The Genesis of Violence and Self-Destruction in
George Lamming’s Water With Berries

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Abstract:
This paper examines George Lamming’s Water with Berries, a postcolonial text, to reveal the counter literary strategy used by the writer to redefine the colonized against the Western cultural hegemony and the attempts done by the colonial writers to misrepresent and stereotype the colonized people. The paper discusses how the counter text with its alternative interpretation challenges the constitution upon which the canonical work has been based. Rewriting and writing back represent the textual resistance to the misrepresentations and ideas expressed by the center. Lamming explores the colonial experience and its effects on the social, moral, cultural values of previously colonized people. By re-writing Shakespeare’s The Tempest, Lamming provides an alternative reading that might appropriate or undermine the original text. Thus, writing from a post-colonial perspective creates a new perception of colonialism and its effects.

Keywords: Colonization, Stereotyping, Violence, Cultural hegemony, Language.

William Shakespeare’s play, The Tempest, and specifically, its theme of colonialism as a mode of civilizing the colonized, has long inspired most of the postcolonial writers to re-write this text from a postcolonial perspective. George Lamming and most of the postcolonial writers find in Prospero and Caliban a powerful metaphor for colonialism. Caliban’s name has been adopted to represent all those victims and oppressed who are struggling to revolt against their oppression. For Lamming, Caliban has become a symbol of the colonized people of the Caribbean who are enslaved and exploited by the colonizers, robbed of their history, traditions, religion and freedom; they taught a language that was not their own. This subjugation of Caliban creates in him a sense of division; Lamming argues in Pleasure of Exile that “Caliban is a Man and other than man. Caliban is his convert, colonized by language, this attempt at transformation which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban’s exile. Exiled from his gods, exiled from his nature, exiled from his own name!” (15)

Lamming adopts the form and content of Shakespeare’s The Tempest as a “political allegory”. Sandra Pouchet Paquet says that
Water with Berries “combine both social realism with allegory as a way of linking past history with typical conflicts in the present.” (8) Lamming chooses to re-write The Tempest, for he considers the play as prophetic of the future of both cultures, British and Caribbean. He says: “it is Shakespeare’s capacity for experience which leads me to feel that The Tempest was also prophetic of a political future which is our present. Moreover, the circumstances of my life, both as a colonial and exiled descendant of Caliban in the twentieth century, is an example of that prophecy.” (PE 13) He adds that “It is my intention to make use of The Tempest as a way of presenting a certain state of feeling which is the heritage of the exiled and colonial writer from British Caribbean” (PE 9). Nevertheless, Lamming reverses the situation in Water With Berries; unlike The Tempest, we find Caliban in Prospero’s land. Actually, this reversion is necessary, and it is an eventual consequence of colonialism. Helen Tiffin comments on this point saying, while in the past it implied a journey and dislocation for the imperialist, decolonization today implies the reverse journey, which always ends in the pain of displacement and disillusionment. This immigration of the colonized leads eventually to a sense of alienation and exile when they are confronted by “the reality where they are”. They have that sense of disconnection and disorientation.

By virtue of the imperial education, the colonized people are led to believe that their success and future is elsewhere, rather than in their society. The colonized is conditioned to feel inferior, part of this sense of inferiority and the belief in the superiority of English Culture, which are implanted in the colonized mind, are due to that education. Lamming confirms this fact, describing the Caribbean society as “a society made up with people who always saw their fulfillment elsewhere, outside of the society. That aspect of migration is going to be very central to the psychology of the whole generation of people. The question was not so much “what am I going to do here,” but “when will the opportunity arrive for me to leave?” (Kent 95-96).

Due to historical conditions, the Caribbean, more than any other colonized societies, have been heavily influenced by the English Education for they have no collective pre-colonial history to unite them; so, they are highly dependent on the European education they are receiving. Because they lack their own words, the Caribbean use the words of the colonizer. The colonizer, by virtue of their language, controls the native culturally and mentally. Therefore, the colonized people are trapped in the linguistic dualism; they are caught between two cultural realms. Their education leads them to feel uprooted from their homeland. Eventually, the colonial educational system creates a sense of alienation.
For Lamming, the “gift of language” is another way of domination; it “is the deepest and most delicate bond of involvement. It has a certain finality. Caliban will never be the same again. Nor, for that matter, will prospero.” (PE 109) Lamming draws on the following speech from *The Tempest* to illustrate the importance of language in the colonial attempt and subsequent decolonization:

**You taught me language, and my profit on’t
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!”** (1.2.362-64)

So, Caliban “can never be regarded as a heir of that Language, since his use of Language is no more than his way of serving Prospero; and Prospero’s instruction in this Language is only his way of measuring the distance which separates him from Caliban.” (PE 110) Prospero never allows Caliban to develop language skill beyond what he teaches him. In spite of their education, the Caribbean “never accorded the power to see. [They are] always the measure of the condition which [their] physical appearance has already defined. [they are] the excluded, that which is eternally below possibility, and always beyond reach.” (PE 107) The “mother country” never recognizes the Caribbean as equal to its own citizens, instead, the Caribbean are identified with the slaves, or in other words, with Caliban. The experience of migration offered those colonially educated Caribbeans a new “reality” from which they would continue to reflect on their various personalities.

In *Water With Berries*, Lamming examines the influence of political and economic history of colonization on three levels; as Sandra Pouchet Paquet argues, “the world of the private and hidden self; the world of social relations, and the community of men” (1), and how these three levels are related to each other. Besides, Lamming explores the present in relation to the past and future. The novel sees the colonizer and the colonized “as inevitably tied by bonds of past violence in a “blood knot” which issues in death or life in death, and in personality disintegration.” (Tiffin 39) the Caribbean are divided and caught between two worlds; they cannot find fulfillment in either. What Lamming tries to do in this novel is to uproot that deep sense of inadequacy instilled in Caliban by Prospero.

It is true that Lamming uses Prospero and Caliban as a metaphor for the historical roles of the colonizer and colonized; however, he uses this metaphor to comment on the changes in these roles; Lamming presents Caliban in revolt. Lamming argues that even though Caliban is enslaved and exploited by Prospero, “[yet] Prospero is afraid of Caliban. He is afraid because he knows that his encounter with Caliban is, largely, his encounter with himself.” (PE 15) In *Water with Berries*, Lamming reverses the power relation
between the colonized and the colonizer. Lamming, challenges the motif of master/slave relationship; he retells the story of Caliban’s rebellion from a different perspective. Lamming explores the weakness of English control and the possibility of the Caribbean to challenge that control and take power into their hands. According to Lamming, the only way for Caliban to escape is through violence. Lamming says “It seems to me that there is almost a therapeutic need for a certain kind of violence in the breaking. There cannot be a parting of the ways. There has to be a smashing” (Kent 91). The colonizer dehumanizes and exploits the colonized and portrays his world as a society without values. So, from the very beginning, the colonizer refuses to recognize the humanity of the colonized.

The title of the novel is derived from Caliban’s words to Prospero in The Tempest:

When though cam’st first
Thou strok’st me and made much of me; wouldst give me
Water with berries in’t, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night. (i.ii. 333-37)

What Caliban gets in return is exploitation Prospero made much of Caliban. So, the betrayal is implicit in these lines, which reflect the nature of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer whose kindness was a mask to enslave the colonized.

In this novel, we have three artists – Teeton the painter, Roger the musician, and Derek the actor – who left their island, San Cristobal, for personal or political reasons. They believe that by coming to England, they will liberate themselves from the oppressive colonial system which embedded their success. They represent a composite picture of Caliban who has mastered Prospero’s art and returned only to haunt him, and turn back violently on that master. (Brydon 84) They struggle to keep their past histories at bay in order to succeed as artists in exile. They want to improve themselves in London, but their journey ends in “failure and violence”. The three characters disintegrate into “false stereotypes and self-destruction”. Instead of doing something for their lives, their immigration brings them to the point of “artistic bankruptcy”. Derek turns himself into the black rapist of the colonialist consciousness, Teeton becomes the ungrateful slave who murders his benefactress, and Roger, out of his guilt after Nicole’s suicide, turns to an arsonist. These revolutionary acts made by those characters take them directly back into that violent past, and ironically into those racist stereotypes of murder, rape, arson, which provide the justification for the white violence (Tiffin 51). So, the colonized and colonizer can never extricate themselves from the nightmare of the colonial history. It is impossible to escape the past.
All three men find that the past, from which they try to escape, follows them to England. Although they are talented, they cannot get rid of the sense of inferiority that they were born on the island of San Cristobal. Roger believes that their land “had no antiquity; no magic of remoteness; no trail which led to some prize of ruins that might be waiting for discovery. It was always a kind of embarrassment for Roger that the island could not say “before the birth of Christ” . . .” (70).

