

Postcolonial Travel Writing: Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse in O.A Bushnell's *the Return of Lono*

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Received	Revised	Accepted
31-12-2022	14-02-2023	27-03-2023

Abstract - This paper analyzes O.A Bushnell's *the Return of Lono* from postcolonial perspective, focusing on the ambivalence of colonial discourse and the resulting contradiction which ultimately undermine Western claim of superiority. This novel dramatizes the arrival of Captain Cook's expedition on the Hawai'ian isles from the first-person perspective of Jonathan Forrest as he reminisces of their prior expedition. The Westerners' view of an idealized and imagined Hawai'i constructs Hawai'i as a space which is exotic and primitive while simultaneously promotes the idea of beauty and welcoming. While previously abiding on the Western paradigm which denigrates the natives as animalistic and savage Others, Forrest's perspective unsettles this dominant thought and contextualizes the resulting ambivalence within colonial discourse. This paper employs the concept of contact zone as stated by Pratt and the theory of colonial discourse and ambivalence as is proposed by Ashcroft et al. The finding concurs that every exertion of colonial thought will result in resistance as by nature, the colonial discourse itself is intertwined with ambivalence.

Keywords: travel writing, postcolonialism, ambivalence

Abstrak - Penelitian ini menganalisis novel *the Return of Lono* karya O.A Bushnell dari perspektif pascakolonial, berfokus pada ambivalensi wacana kolonial dan kontradiksinya yang mengarah kepada penegasian klaim superioritas Barat. Novel ini mendramatisasi kedatangan ekspedisi Kapten Cook di kepulauan Hawai'i dari sudut pandang orang pertama Jonathan Forrest yang dinarasikan secara retrospektif. Pandangan orang Barat tentang imajinasi Hawai'i yang diidealkan dan dibayangkan memproyeksikan Hawai'i sebagai ruang yang eksotis dan primitif dan di sisi lain mempromosikan gagasan keindahan dan penyambutan. Perspektif Forrest yang awalnya memegang paradigma Barat yang menempatkan penduduk asli sebagai Sang Liyan dengan insting barbar dan naluri hewanih pada akhirnya mengkritisi wacana kolonial dan mengkontekstualisasikan keberadaan ambivalensi yang dihasilkan dalam wacana kolonial. Tulisan ini menggunakan konsep zona kontak seperti yang dikemukakan oleh Pratt dan juga teori wacana kolonial dan ambivalensi merujuk kepada argumentasi Ashcroft. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa setiap pembentukan wacana kolonial selalu berujung pada resistensi mengingat hakikat wacana kolonial yang tidak terlepas dari ambivalensi.

Kata kunci : sastra perjalanan, paskakolonial, ambivalensi

INTRODUCTION

Literature about travel, or travel writing have been a pivotal and recurring genre of Western literary canon. As Hulme and Young elaborates, writing and travel have always been intimately connected, and both "the biblical and classical examples of Western literature, such as Exodus, the punishment of Cain, Odyssey and the Argonauts provide references and inter texts for modern writers." (2002, p. 1) travel narratives have existed for as long as people have journeyed, travelled and have told stories about their travel. Travel writing presents a plethora of experiences, dealing with the dialectics of place and self in which the act of writing about place can be presented either in first-person or third-person point of view.

Historically the studies of travel writing emphasize upon the early modern period of British and other European writers on exploration, scientific endeavor and other forms of travel narratives from missionaries, soldiers, authors or politicians. (Das & Youngs, 2019, p. 13) It was only in 2002 through the publication of Hulme and Young's *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* that the discussion of travel narratives began to be more proliferated, diversified and more historically nuanced, focusing on writers either outside of or in the periphery of Western canon. Within the discourse of literary studies, travel writing studies is a burgeoning field of academic enquiry,



emphasizing on the circulation and acquisition of knowledge from other regions and the differing form of cross-cultural interaction and exchange. (Thompson, 2016, p. 5)

The debate on what constitutes travel writing mainly focuses on the issue of fictionality and non-fictional narrative. This polemic is addressed by Thompson, who posits the question concerning “what we class as travel writing, and what we exclude from the genre, are perennially matters of debate.”(2011, p. 12) Some scholars argue for a broader definition of this genre, while others advocate for a more narrow and exclusive conceptualization of this term. One example of a critic who delineates the factual nature of travel narrative is Fussell who argues that “travel book profess to be a representation of a journey, and of events on that journey, that really took place.” (Fussell, 1980, p. 15) The format and thematic feature of this particular definition of travel writing, as Fussell further elaborates is a retrospective, first-person account of the author’s own journey experience. His account emphasizes how a travel narrative should only constitute factual event; recounting events based upon the first-hand experience on the author.

