



The Windrush Thinkers and Artists
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One year ago, in my last Gresham Lecture I spoke of Slavery and the City of London across the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Tonight, I speak of scholars, thinkers, novelists, artists, sculptors and poets in the Twentieth century. These immigrants were descendants of enslaved Africans, and of indentured Indians who had laboured on Caribbean plantations. In coming to Britain, they sought to challenge a spiritual regime of unequal personhood produced by the colonial order. To begin where I began last year, the slaves were coming to break through that wall which separated those who enjoyed the freedom and wealth of the city from those who suffered its despotism and poverty.

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21 June 1948 was cold and wet. In the dark midsummer afternoon, the House of Lords met to debate the committee stage of the Nationality Bill, which proposed to create a common British citizenship across the empire.¹ The question of race, and of the place of the colonies surfaced quickly. Viscount Elibank declared that he knew the colonies well. 'The natives' he said, were happy as subjects of the Crown. He told a joke about a friend in a New York hotel who

went up to bed one evening, and the elevator man was coloured "as black as your hat." When my friend reached his floor he left the elevator and the man looked at him and said: "Sah, we two are the only, darned Britishers in this hotel."

The point of his 'joke' was to illustrate the danger of a new doctrine of British citizen undermining the old order of British subject, in which each knew his place, on either side of the wall. Jowett, the Lord Chancellor, in his reply sought to put such anxieties to rest, declaring "Most of the Colonial people will not read this Bill, and I do not think they would understand much about it if they did".

As he spoke, thirty miles down the Thames at Tilbury, the Empire Windrush docked. Many of its 1,000 passengers, who had bought their tickets after the Bill's first reading in the Commons, would have had something to say to Jowett. They were confined onboard until the next day, and there is no record of their debates. But we might guess their tenor from the immediate response of Lord Kitchener, the Trinidadian calypsonian, when pressed the next morning by a reporter for a song. He declared: 'London is the place for me/London, this lovely city'. What is often missed about this song is that it is not a celebration of arrival, but *return*: 'You can go to France or America/ India, Asia or Australia/ but you must come back to London city'.

For many of the passengers it was a return. In First Class, in a cabin near Nancy Cunard's suite, there

¹ BRITISH NATIONALITY BILL. [H.L.] HL Deb 21 June 1948 vol 156 cc 992-1083.

was Ellis Clark, the 30-year-old barrister, an alumnus of UCL and Grey's Inn, who in 1976 would become the first President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Five levels below there was a regiment of Jamaican ex-servicemen, who had already shed blood, sweat and tears in Europe. But for Kitchener and many fellow passengers, as for many other generations of West Indians, it was a more complex kind of return. They confronted the enigma of arrival home to a strange place, where they were branded on the skin as strangers.

The coming of West Indians to Britain in the Twentieth Century, long before and after Windrush, is quite unique in all the thousands of years of immigration to the British Isles. Unlike the religious exiles like the Sephardic Jews or French Huguenots in the seventeenth century, or political exiles like royalists from France, Marx from Germany or Herzen from Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or East European Jews in the Twentieth century, whether tailors in Bethnal Green or scholars in Oxford, we understood ourselves as coming home. West Indians shared this sense of coming home with immigrants from Canada or Australia, but what distinguished their situation is they understood they were journeying against the current of an ancient relationship of power, and across a global colour line. Unlike migrants from South Asia and Africa, West Indians came from societies which had been constituted in modern history, over three centuries, side by side with modern Britain, in the most intimate entanglement, but on terms of categorical inequality.

In 1950, the West Indies cricket team defeated England for the first time in a Test series in Britain. The victory at Lords was watched by Lord Kitchener and his fellow calypsonian Lord Beginner, who had also arrived on the Windrush. They led a crowd of revelers to Piccadilly singing a victory song which would become famous for its lyric 'Cricket Lovely Cricket/at Lords where I saw it', and its chorus praising the guile of the bowlers the Indo-Trinidadian Ramadin and Afro-Jamaican Valentine. In April of that same year, a very different pair of spinners arrived in Plymouth from Port of Spain, the Barbadian George Lamming and the Trinidadian Sam Selvon. They had shared a cabin and a typewriter on the crossing. Selvon on his immigration declaration claimed his former profession of journalist, Lamming, more boldly, given that he had not yet published more than few poems, described himself defiantly as 'Writer'. Lamming would write in London, and publish in 1953 the classic *In the Castle of My Skin*, a glance back to a colonial childhood in Barbados, following it in 1954 with *The Emigrants*. Selvon followed a similar pattern, publishing in 1952 *A Brighter Sun*, a unique portrait of Indo-Caribbean experience, and in 1956 the *Lonely Londoners*, perhaps the greatest novel exploring the Windrush migrant experience. Lamming reflected in the 1980s:

Migration was not a word I would have used to describe what I was doing when I sailed with other West Indians to England in 1950. We simply thought we were going to an England which had been planted in our childhood consciousness as a heritage and a place of welcome. It is a measure of our innocence that neither the claim of heritage nor the expectation of welcome would have been seriously doubted. England was not for us a country with classes and conflicts of interest like the islands we had left. It was the name of a responsibility whose origin may have coincided with the beginning of time.

