CHAPTER EIGHT

George Lamming

Mary Chamberlain

It was a chance encounter, the Trinidadian, Sam Selvon and the Barbadian, George Lamming, on the boat from Trinidad to Britain. Two young, unknown writers, indistinguishable (as George Lamming recalled) from all the other 'ordinary' young men and women immigrating to Britain at that time, all coming 'to look for a better break ... in search of an expectation'.¹ When they came, in 1950, West Indian immigration to Britain was approaching its zenith. Selvon and Lamming, sharing Selvon's *Imperial* typewriter, charted this immigration, a middle passage in reverse, explored its historical origins and cultural dynamics – and noted its subversiveness and challenges. For as West Indians 'creolised' the cities, and indigenised (in Susan Craig James's memorable phrase) where there were no original indigenes,² they changed irrevocably the social vocabulary of the metropole.

The role of culture as a means of subverting the dominant order is, arguably, at its most refined in the Caribbean.³ The long centuries of slavery provided a fitting apprenticeship where the ground rules of alternative, creolised, cultural forms and social practices were laid and where the conditions for its evolution were most refined. While full emancipation in 1838 introduced the legal framework for freedom, in practice the plantation economy maintained its stranglehold over the material conditions of Caribbean society and the planters an indifference to the practices of freedom. For the former slaves, however, the struggle for, and meaning of, freedom remained a – perhaps *the* – dominant concern throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the struggles for (and after) independence. As Lamming observed in 1966,

in spite of the constitutional arrangements for political independence, West Indian society is still in the era of emancipation. The phase we call emancipation is not yet over, and the values which inform the most progressive political sentiment do not indicate that the paradox has been grasped.⁴

The lack of opportunity to engage in meaningful citizenship for the former slaves, and the failure of the colonial authorities to understand, recognise and acknowledge creole cultural forms, social practices and gender responses, generated a crucial space in which these became signifiers of resistance and identity. At the same time, the poverty of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Caribbean resulted in large migrations away from the plantations and the islands. There was (is) scarcely a family in Barbados which has not been touched by migration, a point poignantly brought out by G. in Lamming's autobiographical novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*:

My birth began with an almost total absence of family relations. My parents on almost all sides had been deposited in the bad or uncertain accounts of all my future relationships, and loneliness from which had subsequently grown the consolation of freedom was the legacy with which my first year opened.⁵

Absence and exile were built deep into the cultural psyche from the beginning. Families were created around them, accommodated to them, and survived on them. But migrants returned: with money, *and* with experience of organised labour, and of the power of ideas, particularly of race, which could explain the meaning – and failure – of freedom in the post-emancipation Caribbean. This was a key insight which Trumper, returning from America, in *In the Castle of My Skin*, shared with G.:

'You know the voice?' Trumper asked. He was very serious now. I tried to recall whether I might have heard it. I couldn't. 'Paul Robeson,' he said. 'One o' the greatest o' my people.' 'What people?' I asked. I was a bit puzzled. 'My people,' said Trumper ... 'The Negro race'.⁶

While the Caribbean may have invented colour and linked it, before and after emancipation, with every nuance of rank, status and class, the idea that race existed as an autonomous organising political agent was for the most part a concept alien to the British West Indies. The experience of being defined by race was one which West Indians encountered in their migrations abroad, either working for an American company (as in Panama in the early years of the twentieth century) or in the United States itself. The experience left an indelible impression, not lost on the generation of migrants who returned in the 1930s and who played an active part in the disturbances of that decade.

The riots of the 1930s which racked the Caribbean surfaced in Barbados in 1937. They were the culmination of a century of frustration, and a watershed marking the transition from the struggle for emancipation to one for independence. The symbols of independence, at this stage

in its political history, lay in the structures of subversion, in domestic organisation and village life, in Tuk Bands⁷ and Landship,⁸ in Banja songs and banter,⁹ in the grammar and lexicography of creole, in faith practices and workplace negotiations, in the entire cultural topography of black Caribbean life misunderstood, denigrated and vilified by the colonial authority. The importance of the riots as a catalyst for cultural renovation and nationalism is central to understanding not only Lamming but also the subsequent explosion of literary creativity through which the struggle for freedom could be imagined. As Lamming recently argued,

It is not often recognized that the major thrust of Caribbean literature in English rose from the soil of labor resistance in the 1930s. The expansion of social justice initiated by the labor struggle had a direct effect on liberating the imagination and restoring the confidence of men and women in the essential humanity of their simple lives. In the cultural history of the region, there is a direct connection between labor and literature.¹⁰

George Lamming was ten years old when the riots broke out. His village – Carrington’s Village – was close to their epicentre, and to the Governor’s residence. He had grown up in a landscape in which difference, privilege and class, and the histories that produced them, were enshrined in every contour, hill and valley. Every grand plantation house was visible from its neighbour, while the police (formerly militia) stations guarded the landscape from the hilltops. Surveillance was part of the topography, demanding ingenuity to evade its scrutiny. For children, what must have entered into their imagination, walking past the governor’s mansion, surrounded by its forbidding walls, protected by the sentinels in their colonial liveries? Or wandering in the adjoining neighbourhoods of Belmont and Bellevue – solid, white and wealthy – past the mansions of the moneyed, cleaned, manicured and pampered by the men and women from the village? Carrington’s Village was also close enough to Queen’s Park for him to be aware of (but forbidden to attend) the speeches by Clement Payne and other popular leaders. By the time he wrote *In the Castle of My Skin* he was able to translate the fear, misery and violence he had witnessed into a sophisticated literary analysis of the complexities of poverty and powerlessness.

Lamming won a scholarship to Combermere School, one of the few secondary schools in Barbados. In 1930, of a population of approximately 180,000, only 704 boys and 331 girls were educated to secondary level.¹¹ Frank Collymore, a white Barbadian with an unrivalled passion for Caribbean literary form, was his teacher, and was to be the founding editor of *Bim*,¹² which emerged in the 1940s as a decisive regional cultural journal. Collymore also had a personal library to which he allowed

pupils access. It was through Collymore that Lamming was introduced to the writings of, among others, Thomas Hardy and Joseph Conrad, and the poetry of Wilfred Owen. At a very young age Lamming could begin to imagine the cultural conditions of a new nationalism and the consequent 'revisioning' of the history of the colonisers,¹³ which itself anticipated the emergence of a full citizenship for the people coming out from the shadows.