On the other hand, it cannot be understated how the terms travel itself, or movement through space is always an integral element of literary texts. This context influences Borm’s attempt to define travel writing as, “a collective term for a variety of texts both fictional and non-fictional whose main theme is travel.” (Borm, 2004, p. 25) By this definition, Borm emphasizes how the issue of travel is also a recurring theme in fictional literature instead of limited only to a retrospective account of the author’s real journey. It is further explored by Hulme and Young on how “all travel writings are textual artifacts that have been constructed by their writers/publisher” (Hulme & Young, 2007, p. 3), even a factual narrative includes some fictive events/dialogues as it is a reflection of travel, instead of the authentic or original travel experience. To concur, it can therefore be stated that both fictional and factual narratives which foregrounds travel as the central theme is classified as travel narrative.

The publication of Said’s *Orientalism* (1977), a seminal work in postcolonialism which explores the representation of the Orient through cultural productions such as travel writing and ethnography illustrates the intertwined nature between travel writing, knowledge and power. Said argues how “people, places and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires greater authority, and use, than the actuality it describes (Said, 1997, p. 93) Travel writing is considered as a major part of postcolonial corpus, offering particular insight on how colonial discourse operates and manifested, especially through textual practices related with the discourse of differences which justify the colonial project. (Lindsay, 2010, p. 21)(Edwards & Graulund, 2010, p. 7) Travel writing seldom focuses on the travel itself, but more on the issue of place and people, how different place and people is conceptualized and then re-imagined. The idea of foreign landscapes and peoples is associated with the subsequent desire to conquer and possess, as Ashcroft delineates, “the travelling eye treats the landscape as a body, an object to be possessed by the gaze, an object of desire. From the beginning of travel writing, this relentless trajectory, this relentless attraction of the gaze, to draw the strange into the intimacy of the familiar, has been grounded in a discourse of ownership.”(2008, p. 231)

Similarly, Pratt conceptualizes how travel and exploration writing enables Europe to rationalize different conception of itself in relation to how it became possible to call the rest of the world. The trope of imperial eyes, as Pratt theorizes refers to the author-narrator, commonly white male subject of European discourse that eyes passively look out and possess foreign landscapes. (1992, p. 9) Travel writing presents a multiplicity of avenues for exploring the dialectics of place and self which more often than not is filtered through a Eurocentric bias and the notion of the other. Theme of discovery and exploration in travel writing often underlines an ambivalent narrative between the speaker’s discomfort, alienation and displacement and their subsequent desire to experience the visual spectacle of the exotic land and its people. (Chandran & Vengadasamy, 2018, p. 16)

The imagination of utopia is a defining theme in Eurocentric travel writing. As Ashcroft proposes, the idea of utopia as a discoverable or transformable place has been central for the European imagination of pre-modern utopia subsequently brought into the familiarity of language through travel writing. (2021, p. 46) The link between discovery and knowing, therefore delineates the urge for possessing the unknown, which is actualized in the act of writing their travel accounts, which may took place years after the actual events.

In many ways, travel writing is an implicit debate concerning possession and about who owned a particular place. Said comments how “the main battle of imperialism is over land....and these issues were reflected, contested and decided in narrative.” (1994, p. xii) It can be asserted how the issue of ownership is manifested through a textual discourse and as the writing re-imagines the travel, the writing conjures the utopia of an unfamiliar world made familiar. As previously explored, the contrast between the unfamiliar and the familiar often creates an ambivalent narrative, in which the fiction of colonial authority is both undermined and highlighted.

Oswald Andrew (O.A) Bushnell, a Hawai’ian-American novelist re-imagines the colonial encounter between the pre-contact Hawai’ian natives with a British expedition led by Captain James Cook on 1779 through his novel, *the*

Return of Lono. A novelist of European descents, O.A Bushnell is noted as “among the very few authors who have been able to represent deep and moving insights about Hawai’i’s social history” (Young, 2001, p. 463) This story is a fictional reconstruction of the discovery of the Hawai’ian island chain, at that moment the most isolated archipelago which eventually lead into the subsequent interaction between Hawai’i and the wider world.

The title of the novel alludes to the Hawai’ian belief that the foreign visitors, especially Captain Cook were the long-awaited God *Lono*, arriving during the exact time of the *Makahiki* festival. Captain Cook embraces his false divinity and is treated warmly by the locals, but was later caught in a quarrel and killed during a skirmish with the Hawai’ians. The story is told by Jonathan Forrest, a midshipman on Cook’s flagship, the *Resolution* and is narrated in the form of a memoir of Forrest recounting past events years after it occurred. His perspective romanticizes the Eurocentric ideas of utopia and paradise, which is subverted through the seemingly savagery of the indigenous people, while also allowing for the emergence of native voices. This present study contextualizes *the Return of Lono* as fictionalized travel writing from a postcolonial perspective, emphasizing on the turbulent relationship among colonial discourse, contact zone and indigenous agency.