This lecture is dedicated to George, now in his 94th year, whose influence on me is only exceeded by my parents, whose voice I will always carry in my own.

But West Indians also packed in their grips memories of colonial terror. In that same Windrush month of June 1948, many in British Guiana would have puzzled at Lord Elibank's faith in their happiness as subjects of the Crown. A strike of sugar workers, on whom Bookers was trying to force a cut in wages,

had a tragic culmination. On June 16th 1948, the police opened fire at the rear of the factory of Enmore Plantation, killing five and maiming 12 others. It was not the first, or the worst example, of the British colonial state killing Guianese workers. At Rose Hall plantation in 1913, police troops equipped with a machine gun had killed thirteen people and wounded forty others; at Riumveldt in 1924, thirteen sugar workers died; in 1939 at Leonora, four were shot and killed. In 1948 news spread fast through the colony, and on June 17th, a vast march carried the bodies of the Enmore martyrs for burial in the city. In Georgetown, my father and his step father joined thousands of others on Vlissingen Road for the journey to Le Repentir cemetery, where political speeches continued for hours. This history, three hundred years of confrontations of workers against the combined force of the planters and the colonial state, during and after Slavery and Indenture, is also part of the Windrush story.

But much as the Russian peasants of the nineteenth century are said to have blessed the Czar while cursing local landlords and magistrates, so many West Indians, even as they struggled with the local planter class and colonial officials, imagined England as a pristine theatre of liberties and justice. There were two Britains in West Indians' minds. One was the Britain which was the mistress of a violent system of colonial domination and inequality, the Britain which had betrayed Abyssinia in 1934-35. But the other Britain was an idea synonymous with high culture and democratic rights. That higher England gave a freedom of thought and action which the Sedition Laws passed in the colonies after the Russian Revolution denied, there their talents would find opportunities denied at home, battles might be won which were not winnable in their native islands, from which a new order of justice might reach the colonies. Britain was the sign under which they participated in the cosmopolitan. Their journey to the putative 'mother country' should be seen as an attempt to resolve that contradiction. Their quiet disappointment would be to find that the realities of Britain at home, on the other side of the wall, never quite matched that heroic colonial myth.

Every Windrush migrant travelled to Britain with memories of the violent social struggles of the 1930s, and the wave of strikes and riots which spread from Belize in 1934, through to Barbados, British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica in 1937 and 1938. But those memories would have been entangled with memories of the Royal Commission of 1938 which investigated these disturbances and listened to the complaints of the poor. In Barbados, for example, Commissioners ordered loudspeakers to be placed outside so that ordinary people could hear testimony as it was delivered. What emerged was extraordinary political theatre, with the crowd's shouts of 'yes!', or 'he lie!' penetrating into the council room, even sometimes returning in an amplified echo to the crowd. And that Royal Commission in its first report in 1940 had demanded that colonial governors enact legislation to protect unions from actions for damages consequent on strikes, to make picketing legal, and to create a system of Workmen's Compensation.²

Injustice was local, justice might just come from that distant perhaps 'Mother Country'. That is not to say that many did not hold Britain as an imperial power responsible for the iniquity of local authority. But they had faith that other outcomes were negotiable through alliances with progressive interests within Britain, whether the Fabians for Norman Manley, the Labour Party for Grantley Adams, or Fenner Brockway and the Communist Party for Cheddi Jagan. The migration to Britain might thus also be seen as an equivalent of that attempt by the Barbados crowd in 1938 to reach that megaphone which made voices audible.

The BBC, English publishing houses, art schools and galleries became the megaphones through which the creative genius of the Caribbean found expression in the 1940 and 50s, and could then become

² West India Royal Commission, 1938-39: Recommendations (London, 1940), pp. 15-16.

valuable in the soil which had produced it. Lamming noted ironically, much later 'such are the contradictions of this imperial arrangement, that this same power which had organised the castration of our creative energies, would be responsible for returning our names where they belonged. The enemy had rescued us from total anonymity'.

