

December 2014

The Pleasures of Excerpts: George Lamming, *New World Quarterly*, and the Novel

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Recommended Citation

DeGuzman, Kathleen (2014) "The Pleasures of Excerpts: George Lamming, *New World Quarterly*, and the Novel," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 2 , Article 2.

Available at: <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/vol11/iss2/2>

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Cover Page Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the librarians and staff at the Sidney Martin Library of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill for kindly assisting me in Barbados where the research for this essay was undertaken during the summer of 2012.

In *The Pleasures of Exile*, George Lamming lists the three most important events in anglophone Caribbean history. The first is the region's discovery by Columbus, and the second is the end of slavery and the subsequent influx of Indian and Chinese laborers. But the third event swerves to a subject that at first seems to lack the epic implications of discovery and emancipation: the launch of the novel. As Lamming puts it, "The third most important event in West Indian history is the discovery of the novel by West Indians as a way of projecting the inner experiences of the West Indian community" (1960b, 37). In this essay, I link Lamming's emphasis on the novel to another crucial event in Caribbean history – one that had not happened yet when *The Pleasures of Exile* was published in 1960: independence from the U.K. In particular, I draw attention to the 1966 Barbados independence issue of *New World Quarterly* that Lamming guest edited in an effort to frame it as a moment when the author sought to reorient the role of the novel in the Caribbean through the use of excerpts.

With a prose style that has been described as both "a nineteenth-century bore" and a continuation of high modernist experimentation, Lamming has faced much scrutiny for his efforts to communicate via the novel with readers in the Caribbean (Ferguson 169).¹ After claiming in *The Pleasures of Exile* that "the novelist's eye" was the first to look upon West Indian peasants with empathy, Lamming famously came under fire from Gordon Rohlehr (Lamming 1960b, 39). Citing historians on post-emancipation farming innovations and the development of political solidarity against the planter class, Rohlehr pointed out that novelists in the 1950s primarily "reflected" an existing peasant ethos (8, emphasis in original). Lamming's characterization of what the novel has done for the peasantry has thus been qualified as romantic; moreover, as Christian Campbell has outlined, the author's very idea of the "West Indian peasant" was one of several "politically necessary discursive constructions" that preoccupied Caribbean literary criticism throughout the 1960s and 1970s (388).²

¹ Jamaica Kincaid likened reading Lamming to nineteenth century literature because his language is "very boring, formal writing" (Ferguson 169). By contrast, scholarship over the past two decades increasingly frames Lamming as a modernist writer akin to James Joyce and Virginia Woolf in light of his experimental, fragmented style. See Simon Gikandi (1992), Leah Rosenberg (2007), and J. Dillon Brown (2013). I suggest that these polarized interpretations of Lamming's prose indicates that his relationship to the nineteenth century British tradition of the novel requires further examination, which is a subject Caribbeanists have not closely pursued since Belinda Edmondson's *Making Men* (1999).

² Campbell provides a genealogy of "the folk" and argues that the concept remains an issue within Caribbean literary history. Discussing Kamau Brathwaite on the "Little Tradition" of Caribbean writers and Lamming on the West Indian novelist's representation of peasants, Campbell points out how the former attempts to "elevate the folk" while the latter "seems to be more interested in elevating the novelist" (387 – 388). Campbell suggests that Lamming unwittingly reinforces colonial hierarchies by focusing on novelists rather than on their subject matter. This is why Lamming's excerpts from his novels in the *New World Quarterly* special issues are so fascinating:

Groundbreaking archival work in anglophone Caribbean literature has also weakened the purchase of Lamming's account of the West Indian novel. The author bemoaned how he and authors such as Edgar Mittelholzer, V.S. Reid, and Sam Selvon faced a literary abyss characterized by its lack of a "previous native tradition to draw upon" (Lamming 1960b, 38). In the decades since *The Pleasures of Exile*, however, scholars such as Rhonda Cobham (1982), Evelyn O'Callaghan (2004), and Leah Rosenberg (2007) have unearthed writing from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to both question Lamming's claims for "the historic novelty" of his generation and overhaul the paradigm of early anglophone Caribbean literature as male-centric and London-based (1960b, 38).³ By placing Lamming back under the spotlight in this essay, I work within such ongoing archival work that looks closer at the canon. At the same time, I also think alongside the author's epic historical vision of the Caribbean novel. Stressing the moment of Barbados's independence, I argue that Lamming used the periodical format of *New World Quarterly* to reenvision his work as a novelist through the use of excerpts. Such adaptation demonstrates Lamming's commitment to fashion his self-consciously complex literary endeavors for the local audience he most deeply sought to reach. Later in the essay, I also show how the writer's editorship of *New World Quarterly* illuminates a surprisingly inclusive vision of an independent Caribbean that prioritizes the role of women.

