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Shattering the civilizing claims of colonialism: George Lamming's *Natives of my person*

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Abstract – From colonizers' perspective, colonization amounts to a civilizing mission. Quarreling with the so-called philanthropic civilizing mission advanced to support the system, Lamming debunks the self-proclaimed civilizing claims through unearthing numerous, multilayered, complex, and self-centered motives behind the system in *Natives of My Person*. This essay argues, through the prism of reader-response criticism, that by unveiling the manifold driving forces behind colonialism, this novelist undermines its civilizing claims and reduces its so-called philanthropy to an immoral exploitation.

Résumé – La colonisation égale civilisation, telle est la raison superflue avancée par le colon pour justifier sa pratique. Réfutant les arguments philanthropiques ainsi que son prétendu rôle de mission civilisatrice, Lamming élucide les raisons égoïstes qui sous-tendent le système colonial dans *Natives of My Person*. Cet essai argumente, par le biais de la théorie de réception, qu'en substituant les intérêts personnels du colon à l'allocentrisme dans cette œuvre, ce romancier anéantit son rôle altruiste et réduit ainsi la philanthropie clamée par l'entreprise coloniale à une exploitation sans vergogne.

1. Introduction

Representing themselves as bringers of progress and modernity to the colonized, colonizers present the colonizing culture as an emissary of light and marshal a civilizing mission ideology to bolster the colonization of "backward" people around the world. Refuting the civilizing claims advanced in support of the colonial enterprise, Lamming offers a different reading of the colonial system in his numerous works, including *Natives of My Person*. In this novel, a diatribe against the British Empire and cultural imperialism, this Caribbean novelist of African origin brushes aside the routine arguments readily deployed to justify colonialism and claims the destruction of indigenous people as the true achievements of the colonial enterprise. Squarely rejecting the civilizing mission ideology boasted as the foremost motive for colonizing "others," Lamming excavates, in *Natives of My Person*, the self-interested motives behind colonialism. This essay argues, through the prism of reader-response criticism, that by unveiling the manifold and complex driving forces behind colonialism, this novelist undermines its civilizing claims and reduces the so-called philanthropic civilizing mission to an immoral exploitation.

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The present essay is structured around two major points. The first section, which reads like a treatise on colonialism, discusses the civilizing mission claims from colonizers' perspective. Debunking this so-called civilizing ideology behind the system, the second one articulates Lamming's counter to the pompous self-celebratory declarations of the colonial enterprise.

2. The civilizing mission claims

Colonialism is incontrovertibly a civilizing mission; such is the redundant argument ferociously deployed in its defense. The metropolitan powers, "the people from the center," routinely perceived overseas territories, "the people on the circumference," as in dire need of the *mission civilisatrice*. The moral obligation of the people from a more advanced civilization to improve "backward" people was regularly advanced to justify colonial expansion. Imperial powers reasoned that the only way in which slavery, cannibalism, infanticide, endemic tribal warfare, among others, could be suppressed and Christianity, education, medical welfare established would be to create a modern society by means of colonialism (Fieldhouse, 1981: 23). Thus, one of Eddward M. Forster's characters in *A Passage to India* (1924/1984: 51-52), for instance, conveys the idea that Great Britain holds India for the good of India. Colonialism simply presents itself as means to achieve civilization. Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea (in Dyer, 1997: 31-32) stress this fundamental claim of the system in their account of the history of British imperialism: "The very existence of Empire was viewed [as] the outcome of the struggle between superior and inferior 'races,' an outcome in which the labour of the inferior 'races' had been appropriated … to ensure 'their' advancement towards 'civilisation.'"

Colonialism and imperialism have been around since antiquity. Both concepts have been, and still are, about far more than simple domination of other people in distant lands. Some scholars persuasively demonstrate that they entail such domination, but they have also entailed idealist and "progressive" agendas for intervention in the interests of the colonized (Lambert, 2004; Fischer-Tiné 2004; Go, 2004). Regardless of timeframe and geographic space, instances of benevolent declarations concerning the said agendas are legion in the shared history of colonialism and imperialism. For concision's sake, however, this section focuses on the British, French, and American imperialism of the last five hundred years to show its deployment of the civilization discourse.

The English colonization of Ireland during the sixteenth-century provides the first body of evidence. In order to be "free and prosperous," the Irish were coerced

to become English. Raising serious objections against the Irish loyalty to their own system of clan kinship rather than to the English law, the English vented their frustration and expressly demanded "that the Irish septs be dissolved, that the Irish be moved into town, mingled with the settlers, educated in English, in grammar and in science." In fact, the English hoped that this assimilation program would fully transform Irish children, who would grow up to "loathe the former rudeness in which they were bred," while their parents would, by the example of their young children, "perceive the foolness of their own brutish behaviour compared to theirs, for learning hath that wonderful power of itself that it can soften and temper the most stern and savage nature" (Deane, 1983: 5-6).

The English colonization outside Europe provides similar justifications. The Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, Lord Curzon, spoke of colonization as a glorious inspiration, stating that the Empire must deliver to "the people on the circumference what they cannot otherwise or elsewhere enjoy; not merely justice or order, or material prosperity, but the sense of partnership in a great idea" (Betts, 1998: 7). On the one hand, proponents of European colonization glowingly underscored its benefits to worldwide "inferior" people; on the other, they packaged it as a "civilizing mission," or the "White Man's Burden," for home consumption.[1]

In the same vein, remarking that raw materials "lay wasted and ungarnered" in Africa "because the natives did not know their use and value," Frederick J. D. Lugard declared that the colonization of Africa made them available to Europeans, while Africans received in exchange "the substitution of law and order for the method of barbarism" (Betts, 1998: 12). In Lugard's view, the colonial enterprise brought a "civilized administration" to the "heart of darkness." In a colonialist discourse on Africa's inglorious past – the Nigerian past, to be precise – Iris Andreski (1970: 26) puts it this way: "The British administration not only safeguarded women from the worst tyrannies of their masters, it also enabled them to make their long journeys to farm or market without armed guard, secure from the menace of hostile neighbours."

In the same fashion, but coming from the French side, Albert Sarraut (1872 – 1962) made similar statements, a sample of which is drawn from Betts' *Decolonization* (1998: 12): "The France that colonizes does not do so for itself: its advantage is joined with that of the world; its effort, more than for itself, must be of benefit to the colonies whose economic growth and human development it must

[1] "The White Man's Burden" is the title of Rudyard Kipling's infamous poem (1899) that the English poet dedicated to the Americans as a commentary on what they must do in the newly conquered Philippines.

assure." Likewise, Jules Hammond, a first-rate advocate of French imperialism, declared in 1910 (in Said, 1993: 17):

> It is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilization, still recognizing that, while superiority confers rights, it imposes strict obligations in return. The basic legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic, and military superiority, but our moral superiority. Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity.