Migration was also lurking in those shadows. For Lamming's generation the destination was Britain. Lamming, having moved from Barbados to Trinidad when he was eighteen re-migrated to Britain in 1950. The migrants who came, like him, in the aftermath of the second world war came with insights which had been informed by an altogether different *gestalt*, what DuBois or Gilroy might term a 'double consciousness',¹⁴ an awareness which provided them with one vision rooted in the colonies, one in the metropole.

Lamming's arrival in Britain coincided with, and was part of, an explosion of Caribbean literature and poetry. In common with other aspiring writers, he gravitated towards the BBC from where Henry Swanzy broadcast the weekly *Caribbean Voices*. As Glyne Griffith demonstrates, the impact of the programme was immense bringing together, via the airwaves, aspiring writers from the entire Caribbean, introducing them to each other and to their different island vernaculars. That all of this came from the metropolitan heartland was an irony not lost on the writers: as Lamming points out, 'It was not only the politics of sugar which was organised from London. It was language, too.'¹⁵

In the 1940s and 1950s writers in the West Indies – despite the success of *Caribbean Voices* – were barely regarded as artists. There was no Caribbean-based publishing house which provided them with the means for establishing a shared voice. Recognition, publication, and performance resided not in the West Indies, but in London. For many, their debut was on radio. This, too, had an impact for writers had to think about the orality of their work, 'I still write very much, first of all, with the ear'.¹⁶ They were aware of the contributions each was making to the joint endeavour of West Indian literature, and aware that they were part of a far wider philosophical, cultural and political world in the West Indies, supplementing the work of cultural journals such as *Bim* in Barbados, or *Kyk-over-al* in British Guiana, or *Focus* in Jamaica, or London where, for instance, Derek Walcott's play *Henri Christophe*, with an all West Indian cast, opened to critical acclaim in 1952 (with a prologue written by Lamming).¹⁷

In London, Lamming mixed with the poets Dylan Thomas, Louis McNeice, and George Barker, and with fellow West Indians, through whom he entered into a European network of exiled, black intellectu-

als. His friend C. L. R. James was in contact with Richard Wright in Paris. Wright wrote the introduction to the first (American) edition of *In the Castle of My Skin*, and was close to Jean-Paul Sartre. Simone de Beauvoir introduced *In the Castle of My Skin* to Sartre, who chose to publish it in his series *Les Temps Modernes* in 1958. Lamming's networks also included African, Indian and Asian dissidents through whom he became 'increasingly conscious of the political continuities between the Caribbean and the kind of discussion taking place among Ghanaians and Nigerians at the West African Students' Union',¹⁸ where nationalism and the struggles for independence in Africa ran in parallel with the increasing talk about, and preparations for, Federation in the West Indies.

At the time London and Paris were at the heart of the colonial world – and at the centre of radical anticolonialism, whose protagonists were engaging not only with political struggles for independence but also with the psychologies and psychoses of dependence. In this, artists, writers and intellectuals played a leading role, where the milestones towards independence were marked as much by cultural and intellectual achievement as by direct political confrontation. Much of this intellectual activity was engaged in radical philosophical questioning which ran along the lee-line between the nature of self, at one end, and the nature of the collective, at the other, in which subjectivity, race and colonisation were reimagined as the conditions for culture, nation and freedom.

In France *Présence africaine* (*Revue Culturelle du Monde Noir*), founded in 1947, was dedicated to revitalising, illustrating and creating 'values that belong to the black world'. Building on the intellectual precedents established by an earlier generation of black intellectuals, including Leopold Senghor from Senegal and Aimé Césaire of Martinique, *Présence africaine* became not only 'a publishing enterprise but an intellectual group and a cultural movement'.¹⁹ 'Culture', as Senghor argued, 'is at once the basis and the ultimate aim of politics'.²⁰ 'What we're trying to do is multidisciplinary', was how Lamming saw it:

My contribution has been to bring this kind of discussion into political organizations, to address political party conferences raising this theme. Bringing them onto the terrain of how do you conceive of sovereignty, how does your party conceive of cultural policy.²¹

Lamming published at a key moment in the anticolonial struggle. *In the Castle of My Skin*, published in 1953, resonated not only in the Caribbean – Kamau Brathwaite felt 'everything was transformed'²² – but far wider afield. The Kenyan novelist, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, claimed

Lamming as his mentor. Richard Wright believed that Lamming articulated his own North American experience. *In the Castle of My Skin* was followed by *The Emigrants* (1954), *Of Age and Innocence* (1958), *Season of Adventure* (1960), and his collection of essays *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960), all of which were written in London, and all of which were inspired by the predicament of colonial subjugation.

His writing – ‘analogous imagery, metaphor ... the method par excellence of Negro-African speech’²³ – has to be seen as part of this larger collective moment. Jean-Paul Sartre’s 1948 essay, ‘*Orphée Noir*’, argued that *négritude* was the antithesis to the white colonial thesis; the synthesis would be ‘the realisation of the human in a society without races’.²⁴ *Négritude* was, in this reading, a passing moment in the dialectic of progress. While Sartre’s conclusions on the transitory nature of *négritude* were contested (not least by Frantz Fanon and Alioune Diop, who saw ‘African reaffirmation as an end point rather than an antithesis in a dialectical movement’),²⁵ the notion that the colonised and coloniser stood not simply in opposition, but in a dialectical *relationship* emerged also in Lamming. This was so most noticeably in his insights on the language shared, and synthesised, by both Caliban and Prospero.²⁶ For the language which Prospero gave to Caliban created new possibilities for thought itself:

Prospero has given Caliban Language; and with it an unstated history of consequences, an unknown history of future intentions. This gift of Language meant not English, in particular, but speech and concept in a way, a method, a necessary avenue towards areas of the self which could not be reached in any other way. It is this way, entirely Prospero’s enterprise, which makes Caliban aware of possibilities. Therefore, all of Caliban’s future – for future is the very name for possibilities – must derive from Prospero’s experiment which is also his risk.²⁷

George Lamming was invited to speak at the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists organised by *Présence africaine* in September 1956, held in the Descartes Lecture Theatre at the Sorbonne in Paris. Alioune Diop, in his opening speech, and Senghor, in his, likened the congress to a ‘second Bandung’. The Bandung Conference in 1955, convened by the newly independent Asian states and attended by delegates from elsewhere in Asia and Africa asserted their opposition to any form of colonialism and imperialism. The Paris Congress of Negro Writers not only declared its opposition to colonialism and oppression, but linked cultural determination to political autonomy. Its final resolution declared:

We maintain that the growth of culture is dependent upon the termination of such shameful practices in this twentieth century as colonialism, the oppression of weaker peoples and racialism.

