

Transcending the Debt of Colonial History in George Lamming's *Season of Adventure*

Dr. Majda Atieh*

(Received 22 / 4 / 2013. Accepted 5 / 8 / 2013)

□ ABSTRACT □

This article re-interprets George Lamming's theorization and presentation of language as a strategy of resistance in light of investigating the notion of the commodified self. In particular, Lamming's *Season of Adventure* can be addressed as a narrative of rebellious self-purchase that construes language as a medium of historical dissent to the imposed debt of colonial history. Language in *Season of Adventure* is shaped by revision as it retraces both the genealogy of the individual and the past of a nation. Arguably, such a revisionary conception of language ultimately projects an alternative genealogy of opposition. In this respect, both the thematic and narrative structure of *Season of Adventure* transcends the European debt of history and presents a textual counter-discourse that articulates a historiography of resistance. Recent theories on the logic of debt and Lamming's strategies of linguistic resistance featured in his non-fiction writings are central to the premise of this reading of *Season of Adventure*.

Keywords: colonial history, abuse of language, debt, dissent

* Assistant Professor, Department of English, Tishreen University, Lattakia, Syria.

تجاوز دين التاريخ الاستعماري في "موسم للمغامرة" للكاتب جورج لامينغ

الدكتورة مجدة عطية*

(تاريخ الإيداع 22 / 4 / 2013. قبل للنشر في 5 / 8 / 2013)

□ ملخص □

يقدم هذا البحث تفسيراً جديداً لنظرية الكاتب الكاريبي جورج لامينغ حول اللغة، بوصفها إستراتيجية للمقاومة، وذلك في ضوء مناقشة مفهوم الذات السلعية. بشكل خاص، يمكن قراءة رواية لامينغ "موسم للمغامرة" كعمل نموذجي عن المفهوم الثوري لشراء الذات و الذي يتبنى اللغة بوصفها وسيلة لمعارضة الدين المفروض والموسوم بالتاريخ الاستعماري. إذ تنسم اللغة في هذه الرواية بصفة التنقيح و ذلك لإتباعها نهج المراجعة لأصل الفرد وماضي الأمة. يمكن القول أن مثل هذا المفهوم التنقيحي للغة يقدم ما يمكن تسميته بسلالة التعارض في نهاية المطاف. في هذا السياق، تتجاوز كل من البنية الموضوعية و السردية لرواية "موسم للمغامرة" على حد سواء ما يمكن تسميته بالدين الإستعماري الأوروبي الذي يتعلق بتصنيف التاريخ، كما وتقدمان خطاباً نصياً لتأريخ المقاومة. تعتمد هذه القراءة لرواية "موسم للمغامرة" على النظريات الحديثة عن مفهوم الدين بالإضافة إلى إستراتيجيات لامينغ للمقاومة اللغوية الواردة في كتاباته غير النثرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التاريخ الإستعماري، الإساءة للغة، الدين، المخالفة

* مدرّسة - قسم اللغة الانكليزية-كلية الآداب - جامعة تشرين - اللاذقية-سورية.

Introduction:

Season of Adventure (1960) is George Lamming's fourth narrative that articulates his emphasis on the integral relevance of language to his enterprise of decolonization. The narrative particularly contributes to the consistent progression of a recurring theme in Lamming's work, defined in one of his lectures as the mechanism of escaping the cage of one's personal history (1973). This escape from historical imprisonment entails a rejection of all constraints that frustrate changes in a certain reality. As such, Lamming contends that "[t]he novel does not only depict aspects of social reality. It explodes it. It poughs it up" (Lamming, 1992: 29). In this respect, *Season of Adventure* foregrounds the strategies of altering the reality of displacement, alienation, and exile that shape the colonial project. In this narrative, Lamming introduces San Cristobal, a representative West Indian community of the post-independence era. The narrative predicts the downfall of Cristobal's first republic and the construction of a new government that could realize the difficulties of attaining independence. The narrative's female protagonist, Fola Piggott, leads both a personal and collective journey to re-establish a solid connection with her suppressed West Indian culture. Fola's discovery of her cultural roots involves an interaction between the formulation of language and that of history. So, language in *Season of Adventure* is central to the process of historical revision for it retraces both the genealogy of the individual and the past of a nation. Such revisionary notion of language eventually projects an alternative mode of cultural maintenance and transmission that reclaims a lost historical inheritance. Arguably, Lamming's conception of language as a cultural medium of reconstructing history can be construed as a mechanism of interrogating the power structure of imposed indebtedness. In particular, *Season of Adventure* articulates both a personal and collective dissent from the restrictive obligation of a European version of history shaped by cultural suppression, strict determinism, and control. In other words, the thematic and narrative structure of *Season of Adventure* archives an alternative history which is shaped by inclusion and freedom from all colonial constraints. Thus, *Season of Adventure* can be construed as a narrative of rebellious self-purchase which queries the logic of colonial debt that generates colonized identities, cultures, and histories.

