlike merely historical periods (this) can be made present again at any moment by the performance of ritual...' It is here, Mircea Eliade saw an endless succession of forms in dream, myth ritual and the like, trying to realize the archetype. For him '...every historical form tends to imitate previously existing forms' – this being a movement towards the restoration of the perfect form of which the myth or rite is but a variant.⁵³ Cole argues, that the *illud tempus* 'can also be seen as a theatre script in which the Shaman makes himself present, and by whom some aspect of that script makes itself present amongst us. In such cases 'he is the actor who becomes possessed by the life of one of the inhabitants of that *illud tempus*'.⁵⁴ I would suggest it is these enduring forms of 'life' that power the fictional detective text; coming under Cole's helpful notion of what he calls the 'Image'- spelt with a capital 'I'. This 'Image' 'is to mean roughly an inhabitant or personage of the 'script *illud tempus*'. As a description, this would seem to conveniently separate the fictional detective text and performers-or Images' like Poirot, from the religious and ritualistic versions of the time of origins in which the god-possessed diviner or sorcerer will perform.

Accordingly, this 'eternal present' where events are always happening now, would seem to belong to the world of 'make believe' in general: to detective fiction and drama, for instance, which employ what Cole terms a 'script *illud tempus*' in order to help create a world where the characters and actors live; and we are 'made to believe' by goodly lies, illusions: those means which art needs to deploy because the old axiomatic religious belief, like-that of the Ndembu- is no longer there. Taking the place of the shamans today in Western Society, are rather the artists, authors and playwrights: all those who are sufficiently possessed, and skilled enough to make present in detective fiction, not a shaman, but a diviner-detective who ultimately draws with his presence that final faint radiance of a cosmogonic world newly-purged of evil and ready for a new beginning.

It is noticeable how- in *TF*- David's enthusiasm for the black magic of the middle ages translates finally into actions better suited to those engaged in by the Ndembu sorcerer or witch; a leaning that appears to foreshadow what will be his own direct crimes of murder and deceit; crimes he conceivably would have got away with had not Poirot been on his track.

Lynn and David's conversation is worth quoting. It is a dialogue between two young people newly drawn to one another: They are discussing what would have happened to their stultified Western Society (and to their immediate familial one) in medieval times.

Before this short exchange, Lynn has reflected that everywhere in society, in the upper class supper she partakes of, as well as wider afield, there is hate. 'It's the aftermath war has left. Ill will...It's everywhere, on railways and buses...among workers..., clerks, and even agricultural labourers. And, I suppose worse in mines and factories. Ill will. But here it's more than that. Here it's particular. It's *meant* !'⁵⁵ With the last word, Lynn would seem to include the powerful archetypal figure of David Hunter who in the discussion which occurs between them a moment later, gives a veiled hint of how *he* means to 'try hard'.

'It is usually more practical to wish to do harm. We've thought up one or two rather practical gadgets in that line during the last few years – including that *piece de resistance*, the Atom Bomb.'

'That was what I was thinking about – oh, I don't mean the Atom Bomb. I meant ill will. Definite practical ill will.'

David said calmly: 'Ill will certainly – but I rather take issue to the word practical. They were more practical about it in the Middle Ages.'

'How do you mean?'

'Black magic generally. Ill wishing. Wax figures. Spells at the turn of the moon. Killing off your neighbour's cattle. Killing off your neighbour himself.'

'You don't really believe there was such a thing as black magic?' asked Lynn incredulously.

'Perhaps not. But at any rate people did try hard. Nowadays, well –' He shrugged his shoulders. 'With all the ill will in the world you and your family can't do much about Rosaleen and myself, can you?'⁵⁶ As matters develop further, so do the actions of David cease to be those of the diviner. Rather does he begin a series of actions more analogous to the Ndembu Sorcerer: killing, not by sorcery, but by the direct and convenient Western method of poisoning. What is interesting in this pregnant dialogue, is his enthusiasm for what is in effect the Ndembu way of killing- one which he cannot in his present need adopt. Here a character in the narrative has made a direct connection with the ritually indirect Ndembu ensorcelling and western style directness of killing.

