THE THEME OF ROOTLESSNESS IN WEST INDIAN FICTION

by

CHERYL INDRA JIBODH

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Department of English

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

ABSTRACT

This thesis acknowledges that a combination of circumstances has produced in the West Indies an almost wholly immigrant population whose fundamental condition is one of rootlessness. It attempts to show that rootlessness manifests itself negatively in the literature in an inability to regard the West Indies as home, in the placelessness that is brought about by emigration, in an uncertainty as to identity, allegiances and origins, and in an existential self-alienation produced by acculturation.

Chapter One is a selective account of relevant historical and sociological data that demonstrates how the condition of rootlessness and the accompanying feeling of loss and deprivation arose. It ends by trying to draw a parallel between the particular West Indian condition of rootlessness that sprang from a slave society and existential rootlessness as generally understood by Western philosophy.

Chapters Two, Three and Four are studies of selected prose texts which treat this theme. The texts are grouped according to their setting. Chapter Two attempts a detailed analysis of three novels set in the West Indies which depict the rootlessness of an individual or sector of society against a larger uncreated society. They reflect two fundamental reactions to the condition of rootlessness -- refusal to come to terms with the environment, and its opposite, the attempt to ground one's existence meaningfully. The novels that have
been selected are: Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus*, Naipaul's *A House For Mr. Biswas* and Lamming's *Season of Adventure*.

The world of the immigrant is explored in Chapter Three. Austin Clarke's *The Meeting Point* is set in Canada while Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Salkey's *The Adventures of Catullus Kelly* are set in England. In these novels, the characters are cut adrift of any moorings and their rootlessness exacerbated in an even more alien environment in which they are totally disoriented.

The Afro/Asian/European search for origins in the ancestral homeland and the chasm that separates the West Indian from his origins form the subject of Chapter Four. Naipaul's *Area of Darkness*, Dennis Williams' *Other Leopards*, and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Voyage In The Dark* demonstrate the impossibility of return, and the irreconcilability of the two worlds and the sensibilities born of them.

(Supervisor)
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CHAPTER 1

A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There are several factors in West Indian history which have influenced the literature. If we take it that the literature of a society is a sensitive gauge of its inner tensions, it becomes obvious that West Indian literature is largely preoccupied by a West Indian condition of rootlessness. The most basic reason is that the society is an almost wholly immigrant society (that 'immigration' being a forced one for the majority) that has not yet sunk into its landscape nor found that it can claim it fully. Naipaul's vision of West Indian man is of "A derelict man in a derelict land ... lost in a landscape which has never ceased to be unreal because the scene of an enforced and always temporary residence."¹

The feeling of loss and displacement is accentuated by one of cultural loss; the culture is borrowed and the values imported like a commodity. The plantocratic policy of expediency and the system of slavery have created a West Indian mentality of living only for the present, and the Colonial policy of insularity has exacerbated the absence of unity and the feeling of not belonging. Lastly, Britain's abandonment of the territories has left the peoples at the mercy of economic forces, thus giving rise to emigration and further rootlessness.

The unique foundation of West Indian society and the chain of events it set in motion is succinctly expressed by
Orlando Patterson:

Jamaica, and the other West Indian Islands, are unique in World history in that they present one of the rare cases of a human society being artificially created for the satisfaction of one clearly defined goal: that of making money through the production of sugar.²

It has been estimated that during the whole of the European slave trade, a quarter of which was concentrated in the West Indies, no more than 20,000,000 Africans were sold out of Africa.³ The Europeans, in their capacity as slave and plantation owners and administrative officials largely made up the rest of the population until the last wave of immigration, when Asiatics were imported to supplement the labour force after emancipation. The native Indians having been almost wholly exterminated, the society is therefore a transplanted, heterogenous, immigrant society that was not founded on any principles.

Conditions in the West Indies -- the harsh climate, the tropical diseases, the demoralising effect of slavery, the sterility of social and intellectual intercourse and the unsettled character of the islands, made them a place of exile. The Europeans consequently looked to the metropolitan countries as home and regarded the colonies as a place where money was to be made -- as the high rate of absenteeism testifies. The patriarchal system of plantership therefore failed to take strong root in the West Indies.⁴ Some planters undoubtedly felt a permanent attachment for their adopted homes, but the majority who resided there did so because they could not afford to live abroad. Those who could, left after making a fortune.
Their attitude has therefore had a profound effect on the course of the West Indies. A nineteenth century visitor, Sewell, observed that "The plantocracy of other days were not too deeply interested in the permanent prosperity of the islands, or too willing to expend a portion of their revenues in investment that promised no immediate return."\textsuperscript{5} He was astonished at their utter disregard of the basic principles of economical science. They were notoriously resistant to change and for a long time ran their estates without regard to labour-saving devices, soil chemistry, or crop rotation. Their shortsightedness in their dealings with the negroes was worse: "They do not seem to reflect for a moment that the interests of a proprietor is to elevate, not to degrade, his labourer."\textsuperscript{6}

The consequences of absenteeism were disastrous:

No country, since the world was made, were its resources ten fold greater than those of Jamaica, could continue to prosper with the large body of its landed proprietary permanent absentees ... and even those who were nominally residents usually passed half the year in Europe and spent their money there.\textsuperscript{7}

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, lucrative posts in Jamaica were often held by absentees who farmed them out to deputies who further farmed them out to sub-deputies.\textsuperscript{8} The children of planters resident in Jamaica were sent abroad for education and seldom returned. Children were provided with annuities charged to the estates and had no first-hand connections with the source of their income. Between 1625 and 1792, of 370 wills relating to Jamaica abstracted, 142 testators were resident in England and 133 in Jamaica.\textsuperscript{9} Jamaican
estates went in almost every case to relatives in England who would most likely put them in charge of attorneys, thereby compounding the situation. By the end of the nineteenth century, when the system was collapsing, a large number of indebted estates were foreclosed by English creditors who had no intention of living on the island. One observer, writing sixteen years after the abolition of slavery, estimated that nine-tenths of the land under cultivation before emancipation was owned by absentees. These facts demonstrate the extent to which England was regarded as home, the consequent orientation of the entire society towards England, and the temporary nature of the European's West Indian residence, all to the detriment of the colonies which were purely a means to quick fortunes. These factors naturally prevented the imparting of a settled character to the islands. In addition, Jamaica, especially, was always drained of the people needed for leadership. The sense of cultural loss is therefore sharper in Jamaica than in Trinidad where there were Spanish, French and English settlers who maintained an active interest in their cultures. This could account for the Jamaican isolationist and insular attitude, for the popularity there of minor religious sects which presumably fill an emotional need, and for the extreme withdrawal from Jamaican society of the Ras Tafarians who regard Ethiopia as their true home, Jamaica a kind of hell they must endure for their sins. They meet rejection with rejection.

While the idea of England existed whole in the minds
of the plantocracy, the idea of Africa was tarnished for the negroes. Although the missionaries must be credited with trying to improve the condition of the slaves and to fill an emotional void in their lives, they also share some of the blame for teaching the negro self-contempt by devaluing the African heritage. They regarded the African cultural tradition as a relic of heathenism and tried to suppress it. Among the converted, said one missionary, "The Hankering after the vain Traditions of their Fore-fathers is already considered as a falling off in that Love to the Lord Jesus and his Doctrines, which once prompted them to forsake all ungodliness and devote themselves to God." And yet it is significant that they strongly reinforced the slave system by stressing the virtues of obedience and submission without questioning the morality of the institution in the first place; acceptance of the social structure and support for its principles of subordination was the price they were prepared to pay. With the missionaries openly antagonistic to the African tradition, and the planters indifferent, contemptuous, or determined to destroy any signs of solidarity among the slaves by splitting up families or tribes that spoke the same language and had the same characteristics, with the English orientation of the society and the devaluation of Africa, African survivals were few. Slavery flourished on the absence of moral and ethical standards and on the absence of values, and therefore made anything positive, useless and meaningless, hence the complete breakdown of African tribal forms, the family unit, codes of
behavior and African forms of technology, economic life and political organization.

East Indians, who made up the majority of the post-emancipation indentured labourers, were the most recent mass addition to the melting pot -- the last boat arrived in 1917 -- and they clung to the idea of India as the mother-land. Many still do. In roughly eighty years, 548,000 Indians went to the West Indies and settled mainly in Guyana and Trinidad. They were initially committed to a five-year term of indentured labour, at the end of which they were guaranteed a free return passage. They proved to be a tractable and docile labour force with a strong attachment for the land, but the earliest ones regarded their period of service as a temporary one and many took advantage of the free return passage. Their strong initial resistance to settling down may have been due to a number of reasons. One writer suggests that, "Owing to the limited compounds of the human personality, some men wither when they are uprooted ... there are human beings in all societies who do not have the emotional and intellectual reserves to adapt themselves to new and trying conditions." A more likely explanation is that they resisted acculturation because they came from an ancient culture, a highly organised society that was rigidly stratified into a caste system which governed every act of social intercourse and man's place in society. Secondly, religion was a way of life to them, not an appendix to it. Finally, their culture is an essentially conservative one, and they had two binding institutions to unify them --
the extended family and the village unit. In addition, the free return passage was undoubtedly a major reason why early Indian immigration had such a transitory, impermanent nature. As long as the possibility of returning to India existed, the immigrant would not acquire settled habits and there would be an almost complete retention of their native culture. An early observer commented:

These Asiatics still adhere to their own peculiar habits and creeds; they even continue, with rare exceptions, to wear their country costume, and but few have become converts to Christianity .... They are thus naturally led to retain most of those habits which they expect to resume in full force on revisiting their native land.¹⁴

To another they looked like "a tribe of migrating hordes."¹⁵ It is significant that when the Indian High Commissioner first arrived in Trinidad in 1951, many Indians were disappointed to find out that he had not come to arrange their repatriation back to India as they had hoped.¹⁶ In fact, as late as 1908, out of a total of 2,448 who came to Trinidad, 726 returned to India.¹⁷

Indian immigration eventually acquired a more settled character. The turning point was the 1860's when added incentives to staying were offered by the planters who despaired of seeing them return after they had finally adjusted. Crown land was offered to those who wished to remain. By the 1860's they began to settle down in the agricultural areas near the estates. They acquired more stable habits and institutions, revived their skills and engaged in agriculture. But the nature of their adaptation is significant, revealing the extent
to which they were still oriented towards India. They transplanted whole, many of the institutions with which they were familiar. "Here the Indians established themselves in much the same way as in India. They built the same type of houses, wore the same type of clothes, spoke the same language and worshipped the same Gods in the same kinds of temples." In *Area of Darkness*, Naipaul captures well the complete transference the Indian community in the West Indies made and the subsequent 'wholeness' the idea of India represented:

More than in people, India lay about us in things; in a string bed or two ... in innumerable brass vessels, in wooden printing blocks ... in drums and one ruined harmonium; in brightly coloured pictures of deities on pink lotus or radiant against Himalayan snow; and in all the paraphernalia of the prayer-room .... In its artefacts India existed whole in Trinidad.

The fourth significant sector of society in terms of this study, is the mulatto or coloured. Their dilemma is emblematic of the general West Indian one of looking both ways, of being caught between traditions. They were an intermediate class in slave society and had more privileges than the pure negroes. They were house slaves rather than field slaves. In time they became a threat to the whites because they had the basis for the formation of a middle class, because they were on the numerical increase, and because they had established themselves financially, many of them having been left generous bequests by white fathers. By the time of emancipation, they were well off and ready to assume the role of leadership and fill the gap left by the whites. They have always been characterised
(and stereotyped) by their rejection of their part-negro ancestry and their desire to 'become white'.

To recapitulate, the homelands they left behind exerted the strongest hold on the Indian and English imagination and existed whole in their minds. This gave a certain transience to their West Indian life. The coloureds were directly caught between Africa and England and strove to be English, denying their connections with Africa. The negroes had contracted the biases and preferences of their masters but were totally excluded from their world while at the same time Africa was devalued in their eyes. In The Middle Passage, Naipaul quotes from Trollope who visited the West Indies in 1860:

But how strange is the race of creole Negroes .... They have no country of their own, yet they have not hitherto any country of adoption. They have no language of their own, nor have they as yet any language of their adoption .... They have no idea of country, and no pride of race .... The West Indian negro knows nothing of Africa except that it is a term of reproach. If African immigrants are put to work on the same estate with him, he will not eat with them, or walk with them. He will hardly work beside them, and regards himself as a creature immeasurably the superior of the newcomer. (M.P.,66)

Slave society with its polarities of power on the one hand and total subjection on the other, its devaluation of life and its erosion of dignity, reduced the slave to the status of an object. Naipaul's sensitivity to the figure of the peripheral man can perhaps be traced to this fact of West Indian history. Under the slave system, the place of the individual was determined by his status; the status of the slave was
characterised by subordination and lack of rights. His social position was determined by the fact that he was regarded (and designated), primarily as property. Clause Four of the Act of 1674 enacted that, "All Negroes lawfully bought as bondslaves shall here continue to be so and further be held and judged and taken to be goods and chattels and ought to come to the hands of Executors ... as other assets do." The slave system depended for its very existence on a denial of the humanness of the slave; therefore to ensure its continuance, the slaves were stripped of legal rights, robbed of self-respect and made to work like animals. They were "a herd of the human species reduced to the most abject state of misery, considered, even by themselves, as an inferior order of being in the scale of creation." 

A sense of belonging to a larger West Indian community might have offset some of these group attitudes and relieved the slave's total isolation within slave society, but there has never been a West Indian community. The general aimlessness that is characteristic of the individual islands, reflected in the insular, isolationist attitude that prevails, is a direct inheritance from the British policy of keeping the individual islands separate in spite of their geographical proximity.

At the end of the eighteenth century, most of the West Indian territories shared certain characteristics which at once united and divided them. They were, almost without exception, insular colonies of European States, and the majority of them had built up an economic and social organisation based on plantation and Negro slavery and dependent for
its very existence on external trade, credit, and force. But these general features of resemblance had led to the development of complex ties with the European imperial powers which completely overshadowed interrelationships among the colonies themselves.  

Their political dependence on the 'mother-country' was strongly reinforced by their vested interest in building up protected markets and access to capital resources there, by their need for military protection ... and by the habits of isolation and the lack of organization prevailing among them.  

It is ironic, and perhaps sad, that this still applies. As late as August 1, 1973, at the signing of a "Caribbean Community Treaty", by the heads of Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, Dr. Eric Williams, a noted historian and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago remarked, "It remains to be seen whether centuries of individualism can be buried in one decade of co-operation."

Colonialism, being the exploitation of one unit for the advantage of another, it was to the advantage of Britain to play one unit off against another, to foster a spirit of rivalry and to create disunity. The colonies had no intrinsic value as such. They were valuable only in the extent to which they benefitted Britain, and her attitude was governed by a consideration of the political, economic or strategic importance of each colony. (Eric Williams has shown how the wealth from her West Indian colonies financed Britain's Industrial Revolution.)

The small islands, for example, were considered to be useful as pawns in treaties. Or, as was the case with Tobago which no one wanted to develop or defend (nor did they want
anyone else to), there was a tacit agreement that the small or neutral islands should be waste lands. As a result, Tobago is still undeveloped. As for the planters, they regarded the small islands as unwelcome competitors for labour and for the sugar market. It was therefore to the interest of both Home Governments and planters to strangle the small islands. Today, they are the poorest ones.

This insular attitude prevails today in the inter-island depreciation. "Each island distrusts its neighbours, a rivalry that has its historical roots in the traditional fear that the planter class of one island had of competition from its neighbours." The break-up of the West Indian Federation has been blamed on this attitude:

Political imperialism explains, more than any single factor, the present disunity of the region, the aimlessness so distressingly apparent since the collapse of the federal venture in 1962, with the resultant trend toward micronationalism.

In view of the nature and function of West Indian society, it being created by slavery for the enrichment of Britain, it had no inner reserves to hold it together, and it is not surprising that once it ceased to be profitable financially, it fell apart. The beginning of the decline of the West Indies at the end of the eighteenth century was accelerated by emancipation in 1834. Lord Harris, governor of Trinidad, articulated the dilemma of West Indian society then as it is now. "A race has been freed but a society has not been formed." The overwhelming question in the minds of the planters was whether or not the newly freed slaves would remain
on the plantation. The question was decided largely by the alternatives available. Where there was land they could cultivate, as in Trinidad and Guyana, they left the estates in large numbers. Where there was none, as in Barbados, they stayed. Jamaica fared badly. It had been declining since the 1780's and the high rate of absenteeism with the consequent drain of capital was disastrous for an already shaky economy.

The post-emancipation years saw the beginning of the West Indian mobility that was to continue into a diaspora. The extent of migration from and within the West Indies is an indication of the instability of West Indian life, and of the great sense of placelessness and homelessness that it has bred. The post-emancipation population shifts were relatively inconsequential compared with the mass emigration at the turn of the nineteenth century when the sugar industry was in its death throes. In the 1880's, when the West Indian economy was buckling under the strain of debt and competition from the beet industry, there was chronic widespread unemployment, resulting in the "emblematic beginning of the continuous West Indian emigration in search of work."\(^{31}\) Sewell describes the Jamaica of the 1860's: "Kingston looks what it is, a place where money has been made, but can be made no more. It is washed up and cast aside as useless."\(^{32}\) Between 1904 to 1920 the Central American Mainland provided work on coffee, sugar and banana plantations, Cuba on the sugar plantations. Panama attracted many Jamaicans. The end of this dispersion came with the world-wide economic depression at the end of the 1920's and
the situation was further aggravated by the U.S. restrictions on immigration in 1924. Barbados, which has always depended on emigration to curb its population, was seriously affected. The 1930's saw a flow of immigrants returning. In the 1950's, Montserrat lost an estimated fifty per cent of its population in a wave of small island migration to the United Kingdom.33 The diaspora continues unabated. To stay in the West Indies means, for most, to exist at a bare subsistence level; to emigrate means to become a nomad, uprooted.

Naipaul has dissected the society ruthlessly in The Middle Passage, laying bare all the smug, comfortable platitudes, and feeling beneath the surface to the hidden tensions of a society that has been built on nothingness:

History is built around achievement and creation and nothing was created in the West Indies. (M.P.72)

With the granting of Independence to most of the islands, a new awareness has sprung up. The process of decolonisation has begun. West Indians are coming to realise that they have been living in a borrowed culture and that they live a daily paradox. The West Indies is now trying to find its true self, affirm its heterogeneous racial past and heritage and shed its white cultural skin. The problem of identity that is being articulated in its literature reflects a need to ask the very basic question, "Who am I?" A plastic type of individual had evolved under slavery, a type who was highly susceptible to outside influences, not having a native tradition to draw upon.