These ideological postures generated sustained interest and convinced metropolitan citizens to support the colonial enterprise. Regardless of the imperial nation (Great Britain, France, the United States, etc.), the civilizing character of colonialism is routinely emphasized as a major reason for colonizing worldwide "barbaric people" (Murphy, 1968; Daunton, 1999; Guest, 2007). Indeed, from the late eighteenth-century onwards all major European powers claimed to pursue a civilizing project in their respective colonies. What was initially referred to as "improvement" and, later on, "moral and material progress," quickly morphed into a civilizing mission. This, in turn, became the leitmotiv of imperial ideology. Grounded on the twin fundamental assumptions of the superiority of French (Western) culture and the perfectibility of humankind, the idea of a civilizing mission implied that indigenous people were too backward to govern themselves and that they had to be "uplifted" (Fischer-Tiné, 2004: 4). The concrete results of colonial "uplifting program" in Lugard, Hammond and Sarraut's assessments are economic, human, and cultural developments of the colonized. These are colonizers' gifts to the colonized.

Solidly grounded on such a superior plane, the French government boasted the civilizing mission as the foremost motive for colonizing "less developed" people around the world. Claiming a superior culture/civilization, the French saw it a moral obligation to bring the benefits of the Enlightenment to the non-European world. France, French imperial apologists maintained, was resolutely engaged in an ideological mission, the mission of the white race, which would ultimately transform barbaric continents into civilized regions. This redeeming vision fueled French imperialism and energized its advocates (Murphy, 1968). "The goal of colonization is to place a new society in the best conditions for prosperity and progress," held the Collège de France Political Economy chair, Pierre P. Leroy-Beaulieu (in Said, 1993: 107). The long stretch leading to this erroneous view needs some clarification.

Behind the perception of the superiority of the French culture over the "less developed" cultures is the claim of waged labor and industry that were

fundamental to the credo of the sacrosanct Third Republic; so much so that to refuse waged labor amounted to refusing civilization. For French colonial ideologues, Martin Evans (2004: 14) maintains, "work only meant work for wages, whilst work in non-cash systems of rural production was defined as idling, and their non-culture a symptom of the inherent laziness of the native population." The myth of waged labor, in part, explains the condescending attitude of the French culture vis-à-vis indigenous cultures materialized through its routine emphasis on the "idleness" of overseas cultures.

In any case, based on this cultural logic, colonization was presented as freedom from idleness, thanks to its introduction of forced labor on a grand scale, especially in the French colonies, where harsh laws stipulated that every able male had to work for a number of days on a yearly basis. But waging war against "idleness" was not an exclusive trademark of French colonialism: it was a widespread colonial program. For instance, Kathleen Pickering (2004: 85-97) reaches similar conclusions in her study of federal Indian policy and the Lakota during the 1880s. As applied to the Lakota, the federal policy aimed to dismantle their traditional economy and assimilate them into the mainstream economy through commodity agriculture and waged work. In order to transform the Lakota into "modern" individuals, the U.S. government implemented a rigorous civilization program dedicated to facilitating, finessing, and forcing the Lakota to transition from task orientation to timed labor. Besides efforts to instill a sense of private business in the Lakota mindset, attempts to bring federally imposed regimes of work and increase Lakota participation in waged work were the *locus classicus* of U.S. policy. "One solution to assimilating the Lakota into the notion of 'timed labor,'" Pickering concludes, "was to employ Lakota people in federal agency jobs." Clearly, federal Indian policymakers deployed the civilizing mission discourse in the colonization of American Indians and imposed compulsory service upon Native Americans on their own treaty lands (Cook-Lynn, 2001: 10-11).

In light of these efforts to transform the native culture, colonialism was presented as a relentless struggle of civilized culture against uncivilized culture, of progress against backwardness, of light against darkness. In all, a recycling of Hammond's principle of domination became the blueprint for Western cultural attitudes and sense of superiority over natives. "Our protection, you must understand, delivered millions of men, women and children from the nightmare of slavery and death," a guided tour pamphlet read in a celebratory note, and further commended colonialism for its magnanimous deeds: "Do not forget that before we

came, on the African continent the stronger dominated the weaker, a woman was but a beast and a child counted for a little. [There] we found the vestiges of an old civilization with outdated beliefs … how much work we have accomplished" (in Evans, 2004: 14).

Similar self-celebratory stances permeate the English assessment of their culture. In his illuminating study of Western colonialism, Edward W. Said (1993: 101) passionately shows how the English vaunted the superlative nature of their civilization. In the system of education designed for English colonies, he notes, "students were taught not only English literature but the inherent superiority of the English race," while the fledging disciplines of anthropology, ethnography, law, science, and linguistics never wavered to affirm "the superlative values of white (i.e., English) civilization." These emerging sciences locate barbarism outside the realm of Great Britain.

Authorized voices have addressed the inescapable Eurocentrism and racism that materially and discursively shape the colonial encounters between Europeans and "others." Generally, colonizers believed indigenous people to be uncivilized. Thomas Jefferson exemplified the pervasiveness of this view in the colonization of Indian nations. For Jefferson (in Moses, 1984: 8), the United States, in its spatial and human dimensions, appeared to be a perfect example of various stages of human society. He theorized a progression of cultures that were living monuments to the development of mankind, from the most primitive savage to the enlightened gentleman-scholar:

> Let a philosophic observer commence a journey from the savages of the Rocky Mountains, eastwardly towards our seacoast. These he would observe in the earliest stage of association living under no law but that of nature. He would next find those on our frontiers in the pastoral state, raising domestic animals to supply the defects of hunting. Then succeed our own semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers in the advance of civilization and so in his progress he would meet the gradual shades of improving man until he would reach his, as yet most improved state in our seaport towns. This, in fact, is equivalent to a survey in time, of the progress of man from the infancy of creation to the present day.

During colonial times, worldwide indigenous people were repeatedly hailed by terms that implied a moral judgment of culture and cultural status: uncivilized, barbarian, and savage. Moreover, colonizers were reinforced in their belief and branded natives as innately inferior beings, because they assumed these people lacked literacy, which was the standard mark of civilization. But Jacques Derrida (1976: 83) directs his response to that colonialist mindset, citing André Leroi-Gourhan: "Actually, the peoples said to be 'without writing' lack only a certain type of writing. To refuse the name of writing to this or that technique of

consignment is the 'ethnocentrism that best defines the prescientific vision of man.'"

