CHAPTER - III

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVELS OF GEORGE LAMMING

In The Castle of My Skin which is a study of a colonial revolt, traces the factors and forces acting on the society, responsible for it and its development in three main stages: a static phase, then actual rebellion and finally ending in a phase of achievement and disillusionment because of new tensions and dissensions in the society. It sharply records the mounting tensions between the aspirations of peasantry and those of the emerging native elite and the conflict which is masked in the second phase but surfaces eventually resulting in some apparent achievement. The novel itself is built on a three tier time structure corresponding broadly to the three stages: the first three chapters describe stable life in a village community whose social consciousness is limited to a struggle with immediate nature; the next six chapters deal with a village whose consciousness is awakened into a wider vision, involving challenge of and against the accepted order of things, while the last chapter shows the ironic denouement. A new class of native lawyers, merchants and teachers have further displaced the peasantry from the land. But underlying the story's progress in time is a general conception of human history as a movement from the state of nature to a higher consciousness. It is a movement from relative
stability in a rural culture to a state of alienation, strife and uncertainty in the modern world.

In the Castle of My Skin, on the immediate level, is the story of adolescents in a small peasant village in Barbados. It opens with a boy's ninth birth day, but straight away we are plunged into the recurring theme of loss.

"That Evening. I kept my eye on the crevices of our wasted roof where the colour of the shingles had turned to mourning black and waited for the weather to rehearse my wishes. But the evening settled on the slush of roads that dissolved parts into pools of clay, and I wept for the watery waste of my ninth important day."

Though his early novels are branded as more or less disguised autobiographies, Lamming acknowledges that certain facts contained in The Pleasures of Exile are closely linked to his childhood. In deed, when evoking his youth in The Pleasures of Exile, he states:

"When I was about twelve years old, I had had the shattering experience of seeing old papa grandison, my God father, forced to move his small house from the site which generations of children had learned
to speak of as 'the corner where papa who keeps goats does live.'

and Lamming States that "the meaning of Papa's departure is the story of In the Castle of My Skin." If one grants that in the first work the writer is generally the captive of his memories, his joys and his suffering, one can easily understand why Lamming remains, to some extent, bound by history. As Kenneth Ram Chand aptly notes in The West Indian Novel and Its Background:

"Lamming's intention is to suggest the essential outlines of boyhood in a West Indian community that is growing painfully—like the four boys in the novel—in to political self-awareness and his concern to suggest complex shiftings in the community at large, at times, takes precedence over any notion of fidelity to the boy's consciousness."

For nine years the rain has doggedly marred his birthday, and flattery from the elders that his birth day has brought blessings is not adequate compensation. His awareness of loss, of absence, goes deeper than mere lack of sunny celebrations: his father has gone and left him in the charge of his mother; his grand father is dead, and his grand mother has gone to Panama.
"My birth began with an almost total absence of family relations, and loneliness from which had subsequently grown the consolation of freedom was the legacy with which my first year opened." 5

But the boy's life is skilfully interwoven into his social and physical environment. His world is close to nature. Images of sea, earth, sky and wind abounds when a palm tree near the school sways left and right, the church steeple seems to listen 'as the wind carried their chorus across the village and into the sea.'

Through evocation of nature, he manages to capture a certain quality of life, harmonious embracing man, beast, earth and sky. But nature is also shown to be destructive. The boy himself is born into rain, his ninth birth day is a perennial birth into nature; floods with a potential power to change everything and "level the stature and even conceal the identity of the village." Lamming depicts, with intense emotion, admiration and nostalgia, the nature of the ties which exist between different social groups: Children, women, men, the young and the old. As Ian Munro writes:
"Lamming's villagers accept their state of oppression with equanimity and expression of faith in the British Empire and the land lords good intentions - in effect they still accept as the novel opens, a social order going back to slavery times. They get up in the morning to the land lord's bell and go to bed when the lights in the house on the hill go out."