Paralogic - 'The Supreme Confidence Trick' to Make Us Believe

Consultations with the diviner normally take place under the protection of an eminent chief, and near the most important village and in the cluster of villages where the deceased person lived. Everyone in the neighbourhood- as with Poirot's typical *denouements*- is expected to attend, and failure to do so is a cause for suspicion. Poirot has also to

stage his investigations at the scene of the crime: at the village, country-house or inn, where the deaths have taken place. In his *final denouement* in *TF*: when unmaking of the murderer, David Hunter, this background of the crime will be intimately explored. Hence, in the text we have our detective's ready account of David Hunter's dislocated movements to London after finding- what he knows, for himself- is the incriminating body of the so-called Enoch Arden on the floor of his room at *The Stag*. As Poirot explains, David's only means of clearing himself is to establish the alibi that he was in London at the time of the crime. To accomplish this, David must do certain things:

To catch the train your only chance is to run across country. In doing so you unexpectedly run into Miss Marchmont and you also realize you cannot catch the train. You see the smoke in the valley. She too, although you do not know it, has seen the smoke, but she has not consciously realized that it indicates that you cannot catch the train, and when you tell her that the time is nine-fifteen she accepts your statement without any doubt.⁵⁷ In doing so she also accepts that he will get to London by the said train. The illusion is maintained by a clever ruse: David managing to phone Lynn locally, and convince her-by some technical tricks- that he is calling her from his London destination after having- ostensibly- caught the train.

To accomplish David's alibi, Christie needs resort to paralogism, or false logic, or 'the art of telling lies', a mental technique as it has been used by writers, actors and shamans for centuries. This mechanism is related to Aristotle's notion of dramatic *reversal*, and its accompanying sense of 'wonder', or what is 'marvellous'. Thus Homer, for Aristotle, is the master of the art of telling lies, and *paralogism* is the device by which the lie is passed, the reader being fallaciously induced to infer that if 'p' implies the presence of 'q', the presence of 'q' implies the presence of 'p'. Translated into narrative terms it can, as cited in Aristotle's *Poetics*, be located in the scene where Odysseus misleads his wife, Penelope who has not recognized him on his return. By posing as a messenger and giving her a correct account of his dress, she believes the rest of his story; that is: he is not Odysseus.⁵⁸

An insightful connection between the paralogical and what E.T.Kirby refers to as 'pseudo shamanism', is the 'basket trick', as enacted on the European stage. It involves placing a child in an oblong basket that is tied with a belt and then pierced with a sword 'which emerges dripping with blood.' After, the basket is opened and found to be empty, an escape having been accomplished through a sliding double bottom and back. The 'belt' of course, is what initiates the trick. The presence of it is a sign that the child is still in the basket, means that it is the infant's blood on the piercing sword. The simple *counter-logic* of a sliding-bottom occurs to nobody.⁵⁹

Ndembu believers, like the kin of the victim being ensorcelled, have

no need to be tricked into *paralogismos* ('false logic'); their belief in sorcerers, witches, shades and magic reputedly being axiomatic at the time Turner was living among them. The Westerner however, like Lynn, must be tricked by it if the cure of the plot is to be completed. In this case cited above, it involves a 'false recognition' followed by a series of false conclusions about what is happening in the scene about her. Hence a traditional form of mental magic is substituted in the detective text for what otherwise would be the axiomatic belief prevailing in those typical divining rituals we are exploring.

The *tuponya* 'As ritual symbols in these, give a visible form to unknown things, they express ...in familiar terms what is hidden an unpredictable. They enable men to domesticate wild and wayward forces'⁶⁰. This sense of revealing gives rise to what can be seen as recognitions, and these in turn can lead to reversals which trigger about-turns in the action.

In a similar way the significance of the clues picked up by Poirot, and what he deduces from these, helps in the apprehension of the murderer and thus helps in the containment of criminal impulses in society. Poirot's reading of these signs, and what he deduces from these, effect major reversals in the action. Suddenly one or two of those innocent-seeming people attending the *denouement*, will be *recognized* as guilty, and be dealt with accordingly.

