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One-Way Traffic: George Lamming and the Portable Empire

All the books they read, their whole introduction to something called culture, all of it, in the form of words, came from outside: Dickens, Jane Austen, Kipling and that sacred gang. The West Indian's education was imposed in much the same way that flour and butter are imposed from Canada.

— George Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile

George Lamming's 1950, The Flamingo War, situates the Barbadian-born novelist squarely in a familiar postcolonial tradition. In that book, the hegemonic force of British import, both physical and metaphorical (from butter to Austen), is imagined as making the colonial subject anamorphically into a version of the colonizing country. Shakespeare's The Tempest is then the book's most striking example of the West Indian colonial condition. This is in part because the text represents the colonial situation, but also because the play itself was exported to the West Indies, thus becoming part of the very colonial legacy on which it reflects.5

But Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin (1953) depicts British objects operating in quite a different way. That novel, Lamming's first, intervenes slyly in debates that raged then, and rage now with even more force, on the nature of the cultural legacy inflicted on a colony by its conquerors and long-term owners. Thirty years after his first substantial work and at a scholarly moment when new ways of parsing both the imperial text and postcoloniality itself have returned us to aesthetic texts as avenues into ideological formations, Lamming's novels reward reevaluation. They have always appeared to be a direct response to the logic of trade and imperial expansion that made even the postcolonial West Indies seem an overseas extension of British culture. But our new awareness of the relationship between postcoloniality and globalization and a renewed scholarly interest in material culture make Lamming's novels seem even more so as well. In his six novels—but most notably In the Castle of My Skin and Native Life of My Own—Lamming reveals the ways in which the wide sacred gap of British high culture singularly fails to take hold in the postcolonial context—even at the moments when such portable imperial culture seems most triumphant.

To access to the force of the colonial mind-set, Lamming suggests, it "in silence or with rhetoric. . . . to sign a contract whose epigraph reads: To be in exile is to be alive." But Lamming thinks there is a way out of such an acceptance of exile: it comes by discovering that one's imaginary motherland, the England that made and shaped one, bears no relation to the England of the English. In other words, by refusing its imaginary hold, one can discover that the seeming porosity of the imperial motherland is an illusion. In that sense, Lamming's work seems a remaking propagandist of the nature of debates about a distinctively postcolonial literary form (debates that have shaped the field in important contributions by Jameson, Ahmad, Durot, Halme, Beverly, and others).6

The key question that Lamming's approach arguably the most important question for framing postcolonial studies today: what is to be made of the export objects that colonizers offered as feint representatives of the metropole? How, in other words, does British object lesson function in a colonial context to enforce a "text" the metropole is not a distant actor upon but a proximal actor within a colonial space? That question has been approached in a wide variety of ways by a recent wave of "vocative postcolonial scholarship" in recent years books like Gauri Viswanathan's Mode of Conspicuous and work by such ambitious studies scholars as Gyan Prakash have propo-sed that the story of British "hegemony" in India be rethought in terms of the complicated struggles among various models for how culture was to be transmitted from the mother country to the colony. And works such as Peter Halme's have alerted scholars of the Carabinian to the complicated questions of hybridity and disconnection that C. L. R. James's Black Jacobin had broached in the 1960s.7

However, Lamming's particular contribution to the West Indian debate on the colonial legacy offers us a different way of thinking about the postcolonial condition. If the best work by Viswanathan, for example, has focused on the export of "culture" read as a denaturalized set of practices and consumers, there has also recently been a vigorous scholarly attention toward what is labeled "global circulations" in Lydia Liu's recent collection, Tókés of Exchange. Such work, building on what it does on both worlds systems theory and Marxist accounts of commodity exchange and responding to the material turn evident in Arjun Appadurai's magisterial collection, The Social Life of Things, has opened the way to see postcolonial studies into a different field—that is, a field that studies the objects that make up the global trade by which colonies were both initially justified and sustained.8 Justified because the export of the objects of religion played a key role in legitimating colonization in the first
place; sustained because it was the successful export of Britishness itself (tea- 
sets, domestic interior, flags, and all manner of civilian material) that made 
the colonies seem viable extensions of British self. Lamming brilliantly ana-
thomatises the ways in which British objects, pressed down or pressed onto colo-
nial subjects, are imagined, from a British perspective, as capable of shaping 
lines constructively—and anatomises as well the ways that such objects work in-
stead to produce an odd kind of imaginative freedom.

