Lamming is one of those rare novelists whose works have created social and political awareness among West Indians. The socio-political scenario of his novels in the context of West Indian history, however truncated it may be provides, the native audience the basic knowledge about Caribbeans themselves and the society to attain maturity and unity. He could successfully educate his people using 'novel' with his distinct technique of narration which Mark shorer has observed as "the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning and finally of evaluating it".\(^1\)

Lamming is a committed writer in the sense that, for him, 'novel' is "a way of investigating and projecting the inner experience of a people"\(^2\). He begins with the objective of demolishing the colonial structures of thinking restricting the development of the West Indian sensibility. To him, colonisation above all "is simply a tradition of habits that become the normal way of seeing".\(^3\) He has also opined that "In order to change this way of seeing, the West Indian must change the very structure, the very basis of his values."\(^4\) This movement for a radical change, rejects the colonial way of seeing. It forms
the whole process of narrative to use a more appropriate term of Darstellung.

Lamming, who published six novels on Caribbean life and experience over a period of two decades, has been experimenting with the fictional form, viewing the life around and the experience of his people in different periods, in an attempt to get to the core of the Caribbean consciousness. Lamming's first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953) as Ngugi aptly describes it, is "a novel of colonial protest." The title, *In the Castle of My Skin* is significant in understanding the novel, which records his own experience, agony, and happiness in West Indies. He himself has admitted that:

"I first came across the phrase 'Castle of my skin, in a poem by the West Indian poet, Dereck Walcott. In a great torrent rage becomes inseparable from hate. The poet is addressing some white presence, and the assault is stated: 'You in the castle of your skin I among the swinehere' This phrase had coincided with my search for a title and I remembered that night and knew that inspite of his age, meaning skin, papa could never possibly see himself among swine. Nor could the village. So I thought it was correct, and even necessary to appropriate that image in order to restore the castle where it belonged."
The novel traces the maturation of an adult sensibility against the backdrop of a disintegrating society. It is set in a Barbadian village of 1930's and charts the village waking to a mild resistance. Lamming elaborates the trauma of a growing unstable society through the predicament of Boy G, and his friends. The gradual collapse of the old order is symbolised by the eviction of 'Pa', the oldest member of the clan, and the symbolic time keeper and custodian of the traditional heritage.

The narrative mode alternates between autobiographical reminiscences and authorial reflection. Correspondingly, there are two very distinct narrative lines: Boy G's inward psychologising forms one narrative register, while the society he grows up in, displacement of native families, vicissitudes of social change, another. The novel has dexterous blending of these two distinct strands. The essential conflict the central characters experience is symbolically suggested through a duality of self and world perceptible in the duality of time embodied in the characters of Pa and Mr. Slime. In the world of the former, the time machine does not operate. He reckons time by natural cyclic changes, and as it stands for the African ideal of continuum of time. He recreates the history of the race through memory, dream and myth. Mr. Slime is a man of his time for whom every minute is precious in the western sense.
He represents numerous changes that accompany modernisation even in the traditional African Societies. Although the basic narrative modes Lamming uses here are not really indigenous, the recreation of the island's past as recollected by the symbolic characters like Pa and Ma, juxtaposition in the fictional idiom, interweaving of the personal with the communal experience all these mark departure from the conventional form. The linear discourse is rejected, the narrative time dislocated, the central character revolves inside a complex multi-dimensional world, where past, present and future dream and reality interpenetrate each other. The form of narration itself becomes an image of a desperately dislocated society.

In his later novels, Lamming shows a more pronounced reliance on the indigenous material. He draws literally from the Caribbean legends, myths and history and examines the present in relation to the mythical or historical past. Lamming’s of Age and Innocence is an excellent example of the creative use of myth in a fictional work. Lamming uses the caribbean myth of tribal boys and Bandit kings as the frame work to narrate the story of San Cristobal's liberation movement. The myth is used here to make the societyCchere and to make a contrast, to universalize and to generate between the past and the present. The legend of the Tribe boys and Bandit kings which celebrates the caribbean resistance to the early Spanish
raids and the heroic self-sacrifice of the tribesmen constitute a part of the folk-tale of San Cristobal and it is sustained by an oral tradition. In the contemporary world of nationalist politics, the legend becomes an important rallying point for the liberation movement. Ma shephard "a complex character" like Pa and Ma In the Castle of My Skin is the repository of legends and symbolizes "age'. She preserves and transmits the myth with all its import to the younger generation growing up in the island represented by Bob singh, Lee and Rowley. These boys come from the African, Indian, Chinese and European segments of the West Indian Society and they stand for "innocence". To these children, the myth provides a viable cultural model for emulation.