The imagination of Hawai’i as a paradisaical utopia and the ‘Otherness’ of its native population has been contextualized through several travel writings during the 19-20th century. Mark Twain, writing in 1889 famously remarks on how “no alien land in all the world has any deep strong charm for me but that one (Hawai’i)”. (quoted in Rapp, 2004, p. 1) Twain spent four months in the islands in 1866 and wrote his report to the *Sacramento Weekly Union* which mixed the sublime and exotic sights with the factual. Another writer was Jack London, who visited Hawai’i twice, in 1907 and 1915. Similar with Twain’s account, London’s description of Hawai’i is loaded with Orientalist tendency which engendered this tropical archipelago with the stereotypical image of a seductive woman. “Somehow, the love of the islands, like the love of a woman, just happens. [...] Truly, Hawaii is a woman beautiful and vastly more persuasive and seductive than her sister sirens of the sea. [...] When Hawaii was named the Paradise of the Pacific, it was inadequately named. The rest of the seven seas and the islands in the midst thereof should have been included along with the Pacific.” (quoted in Rapp, 2004, p. 72)

The Westerners’ view of an idealized and imagined Hawai’i as seen on prior accounts constructs Hawai’i as a space which is exotic and primitive while simultaneously promotes the idea of beauty and welcoming. Criticizing the colonial discourse in travel narratives from a postcolonial perspective means to “scrutinize an array of writing about ‘foreign’ and ‘exotic’ places in attempt to make sense of imperial history”. (Lindsay, 2015, p. 28) The idea of exoticism, desire to conquest and control and the general nuance of the Other delineates colonial discourse written from a Eurocentric paradigm.

Several previous studies on the topic of analyzing travel writing within postcolonial discourse and specifically travel writing about Hawai’i have been explored. Chandran and Vengadasamy argues that the European colonialist discourse which defines the Orient as the other persists up until the post-colonial era of travel writing as foregrounded through their analysis of Hanlon’s *into the Heart of Borneo*. They underline how Hanlon’s narrative objectifies his native companion as wild and possessing strange attributes while the land of Sarawak is populated by untold danger, a common tropes in imperial discourse. (2018, p. 23) Differently, Crane’s analysis on Kincaid’s *a Small Place* foregrounds the shift of perspective in which the narrative is not presented in first-person pronoun but employs the pronoun “you” instead, this shift contextualizes Kincaid’s own ambivalent status in Antigua. (2019, p. 437) Prior analysis on travel writing in Hawai’ian context have been explored by Indriyanto et al concerning how *the Return of Lono* provides a reinterpretation for the figure of Captain Cook, often demonized in Hawai’ian historiography. He explores how the depiction of Captain Cook in *the Return of Lono* is sympathetic toward local custom and respecting the authority of Hawai’ian religious leader (*kahuna*). (Indriyanto et al., 2021, p. 61) Different with the prior discussion on this topic, the present study contextualizes the colonial discourse and its ambivalent nature based on the first-person perspective of Forrest. While previous discussion on *Return of Lono* delineates a positive reorientation of James Cook, this paper highlights more on the issue of colonialist outlook upon discovering the exotic and unknown ‘Other’ and the resulting ambivalence which undermines colonial authority.

From postcolonial perspective, travel writing perpetuates the rhetoric of empires and disseminates discourse of difference/othering which is then used to justify colonial projects. Even the term travel itself is conflated with ‘Europeanized’ travel in which the Europeans “mapped the world rather than the world mapping them.” (Clark, 1999, p. 3) The issue of mapping is closely related with the issue of voice and perspective, as travel writings often adopted a first-person point of view closely linked with the figure of the author/narrator. This singular perspective delineates how travel writing is implicated with colonial discourse which works to construct reality within which the world can be known. Colonial discourse, as theorized by Ashcroft et al refers to “the complex of signs and practices that organizes social existence and social reproduction within colonial relationship.” (2013, p. 37) This concept hinges of the binary opposition which construes the civilizing nature of European culture and denigrates

the native's own culture and backward and primitive. This colonial discourse delineates the construction of Otherness through travel and voyage particularly at the moment of contact zone between Europe and its other.