An incurable ethnocentrism lies at the heart of colonialism. In the heights of imperialism, Europeans came to the conclusion that worldwide indigenous people were in a state of pre-civilization and believed they could raise them from bestial to higher level. Granting themselves the authority to attribute negative traits of character to the "less advanced" people, colonizers viewed them as primitive and "the natural inferior" of Europeans during the colonial era. By constructing elaborate hypothetical hierarchies of humankind, advocates of the civilizing mission ideology sought to capture the attributes that separated Western societies from "inferior" people. Using a standard set of binary opposites, they contrasted Europeans with "others." Europeans were thought to be "scientific, energetic, disciplined, progressive, and punctual, while indigenous people were dismissed as superstitious, indolent, reactionary, out of control, and oblivious to time" (Adas, 2004: 31-32). The colonized were dismissed as lazy, shiftless, childlike, carefree, primitive, uncivilized, and playful people (Miller and Smith, 1988: 564-65). The colonizers and their civilizations were the benchmarks; the colonized and their cultures were anomalies.

These blatantly essentialist oppositions made European intervention a *sine qua non* of normalcy in these doomed places and people, because these "territories and people *require* and beseech domination," to use Said's formulation (1993: 9; italics in original). Little wonder that European and American occupation of others' lands began to be talked of in terms of "The White Man's Burden." Thus, honestly thinking that Black Rock natives were in an "animal state," Master Cecil savagely attacked these tribes in order to "civilize" them. Regretting their refusal of the highest offerings of colonialism after his defeat at Creek of Deception, he pitied the tribes: "They had no reason to resist. With a little luck he would put the gifts of the Kingdom at their service; correct their tongues, which knew no language; introduce them to some style of living […] Lunacy … it was lunacy to desecrate such gifts with an open insult, to resist […] Nothing would change except increase of crops, which the natural vegetation now conceals."[2]

As can be inferred from the above text, colonizers assigned themselves the task of teaching the colonized some level of industrial sophistication (Jacobson, 2000; Domosh, 2004). The speaker of this text, Master Cecil, is a ruthless colonizer who

[2] Lamming, *Natives of My Person* (1971; reprinted, London: Alison and Busby, 1986), 71; subsequent quotes are from this edition, with page number parenthetically included in the essay, and preceded by NOP.

placed his right to plunder before all else. Like any typical colonizer, he knows what is good for the colonized, better than they could know themselves (Said, 1978: 34-5). As his statement implies, colonizers portray themselves as bringers of civilization; his insight corroborates Fanon's contention that colonizers represent themselves as "pioneers of civilization" (1971: 97). In colonizers' view, then, the welfare of any indigenous people is possible only in direct correspondence to the degree to which their cultural integrity is destroyed, their worldview extinguished through assimilation into the ever more perfectly "advanced civilizations" of colonizers (Jaimes, 1991: 35). U.S.-Indian history, infused with this civilizing mission ideology, represents Indians who objected to American colonization, at the very least, as hostile and mean-spirited troublemakers and, at most, as lazy, deficient, un-Christian, ignorant, cruel, and warlike individuals. Clearly, the master narrative of U.S. history portrays them as opposing civilization and its highest offerings (Cook-Lynn, 2007: 109).

Observing a day-to-day business in a colony would suffice to reveal the pervasiveness of civilization as the core reason for colonizing others, from colonizers' standpoint. As Gordon Stewart (1998: 233) comments, the cultural discourse of civilization was prevalent even within the context of a "down-to-earth" activity such as jute manufacturing in colonial India. Here, instead of thinking about profits and dividends alone, colonizers "depicted themselves as bearers of energy, technology, industry, progress and modernity to a hitherto languid India." Definitely, imperialism and colonialism understood themselves as the civilizing endeavor whereby "the image of light versus darkness became an all-pervading metaphor, summarizing colonialism as the battle of enlightenment values against despotism and feudalism" (Evans, 2004: 72).

The Nigerian novelist and critic, Achebe, has routinely disputed the validity of the above representation. His "The Novelist as Teacher," available in Gordon D. Killam's *African Writers on African Writing* (1973: 4), remains a strong rebuttal. Colonizers believed that prior to their invasion, worldwide indigenous people were in "a long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them," Achebe holds in that inflammatory critical piece on colonialism. The idea that there was no single civilization but multiple civilizations never crossed their minds. That these indigenous communities had their own systems of order and justice counted for little. As Albert Memmi comments in *Le Portrait du colonisé* (1957/1985: 105), native institutions were unceremoniously dismissed through a series of negations: indigenous people were not fully human beings, aborigines were not literate, their languages and modes of thought were

felt to be inadequate, natives were not civilized, etc. Indeed, colonizers believed they were the only rational, peaceful, and logical human beings "capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion;" the colonized "are none of these things" (Said, 1978: 49). The invented image of the colonized provided cultural and moral justification for imperialism, the bottom line being the superiority of the Caucasian over indigenous people. By basing their argumentation on the simplistic system of binary opposition, colonizers dismissed the colonized as inferior and distinguished the perfect colonizers from the imperfect colonized.

Clearly, colonial powers hailed colonialism as an essentially humanitarian impulse, an act of deliverance, the ultimate aim of which is to unshackle "less advanced" people from superstition, barbarism, and ignorance. No wonder that the history of the American conquest of Indian nations glorifies progress and cheers the settlers as heroes on their way to the Promised Land, whilst it presents Indian communities as the last remaining survivors of a barbaric native culture that must make way for an advanced civilization. Patricia N. Limerick (1988: 322) showcases this feature in her representation of the "creation myth" of American frontier history. One generation after the other, immigrants-colonizers were chosen to bring "civilization to displace savagery, took on a zone of wilderness, struggled until nature was mastered, and then moved on to the next zone." Thrown on their own resources, these pioneers in civilization literally "recreated the social contract from scratch, forming simple democratic communities whose political health vitalized all of America."

Annette M. Jaimes (1991: 40) is among Indian scholars who dispute such a rendering of U.S.-Indian history. Her account of American settlement debunks this self-consoling "creation myth" by highlighting continuity, not a *tabula rasa*:

> Even though the European settlers imposed new architectural styles and new ideas of urban planning on America, they usually built over existing Indian settlements rather than clearing out new areas of settlement. Subsequent generations of Americans usually forgot that their towns and cities had been founded by Indians. Myths arose about how the colonists literally carved their settlements out of the uninhabited forest. In nearly every case the European colonists built a city that eventually stretched to hundreds and even thousands of times the size and population of the original Indian settlement, but nevertheless they built on top of a previous settlement rather than starting a new one.