Derek represents Caliban in revolt. He starts his career successfully when he plays the lead role in *Othello*, then, this success sooner deteriorates, leaving him with the role of the corpse. Derek’s role is to be powerless, without a voice, unable to interact with the living. His silence reflects the oppression which the colonized suffered from. This sense of failure and also the sense of guilt that he is behind the separation of Roger and Nicole, lead to his mental breakdown and result in his rape of the white heroine in *A summer’s Error in Albion*, acting out “the monster stereotype of his white colonizer’s imagination” (Tiffin 46). Unlike the rape in *The Tempest* which is hinted at, the rape in the novel takes place in front of all the English audience:

> And the audience saw it, almost watch it, as though the girl’s scream had manacled every witness to his seat, made impotent by their lack of warning before so uniquely brutal an assault. They watched it in speechless unbelief until the curtain raced down through that terrible hush and fell, trembling like a veil over their fury. (242)

This violet act represents a violation and a challenge to the legacy of the colonized/colonizer relationship. Derek’s violation of the white actress and the audience symbolizes the uprising of the colonized against the colonizers. So, Derek’s act is sadistic just like that of the colonizer.

In reality, Derek’s sense of inferiority, insecurity, and guilt are the reasons behind his violence. According to Lamming, Derek’s power is limited because his use of language is limited; this limitation creates in him a kind of oppression which leads at the end to react violently to the pressure of the English society. The continuous attempts of the colonizer to dehumanize the colonized and treat him in a humiliating way keep the colonized in a state of rage, which yields aggressiveness and anger inside him. Being orphan and rootless results in his sense of insecurity that adds to his trouble with sustaining lasting relationships with others. Derek obsessed by his feeling of guilt because he informed Roger that his wife might cheat on him; an act which leads to Nicole’s suicide. His role and Roger’s
arson reminds us of Iago in *Othello* who plays on Othello’s distrust in Desdemona.

Roger is another West Indian immigrant who comes to England in the hope of achieving a success in his career as a musician, and to escape the influence of his father. Teeton thinks of Roger that he “assumes the dimensions of drunken and rebellion Caliban”. Roger rejects his native land because it is an impure place filled with “racial heterogeneity.” This feeling ultimately leads him to reject the idea of being a father of a racially mixed child; he denies his child from his wife, Nicole. Paquet describes Roger’s relationship with Nicole and his rejection of the child as metaphors for his “crippling rejection of the racial and cultural hybrid that is his heritage.” (92) He rejects his birth place for its lack of history. He is alienated from his land and culture which he considers mixed. Before meeting his wife, he was in a state of deep repression; he was “vulnerable, afraid, he might have gone dead in his pride if Nicole had not arrived. And she had found him at the very height of danger; he hated the world around him, knew all of it to be in conspiracy against him; had come to see an agent of malice in every face he met.” (80) He considers his land as unnatural and impure and believes in the purity of England. He believes in the concept of the racial purity and considers their child as a violation to that concept. He says that “the child won’t be mine. The child won’t be mine.” (78) This means that he neither denies nor accepts the fact that the child is his own, but what is torturing him is the cultural identity of the child. Obsessed by his self-destructive and violent nature, Roger cut himself off from all those who care about him, especially Nicole. His feelings towards her are ambivalent; he hates and loves her at the same time. After knowing about her possible infidelity, he “had become a blabbering curse, ranting until his memory ran short of crimes committed against his kind; and finally, he collapsed like a parcel that had burst.” (113) Toward the end of the novel, Roger overwhelmed by “a sudden hatred of Nicole” (218). His frustration against his mixed heritage results in his desire to destroy all the houses of the West Indian immigrants. Roger “had lost all interest in the promise of this town; he commits arson all over the west Indian part of the town, which results in his imprisonment.” (220) It is clear that Roger’s character is one-dimensional, begins and ends in the same mental and emotional state, which is the result of the oppression inflicted by colonization. Paquet describes Roger’s violence as being “a revolutionary act in that it is calculated to destroy the terms of his colonial relationship to the world in which he lives.” (93) Paquet argues that Roger’s distress is in “his inability to enter into the race as well as the culture which colonized his history.” (92-3) Roger feels
ashamed of his racial history of being colonized; that is why he cut himself off from everyone in San Cristobal, even from his father.

