Chapter V

Conclusion
Austin Clarke’s trilogy revolves round the lives of the immigrant black proletariats in Toronto. The novels are fine studies on the immigrant psychology. Besides being fine studies in psychology, a number of themes namely racism, repression, violence, poverty, frustration, isolation surface in the course of the unravelling of these stories about the West Indian immigrants in Canada. To begin with his protagonists appear to be lured to Canada in two specific ways. Firstly they consider Canada to be a land of opportunity that would promote their materialist ambitions. Secondly it is because Canada is the land directly linked to the British, their superiors. In their efforts to arrive at an identity of their own in their rulers’ land and to prosper materially in Canada, the psyche of these immigrants is put to various kinds of tests. In the end they fail to evolve victors. This is because, firstly, it becomes psychologically difficult for these immigrants to delink themselves completely from their roots. Even if they succeed in this regard to some extent as Bernice does in the first novel *The Meeting Point*, when it comes to the search for self identification she fails to acquire an identity for in Canada. This is because of a lack of racial and cultural support from the natives in Canada. Secondly, though some of the immigrants succeed in achieving material prosperity as is the case with Boysie and Dots when it comes to the question of personal fulfilment they end up as emptied selves. All along what one can notice is a search for identity, a search for being in which the characters
unknowingly indulge. They seem to be yearning for a transformation from the status of non-being to that of being in an alien country, they have embraced for the material prosperity.

The first novel in the trilogy, *The Meeting Point*, is increasingly concerned with Bernice and her psychological predicament of frustration that prevents her from arriving at ultimate fulfilment. She finds herself relegated to the state of slavery while working for the Burrmanns, a Jewish family. Her inability to cope with the demands of life in Canada inflicts immense pain on her psyche. She is cut off from her roots in Barbados and she deliberately cuts herself from her fellow blacks in Toronto with the hope of coming closer to the Canadian sea of whiteness. By rejecting her real self, her being in the form of the other blacks in Toronto she hopes to get a new identity for herself in the new country. But by rejecting her being, her black self she is indulging in a kind of self negation which perpetuates the deformation of the self through the co-optation of the colonised subject into the agency of domination. This only leads her to the becoming of nonbeing intensifying her agonies.

In his exploration of immigrant psyche Clarke arrives at several issues responsible for the pain inflicted on the immigrants. On the one hand the blacks are fascinated by the whites to the extent of delinking themselves from their own origins as is the case with Bernice. On the other hand the inter-racial conflict involving the white men chasing black women and black men chasing white women provides another dimension to Clarke's novels. We find Mr.Burrmann trying to trap Estelle, Bernice's sister for reasons which are rather cold-blooded. It is not out of his genuine love for Estelle that Mr.Burrmann is drawn towards her. He sees her more as a mechanism or an instrument to test his virility. Clarke also succeeds in showing the tensions found in the lives of the blacks. Their lives seem trapped within their imprisoning blackness that makes it harder for them to come to terms with a hostile environment. The feeling of racial insecurity arises
from the social conditioning of the black men to think that he is destined for an inferior status. It is in their attempts to come out of this status of inferiority they try to link themselves to the whites. May be this is what prompts Henry White to cultivate a relationship with the white, Agatha. The relationship which is not founded on something solid as genuine love ends up on a disastrous note. As depicted in the second novel of the trilogy *Storm of Fortune*, Henry White though succeeds in marrying Agatha is haunted by a sense of guilt for he fails to come out of his status of inferiority. Added to this is his financial helplessness. The guilt-ridden Henry chooses to escape the situation of degradation through suicide.

One more interesting aspect of Clarke's novels is the pattern of hate. It is not confined to the blacks' perception of other blacks but extended to the relationships between blacks and whites and other whites. The theme of hate come handy in intensifying the unresolved and the moral complexities of the blacks. Hates sometimes is used as a positive element to effect a transformation in the outlook of a character making him see himself realistically and change for the good as is the case with Boysie.

The Black-Jew relationship brought to focus by Clarke enriches the novels. There is an ambivalence and prejudiced connection between these characters. Mr. Burrmann and Estelle on the one hand and Henry and Agatha on the other hand demonstrates these evolving ambivalences in the inter-relationships between Blacks and Jews. Where as Mrs. Gasstain and the German Brigette act out the German-Jew conflict. It is ironic that Bernice exhibits no affection for the Burrmanns inspite of her three year association with them. Mr. Burrmann's love affair with Estelle is one of love-hate relationships. They both use each other to meet their own selfish ends which infact reduced Estelle to the status of a whore. Estelle later admits that Mr. Burrmann succeeded only because she 'had less love in her heart than he had hate in his'. This love-hate relationship
spills over into the social lives of the characters. One probable cause of friction between these two groups is the Jewish emergence as the upper middle class employers of blacks. With the attainment of this social level their ancient unity is dissolved by their differences.

In the Henry-Agatha relationship, Henry commits suicide because he finds it difficult to come out of his inferiority complex. When he dies the blacks blame Agatha despite the indications that Henry is deeply disillusioned in terms of the failure of the culture to understand and to accept him. The tangibility of Henry's destruction merges with the intangibility of the other major characters' corrosion. Together they bring to the fore the destructing nature of the system of social relationships that refuses to accept the humanity of the black person. It is amidst this system Dottie and Boysie carry on their struggle.

Dottie's obsession with material acquisition is similar to Boysie's. She becomes a failure when it comes to the question of comforting material relationships. For Boysie also, the same thing happens. Central to both of them is the desire to become the persons of self worth through absorbing as much as possible of their conceptions of the status quo. Though he becomes a successful man financially it helps him in no way in providing an authenticity and a sense of fulfillment. At the end we find in him a very sombre person, a man whose deformity takes on deeply pathetic undertones. By the time we come to the end of the third novel in the trilogy, *The Bigger Light* we find Boysie completely estranged from his wife both literally and metaphorically. This is the result of the alienation produced in the culture which has continued to reject his humanity despite his material being. In Boysie's case cultural alienation is integrally bound up with personal and sexual alienation, and hence the agonymore is more intenser. The only source of some comfort is the relationship between Estelle and Mr. Burrmann. They succeed in arriving at a state of personal fulfillment, though
outside the conventional social set up, with Mr. Burrmann accepting Mbelolo as his own child.

Clarke's succeeds in depicting Canada as an enigma of desperate entities of which these immigrants are minor components lost in the sea of Canadian whiteness. Inspite of their efforts the struggles to arrive at the state of being from that of non-being these immigrants end up in their pursuit, never arriving at the state of being.