We affirm that all peoples should be placed in a position where they can learn their own national cultural values (history, language, literature (sic) etc.) and enjoy the benefits of education within the framework of their own culture.²⁸

Lamming was one of twenty-seven invited speakers who included Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Leopold Senghor from Senegal, Richard Wright, Alioune Diop also from Senegal, and the novelist Jean Alexis from Haiti.²⁹ Other participants among the 600 crammed into the smoky lecture hall included James Baldwin and Langston Hughes. The majority were acutely aware of being linked through the shared experience of being black in a white, colonial world. This experience rode roughshod over the divisions of the world generated by colonialism, and of nation states which relied on notions of difference for their national identities, and oppression for their racial identities. It articulated a new vision of world power fused, and fissured, by race. This vision required a politics of a different order.

But if the Congress was preoccupied with decolonisation, it was as much a decolonisation of the mind, an affirmation of pride and identity, as a manifesto for political autonomy. It was making links with a common black encounter that could unite this experience in the Caribbean, America, Europe and Africa. The papers ranged in style and content, from scientific treatises on 'The tonal structure of Yoruba poetry', to representations of ethnography, from theological discourses on Christianity and Africa to critiques of colonialism.³⁰ Nothing was permitted to be overtly political (Algeria, for instance, was not publicly on the agenda), yet the Congress was charged with sublimation, and silences.³¹ It was charged also with fierce debate over the meaning and crisis of culture, of Africa, of colonialism, of racial identity, and also with passions and dangers – of the anticolonial wars in progress or in waiting, of delegates refused permission to travel, or of fearing imprisonment on return – all of this against the predatory, possibly annihilatory, backdrop of the Cold War. But while the common experience of being black could provide a degree of unity, it also illuminated the sharp divide between colonial life in Africa and the situation in the New World.

Lamming spoke on the third day, 'raw-boned, untidy and intense', as James Baldwin described him.³² He addressed the issue of subjectivity, arguing that for blacks subjective life was predicated on internalising the destructive gaze of the Other. As a consequence, he believed, blacks experienced a 'lack' or a 'gap' from which arose a driving 'desire for totality':

a desire to deal effectively with that gap, that distance which separates one man from another, and also in the case of an acute reflective

self-consciousness, separates a man from himself. In the isolated case of the Negro it is the desire, not merely to rebel against the consequences of a certain social classification, but also a fundamental need to redefine himself for the comprehension of the Other ...³³

His insights into the 'Other' echo Fanon's concerns. 'Ontology ... does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man.'³⁴ Like Fanon and Sartre, we can see in Lamming's work a home-grown existentialism which offered a route into an understanding of the self and a way through the states of non-being induced by the colonial context. '[The Negro Writer] does not emerge as an existence which must be confronted as an unknown dimension; for he is not simply *there* ...'.³⁵ It was an idea that found echoes in Richard Wright, too, in his descriptions of the black American experience,

'Frog Perspectives.' This is the phrase that I've borrowed from Nietzsche to describe someone looking from below upward, a sense of someone who feels himself lower than others ... A certain degree of hate combined with love (ambivalence) is always involved in this looking from below upward and the object against which the subject is measuring himself undergoes constant change. He loves the object because he would like to resemble it; he hates the object because his chances of resembling it are remote, slight.³⁶

Being-there, existing in-and for-yourself were not possible at the best of times, as Sartre pointed out, but as Lamming insisted, for the black West Indian it was not even possible to imagine what these might mean in constructing the self. The ability to define and defend the self by making an existential choice were inhibited and distorted by racism and colonialism. Freedom was, therefore, essential if the individual was to become fully human and the ego whole rather than incomplete. Freedom was both a personal and a public choice, and neither could be achieved while colonialism corrupted the psyche *and* the polis. The category of non-existence was a collective category. It involved 'my people' as Trumper argued. As Stuart Hall pointed out as early as 1955, it required for Lamming a representation of the self as 'the social self, the consciousness, a national consciousness ... [a] refusal to localise the centre of interest in a single character or a limited set of characters ...'.³⁷ It involved engaging in 'the creative power of mass ... [as] ... the central character',³⁸ a position which Lamming acknowledged owed its influence to C. L. R. James.³⁹ It involved, above all, a consistent reworking of the colonial relationship, and of the state of exile as a complex metaphor of both 'absence' and 'freedom'. Yet, as Richard Wright could also argue, the experience of being black (in his case, from Mississippi) offered par-

ticular insights and perspectives on the West, on oppression, race and identity. For the search for what Lamming called 'totality' had echoes in DuBois's 'double consciousness', in Wright's 'double vision' as well as in Fanon and in Baldwin, all of whom, as Paget Henry points out, have 'focused on the deformation (double consciousness) that accompanied the racialisation of African identities and their subjugation to the ontological needs of white ego genesis'.⁴⁰ To this one could add that the black experience of slavery in the plantation system was, as the anthropologist Sidney Mintz observed, the first experience of modernity. No wonder, therefore, that the dislocation and alienation identified with the modern condition were first and most acutely experienced in the plantation regimes of the New World, and that the search for reconciliation between what DuBois termed the 'two warring souls within one black body'⁴¹ would be first perceived by those intellectuals who had emerged from that history. Indeed, as Paul Gilroy argues of Wright:

He was not straining to validate the African-American experience in European terms but rather demonstrating how the everyday experience of blacks in the United States enabled them to see with a special clarity of vision – a dreadful objectivity – the same constellation of problems which these existential authors had identified in more exalted settings.⁴²

This point could be extended beyond Wright.