There is a reference to Noah's flood and the biblical mythology in the novel contrasting the experiences of Creighton village with those of a Hebrew pastoral peasant community. The water pours in through the floor boards till it reaches his knee and then goes upon the roof. He climbs up to see if he and the house sailing down the river while the people, shout out, "Look, Noah on the ark!" This episode illustrates how the peasants are rooted to their world and how much their house and a piece of land mean to them.

There is a unique situation in the society where fathers are either absent or merely peripheral to the household and mothers try to exercise a 'paternal' authority on rebellious boys by constant threats and flogging. The delightful relationship between sons and mothers is well described in the comic scene in which Bob, to avoid his mother's flogging, escapes in
a sack by playing bear, a children's game and passes, unnoticed by his mother and other laughing women. The attitude of mothers to their sons is ambivalent, a blend of affection and impatient harshness. About three thousand villagers live in an essentially feudal society. At the head of the estate is creighton, whose house is appropriately situated on the top of a hill, dominating all below it. The overseers, the Police constables and the school teachers make the middle stratum. And at the bottom of this social hierarchy are the peasants, who over the years have acquired customary rights to their homes and piece of land. They accept the social order as divinely willed and dwell under the shadow of creighton's paternal benevolence. Wealth, law and Police power also subscribed in exercising his authority and the villagers developed subservient complexes governing their response to and contact with creighton. What distinguishes creighton estate from earlier forms of feudalism, more highly stratified with corresponding duties and rights, is its colonial setting with roots in slavery.

"In the Castle of My Skin' is clearly a political novel of class struggle depicting the transition of a society from Semi-Feudalism to semi-independence under the leadership of a national bourgeois. The conflict focusses on one small creighton's village in Barbados."
And the very educational system deliberately aims at buttressing the attitude of acceptance. The schools celebrate empire day, the Queen's birth day and the people sing the British National Anthem and embrace the English history and heritage as their own. When the parents are invited to Empire day celebration they are reminded of "good old little England they had embraced. The colonial Education had only prepared children how to venerate England and the British throne. The Head master, distributing Pennies as 'a gift of the queen' -- solemnly assures children that;

"You must all when you got to spend your Penny think before you throw it away. Queen Victoria was a wise queen, and she would have you spend it wisely."

As the boys have not been told the truth about their past, slavery and the slave trade are a jumble of bits and ends in their minds. The queen, they have been taught, had freed them and the only history which they have been taught is that of Britain.

Lamming evokes the confusion in the minds of boys as they puzzle out a phenomenon they could not understand. At times, they don't even believe that it had happened nor could explain the issues of freedom and slavery in terms of Biblical mythology. And the children are told only about the myth of Barbados as being 'Little England.'
"Good old England and old Little England!... Barbados or little England was the oldest and purest of England's Children and may it always be so." 9

The boy's restless minds find the answer of the older people evasive and of the teachers inadequate to understand what slavery is? what is Freedom? Curious, puzzled and pained, the boys turn to religion for specific answer. The Christian view of man (make me a captive Lord and then I shall be free) seems to offer a meaningful explanation. Since the boys belong to a new generation and never experienced slavery and yet have no book knowledge of their immediate past, they seek to find their roots on a general human predicament of sin, death, resurrection and salvation by grace. But Lamming shows how the seeds of crisis already exist within the present order and how fear and antagonism control the relationships between people of different social strata. The landlord might at first appear to be a god whose eminence and dominance cannot be questioned.

He and the constable and the school teacher are the forerunners of the colonial bourgeoisie who co-operate with the whiteman and even share the oppressor's view of the peasant and workers. Rejected in the social world of the white rulers and alienated from the masses by their jobs and education, they either tend to blame themselves, or blame their own people.
"But resistance, in one form or another, to the plantocracy in Barbados goes at least as far back as the slave rebellions of 1816. The Barbadian, a colonial newspaper, records frequent incidents of work stoppages by 'Freed' laborers in the 1830's and there are several vivid accounts of slaves murdering their masters."  