West Indian culture is a hybrid one, with English the
main influence. English policy in the Caribbean was "masked by the desire to anglicize -- to print her own stamp on all her subjects." The West Indian is also a hybrid. Gordon Lewis describes the phenomenon:

Cultural imperialism ... by seeking through education to convert the West Indian person into a coloured English gentleman produced the contemporary spectacle of the West Indian as a culturally disinherited individual, an Anglicized colonial set within an Afro-Asian environment, caught between the dying Anglophile world and the new world of Caribbean democracy and nationalism seeking to be born.

This is precisely the dilemma that Lamming is trying to resolve in *Season of Adventure*. The Martiniquan-born psychologist, Frantz Fanon, has pointed out the danger to the psyche of this cultural imposition -- so thorough was the colonial indoctrination, that the black West Indian has unconsciously assimilated the prejudices, myths and folklore of Europe so that the negro, black being a negative in the European unconscious, is in combat with his own image, a case of authentic self-alienation. Fanon calls it an existential deviation; it can be summed up in the title of his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*. The negro self-deprecation, his unsureness of his worth, and his self-contempt, is seen in the Trinidad gift at self-caricature. One of the greatest dangers slavery inflicted on the negro was that it taught him self-contempt; it set up for him the ideals of white civilization and made him despise every other.

The colonial has to create a whole new identity. He has to pick up the pieces of his history and make the future whole.
Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other people all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?"38

In spite of a few survivals of the African tradition,39 the negro has been thoroughly detribalized and acculturated, except, of course, for isolated groups such as the Bush Negroes of Guyana and the negroes of Haiti. Many of the traditions and institutions they brought with them broke down under the strain of the slave system. Any advantages their numerical superiority might have given them were nullified by their status and function in that society. Acculturation has been defined as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."40 This sort of definition is, of course, ludicrous, when one applies it to a colonial situation. It produced "a monstrous distortion of human society."41 Herskovits, in The Myth of the Negro Past, observes that a people that denies its past cannot escape being a prey to doubts of its value today and its potentialities for the future.42 The awakening of interest in the African past has started many on a search for roots. It has taken varied forms, a symbolic return through the adoption of what is thought to be African, and a physical return for those who have the means. Africa now serves as an emotional matrix for those who find that they belong nowhere.

East Indian acculturation has been limited. Certain
Indian institutions were bound to disappear or be modified, the natural result of being transplanted to a Western society. The caste system has largely lost its meaning to the majority and is not a potent social force. For obvious reasons, it had little chance of survival. In the first place, all the immigrants were placed on an equal footing by the mere fact of being immigrants. Throughout the journey, it was impossible to avoid touch pollution as brahmin and sudra rubbed shoulders. On arrival, everyone was aware that it was simple to upgrade one's caste in a new place. Most important, the Caribbean context would have rendered full retention archaic, for they were equal in the eyes of the rest of the population. Moreover, the West Indian population was neither receptive or sympathetic to the principles of the system. The extended family unit and the Hindu and Muslim religions have survived, as have the languages.

The Indian community is, in many ways, more suspended than any other between two worlds, the older members treading a precarious path between denying their new environment while living in it. There are many living today who came directly from India and the constant reminders of India around them make the transition more prolonged.

There is an element of existentialism inherent in the West Indian condition that has been generally recognised by its writers. The philosophy of existentialism is basically one of uprootedness -- the severing of the links that have traditionally anchored man psychically. The loss of religion
and the despiritualization of nature has left man homeless; mass society and collectivism have swamped the individual and reduced him to an automaton, left him with a "desolating sense of rootlessness and vacuity;" man has become a stranger in a world which is hostile to his desires. In short, man is uprooted.

Thus with the modern period, man ... found himself for the first time homeless; science ... presented man with a universe that was neutral, alien ... with the loss of this containing framework (religion) man became not only a dispossessed but a fragmentary being ... man's feeling of homelessness, of alienation, has been intensified in the midst of a bureaucratized, impersonal mass society .... He is trebly alienated: a stranger to God, to nature; and to the gigantic social apparatus .... But the worst and final form of alienation ... is man's alienation from his own self. In a society that requires of man only that he perform competently his own particular social function, man becomes identified with this function.

The divorce between man and his environment operates on several levels in the Caribbean context. That environment is regarded as an alien one by its immigrant society. The society itself was artificially created by the sweat of slaves who did not enjoy its advantages nor do now. The slave himself was the archetype of today's faceless man of the masses. He was utterly reduced to his function and was required to do, not to be. He was an object "as goods and other chattels." Wilson Harris points to the absurdity of even hypothetically referring to "the individual African slave." The contingency of his existence is testified to by the circumstances under which he came to the West Indies. West Indian history reads like a grotesque series of accidents; the West Indian
himself is an accident. His life has never been characterised by security; he has no golden age to look back on. The absence of a stable society politically, socially and economically is a perpetual reality for him. Lastly, there is the damage slavery did to the psyche, the self-alienation and self-hatred that Fanon calls an existential deviation.

These themes have found their way into West Indian literature - both the poetry and prose. Space does not permit the inclusion of West Indian poetry in this study. A more extensive analysis would obviously have to include Brathwaite's excellent trilogy and Walcott's poetry. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the prose alone will suffice to give an indication of the pervasiveness of the theme of rootlessness, and its comprehensiveness, for it captures the essence of the West Indian condition.
FOOTNOTES


6 Ibid., p. 112.

7 Ibid., p. 112.

8 The Sociology of Slavery, p. 32.

9 Ibid., p. 35.

10 Ibid., p. 37.

11 Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands, p. 301.

12 Ibid., p. 300.


15 Trinidad in Transition, p. 133.


The Sociology of Slavery, p. 80.

Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands, p. 137.

Ibid., p. 311.


History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago, p. 52.


Ibid., pp. 18-19.

In *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands*, p. 332.

The Making of the West Indies, p. 241.

The Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies, p. 174.
33 The Growth of the Modern British West Indies, p.119.

34 Trinidad in Transition, p. 292.


36 Black Skin, White Masks, p. 12.

37 The Middle Passage, p. 66.


40 The Myth Of The Negro Past, p. 10.

41 The Sociology of Slavery, p.9.

42 This definition is quoted by Kerskovits in The Myth Of The Negro Past, p. 32.


44 Ibid., p. 30.


CHAPTER II

A WEST INDIAN SETTING

Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus*, Naipaul's *A House For Mr. Biswas* and Lamming's *Season of Adventure* are set respectively in Jamaica, Trinidad, and a fictitious West Indian island, San Cristobal, that is obviously meant to be a composite of all. The characters are those for whom the middle passage journey has been final -- at least in the physical sense; and the novelists, by ostensibly defining West Indian man and society, create the antithesis -- fragmented, dispossessed individuals who are essentially placeless and rootless in an unformed society. The prevailing sense of rejection and of not belonging is strong in Naipaul and Patterson, Naipaul's Tulsis trapped in a decaying Indian world while rejecting the Western reality around them in their nostalgia for India, and Patterson's Ras Tafarians similarly caught between worlds in their frustrated desire to be repatriated to Ethiopia.

The transitional period between colonialism and nationalism that a Naipaul would see as a period of darkness giving way to further darkness, Lamming optimistically entitles "Season of Adventure", and in his novel he attempts to resolve the West Indian cultural paradox, in Gordon Lewis' words, of "the Anglicized colonial set within the Afro-Asian
cultural environment, caught between the dying Anglophile world and the new world of Caribbean democracy and nationalism waiting to be born. His characters are therefore trapped, as well, between worlds.

An interesting picture of West Indian society emerges from the novels. They indicate the essential formlessness of the society, such that the frame of reference, the context, cannot be drawn upon; it has to be created. One suspects that Lamming did not set out to do this intentionally, that he found himself in deep waters when he tried to create his fictitious San Cristobal out of all the West Indian islands. Despite numerous references to Lords, Ladies and Sirs, Presidents and Vice-Presidents, we are never firmly planted in an organic, living society. He unwittingly reveals the poverty of the West Indian tradition. John Hearn's 'Cayuna' is a shade more convincing because his concern is with a middle class that is familiar from the pages of the English novel proper.

Patterson's characters are a type that has become familiar through the novels of Roger Mais. They are the slum dwellers of the Caribbean, and it is significant that both novelists are frankly fatalistic and both see the predicament of their slum dwellers as an intolerable existential one. A third Jamaican writer, Andrew Salkey, shares their view; in *The Adventures of Catullus Kelly*, the Jamaican, Erasmus, comments on "the smallness of the enclosed area of everyday living, the nearness of individual lives, the rawness of the
reports of disappointment and defeat ... and the intolerable existential life.\textsuperscript{5}

In Mais' \textit{first} novel, \textit{The Hills Were Joyful Together}, the inhabitants of 'the yard' (shacks clustered around a compound), are horribly trapped in a vicious chain of circumstances. At the end of the novel, Surjue, one of the main characters, makes an attempt to escape from prison:

\begin{quote}
Halfway up already. More than halfway up. In a moment his fingers would clutch the edge of the wall. It was all so easy he wanted to laugh .... His hand reached up and took a firmer hold of the knot above .... He did not hear the sound of the single rifle shot ....

He lay on his back, his arms flung wide, staring up at the silent unequivocal stars. (The Hills, 228)
\end{quote}

The tragedy is compounded by our knowledge that his wife has burnt herself to death at about the same time in a fit of insanity.

\textit{The Children of Sisyphus} is Patterson's first novel. Most of it is set in a slum called the Dungle, which is occupied by various social outcasts, notably the Ras Tafarians, a Jamaican cultist group. Their leader in the novel is Brother Solomon. We leave the Dungle for a short while as we follow the trail of Dinah, one of the cultist's women, who makes a determined effort to escape from it, and it is Dinah who leads us back to the Dungle when she crawls back after being stabbed by the jealous co-leader of another religious cult she had joined.

The Ras Tafarians figure prominently in Jamaican novels. They are noticeable in Jamaica by their long matted
hair, their beards and their antisocial behavior. They have no regard for Jamaica or its privileged, whom they regard as the sinful children of Babylon. They wish, above all else, to be repatriated to Africa, preferably Ethiopia, their one true home, land of their fore-fathers. Consequently they pay allegiance to the Ethiopian national anthem and worship Haile Selassie.

In the novel, they have collected among themselves and sent some delegates to Ethiopia to arrange for their repatriation. News arrives that their mission has been successful and that ships are on their way. They gather on the Jamaican shore singing and rejoicing, their belongings packed. Only Brother Solomon knows that the mission has been a failure, but he allows them this one moment of happiness, and with a triumphant feeling of having fooled fate, he commits suicide.

Patterson has set his novel within the context of the myth of Sisyphus who was condemned by the gods to ceaselessly push a rock to the top of a mountain in Hades and begin again when it rolled back down. This archetype, the 'absurd' hero condemned to a monotonous and endless round of futile labour, gives the novel its title. The context is modern, but the parallel is clear. Like Sisyphus, the children of Sisyphus are condemned to a rootless, treadmill existence from which they cannot escape.

Patterson has intensified the absurdity of the existential framework by setting the novel in the Dungle, which
becomes a symbol of the foundations on which their lives are built. Originally a swamp, the Dungle was built up artificially:

An' I 'member de firs' time de donkey-cart start to carry de shit an' dump it right here 'pon de swampland.... I use to watch dem day by day till de place come hard so dat we could walk 'pon it like we doin' now. Me was one o' de firs' person to walk 'pon dis land o' shit here, gal. (Children, 39)

As a powerful symbol and a controlling motif, the Dungle focuses on the absurdity at different levels. It symbolises the rootlessness and contingency of their existence; it reduces to ironic comedy man's struggle with his environment; and it becomes an internalised symbol. It is as impossible for its inhabitants to escape from the Dungle as it is for them to escape from themselves. The Dungle is both within and around them.

The novel relentlessly pursues the theme of the futility of escape. All the characters have their eyes firmly fixed on leaving the Dungle. Holding on to their various frail rudders, Dinah, her ambition, Mary, her mulatto daughter, Mabel, her guts and ambition, and the Ras Tafarians, their hope of repatriation, they go through the motions of leaving or preparing to leave, but all end up where they started -- in the Dungle. Mary is carried off insane and her daughter is taken from her, Dunah runs back to it to die, and the Ras Tafarians are left on the Jamaican shore waiting for a ship that will never come, waiting for Godot. The absurd is born of the confrontation between man and a universe that does not respond to
his desires, making individual will useless; in such a world there can be no heroism, only Sisyphian revolt. At the end, Brother Solomon, through whose consciousness we see the absurdity, fixes his eyes on the void, on the farce of the human comedy that the Ras Tafarians play out on the sea shore and cries out:

"Every wretched one of them is an archetype of the clown-man, playing their part on the comic stage so well they are no longer conscious of playing ... they have before them ... twelve hours of happiness. Who else but the gods could enjoy such happiness? For the moment they are conquerors. For the moment they have cheated the dreary circle." (The Children, 202)

The opening scene of the novel with the three garbage-men on their way to the Dungle with rotting food is Kafkaesque in its evocation of guilt and condemnation. They sit "like condemned men being hauled by the asses to a fate unknown, unthinkable .... They were abandoned to a fate which seemed to terrify them, partly because they were perpetually plagued with doubts of its existence, partly because they felt that if indeed it did exist, then in some bizarre way they already knew what it was." (Children, 17).

The Dungle is peopled by the dispossessed who have nowhere else to go, their squatter life emphasizing their rootlessness. Their greatest ambition is to escape; their songs are songs of nostalgia and exile, of rootlessness and of not belonging. In their songs, the Ras Tafarians hear king Rasta calling them home to Ethiopia. Their allegiance is a passionate one to a land they have never seen and are doomed never to see.
Camus said of 'absurd man', "His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land." The Ras Tafarians do have this memory and they do have this hope, and it makes their plight all the worse.

As his Brothers prepare to board the ships that will never arrive, Brother Solomon searches for reason, for meaning behind the comic repetition of their lives, the dreary circle that goes round and round, but comes face to face, instead, with the futility of rational human endeavour.

You fool yourself into believing that deep down in you there is a hidden god, something real, something meaningful .... Brother, there is the complete comedy, for when the mirage vanishes you have not just the agony of your own thirst still unquenched but the added agony of knowing that the mirage was always unreal ... to seek for God, to seek for meaning, some essence, is unreality twice times over. (Children, 202)

His confrontation with a mirage is the absurd discovery, "a condition that results when man seeking happiness and reason confronts a meaningless universe, what Camus called 'the unreasonable silence of the world.'"

It is the man of consciousness who sees the absurdity, for the act of thinking is an attempt to cope with the environment and thereby transform it. Solomon, and to a lesser extent, Dinah, are the centres of consciousness in the novel. The beginnings of Solomon's quest for meaning go back to his theological days when Christianity failed to provide the answers. "Where was he coming from? Where was he? Where was he going? ... What was the point of even asking what was the
point?" (The Children, 63). It has been said that the existentialist imagination seems particularly appropriate to a time when man has lost all familiar props and seeks new ones even while he recognizes that they may prove insufficient. This has particular reference to the West Indies where the old props were not indigenous in the first place. Thus, Solomon dispenses with the prop of Christianity and embraces the seemingly more meaningful Rasta cult. But the paradox of that cult lies in the fact that it is firmly planted in a heaven on earth (Ethiopia), which is therefore subject to all the contingencies of earthly existence, as the end of the novel makes clear. At the end of his quest, Brother Solomon comes to realize that man is not poised between the infinite and the finite in a classical chain of being, but that man is infinitely finite. The elusive lines of the "Sic Vitae" come back to his mind and he completes the last section of the sonnet:

The wind blows out, the bubble dies;
The spring entombed in autumn lies;
The dew dries up, the star is shot.
The flight is past -- and man forgot. (Children, 205)

Nature has few romantic associations in this novel. Instead, it serves to confirm the characters' consciousness of their nothingness and their estrangement from nature itself. Both Dinah and Solomon see in nature only an extension and reflection of their emptiness. Camus has said, "With what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us." It is significant that they both describe the nothingness metaphorically as a desert. To Brother Solomon, man's search for meaning is a
mirage that suddenly vanishes, leaving him stranded in a barren desert. Thus, the desert becomes a metaphor for the aridity of his soul in its absurd confrontation. It has this meaning also for Dinah. At the height of her religious conversion, when the "full consciousness of herself crashed in on her," she is gripped with terror and she rushes to the window to gaze outside and find some affirmation of herself in nature. She sees only a parched, plain piece of earth, a reflection of her own empty, arid life:

Her being became trapped in its sear, dry nakedness. What was beyond the nothingness of the dusty patch? she wondered. Nothing but more barren nothingness. (Children, 159)

When, at the end, Brother Solomon sees the comic futility, he laughs the mocking laugh of a man who has looked on the void. In a last act of defiance, he "mocks the vast blue void with a wild, bulging, fantastic stare" (Children, 206) and chooses to commit suicide as a supreme assertion of reason in face of the irrationality. Patterson denies his character's Sisyphian heroism. In the confrontation between man and the environment, one emerges victor. In this case, the environment triumphs. (But the act of writing is itself a form of defiance).

All the characters in the novel are trapped. Their situation is intensified by the claustrophobic atmosphere of the novel, similar to that of A House For Mr. Biswas. Rachel is one character who has learnt to live within the walls of absurdity. Her weapons are a caustic, sarcastic regard for human endeavour and an acceptance of the futility of revolt.
She herself had twice tried to escape but always had to return. "Is not wha' yu wan' fe do ... is wha' yu 'ave fe do."

Where Patterson permits no escape from the claustrophobic prison of the Dungle, Naipaul allows Mr. Biswas a limited escape from the equally claustrophobic East Indian enclave of the Tulsis. Both authors depict a section of society that has made the middle passage but has not arrived, only Naipaul's vision is more inclusive. In Mr. Biswas we see the figure of the rootless, peripheral man set against the starker outlines of both a static, decaying racial group and a larger colonial society that is as yet a void.