Roger represents the mimic man who wants to identify himself with the colonizer; he is obsessed with the idea of leaving the chaos of his island and going to the “mother country”. Due to his father, Judge Capildeo, he grows detached from his home, roots, and himself. His father “had nothing he could call his own, nothing at all.” (71) After the colonization of the island, the island loses its “magic remoteness”. Roger admits that he likely hated his father from the beginning. (71) He considers his father as a puppet, a mimic man, who just follows the rules which are instituted for the colonial and tries his best to succeed. His father raised him to feel that England is his home; this could be the reason behind his desire to immigrate to England. England for him is the symbol of purity, which results in his rejection of his culture and history, and his mixed races.

The novel begins with Teeton planning to depart for San Cristobal after seven years as a tenant in the Old Dowager’s rooming house. His return is postponed when he discovers the body of Nicole in his room. Nicole committed suicide for she could not bear that idea of abortion that Roger asks for. The Old Dowager and Teeton buried Nicole beneath the trunk of a tree in the backyard and escape to an island in the North Sea to protect Teeton against any suspicion in Nicole’s death. That journey becomes a journey to the Old Dowager’s past. Old Dowager’s genuine affection leads Teeton to postpone telling her about his plan to return to San Cristobal. Teeton’s attempt to break his attachment to the Old Dowager, to return to his island and the revolution is in progress, is parallel to Caliban’s struggle to free himself from Prospero’s colonial legacy. We learned later through Jermey, an old San Cristobal acquaintance of Teeton, that his wife, Randa, is responsible for his safe departure from San Cristobal. Randa prostitutes herself with the American ambassador in exchange for his release from prison; an act for which Teeton cannot ever forgive neither Randa nor himself, and leads to Randa’s suicide. We never heard from Randa herself, her story is narrated by others; she is absent from the text. The obvious parallel in Shakespeare’s text is Sycorax. Teeton, in his exile, overwhelmed with shame and guilt for he did not have a braved imprisonment and faced his death just like his fellow revolutionaries in San Cristobal.

Teeton’s relationship with the Old Dowager is controlled through obedience and domesticity. Paquet describes Teeton as the Old Dowager’s dog, who is totally dependant on her to survive; in her realm, “the former revolutionary is thoroughly tamed and domesticated.” (88) In fact, their relationship is reciprocal, for the Old Dowager is also dependant on Teeton. She feels younger when he is
with her, he provides her with a sense of hope and promise for the future. Lamming uses the metaphor of the dead black tree trunk to reflect the relationship between the “mother country” and immigrants. In the beginning, the Old Dowager rejects the tree trunk, which represents the West Indian immigrants, to be put in Teeton’s room, then, she grows accustomed to it. She even resists Teeton’s decision to get rid of it. Just like the tree trunk in his room, he feels that he is trapped there, he thinks that his loyalty should be to the revolutionaries, but the Old Dowager’s hospitality and care for him make him feel that “she has earned a brief exemption from all codes.”

Teeton is the character most influenced by the colonizing effect of language. He represents Caliban in that he is educated to a point where he services the white culture. Old Dowager’s language maintains her power and control over Teeton. It is apparent that “this code was complex” (31) and in order that Teeton could tell the Old Dowager about his departure, “it would be necessary to violate the code.” (32) Old Dowager’s access to language keeps Teeton under her spell; she is the controller of language. Her whiteness allows her access to the language. She uses silence, whenever she wants to maintain a distance between them; “Silence was allowed as a form of protection against any further question.” (34) Old Dowager’s silence is a kind of disciplined act.

Teeton’s connection to the Old Dowager embraces him until he is finally forced to murder her. Their relationship reflects the weight of the colonial relationship between England and the Caribbean. This relationship, which ultimately breaks down, is built on language, respect, formalities, and custom to give power to the Old Dowager. This kind of close bond between Teeton and Old Dowager symbolically reflects the bond between colonized and colonizer that leads to the necessity of decisive and violent rupture from this dependence, which underlies their relationship. Fanon argues that the colonizer and colonized do not need each other, but that the colonized people’s state of dependence, in fact, is created by the colonizers by virtue of their technological superiority to exploit the colonized people (96).