THE DIFFICULTY OF LAMMING'S "GREATEST PLEASURE"

My greatest pleasure would be to know that the cane-cutters and the laboring class read and understood *In the Castle of My Skin*; that would be infinitely more pleasing to me than the verdict of whoever is known as the most sensitive and perceptive critic. (Lamming 1992, 64)

During the 1970 interview with Ian Munro and Reinhard Sander from which I draw the epigraph above, Lamming outlines two competing attitudes about his novels. On one hand, he acknowledges the criticism that his work is "a bit difficult." Precisely because of this challenging quality, however, Lamming hopes his readers will closely engage with his writing, even if it entails progressing at "the pace of a page a day" (1992, 64). As J. Dillon Brown has shown, Lamming's

by removing passages from longer works, the author privileges content, theme, and approachability over style, form, and creator in the name of independence.

³ Other important excavations of local writing that complicate the post-World War II London "birth" of Caribbean literature include Reinhard Sander (1988), Selwyn R. Cudjoe (2003), Alison Donnell (2005), and Belinda Edmondson (2009).

difficult fiction serves as “an assertive literary-political gesture” that, especially in the context of writing and publishing in London after World War II, equipped the novelist with a way to maintain West Indian difference and challenge metropolitan stereotypes about the Caribbean’s ostensible backwardness (77). While Brown’s analysis primarily focuses on Lamming’s career in London and thus engagements with British reading audiences, he also underlines how the author carefully approached a second major question about his novels: reaching readers in the Caribbean.

In the years leading up to the publication of *The Pleasures of Exile*, Brown points out how Lamming “viewed the building of a West Indian readership as a long-term, future-oriented process” rather than as an uncomplicated reality (87). Indeed, over a decade later in his interview with Munro and Sander, Lamming still understands the idea of a Caribbean reading audience in terms of an ongoing process. Socioeconomic conditions in the Caribbean pose an obstacle, Lamming recognizes, “because the common people are often too busy looking for bread. You know, when a man is really rummaging for bread, you can’t be too hard on him when he says, ‘I haven’t the time for books’” (1992, 65). Lamming therefore grasps a paradox embedded in his aesthetic-political endeavor as a writer: the ideal way to engage with his novels demands time from readers – a scarce resource for the laboring class he wishes to reach.

The challenge of reading Lamming’s novels in light of his prose’s difficulty and his Caribbean audience’s lack of time provides an illuminating context for approaching his editorship of *New World Quarterly*. This periodical was the publication of the New World Group, a collective of economists and social scientists primarily from the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies who urged understanding the Caribbean as a plantation society in the 1960s. Led by Lloyd Best, *New World* took seriously both the colonial past of the Caribbean and the entwined questions of political and economic freedom. As the front matter of *New World Quarterly* outlines, the publication existed “[i]n the context of a society, which, since its colonization in the sixteenth century, has never had serious public discussion of important issues.” *New World Quarterly* and, in Guyana, *New World Fortnightly*, therefore provided “media of direct democratic expression” that spurred discussion and argumentation among readers in the Caribbean (Lamming 1999). According to Best in a 2005 interview, the first issue of *New World Quarterly*, which was published in March 1963, immediately sold out of its first 2,000 copies (Bogues et al. 240). The journal sustained readership throughout the University of the West Indies campuses and also had distributors in Puerto Rico and across North America.