A telling debate at the heart of In the Castle of My Skin spotlights Lamming's interest in classifying the British objects that help both to define and to control the West Indies. The novel at its outset is collectively narrated by a group of boys to whom every object is an occasion for the same sort of incoherent debate that rages about the double boiler nailed to the wall of the Papad midway through 'Moby Dick'. In this case, the object is the British penny that each boy has received as a school prize day. As soon as the gift is received, the debates begin among the boys:

Some said it was a drawing of the king made with a pin while the copper was soft... It was a long and patient undertaking. But it had to be done if there was going to be any money at all, as everyone knew how important money was... Others said it was very silly to argue that such a job would be done by sensible people. And the English who were the only people in the world to deal with pennies were very sensible.

This debate frames the production of money for Barbados as a gift of the English. Because the children believe that only the English make pennies, they also believe necessarily that these must be both a reason for their production and a reasonable way to produce them. The challenge is to read the mind of the imprint. And the debate isaggioed around a competition as to who can successfully reappropriate the penny. Those pennies thus become something like the commodities that Marx believed were capable of bringing their owners to market, or even of making their owners into agents of their (objective) will.

Theories proliferate among the boys, one is that "it was the same penny all the time." The portraits of the king on the penny will not vary because "The king could never find time to press all the pennies in the world."

One penny, that is the first penny ever made, was the real penny, and all the others were made by a kind of stamp. You simply had to get the first penny, and the necessary metals and tools followed. That means, someone asked, that you couldn't spend the first penny. Someone wanted to know how the first penny was made... [The penny was made and burned] and finally sent to the king who pressed it on one side of his face. If this account begins to seem allegorical of the relationship between these boys and their distant ruler— thus, if the latter pennies made from first pennies begin to sound like copper-colored allegorical figures for the "Brown Britons" boys themselves— so much the better.

Why does Lamming decide to go on at such length staging this debate on the meaning of the penny? The absurdity that pervades at each unlikely theory about the penny's origin is introduced not merely contingent, but also cen-
tral to the meaning of these debates. The incredible quality of these explana-
tions is exactly the point.

Nigidi wa Thiong'o's influential account, "George Lamming: In the Castle of My Skin", sees the explanations as moving toward a real understanding of the colonial condition. He argues that in this novel, "the yardstick is England. Everything that afflicts the tender minds of the children is geared towards vernacularization of England and the British throne." But the yardstick is precisely not the real England. Instead it is the imaginary England that has been sum-
moned up in the children's minds. The final scenes advance by one of the children is that the king is not responsible for that image because "the king was never seen!" and all images flow only from a kind of "shadow king." That notion of the invisible but omnipotent shadow king points to Lam-
m sing's real intent here. The wholesale importation of "Dickens, Jane Austen, Kipling and that sacred guru" has produced not a comprehensive but rather a kind of "shadow" Britishness, and that shadow's relationship to its original is fundamen-
tally unmissable. Just as the children that a "shadow king" were will have no generic relationship to the "real king," the details sparked by these shadow imports will have. Lamming supposes, no true relationship to the site from whence the objects came. The children's accounts of the object they see before them is grounded not as a reference but in imagination and is derived at neither by extrapolation nor interpolation, but pure and simple speculation.

To understand the postcolonial rebellion against British portable objects, as explored in Lamming, means in part to understand why such portable objects as those copper pennies came with such significant cultural adhesions, such "aura" as Walter Benjamin put it, attached. The carefully satirical set piece on pennies is oriented against an ideology that had imagined the perfect par-
tadigm of the British nation (seat of an imperial culture) by way of objects. Lamming conjures up a world in which the creation of a plausible past for the imported artifact is fatally compromised by the very act of imagination that is required to constitute the object as a lesson of the empire. That is, all the
meaning that seems to inhabit in the object is actually conjured up by its interper- 
eter. That claim is both necessary and striking because Lamming’s writing aginst an inermented set of object lenses that posit the perfect transmumability of British culture abroad.

Consider, for example, a British tea service laid out by Britons in India. What is it that makes the object’s meaning in India seem to depend upon the object’s original meaning in England? Flora Annie Steed, in her 1896 *On the Face of the Waters*, has her heroine call her English garden of “hartree and sweet pea” in India “the shadow of a nook in a dainty land” and go on to describe the watchful apperances as a piano in the same terms.11 Home notes sound loudest. Even playing Beethoven, even struck by Indian hands, the “44 country” piano must operate as a mark of Britlishness in the Rai.