*A House For Mr. Biswas* is perhaps the best known West Indian novel. Kenneth Ramchand suggests that it is "the West Indian novel of rootlessness par excellence." Mr. Biswas is an Indian born of a poor high-caste family. His father is drowned while he is a boy and the family is split up. Mr. Biswas fails at job after job, becoming in quick succession, a pundit-trainee, an apprentice in a shop and a sign painter. During this time his addiction to the novels of Hall Caine and Marie Corelli with their stories of romance in temperate climes adds to his frustration. His sign-painting leads him to the Tulsis, a respected Hindu land-owning family in Arwacas who hire his services. The Tulsi kingdom is run by Mrs. Tulsi and her brother-in-law, Seth. Labour is provided by the Tulsi sons-in-law in return for a place in the communal household. Biswas makes a clumsy effort to attract Shama, one of the Tulsi girls and his love note is found by Mrs. Tulsi. Immediately,
the oiled Tulsi machinery swings into action and before Biswas knows what is happening, he is a Tulsi son-in-law.

The Tulsi communalism, without which Tulsidom couldn't function, awakens all his instincts for self-preservation and so begins his life-long war to resist it and throw a spanner in the works. His attempt to preserve his identity is symbolized by his determination to have his own house. His weapons for resisting Tulsidom are his sarcasm, his religious unbelief and his disrespect for all that the Tulsis hold dear. But there develops a love/hate relationship between him and the Tulsis, for while they threaten him with self-annihilation, they also provide him with a make-shift identity as a Tulsi, and his rebellion has a double edge. At length, when the Tulsis can no longer put up with his attitude and behavior, they set him up in a shop at 'The Chase'. The venture fails and Biswas, Shama and their three children, Anand, Savi and Myna, return to the Tulsis. He is given another position, as a sub-overseer on the Tulsi sugar-cane estate at Green Vale. Here Mr. Biswas makes the first of his attempts to build a house. A period of crisis in his life approaches and on a stormy night, as he and Anand lie in the unfinished house, Biswas is overcome and is reduced to a sobbing wreck. He returns to the Tulsis once more.

He then moves to Port-of-Spain where he becomes a newspaper reporter and his creativity is allowed some outlet. Under pressure from Shama, who misses the communal household, he throws his lot in with the Tulsis once more when they sell their original house, Hanuman House, and settle in a place
called Shorthills. Here he makes another aborted attempt to build a house, moves once more with the Tulsis when they abandon Shorthills and invade Port-of-Spain, and we finally see Mr. Biswas in his own house which is, ironically, mortgaged to his uncle.

The opening line expresses the larger irony of *A House For Mr. Biswas*. After forty-two years, Mr. Mohun Biswas of no fixed address has finally become Mr. Mohun Biswas of Sikkim street, St. James, Port-of-Spain, only to die four years later. But his house, which is as precarious a facade on insecure foundations as the rest of his houses, nevertheless symbolises his one goal in life, to forge an identity amid the disintegrating rubble of the Tulsi world and the uncreated features of the larger colonial society.

How terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it: to have died among the Tulsis, amid the squalor of that large, disintegrating and indifferent family ... worse, to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one's portion of the earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated (House, 13).

"A home is the accepted framework which habitually contains our life. To lose one's psychic container is to be cast adrift, to become a wanderer upon the face of the earth."

Shuttled back and forth between a succession of houses and people, never wanted and never missed, Biswas becomes such a wanderer, without a home to call his own for the greater part of his life. A home gives order to the memory, preserves the past, gives one a context and an identity, and acts as a base
on which to ground one's self. When Biswas finally moves into his own home with his family, the narrator steps out from behind the mask:

From now on their lives would be ordered, their memories coherent. The mind, while it is sound, is merciful. And rapidly the memories of Hanuman House, The Chase, Green Vale, Shorthills, the Tulsi house in Port-of-Spain would become jumbled, blurred: events would be telescoped, many forgotten. Occasionally a nerve of memory would be touched ... and a fragment of the forgotten experience would be dislodged, isolated, puzzling .... So later, and very slowly, in securer times of different stresses, when the memories had lost the power to hurt, with pain or joy, they would fall into place and give back the past. (A House, 581)

Naipaul's connection between the house, memory, and the past is significant in our evaluation of this novel as an expression of the West Indian rootlessness. To people like Biswas who have never had a 'house', their memory, and in a certain sense, their past, has been a nightmarish history of an uprooting process. In this, Biswas can be seen as an archetype of the West Indian mobility, the mobility of the dispossessed. Hence Naipaul's insistence on the connection between mobility, the consequent disruption of memory and a whole past. Naipaul links this with the loss of childhood.

Biswas has lived in so many houses, most of which have vanished without a trace or been destroyed, that it is as if he never really existed, as if parts of his life have been obliterated, especially his childhood. (He is called Mr. Biswas even as a baby). The uprooting process begins when his father dies. "For the next thirty-five years he was to be a wanderer with no place he could call his own, with no family except that which
he was to attempt to create out of the engulfing world of the Tulsi's" (A House, 40). When he pays a visit to the house where he was born, he finds oil derricks in its place. Visiting his mother one Christmas, he reflects upon how many places he has lived in, and how little he was missed, because he was always an appendage. "In none of these places had he ever been more than a visitor, an upsetter of routine" (A House, 132). None of these places carry the mark of his absence, and neither do his wife and children whenever he deserts them or they him. Because he has never had a home, his memory and consequently his childhood have been violently dislocated. This applies equally to his brothers and sister who change from children to married adults overnight. Rolled back and forth between houses, he has never really known his children. "I have missed their childhoods" (A House, 533). The quest for a house therefore becomes an embracing symbol of the West Indian quest for a past, for continuity of memory and for psychic wholeness. Mr. Biswas, like West Indian man, is trying to build a symbolic house against a splintered and disrupted past of servitude and deprivation. Only by doing so can he order his life, make his memory coherent and let it "fall into place and give back the past." I believe that Naipaul means Biswas to be representative in this sense because although the East Indians did not experience slavery, the metaphor governs the book.

Slavery is one of those ingathering, creative metaphors which have in them both strength and universality. It is this metaphor which initiates and sustains A House For Mr. Biswas.
Both William Walsh and Gordon Rohlehr have traced this metaphor in the novel. Rohlehr suggests that Hanuman House is a microcosm of the old slave society and that Mrs. Tulsi and Seth have fully grasped the psychology of the slave system. Since it is important to the psychology of the slave system that the impression be maintained that everyone joins it of his own free will (slavery created the evidence of its own legitimacy), Biswas is made to feel that he controls the absurd course of events surrounding his 'courtship' and marriage. "We don't want to force you to do anything. Are we forcing you?" (A House, 90). Mrs. Tulsi divides power among the sisters and rules by a system of checks and balances. By allowing her daughters the illusion of freedom and democratic rights, she partially controls their husbands. They are, in turn, effectively emasculated and inculcated with an inferiority complex (Mr. Biswas is the first to resist this psychic emasculation and Govind follows suit). Any sign of independence and individualism is punished in the children and the non-conformist is ridiculed and ostracized. All are reduced to the same level of mediocrity. Biswas is allowed to make those jokes which affirm his self-contempt and strengthen and justify the stereotype others have of him. He, in turn, ridicules himself as a means of having his presence acknowledged. The Tulsis practise absenteeism at the Chase shop.\(^15\) Walsh points out that all the members of the Tulsi community carry about them the mark of the slave, the unnecessary person, and that all are occupied in the urgent task to get others to acknowledge, so as to have it validated for
themselves, their human necessity. Before Biswas even grows up, a little unnecessary part of him, his sixth finger, falls off and dies. Slavery, it will be remembered, involved a total lack of human necessity; being simply a function and a thing turned the victim from a subject into an object. The Green Vale labourers clearly see the victim in him and flaunt his authority. Biswas' great achievement, therefore, is in not becoming a Tulsi slave, not dying "unnecessary and unaccommodated" (the typical Naipaul technique of presenting the most positive achievement of his life as a negative -- being as not being).

Naipaul's rendering of the Tulsi world is therefore vitally important. By showing them in their closed worlds as prisoners of the past, the household, not society, becomes the social unit against which we see the individuals, and the household clearly exhibits the structure of slave society. Mrs. Tulsi and Seth provide for everybody's needs and wants. They, in turn, provide the labour needed to run the regime. The frequency of floggings at Hanuman House is reminiscent of slavery. No one is paid in the Tulsi establishment. Biswas is never paid for his sign-painting; it is regarded as his contribution to the household.

Just as slavery held the seeds of its own destruction, so does the Tulsi set-up. The Tulsis live in Trinidad, but their whole being is oriented towards India. They have maintained their connections with India, and when Owad speaks disparagingly of Indians from India, the sisters "grew grave as
they realized their responsibilities as the last representatives of Hindu culture" (A House, 540). They deliberately withhold themselves from society and cluster together for security:

Despite the solidity of their establishment the Tulsis had never considered themselves settled in Arwacas or even Trinidad. It was no more than a stage in the journey that had begun when Pundit Tulsi left India. Only the death of Pundit Tulsi had prevented them from going back to India; and ever since they had talked, though less often than the old men who gathered in the arcade every evening, of moving on, to India, Demerara, Surinam. (A House, 390)

The Tulsis interact only among themselves; religious ritual, a fantastic capacity for role playing, and domestic entanglements provide their only emotional props and give their life meaning. Anything beyond their gates is unimportant and foreign to all except the third generation. Biswas, on the other hand, strikes out on his own. The closed, cramped quality of their world, the internalised orientation, give an incestuous taint to the family structure. (An equally powerful rendering of the incestuous planter family turned in on itself is given in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*.) The consequent demoralising is apparent when the communal way of life fragments nightmarishly and individualism reigns.

The Tulsis, with their psychic orientation towards India, are unable to control their environment physically or through language. As the novel progresses, and especially in the Shorthills episode, the insidious process of decay and destruction that they seem to generate from inside, the frantic struggle to comprehend and control an unfamiliar environment
that is neither the familiar canefield or rice land, precipitates the dissolution of the communal system. They boil, fry and curry all the plant life that seems edible. Scheme after scheme is hatched and abandoned. They ravage and plunder the land. Their loss of control is also suggested in the linguistic dilemma in which they find themselves. The function of language being to describe the universe and thereby control it, the Tulsis are faced with the problem of articulating the Western environment in Hindi terms, so that they alternate grotesquely between the two languages. By speaking in Hindi they never come to terms fully with their environment and so remain linguistically rootless. As part of his rebellion, Biswas refuses to reply in Hindi whenever a Tulsi addresses him in Hindi. They need the support of a sympathetic Indian environment in order not to seem anachronistic. Bereft of the comforting enclosure of Hanuman House and their reputation in Arwacas as a pious, Hindu, landowning family, they become mere exotics in Port-of-Spain.

Their negative state of existence extends also to their emotional make-up. They cannot show emotion except by negative means. At Christmas the sisters mask their excitement by frowns and complaints of fatigue. Shama apologizes by being aggressive. Scenes of love between husband and wife or parents and children are few and far between and usually reserved for private moments. Biswas and Anand share a painful relationship, with "exaggerated authority" on the part of Biswas and "exag-
gerated respect" on Anand's part. "For Shama and her sisters and women like them, ambition, if the word could be used, was a series of negatives; not to be unmarried, not to be childless, not to be an undutiful daughter, sister, wife, mother, widow" (A House, 160).

In such a world of negativeness and collectiveness where the mass swamps the individual, Biswas stands out alone and pathetic in his efforts to create and preserve his identity and individuality. "The theme of one man pitted against a whole way of life is tragic in scope." The Tulsi way of life is a blank, solid hulk which Biswas makes pathetic efforts to dent. Where it seeks to reduce all to a communal melting pot, he must hold on to his individuality; where it denies individual worth and dignity, he must assert his; where it seeks to create a fatal dependance, he must resist it and strive for independence, no matter how lonely the road. The poignancy of his dilemma derives, however, from the void he faces on all sides, for he has no real alternative and no values with which to replace the Tulsi world. He faces a disintegrating Indian enclave on one hand, and an unborn colonial society where romance, adventure and heroism are to be read about, not experienced. His choice is essentially an absurd one -- between two nothings.

In such a society, there can be no heroes, only anti-heroes of the picaresque or the existential type. It is important to note that both these archetypal figures are figures of rootlessness, the wanderer. Naipaul has noted the Trinidadian
admiration for the picaroon. Trinidadians, he comments, like the 'sharp character' who, like the picaroon, survives and triumphs in a place where it is felt that all eminence is arrived at by crookedness;\(^{20}\) moreover, the picaroon or anti-hero is doubly suited to the Trinidad society because it "denied itself heroes."\(^{21}\) To use Maurice Shroder's terms,\(^{22}\) the 'deflationary' novel where every youth is not a hero, unlike the 'inflationary' or 'romanesque' novel, would be a more authentic Caribbean form. This is not to imply that Naipaul is merely following slavishly in the European picaresque tradition, for the peculiar social and historical conditions which gave rise to the admiration for the picaroon are unique in a slave society. In such a society the folk tradition would naturally manifest a strong admiration for the trickster hero who outwits the authorities. Thus we have the Uncle Remus stories of the American South and the Brer Anansi stories of the West Indies. Naipaul continues on the subject of the picaroon:

The picaroon delight in trickery persists .... Slavery, the mixed population, the absence of national pride and the closed colonial system have to a remarkable degree re-created the attitudes of the Spanish picaroon world. This was an ugly world, a jungle, where the picaroon hero starved unless he stole, was beaten almost to death when found out, and had had therefore to get in his blows first whenever possible.\(^{23}\)

Biswas incorporates many of the features of the picaresque hero -- the essential situation of the wanderer, the outsider who belongs nowhere, his episodic life, the adversity he faces
and his satiric view of society.

It is also useful to consider the novel in terms of the existential tradition. Perhaps the happiest compromise can be found in the term 'neo-picaresque', a term given to some modern existential quests. An anti-hero Biswas certainly is. Whereas many picaresque novelists use the motif of the illegitimate birth of the hero to parody the mysterious birth of the traditional hero, Naipaul goes all out and gives Biswas a mysterious birth complete with absurd mock-heroic prophecies. Like Oedipus he is fated to kill his father; unlike Oedipus he fulfills the "prophecy" in the most ridiculous way. His basilisk look is ominously hinted at; he has to be viewed indirectly by his father -- in a brass plate filled with clear coconut oil. As it turns out, he cannot intimidate a fly. His name hints at divine favour; it is 'Mohun', meaning 'Beloved of the gods'. He is hounded by misfortune throughout his life. It is said that he will become a liar, spendthrift and a lecher. He is an unconvincing liar, his romance with Shama is an absurd train of events over which he has no control, and life-long poverty prevents him from becoming a spendthrift. When he and Shama have their first quarrel, he is the one to pack up and go home to mother.

Alter, writing on the picaresque novel, comments, "The anti-hero finds himself dropped into a world as stolidly indifferent to his own existence as any absurd universe faced by the protagonist of an existential novel." This clearly is Biswas' position. He is continually trying to cope with an
environment that is alien to his dreams and indifferent to his existence. He identifies with the heroes of his novels, but only up to a point. Like them he is poor and struggling, but "The heroes had rigid ambitions and lived in countries where ambitions could be pursued and had a meaning. He had no ambition, and in this hot land, apart from opening a shop, or buying a motorbus, what could he do? What could he invent?" (A House, 79). He has no innate dignity and none is allowed him except at Tara's prayers when he has a temporary dignity as Brahmin for a day. Tulsidom thrives on indifference to people as individuals.

Biswa's most typical mood is that of the uprooted man -- anxiety. He is constantly overwhelmed by his dispensability and contingency. He is at the mercy of the fluctuations of others' fortunes for most of his life. Because of his consciousness of self, he has a capacity for being reduced to the utmost nakedness in times of crises. One such moment is at Green Vale as he and Anand huddle in the unfinished house with the storm raging around them. His fear of the darkness, his fear of people and his claustrophobia had been eating away at him for some time, making him fluctuate between nonentity and being:

Who is your father?
You.
Wrong. I am not your father. God is your father.
Oh. And what about you?
I am just somebody. Nobody at all. I am just a man you know. (A House, 279)
It is of course ironic that while the Tulsi threat reduces him to this, it is the Tulsis who give him some identity, hence his indecision and fluctuation when it comes to a final break from them. After his breakdown the night of the storm, he is taken to Hanuman House and there his shattered self finds some comfort. The very solidity of Hanuman House, which he normally finds threatening, becomes reassuring when he awakes the next morning.

The Tulsi way of life is a choking embrace of communalism and reductivity, and Biswas' fear of this faceless mass that closes in on him and threatens to snuff out what is best in him is vitally linked to his quest for a house. Naipaul's handling of the Tulsi mass and the colonial void is therefore a skilful use of the techniques of satire. Since the satirist assumes an implicit moral standard or norm against which deviations of the grotesque or the absurd are to be measured, Naipaul's task is doubly difficult when we consider his vision of the Trinidad norm. What does his society accept as rational? What is its norm? As Miguel Street, The Mystic Masseur, and The Suffrage of Elvira make clear, Naipaul sees Trinidadians as natural eccentrics and oddities with a great talent at self-carricature, and the society as an anarchistic, farcical one without traditions, standards or inflexible morals. It is a nation of buffoons and practical jokers, benignly tolerant towards the most extreme behavior. The norm is therefore no norm -- it is extreme, farcical, absurd and grotesque. Naipaul therefore rejects both the 'norm' and deviations from it.
This accounts for his emotional distance from the scene he satirises and it intensifies the quality of his satire, for the greater the emotional distance between the satirist and the object of his satire, the more detached he is, "the more will the swarm of minuscule characters fall into the neat intellectual pattern imposed by the mind of the satirist."

Hanuman House has all the qualities of the satiric scene. It is disorderly, crowded, packed to the point of bursting with miscellaneous people and things; the faces are grotesque. The scene where Mr. Biswas is being questioned about his love note to Sharma is Bosch-like in its details -- curious children peeping at him and being dragged away by ringed hands, faces of women and children peeping out from the kitchen door-way. Hanuman House, itself a grotesque structure with statues of the monkey-god Hanuman erected at the corners of the roof, is packed with people caught in their animal functions -- the eaters, the squelchers, and people riddled with the weaknesses of the flesh -- boils, eczemas and lice. Throughout all this, Biswas must retain his vision, a precarious ideal that is always in danger of slipping into the darkness. And yet, it is a tribute to Naipaul that he maintains a genial Chaucerian tone throughout. Malice and derision are absent.