In In the Castle of My Skin it is a dismissed school teacher, Mr. Slime, who exploits and directs the village's collective consciousness to become an instrument of challenge and change. In the process of change, Mr. Slime becomes a catalyst in spreading conflicts in the society like Marcus Garvey. Mr. Slime kindles in them a dream ("he speak the other night how he going to make us owners O' this land ... I could not sort of catch my breath when I hear it but 'tis a big thing to expect...), which makes them look differently at the hitherto existing relations on the Estate. It occurs to them, for instance, that the land lord is as much dependent on them, the village, their labour, as they on him. What Lamming tells in another beautifully realized episode involving the boys and a fisherman, is to be vulnerable. Creighton is incensed with the people for rejecting his paternalism and for disregarding him. Instinctively, he realises that only personal disrespect is a challenge to the value system that legitimizes his power over the people.
Ma, sympathising with the land lord and feeling sorry for the turn of events and change in the attitudes of the people, goes to him to apologize for her people's sacrilege. She being old and religious, resolves to remain so, unchanged throughout. She is opposed to radical change and finds future to be bleak and gloomy. But her husband Pa, infected with the new mood and ideas rejects his wife's cautionary tale of desecration of tradition and the system.

This change in thinking and attitude of the people calls for a total overhaul of all the relations hitherto governed the island—the colonial plantocracy. But, some are frightened at the turn of events. Ma out of religious reverence for life and existing social order, cautions the people of the grave consequences to follow the revolutionary change and she fears more for the children. In many respects, the political struggle of In the Castle of My Skin is similar to the process of decolonisation depicted in Lamming's other novels and as in Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People, for instance, or Gabriel okara's The Voice, Petter Abraham's A Wreath for Udomo and David Cauté's Decline of the West. What makes Lamming's novel unique, however, is the interception of the autobiographical theme, the "gradual unfolding and flowering of an adolescent sensibility, interwoven movement by movement with changes in the life of the villages around."
Describing the change however destructive its effects may be on the life of individual and the society, Lamming shows how Christian values legitimize colonial authority spiritually emasculating a whole community. A rejection of Creighton's domination is hence preceded by a questioning and rejection of religion and Christian teachings:

"They turn us dotish with all these nancy stories but born again, an' wenever ever give ourself a chance to getup an' get. Nothing' ain't goin' change here till we sort O' stop payin notice to that sort O' joke 'bout a oldman goin' born again. It ain't only stupid but it sound kind O' hasty, an' that's what Mr. Slime want to put an end to. He mention that said somethin' lastnight in the speech. An' he call it tomfoolery.' Tis what got us as we is, he say."

Not only Christianity, even the shoemaker and his friends now question the kind of education Lamming depicts in the first section of the novel. But they can only grope in the dark slowly. Some, like the shoemaker, who have read bits from newspapers can just begin to glimpse at the connection between education and power and try to pass on the knowledge to their ignorant brethern. Two views of change run side by side in their awakened consciousness. Some, like the shoemaker, see change but as the law of Nature and essential and hence
inescapable and think that the community should therefore ally itself with the positive forces. Even their little knowledge of history, seems to suggest their point of view. But there are others, who argue differently. To them, all the convolutions of history are mere superficialities. When pa becomes enthusiastic over Mr. Slime's schemes of emigration to America, Ma reminds him of his (Pa's) emigration to Panama that did not improve his economic condition. But Pa contends that it will be different, as he believes in America money flows faster than flood.

Mr slime's strength lies in his ability to harmonize these warring views into a vision embodying people's deepest aspirations. To the villagers he is a new Moses leading them to a Jerusalem, 'new promised land' where they can have better houses and permanently own their plots of land. And hence, they are ready to endure thirst and hunger going across the desert. For instance they have little knowledge about the details of the strikes in the neighbouring town and in the village. And they expect Mr. Slime to speak with the shipping authorities about their plight and for their reemployment if they are found physically fit.