Like the beloved “old willow-ware” that reminds the “no captain in Emily Eden’s *The Semi-Detached House of life back home*”, English objects in a range of nineteenth-century British accounts are—what make the old island palpably present. To make one’s country ‘at family or even oneself feel “at home” over-
seas required the careful transplntation of not only culture in the most abstract sense, but also of “material culture,” rooted in tangible objects.12 Tea-
sets, Bibles, lockets, and portable copies of Shakespeare instantaneously the benighted overseas. The British in India, in Kashmir, in the West Indies sternly out a sense of their distant metropole in every public space, recreated it in every private interior.13 Flora Annie Steed’s *Complete Indian Housekeeper* at century’s end listed all the English terms available at good Delhi markets (sautéed oil, turned fish) that made an Indian house a pure-English one.14 And Emily Eden’s *Up the Canning*, letters written from the Indian hinterland in the 1830s, details her ability to create upon an often landscape an illusion of British do-
minicity—though it might take a retinue of several hundred servants to imple-
tein her feeling of home.15

It should not be surprising that it is often literary works, those most cultur-
ally loaded of objects, that are imagined as best at constructing parochial Englishness abroad. Consider, for example, Ruskin’s *Kipling’s fascinating 1896 short story, “The Janites,” a convincing testament to the felt power of a Jane Austen novel to create an entire English world once Austen has become an object exportable in people’s minds, not just their values. In Kipling’s account, it is a shared knowledge of Jane Austen’s world (acquired through conversa-
tion and the passage of battered texts from hand to hand) that enables him to recognize one another overseas.16

Does it make any difference to a Briton’s ability to serve in India in 1896 if his collection of Jane Austen novels has arrived there with him? Kipling’s account supposes that it does, because in that moment *con versa* the Austen novels have become mnemonic for those “muddling counties of England.”17 It is just this that West Indian writers like Lamming understand as the strongest claim that literature can make—and as the most threatening form of imperial extension into the West Indies. For if the book, suitably laden with cultural freight, can be “de-adopted as a piece of Britain, then the imaginative force of literary conquest will have steered not to triumph, but actually to disappear: there is no literature here anymore, simply a piece of England transported whole to these islands. Literature’s triumph would therefore be its disappear-
ance too if imperial naiveté is to become the ultimate ending of any text sent overseas “as England.”

This sort of subversive logic may seem familiar from our understanding of “regional” literature. Consider, for example, the claim of local particularity that is registered by Thomas Hardy’s Wessex novels, in which the world of Wessex is definitively bounded by the province (these people belong only here) yet also made exportable as a kind of cultural piece contained within the novel itself (“a name of Wessex”).18 But there is a crucial difference. Hardy offers a repre-
sentation of Wessex that will not lend itself to that world being recreated as a
living whole. Kipling’s *Janites*, though, implies that Austen’s book will
function abroad to make up England. The middling counties are suddenly
transportable anywhere Austen is eligible, so that one can imagine reconstruc-
ting England’s culture, just as dried soups can be reconstituted to allow British
culture (terrifying thought) to travel overseas.

It comes to seem, then, that the existence of England overseas depends, in an imperial age, upon the triumph of a readily portable culture, cored in cer-
tain key culture-laden artifacts. This conception of a “borrowed” made portable by way of objects coexists, in some forms, with the middle of the
nineteenth century.19 Evelyn Waugh’s 1934 *The Man Who Loved Dickens* marks one important break, after which the successful dissemination of British
literature (here by way of Dickens) begins to seem more a triumph but a curse on Britain, as in *soulless children* see that culture to turn the tables on the colo-
nizers.20 Waugh’s account of the attacks that occur when Dickens is made
available to racial aliens like the illiterate Mr. Todd (who had to kidnap the Englishman Tony Last to serve as his reader) suggests that it is time to close the floodgates, to reconsecrate the flow of portable objects so as to save little England from the Greater Britain it has—Waugh gloomily observes—successfully cre-
ated. However, a larger shift is in store. By 1930, in the work of the first post-
World War II (and post-Indian independence) generation of West Indian
writers, the very idea of portable British culture at times seems simply
outhought, but fatally flawed from the outset. Small wonder, perhaps, that Australian David Malouf’s Remembrance Day begins with a colonial subject crying, “Don’t shoot! I am a B-h-b british Object!”