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In my last Gresham Lecture, I spoke about economic and social history. This lecture is an example of what my guild calls intellectual history, but not as it is usually done in Britain. Intellectual history, or as they call it in Cambridge, 'the history of political thought', has been dominated by a focus on the relationship of published texts to earlier published texts. It is a peculiar cloistered disembodied history, which studiously ignores the effects of power, which focusses on literate and privileged minorities, ignores the oral and popular, and is uneasy with, if not contemptuous of, the unmannered forms through which the uneducated, which is to say the poor, transact their intellectual life. It reproduces that ancient alienation of mind from hand, which preserves thought as the privilege of a class or caste distant from material life.

But man does not live by words alone, and how people work for bread conditions the terms of their thought. As Martin Carter, the national poet of Guyana put it, 'The mouth is always muzzled/ by the food it eats to live'. Sometimes, thought and ideas, can find safe expression only in actions, from the running away of the slave which finds its twin in emigration from the colony, to the forms of self-care and cooperation through which resistance and new kinds of solidarity find their voice. And what is said or written, will always be marked by how power and privilege is organised in its context: who has the right to speak, and more critically, to be listened to. Thoughts and speech may be free, but only some effects of human intelligence receive attention or reward. And what is written always carries as its shadow, what was unsayable, impolite, unreasonable, or too dangerous, in that time and place. Social facts order kinds of repression and exclusion which shape the underwater bulk of ideas of which the library of printed books are just the tips of icebergs. Until we reckon with this, we deny ourselves insight into the greater part of the real human history of ideas, and intellectual history will remain part of what Michel Rolphe Trouillot called 'silencing the past'.

This, instead, is an essay into an intellectual history from below. My intellectuals were only one, or two or three generations away from the plantations. They were formed in societies in which education was a luxury good, denied, past the most basic level, to most people. They were educated into a double consciousness, even a fractured one, living in one dimension as equal participants in the universe of art and ideas, and in another, marked as the perpetual subordinates in a global order, for which the sign was their dark skin. To be schooled was to learn about Greece and Rome, English history, places, and literature, to have your gaze focussed on places far away, to tune your spirit to an authority whose high priests were white. But, from the end of Slavery, it was clear that the only rescue from poverty was education. Families sacrificed, so that one or two of them might climb that Jacob's ladder. Across the Caribbean, as Lamming put it, the elementary school became the chapel, the colonial versions of the English public schools like Queens Royal College in Trinidad or Harrison College in Barbados or Jamaica College became the Cathedral, and an English university, the Kingdom of Heaven. I went to Harrison College in the decade after political independence, but our Sixth Form library still had an aged bound volume which recorded all the Oxford vs. Cambridge varsity competitions across a century, in rugby, rowing, cricket, bridge, even tiddlywinks. Education in the colony amounted, at its highest level, to preparation for emigration.

Colonial societies existed to produce commodities for export: sugar, rum, bananas, cocoa. They imported manufactured goods, including ideas of value and aesthetic taste. The educated in the colonies, if they were not doctors, dentists or lawyers, could be paid only as teachers or civil servants, usually only at the most junior level, as the top jobs were kept for British or White Dominions expatriates. No one would be paid to write, paint, or sculpt. Indeed, why should they be paid, since nothing valuable was made where there were no winters? There were no publishing houses, or a reading public, let alone book reviews or radio broadcasters who hired freelance contributions from clever people. Newspapers like the *Argosy* in Guiana, the *Gleaner* in Jamaica, or the *Guardian* in Trinidad, were organs controlled by the planter class, and shut out dissenters. There were no galleries to sell or collectors to buy works of art, no studios, no kilns, oil paints an expensive import.

In spite of this, thoughts were thought, poems written, art made. The partners of the national awakening in the 1940s were literary journals like Frank Collymore's *Bim* in Barbados, A.J. Seymour's *Kyk-Over-Al* in Guiana, and Edna Manley's *Forum* in Jamaica, and initiatives like the ER Burrowes's Working Peoples Art Class in Guiana and the 'Why Not?' discussion group in Trinidad. Our protagonists: Lamming, Bowling, two Brathwaites, LaRose, and many others, were products of that tide.