Another symbol that could be used as a metaphor for the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer is the “tulips”, which represent the authority that the Old Dowager has over Teeton. Lamming says that like a “guard on parade”, the tulips were “meek and grateful for the honour of her gaze” (38), and “there was a pride of ownership in her eyes as she watched over the obedience of her plants.” (39) This reflects how deep the bond between Old Dowager and Teeton. Both Teeton and the Old Dowager represent two different races involved in colonization. Though it seems that they were fine at...
the beginning, they could not escape the colonial past and history. After she takes him to the island off the coast of England, suspicion arouses the fear that has never been acknowledged between them. When Fernando, her husband’s brother and former lover, told her about the rape of her daughter, Myra, and the tragedy that happened on the island of San Cristobal, she has begun to distrust Teeton and suspects him of treachery of the “ancestral beast which possessed his kind, a miracle of cunning and deceit, forever in hiding, dark and dangerous as the night.” (234)

Old Dowager’s husband, Prospero, deserted his wife after suspecting her and his brother, taking his daughter, who was not his real daughter, to San Cristobal. So, the Old Dowager was separated from her daughter and condemned to suffer the pain of the loss of her daughter. There, Myra degraded at the hand of her father’s servant and his men. Fernando informed Teeton how his natives, … took her body, like cannibals feeding on some carcass they had never hoped, never dreamed they might ever taste. God, how they brutalized her beauty. For she was that: beautiful; an absolute beauty until they set the hounds upon her. Can you imagine it? Or perhaps you can, you can. Perhaps you can imagine how they made the hounds violate the sex. The animals. The very creatures which had been her fondest pets. Those monsters stirred up the animals’ lust for her; and let them loose over her body. Just as they had seen their master do with some of them. His own field servants. Oh, yes my brother, come from the same blessed lions, the same ancestry of privilege and blood; my brother himself had made the devil’s crime a common sport upon his servants. Male and female alike. (228)

But what Fernando fails to see is the historical violence enacted first upon the bodies of the Africans. It appears that the violent acts are the sport of the Old Dowager’s husband. These acts of violence turn against him when the opportunity has come; Myra is raped and savaged in revenge for similar treatment that her father has given his slaves. So, the colonizer is the initiator of using violence, and the violence of the colonized is the natural reaction to the violence inflicted by the colonizer, for the colonizer left no other choice for the colonized. The rape of Myra is discussed further by Lamming in his interview with Kent, pointing out that “the rage inflicted on her is really that intended for Prospero, for she cannot in the minds of Prospero’s victims be separated from his privilege and his history” (Drayton 100). Moreover, Paquet says that in Water With Berries, “the
revolt in San Cristobal that destroys the Gore-Brittian estates and leads to the violation of Prospero’s daughter, Myra is one stage in Caliban’s continuing revolt against Prospero’s absolute power.” (85)

When Teeton meets Myra on the heath, she is one of the placeless and homeless victims of Prospero’s colonial experience; she is physically and emotionally abused. She told Teeton about her story; “I was hardly three when we arrived on the island . . . Five thousand miles away from home, and not a face that resembled our own. No native of intelligence to keep him company. Just the two of us.” (145) She said that “he taught me everything . . . Nature was familiar as my own hands. The island becomes my only home. I could name every plant, every flower. . . . he was the only school I had ever known. Until the day he died.” (145) Myra attempts to bring Teeton to a deeper understanding of his past. He is torn about his own part in this history, since the servants are his comrades. Lamming says that Myra and Teeton, “as versions of Caliban and Miranda,” share “an ignorance that is also the source of some vision. It is, as it were, a kind of creative blindness.” (PE 115) But their exchange remains unfulfilled in the novel. (Paquet 86) The parallel between Randa’s decision to offer her body in exchange for Teeton’s life and freedom and the privilege Teeton claims for Myra distinguishes the histories of European and African women in colonial and postcolonial narratives.

The theme of revolt against the inherited colonial relationship is balanced by the equally important theme of reconciliation in the Ceremony of souls that Teeton describes to Myra on the heath. This comparison also has its own parallel in The Tempest. Paquet connects the Haitian ceremony of souls to the storm which is conjured by Prospero’s magic, causing the shipwreck; “The Haitian ceremony of souls is Lamming’s symbol of the dialogue between the living and the dead, the present and the past, as a means of liberating the living from the dead hard of the past that haunts and confines human consciousness” (8). In his interview with George Kent, Lamming says that since the present is the creation of the dead, so, the past can only be healed through a “continuing dialogue between the living and the dead” (Drayton 94). This ceremony gives a chance to a meaningful reconciliation of the present neo-colonial experience with its historical past that is never achieved in Water With Berries, for the three characters can not break from their colonial bonds. Both the colonizer and the colonized share a “common history of lost innocence.”