The strike is instigated and led by the Urban workers who have greater social and political awareness than the villagers, a phenomenon true of most colonial revolts. But the aggressive
mood generated by the strike infects the whole country. In Creighton village, schools are closed for the day, trade and work stops, with much expectation. But the entire episode in town has to be viewed from the point of village and villagers. Still they don't quite understand what is happening. The rumours that fighting had broken out in the town would terrify them. Rioting spreads in the town and also to the surrounding villages. The peasants resent the towners but watch curiously as the workers ambush Mr. Creighton, but saved by the timely arrival of Mr. Slime. People who wanted to avenge Pa's death, are disappointed. Soon, the police arrive in the village with rifles and "bayonets shining dull and deadly in the night" and things return to normalcy."

The break-up of the old is an inevitable process of growing up and what the boy uncomfortably feels that he is seeing things for the last time is part of the human mutation from adolescence to manhood. But his transition coincides with, or becomes a symbol of, a deeper historical experience of the village community. The peasants become dispossessed beings and are forced to enroll themselves into the army of the rootless urban workers. This experience, as in many events in Lamming's novels, had a peculiar irony. The final dispossession logically follows their own agitation, however awakened their consciousness may be. The strike and the riots make Creighton
depart from his estate, and dispose of the land to the penny Bank and the friendly society. The people with large shares are given preference in the purchase of land and house plots. Mostly they are lawyers, teachers, doctors and members of the legislative Assembly, in a word, the emergent national bourgeoisie, and not the poor of the society.

In the light of what has happened to the peasant masses in Africa, West Indies, and all over the former colonial world, _In the Castle of My Skin_ acquires symbolic dimensions and new prophetic importance to emerge as a significant political novel of modern colonial literature.

Lamming’s works present a broad spectrum of development from realism towards an allegorical form based on West Indian history. _Water with Berries_ appears to be a digression from this, returning to the life of West Indian exiles in London dealt with in _The Emigrants_. Yet, the novel clearly shows how the exiles are not free from the influence of the West Indian social, cultural and historical background which they have rejected. The title _Water with Berries_ suggests the theme of relationship between the coloniser and the colonised and it also provides the allegorical basis for the novel. The title _Water with Berries_ is derived from an impassioned speech of Caliban in _The Tempest_. Caliban says:
I must eat my dinner,
This island's mine, by sycorax my mother,
Which thou takest from me, when thou camest first,
Thou strokdest me and mads't much of me;
13 Wouldst give me
Water with Berries in't.

As such, the title Water with Berries covers, at a
stretch, the relationship between old Dowager and Teeton at one
end and the relationship between the old Dowager's husband and
the West Indian natives at the other end.

In the first part of the novel, it appears as though
Teeton and the old Dowager have established a cordial relation­
ship over a period of six years. Teeton feels that he has found
a home in London;

"He watched her and wondered what miracle
of affection had turned this room in to a
house .... Six years ago he had discovered
a home in the old Dowagers' house." 14

But, eventually, this relationship does terribly fail
and proves to be superficial. This is a comment on the relation­
ship between the coloniser and the colonised.

Meanwhile, it is decided at a secret meeting that Teeton
should leave for San Cristobal to set right the wrong he had
committed.
"He (Teeton) had once deserted his comrades in San Cristobal .... seven years ago he has been arrested after a minor revolt in the San Souci plains. The island was never to be the same. But he had got away, leaving some of his own cell-mates behind ... It was desertion."  

Though Teeton has lived in London for seven years as an exile, he could not emancipate himself from the past. The feeling of guilt of having deserted the movement and the Comrades has always haunted him. Teeton doesn't consider his paintings as expressions of creativity.

"This premature fruit of a rotten crop was about to pass out of his ownership for all time. They were an innocent betrayal of the Island. ..... He turned to the maps again, inviting the island to pass some verdict on his escape."  

Roger and Derek, Teeton's friends, are not plagued by any sense of guilt for rejecting San Cristobal. Roger is the Son of a judge of Capildeo. He breaks away from his father and comes to London. His own attitude has isolated him from his own place of birth.