The problematic of imperial dissemination by way of imperial object does not inevitably produce a Lamming-like response. Indeed, the responses of writers from the margins of empire to imperial notions of object porosity do not always shift widely from the metropolitan accounts that the well-educated colonial imbibe. 24 And even when they do, the results may serve circuitously to affirm the effect that British imperial objects were imagined to have.

There are many writers of the ex-colonized world who accept the legacy of the successfully portaged object and turn to the question of assessing the damage that such objects have done. What have these objects done to us, some writers worry, by manufacturing illusory accounts of “other life” back in the motherland, the “imaginary homeland”? Salman Rushdie’s Midnights Children (1981) brilliantly-anthropizes this worry in its account of the allegorical Mehtwold Estates. Sold to Indians at the moment of independence, the “Erasure” are handed over on condition that all its artifacts are left untouched—whisky bottles and glasses, toilet paper, pictures of singing old Englishmen. The (purely intentional) effect is that within a month the residents are gathering on the veranda for cocktail hour, telling stories of past glories in pseudo-Oxford accents. 25

After such porosity, Rushdie asks, what revenge? What is to be made now of these no longer new things, these “work commodities” that arrive on our shores with their Englishness and imperial might seemingly intact? Rushdie jokes in Midnight’s Children about the mother country’s abiding belief: a radio arrives labeled not “made in England” but “made in English.” Whatever comes from the mother country, home of all objects and of all objectivity, serves in the still colonial space as more than a symbol, as a mnemonic portion of that mother. Seeing the English object, one thinks more of its country of origin than of the object itself. Go looking for Britain, and it recedes before you; invert it from what has been seen you, and a complete life, seemingly imported from abroad, is on offer. But Anglophone West Indian writers have addressed that legacy somewhat differently. Derek Walcott, for instance, makes colonial dislocation meaningful—only by contrasting it to the imagined wealth of the “connected” culture brought from overseas: “Colonials, we began with that material inheritance: that nothing could ever be built among these ersten shades, bureaucrat backyards, and mound thingie. . . . We knew the literature of empires, Greek, Roman, British, through their essential classics.” 26 And V.S. Naipaul, in both The Mimic Men (1967) and A Bend in the River (1979), takes a look at British objects that seem no longer to hold the sway they should over colonial subjects, and the effect of his examination is to produce an account of colonial in-grownness that is surprisingly similar to Lamming’s. Certainly Naipaul, born in 1932, who sailed (like Lamming) from Trinidad to England in 1951, is of a generation to know something of such colonial nostalgia. To some critics, his work is nothing but variations on that nostalgia—slow discoveries of various ways in which former meaning has waned and left the world the dimmer for it. Trains, stamps, steamboats are all part of the vanished European legacy in A Bend in the River, and at times it is hard not to feel that Naipaul fervently believes all can be restored to their colonial magnitude. 27

That nostalgia, however, is only a way that characters persuade themselves that they once had, and so could have again, a closer relationship to the imperial center than they have now. In Naipaul’s account, only two sorts of Western objects endure: demed trade goods and irrationally aura-laden memorabilia. A Bend in the River seems to set up the waning presence of Europeans in Zaire as emblematic of the postcolonial fall away from civilization more generally. In the place of the bygone era of memorable European products—fade posters for Italian wines, postage stamps whereby even illiterate Arab slave traders could learn their own history, a calendar that brought order into the timeless class of pre-European lives—28 Naipaul sees a grubby trade in fungibles, marking the failure of any admirable postcolonial life to replace the vanished empire. The perfect emblem for the diminished flow of culture after the captains and the kings departs is imported incense: “It was anticipated junk, specially made for shop like mine, and I doubt whether the workmen who made the stuff—in Europe and the United States and perhaps nowadays Japan—had any idea what their products were used for.” The actual use to which they are put, these deliberately demed objects, could not possibly have been envisioned back in the first world: “The smaller basics for instance, were in demand because they were good for keeping grubs alive in, packed in dopp kits and march earth.” 29