Obviously this is dangerous time for the diviner-detective, but again, the dangers that gather round Poirot as he conducts a case, gather also around the Ndembu diviner whose ritual frequently comes to an end when- having anointed the head of the unmasked sorcerer or witch with red clay- he flees to the bush, leaving his assistant to face a vengeful family.⁶¹ This constitutes in a moment, a ritual parallel to what is Aristotle's notion of an ideal *denouement in tragedy: the simultaneous recognition and reversal of the protagonist's status; the mixture of pity and fear this seemingly arouses in the spectator*, as the action which was proceeding in one direction suddenly swings off in another, bringing with it the downfall of the clay-crowned sorcerer: recognition of what he supposedly is, frequently resulting in his death; this being the punishment for sorcery in Turner's time⁶²

The 'Prevaricator' Figurine (*Chamutang'a*): *Tuponya* as Symbols of Universal Types

Both the Ndembu diviner and Hercule Poirot share the quality of being eccentric. Christie describes his charisma: '...all it seemed under the sway of this absurd little man with the big moustaches...all listening to this little man who in some way dominated them all'.⁶³ From the photo of the Angolan diviner accompanying Turner's description of the typical diviners and their initiations, we get a fey image. His right hand has been maimed:

several digits of his fingers having been removed- perhaps ritually- though the diviner himself denies this. His breath comes wheezily because he is possessed by the god of divination, *Kayong'u*. He wears a white, rudimentary cut shirt and black trousers. His expression is the blank of one who characteristically has an inward stare. His panama style hat finishes off what appears to be a man whose notable presence has come out of what he has suffered. He holds a plate of figurines similar to those we have described. (See Frontispiece and Plate 1, reproduced below).



AN ANGOLAN DIVINER AND THE TOOLS OF HIS TRADE



PLATE 1. DISFIGUREMENT OF THE ANGOLAN
DIVINER'S HAND

Before the latter shakes up his *tuponya*, he asks a relevant question aloud. So, too, does Poirot ask, not one, but a number of questions of those about him. 'What,' he asks, 'causes crime?...What happens when people who have been protected from real life...are suddenly deprived of that connection.?'⁶⁴

This universal style of question could have as easily been put by the

Ndembu shaman, where, procrastination by a family in bringing in a diviner, has resulted in the death of an ensorcelled kinsman. Most members in the family have an excuse for not acting: 'Oh, we haven't enough money to pay for a diviner'. 'We've just come from working in our gardens. We can't possibly go (for him) today, we're exhausted'. Representing this African situation is the figurine *Chamutang'a*, alias, 'the slippery customer or prevaricator.' (see Fig 1,1) .a...He is the sort of person who when one tries to know what he is like, escapes one'⁶⁵

The Cloade family are given to the same form of slippery dithering, for Francis Cloade's ineptly hesitant visit to Poirot to request his help in family matters, fails utterly because she is unwilling to pay his exorbitant fees . It is his own interest in the reported murder of Enoch Arden that finally draws Poirot into the case- a murder he just might have prevented had he been brought on the scene earlier..?

As it is, the Ndembu's figurines, *the tupyona* ,can only arrive at and describe what might be termed 'primal situations'. Unlike the Bantu, the Ndembu diviner (or 'magician' as Zahan would have him) are not mantic. 'He discloses what has happened, and does not foretell future events'.⁶⁶ As regards our story, *Chamautang'a* stands for matters that are not at all clear. In this aspect it reveals a difference of opinion so great between the diviner and his clients that he will immediately, and with a minimum of payment, abandon the case.

This essentially 'unclear', muddled situation can be seen also in the Cloade family, before Poirot is brought in. Thus the sad, irresolute image symbolizes those vacillating members of the family who do not sufficiently know themselves, let alone those others around them. Lynn, bored at the thought of settling down after the war with her old fiancée, Rowley Cloade, becomes wayward and hesitant about finally marrying him because she considers she has changed during the war into a more questing, interesting woman: one eminently more suitable for the likes of the dashing David Hunter. Rowley, conversely, has remained a simple, rather boring farmer, who, unlike her, has not had any real experience of war. His views have remained narrow: his main business worries now being how much he will get for his livestock.