In the Castle of My Skin, Lamming’s first novel, prompted a chain of events that led the author to edit two special issues of *New World Quarterly*. Historian Robert A. Hill has recounted the personal impact of reading Lamming’s

autobiographical novel, an experience that inspired him to invite the writer as a guest speaker for a conference on Caribbean politics he was organizing at the University of Toronto in 1965. Coming to Canada from London, Lamming went on to give more lectures in North America, where he received the opportunity to edit the Guyana independence issue of *New World Quarterly* with poet Martin Carter and a similar edition for Barbados after meeting Lloyd Best and other members of New World in Montreal (Scott 103).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these special issues edited by two writers allot several pages to literary material.⁴ In the May 1966 Guyana issue, Lamming and Carter include a trio of poems from Nicolás Guillén and excerpts from Edgar Mittelholzer's memoir *A Swarthy Boy* and Jan Carew's novel *Black Midas*. These sit alongside essays by Cheddi Jagan and Walter Rodney. Lamming and Carter even include excerpts from two colonial-era European explorers: Walter Raleigh and Richard Schomburgk. Later that year in November's Barbados independence issue, Lamming and associate guest editor Edward Baugh assemble writing from Frank Collymore, Paule Marshall, and Kamau Brathwaite, with non-literary contributions from historian Gordon Lewis and sports writer Clyde Walcott (not to be confused with the famous cricketer of the same name). Perhaps even more unsurprisingly, Lamming and Carter include themselves in these special issues; Lamming in fact appears in both, while Carter contributes an essay and poems to the Guyana issue.

If the aim of *New World Quarterly* was to supply media that fostered discussion and engagement, then approaching Lamming's and Carter's collections of excerpts in the vein of a Caribbean chapbook is worthwhile. In Renaissance England, chapbooks were ephemeral publications that emphasized accessibility. They were a means of putting poems, songs, and political tracts into the hands of the masses. To be sure, the *New World Quarterly* independence issues were not made to be easily disposed. Lloyd Best recalls them as "splendid editions" in his foreword to their 1999 reprint within a single binding titled *On the Canvas of the World* (3). While they diverge from early English chapbooks in their material quality, the independence issues certainly resonate in terms of their diversity of content and accessible appeal. Lamming recognized that "[t]he people whose lives are the substance of [*In the Castle of My Skin*] do not have an opportunity to see that life returned to them in literary form," but the chapbook-like form of

⁴ Although better known for its economists and social scientists, the New World Group and their call for localized thought influenced a range of Caribbean writers. For example, Erna Brodber credits the influence of Lloyd Best's essay "Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom" in her recent contribution to *Small Axe* (2012). Tracing the influence of the New World Group and *New World Quarterly* on various Caribbean writers could produce fascinating assessments of the periods of decolonization and independence, as well as of the present-day literary landscapes of the region and the diaspora.

these *New World Quarterly* independence issues offers a truly tangible means of engaging with literature (1992, 65). Given the criticism Lamming has faced for his prose, I argue that the gesture of excerpting translates into an effort to share his work in a more approachable manner. Lamming's commentators tend to point to his early work as a poet as grounds for his challenging fiction. As Kamau Brathwaite wrote in a 1968 *BIM* essay, Lamming's novels show a "tug of war" between his poetry and prose that hinders his novels from "achieving a clear, coherent, over-all whole" (165).⁵ I stress that excerpting from such novels thus concentrates Lamming's convoluted yet lyrical prose into digestible doses of politically charged art.

In the Barbados independence issue, Lamming includes excerpts from *In the Castle of My Skin* and *Of Age and Innocence*, novels originally published, respectively, in 1953 and 1958. These two works show the expanding scope of Lamming's writing. His first novel is the autobiographical story of a boy named G. as he grows up in the fictional Creighton Village, which is based on Barbados's Carrington Village. *Of Age and Innocence*, his third novel, explores the tribulations of both an emigrant's return to a homeland and an island's movement toward political independence. In the latter novel, Lamming's allegorical island San Cristobal makes its first appearance and supplants *In the Castle of My Skin*'s rural village setting, a creative endeavor that demonstrates the author's attempt to write about the Caribbean as a whole. These novels also provide different snapshots of Lamming's use of form. *In the Castle of My Skin* contains chapters that take the shape of dramatic dialogues among schoolboys and between village elders. In the longer novel *Of Age and Innocence*, the narrative unfolds over three books further divided into parts and chapters. These subsections continue the first novel's sudden transitions to dramatic dialogues; at times, diary entries by Mark Kennedy, the aspiring writer character returning to his homeland, comprise entire chapters.