But to be of value in a colonial society, one had to follow the circuit of commodities, exported like cheap brown sugar to Britain, to be reimported as expensive refined white sugar or jam. And so, in August 1951, the 19-year-old Stuart Hall sailed from Kingston Jamaica to Avonmouth on the Elders and Fyffes banana boat to go to Oxford. And in May 1953, the 19-year-old Frank Bowling left Georgetown on the Booker's ship to Port of Spain, on deck above a cargo of sugar and rum. Booker's at that time controlled about 70% of the economy of his homeland, such that the colony's initials BG, were humourously parsed as Booker's Guiana. Bowling and Hall were raw material exported to be refined in the cultural factories of Britain. It was a recurrent tragedy that as finished products, such men and women, would become too complex, too costly, to ever be reimported back to the soil which made them.

Throughout his work, Bowling would insist on his roots, both African and Guyanese, in works such as 'Bartcaborn' (1967), and in the haunting superimpositions of the profile of his mother's shop in New Amsterdam, onto experiments in abstraction such as 'Cover Girl' of 1966, the year of Guyana's independence. But there was no way home, no way to live and work as an artist of his ambition, in colonial or post-colonial Guyana. For Stuart Hall, similarly, Jamaica and the Caribbean would be places to be visited for short or long spells, but, except in his majestic brain, there was no way back home. His gifts became entangled in the problem of Britain, his energies folded into the work of the New Left Review, of Hoggart's Cultural Studies programme in Birmingham, and a new British sociology.

Some tried, more than once. Donald Locke, the painter and ceramicist, first arrived from Guyana at the age of 23 in 1954, on a British Council Arts scholarship. He returned home trained as a potter, but found no kilns to work with. He returned in 1959, coming to the Edinburgh College of Art, returning home to teach in 1964. Finally, in 1969-70, faced with the impossibility of doing the work he wanted to do in Guyana, he left again for good, making a career first in Britain, then in the United States. In 1972-4 in London he made his masterpiece 'Trophies of Empire'. I hear in it Donald's bluesy laugh, humour seasoned with pain, a meditation on his art's colonial predicament, on the commodification of art and artist, the phallus in chains, the exhibition vitrine as a kind of ineluctable prison, on his refusal of the 'savage slot'. I give you as an example of Donald's humour, his *Conspiracy of Icons I* (1991), now in the High Art Museum in Atlanta -- on the bottom left corner, you can see immortalised my feet. (And did these feet....).

All knew that in order to succeed or even just survive, they were compelled to accept a kind of alienation from their societies. But the best of them recognised that their capacity for originality depended on challenging that denial of roots. Their work exemplified what the Martinique poet Edouard Glissant called 'forced poetics', the forms of expression of those who are constrained to negotiate their meanings from a subordinate position in a regime of culture and power. They found themselves sometimes in a double isolation, a double loneliness, neither wholly legible to the society they were in, nor to those they had left behind, for whom they sought to speak. We can rescue them retrospectively from that alienation through restoring that connection between cutlass and typewriter. The writers and artists were no different from the peasant farmers, nurses, mechanics, and masons who could scarcely eat at home, and who journeyed to work for their fair share of life. We may recognise how the poet and the calypsonian, the cane-cutter, historian, nurse, painter and bus driver shared a similar colonial predicament, and a similar determination to be fully human, to become their truth, even if it cost them the safety of home. They were surviving, working, thinking towards a future, which might just be us.

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In the colonial conjuncture, long before Windrush, England was the forum in which West Indian interests had to be prosecuted. John Jacob Thomas (1841-1889) of Trinidad, perhaps the greatest of all nineteenth-century anglo-caribbean intellectuals, ended his life in Britain as he tried to publish new editions of *Froudacity*, his riposte to J.H. Froude's negrophobic contempt, and his pioneering *Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar*, the first book to explore the African grammars organising Caribbean vernacular speech. In March 1932, another Trinidadian, a 31-year-old man, who identified his profession as teacher, arrived on 'The Colombia' in Plymouth. His name was C.L.R. James, and in 1933 he published with the Hogarth Press, under the patronage of Leonard and Virginia Woolf, a pamphlet called *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. He would go on in 1936 to publish a novel *Minty Alley* (1936), and in 1938 his historical masterpiece *The Black Jacobins*. He left by 1940 west to Mexico and New York, but returning in the 1950s, as another kind of Windrush migrant.