The 'problems' related to the phenomenological world: for the existentialists, the certainties, once mediated through religion, were no longer sufficient to explain the world, let alone the self within it. The self, they believed, had become bifurcated, identity doubtful, and resolution sought in the search for authenticity. These philosophical ideas, adumbrated in their exalted Parisian settings, served to illuminate the black experience. In this lies the significance of the Paris Congress of 1956: and of Frantz Fanon, Richard Wright ... and George Lamming.

For Lamming, in common with Fanon and Wright, the search for authenticity necessitated a profound reworking of the colonial relationship. Insofar as this turned not only on phenomenological but also historical issues, it questioned decisively the relations between past, present and future. It is, on a grand scale, the Ceremony of Souls with which Lamming opens *The Pleasures of Exile* and which featured so acutely in *A Season of Adventure*. The Ceremony of Souls, observed by Lamming in Haiti, involved (via a medium) the trial of the dead by the living, who then judged whether forgiveness was appropriate or possible before the dead could rest in peace, and the living move forward. It was a process essential to the pursuit of truth, self-discovery and authenticity. But, as Lamming demonstrates, for Caliban and Prospero,

the living metaphor of colonialism, everyone was implicated in the shared history of colonialism, whether as spectator or accessory. There were no extenuating circumstances:

The confession of unawareness is a confession of guilt. This corpse, dead as he may be, cannot be allowed to go free; for unawareness is the basic characteristic of the slave. Awareness is a minimum condition for attaining freedom.⁴³

In the same year as the Paris Congress Lamming visited the Gold Coast. He also won a Guggenheim scholarship to travel through the Caribbean and North America, where Langston Hughes was his guide. Those travels, in the Caribbean and in Africa, deepened his intellectual understanding of the practicalities of anticolonial struggle. They connected him, a West Indian, with Africa. And his journeys through the Caribbean opened for him an appreciation of the importance of a regional Caribbean identity. These experiences of Paris, of Africa and of the Caribbean, all the ambivalences of colonial self-hood notwithstanding, also provided him the means to comprehend the civilisation of the English with a sharper eye, unambiguously recognising the need for the English to return to 'the original condition of a man among men'.⁴⁴

There was another chance encounter, this time on the Charing Cross Road in London, shortly after the publication of *In the Castle of My Skin*, where Lamming was accosted by a tall, middle-aged Trinidadian – C. L. R. James.⁴⁵ It was an important encounter, between two exemplary West Indian intellectuals and writers of their respective generations. 'I did not hold him in awe', Lamming recalled of that encounter, 'Having hardly heard of him ... But as I got to know him I became very aware of a special quality [which influenced my writing]'.⁴⁶ They met, not in the Caribbean, but in exile. The meeting inspired *The Pleasures of Exile*, a dialogue between the Caribbean and England, between Caliban and Prospero, between the colonies and the metropole, between Lamming and James, anticipating the theoretical insights of postcolonial theory, and a critical and revolutionary reading of the literary canon. 'My subject', says Lamming, 'is the migration of the West Indian writer, as colonial and exile, from his native Kingdom, once inhabited by Caliban, to the tempestuous island of Prospero's and his language'.⁴⁷ Exile, for Lamming, was not solely about absence. It was about identification:

No Barbadian, no Trinidadian, no St. Lucian, no islander from the West Indies sees himself as a West Indian until he encounters another islander in foreign territory ... The category West Indian, formerly understood as a geographic term, now assumes a cultural significance.⁴⁸

And about indigenisation:

There is a Caribbean in Amsterdam, Paris, London, and Birmingham; in New York and in other parts of North America ... wherever you are, outside of the Caribbean, it should give you not only comfort, but a sense of cultural obligation, to feel that you are an important part of the Caribbean as external frontier.⁴⁹

It was about creating West Indianness, the cultural struggle for nationalism – or, more correctly, regionalism and federalism. It involved a dialogue between the metropolitan centres and the Caribbean. This dialogue was already premised on a very Caribbean conversation, for 'Here Africa and India shake hands with China, and Europe wrinkles like a brow begging every face to promise love ...'.⁵⁰ Migrants, he believed, could hold a privileged relationship with the territories they had left and those they had settled, redefining the boundaries of the nation-state, and extending the Caribbean frontier beyond geography into culture.

All of Lamming's fiction is concerned with migrants, leaving or returning to the Caribbean. Lamming's tour through the Caribbean and North America consolidated his sense of the Caribbean as a whole, unified by a common historical experience.⁵¹ Similarly, his travels in Africa provided vital insights into the peculiarity of the Caribbean experience, for Ghana 'owed Prospero no debt of vocabulary'. Ghana was free, independent, 'And the implication of that silence was an acute awareness that the West Indies were not ...'.⁵²

It is in *The Pleasures of Exile* that the role of Caliban as a metaphor for the colonial equation is first introduced. Although Caliban was a slave, his history, as Lamming points out, belongs to the future.⁵³ The legacy of slavery and of colonialism was a legacy of power relations where the victor can only maintain his position through destroying the other. The result was an inheritance of inferiority and superiority which ate into the essence of existence, corrupting both. But the ironies are manifest. Prospero both needs and fears Caliban – as the primitive and primitivised Other. Caliban's encounter with Prospero has caught them both in a joint enterprise of exile and colonialism. Yet as a slave Caliban has lost the innocence of the primitive. A slave is not 'in a State of Nature. A slave is a project, a source of energy, organised in order to exploit Nature'.⁵⁴ At the same time, Caliban's descendants, literally and metaphorically, are descended not only from Caliban, but also from Prospero,

using the legacy of his language – not to curse our meeting – but to push it further, reminding the descendants of both sides that what's done is done, and can only be seen as a soil from which other gifts, or the same gift endowed with different meanings, may grow towards a future which

is colonised by our acts in this moment, but which must always remain open.⁵⁵

Appropriately Lamming highlights C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins*. In a chapter entitled, tellingly, 'Caliban orders history', Lamming assesses the significance of Toussaint L'Ouverture, endorsing James's confidence that 'the narrative will prove that between 1789 and 1825, with the single exception of Bonaparte himself no single figure appeared on the historical stage more greatly gifted than this Negro, a slave till he was forty-five'.⁵⁶ In reinstating and endorsing Toussaint as hero, James himself, as Lamming argues, breathes the spirit of Toussaint. For his work of historical excavation and interpretation needs to be read, not solely as history, but history as action, as praxis. It also needs to be read as literature, as the product of an artist. James, in rendering Toussaint's account, gave Toussaint, and all that he represented in terms of freedom, an acknowledged place in the modern world, alongside and equal to Bonaparte. Toussaint, in other words, is not only inscribed in history, but the course of history – of Europe and the modern world Europe inaugurated – cannot be read without reference to him. In giving voice to Toussaint, James gave voice (language) to Caliban, thereby challenging the authority of Prospero. As Edward Said argued, 'The main thing [for Lamming] is to be able to see that Caliban has a history capable of development, as part of the process of work, growth and maturity to which only Europeans had seemed entitled'.⁵⁷