This action repeated itself sequentially in many colonized places. In Mexico, for instance, the invaders built Christian cathedrals on top of ancient indigenous temples and changed the physical traits of Olmec, Mayan, Mixtec, Toltec, Zapotec, and Aztec civilizations. For Cook-Lynn (2001: 126-7), this colonial practice obliterates native cultures that had predated the colonizers by thousands of years. Moreover, through her comparative analysis of Indian and Iraqi invasions, Cook-

Lynn (2007: 209-10) uproots imperialism's claim of civilizing the uncivilized, arguing that the system destroys the cultures of the colonized, instead:

> The people in the Middle East who have been taken over by the United States in a recent war are not uncivilized, and neither were the indigenous peoples of North America. They are not savage, and neither were the indigenous peoples of America. Iraqis are not without god, language, or culture. Neither were the peoples of the Americas. Yet they have been characterized as that by Western minds […] Iraq is not a backward country. It is a Muslim country with thousands of years of history, culture, and civilization that has been the pride of the Arab world.

Colonialism and imperialism are nothing more than expressions of colonizers' misbegotten superiority complex, beginning with their positioning of Europe, in the peculiar geography of imperialism, as the center of world affairs. Colonizers' alleged superiority complex is nowhere better theorized than in the work of an Italian psychologist, Dominique O. Mannoni (1964: 32) whose research primarily targets the effect of colonization on the psychology of both protagonists of the colonial enterprise:

> The colonizers of the heroic age – the era of colonial expansion – were fully convinced of the superiority of the civilization they represented. Their strength came from their knowledge that, though they represented this civilization, they did not embody it. They did not set themselves up as models; they offered to others their own ideals, something greater than they. But the fact that they possessed superior power persuaded the natives of the overriding need to imitate and, like schoolchildren, to obey.

The role of ideology cannot be underestimated in this complex business of colonizer-colonized relations. Ideology functions in support of economic and political institutions to maintain the relation of domination and exploitation between those subjects positioned as colonized and colonizers. Every society, which has existed for any length of time, has some interpretation of its own way of life. As Louis Althusser (1972: 162) argues in his most influential essay, "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." Whether ideology refers to all organized forms of social thinking, or whether it means the languages, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation that individuals deploy to render intelligible the way society works, it has a powerful role in shaping people's vision of their world (Hall, 1985: 93 and 1996: 26). A sum of these mental frameworks, ideology comprises beliefs and concepts that explain complex social structures in order to simplify and direct socio-political choices facing any society. Consequently, it provides justifications for social relations and is both a reinforcing and legitimating mechanism of control (Carlton, 1977: 21-24).

The self-aggrandizing and civilizing mission ideologies that accompany colonialism and imperialism fall into the myths of imperialism (Achebe, 1958 and 1960; Adas, 2004; Adesanmi, 2004; Gardiner, 2004). Catherine Hall (in Chambers, 1996: 67) entertains that colonizers' self-assigned task was to educate and raise the colonized to a higher state of civilization. Indeed, colonialism sees itself exceeding expectations everywhere with its extraordinary deeds, prompting Margaret Atwood's following comment (in Ashcroft, 1995: 157-158): "The Indians in Canada did not have the wheel or telephones, and ate the hearts of their enemies in the heathenish belief that it would give them courage. The British Empire changed all that. It brought in electric light." For Jenny Sharpe (in Ashcroft, 1995: 99-100), these vignettes narrate the story of the civilizing mission and present the colonizing culture as an emissary of light. In the final analysis, colonizers' self-portrait as bringers of progress and modernity to the colonized is best read as a powerful self-legitimating tool. While the colonial enterprise was exalted as "a philanthropic 'civilizing mission' motivated by a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease and tyranny," colonialism is actually "a gigantic act of pillage whereby whole continents were bled of their human and material resources," according to Robert Stam and Louise Spence (in Ashcroft, 2006: 110). To be sure, propagandistic declarations by colonizers only amplify the deception of the system.

The trope of savagism, as it appears in this section, is abundantly used to justify colonizing "barbaric" people around the world. The concept of the savage was imagined and applied to all non-European people. Cultural historian Hayden V. White (1978: 164) tracks its origin to the European tradition of the "Wild Man": "But to speak of a Wild Man was to speak of a man with the soul of an animal, a man so degraded that he could not be saved even by God's grace itself." Savage people are solitary hunters and pagans who would not accept the highest offerings of civilization. A fifteenth-century philosophical invention based on second-hand information collected from the diaries of missionaries and explorers influenced by the works of Montaigne, Locke and Rousseau, the construct of savagism served as an "ideological justification for colonial appropriation of non-European territories" (Eisenstein, 2004: 79-80).

Additionally, European imperialists heavily relied on renaissance ideologies to construct the theory of the "Great Chain of Being," a convenient system in which everything in the universe follows a particular order: God at the top; primitive and savage indigenous people at the bottom (Aldama, 2001: 11; Mihesuah, 2003: 47). Allied together, both constructs made up a powerful ideological arsenal for the conquest of those positioned at the bottom. Clearly, they have served colonial

purposes and called forth the subjugation of uncivilized, barbaric, and pagan people around the world. In light of this popular savagery imagery, the church and school took upon themselves to facilitate their transition from savagery to civilization, by ridding them of their "inferior" cultures.

According to the theory of cultural evolution, all cultures evolve through similar processes, from savagery to barbarism to civilization, with Western Europe being the pinnacle of civilization (Pearce, 1953). Savage people were understood to be "miserably deficient;" so much so that they were incapable of generalizing their ideas (Guest, 2007: 40). If the history of mankind is one of progress from hunting to farming, it follows that by polarizing the "uncivilized" nomadic hunters against the "civilized" farmers, colonialist discourse sought to elevate colonizers to a status of privilege by highlighting their moral and cultural superiority over those of natives. As Said argues in *Orientalism* (1978: 7; italics in original), the order of subordination between the Orient/uncivilized and the West/civilized supported a "*positional* superiority" of the latter over the former.

Articulated in stark Manichean terms, these philosophical and cultural considerations were adequate grounds for denying indigenous people their rightful place in the cultural geography in order for the colonial enterprise to go forward. In the end, this colonialist discourse mandated the subjugation of worldwide non-European people. But Lamming categorically rejects these pompous claims in *Natives of My Person* through unearthing the real driving forces behind colonialism.