James was part of a galaxy of West Indian intellectuals in London in the generation before Windrush. The interwar cohort has received increasing attention. Prominent among them were the Moody brothers, Harold who helped found the League of Coloured Peoples, a British response to the NAACP, and his brother Ronald, the sculptor. George Padmore, the former head of the Pan-African section of the Comintern, joined James in the forming the International African Service Bureau. At the LSE, the St Lucian Arthur Lewis (1915-1991) took a top first, which led to his appointment as the first black lecturer. He began that puzzling over the economics of development which would lead in 1979 to his winning the Nobel Prize for Economics. Eric Williams, first in the First Class in History at Oxford, wrote much of his field-changing 1938 D.Phil dissertation in London, published in 1944 as *Capitalism and Slavery*, before taking the road which led him to be the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. In 1932, when James came from Trinidad, Una Marson, the poet, playwright, activist and broadcaster arrived from Jamaica. In a 1944 BBC war propaganda film for the West Indies, 'London Calling', she is seen here in 1944 with Learie Constantine the cricketer, and Squadron Leader Ulric Cross (1917-2013), the most decorated West Indian of the RAF, later a prominent jurist, whose life is the subject the 2019 film "Hero".

Less well known is the late 1940s. This is unfortunate, since this generation was a crucial one for the building of Caribbean institutions over the next decades. Lewis, who had completed his PhD in 1940, was Lecturer then Reader in the Economics of Colonies at the LSE. In 1948 he would go on to Manchester, as the first Black occupant of a British professorial chair, before he returned in 1960 to

lead the University of the West Indies. He mentored many. Among them was the brilliant historian Elsa Goveia (1925-1980), who won the Pollard Prize in English history in 1947, and the top first of her year in 1948, completing her PhD after her return to the Caribbean, where she founded Caribbean history as a subject in its own region. Sir John Neale's comment on Goveia is worth quoting for its praise and its condescension, 'When one considers that she comes from the colonies and can scarcely be compared with somebody coming out of a highly cultured West European background, she is phenomenal'. Her companion reading history was the Jamaican Lucille Mathurin Mair (1924-2009), who would go on later to write the first major study of Caribbean women's history. The Jamaican anthropologist MG Smith (1921-1993) was at UCL, beginning the journey towards his Plural Society model, in debate already with the Trinidad sociologist Lloyd Braithwaite (1919-1995), who developed the Weberian Parsons model of social stratification, and later directed UWI in Trinidad. In the background were other minds of great originality, such as the Guyanese Denis Williams (1923-1998), painter, novelist, and scholar of African Art and pre-Columbian Guyanese archaeology, who arrived as an art student in 1947. Around the LSE, and the Inns of Court, mixing with Seretse Khama and Lee Kuan Yew, were figures like Errol Barrow of Barbados, who like Cross had had a good war in the RAF, Michael Manley of Jamaica and Forbes Burnham of Guyana, who graduated in 1948: 25 years later, they would each be Prime Minister of their homelands. I pass you a story I heard as a child, lest it be forgotten, of the evening in London when they bid farewell to Burnham, Lloyd Braithwaite giving a toast which ended with his vain hope that Burnham would not use his formidable talents for 'the seduction of young women and the corruption of his people'.

Windrush changed the volume and the character of West Indian migration. Lewis in St Lucia, Williams in Trinidad, Burnham and Goveia in Guiana, had won the only scholarship for their year. After 1950, the number of West Indian students multiplied: in 1939 there had been 166 in Britain, by 1947 there were 929, but by 1960, 7,000. The gender ratio became more balanced: until the late 1950s, there were almost three West Indian men for every woman. Among the students themselves, West Indians like Vidia Naipaul, who in 2001 would receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, or Hall in Oxford, and Kamau Brathwaite, now considered the National Poet of Barbados, at Cambridge, the students of Edinburgh and Manchester, the diners at the Inns of Court, the talkers and drinkers of Bloomsbury and the LSE, lived in quite distinct worlds, even if they overlapped increasingly in the West Indian Student Centre in Earls Court, and in the Federation of West Indian Students. But more important was now that tens of thousands of people came, from that majority of the West Indian working class to which colonial society had not given much schooling. Some students, like 'Sleepy' Smith, later Sir Frederick, worked sometimes for extra income in the coal yard of Euston with other West Indians, black people at the time being barred from working inside the station. But most ranged in quite different territory from the workers who shared cramped houses in Notting Hill, Ladbroke Grove, Kilburn and Brixton, and from the haunts of Lamming, Salkey, and those who came after, such as the novelist Wilson Harris in 1959. But all these worlds, though, were forced into collision, when they sought housing, jobs, and faced the police and racist violence. It is said Richie Haynes, later Sir Richard, arrived at Edinburgh University in the late 1950s, as a cautious Barbadian. But after a trip to London, when he was beaten up in Notting Hill by Teddy Boys, he returned to Edinburgh and threw himself into left politics.