It is, of course, significant that Lamming focused on James, Toussaint, *The Tempest*, and that his essays were entitled *The Pleasures of Exile*, for both Caliban and Prospero were exiles. It was Caliban who reminded Prospero that his ambitions were temporal, that his actions were limited by what was humanly possible, and that Caliban himself embodied those parts of Prospero's past which he disavowed.

Caliban is his convert, colonised by language, and excluded by language. It is precisely this gift of language, this attempt at transformation which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban's exile. Exiled from his gods, exiled from his nature, exiled from his own name! Yet Prospero is afraid of Caliban. He is afraid because he knows that his encounter with Caliban is, largely, his encounter with himself.

The gift is a contract from which neither participant is allowed to withdraw ...⁵⁸

Arguably, the role of the colonial writer, was (is), to make colony and metropole strange. West Indians were strangers in the nation which called itself the mother country and, as residents abroad, strangers equally to their country of birth. Colonised and excluded: the pleasure and paradox of exile. Lamming opened a pathway through which what

Fanon described as the 'existential deviation',⁵⁹ could be directed. Creativity was the route back into a sense of Caribbean self-hood, redirecting the ego by relating West Indian experience 'from the inside'⁶⁰ into a reconciliation with its internalised imago. But this could not be done without a corresponding challenge (political, philosophical, historical) to the authority of the metropole. The very presence of West Indians in London necessarily changed the chemistry and the circumstances of the colonial relationship. The first of the crises induced by this encounter came with the 1958 Notting Hill riots, which ripped open the veneer of politeness, tolerance and civilisation which had cloaked England's self-perception.

In his essay, 'A way of seeing', Lamming writes:

it is my right, while things remain as they are – to speak; and it is my responsibility as a writer who is also a colonial to report honestly my feelings about matters which deeply concern us both. I could not accept any uniqueness of privilege in an atmosphere capable of gratuitous murder.⁶¹

The murder referred to was that of a young West Indian in Notting Hill. It occurred some months after the white riots of September in Notting Hill and Nottingham. The police had been reluctant to defend the West Indians, and the Home Secretary slow to intervene. For many West Indians, the riots marked the turning point in their relations with the police and the white community. Henceforth, trust was replaced by suspicion, a mindset for which the West Indian had, at that time, been unprepared. For the white community, 'Caliban' was 'now seen not only for who he is, but for what he has always been'.⁶² Yet, as always, these positions, for Lamming, were not simple polarisations, but complicated by a relationship of mutual dependence. 'The history of the Other', as Lamming observes, 'has never been far from the history of ourselves'.⁶³ The implications for the metropole were clear: the Caribbean – Caliban – is 'here to stay'.⁶⁴ His – their – presence in the metropole must change not only the relationship between the colonies and the metropole, but the nature of the metropole itself. Whereas in the past it was the colonials who had to adapt to the change forced upon them, an adaptation which had brought them into history, now 'it is Prospero's turn to submit to the remorseless logic of his own past'.⁶⁵ In this, Prospero has no choice. 'He must act; and he must act with Caliban; or he must die ... To change or not to change? That is the question which has already set up an atmosphere of change in Prospero ... Prospero's role is now completely reversed ... And he is terrified'.⁶⁶

Lamming was and remains a committed West Indian. His first and his last reference points are the Caribbean, and the Caribbean in the widest sense.

I always make the point that the first time I heard of the Cuban poet, Nicolás Guillén and the French poet, Aimé Césaire, was through [Eric] Williams who was telling me that if you are going to be a writer of and for the region, you've got to make this contact ... So that by the time I got to England, this seed was very firmly planted and then it blossomed there in a way because it was one of the ironies of history that here we were separated by imperialism – Jamaica from Barbados, Barbados from Trinidad and so on, but it was really at the metropole at London that we came together, so I first got to know Jamaica and Guyana and other territories at London and then that was really an extension of that learning to be a Caribbean person.⁶⁷

His island, San Cristobel, the geographic heartland of all his novels, is everywhere and nowhere in the Caribbean. It is simultaneously Haiti and Guyana, Barbados and St Lucia, Trinidad and Cuba, Jamaica and Martinique. It is a metaphor for a shared Pan-Caribbean history and experience, and a tool for incorporating (and corporealising) a shared Caribbean reality, already federated by blood⁶⁸ and by history. Lamming is a political writer.⁶⁹ It is not a role to be taken lightly. 'Every word you use', argues one of the (anonymised) characters in *The Emigrants*,

can be a weapon turned against the enemy or inward on yourself, and to live comfortably with the enemy within you is the most criminal of all betrayals ... you are articulate not only for yourself, but thousands who will never see you in person, but will know you because the printed page is public property. And if you betray yourself, you can betray thousands too. To be trivial, dishonest or irresponsible is to be criminal.⁷⁰

Thus the writer must bear the weight of, and be the protagonist in, a process of historical reinvestiture, sustaining a dialogue with the past, and integrating it with the present. The Caribbean people, as C. L. R. James argued, 'are a people, more than any other people, constructed by history',⁷¹ and, as Lamming put it, 'every Caribbean writer carries with him the weight of history'.⁷² To be a West Indian writer is to be 'one of the more serious social historians by bringing to attention the interior lives of men and women who were never thought to be sufficiently important for their thoughts and feelings to be registered'.⁷³ Every line of Lamming, as James points out, 'is permeated with a sense of the origins, alignments and movements of the classes in the Caribbean'.⁷⁴ For Lamming, history centred on creolity, on the ways in which West Indian civilisation was fashioned by the will of its peoples. It was a culture born of defiance and out of survival: as resistance, as nation.