Methodology:

This article contextualizes the tropology of colonialism to address the logic of debt in Lamming's *Season of Adventure*. The West Indian experience features African and trans-Atlantic slavery as a major manifestation of Western colonization. Recent few investigations have contended that the studies of slavery have exclusively, but understandably, focused on its history and experience. However, such scholarship on slavery features a research gap related to the figural implications of slavery's presence in Western tradition. So, exposing the hidden consequences of slavery entails reading its metaphorical presence or tropology. One particular trope is related to the social, cultural, and economic debt of slavery, which develops in this struggle for recognition between two individuals bound to one another as unequals in a relationship of dependence.¹ In this respect, critic Tim Armstrong contends that debt has been one of the "figural implications

¹ See the Lordship and Bondage section that defines the structure of subordination in G.W.F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1977. 179-85.

that infiltrate the fabric of other modes of thoughts and shapes what is thinkable, informing what could be called a culture of slavery” (2012: 1). Such implication of debt has entailed the figuration of the slave as debtor and the narrative consequences of that figuration. These consequences include sacrifice as the operation of power, the slave’s attempts of foreclosure, self-purchase, and the curing of the self (2012: 6). In both African American and a wider Atlantic culture, the master-slave dialectic has evolved as a major definition of the colonizer and colonized’s relation. Colonization legalizes conventions shaped by the effects of power which perpetuate debt to the powerful and a consequent effacement of controlled identities. Colonial subjugation has also extended the colonized’s consequent need of ransom, self-redemption, and foreclosure. Debt is therefore considered one of the cultural figurations or tropes that underpin trans-Atlantic colonialism. However, such colonial debt has involved more than economic, cultural, and ensuing psychological liability to the colonizer. Colonial debt entails the colonized’s obligation to the burden of the past enforced by the colonizer’s conception of history. *Season of Adventure* can be read as a postcolonial response to the logic of both cultural and historical debt and introduces the strategies of liberation from such imposed obligations. In particular, Lamming proposes a theory of language that could be construed as conducive to the colonized’s epistemology of dissent and transcendence of colonial debt.

In his non-fiction writings that articulate anti-colonialist poetics, Lamming has repeatedly emphasized the crucial role of language in constructing the forms of human knowledge and determining power relations. In *The Pleasures of Exile* (1972), Lamming elaborates on how language is essential to the human condition as it comprises more than writing and talking. Language even becomes a reservoir and a “history of meanings” (1984: 156). In the same work, Lamming explains that language is the “product of human endeavor” (119) and lies “at the heart and horizon of every human consciousness” (30). In his 1995 interview, Lamming emphasizes the significant contribution of language in mapping out the genealogy of being and in defining the future. For Lamming, language is “the verbal memory which reconstructs our past and offers it back to us as the only spiritual possession which allows us to reflect on who we are and what we might become” (1995: 30). So, language bears a genealogical significance as it allows retracing and re-claiming the original descent of the individual. Lamming’s presentation implies that language generates the process of relocating the existence of being and of understanding both the nature and cultural properties of that being. Thus, the full possession of language endows individuals with the power of owning themselves and eventually reconstructing their identities, subjectivities, and relations to others.

Lamming’s proposition concerning the damage of language is crucial to the realization of colonial restriction of language with terms of binding and obligation. Language has been an essential colonizing tool for European countries, being central to relations of power, hegemony, and politics. In particular, a kind of “epistemic violence,” to use Gayatri Spivak’s development of the term,² has been done to language by dominant discourses of knowledge. Such violence can be considered as one strategy of manipulating language to enforce colonial control. In *Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming reveals how language has undergone damage through materialism and colonialism for the effect of wielding power. To explain this logic of damage, Lamming refers to Shakespeare’s much-quoted characters, Prospero and Caliban, respectively representative of the colonizer and

² See Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), 271-313.