Salim, the protagonist, primarily distinguishes these basins from the objects that were still filled with all the allure of neocolonial power. He has a palpable addiction to first world popular science magazines, filled with pictures of what “they” are doing in Europe—“they” being not so much Europeans as scientists of any race, inventors in sterile labs, “people far away from us in every sense.” 30 The entire appeal of the magazines is theoretical, or rather, they are appealing because they bespeak a practical meaning for objects that Salim cannot imagine ever entering Zaire. Guy Debord describes the “our commodity,” an object that marks the advent of technologically superior North to the retarded South. 31 But in Naipaul’s account, the commodity remains a star precisely by not arriving, by not contaminating itself with actual exposure to the zone of reproduction.
These inventions are appealing probably on account of their unavailability. Should a Western object sexually successfully arrive in Zaire, it would not help but be corrupted. When a "big burger" franchise arrives and thrives, Salim sees it only as a lower common denominator where corrupt Zairean culture meets the worst of the West. When Salim begins an affair with a Western woman, Venus, he wants only to possess her: while she returns the sentiments of someone like him. He desperately wants objects to preserve their distant purity of Western promise ("made in England"), and yet he wants those objects right here simultaneously: wants them to enter his life while holding on to their chilly Northern distance from him.

Rather than converting a suitable way for the portable European object to continue flourishing in this fallen present, however, Npalu concretizes the illusions that go along with imagining that European culture is a vast out of one's provincial life. Like Lamming, with the copper penny, Npalu plunges into the realm of European objects to pick out one that exemplifies the week that goes into inventing the meaning that seems embodied to a Western object. He does so more tellingly in an earlier novel, *The Misfit Man*. There, he tells the story of a portable British property that never existed and yet overshadowed so the colonial mind an object that actually did. "My first memory of school is of taking an apple to the teacher. This puzzled me. We had no apples or Isabella. It must have been an orange; yet my memory insists on the apple. The editing is dearly at fault, but the edited version is all I have." This apple actually arose the local object and replaces it with what has never been imitated. Npalu can conceive the European portable object's surviving, but only within this edited imaginary world. Later Lamming penny made the boys create in their minds an elaborate England that never existed, the apple creates the poignant illusion of a Western bohemy for someone who lived in a realm where the object necessary for such a bohemy was not provided, even though the narrative of such bohemy was.

Npalu once claimed that "Nothing was created in the West Indies, but the conjuring-up of this apple strikes me as a very telling kind of creation, most telling perhaps because the act of creation seems to do no more than animate the careless." Npalu is experimenting here with something like Du Bois's notion of the "double consciousness" belonging to African Americans living in the "world within ... the Veil." In Npalu's, the narrator's conviction that the apple memory is simultaneously real and false makes him a single subject who exists both inside the bounds of empire and outside of them. Inside the Veil, the apple is real only in thoughts of the distant motherland, imaginary when associated with one's own provincial home. This form of double consciousnessness, though, is defined by distance: one's veiled relationship to the proximal seeming yet distant motherland via the exported objects that arrive to constitute it—via those objects that promise to arrive and never do so. To live beneath the Veil as a "Black Briton" is to constitute oneself as British until the moment that one actually arrives in Britain.

Lamming's parallel of the peasant turns a seeming deficit into a hidden strength because it credits West Indian distance from the cosmopolis with endowing its residents with a powerful imaginative site. The West Indian imagination, by this account, is only putatively engaged in interpreting England's objects. In reality, it uses those objects asocations for the most fabulous invention. Like Homi Bhabha's account of colonial "ministry" or muteness that fails even by succeeding, Lamming's account of imaginative insufflation—suggests that the very meanings of those colonial subjects one sees most invested in their imperial antecedents is the moment at which they have already broken with that empire.27

In the penultorable Lamming is, like Sarah-One Jewett in "The Queen's Twins," peeling the imagination that arises around a few scrap memories as a far more powerful force in the world than mere mundane experience of one's surroundings.28 In Jewett's story, the protagonist, Abby Alston, born the same day as Queen Victoria and linked to her by various seemingly significant coincidences, builds up a collection of pictures of the queen, as well as a fantasy life of secret communication, a life that Jewett finds more admirable than living respectably in one's own provincial locale.29 Abby enters into feeling, communication with the queen, who is imagined to be her not by penises but by magazine illustrations and articles. Such imagination is a purely provincial power; her urban friend, a frequent traveler to England, is acceptable of experiencing the kind of quill those illustrations bring no ability. As a friend tells her at the climax of "The Queen's Twins," "Don't it show that for folks that have any fancy in 'em, such beautiful dreams is the real yit of life? But to most folks the common things that happen outside 'em is all in all."30