Lamming's Season of Adventure is less moulded by an artistic vision as by a social consciousness, and a desire to propose solutions to West Indian problems. In the novel, the coloured girl Fola's backward glance into her personal and
racial past precipitates a young nation's search for its origins and an assessment of its dual cultural heritage, so that both move forward in an artistic climax to the sound of steel drums— at once African and West Indian. The novel revolves around an intricate network of paradoxes— personal, racial, national and cultural — and such is the precarious security and foundation of San Cristobal, that an individual's quest is enough to bring the whole structure tumbling down. From its ashes, a second republic, an amalgam of the two hitherto unreconciled cultures it has inherited, will presumably be born.

In Fola is concentrated the dilemma of the coloured who has turned his back on his African ancestry and heritage; an added twist is given to her symbolic position of belonging to two worlds by the fact that we do not know if her father is negro or white (her mother had relations with both a negro and a white the same day and does not know which one fathered Fola). In this way, Lamming tries to capture the inseparability of the different elements of the West Indian heritage.

Fola's awakening of consciousness is triggered by her visit to a tonelle, an African serpent cult that has survived in San Cristobal, and her consequent realisation of how intimate her relationship is with Africa. Her quest for the true self takes the form of a passionate search for her father; it entails rejecting her step-father and her English life style, and coming into intimate contact with the black masses. She enlists the aid of a black artist, Chiki, and together they
create a portrait of her father. The murder of a high official plunges the island in a mass search for his murderer, whom Fola declares to be her father. The portrait, presumably a composite half-black, half-white, is printed on posters and the island is at once engaged in a search into its own past. The newly-acquired Independence does not survive the crisis and at the end, the new leader, Dr. Baako, outlines the cause of its failure and proposes how they are to appropriate their traditions meaningfully.

The 'tonelle' we witness in the opening scene of the novel is a West African serpent cult that was brought by slaves to the West Indies. It is a ceremony for the resurrection of the dead, during which the dead come back to speak about their past relations with the living and the living come to hear "whether there may be any guide that may help them towards reforming their present condition." In the tonelle, past, present and future all come together; it is at once rooted in the past and a kind of prophecy. As Kenneth Ramchand points out, since the ceremony is for the resurrection of the dead, it lends itself symbolically to the theme of the novel:

The middle-class West Indian's denial of the masses, and his shame of Africa are seen as obstacles to the fulfillment of the person, and the inauthentic existence of the unfulfilled person is a kind of death. Fola is imagined as such a dead person, and the creative task of the novel is to probe this condition and to feel for the problems and possibilities of re-birth.

To deny one's past is to be spiritually dead, to be forever "a stranger within one's own forgotten gates."
As a privileged coloured girl, Fola has been taught all the refinements of her class in San Cristobal, which means a European upbringing. This process of cultural imposition and the denial of her negro ancestry cuts Fola off from her past and the implication is that the coloured middle-class is split between the authentic and the inauthentic self: the real self is the self that has a sense of its African past, that is attuned to the world of feeling the tonelle represents; the bogus self has opted for the dry, dead, sterile English heritage (It is regrettable that Lamming uses the old cliches). Powell, a negro with a pathological hatred of coloureds, describes the split:

Look at her (Fola) good ... education an' class just twist that girl mouth right out o' shape. Like the rest she learn fast how to talk two ways .... She got open-air talk an' inside talk .... Like tonight she go talk great with the stranger man. Grammar an' clause ... an' all that. But inside, like between you an' me, she tongue make the same rat-trap noise. Then she talk real .... Is how them all is. (Season, 21)

Fola is taken to the tonelle by her European teacher, Charlot, who recognises her affinities with the native women who dance the ververs. Charlot is himself a self-exile who has come to San Cristobal to seek adventure, having rejected his European heritage as a monotonous, sterile one. He feels it his duty to force Fola to glance backwards at her past. "Charlot was sure there was some hidden parallel of feeling between the girl ... and the coarse exuberant faces of the crowd which had suddenly grown hysterical in the tonelle. Social refine-
ment had become Fola's natural atmosphere, yet she had kept the raw, unbridled certainty of instinct which had tossed those women through the dance around the bamboo pole" (Season, 24).

The atmosphere of the tonelle makes an assault on Fola's senses and shocks her into the realisation that she shares this past with the black crowd. Her relation to the tonelle is "personal and near", and so begins her journey of return to her African past, a past that is "personal and near" because it recalls the departure of those slaves who had brought the serpent cult with them. She commits herself to unearthing that side of herself that is obscured under education and upbringing, the side of her that responds instinctively to the rhythm of the steel drums.

The events at the tonelle that night have particular reference to her. One of the dead that returns to speak at the tonelle is a boy who was deserted by his mother while he was alive. He had spent his life searching for her in vain. Crim, one of the negro peasants at the tonelle, comments on the significance of this:

Is the biggest, nat'ral thing any man want to know. Who work on who to give you life? Which man you can call father, however it happen, which woman you can call mother whatever her past position? Is the biggest nat'ral thing. (Season, 47)

This has a two-fold reference to Fola. In the first place, "it is against all custom for the guilty to stay away" from a tonelle, and so it is entirely appropriate that Fola, who has
denied her past, like the mother who has denied her son, should be at the tonelle. Secondly, it makes Fola realise the incompleteness and unnaturalness of her existence, for she doesn't know who her father is. The two quests therefore become one. She makes it clear to her step-father that she doesn't regard him as her father. She starts on a "history of needs; a season of adventure" and her quest takes her to Chiki the artist.

Chiki is caught in a similar predicament. He is artistically paralysed by the conflict of his dual heritage, the Christian tradition, and the African/West Indian one. His paintings move from Christian themes, the miraculous transformation of water into wine at Canna and the resurrection of Lazarus, to a vision of his own failing inspiration, a crippled hand plunging underground. His artistic crisis is intensified by his inability to capture sound in his paintings; he views this as an artistic failure. These paradoxes are resolved temporarily at the end and his paintings come to life, when the victorious steel drums led by Gort, who is playing the drum dug up from the grave of Jack O'Lantern, march towards Freedom Square. There is the miraculous transformation of drums into music and the capturing of sound, the fusion of Christian and African/West Indian traditions in the hymns that are played on the drums, and the resurrection of Jack O'Lantern's drum from the grave. The crippled hand is vicariously creative and the two traditions are reconciled temporarily.

When Fola and Chiki create her father in paint and the
portrait is displayed throughout San Cristobal as the murderer of a high official, the personal and national quest become one as the whole nation searches for him. "It might have been your father missin' the way that face haunt every man with lookin and searchin." This is as it should be, since Fola's father is a mysterious combination of black and white, and the search becomes, by implication, a national backward glance at the past, posing the fundamental West Indian question of identity: Who am I?

Lamming selects the distinctive West Indian sound of the steel drums as the basis for a solution to the cultural dichotomy. The music itself is a motif in the novel, sometimes near, sometimes distant, but seldom absent. As Kenneth Ramchand points out, *Season of Adventure* is the first literary celebration of the steel band. The drums are portrayed throughout the novel as the repository of the peasant consciousness, speaking a language that is more immediate to the majority than the Standard English of the middle class. They are referred to several times as "talking drums", and Powell, who has trouble articulating -- he is haunted by the threat of the failure of words to come -- and whose tongue trips over disconnected syllables, responds instinctively to the drums. He can hear Gort's drum call him like a human voice. Gort experiences a similar divorce between language and life. "When words did not connect with what they were doing they knew it was a warning trouble was near" (Season, 59). Language is very important in San Cristobal's higher circles. The middle-class place great em-
phasis on elocution and try to outlaw the drums and the
tonelle as signs of backwardness. When the crisis, precipi-
tated by the murder, topples the Republic, Dr. Baako proposes
that, since language was the cause of the failure of the
first Republic, they must find a language that was no less
immediate than the language of the drums. In other words, the
instinctive control that the players have over their drums
should be their model in the appropriation of their cultural
past.

The Second Republic and the West Indian nation,
Lamming is urging, must not only take a backward
glance at its origins, it must use the personal
relation of the Drum Boys to their drums as a
model for the creation of a language, and for the
meaningful and relevant appropriation of their
double cultural heritage.
FOOTNOTES

1. The Children of Sisyphus (London: New Authors Limited, 1969). Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text and will be cited as 'Children'.


3. Season of Adventure (London: Michael Joseph, 1965). Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text and will be cited as 'Season'.


10. The Existential Imagination, p. 31.


15 Gordon Rohlehr, "Character and Rebellion in A House For Mr. Biswas," New World Quarterly, 4,4 (1968) pp. 68-72. This article is the source of most of the observations in this paragraph up to this point.

16 A Manifold Voice, p. 71. Walsh traces the theme of slavery in Naipaul's earlier works as well.

17 Ibid., p. 72.

18 Ibid., p. 75.


20 The Middle Passage, p. 72.

21 Ibid., p. 41.


23 The Middle Passage, p. 73.


25 Ibid., p. 110.

26 "Character and Rebellion in A House For Mr. Biswas," p. 66.

27 Rogue's Progress, p. 5.


30 The Mystic Masseur (London: Andre Deutsch, 1957).


33 A ceremony described in The Pleasures of Exile (London: Michael Joseph, 1960), pp. 9-10 seems to be the basis of the tonelle. "This Ceremony of the Souls is regarded by the Haitian peasant as a solemn communion; for he hears, at first hand, the secrets of the Dead. The celebrants are mainly relatives of the deceased who, ever since their death, have been locked in water. It is the duty of the Dead to return and offer, on this momentous night, a full and honest report of their past relations with the living .... It is the duty of the Dead to speak, since their release from that purgatory of Water cannot be realised until they have fulfilled the contract which this ceremony symbolises .... The living demand to hear whether there is any need for forgiveness, for redemption; whether, in fact, there may be any guide which may help them towards reforming their present condition. Different as they may be in their present state of existence, those alive and those now Dead -- their ambitions point to a similar end. They are interested in their Future.

34 The similarity of the ceremony described in The Pleasures of Exile and the tonelle, and the symbolic implications both hold, would warrant our assuming that they are the same.

35 The West Indian Novel and Its Background, p. 143.

36 Ibid., p. 136.

CHAPTER III

THE IMMIGRANT

Emigration is an extension of the West Indian experience; for the majority of West Indian writers, it is as much a part of their experience as the islands they left. Salkey's *The Adventures of Catullus Kelly* is prefaced by an extract from a B.B.C. talk by Stuart Hill that is worth quoting at length.

Every country has a store of collective memories; I mean the memories which combine certain places with certain experiences which seem particularly symbolic of the culture and history of that country, and are meaningful, collectively, to everyone living there; though, as an individual, a man may not have lived in that kind of place or had that kind of experience. West Indians inhabit certain collective memories. The first is the peasant and village memory .... The second is the incredible jumble and scurry of life in the downtown section of any of the bigger towns .... The third is not of the West Indies at all. It is the memory of the freezing bed-sitter in Earls Court or W10; it is the sad, bitter-sweet memory of emigration; for some of us, it is now the sharpest and most meaningful collective reminiscence of all. These collective memories are part of what 'being a West Indian' means for us now; there is, in each of them, the key to a particularly important look in our history, our way of life, our attitudes, and our literature.

The second most prominent subject of West Indian literature, apart from life in the West Indies, is the emigrant living away from the West Indies, cut off from whatever roots he did have. Even in novels set in the West Indies, the figure of the emigré is a familiar one at the end. It follows that
the West Indian rootlessness that has been the subject of the previous chapter is exacerbated in the immigrant novels when the support of a familiar environment is withdrawn.

Whether the novels are set in England, as are most, notably by Selvon, Salkey, Lamming and Braithwaite, or in Canada, where the Barbadian, Austin Clarke has until recently been living and writing, they share the concerns of those set in the West Indies, the essential difference being that in the latter, individual rootlessness is reinforced by the formlessness of society, while in the novels set in England, individual rootlessness is juxtaposed starkly with the full outlines of a society that is rich in tradition, has evolved a distinctive culture and has no doubts about itself. Exclusion, rather than rejection, is more dominant in the immigrant novels.

The new environment naturally posits different situations and demands different solutions; it adds a new dimension to the themes discussed in the previous chapter. In addition to the familiar themes of identity, alienation, the threat to the psyche and the failure of language, the immigrant novels explore cultural deprivation (as opposed to cultural duality), they focus on the individual who is rooted in neither his social nor physical environment, explore his overwhelming feeling of loneliness and isolation, examine the fragmentation or breakdown of personality resulting from the contact between the immigrant who has little inner reserves and an alien, hostile country, and depict the total lack of communication between the two.
These novels generally document the fate of immigrants in the new country, filling in such background information as their reasons for emigrating and their expectations, so that we can determine the extent to which the new environment fits their preconceptions. More often than not, they make no meaningful impact on their environment and are largely afraid of and puzzled by the bustle and impersonality of the life that swirls around them.

The dominant image they leave on the mind is that of so many pieces of driftwood floating on the English/Canadian/Whatever tide, going backward and forward, never anchoring themselves, but occasionally being washed up. The violence that broods under the surface of Austin Clarke's *The Meeting Point*\(^2\) explodes in Lamming's *The Emigrants*,\(^3\) reflecting the complete disintegration of personality and breakdown of morals. Few of the emigrants return, although at some point they have a lucid perception of themselves and their floating existence. Without the support of their environment or of a meaningful role in it, they become almost a part of the seasons, dormant in winter, flickering to life in summer, the season with which they are most familiar.

In the immigrant novels, form and content are more synchronised than in novels set in the West Indies, with the notable exception of *A House For Mr. Biswas* with its leisurely, episodic structure. The episodic nature of the immigrant novels and the tendency to plotlessness, in fact the fragmentation of plot and language, reinforces the theme of rootless-
ness. This can account for the success of Selvon's immigrant novels. *The Lonely Londoners* is the most episodic of the three novels under discussion; it is built purely around incident and there is no plot. His long unpunctuated panegyric to summer (in dialect) is artistically successful in terms of the structure of the novel. Salkey's urban, rootless idiom in *The Adventures of Catullus Kelly*, the ping-pong quality of most of the dialogues, with disconnected words batted back and forth, complements Catullus' rootlessness and demonstrates his linguistic schizophrenia. Finally, the inconclusive endings of many of these novels, notably *The Emigrants*, *The Lonely Londoners*, *The Housing Lark* and *The Meeting Point* mirror the dead-end roads the characters follow.

*The Emigrants*, an unsatisfying book in many ways, is, nevertheless, an ambitious attempt to chronicle the entire aspect of this modern middle passage. The novel begins with the actual voyage from the West Indies to England. We follow the ship from island to island as it picks up passengers. In their conversations on board we see their painful attempts to find unity in a concept of West Indianism, as if they sense the danger of individual forays into England. Then the novel traces the fragmentation of the individuals and of the group in England.

In *The Emigrants* Lamming cuts us adrift from any mooring... realization of an identity as West Indians is farther away than ever; and this nightmare England, all jagged flashes and fragments, seems to deny the very existence of any recognizable human identity at all.... The separation, the absence of love in Lamming's characters, becomes a universal rather than a West Indian condition. Everyone is adrift; only some new dark figures, formerly locked in their islands, have entered the current.
The quest motif is entirely appropriate to these novels, for England is in many ways an extension of the West Indian self. The West Indian has been shaped by the respective Home countries more than he realises. Naipaul comments on the extent to which the West Indian identifies with England:

It is not fully realised how completely the West Indian intellectual identifies himself with England. Africa has been forgotten.... For the West Indian intellectual, speaking no other language but English, educated in the English way, the experience of England is usually traumatic. The foundations of his life are removed. He has to look for new loyalties.7

Lamming, in The Pleasures of Exile, has made a similar statement on the powerful hold that the 'idea' of England has on the West Indian mind.8 The 'idea' of India fills this emotional need for the East Indian. Fanon shows how applicable it is to the Antillean negro in his relationship with France. "The Antillean who goes to France pictures this journey as the final stage of his personality."9 Selvon captures it lyrically in The Lonely Londoners:

The changing of the seasons, the cold slicing winds, the falling leaves, sunlight on green grass, snow on the land, London particular. Oh what it is and where it is and why it is, no one knows, but to have said, "I walked on Waterloo Bridge," "I rendezvoused at Charing Cross," "Piccadilly Circus is my playground," to say these things, to have lived these things, to have lived in the great city of London, centre of the world ... to write a casual letter home beginning: "Last night, in Trafalgar Square ...." (L.L., 164)

The peculiar paradox of venturing into the known/unknown seat of the empire can invest the immigrant with a false sense of security. The average immigrant probably knows
more about England than about the West Indies. Conrad once wrote, "The adventurer into the depths would do well to have roots in a human community." Real inner security can exist only when the person is capable of realizing his real self and of being rooted in and belonging to his environment. In his new environment the immigrant becomes the outsider. Camus has said that the mind's deepest desire is for clarity and familiarity; the impenetrable world of the immigrant denies contact and communication at any but the most superficial level. These are not pioneers, but exiles.

Because of the nature of the experience they are dealing with, the three novels under discussion have more in common than those dealt with in Chapter One. Their characters are predominantly negro (Lamming's are coloureds and negroes, Naipaul's are Indians), their concern is with individual or a loose group experience (Lamming's is national, Naipaul's is racial), and their characters are immigrants in predominantly white societies. The feeling of loneliness and of not belonging is more obvious in Clarke and Selvon whose characters are also at the bottom of the 'socio-economic' ladder. The most striking thing about them is their love/hate relationship with their employers or adopted country, their very ambivalence indicating the extent of their dependence and insecurity.

The Lonely Londoners is as directionless as the lives of the men it draws into its orbit. The characters are West Indian with one Nigerian, Cap, "the wandering Nigerian living off his wits and women" who is as rootless as they are. The
novel is built around the kind of eccentrics one associates with Naipaul, especially the *Miguel Street* type. Moses, one of the older immigrants and the centre of consciousness in the novel, is common to all. They gather in his room on Sunday mornings to *old talk*. As Gerald Moore has observed, the dominant landscape in this novel is the narrow furnished room. The immigrants have very little contact with the English and tend to cluster together. This is one way to defend themselves against uprootedness, by staying in touch with the familiar — the dialect, their countrymen, the common experiences, fears and dreams. It is also an effective way of imprisoning themselves and living in the past. By studiously avoiding the opportunities for self-evaluation that are continually forced on them, they retain the West Indian wine, women and song attitude to life. Moses, a veteran Londoner, is the only one in the group to assess himself periodically, and even so, he is characterized by a certain paralysis of will that leaves his condition essentially unchanged year after year.