colonized. Lamming suggests that Prospero's project has annihilated the existence of Caliban by severing him from the reservoir of meanings. This annihilation leads to one psychological result where the "colonized is slowly and ultimately separated from the original ground where the colonizer found him" (1984: 157). The word is the tool that Prospero has "tried on the irredeemable nature of his savage and deformed slave" (109) in order to distort Caliban's way of seeing himself. The colonial agent strives to get the colonized into his own power (156) by depriving the colonized from the power of fully realizing himself and of understanding his existence. This deprivation of self-realization develops into binding Caliban with one tradition and habit of seeing, which is the colonial condition. So, colonialism projects a restrictive "tradition of habits that become the normal way of seeing" (157). In this way, colonialism endorses one of the tactics that generate the limitation of language or what critic Curdella Forbes calls as the "abuse of language" (2002: 13). Such abuse encompasses hidden facts and tropes of silence with which the colonizer shapes language in order to control the colonized. Eventually, abusing language would lead to the enforcement of certain distorted identities and subjectivities on the colonized. As such, the colonized's subjectivity becomes bound to colonial obligations.

Lamming's argument regarding the necessity of healing language also serves to define the strategies of unpacking colonial debt. In most of Lamming's novels, healing the damage of language is the task that the colonized subject must embark. As argued before, abused language is the site of ontological fragmentation, exile, and colonization. Exile is always associated with the imposed linguistic register of Prospero. The natives in Lamming's fiction experience a particular disillusionment realized in their inability to connect with the reservoir of language. Since language is "the agent and effect of alienation" (Edwards, 2002: 62), linguistic limitation generates the inability of the colonized to reconfirm his/her subjectivity in the language of the colonizer. Such linguistic disability may even develop into a form of silence, where a native's personal history is either effaced or distorted in compliance with the demands of the colonizer's dominant narrative. Thus, colonial subjects in Lamming's novels must embark on the difficult task of unbinding and then imposing their own identities and subjectivities on Prospero's language. In other words, the colonized subject has to "christen Language afresh" (Lamming, 1984: 119). Re-christening language enunciates the need for the colonized to reconcile himself to the historical silence and its gaps that the colonizer has enforced. Such reconciliation implies severing the continuity of the colonized's historical indebtedness to the colonial condition. Through unsettling the constraints of colonial history, the colonized subject may realize the potential of changing the future. Such discovery reiterates what Lamming identifies as the ironic gift of Prospero's language. Lamming suggests that Prospero has endowed Caliban with "awareness of possibilities" by introducing "speech and concept as a way, a method, a necessary avenue towards areas of the self which could not be reached in any other way" (1984: 109). In other words, Prospero has unintentionally acquainted Caliban with the mechanism of unsettling all colonial obligations. Such mechanism exercises the faculty of awareness that unbinds the self and interrogates the existing power structures of indebtedness.

Objectives:

In Lamming's *Season of Adventure*, colonial past binds identities to particular personal and national histories. Lamming's anti-colonial proposal presents an exact explanation of the reality of colonialism or what he particularly calls "the prison of

colonialism" (2001: 36). In *Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming defines the colonial condition as being shaped by exile: "to be colonial is to be a man in a certain relation; and this relation is an example of exile. To be a colonial is to be in a state of exile. And the exile is always colonial by circumstances" (1984: 156). *Season of Adventure* presents the community of Forest Reserve that suffers from the colonial residues sustained through the antagonistic forces between the ruling class that wishes for a new sort of colonialism and the peasants who aspire for independence and freedom. *Season of Adventure* is symptomatic of the reality of enduring debt, exile, and ontological fragmentation maintained by the colonial condition. The narrative's female protagonist, Fola Piggott, is alienated from her West Indian heritage. This alienation is caused by Fola's sole orientation with a world filtered through western values. She is only cognizant of a limited language associated with her absolute exposure to the European culture. Fola attended British schools for girls and received education based entirely upon the English model and exporting British culture. Fola's home upbringing also dictates British values. She was raised by her mother, Agnes, and stepfather, Piggott, who blindly follow and consume the British standards of lifestyle. So, Fola is subjected only to the language of control, oppression, and cultural intolerance. Such language is consistent with the western logic of wielding power and maintaining colonial hegemony. Thus, Fola's lifestyle confines her to one reality that does not incorporate deep West Indian roots. Her reality does not even recognize cultural difference, opposition, or agency on behalf of the peasant community. Fola has founded her identity in the debt that reinforces destroying any non-western way of perceiving the world. Such ideological debt figures Fola's sole existence as a slave to the European perception of reality and history. Therefore, Fola's self-narrative becomes shaped by suppression or "occlusion," a central trope that the African American critic and author Toni Morrison claims to have shaped any slave narrative.³ So, Fola presents an example of the colonized self, being bound to restrictive obligations of the colonizer's dictated language, reality, and history.