"Roger could never recognise any links between him and San Cristobal. It seemed that history had amputated his root from some other human soil, and depicted him, by
chance, in a region of time which was called an island. He had never really experienced the island as a place, a society of people."

Ever since his childhood, Roger has always felt a sense of Chaos in San Cristobal. The rhythms of Nature and the landscape of San Cristobal have never inspired him into music. On the otherhand, he is afraid of the landscapes and of the sudden, early descent of the nights. A strange idea comes to his mind:

"Everyone around seemed to take a mad delight in celebrating the impure; so that he had inherited this horror of impurity." Though Roger wants to get away from San Cristobal, it is only after coming to London does he realise that he has nothing that he can call his own, nothing at all. As a result, his talent for composing music does not bloom into activity.

Derek, who is an actor, has grown up under the powerful influence of chapel education. He strongly believes that honesty is the best policy and that one will have to answer for one's sins. Though a very talented actor, Derek doesn't get good opportunity to prove himself in London. The only role that he gets is the role of a corpse in a play which symbolises creative sterility.

The three women - Randa, Nicole and Myra in the novel meet with a terrible fate which again reveals an aspect of the
West Indian cultural background. Randa is Teeton's wife. When Teeton is arrested and imprisoned, Randa goes to the Governor of the place and agrees to sleep with him on the condition that Teeton is released from prison and allowed to escape to England. But Teeton doesn't appreciate Randa's sacrifice and deserts her after his release from prison. Randa waits for him six long years, and finally, heart-broken, she commits suicide. The news of Randa's suicide comes as a great shock to Teeton and disturbs his mind.

Nicole is the wife of Roger and she is an American. When Nicole becomes pregnant, Roger suspects Nicole's fidelity. It is Roger's own sense of horror of impurity and the likelihood of suicide after the birth of a white baby that make Roger charge his wife with infidelity. When Nicole comes to know of the suspicious mind and despair of Roger from Derek, she commits suicide. Roger's obsession with impurity is the result of his traumatic childhood at San Cristobal.

Myra is the daughter of old Dowager and as a child, she is brought by her father to West Indies. Her father as one belonging to the class of colonisers treats the natives with utmost cruelty and contempt. And consequently, his own servants who are natives, rape Myra, their master's daughter, and force her to become a prostitute.
The novel moves to a gruesome close with Roger burning down the house of the old Dowager and Teeton killing old Dowager and burning her body. The suicides of Randa and Nicole assume a wider significance on an allegorical level with the introduction of motifs from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* which is, for Lamming, an allegory of colonialism. In *Water with Berries*, Shakespeare's Prospero is dead, but his widow is represented by old Dowager. As a survivor of the spirit of colonialism, she exerts a subtle, mothering control over her colonial tenant, Teeton. Shakespeare's Miranda is resurrected both as Randa, Teeton's wife, and as Myra, who is forced to become a prostitute. But she does not hold her father's demonic treatment of his servants responsible for her fate. Myra's fate is linked to Randa's and Nicole's as Caliban's fate is linked to Prospero's. The linking factor is what Fernando calls the "Curse" of colonialism. Fernando, old Dowager's lover and Myra's true father, alone realises that Myra's rape has been the result of Prospero's "Experiments in ruling over your kind" as he tells Teeton. He is convinced that the curse will last until" one of us dies." The novel indeed ends with murder and arson as the artificial harmony between the English and the West Indian immigrants disintegrates.

The socio-political scenario of his first - novel is also seen in his other novels. Lamming's method of creating
an imagined world has become predominantly allegorical. The rela-
tion of the fiction of Natives of My Person to historical experience is almost
a general one. Like the earlier novels, it takes the phenomenon
of colonialism as a metaphor to suggest deep corruption implicit
in human relationships. The question of identity surfaces
because of improper perception of human relationships. The
articulation of this awareness is the very stuff of his fiction.
Lamming prefaces Of Age and Innocence with a quotation from
Djuna Barne's Nightwood summing up character's notions of
themselves. A strong sense of identity makes a man feel he can
do wrong too little accomplishes the same. If all of Lamming's
novels can be said to explore the relationship between colonizers
and colonized, Natives of My Person (1972) reexamines the very
roots of that relationship. Lamming has described this destruc-
tion of authentic individual or group identity as a state of
alienation or exile from self, which he relates to the more
obvious forms in the public context. The manifestations of exile
in his fiction have been perceptively described by Ngugi wa
Thiong'o in his essay, 'George Lamming and the colonial
situation':