⁵ Lamming explains his relationship with poetry in his extended interview with David Scott. He says, "But I want to get clear about leaving the poetry. What I did not return to was writing in verse. But what I never really left was what I would regard as the components of the poetry, that is that my prose retained a very strong visual and a very strong aural [dimension] – that is, the devices, what you would call the poetic devices, never left the prose, remained in the prose. And sometimes to the displeasure of certain critics who think that it makes for a density that was unnecessary" (Lamming and Scott 106). The critical vexation Lamming mentions can be found among both Caribbean commentators, as Brathwaite's remarks show, and contemporary British critics. For a sampling of British critics' responses to Lamming's prose in the 1950s, see Brown (78 – 79). Neil ten Kortenaar, in an early postcolonial reading of *In the Castle of My Skin*, identifies "its ungainly style and its erratic narrative" as the defining characteristics of Lamming's first novel (43).

Despite the differences between the novels, both challenge readers through uneven narrative textures. In excerpted form, however, Lamming's novels occupy a middle ground between what he has called the "lecture-form" and "novel-form" (Lamming and Scott 196 – 198). In contrast to writing novels, the author reports "using the language of statement as distinct from the language of fiction" when addressing audiences such as workers' unions in Barbados. Lamming concedes that these audiences will likely not read novels such as *Of Age and Innocence*; nonetheless, he delivers lectures "that illustrate the theme and content of the novels" (Lamming and Scott 197).⁶ By looking more closely at the particular excerpts Lamming included in the special Barbados issue of *New World Quarterly*, I will illustrate how the moment of independence compelled the author to creatively blur the lines between the "lecture-form" and "novel-form." In the process, Lamming's female characters take on a paramount role. Lamming's refashioning of his fiction for *New World Quarterly* thus reveals two projects with which he is not typically associated: tailoring the novel for Caribbean readers and centering women to ideas of cultural memory and sovereignty.

"A LONG, LONG, LONG, TIME AGO": LAMMING'S FUTURE HISTORY OF BARBADOS

The Barbados independence issue of *New World Quarterly* contains seven sections with contributions from famous and lesser-known writers alike. The issue also includes essays on the states of public health and agriculture on the island. In "the roots of a tradition," a section that focuses on education in Barbados, Lamming includes an excerpt from the third chapter of *In the Castle of My Skin*.⁷ Set in a classroom on Empire Day, this chapter criticizes how education under colonial rule amounts to indoctrination rather than learning. In a long paragraph

⁶ Lamming did not hold such a clear-cut distinction between statement and fiction when he was actively publishing novels. A famous "Author's Note" interrupts his fourth novel, *Season of Adventure*, to argue that "[h]istorians and analysts" cannot fully explain the drummer Powell's disappearance from San Cristobal. In the note, Lamming's author persona contemplates, "There must be another way to the truth of Powell's defeat" (1960a, 331). By concretely differentiating between the languages of statement and fiction as he does in his 2002 interview with Scott, Lamming shows his ongoing investment to inquire in "another way." Ironically, however, Lamming's interview with Scott communicates the need for the literary via a conversation – which I understand as the language of statement – and not in fiction or prose.

⁷ The other sections of the Barbados independence issue are titled "a question of character," "men of colour and importance," "twin brothers in the world," "preludes to independence," "prescriptions," and "voices from the future." I retain the lowercase type from their appearance in the journal. Furthermore, all parenthetical references to *In the Castle of My Skin* and *Of Age and Innocence* excerpts, as well as to Barbara Jones's and Marguerite Wyke's poems, come from the reprinted editions of the independence issues, which were published together as *On the Canvas of the World* by the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of the West Indies (Lamming 1999).

excerpted onto a single page in *New World Quarterly*, Lamming shows the estranging efficiency of colonial learning: for the schoolboys, the history of slavery in Barbados is deemed “simply unreal” because “[i]t was a long, long, long time ago” (1999, 194). Sandra Pouchet Paquet insightfully reads this depiction of the colonial classroom as Lamming’s parody of school narratives by Victorian writers like Rudyard Kipling (2002, 119). This scene also foregrounds what critics identify as the writer’s resistive narrative strategies. By staging the schoolroom and its alienated colonial subjectivities, Lamming’s “[n]arration becomes,” as Simon Gikandi outlines, “a process of developing a critical attitude toward...the colonial vision” (78). Though the schoolroom focuses exclusively on English history and figures such as William the Conqueror, Gikandi suggests that the setting implicitly initiates the students’ curiosity about what colonialism has obfuscated in Barbados. I would like to push Paquet’s and Gikandi’s readings further by approaching the schoolroom scene not as a moment in a novel, but as a contribution to a special issue of *New World Quarterly*.