Season of Adventure articulates the ritual of cleansing language, a required process for unbinding the constraints of the colonized self. Lamming's fiction is defined as a "serial art" whose design "figuratively generates new beginnings" (Paquet, 2008: 97). According to Lamming, re-starting is a "way of going forward" which is only realized by "making a complete return to the beginnings" (Kent, 1992: 104). In this context, *Season of Adventure* introduces a major trope of generating new foundations in the contours of origins. This trope is related to the return to the unconscious and aboriginal reservoir which, being unrecognized by Prospero, would enunciate the cleansing of language. In this respect, this reading of *Season of Adventure* mainly focuses on the *tonelle* Ceremony of Souls as a presentation of the rite of reconnecting the self with the realm of the unconscious. The Ceremony of Souls is San Cristobal's native religious ritual of resurrecting the dead. Fola first intends to observe the cultural event of the *tonelle* Ceremony only to please her teacher Charlot Pressior whose motivation of attending is merely anthropological. However, Fola's presence at the Ceremony is transformed from a research activity that objectively addresses the customs of the natives into an exploration of her repressed cultural roots. Such subjective exploration represents a genealogical discontinuity that requires a transformation

³ See Morrison's "The Site of Memory," 1995. Morrison quotes African American author Harriet Jacobs in claiming that a central trope of the slave narrative is occlusion which leaves the unspeakable unspoken.

in Fola's relation to language. Fola's genealogical dissent is initiated by her symbolic journey into the unconscious of language associated with a "mythic past" (Wilson-Tagoe, 1998: 89). Fola has to be symbolically reborn through returning to the realm of the unconscious that represents a latent stage of childhood. Such stage conflates the flux of language that is not formulated yet. The Ceremony at the *tonelle* presents "the terrible birth of the child's dance" (Lamming, 1982: 75) that works a deeper influence on Fola's memory. Such dance is the catalyst that instigates Fola's rebirth with a new language to redefine her identity. Fola's rebirth through her journey to the unconscious is realized in the fever, blurred vision, and hallucinations that she undergoes after the ceremony. So, Fola performs what Lamming calls the "drama of returning" (1966: 64) and reaches a world where all tropes of indebtedness and imposed restrictive history have to be erased.

The *tonelle* Ceremony prompts Fola's self-conscious re-consideration of her own relation to various personal genealogies. Lamming underlines the role of political power in the process of meaning production and shows that there is no single way to receive or conceive history (Birbalsingh, 1996: 2). It is only after reaching this awareness that the colonized subject will be empowered and able to construct alternatives to the enforced history of colonial domination. In *Season of Adventure*, Fola is indebted to the constraints of a distorted narrative of history, which has been maintained by Agnes, Piggott, and the rest of Federal Drive. Their narrative is defined by enslavement to, what Paul Gilroy calls, "historical periodization"⁴ that generates fixity and continuous indebtedness to the imposed colonial history. As argued before, acquiring a language shaped by agency creates a new self-awareness that could change the relation of debt that binds the self to certain people and histories. The Hegelian dialectic that defines the turbulent master-slave exchange is pertinent to understanding the liberatory implications of the *tonelle* Ceremony. Hegel demonstrates how the slave is an extension of the master's will, having defined his identity through the debt which is his existence, when he is defeated and chooses captivity over death. But through his labor and creation/mediation of things, the slave fabricates some kind of sovereign image of himself and becomes aware of freedom.⁵ So, the slave's struggle with subordination produces self-knowledge and agency. In *Season of Adventure*, the return to the unconscious of language, celebrated at the *tonelle* Ceremony, initiates another reverse return defined as "the return from otherness" (Hegel 105).⁶ This double return prompts Fola's recognition of her struggle with subordination to the colonial world. Such struggle gradually articulates her self-awareness, realized in a kind of dislocation and a sense of rupture from the only British world that Fola knows. In the Ceremony of Souls, the living and the dead participate in a liberating dialogue that frees both from the obligation of a colonial past. The dialogue empowers Fola who intends to break from the colonial past that has bound her identity to particular personal and national histories. Fola's contact with the mythic world shaped by the unconscious of language generates her new realization of the world as based, not on periodization, but on analysis and revision. This awareness shatters the picture frames that have defined Fola's childhood and haunted her memory as she tried to summon her past from the world beyond these pictures (Lamming, 1982: 75). The self-certain Fola then begins to suspend the memories of her British dictated childhood (Paquet, 1982: 78) and to recognize new relations with her people. She starts to

⁴ See Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 1993.