In the reactions of a newcomer, Galahad, we see the strong emotional attachment to London, the colonial preconceptions that weather his actual experiences. The immigrants have this ability to separate the England they have known since childhood, the England of their imagination, with the actual place, in a way for instance, that Naipaul cannot, when he visits India. The lonely Londoners' affectionate references to "the old Brit'n" and "the great city of London, centre of the world," are genuine in spite of London's indifference to them. Gerald
Moore comments on it:

By writing throughout in a carefully-composed Trinidad dialect, Selvon is able to impose a distinctive rhythm upon the life of the city as experienced by his characters. We see its moods and seasons through the alien but affectionate eyes of those for whom it remains through everything an exciting place to be. The feeling begins with the sheer sensation of being there, in London, 'centre of the world,' the goal of many years scrimping, saving and dreaming .... The most memorable passage is Selvon's long anthem to the coming of summer, that moment which always postpones his departure for another and another year. [He quotes part of it].... So Selvon gives a twist to the wheel and sets the seasons spinning, though it comes to rest on summer again and again.12

However, London is not only indifferent, but antagonistic to them, and if there is any message at all, it seems to be that the West Indians are out of place in London.13 In a New Statesman review, Maurice Richardson expressed it succinctly. "In summer they enjoy a short butterfly period."14 They remind one of the characters in Miguel Street in their transience, the way they flit in and out of the scene, so that although they are filled in in bright colours, their outlines are blurred.

Their contact, or rather their lack of contact, with their environment can be expressed by a passage from The Emigrants. "England was simply a world which we had moved about by chance. It was there like nature, drifting vaguely beyond our reach" (Em, 237).

This aimless, floating, drifting existence seems to worry no one but Moses who has lived in 'Brit'n' for ten years, long enough for him to have carved out a niche for himself,
but the picture isn't pretty. "He used to see all his years in London pile up one on top of the other, and he getting no place in a hurry, and the years going by, and the thought make him frighten sometimes" (L.L., 109). When Galahad swears never to leave, Moses "sigh a long sigh like a man who live life and see nothing at all in it" (L.L., 126).

The whole desolation and futility of their lives is captured at the end when the boys gather in Moses' room for a typical 'old talk' and their comments are interspersed with Moses' silent appraisal of their condition. Under the bravado that has characterised their behavior and their exploits, one sees the great emptiness and the bewilderment of men who don't really understand, and who have never penetrated, the world they have found themselves in. The familiar West Indian greeting, "What happening?" now poses a fundamental question. "Everybody asking what happening but nobody like they know what happening" (L.L., 165). In this last scene together, Selvon imprisons them in their static roles, living only for the moment: Harris, whose main concern is to prove to the English that he is civilized -- a black Englishman -- is looking at his watch anxiously and saying that he has an important engagement; Galahad, who likes to pretend that he is in command of any situation, is looking cocky; Big City, who once played with the orphanage band is fiddling with the radio, and Five-Past-Twelve, who never misses a dance, wants to know if anybody is going to lime in the evening.

Later, Moses stands on the banks of the Thames, fighting
his usual battle: to go home or not to go home.

Sometimes he think he see some sort of profound realisation in his life, as if all that happen to him was experience that make him a better man .... Under the kiff-kiff laughter, behind the ballad and the episode, the what-happening, the summer-is-hearts, he could see a great aimlessness, a great restless, swaying movement that leaving you standing in the same spot. As if a forlorn shadow of doom fall on all the spades in the country. As if he could see the black faces bobbing up and down in the millions of white, strained faces, everybody hustling ... the spades jostling in the crowd, bewildered, hopeless. As if, on the surface, things don't look so bad, but when you go down a little, you bounce up a kind of misery and pathos and a frightening -- what? .... As if the boys laughing, but they only laughing because they fraid to cry, they only laughing because to think so much about everything would be a big calamity ...

(L.L., 170)

Coulthard raises the question of whether this has overtones of a general existentialist anguish, or whether the aimlessness, the restless swaying apply just to the West Indian disoriented in a white world which rejects him and to which he cannot adapt himself.\(^\text{15}\) The inconclusive ending suggests that there will be many more such probings beneath the laughter, the ballads and the episodes, but that the Lonely Londoners will remain trapped in a prison that is partly of their own making.

Austin Clarke is the foremost West Indian writer on the American continent today. His first two novels were set in Barbados. The Meeting Point, his third, is about Barbadians in Toronto and is not significantly different from other immigrant novels. The main character is Bernice Leach, a domestic who works for a Toronto Jewish couple, the Burrmanns. Bernice's closest friend, Dots, is also a domestic. Both women are lonely
and frustrated, even Dots, whose husband, Boysie, married her only in order to get immigrant status. Estelle, Bernice's sister, comes up for a holiday and stays with Bernice at her employers'. Unlike Bernice, Estelle is proud of her blackness and not afraid to enter the white world. She has an affair with Sam Burrmann which ends in disaster when he disclaims responsibility for her pregnancy and she has to have an abortion which sends her to the hospital eventually. Bernice, bewildered at the train of events, returns to her apartment, and looking out the window, witnesses the assault of a Barbadian friend by a policeman whose girl he had been sleeping with. Stunned, she calls Dots, and as Dots chatters on and on, Bernice "ends up listening to 'talking and talking' -- to words -- which are meaningless beside her knowledge of injustice and her more and more futile ache for understanding."

Lloyd Brown has drawn attention to the title of the novel in his article, "The West Indian Novel in North America":

The title of the work is itself ironic, for the novel dispels, rather than confirms, the optimistic connotations of the familiar phrase. 'Meeting Point' really indicates, not reconciliation and harmony, but the collision of hostile attitudes: the black sensitivity of Bernice and her friends meeting the coldness and antipathy of Canadian society. And there is also the personal conflict within each immigrant.

Clarke's first novel, The Survivors of the Crossing set out to show that the survivors of the middle passage are in chains still. The Meeting Point takes the survivors on another journey, this time to Canada, where it becomes obvious that the
emigrants have exchanged one kind of slavery and exile for another. This theme is anticipated in *The Survivors of the Crossing* where Jackson, a Barbadian peasant, emigrates to Canada in hopes of a better life only to discover that "Up here in this country is the same slavery as what I run from back in the island."  

There are many Bernices who can come to Canada only as domestics, an ironic parallel to the circumstances under which their ancestors made the slave journey. And Clarke plays on this. Bernice "always saw herself as a servant; a sort of twentieth century slave. It was mainly the amount of hard work which reminded her of her status. And also, the small wages" (M.P., 5). During the course of the novel we are informed that Brigitte, a German domestic, gets three times their pay for less work. It is not surprising, then, that their psychological make-up, like that of Clarke's negroes in Barbados, is that of the slave. The grim point that Clarke makes in his novels is that physical or psychological escape from slavery is impossible. Bernice and Dots are pathetically unable to rid themselves of their servile, cowering attitudes to their employers. The bravado they whip up in their absence quickly fades into the 'Yes, Ma'am' routine. It is demonstrated in a particularly painful scene when Bernice is relating to Estelle, Dots and Boysie, an incident in which she was reprimanding five-year old Ruthie for peeping up her legs. Her audience captive, expecting some verbal and physical fireworks, Bernice relates:

> I turned round, and I say, "but Miss Ruthie ..." "Miss Ruthie, my fat arse!" Dots screamed. She was almost hysterical. "Miss Ruthie, hell! You
should have slapped her arse till it is still black-and-blue. Miss Ruthie? Miss Ruthie?"
"Look, it is high time you forget all this shit 'bout Miss Ruthie and Miss Serene outta your head, hear? Miss Ruthie, my backside! Call the little monster by her real name, gal!" (M.P., 62)

And the shame and humiliation is mirrored in everyone's eyes as they censure her silently, bitterly. Yet Dots (Miss Ruthie, my fat arse) addresses Agatha, a white girl, as, "Miss Agaffa, dear" (M.P., 89).

The theme of the futility or impossibility of escape that Patterson and Naipaul explore is also treated by Clarke. "The novel sets out to indicate that the attempt to escape is futile. The frustrations of poverty and ignorance are given up for the more terrifying frustrations of loneliness and discrimination."^{19} Boysie is trapped in a loveless marriage of convenience, Estelle by her attempt to use Sam Burrmann, Bernice in a closed mind, an incomprehensible world and the contracting walls of loneliness and frustration.

Clarke's characters live the same limbo existence in their environment as do the Lonely Londoners, only their isolation is more profound. The feel one gets, in Selvon, of a vague world drifting beyond reach is totally absent in Clarke, the absence of any larger outlines contributing to the claustrophobia that the novel generates. Although the dominant landscape in Selvon is the narrow furnished room, the Londoners do emerge in summer. Bernice's life continues to be centred around her radio, her room and the kitchen. Selvon's joyful celebration of summer relieves some of the bleakness of the immigrants'
lives. Bernice hates all the seasons -- the coldness of winter, the unrelenting whiteness of snow, the uncomfortable heat of summer. Clarke utilises the ready-made symbol of the snow to indicate the disparity between the West Indian temperament and the alien landscape. To Bernice, "Mrs. Burrmann not only symbolized the snow; she symbolized, also, the uneasiness and inconvenience of the snow" (M.P., 7). In time, the snow becomes the symbol of the sterility and unnaturalness of her life. "This is our life, child ... it is a life o' snow and whiteness" (M.P., 7). Bernice is incapable of responding to the natural rhythms of her new environment.

Clarke's characters never belong; they remain aliens, completely cut off from the mainstream of life. The attachment and loyalty to England that makes life bearable and sometimes even exciting for Selvon's immigrants does not exist for Clarke's. "This country could never be home, gal. All the black people here, living in this place, called Canada, be we foreign-born black people, or local-born Canadian black people, we are only abiding through the tender mercies ... o' God, the white man and the landlord .... Any time, gal, any time these three Gods feel like it, bram! they kick-in our behinds just like they do down in Mississippi" (M.P., 193).

Their relationship with their employers is a curious blend of love and hate that reveals the insecurity of their existence; their ambivalence and emotional vacillations indicate the insecurity and impermanence that characterises the
deracíné. It prompts an outburst from the normally dense Boysie:

It does really pain my arse to hear how you, both you and Bernice, does say such good things 'bout Mrs. Burrmann and Mrs. Hunter one minute, and gorblummuh! the next moment, both o' you saying Mrs. Burrmann is cheap as hell, Mrs. Hunter is a bitch; Mrs. Burrmann nice, Mrs. Burrmann bad; Mrs. Hunter is a lady, Mrs. Hunter is a whore! (M.P., 63)

Their ambivalence extends, also to their attitude towards the materialistic side of Canadian life. They deplore it righteously one moment; the next, they are embracing it wholeheartedly. By showing that the rich Jews who represent Canadian materialistic values lead empty, unfulfilling lives, Clarke points out the dangers of the Barbadian domestics sterilizing their own lives in their preoccupation with a growing bank account and the physical comforts of Canadian life.20

The same stasis that afflicts the lonely Londoners retard the Barbadians. They change but they do not develop. With the exception of Estelle, they never face the crisis of self-appraisal that continually forces itself on them. Bernice, in particular, continually gives in to a metaphysical blindness that fails her in the end. A consummate hypocrite throughout, she remains a hollow character and a fragmented person.

Her ultimate isolation is due, in part, to her inability to kick free of the dubious security of the immigrant group. Like Selvon's characters, they seek and need the cohesion of the immigrant group as protection against the frustrations of their narrow social lives. Church-going is their only regular
'social' outlet. The church is on Shaw street, an immigrant street.

It was a community of immigrants: immigrants who were not Anglo-Saxon. Like her, these immigrants had suddenly realized they were lost in a foreign land. And like her, and her West Indian friends, they came together like seaweed on pieces of drifting wood, in a sea with a current that went no way. (M.P., 101)

The immigrant street is the one place where they feel human and are able to blend in with their surroundings. Dots had once said of this street: "This is the only street ... where people talk and walk in a million and one different nationalities and languages, and nobody doesn't stop talking the moment I walk by ... nobody don't look at you with wonder and scorn" (M.P., 101). Bernice adds, "I don't feel that I am either a black person, or a white person. Not on this street. This is like back home in Barbados." Yet, it is precisely this that traps them in the past. All their talk after church is centred on 'back home'. When it is centred on the present, it consists of either a mass cathartic denigration of their mistresses or gossiping about other West Indians.

Bernice is a familiar figure in Clarke's fiction. She is the type of negro who is most deeply scarred by slavery. In her we see the apathy and self-hate of the slave. It is the theme of a short story by Clarke entitled "Four Stations in His Circle." The protagonist is Jefferson Theophilis Belle, a black Barbadian who becomes obsessed by his desire for the symbols of the status quo, in particular, a house in an exclusive residential area. In his pathological hatred of
other black people, and therefore his self-hatred, we see a foreshadowing of the internal conflicts of *The Meeting Point*, "the tension between nascent blackness on the one hand, and the old self-hate or apathy, on the other." The irony of his quest for whiteness comes at the end when he acquires his dream house, only to be continually mistaken for the gardener by his neighbours.

Before coming under the influence of the Black Muslim paper, Bernice resents being referred to as black, uses a bleaching cream guaranteed to make one whiter, and switches temporarily from her 'black' church to a predominantly 'white' one. She has such a great capacity for self-delusion, that although she is kept firmly in her place at Forest Hills and reminded that she is a domestic there and not a housewife, she can blithely say on occasions, "I am glad as hell that I come here, that I is a Canadian" (M.P., 97). In her unconscious self-hatred she refuses to identify with other black people who march for their rights. She and Estelle are out one day when a group of marching blacks pass by with placards reading 'Canada Is Not Alabama' and 'End Race Prejudice Now'. Bernice is choked with embarrassment and anger at the impertinence of this "bunch o' black people walking 'bout the place."

All you seeing these days is a lot o' stupid black people marching ... praying, kneeling down all over the street, won't let traffic pass, making trouble .... And these niggers in Canada! Well, they don't know how lucky they are! (M.P., 220)

When Estelle proclaims her solidarity with their cause, Bernice corrects' her:
But this is Canada, dear, not America. You and me, we is West Indians, not American negroes. We are not in that mess. Leave that damn foolishness to them, you hear? (M.P., 220)

To Bernice, a West Indian and a 'nigger' in Canada are two different species. Her self-hate is paralleled, of course, by that of the Jews, revealed in their Jewish party jokes and five-year old Serene's taunt to her playmate, "You're just a lousy little Jew like all of us" (M.P., 20).

The recurring theme in Clarke, that the slaves have not been freed physically, psychologically, or economically, adds a valuable dimension to the West Indian experience abroad as the Survivors of the Crossing make yet another crossing to further slavery.

Salkey's novel is more complex and interesting for a number of reasons, chiefly, its avoidance of that trap that many West Indian novels fall into -- the novel as sociology as bore.23 His hero is Catullus Kelly, a black Jamaican university graduate with a polish and sophistication that enables him to move with a certain ease about his London world, penetrating different levels of society and maintaining, at all times, his 'coolth'. Catullus is witty, unruffled, and has a disarming objectivity that sees him through the usual 'racial' situations with flying colours. It must be said, to his credit, that Salkey avoids the run-of-the-mill immigrant encounters with racial prejudice and discrimination. Catullus, one feels, has a chance of survival, if only in his methodological approach to London, what he calls his 'two-way Weltanschauung.' But, most
important, Catullus, unlike most immigrant characters, is not
the peasant type that Lamming so admires. Yet, Catullus, in
spite of his many buffers, returns to Jamaica after a year of
drifting about London, and when last we hear of him, he is
committed to a mental asylum.

Kenneth Ramchand described Catullus' year in England
as an Odyssey. The novel is loosely episodic with a very
strong quest motif. Catullus' quest is two-fold. He wants to
find the elusive Aethelstan Gordon-Venning, author of a racist
book, The Shape of Skulls to Come. He is also trying to clarify
his concept of negritude, which he will, in turn, be able to
realise at a personal level, "the dignity of an Africoid", and
at a universal level, a Pan-African brotherhood. Catullus'
own fragmented personality is mirrored in the fragmentation and
dispersion of the negro race, therefore in trying to realise
the solidarity and unity of all negroes, he is, in a sense,
seeking psychic wholeness. His failure to interest the negroes
he meets in the idea of black solidarity is part of a larger
personal failure that breaks him.

His attempt to clarify and realise the concept of
negritude (wholeness), is linked to his two-way Weltanschauung.
In Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon has made an important observa-
tion concerning the violence colonization does to the Weltanschauung of the colonized:

As long as the black man is among his own, he will
have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts,
to experience his being through others .... In the
Weltanschauung of a colonized people there is an
impurity, a flaw .... For not only must the black
man be black; he must be black in relation to the
white man .... Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself.24

Salkey rightly interprets this as a schizophrenic split, in that one has to constantly come to terms with experience within two frames of reference.

Catullus' two-way Weltanschauung is his Kingston dialect mood and his Standard English mood, between which he alternates. Salkey defines it further as "his way of realising his Jamaican dreams in London by looking at people, ideas and things, and naming them in terms of dialect, and also dealing with the observable English realities in West London by relying on his use of Standard English: In short, Catullus' personal two-way philosophical survey of and outlook on his former colonial-imperial world, through language" (C.K., 121). But life has a way of foxing Catullus. His two-way Weltanschauung, which was "his style of living sanely away from home, guarding against flights of paranoia and schizophrenia, making himself acceptable to his own moral code and accepting and absorbing the traumata of the new country" is ironically a schizophrenic way of dealing with reality. It is therefore not surprising that this split, thrust on him by his past, drives him mad. By consciously living the West Indian cultural-linguistic split, his Weltanschauung, which he saw as a way of utilising the totality of the West Indian experience but which is really a mental and linguistic split, fails him and his personality disintegrates.

The schizophrenic split is the dominant image in this
novel (as it is also in Other Leopards) as compared with the symbolism of driftwood in the two previous novels. Catullus' linguistic schizophrenia is merely one manifestation of that larger schizophrenic West Indian inheritance which paralyses the individual. In Other Leopards, Froad exhibits a similar paralysis of will arising from a split self. Both men are trapped between the two halves of their inheritance, unable to go forwards, backwards, or break out and liberate the self. In a symbolic scene, Catullus comes upon a fellow boarder, Dulcie, doing a nude self-portrait. With typical farsightedness he quickly undresses and lies by her side and she paints him in. The result is a portrait of the split self — two halves, two colours. Lamming uses the symbol in Season of Adventure.