As the excerpt demonstrates, institutionalized education suppresses the palpability of history. An older woman haunts the background of the scene and reports having been a slave that was freed by Queen Victoria. The head teacher – and representative of colonial power – dismisses the old woman’s claims and argues that slavery “had nothing to do with the old lady” and “moreover it had nothing to do with people in Barbados” (Lamming 1999, 194). With a curriculum centered in England and on events such as the Battle of Hastings, the colonial classroom denies slavery epistemological leverage. “It was too far back,” the diffused narration says, “for anyone to worry about teaching it as History” (Lamming 1999, 194). The excerpt concludes showing how the schoolroom rejects the old woman and the history she bespeaks. The narration describes her as a “poor fool,” and the head teacher and schoolboys laugh at her.

Within the education section of the Barbados independence issue, this excerpt from Lamming’s first novel is concentrated in a way that extends beyond schoolroom parody and a boy’s budding curiosity about the “strange feeling” the word “slave” evokes. Though known within the anglophone Caribbean for their exceptional rigor, Barbados’s schoolrooms become an object of criticism in this special *New World Quarterly* section.⁸ In addition to Lamming’s excerpt, this section includes reflections on the island’s famous Harrison College by Geoffrey Drayton and Austin Clarke. The latter would go on to publish *Growing Up Stupid Under the Union Jack*, his hilarious memoir of the Barbadian schoolboy experience. As an item in *New World Quarterly*, I propose that the *In the Castle*

⁸ In *The Emigrants*, Lamming’s second novel, West Indians on their way to London via a passenger ship argue about their respective islands. At one point, the Grenadian tells the Barbadian, “‘Is only because you Bajans was always under the English you get this idea ‘bout you got more education than anybody else’” (1954, 37).

of My Skin excerpt foregrounds the old woman in a manner that only becomes clearer when continuing to the next section in the special Barbados issue. Titled “men of colour and importance,” this section includes essays on Samuel Prescod and Conrad Reeves, two important names from nineteenth century Barbadian history.⁹ The section also contains the issue’s other excerpt from a Lamming novel: part of a conversation between Rowley and Ma Shepherd that introduces San Cristobal in *Of Age and Innocence*’s second book. While the local and particularly female voice of history was mocked and dismissed in the first excerpt, this passage allows an elder woman to tell history directly to a young boy whose father is a member of the island’s white political elite.

In the excerpt, Rowley asks when “it” happened (Lamming 1999, 217). Those familiar with *Of Age and Innocence* might recall that the pronoun refers to a natural disaster where the sea overwhelmed San Cristobal, an event now commemorated by bringing gifts to the shoreline. But as an excerpt without the rest of the novel, the passage instead reads as a response to the history denied in the portion drawn from *In the Castle of My Skin*. Ma Shepherd rejects the rubric of dates and tells Rowley that the sea nearly consumed San Cristobal at an epoch that defies exact periodization: “Some say five hundred years, an’ some say many more, but everyone accept the time as a long, long, time ago” (Lamming 1999, 217). The repetition of the phrase “a long, long time ago” – with one fewer “long” than the similar line in the excerpt from Lamming’s first novel – renders San Cristobal mythic yet palpable. Ma Shepherd repeats “a long time ago, as I choose to describe the time” and goes on to recount torrential rains and “[b]one and branch” embroiled in “a large comminglin’ of tongues that couldn’t talk their way back to the mouth that house them” (Lamming 1999, 217). Despite the violence of the event, Ma Shepherd casts it as an occasion that “put San Cristobal to rest for a while under the sea, so that when the sea withdraw and grant view of the air again, the resurrection would return a new supply for the needs o’ those that come after” (Lamming 1999, 217).

In the novel, Ma Shepherd follows this story of the San Cristobal flood with that of the Wild Fire. Unlike the “resurrection” of the flood, however, Ma Shepherd criticizes the Wild Fire that she experienced during her youth. Reminiscent of slave revolts that destroyed sugar crops, San Cristobal’s Wild Fire as recounted in *Of Age and Innocence* featured men that “fret how their labour went robbed in a lan’ which refuse to make them brother an’ sister, or feed them with a right reward for the sweat they drip night an’ day” (Lamming 1958, 91).