Lamming's history is not a narrative of history. Indeed, with the exception of *Natives of My Person*, he charts a very contemporary presence: childhood (*In the Castle of My Skin*), emigration (*The Emigrants*, *Water with Berries*), independence (*Age of Innocence*) and post-independence (*Season of Adventure*). *Natives of My Person* exploits an his-

torical moment, but it is a past, with neither date nor chronology. Like San Cristobel, it is a generic past and what Lamming explores is historical meaning, derived from the relationship between colonised and coloniser. For if migration and exile link the novels so, too, does the colonial relationship, at various stages of its development.⁷⁵ If there is no obvious mention of 'history' by name or theme, how is a conversation with history sustained?

In a metaphor which has become a byword for postcolonial literature, Caliban has taken the language of Prospero and inverted it, or reinvented it, for his own purposes. 'We shall never explode Prospero's old myth', Lamming argues in *The Pleasures of Exile*, 'until we christen Language afresh'.⁷⁶ To command the master's language, for the slave, was to complain in it, to satirise and ridicule it.⁷⁷ It exasperated the Jamaican planter and historian Bryan Edwards,⁷⁸ who noted the loquaciousness of the 'Negro slave' but who realised also that when she or he chose, the same slave could speak with brevity and clarity. To command the master's language was to convey his orders – or to resist. And resistance, as Paget Henry argues,

can be viewed as the media in which an oral population formulates its answer to a social problem. Such actions [strikes, insurrections and revolutions] become the books in which they write and therefore should be read as carefully as the written texts of Labat, Long or Saco.⁷⁹

Language is, therefore, a double-edged sword: delight in linguistic subversion had a powerful history.⁸⁰ Lamming christened language afresh by (among other means) introducing the dialect of the vernacular, by switching between creole dialogue and standard prose, a form which at once highlighted how subversion takes place. In juxtaposing two versions of English, he deployed an interlinguality which, in Kamau Brathwaite's words, symbolises an interculturality 'which is our island inheritance'.⁸¹ He textualised the language of *the peasant*, gave voice to the underdog which hitherto had been silenced, and gave voice, by implication, to the bedrock of West Indian society at that time. But for Lamming, the peasant had a particular relationship to the production of culture, for without food there can be no culture.⁸² The *popular* voice of the peasant had always been the voice of resistance, and as Carolyn Cooper points out:

Lamming, in emphasising the role of folklore, singing and banter in the discovery of West Indianness in Britain, provides yet another example of the transformative movement of parody beyond mere mockery ... The Caribbean intellectual and the Caribbean folk, sharing equally in that moment of discovery of the ridiculousness of their mutual displacement in the Mother Country, become one ...⁸³

It is these peasant voices which convey the narrative, acting at times like a Greek chorus which carries the story to its inexorable fate,⁸⁴ at other times assuming the shadowy masks of the protagonists moving in and out of centre stage, sometimes emerging with a name, sometimes disguised by a nickname, or obscured by a generic title. It is a form particularly pronounced in *Natives of My Person*, the most overtly historical of Lamming's novels, but present in all, from Ma and Pa in *In the Castle of My Skin*, to the anonymised voices in *Age of Innocence*, and the revolutionary plotters in *Water with Berries*. Anonymised, genericised, disenfranchised, these interior voices from the countryside drift in and out, operating on the margins of colonial society, unheard by the master.

The master's language sets the context. Lamming's prose is musical and rhythmic, conscious of the melody of orality, and how that translates into the poetry of prose. He is aware too that the melody was absorbed not only through *listening* but through his readings of the literature of the colonisers and, above all, through the 'music of the King James version of the Bible'.⁸⁵ Lamming is conscious that he had a fascination 'with the word as sound, with the word as component of rhythm, removed now from actual meaning'.⁸⁶ The master's language is his own, and his own language, that of the educated West Indian, became distanced by that very education from the voices of the village. It is an ironic alienation, but one also that stands as a metaphor for the larger colonial relationship.⁸⁷

Yet the afterword that lingers when reading Lamming is that of the peasant, for they are the agents who make his stories move. The form of his fiction conveys its content. As Stuart Hall perceptively argued, 'The technique – by which I mean both the language and the structure – is itself part of what the novel *means*'.⁸⁸ The anonymised voice is the collective voice of the West Indies. It is a social, not an individual, voice.⁸⁹ As Lamming himself reflected, some thirty years after the publication of *In the Castle of my Skin*, 'It is the collective human substance of the Village, you might say, which is the central character ... community, and not person'.⁹⁰ In this voice the ego has been submerged, or transcended, and resides therefore not in a state of existential anxiety, but in a condition of harmony with the fates,⁹¹ and with his own imago. In Lamming's writings, this collectivity interrogates the past, through the juxtaposition of creole and standard Englishes, a continuing, linguistic Ceremony of Souls.

Meaning is built into the structure of the novels. The relationship of the village to the plantation, the black villagers to the white plantation owner, mirror the historical relationship of the Caribbean to Britain, and point to the essential precariousness of that colonial relationship.

An estate where fields of sugar cane had once crept like an open secret across the land had been converted into a village that absorbed some three thousand people. An English landowner, Mr. Creighton, had died, and the estate fell to his son through whom it passed to another son who in his turn died, surrendering it to yet another. Generations had lived and died in this remote corner of a small British colony ... From any point on the land one could see on a clear day the large brick house hoisted on the hill ... The landlord, accompanied by his friends, indicated in all directions the limits of the land ... The villagers ... looked on, unseen, open-mouthed.⁹²

Similarly, the ambivalence of the migrants to Britain is reflected in *The Emigrants*, as they metamorphose from confident young men and women, chancing their luck, like Anansi, to diffident, confused, shadowy figures operating at the margins of British society. At the same time, the complex relationship of attraction and repulsion between the migrants and their mother country, the 'pull' of return and the 'pleasure' of exile, are equally built into the fabric of *Water with Berries* and *of Age of Innocence*.