⁵ See Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1977.

⁶ Hegel equates self-consciousness with such process of return.

feel personal revolt against her mother Agnes and stepfather Piggott. Fola gets furious after realizing that her "mother was not only a liar, but also ungrateful" and has always used Fola "to make her lies sound real" (Lamming, 1982: 77). Her relation to Agnes becomes a relation to "*this woman*" (150) who is transformed into a "whore" (153). In Fola's eyes, motherhood becomes a form of whoredom due to the absence of a real and solid precursor or fatherhood. The relation between whoredom and fatherlessness, realized after the *tonelle* Ceremony, is obvious in the credibility that Fola gives to her newly discovered father in determining her relation with her mother: "The strange man's words seemed perfectly fair" (77). In the same way, Fola denies any connection with Piggott who imitates the "colonel's way of life" (121, 127). Piggott endorses upward mobility shaped by British ruling-class standards. His treatment of the peasants reveals his obsession with control and domination. Piggott's attitude represents an excess of cultural imitation or assimilation that reinforces colonial debt. Fola's rejection of Piggott's genealogy implies her transformation from being the "colonial subject and consumer of British intellectual and cultural history" into "a self-conscious producer of alternative discourses" (Bernabé, 1993: 90). In other words, Fola becomes a self-aware being and claims her liberation through an alternative search for a repressed origin and historical discourse that undergird no indebtedness to the colonial condition.

Fola's return to the unconscious reservoir of language initiates a rediscovery of the cultural memory that has been suppressed through colonialism. Rediscovering the memory of the past is central to the creation of another version of history where unheard or silenced voices emerge. In this respect, Lamming's anti-colonial poetics proposes the liberatory requirement of nurturing a natural kinship with the site from which Prospero has severed Caliban. This kinship enunciates a dialogue with the self and awakens in the colonized several levels of awareness and revelation about a suppressed memory. In *Season of Adventure*, the *tonelle* Ceremony translates such requirement of decolonization by initiating a kind of dialogue with an occluded existence and history. Since language represents the medium of possessing the past, reaching its reservoir generates a genealogical communication with the individual's original descent. The individual's reconnection with the "real" language becomes a medium for uncovering repressed ancestry through colonization. The *tonelle* Ceremony locates the flux or reservoir of language that transcends abuse, limitation, and constant debt. Reaching that stage, Fola receives a revelation imploring her to pursue her suppressed genealogy. So, she initiates a "backward glance" (1982: 49) to reach her natural father. She finds an alternative fatherhood in the "strange man" who would help her reconstruct her relation with herself and with the other people. Fola eventually discovers an alternative genealogy that initiates her liberation.

Fola's recognition of her suppressed genealogy becomes a dramatization of realizing possibilities, revising history, and redefining the colonized's future. Fola's "backward glance" represents not only a reconnection to a forgotten origin but also a drama of "cleansing for a commitment to the future" (Lamming, 1966: 64-65). As explicated before, Fola's experience at the *tonelle* redefines the way of perceiving herself and of tracing both her personal history and descent. Fola struggles to shape a cultural memory that is "*beyond* the decrepit skeletons residing near Federal Drive" (Lamming, 1982: 247). Such redefinition endows Fola with the possibility of realizing autonomy. Fola becomes free to choose a future, to destroy what has gone before, and to alter the effect of the past by inscribing new meanings on it. Such personal freedom recalls the mystery of the colonial

that Lamming emphasizes in *Pleasures of Exile*. According to Lamming, while the colonial “remains alive, his instinct, always and forever creative, must choose a way to change the meaning of this ancient [colonial] tyranny” (1984: 229). What the “backward glance” generates then is an alternative way of seeing and a new quality of perception. In *Season of Adventure*, Fola is different from the dead whose memory is their last privilege (Lamming, 1982: 246-47). She is alive and claims control on the future that she will freely choose for herself. Such future is defined by independence from colonialism’s residues and materialistic boundaries. So, Fola is no longer bound by British ruling-class values and standards. She decides to transcend and realize the reservoir of possibilities that endorse her subjectivity and self-determination. In other words, Fola becomes a rebellious dissenter.