"there are four uses to which Lamming puts
the word 'exile' in his novels, exile from
history and a past style of living, from
race, from class, and ultimately from self.
The notions are interrelated but they are
not necessarily inter changeable."
At the apex of the novels' scale of authority is the Lord Treasurer to the House of Trade and Justice, an all-powerful individual in the Kingdom of Limestone who maintains his position adeptly in the nation's corrupt political system. But his actual presence in the novel is remote. The expression of his will is the compulsion which succumbs the entire life of the Kingdom to the laws of the house. This awesome institution, says the narrator, is the vital centre of all commercial affairs of a very commercial Kingdom. Its authority is not constitutional but originates from brutality of economics practised by a merchant elite at the expense of all other national groups. Its influence has that status of inviolable completeness that is enjoyed by the party in Orwell's 1984.

As the narrator reveals:

"People might praise the daring and industry of the nation's parliament; but it was the house which received their ultimate obedience." 20

George Lamming, has said in an interview that:

"in creating the House of trade and justice he was thinking of the modern, international corporation and the difficulties experienced by Post-colonial nations in 'breaking away' from its power." 21
It is to escape the compulsion imposed by the house that an illegal attempt to colonise the isles of the Black Rock is made by the company of the ship Reconnaissance. The leader of this enterprise, known to the reader only as the 'Commandant' gathers around him, the alienated of Lime stone, as the ship's crew and the foundation of the new colony's society. His enterprising spirit is endowed with partially idealistic purity and partiality of authoritarian delusion. He is compelled to break loose from the mercantile greed on which the fortune of Limestone is founded and in support of which he himself has formerly used his own talents with unique distinction and notoriety right from the beginning of the novel, though, the purity of the Commandant's motives is presented in a perspective of irony.

"Class conflicts and regional conflicts characterize life in Lime stone under the monolithic authority of the House. The reader can apply the simple eloquence of Marxist terminology, identifying these conflicts as the contradiction of capitalism in the colonial and post-colonial world, and find a symbol of the alienation of the individual in the fact that the officers are named for their functions. Thus the text successively contradicts readings of it as history, or as historical allegory, and thereby confronts the reader with the complexity of its commentary."
The commandant's rather grandiose vision of himself might well be based on the evidence of his former prowess in 'the arts of conquest and command.' But it is questionable whether these arts are the appropriate instrument with which to 'break free and loose from the ancient restrictions of the Kingdom of Limestone.' These arts, after all, have been the means of upholding the power of ancient corruption which is Limestone. Indeed, the Commandant's plan is, in essence, not so much, one of departure as one of transplantation. To say that the setting for this experiment is 'new and freely chosen', is at best to announce the quasi-libertarian structure of the venture itself. For, the choice is in the hands of its principal proponent only. Moreover, the entire plan is built on the usurpation of rights of 'the savage tribes of the Indies.'

The officers of the Reconnaissance, with the possible exception of pinteados the pilot, whose neutrality is insisted upon, support the enterprise and its leader. It develops that their reasons for doing so do not come from the same idealism as the commandant's. It is possible to see priest as another exception if it is agreed that his pastoral activities are an expression of service he believes he can offer to God and man. However, he is similar to the other officers in the crucial area of his failure in terms of the values of the house. This knowledge of failure at either a personal or a public level in
Lime stone moves all the officers to seek hitherto unattained recognition of their talents in the Commandant's enterprise. All, experience, the compulsion to command; to order or to subject themselves and others to the discipline of the ships authority structure. On the reconnaissances, they have hoped to discover a certainty of freedom. But it is a freedom to control which they seek, a freedom with its own inhibitions. Boatswain realises the implicit restrictions imposed on their position of authority when the officers, at their Christmas meal, discover a sense of rivalry in Pinteado's attitude towards the commandants.