In reality Lynn's dithering, and her immature conclusions, blind her to where, and with whom, the real mortal dangers lie. She comes imprudent. The rupture of common interests between Ndembu diviner and his clients is paralleled in the unsuccessful efforts of the family to be rid of a prying, and vastly expensive M. Poirot. When Rowley and Lynn meet him in the village at the beginning of the case. Rowley cries out in comic desperation : 'Come on Lynn. We must get going. I expect M. Poirot wants to get back to town.' But Rowley's pointed remarks and questions as to why Poirot must remain on the scene, fail to budge the little man who declares maddeningly. He is stopping on in the village because, 'C'est un beau paysage.'⁶⁷

Thus the main theme of the tale is the growing up of the family beyond the image of the 'prevaricator' to whom they so closely resemble as they scrounge large sums of money from the kindly, conscience-stricken new heiress, who has been left the life-interest of a fortune they had expected to come to themselves. Like the prevaricating relations who do not bring in the diviner soon enough, they too become guilty when their thoughts turn to the impractical notion of murdering Rosaleen, rather than call in a proven diviner-detective in the shape of the renowned Hercule Poirot. He finally does come to investigate, but not because he was called on by Mrs. Lionel Cloade, whose Ouija board 'spirits' had given her his initials, and who procrastinates over what might be his ruinous fee; but rather because he has read the report in the press about the death of Enoch Arden, a crime which arouses his personal interest in the murder.

In the Ndembu diviner's ritual, the general belief that the wheezing god, *Kayang'u* is playing some part in manipulating the representations goes a long way to convincing the congregation that whatever decision he comes to, will most likely be the correct one. This is because diviners have also learnt by experience- along with their society- 'to reduce their divinatory procedure and symbolism to a few basic principles and factors, and to juggle with these until they arrive at a decision which accords with the majority of their clients at any given consultation'. Such decisions are arrived at 'by an intuition into what is just and fitting according to Ndembu moral values and the universally recognized concept of the 'reasonable man'.⁶⁸

Turner notes that the 'referents', figurines, mnemonics, ciphers, each one refers to a whole stereotyped way of thinking. 'They serve as reminders to the diviner of certain general rubrics of Ndembu culture, within which he can classify the specific instance of behaviour he is considering. These images must lend themselves to configurative analysis' as when spacially juxtaposed in their basket they then become modifiers of a single basic sense. This will be honed down in turn by the interrogation of the clients and 'attenders' whose reactions to the questions will be closely observed.⁶⁹

In that this process finishes with an apparently detective style interrogation- the suspect being closely observed throughout- it is tempting to see the 'general rubrics of Ndembu culture' as analogous to the framework of Western Law that Poirot works within. For instance, in his final 'configurative analyses', his expositions of the crime, the ghost of the 'reasonable man' is always there: immanent, 'single', but unsung in the logic with which Poirot makes his legal case.

The Symbolic Figurines (Like *Chamatang'u*) as God-Ordered Signs Compared to the Chance Clues Happened on in Detective Texts

These clues or signs by which identification is made, occur unceasingly in what Terence Cave terms 'recognition plots'. In these, *paralogism* and material signs go hand in hand with Aristotle's notion that in the dramatic plots, 'plausible impossibilities' are preferable over 'possible implausibilities'. It is this condition- described above- that Lynn falls victim to when, after the death of Enoch Arden, she meets David seemingly on his way to London. As Cave argues:

Paralogism,...is the supreme confidence trick. It allows the charade of 'consequential action' of narrative motivation, to culminate in an astonishing reversal which the audience accepts as logical though it is based on a fallacy.⁷⁰