3. Uprooting the civilizing mission claims: *natives of my person*

Natives of My Person is a reconstruction of a colonial exploration of the seventeenth century that describes how a group of European mariners set out to reach the Isles of the Black Rock. Set aboard the ship *Reconnaissance*, the novel vividly depicts all the passions as well as rivalries among the officers and crew members in an adventure which will take them to the Americas via Africa. In the course of the journey, the narrator unveils the true reasons why the Commandant caused "this crew of former strangers to break free and loose from the ancient restrictions of the Kingdom of Lime Stone" (NOP, 17). However, this voyage is never completed, for it ends in a murder a day away from its destination.

Undoing the civilizing mission ideology implies identifying various motives behind colonialism from the vanguard of the colonized. To show the complexity of these motives, Fanon's insight into the psychological aspects of colonialism bears underlining (1971: 85; italics in original): "The confrontation of 'civilized' and

'primitive' men creates a special situation – the colonial situation – and brings about the *emergence* of a mass of illusions and misunderstandings that only a psychological analysis can place and define."

In the wake of Hegel, Mannoni and Fanon, Bulhan holds that the quest for self-realization creates the need to conquer others. In his *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (1985: 104), Bulhan claims that beyond and above economic profits, colonizers are looking for psychological satisfactions through colonial venture: "The 'colonial' is not looking for profit only; he is also seeking some psychological satisfactions, and that is much more dangerous. An accurate observation of the facts would no doubt show us that he very often sacrifices profit for the sake of these satisfactions." Fanon (1971: 84) is categorical: the desire to compensate for colonizers' psychological dissatisfactions triggers off colonization. Said (1993: 10; italics in original) further unpacks it:

> But there is more than that [economic profit] to imperialism and colonialism. There was a commitment to them over and above profit, a commitment in constant circulation and recirculation, which, on the one hand, allowed decent men and women to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples *should* be subjected, and, on the other, replenished metropolitan energies so that these decent people could think of the *imperium* as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples.

In sum, Hegel, Mannoni, Fanon, and Bulhan concur that colonizing others fulfils colonizers' psychological needs, in the first place.

Besides psychological motives, other reasons come to light as this colonial adventure unfolds. Socio-political, economic, and personal motives can be identified, among others. Disentangling the numerous but self-interested reasons that have forced this community out of Europe is a complicated exercise, however. Economic, socio-politico-moral, and personal considerations have driven the Commandant and his associates to run away from the failure and disappointment of their lives at home.

First off, political divisions at home account for this voyage. "A House Divided" cannot stand the test of time, Abraham Lincoln (in Urofsky, 1994: 152-155) cautioned his countrymen. Divisions in Lime Stone mandated this voyage, in light of Ivan's confession to the reader: "The unity of the House will always go hand in hand with the safety of the Kingdom. We were unhappy about such divisions in the Kingdom" (NOP, 148-9). So, political turmoil has caused these people to flee their homeland. Lamming further shows that colonialism is motivated, in part, by political oppressions in the metropolis.

The Commandant reveals his noble idea behind the voyage by having the *Reconnaissance* crew witness his resolve to found a new society free of all former

mistakes known in the metropolis: "I had determined to cause this crew of former strangers to break free and loose from the ancient restrictions of the Kingdom of Lime Stone [...] I would plant some portion of the Kingdom in a soil that is new and freely chosen, namely the Isles of the Black Rock" (NOP, 16-7).

They have chosen to break loose in order to free themselves from the political oppressions of Lime Stone (NOP, 16). As the Commandant enjoins his associates to adjust themselves to this new way of life based on justice, in addition to freeing themselves from home tyranny and craving the enjoyment of freedom, the search for justice has made them run away from home. Dismissing wealth acquisition as the primary reason behind the voyage, the Commandant locates the heart of the matter when he harangues them: "You must feel this journey to be for a purpose beyond the price of gold [...]. **The metal is a small matter beside the true heart of my enterprise**. The whole enterprise is a waste if you do not feel this purpose" (NOP, 58; my emphasis).

As can be inferred from his statement, freedom of individuals and social justice trigger this enterprise. However, although they are running after these two cardinal virtues, they prevent the colonized from enjoying these. Ironically, then, while colonizers are seeking both fundamentals, they exclude the colonized from their enjoyment. In sum, though colonization secured political freedom and liberty for colonizers, it doomed the colonized, completely ignoring and tearing down their basic rights, in view of the foregoing development. This contradiction mandates conclusion that colonization is a yoke for the colonized: its civilizing claims are just a masquerade. Lamming reveals, through the Commandant's statement, that the civilizing mission claims of the colonial enterprise are *trompe-l'oeil*. As evidence, the author makes him admit that "gold/the metal" ***is still*** an important objective of the enterprise. Paradoxically, then, the Commandant's good faith declaration rather disproves the civilizing mission of colonialism, i.e., the system serves colonizers' interests. Notwithstanding his effort to hide economic and other self-serving aspects of the enterprise, he ends up betraying himself by admitting these. The two main revelations from the Commandant's subconscious admission are that self-centeredness grounds colonialism, on the one hand; on the other, colonizers are hypocrites who turn facts upside down.

Anyway, the Commandant prohibits black slave cargoes aboard the *Reconnaissance* (NOP, 135-6; 145), a dramatic shift in attitude which is accounted for by his former savagery in the art of conquest. This radical decision is sustained by the Commandant's remembrances of past sufferings he has inflicted on the native populations of the area: "I was eager and knew what it was to be a beast before the

prey of good fortune; second to none in exercising the terrors which forced the Tribes to volunteer their services to us and all men who had brought them no less a reward than a knowledge of the true light" (NOP, 17). To be sure, the Commandant's dream to transform Black Rock into a model colony is a way of atoning for barbaric deeds he has perpetrated there earlier on (NOP, 138; 251). Thus, colonizing a place is usually preceded by colonizers' pillaging its human and material resources.

The Commandant wished to colonize Black Rock in order to correct past political mistakes known in his homeland. Part of this correction entails grounding this new society on democratic principles. If planting a democratic society in this new soil remains his ultimate goal, one should bear in mind that colonizers are sole beneficiaries of this new order: the colonized withdraw no profits whatsoever from this vaunted democratic undertaking aiming at securing the rights and privileges of colonizers. Put differently, the democratic virtues sought through the creation of this colony are beyond the dream world of the colonized; these rare commodities are enjoyed by colonizers alone. As James Riding In (2004: 5) nicely put it, the thrust of European expansionism "consciously sacrificed the human and property rights of indigenous peoples while elevating the colonizers to a status of privilege."