It was not that the early generation had not known British racism. The history of the colour bar in early and mid-Twentieth-century Britain still remains to be written. Unlike in the United States or South Africa, racial segregation was never encoded in law, but it was practiced everywhere, from Oxford and Cambridge, where Williams and the Guyanese polymath N. E. Cameron had not been admitted to proper colleges, to the humblest bars. Students joked about the 'colour tax', that even when landlords agreed to rent to them, they charged more. This discrimination had been the origin of Moody's League

of Coloured Peoples. Arthur Lewis later recalled that he was “subjected to all the usual disabilities – refusal of accommodation, denial of jobs for which he had been recommended, generalised discourtesy and the rest”. Eric Williams's autobiography *Inward Hunger*, has a chapter on his humiliations at Oxford, including a poignant memory of the ladies who moved away from him as he knelt in church at the communion rail. The colour bar was formally challenged in a lawsuit in which Learie Constantine sued and won damages from the Imperial Hotel in 1944. But what law did not protect, custom perpetuated. By the late 1950s, this took a violent edge, and forced new solidarities into being.

From the other direction came a growing hardening of anti-colonial sentiment. Experiences of racism within Britain were enmeshed with responses to the suspension of the democratic constitution of British Guiana in 1953, the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, the Bandung Conference, and the independence of Ghana. A sea change can be detected in Andrew Salkey's 'Jamaica Symphony', which won the Thomas Helmore Poetry Prize in 1955, 'for the first time I began to realise myself as a colonial and us as a colony, and our history and the way that we were forever at somebody else's beck and call'. If from one direction, West Indian nationalism sharpened, they saw too a dramatic tightening of British attitudes to colonial migrants, culminating in the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 which ended the equality of citizenship of the 1948 act. The question of home pulled in two directions. For some, this British sojourn was now a preparation for the work of building a West Indian nation, a temporary site of engagement from a distance with the region. But for many others, a new awareness dawned. West Indians who had only imagined they were coming to Britain for a short spell, now found themselves, with partners, children, homes and jobs, putting roots down under these dark skies. They, and their children, found in the late 1960s, in between Enoch Powell's notorious speech and the rise of the Black Power Movement, a further turn in consciousness. That period from perhaps 1958 to 1970, is the critical decade for the emergence of a self-conscious Black Britain, and it is to it we turn.

Vital catalysts in that story were the political refugees who ended up in Britain in the 1950s and 60s, of which I will focus on four: C.L.R James, who we have met before, Claudia Jones (1915-1965), Richard Hart (1917-2013), and John LaRose (1927-2006). It is critical that these were Marxists, on the left of the left of Caribbean politics, who brought with them clear analyses of race and class and British imperialism, and for whom the colonial and post-colonial Caribbean had no place for.

James and Jones were refugees from American McCarthyism. James had left Britain in 1939 to Mexico, where he debated Trotsky, and after a brilliant and tumultuous decade in the United States, during which he had been a political prisoner for a spell on Ellis Island in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, he was deported from New York to Plymouth on the *Italia* in July 1953. For a brief spell, it seemed he would find a way home, as his friend and former student Eric Williams, then Premier of Trinidad and Tobago made James in 1958 editor of his party organ *The Nation*. But by 1960 their paths diverged, on both the politics of socialism and Federation, and Williams turned violently against him, and he returned to London in 1962. He tried for the last time in 1965, returning to help lead the Workers and Farmers Party, but was placed under house arrest by Williams. In 1966 he returned to Britain, where he would remain, apart from long spells in the United States. In London, in this last quarter of his life, he played an extraordinary role as mentor, first for West Indian students of the Black Power generation such as the historian Walter Rodney (1942-1980) and the lawyer Maurice Bishop (1944-1983), who would later lead the Grenada Revolution, but second for Black British youth, in particular through the mediation of his nephew Darcus Howe. In Steve McQueen's 2020 film *Mangrove*, the role of James and his *Black Jacobins* in the political awakening of the younger generation is given a prominent place. James lived with Howe until his death in 1989, above the *Race Today* bookstore in Brixton. I visited him there early that last year, he was watching cricket on television, wearing thick woolens. How much better if he could

have watched live at home in the heat of Queen's Park. I thought of Eric Roach's poem 'Letter to Lamming',

*Forgive the dream that drags you back to islands,
Desiring your genius home again
Among the immortelles and poincianas
Dropping red pathos on our naked graves.*

Claudia Jones had been born in Trinidad in 1915, but had lived from the age of 2 in the United States. She had joined the Communist Party of the United States in 1936. Journalist, organiser, she made a crucial intervention in CPUSA debates in the 1940s, insisting, as Secretary of the Party's Women's Commission that race and gender interacted with class to organise exploitation and oppression. This breakthrough was the kernel of what in the 1980s would become the theory of Intersectionality. From 1948, with the rise of McCarthyism, she faced persecution by the state for her politics, including periods of imprisonment, culminating in her deportation to London in 1955. In London, she worked with the Jamaican RAF veteran Billy Strachan in the West Indian section of the CPGB. More important was her role in organising Caribbean social and cultural life in Britain. She founded the pioneering newspaper *The West Indian Gazette* in 1958 which she edited until 1964. Her most influential and enduring initiative, however, was the first London Caribbean Carnival in 1959, which was the root of the Notting Hill Carnival.