⁹ Born to a free woman of color and a white landowner, Samuel Prescod in 1843 became the first person of African descent elected to Barbados’s Parliament. Conrad Reeves was an important lawyer who became the Chief Justice of Barbados in 1886 and thus the first black man to hold that position. Reeves was also knighted by Queen Victoria in 1889.

Ma Shepherd does not commend the burning; instead, she blames the devastating windstorm that befell the island when she was a young woman as nature's payback for the man-made Wild Fire. Stressing how "we must not learn to wrong the earth," Ma Shepherd from the outset of her appearance in the novel shows reluctance toward radical, violent change (Lamming 1958, 93). But in the excerpt, Lamming narrows Ma Shepherd's story to that of the flood. This focus obviates what critics have identified as the old woman's conservatism, an attitude with powerful consequences later in the novel that I discuss below. Recall how the excerpt from *In the Castle of My Skin* underlined the silencing of the old woman's voice – and of Barbadian history. By contrast, this passage from *Of Age and Innocence* inverts the hierarchy between the representatives of England and the Caribbean to celebrate and legitimate Ma Shepherd's knowledge. It also anticipates the famous statement on gender relations that concludes Lamming's final novel, *Natives of My Person*: that women "are a future they" – that is, men – "must learn" (1972, 345). I will elaborate more on the future-oriented attitude of Lamming's excerpts later in this essay.

In tandem, Lamming's excerpts thus convey multiple narratives of independence. Chronologically in the *New World Quarterly* issue, the excerpts show a movement from colonial to local knowledge – a history that inserts the Caribbean and positions outsiders as listeners who require edification. Individually, each excerpt refashions the respective Lamming novel into a concise statement about the deceit of colonial education on one hand and the importance of older generations on the other. More surprisingly for Lamming – an author often critiqued for his attention to the Caliban figure – the excerpts show the crucial role of women in Caribbean self-fashioning.¹⁰ As several commentators note, Ma Shepherd is a wise yet conservative character in *Of Age and Innocence*.¹¹ She provides the boys Bob, Singh, and Lee with knowledge of San Cristobal's past, but this same investment in old orders limits her ability to

¹⁰ Patricia Saunders reveals the shortcomings of Lamming's Caliban paradigm in her reading of *Water with Berries*. Analyzing the white and racially ambiguous female characters in the novel, Saunders argues that "the violence enacted on the bodies of women in his narrative points to the continuity of imperial patriarchal control in postcolonial and nationalist narratives" (66). Saunders goes on to criticize how Lamming leaves "native" women out of *Water with Berries* (81). That Lamming foregrounds in *New World Quarterly*, the old woman from *In the Castle of My Skin* and Ma Shepherd from *Of Age and Innocence* thus enriches his treatment of European and Caribbean gender relations.

¹¹ Paquet (1982, 52) calls Ma Shepherd "a betrayer of the revolution," while David Scott asks Lamming why the character "does not support [the boys'] vision of where they want to go" (Lamming and Scott 153). Lamming claims that Ma Shepherd does not function as a politically reactionary character in the novel; rather, her conservatism shows how older West Indians cannot fathom a world beyond the structures of colonialism. As Lamming puts it, Ma Shepherd exudes "a kind of faith that there is an order that is created for you" (Lamming and Scott 153).

actualize the next generation's hopes for change. Given the short length of the excerpt, however, Ma Shepherd in *New World Quarterly* evocatively stands as a source of authoritative knowledge central to the process of cultural memory and the future of independence.

Ma Shepherd and the old woman from the *In the Castle of My Skin* excerpt also complicate critiques of Lamming's use of the West Indian peasant figure. In the *New World Quarterly* excerpt from his first novel, the old woman is from the outset depicted as a victim of colonial indoctrination, not only as a source of an unspeakable history. The opening sentences of the excerpt emphasize the symbolic meaning of Queen Victoria: for the head teacher and "the older people" alike, the English monarch is remembered as "a great and good queen" (Lamming 1992, 194). By contrast, the schoolboys in the scene fail to make a connection to the queen's image; instead, they grasp the English flags associated with the inspector's visit because "they did not need to question them" (Lamming 1992, 194). Lamming's excerpt therefore invites a more careful approach to his depiction of the West Indian peasant. Without the rest of the chapter and other characters from *In the Castle of My Skin* such as Ma and Pa, it is more apparent that this anonymous old woman carries a colonially-inflected memory of the past rather than one that naively emblemizes resistance and alternative knowledge. In other words, the old woman transgressively brings the subject of slavery to the colonial schoolroom, but her attachment to Queen Victoria as a generous liberator simultaneously demonstrates Lamming's reluctance to romanticize her knowledge. Like the schoolboys, colonial rule limits her discursive horizons.