Boatswain's 'identity, then, comes under threat and it is because of his status as an officer, 'a minor authority figure,' 'a man on the inside,' lowly representing the authority structure of the ship. He is compelled to uphold that structure and to seek closer relation with the other officers. He finds himself different from both the commandants and the crew. His identity is a product of an internal compulsion and is bolstered by an allegiance to a net work of compulsion which is external to him. To maintain their own positions, the man 'on the inside' must 'for the moment at least' support the man who is the ultimate expression of their own elect status. For, behind this sense shared by the officers, that pinteado sees himself as a rival to the commandant, lies the consciousness of the crew they command.
Lamming presents the crew with the same semi-anonymity that is given to their superiors on the Reconnaissance. Of the one hundred and fifty who sail on the ship, not much is revealed to the reader except that general sense of their state of deprivation in Lime Stone. Baptist, one of the half-dozen or so who is named, articulates his dispossession early in the novel. The enterprise, he realises, offers more to the crew than to either the commandant or his officers. Faced by Ivan's question about the crew. "Is there no man among them to spare the land a tribute?" Baptiste is as uncompromising as flint:

"What's there to spare? Baptiste, countered. 'They are feeling a freedom they never know on land. North or South, it makes no difference when the powers trample over them. They spare every thing except people."  

Moreover, Baptiste has no illusion as the realities of their present positions. He is aware that their superiors have inherited their powers from the old order, in which they have risen to various stages of Pre-eminence. He shows his understanding of the illusion of freedom when he says:

"They think they are seeing the last of tyrants. But there are tyrants above us, and if I know my way about the ocean, we may yet be hanged."
There is a good deal in the novel following these remarks to demonstrate Baptiste's knowledge of his 'way about the ocean.' He understands that the crew of the ship are, by virtue of their social and economic decrepitude and their consequent political impotence, free to act without the restraints of the House of Trade and justice. Exploited though they may be by this institution, their non-participation in its activities frees them from its system of patronage and loyalty.

A vital difference between the crew and the officers can be seen even in the quality of their alienation. It is true that both the groups have been Plundered by the authority of the house. But with each of the officers the grievance against the house is that he has been allowed freely in acting out the authority vested in the house. Steward's charts of the new world have been stolen by the Lord Treasurer to the House. Surgeon has formerly sought within his scientific discipline to rise within the power system. Priest has served god to further the exploitative interests of the house on the Guinea Coast. Boatswain, a man of some capability and experience, lacks recognition of his service because of his lowly social station. The Commandant, a nobleman of Limestone, fails to sense that he himself has been defiled by the service at the house. The honours conferred on him in recognition of his service however provide him with an identity in which he evinces least interest.
All these characters, in short, have a vested interest in preserving the old ways. The difference between former and present conditions for them, then, is that their identity replaces that of the house's authority. Though their private motivations are different, their overriding concern is to perpetuate the methods and philosophies of the very system from which they seek to free themselves. Their identity, therefore, is oriented towards, and shaped by, concerns and purposes, their essentials, and their humanity.

There is, as has been mentioned, noticeable measure of compulsion imposed on the officers by this need to subject their private existence to the creation of such an identity. A compulsion of a different kind is introduced to the crew by Baptists when one of them exhorts them to rebel against the officers. Confronting the men with their own reality and awakening them to a new sense of identity is his role, which he performs with inflammatory speech instigating them to abandon the Reconnaissance. His question "So what is your share in the wealth of Limestone?" -- is a challenge to their existing loyalties. When he tells them of the house and its upper echelons: that "The same hands of authority organize your decay", he is demonstrating the futility of seeking Freedom in San Cristobal under the old conditions of Limestone which have prevailed on the ship. His conclusion is implemented not long after he has voiced it:
"Your service in the name of Limestone is a lifetime's robbery against yourself... The enterprise must be made ours. We shall lower the boats against any orders from elsewhere. And go forward to San Cristobal on our own." 25