1. The Jewett, Lamming suggests that the necessary illusions out of which provincial life in made can endow the writer or reader or colonial subject with an imaginative power far exceeding any metropolitan assets. It is not that the colonial objects really bring England with them, or is it the case that they lie in seeming to do so. Rather, they offer a set of sustainable dreams. Provincial life is shaped not by imported objects, but by the illusion that life is shaped by these imported objects.

Lamming's claim about the force of such necessary illusions is perhaps best articulated in his most recent novel, *Native of My Person* (1973), its allegorical
rethinking of such New World exploration narratives as Richard Hakluyt's Voyages. The book evidently owes much to Moby Dick as well, although here Ahab's quest for the white whale comes across as another version of the quest for the New World. One can begin to understand how Lamming anonymizes the appeal of the Moby Dick project for the provincial subject by noting that "inside the Castle of my Skin" and "Names of My Person" are almost identical titles. Both assert a kind of corporal unity that underlies the apparent disorganisation of persons—all these voices that you hear, scattered all over the social map, are in reality joined together in "my" experience. The "inside"ness of the first novel's skin castle echoes Teresa of Avila's castle, that spiritual retreat from the world. At the same time "skin" in the racialised connotations of a West Indian subject, necessarily connects to the persistent master-slave relations that depend on color coding. "Names of My Person" seems to offer the same formulation because it too offers a way for a collection of voices, thoughts, selves, to be gathered under a single roof, within a single life. The novel tells of the voyage of a quisquially driven Commandant and of various of his crew (Steward, Surgeon, Boatswain) through duress, voices, dialogue, the manic recollections of the Commandant himself, and finally "The Women" at sea in another ship altogether. Yet the context within which the title phrase appears in the latter novel suggests ways in which the corset of the earlier novel has been replaced by something a bit more difficult to parse. At the book's end, when the three central characters—Surgeon, Steward, and Commandant—are already dead, their wives and lovers, stranded somewhere in the New World and still expecting their arrival, speak of the way that their own lives are shaped, as women, by subjection to men. This is a submission that has the effect of forming their subjectivity, in that their decision to make another's life a resident part of their own means that their own actions are effectively taken as agents for that other:

Surgeon's Wife: It was what I had to do. He was a piece of my person.
Steward's Wife: It is the same. His is the same.
Commandant: (to his subordinates) This is a submission that has the effect of forming their subjectivity, in that their decision to make another's life a resident part of their own means that their own actions are effectively taken as agents for that other:  

What makes the moment poignant is that death has already discovered them from those imagined natives of their person, so that their assertion that they are not acting but simply continuing the action of others is undermined by the fact that those domestic others are not left to act. Their own subjective status is revealed by the fact that they have become the agents, in effect the objects, of others who no longer exist.

In order to live, Lamming holds, people require the impression that they are working for those persons and objects that surround and define their lives. Thus even at the moment in which their connection to those others has been severed, they continue to imagine those others inhabiting them. It is the other the king's penny or the dead husband, the form of imaginary connection is equally strong. But finally all these senescing intimations of one's own thoughts by the mind of another, or by the imported objects that make up a world, are a form of female, a productive illusion. The pluralization in the title—so that one "native of my person" turns into "natives of my person"—seems to suggest that Lamming contains all of his characters as beloved natives. It is also suggests that his own relationship to those others whom his prose ought to constrain and indeed to speak for is profoundly unsettled, as illusory (and as productive) as that imagined affinity to a distant British mediated through its coinage.

In a recent appraisal of C. L. R. James' Mortimer, Renegades and Castaways, Donald Pease speculates James's investment in responding to and rewriting Moby Dick. Pease argues that James writes to register "the horror of Melville's failure to provide the crew with the power to revile against their monomaniacal captain." James's indictment of Melville is echoed in Names of My Person, which revises Moby Dick in such a way as finally to liberate the crew from the Commandant's dead hand.