Lamming's voice is also the voice of action. Language has been reinvented as praxis, requiring new interpretative forms to read the semiotics of movement. In his writing we witness the embodiment of language. It derives from an old language, indigenous to the Caribbean, embodied in every insolent look of the slave, in every act of feigned stupidity, in every act of suicide, in every way by which the regime of slavery was resisted. After Haiti, Lamming suggests,

Language changed its name. A new word had been spoken. Action and intention became part of the same plan ... the miracle had happened. The ploughs had spoken. The human spirit had been redeemed, inscribed in fire by one act of freedom.⁹³

As Hall in 1955,⁹⁴ and most recently Dabydeen in 1999,⁹⁵ have pointed out, there is little characterisation in Lamming's novels, or linear narrative or plot. What emerge are episodes and encounters, themes and impressions. Of course, throughout the history of colonialism and of slavery in particular, the alleged inability of the African to reason, to think logically and to progress intellectually in an ordered, linear manner was recruited as a powerful justification for colonial domination. Lamming's prose follows the laws of composition, the logic of grammar, only to break down in the dialogue, as that in turn breaks up the narrative formation. His narratives are interrupted narratives, modelled not on the compulsion of reason but on the convergences of history. The history of the Caribbean is a story of disjointed arrivals, and departures, of layering and synthesis. As Edouard Glissant has argued,

the implosion of Caribbean history (of the converging histories of our peoples) relieves us of the linear, hierarchical vision of a single History that would run its unique course. It is not this History that has roared around the edge of the Caribbean, but actually a question of the subterranean convergence of our histories.⁹⁶

It is this history, this narrative structure, that shapes the Caribbean imagination which Lamming offers us: it is cast in his dialogue with the past, in his dialogue with the self, and above all with his dialogue with England.

For much of his career, Lamming has been as involved in politics as in literature and for over a decade (between 1960 and 1972) published no novels, focusing instead on critical, editorial and political work. He is not an easy novelist: his work is too complex to be absorbed in a single sitting. But what he did and does was to keep alive the memory of a long colonial relationship, whose history lies deep in the civilisation of colonisers and colonised alike. This memory was shaped by the unresolved questions of freedom which dominated post-emancipation Barbados and by the riots of 1937, by cultures of resistance and the dogged autonomy of the peasant. His aesthetics led him, like many of his generation, to reflect on authenticity and oppression, to translate those philosophical musings into political action and critical reflection on the lingering impact of colonialism. In this, his dialogue with England has been decisive.

Notes

- 1 'George Lamming talks to Caryl Phillips', *Wasafiri*, 26 (1997), pp. 10–17.
- 2 Susan Craig James, 'Intertwining roots', *Journal of Caribbean History*, 26:2 (1992), pp. 216–28.
- 3 For a fascinating discussion of the use of Jamaican in popular culture see Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood: orality, gender and the 'vulgar' body of Jamaican popular culture* (London: Macmillan, 1993). For the Barbadian context, see Curwen Best, 'Popular/folk/creative arts and the nation', in Glenford D. Howe and Don D. Marshall (eds), *The Empowering Impulse: the nationalist tradition of Barbados* (Barbados: Canoe Press, 2001).
- 4 George Lamming, 'Caribbean literature: the black rock of Africa', in Richard Drayton and Andaiye (eds), *Conversations: George Lamming. Essays, addresses and interviews, 1953–1990* (London: Karia Press, 1992).
- 5 George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (Harlow: Longman, 1986), p. 4.
- 6 Lamming, *In the Castle*, p. 286.
- 7 Tuk band music is played on outings and public holidays, accompanied by a group of players in masquerade. It dates to at least the mid-nineteenth century and 'has been an important means of expression for the black masses in Barbados': Trevor Marshall, Peggy McGeary and Grace Thompson, *Folksongs of Barbados* (Bridgetown: Macmarson, 1981), p. 29.
- 8 The Landship movement – first noted c. 1860 – is part parody of British naval tradition, performing often to Tuk music, but also part a savings and loan club.
- 9 Banja and banter are forms of popular song. See Marshall *et al.*, *Folksongs of Barbados*. Banter is also a form of repartee.

- 10 Lamming, cited in Glyne Griffith, 'Deconstructing nationalisms: Henry Swanzy, Caribbean voices and the development of West Indian literature', *Small Axe*, 10 (2001).
- 11 Leonard Shorey and Gerald St Rose, 'Education and development', in Trevor Carmichael (ed.), *Barbados: thirty years of independence* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1996).
- 12 *Bim*, along with *Focus* in Jamaica, and *Kyk-over-al* in British Guiana, all emerged in the 1940s as influential cultural journals.
- 13 See Supriya Nair, *Caliban's Curse: George Lamming and the revisioning of history* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996). Lamming's position, Nair argues, is that 'literature itself contributes to the ambitious enterprise of the making of history'. Lamming 'sees literature as a kind of imaginative record that paradoxically substantiates and challenges historical narratives', p. 2.
- 14 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 146.
- 15 George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984; first published 1960) p. 67.
- 16 'Lamming talks to Phillips', p. 14.
- 17 To date, I have not found this prologue.
- 18 'Lamming talks to Philips', p. 14.
- 19 Bennetta Jules-Rosette, 'Conjugating cultural realities: *Présence Africaine*', in V. Y. Mudimbe (ed.), *The Surreptitious Speech: Présence africaine and the politics of otherness, 1947–1987* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
- 20 Leopold Senghor, 'Nationhood: report on the doctrine and program of the Party of African Federation', in his *On African Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 49.
- 21 'C. L. R. James: West Indian. George Lamming interviewed by Paul Buhle', in Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (eds), *C. L. R. James's Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 36.
- 22 Quoted in Louis James, *Caribbean Literature in English* (London: Longman, 1999), p. 34.
- 23 Leopold Senghor, 'The African road to socialism', in his *On African Socialism*, p. 74.
- 24 Quoted in Rosette, 'Conjugating cultural realities', pp. 27–8.
- 25 Rosette, 'Conjugating cultural realities', p. 28.
- 26 Lamming was the first within the English language to re-read *The Tempest* as a colonial metaphor. Cognate developments occurred in French (Aimé Césaire) and in Spanish (Roberto Fernandez Reamer). See Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (eds), *The Tempest and its Travels* (London: Reaktion, 2000).
- 27 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 109.
- 28 *Présence africaine*, 8–10 (1956), p. 364.
- 29 Barbados and Jamaica were the only two British West Indian islands who sent delegates (four in all). Guadeloupe sent three, Martinique four, Cuba one and Haiti eight.
- 30 *Présence africaine*, 8–10 (1956). See also James Baldwin, 'Princes and powers', in his *Nobody Knows My Name: more notes of a native son* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964).
- 31 See David Macey, *Frantz Fanon* (London: Granta, 2000), pp. 278–91.
- 32 Baldwin, 'Princes and powers', p. 44.
- 33 George Lamming, 'The Negro writer and his world'. Address delivered to the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris, 21 September 1956, in Drayton and Andaiye, *Conversations*.
- 34 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Paladin, 1970), p. 77.
- 35 Lamming, 'The Negro writer and his world', p. 37.
- 36 Richard Wright, *White Man Listen!*, as cited in Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 161.
- 37 Stuart Hall, 'Lamming, Selvon and some trends in the West Indian novel', *Bim*, 23 (1955), p. 175.
- 38 'Lamming interviewed by Buhle', p. 29.
- 39 'The creative power of the mass, in *Season of Adventure*, that the drums bring out