The 'plausible impossibilities' are, in ritual, provided by the fall of the symbolic figurines; by their spatial juxtapositions as manipulated by the possessed diviner who, tranced and wheezing, imitates the asthmatic god. The 'reversal' mentioned by Cave, is exemplified in this ritual by the final anointing of the sorcerer's head with red clay after his recognition. This is a sign which invites the congregation to recognize *what they truly believe he is*. The simultaneous *reversal in status* that comes about with this, renders him liable to be put to death: the common punishment for sorcery in Turner's time. In *TF*- as in many detective texts-, the most significant recognition/sign is a photograph. It is quite by *quite* by chance that Rowley spots it on a desk:

'Yes, it was on the desk. I suddenly realized the likeness...why the fellow's (Enoch Arden's) head looked so familiar. I tumbled on it that Jeremy and Francis were getting some relation of her's to put up a stunt and get money out of Rosaleen. It made me see red.'⁷¹

As a result of this recognition Rowley stalks off and confronts the swindler in his room at *The Stag*. 'I called him a swine and hit him.' The blow accidentally kills the man and initiates a deepening miasma of deceit and murder. The main point at this juncture, however, is the accidental nature of Rowley's glimpsing of the photograph - (a 'plausible impossibility') - given the dire nature of the major events that hang on this chance event. It is one which clearly falls outside Aristotle's notion of the unity of action of the plot in which one action logically follows on another. Cave's comment on this aspect of 'recognition' is apposite here:

Signs, marks or tokens' in recognition plots are always in some way

adventitious. However skilfully they may be integrated into a deductive sequence, they are always contingent in some sense. They might not have been there at all, which is not true, (for example of physiognomy), and they therefore often appear to be precariously adventitious. Yet they seem to work, and their effectiveness often seems to depend on the fact that they emerge accidentally and unexpectedly: the marginal detail triggers the response of recognition where more general resemblance fails.⁷²

Cave rightly draws our attention to the chance nature we have, of Rowley's glimpsing and recognizing the family likeness of the man in the photo. How strange it is this chance recognition and reversal should trigger, as it does, the initial killing and other salient actions in the plot. There is surely a question to be posed here: why then is a major recognition and reversal situated in so 'precarious' and chancy a way? Why is their effectiveness still so great?

The answer, I would suggest, is that the adventitiousness of this recognition by Rowley is the metamorphosed, archetypal scene as it once was conducted by resort to some form of divinatory representations such as we have them with the Ndembu diviner's rituals. The latter is worked by the diviner or magician, and features the figurines: the human and spirit representations that are effective because they aim to reveal *all* with the help of the possessing god; belief in whom is, to all intents and purposes, axiomatic. Moreover, these signs have less chance of being missed than the birth tokens, the odd photographs and signs in fictional diviner-detective texts; and indeed, in recognition plays generally.

Recognition and reversals in these, then, could well be analogous traces of the falls and juxtapositions of signs amidst the axiomatic belief they were god-given images that would lead- together with the diviner's interrogation- to the identification of a sorcerer, shade or witch. Originally, thus, as sacred, god-sent messengers, the recognitions and reversals prompted by these were not to be looked on as chance, *but fell under the sacred as events divinely ordered*. It is only with the erosion of this universally held belief that a lucky or chance status can be levelled at them. Even so, as numinous remnants of the old, sacred power, these adventitious signs, as Cave has observed, are hardly ever queried; figuring largely in the remarkably effective recognitions, reversals and the cure they bring about for the reader and spectator in everyday detective fiction and drama as we know it.

Notes:

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¹ Christine A. Jackson, *Myth and Ritual in Women's Detective Fiction*, (London: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2002), 4-5.

² Andrei A. Znamenski, *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and the Western Imagination*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 220.

³ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 23-24.

⁴ Brooks, 29.

⁵ Jackson, 5. Cited from, Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5.

⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, (New York: Heed and Ward, 1958), 32-33.

⁷ Eliade, 395.

⁸ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 208.

⁹ Levi-Strauss, 209.

¹⁰ Brooks, 16.

¹¹ Levi-Strauss, 213.

¹² Levi-Strauss, 214-215.