Hart and La Rose were victims of the colonial end of British McCarthyism. McCarthyism here, like the British 'Colour Bar', was a far more discreet thing than its American equivalent. But the Christmas Trees on the personnel files of dangerous people at the BBC had multiple informal equivalents. Among the secret archives dislodged from the FCO in 2011, as a result of the Mau Mau trial, was a document from Jamaica in which it is revealed that all appointments to the University of the West Indies were vetted in London by a committee on which there was a representative of MI5 which aimed "to keep the university free of communism". Within the West Indies, "communism" was an elastic category, into which were consigned anyone with an uncompromising relationship to the colonial order and its successor. These dangerous people were simply shut out of jobs in the Civil Service, or they became lawyers without briefs, businesses without credit or clients, forced into emigration. Some were prosecuted under subversive publications laws for owning proscribed books, others were watched by the Special Branch, their post opened and telephone calls recorded. People from one West Indian colony, would be banned in others, to disrupt any attempt to build a pan-Caribbean left, Billy Strachan and Hart banned from Trinidad, Quintin O'Connor and John La Rose banned from Grenada and Jamaica. (It is one of the honourable distinctions of Barbados that it was the only colony which never banned other West Indians). In 1958, when my father was graduating from Edinburgh, he enquired about a post in Jamaica: while neither he nor my mother were members of any political party, they were promptly banned from the colonial government. This did not end with political independence, a decade later in 1968, Walter Rodney was banned under the same legislation. For many, Britain ended up as the refuge.

Richard Hart (born 1917), had been a leader of the Jamaican trade union movement, and a founder member of the People's National Party, placed in detention for a spell during World War 2. After 1945, he was Secretary of the Caribbean Labour Congress, a key figure linking unions and politics across the Caribbean, with left politics in Britain, in particular the Communist Party. In the 1950s the Cold War came to the colonial Caribbean, with leaders like Norman Manley in Jamaica and Grantley Adams in Barbados encouraged by British governors that the path to political progress came through crushing the left of their parties. By 1952, Hart was one of the four key left figures expelled from the PNP. In the

end he had to leave Jamaica, going first to British Guiana, and then in 1965 to Britain. Exiled, living as a solicitor for Surrey County Council, he published the two-volumed *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery*, a history of the role of African resistance and rebellion in the end of slavery, and a string of studies, based on his intrepid research in the PRO and his own extensive personal archives, into the history of the national movement in Jamaica and the Caribbean. Among his side interests was the linguistics of the pre-Colombian languages in the Caribbean. At the same time, he gathered around him other political exiles, such as the Guyanese Lionel and Pansy Jeffries and the Jamaican unionist Cleston Taylor, in an organisation called Caribbean Labour Solidarity, which continues to this day. Apart from a period in Grenada as Attorney-General during the period of the Revolution, and a brief experiment at returning to Jamaica, he spent the rest of his life in Britain, giving lectures on the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in his 90th year.

John La Rose, arrived in England in 1961, in his early 30s, after intense involvement in trade unions and the cultural and political life of Trinidad. It is a challenge even to summarize his impact on Caribbean intellectual life and on the making of Black Britain. Four things, however stand out. First, his key role in the Caribbean Artists Movement, which from 1966 to 1972, brought together an extraordinary galaxy of writers and artists, under the leadership of La Rose, Andrew Salkey, and the poet and historian Kamau Brathwaite. CAM's influence, in both directions, on the Caribbean and on a nascent Black Britain, was profound. Second, his founding of the publishing house and bookshop New Beacon Books, which with Eric and Jessica Huntley's Bogle L'Ouverture Press made London the centre for radical Caribbean publishing. In New Beacon, we can see La Rose's commitment to summon all the Caribbean intellectual generations, its name honoured the pioneering 1920s Trinidad literary and political magazine *Beacon*, while among his first publications were the first new editions in almost a century of J.J. Thomas's *Froudacity* and the *Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar*. Third, the part he played in the founding and driving key Black British organisations: the Black Education Movement and Black Parents Movement, and the Race Today Collective. In the photographs and films of his friend and collaborator Horace Ové, we have a lasting celebration, of these three dimensions of La Rose's British life. But, fourth, La Rose ensured his own monument in his creation in 1991 of the George Padmore Institute, which protects today a precious archival collection for research in Caribbean and Black British cultural and political history.