- is not too far away from what James sees as spontaneous confrontation', in 'Lamming interviewed by Buhle', p. 29.
- 40 Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason: introducing Afro-Caribbean philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 156.
- 41 Cited in Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 161.
- 42 Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 171.
- 43 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 12.
- 44 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 178.
- 45 I am grateful to Bill Schwarz for this story.
- 46 'Lamming interviewed by Buhle', p. 29.
- 47 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 13.
- 48 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 214.
- 49 George Lamming, 'Concepts of the Caribbean', in Frank Birbalsingh (ed.), *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 9.
- 50 George Lamming, *Of Age and Innocence* (London: Michael Joseph, 1958), p. 58.
- 51 See, for instance, Lamming, 'Concepts of the Caribbean'.
- 52 Lamming, *Pleasures*, pp. 162–3.
- 53 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 107.
- 54 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 15.
- 55 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 15.
- 56 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 120.
- 57 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p. 257.
- 58 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 15.
- 59 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. See also Henry, *Caliban's Reason*, p. 93.
- 60 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 38.
- 61 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 83.
- 62 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 83.
- 63 'Damming Lamming', an interview with George Lamming (2000), www.panmedia.com.jm/features/lamming.htm
- 64 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 63.
- 65 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 85.
- 66 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 85.
- 67 Interview with George Lamming (1989), *Banyan*, www.pancaribbean.com/banyan/lamming.htm
- 68 Cited in 'Renewed interest in an open market': www.cweek.com/fpl.html, 22 October 2001.
- 69 'I would say that from about the beginning of the sixties, I entered into the region not just as witness and observer, but in a sense as a certain kind of activist ...', 'Interview with Lamming', *Banyan*.
- 70 George Lamming, *The Emigrants* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 101.
- 71 C. L. R. James, 'The West Indian intellectual', in J. J. Thomas *Fraudacity: West Indian fables by James Anthony Froude* (London and Port of Spain: New Beacon Books, 1969), p. 46.
- 72 'Damming Lamming'.
- 73 Lamming, 'Concepts of the Caribbean', p. 5.
- 74 James, 'The West Indian intellectual', p. 46.
- 75 See Nair, *Caliban's Curse*.
- 76 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 119.
- 77 Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968).
- 78 Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (Dublin: Luke White, 1793).
- 79 Henry, *Caliban's Reason*, p. 73. Jean-Baptiste Sabat was a seventeenth-century French missionary and chronicler of the Antilles. Edward Long was an eighteenth-century Jamaican planter who published, in 1774, his three volumes on *The History of Jamaica*.
- 80 For contemporary examples see, for instance, Gordon Rohlehr, *Calypso and Society*

- in *Pre-Independence Trinidad* (Port of Spain: Gordon Rohlehr, 1990), and Louis Regis, *The Political Calypso: true opposition in Trinidad and Tobago, 1962–1987* (Kingston: The Press, The University of the West Indies, 1999).
- 81 Edward Kamau Brathwaite, introduction to Roger Mais, *Brother Man* (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. xiv.
- 82 Lamming, 'Concepts of the Caribbean', pp. 4–5. Belinda Edmondson argues that the focus on peasants is part of the European romantic inheritance: *Making Men: gender, literary authority and women's writing in Caribbean narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 61–5.
- 83 Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*, p. 184.
- 84 There are, perhaps, parallels here with the use of a female chorus to carry the historical narrative in C. L. R. James's play, *Toussaint L'Ouverture*. See Cora Kaplan, 'Black heroes/white writers: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the literary imagination', *History Workshop Journal*, 46 (1998), pp. 32–62.
- 85 'Music of language: an interview with George Lamming', in Erika J. Waters, *Caribbean Writers On Line*, www.thecaribbeanwriter.com/volume13/v13p190.html
- 86 'Lamming talks to Phillips'.
- 87 Relatedly, Peter Hulme points out that Lamming (in his re-readings of *The Tempest*), argues that 'post-colonial intellectuals, whilst having to recognise themselves in Caliban, should at the same time refuse any full identification and find another ground on which to stand. Part of that ground might be as readers and interpreters of *The Tempest*, ground which Prospero had long thought of as rightfully his. He will expect a nail in the head and take precautions, as the play shows; but he will not expect to be displaced as a literary commentator. Always take the enemy by surprise.' Peter Hulme, 'Reading from elsewhere: George Lamming and the paradox of exile', in Hulme and Sherman, *The Tempest*.
- 88 Hall, 'Lamming, Selvon and the West Indian novel'.
- 89 Hall, 'Lamming, Selvon and the West Indian novel'. Nair also points out how Lamming often begins with a first person narrative which eventually dissolves into a third person account, thus 'combining the individual and the collective to indicate a representative situation: all of them in the same boat, figuratively and literally speaking': Nair, *Caliban's Curse*, p. 59.
- 90 Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, in Drayton and Andaiye, *Conversations*, p. 47.
- 91 See Henry, *Caliban's Reason*, pp. 84–5.
- 92 Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, p. 18.
- 93 Lamming, *Pleasures*, p. 125.
- 94 Hall, 'Lamming, Selvon and the West Indian novel'.
- 95 David Dabydeen, 'West Indian writers in Britain', from *The Second 'Sea Change' Seminar*, The British Council, Hamburg, 22 February 1999, www.britcoun.de/e/education/studies/seach994.htm
- 96 Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, cited in Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *Historical Thought and Literary Representation in West Indian Literature* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 79.