Catullus' two-way Weltanschauung forces him into another existential role, that of the actor, when his contacts with the white world necessitate putting on a mask. With fellow West Indians he is his natural self; with others, he assumes masks of identity and constantly engages in role playing. In his first encounter with a prostitute, "He hunched his shoulders and shrugged like Bogart, and remembered to smile afterwards like Rock Hudson" (C.K., 15). On leaving, he "narrowed his eyes arrogantly, heroically, like Othello before the handkerchief" (C.K., 17). But this is fairly superficial compared with the implications of role-playing later in the novel. Here it merely indicates a need for fantasy, an unsureness of himself, and emotional distancing.
Catullus' sexual prowess has prompted some incredible comments from reviewers. He does indeed have fantastic luck, but the point is precisely that:

Only in the sexual field is he consistently and riotously successful: Even here, though, he is merely fulfilling the role mapped out for him by the Gordon-Vennings of this world: The sexual permissiveness which might be liberating for some people actually shackles him to the old racist sexual myth.

Role-playing takes on its deepest resonances when it precipitates a crisis in Catullus' already precarious grasp on life. At one point in his varied career, he is hired by the owner of a Bistro, "The Onomatopoeia" to be the Atmosphere-Man. The bistro itself is "decorated with every conceivable motif-association of the name and sound of the word coffee" (C.K., 96). The Atmosphere-Man was both coffee-machine attendant and provider of Atmosphere. As the latter, Catullus is given the name 'Beano', required to wear Atmosphere shirts -- Monday's, for example, was white with large blue cups of spilling expresso, required to wear a blank Zombiesque look and generally zombie around. The Zombie look gives Catullus the most trouble. It entails the suspension of all intelligent facial expression and becoming part of the coffee-motif, in short, a thing. Patrons treat him as part of the scenery and talk right through him; he feels undermined and threatened by the Atmosphere shirts; Martin Selby, owner of the bistro, refers to him as "my creation". In this way, Salkey skilfully and imaginatively suggests the state to which the slave was reduced and creates a mounting
sense of the self-annihilation that threatens Catullus. He finds himself losing touch with reality and losing his identity; his schizophrenic split becomes more pronounced with the human half fighting the zombie half for possession of Catullus. The imbalance becomes noticeable to two regulars who engage Catullus in conversation and are puzzled by the alternation in his facial expression between animation and blankness:

"I don't really know how to put it." She paused.
"Half and half, I think."
Martin was immediately disturbed.
"Half and half?" he asked. "How half and half?"

They explain. Martin's brow clears.

"I can explain Beano's half-and-half. In fact it oughtn't to've been half-and-half at all; more whole, really. You see: Beano's my creation, my Atmosphere-Man, and what you've been puzzled by is his Atmosphere look."
"D'you mean he isn't what he is?" Margaret asked.

The point is very nicely made. Catullus isn't what he is.

One day, he makes anagrams with his Atmosphere name, Beano. 'One B.A.', 'A Bone', 'O Bane', 'Be an O'. "He was determined not to be an O." As he fluctuates between being and nothingness his anxiety mounts. The New Statesman reviewer points out that Catullus' angst is Salkey's main preoccupation. Heidegger considers anxiety (Angst) to be the fundamental human mood, when the here-and-now of our existence arises before us in all its precarious and porous contingency. Catullus' return to Jamaica only increases his anxiety.

In neither environment does Catullus belong and in neither is he wanted. One of his mother's brutally frank letters reads in part, "I can't honestly say that your country
needs you." England needs him even less; his status is that of an outsider and he is aware of it.

He listened to his darting inner voice. It accused him of tasting the surface of London life .... He coaxed himself into believing in the delight of being outside everything he touched and saw around him. He was not alone. There were millions of others who were also outside everything. Many people were looking on, touching and seeing at a distance. They owned nothing. They were ripe for alienation .... It had been the same in New York .... But he did not mind being outside in America. The outsider seemed attractive to him .... London's equation was more than marginally different; the margin was a chasm. (C.K., 110)

The chasm that separates the black West Indian from the vital core of England is given the same urgency in Salkey as is given in Jean Rhys to the chasm that separates the white West Indian from England. England has been home to both the West Indian white and the negro. Catullus may compare his position as an outsider and a drifter with that of the alienated Englishman, but the comparison breaks down at a certain point. Olga, the prostitute, is also an outsider, but "She was at home, a component part, however alienated, however embattled .... She wasn't unprotected" (C.K., 163).

As an outsider he has no claim on people or things. They are usufructs. "He searched for what was truly his in Kingston; he sensed the right and ownership of others and his own rejection and alienation" (C.K., 114). His consciousness of his alienation, his fear of 'being an O' and his increasing severance from reality begin to take their toll on Catullus. In an effort to ground his existence, he takes to touching the
surfaces of things he passes — trees, the banisters of stairs — as if this superficial contact with the physical world will prevent him from slipping into the void. Back in Jamaica, he preaches about "the virtues of touching the surfaces of society, of laying hands on the warm bonnets of cars, prodding the ooze of overheated asphalt on the streets, brushing the blades of grass on the university campus, and finally he gate-crashed a garden party at King's House and touched the Governor-General's wife on her hips and thighs" (C.K., 195). When Erasmus hears the news of Catullus' insanity, he attributes it to the "diabolical" mixture of Jamaica and England. The two worlds, Salkey seems to be saying, are too disparate to permit any attempt to bridge them. Interestingly enough, Jean Rhys has pursued the same theme with reference to the white West Indian. Taken together, therefore, the theme of the irreconcilability of the West Indies and England breaks through the barriers of race.

These themes are reinforced throughout the novel by the "rootless idiom" that Salkey employs. It only serves to distance Catullus from the life around him and deny real communication. Any random page will illustrate the number of one word sentences there are.

The book is finely balanced between the comic and the tragic and is both imaginative and original. Salkey makes no overt appeals for sympathy; in fact Catullus deliberately distances himself from the reader. Because it is the
only immigrant novel in this group that ends with the protagonist returning, the end is significant. Catullus is no prodigal returning home to a joyful welcome. His drifting, wandering mode of existence continues and he finally ends his wandering in a mental asylum.
1References to this book will appear in the text under the citation, 'C.K.'

2The Meeting Point (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967). Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text and will be cited as 'M.P.'

3The Emigrants (London: Michael Joseph, 1964). Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text under the citation, 'The Em.'

4The Lonely Londoners (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1956). Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text and will be cited as 'L.L.'


7In a review of George Lamming’s Of Age And Innocence, New Statesman, Dec. 6, 1958, p. 827.

8The Pleasures of Exile, p. 25. Lamming cites, as an example, the astonishment of immigrants on first seeing Englishmen doing manual labour. They simply did not associate the two.

9Black Skin, White Masks, p. 109.


11The Chosen Tongue, p. 102.

12Ibid., p. 104.


14In his review, New Statesman, Dec. 29, 1956, p. 846.

15Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature, p. 111.


20. Ibid., p. 71.

21. In the collection of short stories, When he was free and young and he used to wear silks (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 51.


24. Black Skin, White Masks, pp. 77-78.


CHAPTER IV

THE AFRO/ASIAN/EUROPEAN SEARCH FOR ORIGINS

The West Indian's modern Afro/Asian/European journey back to the ancestral homeland in search of the past (his origins), that will provide the key to his present and future, can be particularly devastating for it is the most final journey that can be made. Failure to find one's place in the ancestral homeland stamps one's rootlessness with a cosmic homelessness. One is completing the circle of the middle passage, retracing the steps of one's ancestors to a reality that has become blurred and obscured by time and ignorance. For those whose ancestors left unwillingly it may represent the safe womb from which they have been expelled. It may have been partly mythologised and idealised as home; it may have been shrouded in darkness; it may have been desecrated; but it is still felt to hold the secret of one's personality and to promise an end to the long exile.

Naipaul, of East Indian descent, Jean Rhys, English, and Dennis Williams, of African descent, are among the West Indians who have attempted to bridge the middle passage. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*¹ is ostensibly an account of his year in India; in Williams' *Other Leopards*,² the hero, Froad, founders in his attempt to come to terms with himself, Africa and the past; and *Voyage In The Dark*³ and *Wide Sargasso Sea*⁴...
by Jean Rhys together create a composite picture of the chasm that exists between the white West Indian and England, the two worlds being mutually exclusive. All four books bring into direct confrontation, two distinct worlds and times -- past and present; all four move towards a common end, the failure of the West Indian to establish a meaningful connection with the ancestral world and the haunting inaccessibility of this world. The common symbolic stresses in the books emphasize the authors' concerns with their characters whose lives have been broken in two by the confrontation with the past. (For the sake of convenience, Naipaul will be referred to as a character). The stress on darkness, obvious enough in the mere titles Voyage In The Dark and Area of Darkness conveys an idea of the inaccessibility of these worlds. Williams' stress on 'whole' and 'half' and Naipaul's on 'whole' reflect the characters' need to remain (Naipaul) or become (Williams) whole, and protect themselves from the disintegration of the self.

Significant use is made of the image of rebirth to suggest the aborted attempt to be born again. In Voyage In The Dark, Anna, who has just come from the West Indies, describes her sensations on being in England. It was "almost like being born again" (Voyage, 7). But the hope and promise implied in this image is savaged at the end when she drifts into a life of prostitution and has to have an abortion. The rebirth that begins the book is soured into an image of death. In Other Leopards, Froad's crisis of identity reduces him to infantility.
There are two major incidents in connection with this. In the first, he is hiding in an outdoor toilet when a woman comes in to use it. Gerald Moore interprets it as "undisguised imagery of anal re-entry to the womb of infancy, which, added to the image of sexual withdrawal, vomit and urination that has preceded it, marks the completion of Froad's withdrawal from maturity." His interpretation is born out at the end of the novel. Froad has stabbed his white superior and runs into the bush to hide. In a bizarre scene, he buries his vomit-covered clothes and cakes his entire body with soft clay in an attempt to mask his body odours. Finally, he climbs up a tree. Moore sees this as "a retreat to the embryo." Naipaul's visit to India ends in a kind of death. One of his closing comments is, "It was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two" (Area, 265).

The situations of the characters are more distinctly existential as a group than the groups of novels previously discussed, for they are making a conscious attempt to bridge the gulf between two worlds, involving the danger of being forever suspended between them. This is, in fact, the position of Rhys' heroines and Williams' hero at the end: Froad up a tree, his physical being annihilated, Anna and Antoinette metaphorically still at sea, having lost their way somewhere on the journey, unable to get ashore.

It is a testimony to the oneness of the experience these writers record, that they arrive at a common conclusion
despite the differences in their racial backgrounds. The point should also be made that the abortive quest for origins is given a universal dimension. The white West Indian's relation to England is ostensibly the least problematic. The English cultural imposition has kept him in touch with the familiar. It is a heritage of which he has never been made to feel ashamed. And he has probably been most able to maintain connections with his country of origin. Similarly, the East Indian has retained his racial pride and maintained close cultural and religious ties with India. His recent arrival in the West Indies has probably facilitated this. The negro approaches Africa with considerably more trepidation. England, rather than Africa, may have represented home to him. Lamming analyses the West Indian's fear and misgivings on approaching Africa:

His relation to that continent is more personal and more problematic ... he has not ... been introduced to it through history .... He knows it through rumour and myth which is made sinister by a foreign tutelage, and he becomes ... identified with fear ... fear of that continent as a world beyond human intervention.7

With the new racial consciousness, one finds that novels set in Africa by West Indians who have never been to Africa are idealized, almost compensatory. Dathorne, who, like Williams, lives in Africa, comments on the similarity of experiences between his hero, Adam Questus in *The Scholar Man*, and Froad. Both become estranged from Africa, as opposed to the idealized picture of Africa that one gets in Vic Reid's *The Leopard*. Other Leopards probes the dilemma of a West Indian negro, Froad, who attempts to resolve the conflict of his dual
Afro-European heritage and of his two selves, symbolized by his two names, Lionel and Lobo, in a newly-independent African State which is as internally riven as he. Lionel is an archeological draughtsman. In his desire to realise his African self, he fluctuates between commitment and independence and finds himself increasingly boxed in by the different claims made on him and the different roles imposed on him. He has neither the inner reserves to resist these claims nor the strength to create his own identity. In this state of vacillation, or rather of creative paralysis and impotence, belonging to neither the African nor European world, hesitating between two women, Catherine, who is Welsh, and Eve, who is black and 'elemental', he becomes susceptible to the pressures applied by Hughie, his white superior who hammers into him his African lack of a sense of time, of history and of the past. Their quarrel centres around an important archeological site at Meroe whose origin is debated. Hughie challenges him to prove that it is African. Lionel is goaded into the quest and becomes intimately involved. In the pyramid of the Queen, Amanashikete, he hopes to find something in the African past that he can communicate with, that he can truly claim as his own.

Instead, the towering 2,000 year old statue of the Queen who was undoubtedly African, proves to be an embodiment of cruelty, hate and grossness, and a mirror image of his own emptiness. There are prisoners tied to her left hand and with her right she is flogging slaves, "She was a spreading desert ...
I wished for the words to assault those stone ears with some claim of my very own, mine, me! But time passed, wind blew, sand settled, gloom deepened, and I could think of nothing; nothing at all" (O.L., 155). Historical knowledge brings no release, and the past having failed him, Froad fragments nightmarishly.

The entire novel is structured around tensions, and by using this device, Williams implicitly outlines Froad's essential position, that of a man always caught between opposing forces. His name, Froad, has overtones of Fraud, of inner hollowness. His two first names, Lionel and Lobo, are an indication of his split self, both names, like his dual heritage, pulling him apart. Lionel is the name he was christened with and represents the European side of him; Lobo, the name his sister used to call him, suggests his African ancestry.

I am a man, you see, plagued by these two names, and this is their history: Lionel, the who I was, dealing with Lobo, the who I continually felt I ought to become .................. All along, ever since I'd grown up, I'd been Lionel looking for Lobo .... I'd felt I ought to become this chap, this alter ego of ancestral times that I was sure quietly slumbered behind the cultivated mask. (O.L., 19-20).

The difference between being and becoming can be defined as consciousness; Froad's consciousness is both his blessing and his curse. The reviewer in Black Orpheus describes the novel as "a moving, though tormenting analysis of a man who cannot solve his problems because he self-consciously observes his every step, calculates every utterance, analyses every human relationship until he is caught like a prisoner in his own
consciousness and does not allow himself to simply live and let his identity take care of itself." This extreme consciousness of self affects the very language of the book. It never flows. "It jerks, quivers, vibrates nervously along."  

As Lionel realises, the step from Lionel to Lobo implies commitment; it involves grounding his existence. He describes his position at the beginning as that of "The Uncommitted African", "that not enviable state of being, the attitude of involuntary paralysis" (O.L., 20). Froad's paralysis stems from his middle-of-the-road position. He both fears and desires involvements and allegiances.

His special position and his political and religious indifference make him the target of rival claims, each of which sees him as a symbol. Of those who pressure him out of his passive state of inertia and uncommittedness, Hughie is the most destructive because he forces him to confront his past. His aim is to determine whether the Meroitic civilization was African, and if so, what prevented it from creating a powerful culture. The only authority on Meroitic civilization is a nineteenth century European scholar called Lespius, and Hughie sees Froad's responsibility as two-fold, first, to settle the question of origin, and secondly, to become the authority on the subject. Froad reports their one-way conversation:

... his carry-on about responsibility: a man's particular responsibility to race and region (which was sacred and obligatory in face of everything), as well as his general responsibility (to himself) to take possession of some bit of the future for the sake of the future .................

I can't think of anyone more capable than yourself ... knowledge of Greco-Roman, Egypto-Roman forms ... African background into the bargain, you see. This business of establishing a dis-
tinctive aesthetic as the life-force in Meroitic Art ... debunking old Lespius ........
you've got stuff to live on there for years. (O.L., 105-107)

But Froad is incapable of living in the past or future. He lives only in instants and traffics only with the immediate. He has no desire to take possession of the future for the sake of the future, and here is where his mind and Hughie's clash. Hughie has a sense of the past while Froad does not because he has not had a past.

Coming across a drawing of Queen Amanishakete in Lespius, Froad is at once struck by its remarkable similarity to Eve, the African girl. It captures his imagination and when he sees the statue of the Queen in the Meroitic museum, "I knew that this image of Eve, this persistent female, would never leave me as long as I lived" (O.L., 134-135). But merely feeling it in his bones is not enough for Hughie who deals with facts and evidence, and by rejecting Froad's intuition, Hughie forces him to prove the African origin of the Queen, to prove her existence and hence, his own existence.

"This queen, man, she's Negro .... My kind, Hughie; me! Y'don't have to prove that, I know it ...." "But you've got to prove it, my dear man ...." (O.L., 135)

In this way Froad's fate becomes bound up with the African past; he is forced to step out of his instants and live in the wider circle of time -- past, present and future.

Froad is also sought by both the Christians and Muslims who see in his unique position the value of his propaganda services. He is first approached by Mohammed, a half-
Negro, half-Arab who is afraid of African nationalism and wants Froad, "as a Western Negro", "a foreigner", and "a man of colour" to write some propaganda articles for the Arabs.

You're a model, in a way, of racial adaptation: just what we foresee for the Southerners out here; your people having evolved as minorities in Western Civilization. You're a model of freedom, Mr. Froad, that's what's important to us. You see why no one else but you can help? Africans, as I've said, worship personalities; they need such a model. With your help we plan to sell them the inevitability of environment; you know, like your own people have understood it among Europeans the last three hundred years. (O.L., 57)

Leaving aside the obvious ironies of this piece, it is worth noting that Mohammed sees Froad as a model and sees his potential as a symbol, which is essentially what a personality cult is based on.

Similarly, the Christians want him to write articles for them and get the Christian message across. The Chief explains to the Bishop, "he is the only uncommitted person ... and in any case Africans love personalities" (O.L., 64). These two claims add new dimensions to his relation to the past. Both groups want him to sell out on the Africans. He is directly confronted with another aspect of his African past, the fact of slavery, and is faced with the same choice his ancestor faced.