Clearly, although correcting past mistakes accounts for colonizing others in *Natives of My Person*, colonizers alone benefit from these "corrections;" the colonized got no profits and dividends from them. In effect, cardinal democratic principles are brushed aside in the autocratic Kingdom of Lime Stone, where the essence of power is vested in the House of Trade and Justice rather than in the parliament, a common source of unhappiness for many in the Kingdom. Here, both law-making and law-interpreting authorities are vested in the House. The following text reveals the breath of its power, making the House the embodiment of the Kingdom, i.e., its ultimate authority:

> This awesome institution was the vital centre of all commercial affairs. Its rules were rigid and elaborate, covering hundreds of clauses that master as well as mariner was expected to know before he went to sea. When ships returned with gold and the reward of glory, it was the House of Trade and Justice that decided on the final distribution of their booty. On arrival or departure every item of cargo had to be listed with the House; the names and particulars of each crew must first be registered under oath in the voluminous literature of their record. All ships, whatever their business or command, were the national property of the House of Trade and Justice. They decided the value of all currency that circulated in the Kingdom. People might praise the daring and industry of the nation's parliament; but it was the House which received their ultimate obedience. *It was the heart and flesh and conscience of the Kingdom of Lime Stone; the source and agent of every national triumph*. To provision a ship and undertake any voyage without the recorded authority of the House was a crime on the scale of treason. And no courts could intervene in its decision (NOP, 12-3, my italics).

This enormous power of the House triggers the Commandant's rebelling against the establishment of his homeland. Also, the unjust treatments received by these people for their endeavors account for their flight from the Kingdom. Contrary to their disappointing Lime Stone experience, this enterprise will enable them to become rich: "The end of the Voyage … would establish men of skill whom fate had deprived of a chance to realize visions in the native soil of Lime Stone" (NOP, 57). Consequently, this enterprise aims to redeem Lime Stone's victimization of them. In a way, their leaving the Kingdom is the Commandant's antidote to the oppressions they once experienced in their fatherland (NOP, 250). Clearly, people can expect decent treatments in the new land (NOP, 56-7). The foregoing locates socio-political reasons behind colonialism: their exile will alleviate tensions in Lime Stone. Although colonialism mitigates internal divisions, projects a facade of national unity, and definitely eases internal tensions in the metropolis, it is beyond telling the wickedness inherent in correcting any former unjust situation by victimizing "others" through colonization. Precisely, Lamming's scrutiny of colonizers' landing site unveils barbaric deeds that run counter to the civilizing claims of colonialism, i.e., its self-professed good deeds relating to the colonized.

Starting life afresh ranks high on the list of colonial motives. Not only is their secret departure an explicit rebellion against the practices of the House but it equally signals their willingness to start life anew. Surgeon's case locates this as a sound reason behind colonialism. A pioneer in the cause of healthcare, Surgeon, is a founder of colonial hospitals and trailblazer in the art of healing. A farsighted medical doctor, he, nurtures the hope of settling in the Isles of the Black Rock and starts life anew there. In Black Rock, Surgeon says, "A man can start from scratch, turn any misfortune into a fact of triumph" (NOP, 119). Representing colonies as the breeding ground for new experiments, he underscores the unique career opportunity available in these "virgin" places, where professionalism is overlooked. In the art of healing, Surgeon admits, both "The surgeon and the sick become equal parts of the same learning. Each man recovers, and with some new knowledge of his body. Such experiment is rare. You can only manage it in virgin lands where you have the chance to start from scratch" (NOP, 119). This contrasts with legal medical practices in Lime Stone, where "there would be no chance to start such a school of healing from scratch. Not back in the Kingdom." He particularly praises "the blessing of virgin lands, where the new man meets the new endeavour. To know there is not a plan to push you out" (NOP, 120). This admission suggests that criminals and scavengers can redeem themselves in

colonies. The author seems to hold that these second-rate miserable creatures are unable to civilize others.

If no ordinary greed supports the Commandant's intention, if he "appears to have little taste for personal fortune" (NOP, 31) – *only* **a little taste for fortune** which foreshadows his admitted hypocritical attitude regarding colonial riches – greed is of paramount importance to his associates. All were attracted by gold; they have known poverty and hunger at home. For many of them, as Surgeon puts it, this enterprise represents "the one chance, the one in a million, that puts every misfortune in reverse" (NOP, 190). The Commandant himself knows only too well about this burning desire in everyone else on the *Reconnaissance*:

> They had sprung from every corner of the Kingdom, a fairly typical reflection of the continent of Lime Stone. Unfortunately born, or with appetites out of all proportion to their status, they had found in the ship their last chance of rescue from the perils of the land. Some had no memory for the law which ruled their Region, and so regarded the sea as their safest home. Others had to flee from the ancient afflictions deriving from religious contention in the Kingdom. But hunger had recruited most of the men. And all were driven by a vision of gold (NOP, 13).

Roughly, the above text catalogues two reasons driving colonizers out of their homeland. First, economic-centered motives: appetites for wealth pushed these paupers to look for gold. Home calamity – comprising hunger and religious persecutions – comes second. Both motives trigger off their fleeing Europe.

Colonizers "were driven by a vision of gold," Lamming claims. Indeed, their growing economic needs generated colonialism. Colonial powers heavily relied on colonies to satisfy their economic imperatives. Besides being ideal markets for surplus manufactured goods, colonies provided raw materials and cheap manpower. Primarily grounded in economics, colonialism served the interests of the state and, notably, the capitalist enterprises seeking new markets and places of investment (Magdoff, 1969; Fieldhouse, 1973; Warren, 1980; Betts, 1998).

That colonialism stems from economic needs holds the center stage of Lamming's first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*. Set in Little England/colonial Barbados, this colony is an economic haven for colonizers, given its geographical location and natural resources. Big England (the colonial power) has Little English work in the Jones and Creighton Shipping Company, a firm which holds an absolute trading position in Little England, as a result of its monopoly on sugar cane production and sugar sale in this colony. A merchant and key partner in this firm, Mr. Creighton, is a wealthy colonizer whose assets can only be surmised. His incommensurable wealth fleshes out Fanon's contention (1971: 108) that "many Europeans go to the colonies because it is possible for them to grow rich quickly

there." A decade prior to Fanon's claim, Lamming held a similar opinion in *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960/1992: 217-8):

> The English Civil Servant going to the colonies leaves with the knowledge – imparted by history, political fact and myth – that his privileges are already established. This privilege is proved almost in the moment of his arrival; for he discovers – at first to his astonishment – that Frank whom he knew at university in Scotland is earning a hundred pounds less for doing the same job. What starts his guilt is the bitter recollection that he was never a match for Frank in problems of gynecology.