The legend of the Tribe boys sets the time early in the novel for the Independence Struggle as a heroic endeavour rooted in the history of the place. San Cristobal's liberation movement marks a repetition of the Tribe boy's experience, and a recurrence of the same basic human situation. While Crabbe and Paravecino typify the ambition and arrogance of the Bandit kings, the nationalists like shephard, singh and Lee are jealous of their freedom like the Tribe boys. The revolution of SanCristobal takes a violent turn sometime later. The colonial Governor, Crabbe and the nationalist leader, Shephard both get killed and every section of the society is affected by the
surge of hostility. The movement degenerates into a massacre and the ruling party clamps a curfew. The extreme violence of Lamming's plot is neither exaggerated nor unconvincing if viewed in the light of revolutionary traditions of the Caribbeans. The myth becomes a hermeneutic principle which elicits a structure of meaning intrinsic to San Cristobal itself.

While Of Age and Innocence eternalizes the caribbean myth, Water with Berries (1971) demolishes the colonial myth of whiteman's superiority planted, fostered and nurtured carefully in the imagination of the colonized. As Lamming himself has pointed out:

"...myth begins in the West Indian from the earliest stages of his education. It begins with the fact of England's supremacy in taste and judgement; a fact which can only have meaning and weight by a calculated cutting down to size of non England. The first do be cutoffdown is the colonial himself."

Lamming now turns to The Tempest for his fictional frame work, since it is generally considered a cultural expression of England's Colonial adventure and retells the 'Prospero-Caliban' tale from caliban's point of view. The novel attempts a demytholization through caliban's redefinition of the Prospero-Caliban relationship. If Prospero and Caliban
are typologies conceived and popularized by the West, Lamming uses the very same typologies to question the system of values and beliefs that underlie these typologies. By doing this, he exorcises the slave-master Syndrome and Underscores the need to annihilate these stereotypes. The novel marks a definite movement in Lamming's novel writing towards what he describes as "an allegorical interpretation of experience" as opposed to a naturalistic rendering of society."

The novel is structured along the lines of The Tempest and the title itself is chosen from one of the spirited speeches of protest by Caliban. Water with Berries is about the three West Indian artists-Teeton, Dereck and Roger who live in self-exile in London having fled the islands for personal and political reasons. Here Lamming reverses the Journeys. In The Tempest Prospero is the visitor in Caliban's island, but here, Caliban's journey to Prospero's ancestral home is suggested through the emigration and exile of the three artists. Such a journey, however, arduous and disillusioning it may be, is an essential ordeal they have to go through if they have to acquire an alternate "Way of Seeing" and make a discovery of self. The novel shows how the three exiles who begin by playing out the slave-stereotype gradually grow into revolutionaries and throw away the yoke of dependence and declare independence vehemently through self-assertion.
Lamming uses the Haitian ceremony of souls as a metaphor for a meaningful reconciliation of the contemporary experience with its historical past. The Haitian ceremony of souls is symbolic of a dialogue between the living and the dead, the present and the past, and the ritual goes through to obtain liberation. The three artists that attempt to come to terms with the past, and break away from the bondage of colonial relationship, are to be viewed as a part of the symbolic drama, of redemption of living.

Lamming recreates the world of *The Tempest* by resurrecting some of the characters of the play. All major characters in the novel are modern versions of either Prospero or Caliban. Prospero as a domineering master, plantation owner and condescending benefactor is variedly seen in the members of the Gore-Britain family. Caliban slave child and rebel is also represented in the West Indian characters. Shakespeare's Miranda is resurrected both as Randa, Teeton's wife and Myra the only child of the Gore-Britain family, brutally ravaged by her father's servants and reduced to the life of prostitute. The novel shows how Prospero's experiment in ruling becomes a curse devouring his own race when his victim Caliban retaliates. Caliban's revolt is symbolically suggested through the acts of murder, rape and arson by Teeton, Dereck and Roger. The myth of Prospero's magical power is thus demolished as Caliban declares freedom. *The Tempest* tale is reread in such
a way that the colonized is appropriated and the myth of colonial experience becomes mythical and subverted to the transmission of quite different oppositional and coded messages.