Interestingly enough, though it is not until the commandant's death has been announced that the men actually take to the boats. It is as if the novel suggests the impossibility of the success of a revolutionary act that was prior to the creation of a power vacuum. With the change in the structure of the ship’s command brought about by Boatswains identity, the Commandant’s murder and the subsequent murder of steward and surgeon, his assassins, the crew are able to see themselves as a source of possibilities. They have no certainty of their own position. But the act of abandoning the Reconnaissance in order to pursue their freedom at San Cristobal, rather than taking over the ship itself, is a positive step towards establishing themselves as separate from the old systems of compulsion. Their identity is not yet clear to them and they have gone beyond their former subjection. They have been made to see the realities of their situation not merely because of Baptist's oratory but because the conditions of Limestone are scaled down to the dimensions they assume on the Reconnaissance, that microcosmic duplication of Limestone. On this reduced
scale, it is possible to comprehend realities which before were vague, though all pervading.

For Lamming,

"There are three worlds to which the writer bears in some way a responsibility — worlds which are distinct and yet very deeply related. First of all, is the world of the private and hidden self and yet very deeply related — a world which turns quietly, sometimes turbulently, within one man, and which might be only known by others after that man has spoken. The other world is that where the writer has real and primary responsibility to himself. The third world, to which he is condemned by the fact of his spirit, 'the world of men'.

Lamming shares within the community. What he cannot escape is the essential need to find meaning for his destiny, and every utterance he makes in this direction is an utterance made on behalf of all men. And his responsibility to the other world, his third world, will he judged not only by the authenticity and power with which he interprets the world of his social relations, his country, that is, for those who have no direct experience of it, but are moved by the powers of his speech, his judgement and his good faith.

Throughout the development of the novel, Lamming makes the correspondence between the events of his narrative, and the political and social aspects of the world outside the
fiction clear. This correspondence is never an attempt at exact political or historical verisimilitude. However, the fiction certainly illumines the reader's understanding of the historical realities of which the novel is an imaginative account. Though certainly not confined in its connection to the Third World experience, the allegorical structure of *Natives of My Person* does have particular significance in the post-colonial context. There is represented in the Social and political dynamics of the Reconnaissance an analogue of the jostling for power in an ex-colony after the withdrawal of the colonial power. The first stage in such a struggle might well be seen in the Commandant's and the officer's attitudes towards their own status. They suggest the mimicry of colonial power by individuals and groups who derive their original authority from their position as proteges of the old regimes. Genuine freedom may be misunderstood or be represented as a value promise of improvement of opportunity. But an act of revolution from within the colonised culture itself, incorporating traditional values of the culture - a stop in the search for a national identity - is the compulsion which throws off a former state of subjection.

These several journeys in Lamming are like several disciplines: an exercise of personal discipline at once exacting and consistent. Each journey is a particular spectrum of the telescopic Caribbean reality and every novel forms an integral part of the whole. Every novel is a yearning towards the
founding of a national solidarity to remake the broken world.

He says:

"The West Indians shall travel the road of self-mutilation, if we do not quickly reconvene and assume our tasks as men and women in this country, It's past is our history in all this shades and jungle darkness of our consciousness, a consciousness which still needs to be discovered." 27

Lamming has crystallised his method of imaginative representation in this novel. The situation it embodies is a model of the nature of colonialism of its cultural and political pervasiveness and of its power to influence the consciousness of the colonised long after the formal structures of colonial authority have been dismantled. Sancristobal was first used in Lamming's novels as analogous to the West Indies. It was shown both in terms of setting and as ethos for a new national identity. In Natives of My Person, it is much more than either of these. It is at once an ideal and unknown future that will inevitably test the quality of vision of those who aspire its promise of freedom.
REFERENCES


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15. Ibid., p. 18.


17. Ibid., p. 70.

18. Ibid., p. 77.


22. Ibid.

24. Ibid. p. 27.