Froad, whom the Christians and Muslims see as a symbol, is more of a symbol than they realise. The division in his self is mirrored in the brokenness of his environment. There are very few characters in the novel who can boast as does the African he meets at a Press Conference, "I am the true
original thing, pure African. I've never been sold, never been a slave. I've got a name, Mr. Lionel Froad, and a tribe. Now tell me who you are!" (O.L., 74). Froad, detribalized and cleft, can only remain silent at this declaration of wholeness. Eve scoffs at his talk about being African. "All this fuss about being African only because you're really white .... You come to me half man" (O.L., 175). His desperate wish to belong and his search for an African past he can claim, are undermined by his feeling of alienation and that selfconsciousness that characterises everything he does. An African playing on a primitive instrument looks at him and Froad immediately assumes that the man can see into him:

It must have been this he recognized, the mark of the slave, the expatriate African, the distorted blue-copy, the misplaced person, the sham. He was coiling all around me like a man-eating snake ... dealing with the alien in me, the fake intelligence, the off-colour finesse, the slave-brand. (O.L., 178)

But the Africans are as split as he is -- by religion, "the parting of our mothers' legs by Crescent, by Cross." And the fictitious setting of the novel, Jokhara, is an objective corelative of the broken, cleft, nature of all the characters. It is in the Sudanic belt of Africa, "Not quite sub-Sahara, but then not quite desert; not Equatorial black, not Mediterranean white. Mulatto. Sudanic mulatto ... Ochre, Semi-scrub. Not desert, not sown" (O.L., 19).

The desert becomes the key symbol of the West Indian condition. It is the dividing line between Europe and Africa, belonging to neither, a kind of mulatto caught between two
opposing traditions and peoples, perpetually looking both ways. It stands there, empty and arid.

The symbolism of the novel therefore revolves around duality, halves, circles and wholeness, underlying Froad's strivings to be made whole. Early in the novel, almost all these words occur in a short description of a woman clearing away the bottles left by the men in a drinking session. The insistent repetition sets up the motif:

And Becks beer, too, drunk where they had sat in a circle.... She broke the circle one by one .... Back in the centre she broke the circle once again, backed through the backs of circled men .... Then the room was split: half against the wall, half half (sic) circled. She gathered the glasses, broke the circle one by one.... She circled the table dry and backed it out.... I broke the circle of rubber bedded in beneath the lid. (O.L., 28-29)

Catherine, describing how she would draw Froad's portrait, says, "I'd simply draw a rather thick, perfectly round, circle -- one colour -- with a tiny gap left in the circumference to bring time into the thing; internal time, external time" (O.L., 133). The hollow in the centre is, of course, occupied by Froad (Fraud). Hughie, by forcing the quest on him, smashes his circle and plunges him into internal and external time, so that when he confronts the cruel statue and discovers that there was "no Mother of Time" only "vessels; whole or broken, full or empty" he confronts himself, a broken vessel.

He never tells Hughie about his confrontation with the statue, and when Hughie begins to preach at him again, "Ideas are simply wasted on people like you .... You won't ever
cease to be driven" he stabs Hughie and flees. "Lonely Froad
on trial in a desert forest." The desert is a fitting place
for his trial for it is both around and within him. It calls
to mind the imaginary article he had planned to write for
Mohammed entitled, "A Eunuch in the Desert", the gist of which
would read, "The man was an African ... and he was a Eunuch"
(O.L., 88). To Williams, the desert is profoundly expressive
of the West Indian condition. It is an uncreating divide, an
embodiment of spiritual drouth, a static and intermediate
condition from which there is no apparent escape.\(^{12}\)

Between Europe and Africa there is this desert.
How fitting! Between the white and the black
this mulatto divide. You cannot cross it, whoever
you are, and remain the same. You change. You
become, in a way, yourself mulatto -- looking both
ways. (O.L., 209)

Froad's plight is resolved by the annihilation of his
physical being. After he removes all traces of himself by
burying his clothes, covering his tracks, insulating himself
with clay and ensuring that he casts no shadows, he climbs up
a tree. "Now having removed my body and the last traces of it,
I am without a context clear. Going up this tree ... I am in
a darkness, nowhere at all, I am nothing, nowhere. This is
something gained" (O.L., 221). The contradiction at the end
is puzzling. Froad reduces himself to nothing, the quest for
mere being is reduced to an intellectual context for neither
world can accommodate him,\(^{13}\) yet this negative state is viewed
as a positive achievement.

Kenneth places his finger on the heart of the matter
when he says:

By the end of Other Leopards the need either for roots or for spiritual transcendence has been concretely established, but the central character has achieved neither .... The agitated sentences act out the obsessive nature of Froad's desire for escape and annihilation, but the negative satisfaction of outwitting Hughie makes it impossible for us to imagine that the climax represents a spiritual or philosophical triumph.14

Not only is Froad denied mere physical being, but he is denied a place in either world (he is up a tree) and is driven into himself. The end makes sense only in the light of what we have known Froad to be throughout the novel -- a shattered man who is at odds with himself and totally disoriented between two worlds.

The importance of An Area of Darkness to this study is that it is autobiographical, a personal statement of the theme of placelessness which runs through this author's work, and a confirmation of his view of the West Indian as a rootless individual whose history is a history of nothingness. "Naipaul sees the whole of West Indian history as a huge hiatus, a gap in time, bounded at either end by the middle passage .... The whole of the West Indian experience has been a long journey, in time and in space, and a pointless one."15 In The Middle Passage, a man whom he meets as he travels through Surinam, symbolizes for him, the utter desolation that was the middle passage -- a derelict man in a derelict land, lost in an unreal landscape, from which there is no escape. The Indian community that he writes about seems, in particular, to have never arrived; it is as if it is suspended in a perpetual journey between the continents.16
In his later novels, as the scene shifts from the regional to the universal, embracing the two continents in *In A Free State*, it becomes obvious that placelessness in Naipaul is representative of the human, not merely the West Indian condition. Naipaul's vision also undergoes a change, the absurdity of his early books evolving into a vision of Existential Absurdity. In an interview with Naipaul entitled "Without A Place," Ian Hamilton, commenting on *In A Free State*, remarked:

I feel that the book offers a much grander, much more total, vision of placelessness, than you've offered before. There is hardly a nation that is not represented somewhere: there are Indians, Africans, Americans, but there are also Danes, Germans, Chinese, Swedes and so on and they are all of them on the move, they are all uprooted, "in a free state". In other words, the predicament, the lostness, is one we all share ...

To which Naipaul replied, "Absolutely. You see, one of the things that struck me, is that ... even when people make the most fantastic assumptions about their place in the world, they still have these enormous personal problems."

Naipaul's world is one of homeless, nomadic men; he becomes one such in *An Area of Darkness*. His pathological fear of Trinidad, his intense consciousness there of being an alien, and his antipathy to so many aspects of West Indian life, made it impossible for him to regard it as home. When he went to London at the age of eighteen, it seemed that he had at last found his place, his centre. He was at least given the kind of recognition he would not have been accorded in Trinidad, "a
place where the stories were never stories of success but of failure ... where a recurring word of abuse was 'conceited', an expression of the resentment felt of anyone who possessed unusual skills. Such skills were not required by a society which produced nothing, never had to prove its worth, and was never called upon to be efficient .... Generosity -- the admiration of equal for equal ... was a quality I knew only from books and found only in England." But England does not provide Naipaul with his niche. "London is my metropolitan centre, it is my commercial centre, and yet I know that it is a kind of limbo and that I am a refugee in the sense that I am always peripheral." One recalls the powerful figure of the peripheral, unaccommodated man in Naipaul's fiction. He goes into the subject of his placelessness in London in more detail in An Area of Darkness where it is worth quoting in full:

I had come to London. It had become the centre of my world and I had worked hard to come to it. And I was lost. London was not the centre of my world. I had been misled; but there was nowhere else to go. It was a good place for getting lost in .... Here I became no more than an inhabitant of a big city, robbed of loyalties, time passing, taking me away from what I was, throwing me more and more into myself, fighting to keep my balance and to keep alive the thought of the clear world beyond the brick and asphalt ... all mythical lands faded, and in the big city I was confined to a smaller world than I had ever known. I became my flat, my desk, my name. (Area, 42)

The reference to 'mythical lands' is to India, holding out the last possibility for a "rootless urban intellectual" to find a place. From an early article he wrote in 1958, it is clear that he hoped to exorcise his sense of placelessness by going
to India. In it he had expressed his dissatisfaction with the sterile life he led in London, its failure to give his life meaning. "My disappointment with the theatre symbolizes the barrenness of my life in London.... Unless I am able to refresh myself by travel -- to Trinidad, to India -- I fear that living here will eventually lead to my own sterility; and I may have to look for another job." He was able to visit India roughly four years after making this statement. The New Statesman reviewer suggests:

... he went to India to discover the reality that lay behind the dying hearsay of his family. Rootless, he hoped -- as many a returned emigre does -- to find a lost self. Perhaps his own melancholy sense of negation -- noticeable in his novels -- would be exorcised.

His visit ends, instead, in revulsion and alienation.

In order to fully appreciate the implications of his alienation, one must understand the unique relationship he had with India. It was the country from which his Brahmin grandfather had come and had never forgotten. The orthodox Hindu family abounding with pundits had retained many features of Indian life; for the older generation, those who were directly from India or the first generation born in Trinidad, an almost direct transference had been made. India lay about Naipaul as a child mysteriously in its artefacts, its people, its religious ritual and its taboos.

India had in a special way been the background of my childhood. It was a country from which my grandfather came, a country never physically described and therefore never real .... It was a country suspended in time ...

It remained a special, isolated area of ground. (Area, 27)
To me as a child the India that had produced
so many of the persons and things around me was
featureless, and I thought of the time when the
transference was made as a period of darkness,
darkness which also extended to the land ....
The light was the area of my experience, in time
and place. (Area, 30)

India had acquired the status of myth. Its outlines were
blurred in darkness, but it was a comforting presence that
counteracted the alienness they felt in Trinidad:

For in the India of my childhood, the land which
in my imagination was an extension, separate from
the alienness by which we ourselves were surrounded,
of my grandmother's house, there was no alien
presence. (Area, 187)

India not only counteracted the alienness they felt, but it
embodies wholeness in their imagination:

Into this alienness we daily ventured, and at
length we were absorbed into it. But we knew
there had been change, gain, loss. We knew that
something which was once whole and had been washed
away. What was whole was the idea of India. (Area, 187-
188)

But the real India that Naipaul visits, proves to be itself
alien and threatens his own wholeness. He is struck again and
again by the stunted specimens of humanity that he sees around
him; their wasted bodies suggesting an evolution downwards
triggers his instinct for self-preservation and wholeness:

The physique of Europe had melted away first into
that of Africa and then through Semitic Arabia, into
Aryan Asia. Men had been diminished and deformed;
they begged and whined. Hysteria had been my reaction,
and a brutality dictated by a new awareness of myself
as a whole human being and a determination, touched
with fear, to remain what I was. (Area, 13).

Only the Sikhs attract him. One suspects it is because "they
were among the few whole men in India."
His second illusion, about India being 'home' in the alienness of India is exposed when he can find nothing in India with which he can identify:

In India I had so far felt myself a visitor. Its size, its temperament, its crowds: I had prepared myself for these, but in its very extremes, the country was alien .... The landscape was harsh and wrong. I could not relate it to myself.... In all the striking detail of India there was nothing which I could link with my own experience of India in ... Trinidad. (Area, 140-141)

The myth and the reality never meet. India remains inaccessible. In the epigram to the first chapter, Naipaul had quoted from Darwin. The chapter itself is entitled "A Resting-Place For The Imagination". The epigram goes:

These Antipodes call to one's mind old recollections of childish wonder. Only the other day I looked forward to this airy barrier as a definite point in our journey homewards; but now I find it, and all such resting-places for the imagination, are like shadows, which a man moving onwards cannot catch.

-Charles Darwin: *Voyage of the Beagle*

The parallel is apt. India, once such a resting-place for his imagination, a mythical land, proves to be as elusive as a shadow: with him, within him and around him but never fully grasped. For the heroines of Jean Rhys, the England with which they have been acquainted in their imagination becomes a metaphorical wall that either locks them out or threatens to crush them (*Voyage In The Dark*), or imprisons them (*Wide Sargasso Sea*).

Naipaul's inability to come to terms with his three worlds, Trinidad, London and India, irrevocably confirms his position as a deracine. He has explored this artistically in his novels as well. David Ormerod interprets Biswas' frustrated
attempts to build his own house as the inability of the artist
to come to terms with his own society, the house as an arte­
fact being the attempt to translate into concrete, tangible
form, the creative impulse.\textsuperscript{25}

There is a basic similarity between the things
Naipaul deplores in West Indian and Indian society that sug­
gests the violence of his rejection of both places. It is as
if he sees all the West Indian futility and nothingness magni­
fied on a gigantic scale in India. While the West Indian has
no history, the Indian has no sense of history — this explains
why India has always been dominated by foreign conquerors: she
never learns the lessons of history. And while the West Indies
created nothing, creation in India "hints at the imminence of
interruption and destruction" (Area, 205).

After a year in India, from Bombay to Kashmir where
he spends some months and seems most likely to send down roots,
finally his visit to his ancestral village in Uttar Pradesh,
Naipaul comes nowhere nearer to fulfillment. His exile is now
a permanent one for there is nowhere else to go. India remains
outside of his experience, "closing up again, as fast as I
withdraw from it, into a land of myth .... In a year I had not
learned acceptance. I had learned my separateness from India,
and was content to be a colonial, without a past, without an­
cestors" (Area, 250). Very much the Brahmin in his sensibili­
ties, he severs himself from what was and is an extension of
himself.

His rejection of India is tinged with a certain deliber­
ateness and one needs to ask why. His ambivalent feelings for
India, evident in his violent alternation between rejection (most apparent in his visit to the village) and acceptance (which makes the Kashmir section so enjoyable), create the central tension of the book. "From the beginning of his travels he experienced the tension between belonging and not belonging, between identification and alienation." He will not surrender to India; when he does surrender to Aziz and the other employees at the Liward Hotel (Flush System), his agonizing uncertainty of their affection and loyalty is comic but very real. He can not surrender because the journey through India is in a very real sense a journey into himself. As his visit confirms, he has been shaped to an incalculable extent by Indian attitudes and philosophies. The India of An Area of Darkness is within Naipaul, its darkness indicating the negative side of his Indian inheritance. "And even now ... though I have travelled lucidly over that area which was to me the area of darkness, something of darkness remains, in those attitudes, those ways of thinking and seeing, which are no longer mine" (Area, 30). While that darkness was within him, it was a part of the self, a part of the collective memory that he had to consciously and painfully exorcise. The area of darkness, like the desert in Other Leopards, is both within and around him, and much of his seeming callousness and withdrawal is the result of deliberately looking at an Eastern world with Western Eyes. His admiration for Ghandi is based, to a large extent, on the latter's similar colonial vision.
Exactly what are the areas of darkness that Naipaul had to illumine? In the first place, India opened his eyes to that dark side of his self which held that every man is an island. In his 1958 article he wrote:

But after eight years here I find that I have, without effort, achieved the Buddhist ideal of non-attachment. I am never disturbed by national or international issues. I do not sign petitions. I do not vote. I do not march. And I never cease to feel that this lack of interest is all wrong. I want to be involved, to be touched even by some of the prevailing anger.28

One can imagine, then, the shock of seeing this attitude magnified millions of times. The vehemence with which he condemns the Indian withdrawal and denial, the collective blindness, and the disregard for reality founded on a philosophy that life is an illusion, arises from the recognition that these attitudes were once his. India almost succeeds in adding its negation to his:

It was only now, as my experience of India defined itself more properly against my own homelessness, that I saw how close in the past year I had been to the total Indian negation, how much it had become the basis of my thought and feeling. (Area, 266)

It explains why so much of his contact with India is tinged with fear, why he constantly alternates between alienation and identification, why he is often on the brink of full communion but turns away at the last moment, wanting but afraid to face the unknown. He fears that by immersing himself in the destructive element he may himself be destroyed.

Interestingly enough, he is overcome by fear when he visits both Trinidad and India. As the ship neared Trinidad,
which he visited in 1960, "I began to feel all my old fear of Trinidad. I did not want to stay. I had left the security of the ship and had no assurance that I would ever leave the island again." His fear is of being possessed by the landscape and imprisoned, of not being able to leave after he has escaped. His fear of India becomes almost a phobia when he becomes part of the Indian crowd for the first time. So great is his instinct for self-preservation that he buys dark-glasses in order to impose himself and establish his separateness. His horror of the Indian reductive tendency and the Indian formlessness is obvious in *A House For Mr. Biswas*.

As the year draws to its close, and with it his hope of finding "what it is that connects him ... with this sprawling, defecating, inchoate India of today," Naipaul makes a last attempt to claim India. The Village of the Dubes is his strongest link with India; it is the village from which his grandfather had come. He goes in a mixed frame of mind, more afraid than anything else. He steels himself, and in a brutal scene where there is a total breakdown in communication, Naipaul relinquishes his last hold on India.

His rejection is as deliberate as when he makes a pilgrimage to the Cave of Amarnath, made holy by the symbol of Lord Shiva that supposedly appears in the form of an ice phallus, and turns away after reaching the mouth of the cave. As a boy he had had no taste for Hindu religious ritual so that side of India was closed to him. But the joy of the returning pilgrims
is not for him. "I wished I was of their spirit. I wished that something of their joy awaited me at the end" (Area, 167).

After the two-day journey, they arrive before the cave in the recesses of which the phallus supposedly forms, so that the pilgrims have to reach it by way of a steep ramp. He climbs up on the ramp, then climbs down, the pilgrimage over but never really begun.

"It was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two" (Area, 265), he writes in the last chapter which is appropriately entitled, "Flight". As Walsh has observed, in this book, it is the subject and not the object which is more important. And yet they are both one. Back in London, he cannot rid himself of his feeling of emptiness and of being physically lost. He is haunted by the suspicion that somewhere there is the key to his existence, if only he can find it. In this state of disorientation, he has a dream:

An oblong of stiff new cloth lay before me, and I had the knowledge that if only out of this I could cut a smaller oblong of specific measurements, a specific section of this cloth, then the cloth would begin to unravel of itself, and the unravelling would spread from the cloth to the table to the house to all matter, until the whole trick was undone. Those were the words that were with me as I flattened the cloth and studied it for the clues which I knew existed, which I desired above everything else to find, but which I knew I never would. (Area, 266)

If we are to judge from the intensity with which the theme of rootlessness is explored in his subsequent books, it is obvious that life never unfolds and yields the magical key to his own house.
Jean Rhys writes about the European equivalent to the kind of experience Naipaul and Williams probe. It will be necessary to give a brief account of both the novels under discussion at the outset, since they will be discussed together. It should be easy to distinguish the separate references if it is borne in mind that *Wide Sargasso Sea* was inspired by Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and is the story of Bronte's Bertha Mason, Rochester's wife, as seen through the compassionate eyes of Jean Rhys. The heroine is Antoinette, whose mother was herself insane and whose brother, Pierre, was an idiot. Most of the novel is set in the West Indies. We are transported to England when Antoinette is taken, insane, to Thornfield, by her husband. *Voyage In The Dark* describes the fortunes of a West Indian white, Anna, in England, as she goes from chorus girl to prostitute after a disastrous affair with an older man, Walter.