Fola’s personal revolt enunciated by the discovery of the reservoir of language develops into a collective dissent. Fola’s realization of the self and personal history acquires public significance through “political action” (Wilson-Tagoe, 1998: 90-91). In other words, Fola’s self-discovery is acknowledged through the process of public recognition. Such contingent acknowledgement implies that Fola’s self-consciousness exists for or, to use Hegel’s analogy, “achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness” (1977: 110). So, Fola’s own self-consciousness is contingent on a larger or collective self-consciousness. Thus, Fola’s personal rebellion against fatherlessness and her mother’s “whoredom” is transformed into a popular or communal revolt against the fatherlessness and whoredom of the nation itself. In particular, Fola’s search for her origin becomes a public endeavor that male figures like Chiki and Gort join. The case of Fola, Chiki, and Gort reveals another trans-generational debt put into practice through colonial education, which is the creation of the colony’s national history. They are all debtors whose commodified selves are owed to another culture and history. So, their personal accounts contribute to a collective history, which is attached to the colonial history and shaped by imitation, compliance, and alienation. Like Fola, Chiki, the artist, has been exposed to British schooling that alienates him from his West Indian community. His exile is extended through his migration to America. The residues of colonization realized in his double alienation bind his identity. His failure to escape the obligations of cultural exile is translated into a failure to understand or transfer the sound of the West Indian music into his portraits. Gort, the drummer whose art is inspired by the peasant community, is not aware yet of the political significance of his music. He needs to realize how the sounds of West Indian steel drums could restructure the society of San Cristobal. Yet, Fola, Chiki, and Gort move beyond the logic of historical and cultural debt toward a perception of collective dissent. Chiki insists on the collective effort of envisioning the face of Fola’s father: “we must invent” (Lamming, 1982: 233). The discovery of Fola’s father even involves the whole community and influences its relations. Fola wanted to locate her father “in order to see what would happen to those who had deprived her of this knowledge” (246). This experience redefines her identity and enables her to explore the possibilities that exist outside her class. On another symbolic level, the portrait of Fola’s imagined father itself exerts a change in the whole republic: “But Chiki does not know; neither Chiki nor Fola knows that the republic will never be the same after that face has made its first appearance for the public gaze” (234). On the other hand, Fola’s search for her unknown father ultimately becomes an exploration of “alternative tradition that accommodates the African and peasant roots of the San Cristobal community, long obscured by colonial

history" (Paquet, 1982: 68). So, Fola's personal freedom initiates a collective responsibility for liberation and a shared growth as debt-free nation.

Still, *Season of Adventure* suggests that an absolute cleansing of language cannot be fully realized because of one outstanding debt related to the paradoxical nature of language. Lamming does not deny the problematics of language. In *Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming does acknowledge the numerous possibilities provided by language to define the individual. However, Lamming contends that these possibilities exist side by side with the inability of any verbal expression to encompass all possible meanings (1984: 15). Lamming translates his awareness in *Season of Adventure*. Fola is now cognizant of the possibilities of language. Through this new realization of language, being an instrument of power, can the colonized intellectual participate in what Michael Foucault calls the production of truth⁷, encompassing new systems of thought and ideologies. So, Fola feels the necessity to define herself as "Fola and *other than*" (Lamming, 1982: 184) in order to explore the other possibilities for her identity. Likewise, Chiki becomes "Chiki and *other than*" because his ugliness engulfs his divine nature (218). Yet, language is paradoxical, being loaded with possible meanings but limited and unable to express all of these meanings. This is the problematic of language that Powell and Gort acknowledge in the beginning: "Might as well call your dog a cat an' hope to hear him mew. Is only words an' names what don' signify nothing" (17). This paradox is the gift and curse of language that "frees and imprisons at the same time" (Gikandi, 1992: 81). In other words, language confines the individual but at the same time gives that individual more than one definition. According to Lamming, it is this paradox that has maintained the colonizer's abuse of language and consequent control on the colonized. Lamming articulates this etiology of paradox through Baako who prophesies the fall of the Republic: "But the main problem was language. It was language which caused the First Republic to fall. And the Second would suffer the same fate; the Second and the Third" (Lamming, 1982: 363). Thus, this paradoxical language cannot guarantee complete dissent from the colonial debt.

