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Md. Abdul Karim Ruman

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George Lamming (born 8 June 1927) is a Barbadian novelist, essayist and poet and an important figure in Caribbean literature. In 1951 he became a broadcaster for the BBC Colonial Service. His 1960 collection of essays, The Pleasures of Exile, is a pioneering work that attempts to define the place of the West Indian in the post-colonial world, re-interpreting Shakespeare's The Tempest and the characters of Prospero and Caliban in terms of personal identity and the history of the Caribbean. This non-fiction is a postcolonialist, postrealist and postnationalist counter-discourse because it gives us George Lamming's glimpse of the complex issues of identity contained within the Caribbean island-states that were largely shaped by European colonial practice from the late-fifteenth century up to the late twentieth century. My research questions in this book are—"How are the nations of the Caribbean and/or the West Indies originated? How are they represented by canonical discourses and how is their identity constructed? What about its impact throughout different times and spaces? Is it possible to deconstruct and reconstruct their identity through counter-discourse?"—with a view to exploring George Lamming's endeavour in The Pleasures of Exile to answer these questions with fact and fiction. The uprooting of the natives and importation of African slaves to toil in sugar plantations, the introduction of Indian and Chinese indentured labourers to replace African slaves after the abolition of slavery, as well as the presence of European colonisers led to the creation of hybrid Caribbean communities of immigrants or exiled people, all with broken cultures and history. I would like to establish that as the canonical discourses like The Tempest, the then media BBC etc. construct the Caribbean's mythologized identities negatively with biased perspectives for their colonial 'civilizing mission', Lamming has tried to deconstruct or decentralize their canonical position counter-discursively to reconstruct his national identity. I have also focused on the problems of the Caribbean hyphenated identities that imply double heredity. So, the region seems to be a no man's land where people lack an autonomous and homogenous identity. At the end of my research, I have tried to establish that—by reviewing colonial history, dismantling the textual unconscious of The Tempest as a poststructuralist critic and rejecting the stereotype identities created by other legitimizing Western discourses, Lamming's The Pleasures of Exile functions as a counter-discursive signifier of the post-colonial Caribbean's metamorphosis into some cross-cultural identities, identities that are experienced between the Caribbean and the West.

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