That colonials go from rags to riches overnight remains Memmi's considered view in *Le Portrait du colonisateur* (1957/1985: 32): "On rejoint la colonie parce que les situations y sont assurées, les traitements élevés, les carrières plus rapides et les affaires plus fructueuses."

The *Reconnaissance* team is fully aware of the above economic advantages available in colonies. Its speculating on "the fortunes that would reward their labours" corroborates economic profits inherent in colonialism (NOP, 22). More than anyone else on the ship, Surgeon's economic vision nurtures this collective hope: "Men will look at you as though you were born again. Even men who knew you soon fail to recognize what they remember, because of the opulence which you blind them with" (NOP, 190). Actually, Surgeon's economic consideration of the enterprise is shaped by practices in vogue in Lime Stone, where personal glory and national fame are enmeshed thanks to riches derived from colonial settlements – and where colonial rewards are daily events: "East and west in every corner of the earth men are declaring fortunes that make your head swim. And the arrivals. Ships like *Intrepid* and *Salamon* coming home for the third time with proof of conquests. Men who had no names at all, scavengers, for all you know, now on full parade. Living in national applause and personal fortunes that would last many a lifetime" (NOP, 187).

The above text drops hints that colonizing powers did encourage their brave citizens to venture forth and conquer (NOP, 233). Individual conquests of new lands automatically confer some prestige on the colonial power, making it mandatory for the latter to pour national praise on the daring individual, Lamming seems to suggest. Therefore, colonialism is rooted in the search for glory by the colonial nation and the individual colonizer (NOP, 127). The colonial power channeled its encouragement via imperial fiction of conquest. In the narratives of colonial voyages, Bulhan (1985: 111) claims, shipwrecked or exiled Europeans "display exceptional virility or technological ingenuity and [...] the superior quality of their nature or culture" to outwit and use for their advantage the subhuman, semi-human, or immature people they encountered in those distant lands.

By all available evidence, then, colonization would not have been possible without this genre of fiction, the raw material of which is drawn from the reality in vogue in the metropolis. In *Decolonising Fiction* (1993: 42), Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin hold that the energizing myth of English imperialism – that charged the English with the will to go out into the world and explore, conquer and rule – owes much to the adventure narratives of imperial fiction, including *The Tempest, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels,* and *The Heart of Darkness*, among others. Building on Peter Hulme's claim that the conquest and colonization of much of the world by European powers was preceded, accompanied and justified by philosophical texts on "otherness," both postcolonial critics argue that "the very savagery that lay at the heart of the white colonialist enterprise was projected, through a series of psychological manoeuvres traced in textual shifts, onto that otherness which was the object of European exploitation." For Supriya Nair (1996: 41), imperial fiction supports, justifies and aggrandizes the quest for power and glory of the colonizing nation. Indeed, rife with (European) constructions of the colonized, the fiction under consideration did promote European conquest of much of the world. The staggering number of critics who have taken issue with some classics of imperial fiction substantiates this point. Bill Ashcroft's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989: 33-53) provides a long stream of critics who have interrogated the philosophical bases upon which some canonical imperial texts are grounded. Furthermore, the list of postcolonial scholars who have re-written the narrative of European colonization is expanded in *Decolonising Fiction* (1993: 51). This critical work is on-going with the publication of Fiona Paisley and Kirsty Reid's edited study – *Critical Perspectives on Colonialism: Writing the Empire from Below* (2014), a collection of essays which brings much-needed focus to the vibrancy and vitality of minority and marginal writing about empire, and to their implications as expressions of embodied contact between imperial power and those negotiating its consequences from "below." Definitely, Antoinette Burton's *Empire in Question* (2011) underscores scholars' rising interest in questioning colonialism and its foundations.

The Tempest has profoundly shaped Lamming's artistic vision in *Natives of My Person*, according to two major critics on Lamming: Sandra Pouchet Paquet (in Lindfors, 1993: 62) and Supriya Nair (1996: 40). Dubbed a "key figure in the transition from colonialism to decolonization" (Nair, 1996: 19), this foremost critic of colonialism questioned, in his *Natives of My Person*, the bases upon which *The Tempest* is grounded – and by extension, each classic of imperial fiction. More, in introducing his *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960/1992: 9), Lamming himself locates the

importance of *The Tempest* when he made the artistic choice to use Shakespeare's masterpiece "as a way of presenting a certain state of feeling which is the heritage of the exiled and colonial writer from the British Caribbean." Paquet (in Lindfors, 1993: 65) further claims that *Natives of My Person* is an invitation to a rereading of *The Pleasures of Exile*, because "it is there that Lamming first identifies Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Haklyut's *Voyages* as key to his understanding of the social and psychological forces that shape the course of colonialism in the New World."

To complement the list of motives, the Commandant's dream to colonize Black Rock is sustained by thirst for glory. Despite his being a national hero in Lime Stone, settling Black Rock will add a badge of honor to the Commandant's name. Its settlement will represent the zenith of his career, for it is "*the only kingdom on earth which my heart yearned to inherit and enjoy*" (NOP, 16; italics in original). Colonizing Black Rock will quench the Commandant's thirst for fame and consolidate his celebrity status. His subduing Black Rock natives will definitely pave his way to Lime Stone's hall of fame.

Also, calamity at home has many of them flee Lime Stone. In effect, famine has driven most of them mad: "Of every age and sex you can see them plundering nature in the countryside ... men made barbarous and bitter by their hunger, eating rats and feeding off the very roots of plants not yet a day in ground" (NOP, 55). This Caribbean author reverses, through this revelation, the terms readily deployed to belittle colonized people. By revealing their barbaric behaviors back home, Lamming demystifies the white man's superiority claims and locates the real savages within this representative European community on board the ship.

Additionally, religious persecutions figure prominently among colonial motives in the Commandant's text that pities the religiously persecuted colonizers. To elevate indigenous people above their jungle status through instilling in them the benchmark – the colonizing culture – diehard religiously persecuted colonizers must enlist religion to serve colonialism. Thus, religious and humanitarian reasons are bolstered to uphold the enslavement and colonization of worldwide "savage" people (NOP, 111). Turning the situation of the self-pitying religious colonizers upside down, Lamming bashes the Christian Church for its instrumentality in the colonization of "un-Christian" people. So the author of *Natives of My Person* has the Commandant identify such a motive to avail himself the opportunity to criticize it from the standpoint of the colonized. In sum, Lamming is virulently critical of the Church's role as an agent of civilization in the colonial process. His criticism is taken over by others, including Barbara Reeves-Ellington (2010) and Hilary Carey

(2011). While the former underscores the role of Protestant mission in creating the American Empire, the latter uncovers the close cooperation between religion and colonialism in the building of "God's Empire" by Great Britain.