If we think across these three or four generations of Caribbean intellectual life in Britain from the 1930s to the 1970s, we may identify three themes. First, an inventory of self, as they looked back to the region, its past and future. It was in Britain that West Indians from different territories met each other often for the first time. There had been other sites of rendezvous and encounter: Panama during the building of the Canal, Harlem from the 1920s, Montreal and Toronto, and after 1950, the University College of the West Indies. But London played a special role in stimulating West Indian projects, and in shaping the women and men, the books, ideas and works of art, which created post 1945 english-speaking Caribbean. Second, they negotiated what it meant to be Black and Brown in Britain, exploring in theory, practice and art what a post-colonial post-racist Britain might become. They declared, as the poet Linton Kwesi Johnson put it, "No matter what they say/come what may/we are here to stay/in England". Last, they looked outwards at the world, imagining a Caribbean cosmopolitan, making rendezvous with Europe, Asia, and in particular with Africa--- MG Smith to Nigeria, Denis Williams to Sudan, Kamau Brathwaite to Ghana --- and, for Williams and Wilson Harris with the Amerindian past and present, and its meanings for a cross-cultural creative imagination.

What I have provided tonight is only the briefest of maps of a terrain on which so much remains to be explored. The recovery of this world of thought is urgent both intellectually and for British civic life. This is why for the last decade I have taught in London a final year special subject in Caribbean Intellectual History, until this year I was blocked, bizarrely, by an administrator from doing so. My conversation with you tonight is shaped by my students' work, from Imaobong Umoren, now a Lecturer at the LSE, from the 2010 cohort, who made me understand Una Marson; to Theo Williams whose book next year from Verso will look at the interactions of Pan-African and British Left politics, to Jacob Feltham-Forbes, who has graduated in 2020, who wrote a brilliant dissertation on West Indian publishing.

White Britain has often not known quite what to do with West Indian intellectuals. For us the spoken word is sacred, the political is personal, and while consummate insiders, we also bring engagements with history and power, great and little traditions, wounds and lines of view, taste and style, which are alien. It is the predicament of the colonised to know the coloniser intimately, while being illegible to them. Writers like Lamming, Selvon, Salkey sold relatively few books in Britain, there was too much going on which British readers didn't get. They met ignorance and condescension, of which Kingsley Amis's 'Fresh winds from the West' essay of 1958 is a monument. You will struggle to find them now in British bookstores. Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* did not receive a British edition till 20 years after its publication. James's *Black Jacobins* was out of print for decades until discovered in the United States. Frank Bowling toiled in great obscurity, surviving because of New York. Only in 2019, would the Tate retrospective give Bowling's genius the national attention it deserved, with his knighthood following Black Lives Matter in 2020. Lamming's paradox held, the Tate is the heir to Bookers, Tate and Lyle, the sugar company: on a Booker's ship Bowling left Guyana and on a Booker's legacy he found his apotheosis.

But West Indians have also often neglected their own. The only living person named in Barbados as a 'National Hero' is Sir Garfield Sobers, the cricketer, neither Kamau Brathwaite or Lamming were so recognized. Prime Minister Mottley, I know you are watching this, it is time to honour the greatest living Barbadian.

In Britain, there is a kind of recognition happening. Last week in Cambridge, Pembroke College unveiled in its hall a portrait of its alumna Kamau Brathwaite (1930-2020) and flew the Barbados flag. That recognition, however, whether the knighthood of Bowling or the appointment of Sonita Alleyne, to lead Jesus College, Cambridge, or Baroness Amos to run University College, Oxford, is less a victory of ideas, than of the broad mass of Black British people, who have refused exclusion from national life for generations. Its partner, also, let us never forget, is the continued injustice experienced by the victims of the Windrush scandal. And while Bowling and Brathwaite are now honoured names, their moral and intellectual hinterlands remain to be journeyed into, by Britons, white and black.

At the climax of *Get Up Stand Up Now*, the 2019 exhibition at Somerset House curated by Zak Ové, a magnificent act of homage to his father's generation, was Zac's own sculpture "Umbilical Progenitor". It explores, via an Afrofuturist kitsch aesthetic, the entanglements of the dead, the living and the unborn. "We are a future they must learn", Lamming wrote in his 1971 novel, *Natives of my Person*. We may now be beginning to remember that future.

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