¹³ Levi-Strauss. See his chapter on 'Structure and Dialectics' (232-241) in which he discusses our Pawnee myth as reflecting a system which correlates with, and yet is the reverse of the system which prevails in the Pawnee ritual. I prefer to see the myth as a vehicle transformed from- at least from the profane point of view- the contradictions of the ritual into an entity which can be performed with the necessary 'make believe' substituting for what was possibly the waning belief in the ritual.

¹⁴ Levi-Strauss, 229.

¹⁵ S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art: The Critical Text and Translation of The Poetics*, (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1951), 275.

¹⁶ Levi-Strauss. 234. Who abstracted this myth from G.A Dorsey's work: *The Pawnee: Mythology, Part 1*. (Washington , D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1906).

¹⁷ Levi-Strauss, 234.

¹⁸ S. H. Butcher, 39-43

¹⁹ This, of course an over-simple definition of the salutary emotion of 'pity and fear' that Aristotle sees as affecting the ideal spectator. Countless articles have explored what it is he means by these terms. However, from the point of view of this paper, whatever 'cure' or purging he is thinking about would be those apt for the type and period of the drama he is analysing, as, in the same way, the fever of suspense some people experience when reading detective texts, is the form of 'cure' from pity and fear apt for today. See Butcher, *Poetics*: Xiii. 3, 43 et seq. Also Butcher, 261-265

²⁰ Butcher, 41.

²¹ V. W. Turner, *Ndembu Divination: Its Symbolism and Technique*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), 5.

²² Turner, 2.

²³ Agatha Christie, *Taken at the Flood*, (London: Fontana/Collins, 1972), 108-109.

²⁴ Christie, 110.

²⁵ Christie, 184.

- ²⁶ Turner, 3.
- ²⁷ Turner, 20.
- ²⁸ Christie, 181-140. The denouement, for instance, usually contains both recognition of who is the murderer, and the status reversal or no, of same.
- ²⁹ Turner, 34.
- ³⁰ Turner, 34.
- ³¹ Christie, 64-65.
- ³² Christie, 127.
- ³³ Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols on Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 82.
- ³⁴ Christie, 190.
- ³⁵ C. G. Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 285.
- ³⁶ C. G. Jung, and M-L von Franz, eds., *Man and his Symbols*, (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 76.
- ³⁷ Jackson, 8.
- ³⁸ Jung (1959), 43.
- ³⁹ Dominique Zahan, *The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 104.
- ⁴⁰ H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, (London: Macmillan, 1927), 104. Quoted by Zahan, 103.
- ⁴¹ Christie, 181.
- ⁴² Turner, 4-5.
- ⁴³ Turner, 44-45.
- ⁴⁴ Turner, 2.
- ⁴⁵ Turner, 4.
- ⁴⁶ Turner, 4.
- ⁴⁷ Carlo Ginzberg, 'Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Method', *History Workshop*, 9 (1980): 23.
- ⁴⁸ Turner, 5.
- ⁴⁹ Christie, 180-190.
- ⁵⁰ Turner, 7.
- ⁵¹ Turner, 2.
- ⁵² Turner, 3.
- ⁵³ Eliade, (1961, 120-121.
- ⁵⁴ David Cole, *The Theatrical event: A Mythos, a Vocabulary, a Perspective*, (Middletown-Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), 114.
- ⁵⁵ Christie, 28.
- ⁵⁶ Christie, 39.
- ⁵⁷ Christie, 186.
- ⁵⁸ Terence Cave, *Recognitions: a study in Poetics*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988), 42.
- ⁵⁹ E. T. Kirby, *The Origins of Theatre*, (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 11.
- ⁶⁰ Turner, 4.
- ⁶¹ Turner, 7.
- ⁶² Turner 5.
- ⁶³ Christie, 181.

- ⁶⁴ Christie, 182.
⁶⁵ Turner, 62-63.
⁶⁶ Zahan, 2.
⁶⁷ Christie, 133.
⁶⁸ Turner, 18-19.
⁶⁹ Turner, 20.
⁷⁰ Cave, 43.
⁷¹ Christie, 183.
⁷² Cave, 250.

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