The long-time collaboration between the Church and colonialism brews trouble for Lamming.[3] Priest's life-long career and active role on the *Reconnaissance* fault the Church for participating in human trafficking under the "civilizing mission" cover. His official role consists in "carrying the gospel like a sword among various and forgotten heathens" (NOP, 116). However, this representative of Christ acknowledges the Church's involvement in enslaving "inferior" people: "The black flesh is a terrible temptation […] You might find such cargo too great a strain for a man of principle," Priest honestly admits (NOP, 113).

That the Church is never principled against the enslavement of Blacks remains a fundamental truth for Surgeon, who earnestly believes that this institution has condoned the harvest of black flesh (NOP, 113-4). Priest's role in numerous colonial voyages is incriminating evidence substantiating this point of contention. To keep the conquistadors' spirit up, he schooled the flock in the discipline of prayer for an enterprise that would last as a memorial to the Kingdom (NOP, 116; 245).

All things considered, Priest contributed enormously to the success of colonial voyages and enslavement of "backward" people. He even became a celebrity in his native Lime Stone and beyond, when he started supplying its rival Antarctica with slaves, increasing the fortunes of the enemy. As a result of this betrayal, he had to flee Lime Stone, becoming "a fugitive for Christ" (NOP, 117).

Priest's case is one in many. Surgeon has known many of them involved in human trafficking, causing his distrust in any priest: "He had no special faith in the reliability of Priest's vocation. From the Guinea Coast to the Isles of the Black Rock there were many priests who had traded as agents of the House" (NOP, 121). The narrator vividly describes the enslavement of natives with its inevitable accompaniment of horrors and atrocities (NOP, 124). In sum, because the enslavement of indigenous people in *Natives of My Person* occurred under the Church's pupilage, Lamming squarely blames the Church for taking part in this dirty job.

Europe's mishandling of its deadly arsenals – deployed in its historic mission of property acquisition and self-aggrandizement – resulted in untold barbaric

[3] Lamming severely critiques the role of the Church in his first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*. Here, he maintains that religion has crippled and fragmented colonized societies.

deeds. An entry from Pierre's diary reveals the savagery at the heart of colonial conquests: "*Here is a people which without too great encouragement of words or by the mere threat of sword and the sound of gunshot will prostitute themselves before us, granting free access to command their continent as we wish*" (NOP, 127; italics in original). While European technology eased conquests of distant lands, it was equally used for barbaric ends during colonial expeditions. In *Natives of My Person*, for instance, colonizers gunned down native women to force their men's surrender (NOP, 110). Lamming uncovers this sad reality of the system which claims "civilizing others" as its central tenet. This very barbarism summarizes the author's concept of the civilizing mission trumpeted by colonizers: exterminating natives and pillaging their resources are the concrete results of the civilizing claims of colonialism. Colonizers' civilizing programs feature plundering the resources of indigenous people and annihilating the natives. To borrow the formulation from Aimé Césaire (1956/2000: 19), theft, pillage, rape, dehumanization and assassination materialize the civilizing claims of the colonial enterprise.

Colonialism goes hand in hand with native genocide. Another case happened in the Isle of San Souci, where natives were starved to death: "We had to drive them like cattle from the fields and pastures, leaving ripe grain to rot, and a mighty famine that would overtake even the unborn," the Commandant had confessed after his "conversion" (NOP, 251). These barbaric deeds, which repeated themselves sequentially in many colonized places, underscore the inhumane nature of the system and undermine its civilizing claims.

Despite the Commandant's profession of good faith, Lamming unveils the fundamental lies inherent in colonialism. The author subverts its civilizing mission claims by having his characters disclose the real reasons behind the voyage: colonialism generated tremendous profits for colonizers but severely ruined the colonized. Best, Lamming has these characters acknowledge their exterminating natives in the wake of colonial encounters. They confessed, for instance, to have killed thousands under the leadership of Master Cecil, a first-rate colonizer (NOP, 85-8).

The author has humanized these characters by having them acknowledge that colonialism plays havoc with the colonized whose physical and psychological spaces are unacknowledged, intruded into, and curtailed. Because they fall into the category of the oppressed, their energy "is often depleted, expropriated, and harnessed to advance the oppressor's interest," according to Bulham (1985: 124) who further holds that violation of one's space, time, energy, mobility, bonding, and identity accompany all situations of oppression. Definitely, the sufferings

endured by these "strange creatures" substantiate claims that European conquest of distant places oppressed millions worldwide – making the civilizing claims of colonialism an illusion.

4. Conclusion

Hailing colonialism as an essentially humanitarian impulse, an act of deliverance, the ultimate aim of which is to unshackle "less advanced" people from superstition, barbarism, and ignorance, colonial powers presented it as a relentless struggle of civilized culture against uncivilized culture, of progress against backwardness, of light against darkness. On the aggregate, the colonization of "backward" people was commended for its magnanimous deeds among the colonized, because colonizers represented the colonial enterprise as a battle of enlightenment values against despotism and feudalism.

To the above perfect picture of the colonial enterprise derived from its civilizing mission discourse, Lamming opposes his representation which is far less likely to make colonizers proud. Equating colonizers' philanthropic civilizing mission to an immoral exploitation, he uncovers numerous advantages drawn by colonizers from the colonial enterprise and rejects its so-called civilizing claims – which amount to fooling people around in his fiction and essays alike. For the author of *Natives of My Person*, economic, socio-politico-moral, and personal considerations, among others, account for colonizing others. From Lamming's lenses, then, colonialism generates tremendous profits for colonizers but plays havoc with the colonized whose physical and psychological spaces are unacknowledged, intruded into, and curtailed. Clearly, besides arguing colonialism as a revenue-generating activity which, concomitantly, fulfills colonizers' psychological needs, this author challenges its humanitarian mission claims and squarely rejects its philanthropic arguments as fallacies in *Natives of My Person*. To be sure, Lamming adamantly rebuts the so-called civilizing mission ideology behind colonialism and claims the killing of indigenous people as the fundamental achievements of the enterprise in *Natives of My Person*. Definitely, by having his characters reveal the true reasons behind their ventures, this novelist shatters the fallacious claims of colonialism and debunks the white man's claim to superiority in this novel. In the final analysis, *Natives of My Person* illustrates the extent to which writing can serve as a weapon of the powerless.

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