But the question raised, here, is why Lamming inflicts his violence on women; Old Dowager’s murder, Myra’s gang-rape, and the rape of the white actress in front of the white audience. Fanon says, in Black Skin, White Masks; to possess white women sexually is to possess “white civilization and dignity and make them mine” (63),
possessing a white woman is equal to the possession of colonial power and privilege. The violence enacted on the bodies of women in Lamming’s narrative also points to the continuity of imperial patriarchal control in a post-colonial and nationalist narrative. Eventually, the hope and dreams of the three characters turn to ashes. Just like Caliban, the three artists fail to bring order into their lives, and their reaction to their failure to assert themselves turns to violence. All destroyed by their crimes of rape, murder, and arson. So, the novel ends in violent nihilism. They react violently to their feeling of powerlessness (Joseph 68). Fanon points out that “The violence of the colonial regime and the counterviolence of the colonized balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity” (46). Fernando’s words to Teeton are prophetic, when he admits that being colonizer was a curse “That experiment in ruling over your kind. It was a curse. The wealth it fetched was a curse. The power it brought was a curse. That’s why my brother found it to his liking. He knew it could deform whatever nature it touched. A curse I tell you. A curse! And it will come back to plague my race one of us dies.” (229) These lines foreshadow Fernando’s death; he is shot and killed by Old Dowager when he tries to stab Teeton. Fernando allows his feelings about the islanders to cloud his vision of Teeton. In spite of her act to protect Teeton, this violent act creates distrust on both sides. The Old Dowager’s act of protecting Teeton, makes him her prisoner; he decides to escape from the Old Dowager and his enslavement. He kills the Old Dowager in order to affect his escape, though the details of the murder are not given; “he had burnt the Old Dowager out of his future. He had burnt her free; burnt her losses; burnt her husband; burnt her lover; he was burning her into eternity.”

So, the original violence of the colonizer has doubled back upon its source, bringing disease, madness, rape, murder, and suicide back to England, Prospero’s original island, itself now a postcolonial space. Nair notes that “the concatenation of madness, sexuality and violence … dramatizes Lamming’s sense of the prevalent disease of colonialism” (Nair 66) Lamming explains that Water with Berries allegorizes the decline of empire through the character of the Old Dowager (Drayton 100). So, in this reading, Old Dowager symbolizes Prospero – figure whom Caliban succeeds in destroying, and Teeton’s murder symbolizes his rejection of the colonial control that the colonizer tries to exert on the colonized.

The novel ends in a nihilistic destruction. Lamming makes it clear that these three artists suffer psychologically, until the point where they rebel and make violent departure from the authoritative dominance of Prospero and his language. In fact, there are two
endings for this novel; an opening ending and closed ending. The British edition (Longman, 1971) ends with a page that is not found in the American edition; Teeton and his group proclaim that he is innocent and wait for the trail to begin. The American edition ends in tragedy and despair caused by the Manichean world of “them and us” that is implicit in the colonial situation.

References

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فصل العنف والتدمير الذاتي في رواية جورج لامنغ: "ماء وتوت"

يتناول البحث دراسة احدى روايات أدب ما بعد الاستعمار وهي رواية جورج لامنغ "ماء وتوت" للكاتب جورج لامنغ لاظهار الاسلوب الذي استخدموه الكاتب كنهج مضاد في إعادة تعريف المُستعمَر ضد الهيمنة الثقافية الغربية والمحاولات التي قام بها الكتاب الغربيون في تصويرهم الخاطئ والتميزي للشعوب المُستعمرة. وناقش البحث كيف ان النص البديل مع تفسيراته الجديدة يتحدى المكونات التي استند عليها النص الأصلي. إن اعادة كتابة الالتباس الغربي والكتابة كرد عكسي يمثلان مقاومة نصية ضد هذه التمثلات والتصويرات والمفاهيم الخاطئة التي تم التعبير عنها من قبل المركز، اي الغرب.

وقد قام لامنغ ببحث التجربة الاستعمارية وتأثيراتها على القيم الاجتماعية والأخلاقية والثقافية للشعوب التي تم استعمارها سابقا. وبإعادة كتابة سريحة "العاصرة" للكاتب المسرحي وليام شكسبير، قام لامنغ بتقديم قراءة بديلة للنص الأصلي والتي قد تصحح أو تضعف النص الأصلي. لذا فإن الكتابة من منظور ما بعد استعماري يخلق فيما جديدا للاستعمار وتأثيراته.