Lamming's use of the excerpt from *Of Age and Innocence* therefore carves out a future-oriented role for the female West Indian peasant. As briefly mentioned above, *Natives of My Person*, the author's final published use of the "novel-form," ends with a chapter comprised entirely of dialogue among the wives of the captain and crew of the ship *Reconnaissance*. As Europeans – Lamming describes *Natives of My Person* as "the symbolic middle passage of the European man" – these women are not exactly comparable to the old woman and Ma Shepherd (Lamming 1992, 92). By positioning Ma Shepherd in a role where she narrates history to a younger generation, Lamming places the Caribbean's future in the hands of a local West Indian woman, not in those of the female gender broadly conceived as he later suggests in *Natives of My Person*.

Indeed, the other literary items that accompany the *Of Age and Innocence* excerpt in *New World Quarterly* emphasize the female writer. Two other contributions in this section include the poems "A Note on Becoming a Foreigner" by Marguerite Wyke and "West India" by Barbara Jones. Wyke also published poetry in *Caribbean Quarterly*, while Jones went on to become a lecturer in

Canada.¹² In these poems, Wyke and Jones echo the past and future interests of Lamming's excerpts. Jones's "West India" outlines a world of "cantonese/from the punjab/yoruba/of the thames/benin bronze/gleaming in/a matador's/prized ear/to the champs elysee/of caribs/and arawaks" and repeats the cry of, "christopher/you betrayed my ancestors" (Lamming 1999, 224). As a complement to Jones's global catalogue of elements that constitute Caribbean violence and resistance, Wyke's "A Note on Becoming a Foreigner" reflects on the twentieth century diaspora where a new country provides "No room/To muse." "The dark mass," however, "suddenly one day will bloom/Flowers from the seeds /No one has seen/But somehow all have sown" (Lamming 1999, 223). Like Ma Shepherd in Lamming's excerpt, the speaker in Wyke's poem becomes a voice of possibility. Lamming could certainly be criticized for rendering women in his work with broad strokes, but this would fail to fully appreciate his careful suspicion of utopian ideas of independence for women and men alike.¹³ The author told George Kent in an interview about the conclusion of *Natives of My Person* that "I do not suggest [reorganized gender relations] will in any way automatically lead to a facile notion of harmony, but that there would be a new liberation of spirit, and the future encounters between [women and men] would be an innovation, as distinct from a continuation, of the past they have known" (Lamming 1992, 88). As Sandra Paquet has shown, Lamming leaves the role of women as an "open-end" to his fictional oeuvre (1982, 110). But as discrete items in *New World Quarterly*, Lamming's emphasis on women crystallizes. The very name "Ma Shepherd," for example, is shot through with visionary spiritual leadership. As an elder matriarchal shepherd, her role in the excerpt is to guide both Rowley and readers of *New World Quarterly* to a future grounded in local coordinates of Caribbean history. She becomes an unexpected representative for Lamming's own vision of himself as a prophetic artist.

By editing the Barbados independence issue, Lamming also epitomizes what Belinda Edmondson has critiqued as the masculine agency of the Caribbean writer, an inheritance and limitation that she traces back to the Victorian man-of-letters ideal. Edmondson contends, "For the Caribbean writer the dilemma is to

¹² Wyke also worked as a senator in Trinidad who promoted the arts. Jones edited the 1967 poetry collection *Among the Potatoes*, which writer Ramabai Espinet recounts to Kwame Dawes as "a veritable holy of holies" for women's poetics and sexuality (Dawes 162).

