

The Negro diaspora which resulted from the triangular trade between Britain, Africa and the West Indies has effectively changed the course of history for these countries. Not only has this dispersion of the Africans affected the lives of the people in the West Indies but it has found expression in the writings of the region. The concern of this thesis is to explore the treatment of race in the Jamaican novel thus focussing attention on one area of reference.

The question of race, and therefore colour, is ever present in West Indian writings because of the region's history. To understand the region's history and the structure of the plantation society is to understand the obsession with race and colour. It is also essential to recognise the interdependence of race, class and culture - factors which deeply affect the choice of literary modes, the selection of content and the determination of viewpoint and diction.

I propose to present the novels, as far as possible, in chronological order of publication or as they deal with the history of the country. H. G. deLisser, for example, wrote well into the 1950s but some of his novels will be discussed in Chapter 1 as they are historical and give graphic accounts of life on the slave plantations. Vic Reid's The Jamaicans, although published in 1978 will be discussed in Chapter two.

In the introduction I have examined the sociological aspects of race and colour; how the experience of slavery has affected the thoughts and ideas of the slaves and their masters and later the freed slaves and mulattos. The inferiority of the Negro, his self-hatred and the attitudinal superiority of the whites may be traced back to this period in our history.

Chapter one gathers together the novels which give insight into the psychological effects of slavery. These demonstrate the social division of society during this time and indicate certain lasting effects especially on the people of mixed blood. Chapter two explores the authors' use of black heroes and heroines - an important development in the West Indian novel. In chapter three I have examined the novels of Ogilvie and Hearne. These novels, written during the 1950s reveal a further development of theme and treatment and present a broader view of Jamaican society than the preceding ones. Chapters four and five present the novels of the 1960s and Dawes's Interim published in 1978. These novels concern themselves chiefly with the younger members of society and others who strive to find their identity. The educated are seen as fighting against established rules and regulations. Social criticism is also stated rather than implied.

It will be noticed that most of the Jamaican writers see the race and colour problems as a direct result of the colonial experience. But Philip Sherlock asserts that:

It is significant that in his attack on racial and colour discrimination the West Indian writer has not advocated racialism.¹

¹ Philip Sherlock, West Indies (Walker, New York, 1966), p.167.