Lamming's *Natives of My Person* (1971) reaches back to the beginnings of colonialism and through allegory, suggests the underlying patterns of colonial history. The novel centres around a Sixteenth century European expedition, and recreates the adventures of the colonists on their voyage. Lamming describes this novel as a "way of going toward by making a complete return to the beginning." What makes the story of slave trade unique is the narrative perspective Lamming provides in the novel. The story of slave trade is narrated from the point of view of the European colonist. The large cast of characters is drawn exclusively from the white world and their attitudes and beliefs reflect the intellectual presuppositions of the time. The voyagers voice their ideas, motives, aspirations and ambitions, at times through introspection. There are no authorial comments and the narrator remains a detached observer and impersonal. However, even as we share the voyager's vision of colonization, we are made to look at the same experience from an entirely different point of view and also from outside. This double perspective becomes highly resourceful and is sustained deftly throughout the narrative.
The main part of the narrative elaborates the journey and the plight of the principal voyagers — the commandant, steward, Boatswain, Priest and pinteados, the pilot. As the narrative progresses, Lamming uses two devices. He uses the technique of impersonal third person narration which would form the basic framework and within this, various episodes are narrated in the first person directly by the participants themselves and are incorporated into the narrative in the form of extracts from the travel diaries of the voyagers. Snippets from the past of these men come to us in a series of "analepses" from time to time. What emerges from the multiplicity of viewpoint presented is a comprehensive vision of the colonial experience in its entirety. These intersecting narrations introduce a new authority and the readers play a vital role in constructing a personally authoritative version of the tale through the discourse of reading. What makes Lamming's narrative options significant is not just the multiplicity of vantage points it offers, but the psychological and ideological relationships the text thereby creates between the narrator, characters, textual events and the readers. In Lamming's works technical excellence and artistic perfection help the successful realization of ideological concerns. Here we have an instance of how "technique objectifies a work of art". As Mark Shorer rightly said, without technical effort and artistry there is no subject in art. There is only "Social history".
In Selvon and Lamming, there is tragic note which glimmers at us from the corners of the page. Higgins, Frederick in the Emigrants. Father Hope in An Island is a World but refuses to step into the centre. Tragedy, either in the sense of the collapse of the old order (King Lear) or in the sense of the conscious perversion of the will (Macbeth crime and punishment), or in the sense of the wilful perversion of the sensibilities (Madame Bovary), suggests too high a degree of purposiveness. The works of Lamming and Selvon are works of exploration of tentative beginnings: the self caught in the act of discovery, the limits of consciousness." the acute consciousness of being" (the phrase itself in Selvon), "the new life"—(Tiger, The Emigrants)—not as failure or success, but as both.

These are essentially social novels. For Lamming and for Selvon, though in different ways, the self is the social self, the consciousness," a national consciousness," Of the four novels, A Brighter Sun is the only novel which has growth of a simple character to constitute its thematic centre. This technique, this refusal to localise the centre of interest in a single character or a limited set of characters is significant. Mais The Hills represents one of the most interesting developments of the contemporary West Indian novel. Lamming most frequently uses a loose, poetically organized framework of points of view, whereas Selvon and Mais use a framework where
subjects of interest are skilfully juxtaposed. In fact, these novels are not novels of character nor episodic novels with main and sub-plots (What happens in *In the Castle of My Skin* is a Question). They are but the novels of situation and human responses. In a way they belong to the genre of "Stream of social consciousness."

Except for *A Brighter Sun*, both Selvon and Lamming, and Mais *The Hills* define their themes by means of contrasted centres of interest. Both in *In the Castle* and *The Emigrants* the focus of interest is thoroughly dispersed. Lamming uses two points of view for narration, the autobiographical "I" and the third person of the omniscient author. This "I" reappears in the second novel, but fleetingly, and with less focus. Many parts of the narration spell the consciousness of Collins, the aspirant artist and the other parts are narrated through the third person. As in the first novel, several sections of *The Emigrants* are constituted as dramatic scenes:

Higgins: you know the ropes, Tornado That's the second thing a man got to know .... Tornado: It ain't my business. The colonial office accustomed to tell you what you should do ...

While Lamming is more an artist than autobiographer, Selvon seems to have emerged as an artist overcoming his taste for journalism. But where Lamming begins as poet, Selvon begins
as reporter. His sense of fact, coupled with the naturalism
of his style gives the impression of art without artifice, of
content without technique. As with Hemingway, this impression
is consciously created. Selvon's technique, particularly in A
Brighter Sun can be contrasted with that of Dos passos. As
with Dos passos, the facts the reported realities, form the frame
work. The facts in the novel are used not merely as they appear
but are also impressively reported, constituting part of its
theme. For, where Lamming dramatises the consciousness going
out to encounter experience, Selvon becomes concerned with the
encroachment of the world of experience. The dramatic tension
in A Brighter Sun springs from the juxtaposition of the world
of facts and Tiger's world. At the beginning of the novel, the
two stand opposed with a perversity which only Selvon's clipped
understatement could express.

On New Years Day, 1939, while Trinidadians who
had money or hopes of winning money were attending the races
in the Queen's Park, Port-of-Spain, a number of Jewish refugees
fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe landed on the island. There
was an almost instant increase in the rental of residences and
business places and later more refugees were refused entrance.

Between the world outside, and the closed world
in which Tiger exists, there is no communication. Selvon's
"Subject" is how, as Tigers ambition drives him to make sense
of his world, to find a purpose in life, "his island" - as Selvon
puts it in the title of his second novel - "Becomes a World".
REFERENCES


3. Ibid., p. 157.

4. Ibid., p. 46.


7. Ibid., p. 27.


12. Ibid., p. 273.