We must consider both novels since, set as they are, one in England, the other in the West Indies, neither world inseparable from the other, they give a composite picture of the chasm that exists between the white West Indian and his ancestors. Secondly, the extent to which Anna's rootless existence is conditioned by Rhys' knowledge and experience of West Indian life is clearly demonstrated with reference to *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The point also needs to be made that Rhys has an unmistakable claim to being a West Indian writer by her concern, exhibited in all her novels, with a theme that largely preoccupies West Indian writing -- the nomadic, wandering character who lives suspended between two worlds, alienated from society
and disoriented by the environment. In her early novels, her world "is the world of modern, urban Europe; her people are the people who live perpetually on the fringes of urban society -- faceless, nomadic characters inhabiting that intransient other world which is a permanent feature of modern urban life in Europe."

The West Indian setting of Wide Sargasso Sea consolidates this theme; and the theme of rejected womanhood is in turn utilised symbolically in order to make an artistic statement about West Indian society and about an aspect of the West Indian experience.

The encounter between Antoinette and Rochester represents, in minuscule, the encounter between two worlds that are in spirit alien to each other, the fateful encounter demonstrating the tragic fate that awaits any attempt to bridge this chasm by emotional involvement in the other world. Voyages In The Dark demonstrates this on a lesser scale.

By choosing the post-Emancipation era as the setting of Wide Sargasso Sea, Rhys catches the white society at its most vulnerable with the social balance suddenly upset and nowhere to go, its alienness and rootlessness made more pronounced. The idea of England would naturally have exerted a more powerful hold on the white imagination at that time. It is therefore all the more ironic that Antoinette, who is a stranger in her West Indian setting, goes to England insane and virtually a slave, all freedom taken away from her, and there becomes even more estranged from her setting. She remains locked away in the
attic of Thornfield Hall, refusing to believe that she is really in England. Surely the ship got lost on its way. This cardboard world they have landed on couldn't be England. If only she could see behind the cardboard!

They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it. Was it that evening ... when he found me talking to the young man who brought me my food? I ... asked him to help me ... I smashed the glasses and plates against the porthole. I hoped it would break and the sea would come in .... And then I slept. When I awoke it was a different sea. Colder. It was that night, I think, that we changed course and lost our way to England. This cardboard house where I walk at night is not England. (W.S.S., 181)

The image of being lost at sea is exactly the image used in Voyage In The Dark. The title itself makes use of the journey motif. In a recurrent dream that Anna has, she is on a ship sailing close to an island which has English trees (The ambiguity suggests that the island could be either England or her West Indian island). Try as she might to get ashore, she is unable to do so. "The dream rose into a climax of meaninglessness, fatigue and powerlessness .... It was funny how, after that, I kept on dreaming about the sea" (V.D., 164-165). The image evoked here, as in Wide Sargasso Sea, is both original and powerful. Both women are in a perpetual journey between the West Indies and England, sailing back and forth, unable to get ashore either world and anchor themselves.

The title of Wide Sargasso Sea is rich in its implications. Wally Look Lai points out one of the levels on which it operates: "... physically situated between the West Indies and
England, the Sargasso Sea becomes a symbolic dividing line between two whole worlds and two people whose spirits belong so totally to their own worlds that they are never able to meet each other in any fundamental sense.\textsuperscript{36} The Sargasso Sea also symbolizes the dangers that await those who make the treacherous passage. Thirdly, it is a natural image for the existential chasm that lies between the two worlds.

Although Antoinette belongs to the West Indian environment more than any of the other white characters, she never quite merges into it. The post-Emancipation era, as previously mentioned, was a time when the whites suddenly found themselves uprooted. In addition, the islands were already on the road to ruin. Rhys captures the insidious process of dereliction and decay that set in brilliantly in her description of Coulibri Estate where Antoinette and her mother live virtually marooned. The subtlest touch lies in Rhys' descriptions of nature in all its wildness ready to take over at any time and reduce everything to the primitive. The suggestion that nature is barely held in check, parallels subtly, the latent madness of the creole heiresses of the islands, tragic products of an inbred, decadent society in its death throes.

The women are presented as rejected creatures languishing in a hostile and alien environment. Antoinette is herself rejected constantly by her mother who pushes her away whenever she tries to show her love. Both women are in turn jeered at by the negroes who scorn them because they are poor whites, and
call them 'white cockroaches', and by the wealthy whites who project on them their own fear of financial disaster and call them 'white niggers'. Mason and Rochester, their only hopes of escape, abandon them, so that their contact with the white world aggravates their latent madness.

As a child, Antoinette, like Anna, grows up half-negro, her involvement with the negro world more profound than that with the white world. With her childhood friend, Tia, she has a love-hate relationship that confuses her group loyalties and causes a certain self-alienation. The fire that destroys Coulibri represents the death of all Antoinette has ever known, and as the drunken negroes who set the place afire surround them threateningly, Antoinette spots Tia in the crowd and runs to her:

... she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri .... When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either.... I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking glass. (W.S.S., 45)

Even this attempt to enter a part of her West Indian world is aborted. When, at the end, the mad Antoinette has a dream of her subsequent burning of Thornfield Hall and suicide, visions of her West Indian life pass before her. "As she stands before the spectacle of her life -- both worlds, both areas of experience, Thornfield and Coulibri ablaze in flames -- the
alternative suddenly appears to her in her dream." 

She sees Tia beckoning to her from below, on the flagstones, and she jumps into what she believes is Tia's waiting arms. But, as Wally Look Lai observes, the real Tia stoned and rejected her; the Tia that beckons to her invitingly is an illusion. 

Rhys therefore rejects this alternative.

Bertha Mason's burning of Thornfield Hall is presented as the demented act of a mad woman in Jane Eyre. In Wide Sargasso Sea it is an entirely rational attempt to solve an existential dilemma. 

By filtering the material through the consciousness of Antoinette the act becomes understandable within the context of the internal conflict that Antoinette has been through. The burning and suicide are not acts of destruction but of preservation from an existence which had become a form of death.

Antoinette's fate is never to belong. She is taunted by the songs of the negroes: "White cockroach, go away, Nobody want you." Anna, her English counterpart, is not wanted in England either. Her room-mate shouts at her, "... and always going on about being tired and its being dark and cold .... What d'you want to stay here for, if you don't like it? Who wants you here, anyway? Why don't you clear out?" (V.D., 145).

Unhappy and unwanted as they are, neither woman has any alternative. When Antoinette hears the familiar 'white cockroach' refrain on their honeymoon, she exclaims bitterly to Rochester, "It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me .... And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I
often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong ..." (W.S.S.,102). The last line is the articulation of the West Indian uncertainty and rootlessness. As Rhys makes clear, it is not confined to any group or race. It is the natural cry of those who have no claims. Rochester, who hates and envies her apparent ability to understand this alien world which is totally inaccessible to him, confesses to her that he feels that the place is his enemy and on her side, but Antoinette dispels this illusion.

It is not for you and not for me. It has nothing to do with either of us. This is why you are afraid of it; because it is something else. I found that out long ago ... I loved it because I had nothing else to love, but it is as indifferent as this God you call on so often. (W.S.S.,130)

Next to Naipaul's statement about derelict men in a derelict land, lost in an alien landscape, this must rank as one of the more powerful expressions of the West Indian's alienation from his environment and the total indifference of this environment to his happiness. What seems to be Antoinette's rapport with her world, is in reality an existential awareness of her position in it as a stranger and an acceptance of that condition of estrangement from both the environment and God.

In the reactions of Rochester who is recently arrived from England, we can assess the impact of the wild environment, of which Antoinette is a part, on the English sensibility. Its excess of colour, of smell, its very extremes, jar on him. Yet he cannot help but feel that it has a secret that he cannot penetrate. He keeps thinking, "I want what it hides." Antoinette, locked up in Thornfield, also tries to see behind the
cardboard, but neither can gain access to the other's world.

Rhys uses the symbol of the wall to symbolize this inaccessibility. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* the symbol is linked to Antoinette's dreams to evoke the terrifying sense of being trapped. In all, Antoinette has three dreams, each of which is a premonition of the direction in which her life is headed at the time. The first is at Coulibri when she is a child. In the dream she is walking in a forest, followed by someone who hates her. The footsteps come closer and closer and though she struggles and screams, she is unable to move (*W.S.S.*, 27). She comforts herself afterwards by thinking to herself, "I am safe .... There is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss. The barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains. And the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers" (*W.S.S.*, 27). The wall, the cliffs and the mountains, though barriers, are protective symbols in her mind at this point. The stranger is obviously Rochester. It is interesting that Rochester, on first seeing the wild landscape, feels threatened and menaced by the hills, the mountains, and the sea:

The road climbed upward. On one side the wall of green, on the other a steep drop to the ravine below. We pulled up and looked at the hills, the mountains and the blue-green sea ... I understood why the porter had called it a wild place. Not only wild but menacing. Those hills would close in on you. (*W.S.S.*, 69)

In her second dream, this time at the convent where she spends her adolescent years after the burning of Coulibri, she has left the house at Coulibri and is walking towards the forest;
this time she follows the man. The sickening fear that Rhys
creates is well worth quoting in detail:

Again I have left the house at Coulibri ... and
I am walking towards the forest. I am wearing
a long dress and thin slippers ... following the
man who is with me ... I follow him, sick with
fear but I make no effort to save myself ....
Now we have reached the forest .... "Here?" He
turns and looks at me, his face black with
hatred .... He smiles slyly. "Not here, not
yet," he says and I follow him weeping .... We
are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed
garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees
are different trees .... There are steps leading
upwards. It is too dark to see the wall or the
steps but I know they are here .... (W.S.S., 60)

The dream undoubtedly prefigures her journey from the West
Indies (the forest), to Thornfield and England (the enclosed
garden surrounded by a stone wall) where she is locked away. In
her third dream, this time at Thornfield, when her life flashes
before her, the world of Coulibri and the world of Thornfield,
the truth dawns on her. "I know now that the flight of stairs
led to this room" (W.S.S., 187).

In Voyage In The Dark, the walls do not imprison Anna,
but they either shut her out or threaten to crush her. Early
in the novel, her claustrophobic existence brings to mind one
day, "that story about the walls of a room getting smaller and
smaller until they crush you to death" (V.D., 30). It is as if
invisible barriers have been erected between her and the
England she wishes to touch. As she seeks in vain to enter the
English world and get behind the exterior of people and things,
the felt life, the barriers of communication begin to close in
on her. "The damned way they look at you, and their damned
voices, like high, smooth, unclimbable walls all around you, closing in on you ..." (V.D., 147). It reminds her of the image she had always had of England subconsciously, as a child. The English biscuits that were sold on the island came in a tin that showed a girl eating a biscuit. But the significant thing in the picture was the "high, dark wall" behind her. Underneath the picture was written:

The past is dear
The future clear
But best of all, the present.

But it was the wall that stood out most in her mind. "And that used to be my idea of what England was like. And it is like that, too, I thought" (V.D., 149). Between the white West Indian and his origins, there exists this divide, be it a wall or a sea, that makes return impossible.

Wide Sargasso Sea explores the irreconcilability of the two worlds through the figures of Antoinette and Rochester. Voyage In The Dark explores this same irreconcilability by the juxtaposition of the two worlds of Anna, the West Indian one composed of nostalgic collections. The difference in national temperament is stressed throughout. Throughout the dark voyage of the soul, the memory of her West Indian home remains a symbol of light in the darkness of England, a haven of warmth and sunshine in the cold, and a riotous assault on the senses in the bland English world. With her vivid memories of the world she has left behind, a world that she knows is gone forever, and her sensitive response to the cold, dark, unfriendly
English world which bristles with barriers, Anna comes to realise that these two halves of her life can never meet. The question Rhys poses in both novels is, which is the dream and which the reality? In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, neither Rochester nor Antoinette can comprehend the other's world. For each, the world of the other is like some mysterious and inaccessible dream. The following dialogue between them illustrates their different sensibilities:

"Is it true," she said, "that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes. I want to wake up."
"Well," I answered annoyed, "that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream."
"But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?"
"And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?" (W.S.S., 80-81)

The two worlds and the sensibilities born of them are presented as so diametrically opposed that they are like two halves which can never come together. To Anna, "Sometimes it was as if I were back there and as if England were a dream. At other times England was the real thing and out there was a dream, but I could never fit them together" (V.D., 8). This mental displacement prevents Anna from coming to terms fully with the English world and with her acquaintances. Maudie, her friend, is incredulous when Anna declares that she doesn't like London. "You must be potty .... Whoever heard of anybody who didn't like London?" Walter himself prefers cold places. "The tropics would be altogether too lush for me, I think."
Anna's problem of reconciling these two worlds is itself compounded by her attraction to the negroes and the way of life they represent to her. "Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad" (V.D.,31). This implies self-alienation also. Although she has a warm friendship with Francine, the black servant, she knows that Francine dislikes her because she is white, "and ... I would never be able to explain to her that I hated being white" (V.D.,72). The question of identity is therefore fundamental to both novels. Rochester, in an attempt to refashion Antoinette's identity to suit his own conception of her, calls her by her mother's name, Bertha, thus destroying her real self and tainting her relationship with her mother.41 It will be remembered that Antoinette's mother had become insane shortly after Coulibri burnt. Rochester consciously imposes this burden on her. Walter makes a similar attempt to redefine Anna's identity to suit his ethics and values. Anna prefers to live in the present and does not particularly care about 'getting on in the world', but Walter cannot conceive of this kind of existence. "Vincent says he doesn't see why you shouldn't get on and I don't see why you shouldn't either. I believe it would be a good idea for you to have singing lessons ... I want you to get on" (V.D.,50).

Rhys' artistic vision is as consistent as Naipaul's. One can refer to 'the typical Naipaul figure' the same way as one can refer to 'the typical Rhys figure'. Everything they write is a reworking of the same theme and the same figure and this gives their work an intensity one rarely meets in West
Indian novels. If the distinction can be made, intensity in the West Indian novel often means a heavy coating of sociology, so that it is often difficult to separate literature from sociology, the imaginative from the historical. And yet both Naipaul and Rhys have a sense of West Indian history. The difference is that their artistic vision grows out of their historical sensibility and embraces not only West Indian man, but all man.

Rhys and Naipaul point to the universality of the condition of rootlessness and indicate one way of maintaining a larger perspective. Wilson Harris points in yet another direction -- the embracing of this condition and transcending its historical and racial limitations through a vision of unity. He challenges the West Indian insular vision of disruption with a vision of unity -- the unity of man with man and man with environment. The fundamental question behind his artistic premise is how to reconcile the broken parts of such an enormous heritage; such a reconciliation he envisions in what he considers to be two West Indian positives -- the people themselves and the environment. He finds remarkable in the West Indian "a sense of subtle links, the series of subtle and nebulous links which are latent within him, the latent ground of old and new personalities."42 An entirely authentic concept in view of the multiplicity and richness of cultures in the West Indies. Harris works this out in his novels by liberating the persona from those historical and racial accretions that fix its role statically in West Indian novels. Kenneth Ramchand defines Harris'
artistic principles in terms of the West Indian novel.

Instead of creating characters whose positioning on one side or other of the region's historical conflicts consolidates those conflicts and does violence to the make-up of 'the person', the West Indian novelist should set out to 'visualise a fulfillment', a reconciliation in the person and throughout society, of the parts of a heritage of broken cultures.\textsuperscript{43}

In \textit{Palace of the Peacock}, for instance, which works on one level as a re-enactment of the El Dorado quest and could quite easily have been a consolidation of the old historical conflicts, the crew is composed of Europeans, Indians and negroes who are incestuously related. "The whole crew was one spiritual family living and dying together in a common grave out of which they had sprung again from the same soul and womb as it were."\textsuperscript{44} In the larger context of Harris' work, it can be expressed in this line from \textit{The Whole Armour}, "the rallying of all their forces into an incestuous persona and image and alliance -- the very antithesis of their dark truth and history."\textsuperscript{45}

The vastness of the Guyanese interior, its great heartland, fertilises Harris' imagination and gives solidity to that other vision of unity -- man and landscape -- in which both are engaged in a constant dialectic, "a drama of consciousness shared by animate/inanimate features."\textsuperscript{46} But, although Harris anticipates the difficulties of the insular writers who have no such heartland to feed on and draw them inward, only the empty expanse of the sea to focus their eyes outward, his solution cannot have as great a meaning for them. The sea is still
a symbol of departure in the West Indian novel, not of arrival. The image of the desert that Dennis Williams and Orlando Patterson utilise is not an authentic Caribbean one. The heartland that gives a certain density and solidity, a sense of place, to the Guyanese writers from Mittelholzer to Harris to Dennis Williams is again not an insular image. The landscape cannot form the backdrop for a reconciliation until it is absorbed into the insular subconscious, and as *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Drayton’s *Christopher* demonstrate, the landscape has remained alien: these novels are filled with threatening images of nature.
FOOTNOTES

1 Subsequent references will appear in the text as 'Area'.

2 Subsequent references will appear in the text under the citation, 'O.L.'

3 Voyage In The Dark (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968). Subsequent references will appear in the text as 'Voyage'.


5 The Chosen Tongue, pp. 123-124.

6 Ibid., p. 124.

7 The Pleasures of Exile, p. 160.


10 Review in Black Orpheus, 13 (Nov. 1963), p. 60.

11 Ibid., p. 59.

12 The Chosen Tongue, p. 125.


14 The West Indian Novel and Its Background, p. 162.


16 Ibid., p. 85.


20 Ibid., p. 898.

21 The Middle Passage, pp. 41-42.

22 "Without A Place," p. 897.


27 A Manifold Voice, p. 63.


29 The Middle Passage, p. 40.


32 A Manifold Voice, p. 64.


34 Ibid., p. 19.
36 Ibid., p. 20.
37 Ibid., pp. 26-27.
38 Ibid., p. 27.
39 Ibid., p. 27. I have followed Look Lai's argument closely in this paragraph.
41 Ibid., p. 21.
42 Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 28.
43 The West Indian Novel and Its Background, p. 10.
46 Tradition, the Writer and Society, p. 55.
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