However, *Season of Adventure* proposes the music of steel drums as a mediator to reach absolute language cleansing and cultural and historical transcendence. The colonial abuse of language and its ensuing paradoxical nature require a search for a mediator. The West Indian music of steel drums is the language that Prospero cannot recognize or abuse. The vernacular language of the drums has connected Fola with her fragmented present and lost ancestral inheritance. The steel drum has the power to recall spiritual and cultural connections with a past that colonialism had severed. Such instrument has created a dialogue between the living and the dead, between the past and the present, and between the self and the others. The music of the steel drums triggers the collective "backward glance" to generate change, redefine the future, and arm both the individual and the community with a repository of possibilities. The language of the steel drums becomes the mediator that Baako announces at the end of the narrative. He proclaims that the music of the steel drums is the language that "every nation needs if its promises and its myths are to become a fact" (Lamming, 1982: 363). This West Indian music also presents a counterculture shaped by multiplicity and tolerance. The steel drums embody the paramount inclusion of the peasants in the community of San Cristobal. So, the language of the drums becomes a medium for both the islanders' revolution against the ruling class and their reconstruction of San Cristobal's community.

⁷ See Foucault's *Microfisica del Potere*, 1977.

The structure of *Season of Adventure* presents a counter-discourse to the imperial registers that sustain historical debt, such as linearity, monologism, and supposed objectivity. Lamming's anti-colonialist politics requires the transformation of the novel into both an exploration of the past through the present and a "subjectiviz[ation]" of history (Schwarz, 2003: 64). In this respect, the structure of *Season of Adventure* rejects the linear and supposedly objective colonial history and replaces it with a subjective historical discourse that explores the past through the lens of the present. The "backward glance" is the trope that signifies the collective possibility of changing the present through the past. The conversation between the present and the past, articulated in the *tonelle* Ceremony, challenges the naturalistic representations of colonial history which sustain strict determinism and the impossibility of change. For Lamming, historical discourse should be polyphonic in order to unmask the gaps in the imperial discourse of history. In this concern, *Season of Adventure* is shaped by a polyphonic structure. The polyphonic novel, as Mikhail Bakhtin extensively demonstrates in *The Dialogic Imagination*, requires as one of its conditions of existence a range of popular voices. Such structure permits the voice of the dispossessed to become integrated into the larger discursive or symbolic community.⁸ As explored earlier, *Season of Adventure* integrates the voices of the social outcasts and the marginalized in its depiction of San Cristobel. The polyphonic structure of *Season of Adventure* also takes a different dimension related to its merging of genres. Lamming weaves fiction, myth, history, and theory into his fiction, hence creating the flexible and versified structure of the narrative which makes it a counter-discourse to the ideology of abstraction in the depiction of colonial history. Also, the polyphonic structure of *Season of Adventure* is a translation of the "West Indian Story" (Paquet, 1997: 764), the multi-voiced and heterogeneous narrative of the modern West Indian. In this respect, the narrative of *Season of Adventure* functions as a counter-discourse to imperial history, its debt-related language, its missing components, and imposed limitations that only serve to glorify the supposed victory of the British Empire in subjecting the colonies to its rule.

Conclusion:

In essence, Lamming's *Season of Adventure* contributes to the scholarship on the theme of debt in literature. Lamming's narrative articulates a reconstructed version of historical discourse that can be read as an interrogation of the power structures of indebtedness. Lamming's narrative reveals how the logic of cultural and historical debt has been used by the colonizer as a means of enforcing and maintaining colonial relations of power and powerlessness. To such effect, this reading of *Season of Adventure* integrates Lamming's theory regarding the full acquisition of language. Such linguistic possession can be re-interpreted as an effective strategy of unbinding the self from its commodified relation to others and re-defining the role of the present in constructing the future. On the textual level, *Season of Adventure* is a complex narrative structured by disintegration and transformation. The narrative's trope of the "backward glance" is a dialogic encounter with the past that refashions and opens up the discourses of history to new revelations. The polyphonic structure of *Season of Adventure* also sustains the inclusion of suppressed cultural memories and historical perspectives about the West Indian reality. Thus, the narrative of *Season of Adventure* presents a debt-free West Indian archive in the present, shaped by cultural maintenance and transmission.

⁸ See Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, 1992. 278.

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