But Lamming goes farther. The revision to Moby Dick proposed in Names of My Person functions not only against Melville, but also against James's acceptance of the ultimate independence of a West Indian intellectual on the canonical texts of the Anglo-American world. In Lamming's account, James's choice to "number oneself among the mariners, renegades and castaways" (as Pease believes James did) may seem to offer liberatory alternatives but actually traps one within a false conception of the colonial world. Names of My Person fantasizes the discovery that all our imagined connections to those who hold sway over us (our husbands, our captains, our nations) are a delusion from the beginning. And having recognized that delusion, one realizes that one was never substantive to that authority, that the force conceived in those guiding British precepts and objects was all along a product of one's own mind, not inherent in the things themselves.

In Names of My Person, the seeming triumph of asserting that one contains another as a "native of one's person" is the psychological corollary to the state of colonization. Both hinge on the delusion that objects and messages can traverse the ocean unimpeded, bearing with them a perfect replica of original intent. Rushdie's Midwood Estates are intended as a satire that bemoans the effectiveness of imperial colonization. By contrast, Lamming tells the story of portable treasures that do not portage any meaning with them; he tells the
story of "insurrection" founded on lies or ex-mistakes. In so doing, he returns to the foundational concern of overweening muses and crafts a response demanding not because it topples an old order, but because it suggests that that old order itself had never existed.

Peter Hulme tightly identifies elements of Fredric Jameson’s notice of the postcolonial novel as "national allegory" that in his work. For Hulme, Langan’s interest in "the shaping of national consciousness" depends on what Hulme calls "an imaginative reassessment of the relationship between modernism and its ex-colonies." In fact, Finance of My People makes an even stronger claim: that the shaping of national consciousness cannot be rejected by the colonial culture, but by recognizing that one’s seeming ingestion of that culture had all along been an illusion. It turns out that your whole life had been speaking postcolonial prove and dreaming postcolonial dreams without knowing it.

Notes


5. John Beverly, African Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Other works which...

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9. It is a satisfying characteristic of Langan's work that is often fares real-life situations of the dignity, lengthy debates of disempowered characters who have the chance of getting the facts right, just that even the reader knows better than the participants. Each other of this is a problem, mixing those who are ignorant and know themselves, a reserved insurrection in the success of post colonial works.


11. Ibid., p. 36.


14. My sense of the Victorian means of (exportable) culture has been shaped by Christopher Herdt's account in Culture and Arrows: Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1995). Of myths of a working class, object-oriented identification. Following Herdt, I ask at here of "culture" as a second sense and the first that has been known and said in the world, to which Sylve's 1891 description of culture as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, art, arts, and culture" (cited in Herdt, p. 4) as a couple-century counterpoint standing in the late Victorian period.


16. Ian Bracoon's Of One Place (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), is one important recent account of this process.


21. It is worth thinking about how much such authors of probability situate the wasteful days of empire in the works of modernism. From Conrad to Ford to Degen (Conde of
Memory), in whose works the possibility of assembling a persuasive account of a culture through any individual's possessions comes to seem more and more problematic.

21 First published as a short story, this piece was reprinted that same year as the final chapter of A Harlot's Tale.


23 Niall Chalmers,' The Descent of the Dastardly Indian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) is one fascinating account of an education in which reality of the tutor is preeminently British heroes. And David Malouf's own novel, which is a study of Osdu's Black Sea route, the Lappland Left (New York: Vantage, 1998) has a certain connection in its refinement of British education in order to recruit the imaginations around the impossibly disjunctive to the native.


25 The term is Guy Debord's; see his discussion in The Society of the Spectacle (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone, 1979) p. 41, later 41a.


27 Nupes is often attacked for rejecting its total state and embracing the island that ruled, inhabited, and shaped the West Indies. In "The Garden Party," V. S. Naipaul's "Derek converses toward the island of his origin" - a concept strengthened by his note, "I had no suspicions in what the Derek of the Derek says" (p. 112).

28 All these images are from the first edition of V. S. Naipaul, A Bend in the River (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 3-43.

29 Ibid., p. 40.

30 Ibid., p. 19.


35 Ralph, "Of Memory and Man".


37 Rutherford Brown, older brother of Charlotte and Emily, was one of thousands of young British soldiers who had the same relationship, in the nineteenth century, to London. Surrounded at his local pub, working at London's docks and communicating to them his knowledge of London's geography...

38 Jewett, "The Queen's Days", p. 112.


40 sy of Michigan Press, 1995), is the best known account. Other interesting work on...