¹³ Lamming's most nuanced depiction of a female character remains Fola from his 1960 novel *Season of Adventure*. An encounter with the drums of the *tonelle* in the Ceremony of Souls allows Fola, a young woman of mixed parentage who also belongs to the middle class, to embrace an outlawed world of rhythm and reason. Given the future-oriented gender reading I offer here, I can only speculate why Lamming chose to excerpt *Of Age and Innocence* rather than *Season of Adventure* in the Barbados independence issue of *New World Quarterly*. I suggest that the former novel's interest in allegory, which Ma Shepherd and the story of the Bandit Kings and Tribe Boys show, makes it more suitable for the unit of the excerpt.

occupy both sides of the equation: to be the owner and the owned, the writer and the land, the masculine and the feminine” (1999, 61). Lamming arguably routes himself through Ma Shepherd in the excerpt from *Of Age and Innocence*, but I propose that the chapbook-like form of the independence issue showcases multiple voices in a way that a novel – however polyphonic – cannot. Placing excerpts from his already published novels alongside lesser-known women’s poetry, Lamming underlines independence as an occasion for inclusion. In this compilation he arranges as editor, Lamming therefore already practices the kind of future he eventually proposes via the “novel-form” in the conclusion of *Natives of My Person*.

“I’M A PREACHER OF SOME KIND”: LAMMING AS EDITOR

To conclude my examination of a neglected moment in Lamming’s career, I would like to briefly revisit Gordon Rohlehr’s important essay “The Folk in Caribbean Literature.” As I summarized earlier, Rohlehr criticizes “Lamming the *essayist*” for his romantic view of the relationship between novelists and the folk. But Rohlehr also praises “Lamming the *novelist*” for evocatively representing “the fluid variety of the West Indian personality” in his first novel (8, *emphases mine*). Such distinction between Lamming’s endeavors – as essayist and as novelist – might explain why his work in *New World Quarterly* has fallen through the cracks of anglophone Caribbean literary history.¹⁴

Raphael Dalleo’s recent study of Caribbean writers’ relationships with the public sphere helps explain why Lamming’s career as a novelist transformed after the early 1970s. He argues that Lamming and fellow *New World Quarterly* independence issue guest editor Martin Carter struggled to sustain their literary careers during the transition from anticolonialism to independence. “No longer able to fuse the political and the literary,” Dalleo contends, the poet and novelist “move away from literature to pursue politics by other means” (154). For both Lamming and Carter, delivering public speeches eventually supplanted the publication of fiction and poetry. Furthermore, Lamming’s own distinction between the “lecture-form” and “novel-form” that I mentioned above bolsters claims that the author’s investment in the political efficacy of literature irrevocably changed after much of the Caribbean attained political independence in the 1960s. Dalleo points to the increasing purchase of mediums such as the radio as a factor in Lamming’s inability to maintain his literary activity. In Dalleo’s account, the postcolonial, postmodern experience of technology and the

¹⁴ Aside from David de Caires (69) and a footnote in Raphael Dalleo’s *Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere* (256 – 257, n. 2), I have found no sustained examinations of Lamming’s guest editorship of the *New World Quarterly* independence issues.

American metropole overwhelmed Lamming and isolated him far more than “the great impersonal hand” of the BBC’s radio services (Lamming 1960b, 45).¹⁵ Citing the fragmentary diary form Lamming uses in the section of *The Pleasures of Exile* where the author lives in New York City, Dalleo convincingly concludes that Lamming’s anxieties about the writer’s role in a world more interested in visual and sonic media portended the end of his published literary activity in 1971 (164 – 165).

But for the early moment of Barbados’s independence in 1966, I have shown how the literary – and the published literary item in particular – was still charged with important meaning for Lamming. By drawing attention to Lamming’s editorship and use of excerpts in *New World Quarterly*, I have illuminated a largely neglected chapter of the writer’s relationship to literary form and Caribbean politics. Available in an intellectual yet widely circulated periodical, Lamming’s excerpts synthesize the abstraction of his novels with the politics of his public speeches. The author described himself in 2002 as “a preacher of some kind” and as “a man bringing a message,” but it might be enough to add “Lamming as editor” to Rohlehr’s spectrum of the writer’s activities (Lamming and Scott 198). Encountering his fiction anew in the Barbados independence issue of *New World Quarterly* pushes us to rethink our accounts of Lamming as the difficult writer who overdetermines what the novelist can offer to Caribbean readers.

¹⁵ For more on the BBC radio program *Caribbean Voices*, see Philip Nanton (2000) and Glyne A. Griffith (2001).

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