The narratives of travel often feature the moment of discovery, where in search of knowledge European explores ventures farther into the previously uncharted region. This moment of colonial encounter refers to what Pratt considers as 'contact zone', which in her opinion refers to

"The site of colonial encounter, a space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination." (1992, p. 8)

The contact zone can be seen as a space of engagement which underlines the inequality and differences between the indigenous and the non-indigenous. The non-European Others are defined as an imaginary, idealized construction in which their voices are marginalized and suppressed. Contact, in Pratt's term emphasizes how "subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other." (1992, p. 7) Regarding the concept of contact zone, postcolonial critiques address the ambivalent nature of contact zone, in which the colonial discourse is undermined and subverted in how the colonizer regards the colonized as both inferior and yet exotic Other. This paradigm is further problematized by the emergence of the indigene's own voices and agency.

Ambivalence, as Ashcroft et al proposes refers toward the "complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterized the relationship between colonizer and colonized" (2013, p. 10) It also characterizes the way in which colonial discourse perceives the colonized subject, can be both exploitative and nurturing at the same time. This is therefore a problematic aspect of colonial discourse for the colonizer, who might be unaware of the contradiction in his/her own thought toward the supposedly other and fundamentally unsettles the notion of colonial dominance. The ambivalent nature of colonial discourse causes slippages and fractures which implicates the colonial subject in resisting this discourse. Ambivalence is the sign of the colonizer's agency due to the failure of colonial discourse to make the subject conform. (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 23) The issues of ambivalence which undermine colonial discourse are emphasized through Forrest's retrospective account of the last journey of Captain Cook and their interaction with the local islanders.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative literary analysis in which the data is textual, in the form of quotations which includes excerpts, sentences, dialogues and monologues from the novel *the Return of Lono* written by O.A. Bushnell. The purpose of qualitative research is to "investigate and understand individuals/groups attributing social or human problems". (Creswell & Poth, 1998, p. 77) Qualitative research is primarily exploratory in nature, used to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations behind the problem, explore and identify the variables behind the problem in a particular context or culture, provide insight into the problem or help develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative assessment. In line with the nature of qualitative research, the data is not in the form of numeric or statistic, which better enables scholar to analyze phenomena concerning social or human problems. The analysis is conducted by foregrounding the quotations through postcolonial perspectives, emphasizing on certain terminologies such as colonial discourse, ambivalence and contact zone. The focus is to foregrounds how the West constructs an idealized image of the Hawai'ian indigene as the Other and the resulting ambivalence that undermines the colonial discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before the Hawai'ian isle's discovery and subsequent encounter with the wider world, this archipelago has been closed for outside contact for hundreds of years. The original settlers of Hawai'i were the Polynesians, the first humans to visit and settle in around 1000-1200 AD. After a period of interaction between the Hawai'ians islands and other islands in the Polynesian Triangle, these contact ended and upon nearly 500 years of insularity, a unique Hawai'ian culture emerged. (Nero, 1997, p. 443) The social hierarchy of the Hawai'ian society was delineated into a strict caste system structured upon the chiefs (*ali'i*) and the experts on the spiritual realm (*kahuna*) at the highest rank. This pre-contact era, based upon extensive agriculture, subservience and land divide known as the *ahupu'a* provides the well-being, survival and sustainability for the Native Hawai'ians. As Trask argues, "*ahupua'a* were economically independent, the people living in each *ahupua'a* had access to all the necessity of life." (1993, p. 4) The arrival of Captain Cook's expedition effectively ended this isolation which eventually led into a chain of

events, culminating in Hawai'i's annexation into the United States and loss of their political independence and sovereignty.

The idea of discovering utopia, claiming the exotic tropical islands in the Pacific Ocean is underlined as a recurring trope through Forrest's recollections. This novel is narrated in the first-person point of view, recounting past events from their arrival in *Kealakekua* Bay until the death of Captain Cook and their eventual retreat. He recounts the evening prior to their interaction with the natives, where the crewmates stayed aboard on their ships while the indigenous people lie before the horizons. From Forrest's point of view, this event is dramatized as the loss of innocence for the Hawai'ians, as upon encountering the foreigners both they and their homeland will be forever altered. This excerpt is narrated as follows:

"it was new to the world, discovered by us, and it awaited now the footsteps of its first white men, coming to ravish it of its treasures and its mysteries as they had ravished all other islands in that Southern Sea. During that night of waiting it lay undespoiled for the last time, while aboard our ships, true to our natures, we played the parts of sailors everywhere." (Bushnell, 1971, pp. 2)

The prior passage contextualizes Western outlook concerning unexplored territory or the new world. In line with what Pratt coins as the 'seeing-man', the landscapes of Hawai'i are objectified as potential treasures to be uncovered and gendered as female body to be ravished as is "all other islands in that Southern Sea." The exoticism of the unknown proves irresistible for the Western sailors, and while the inland remains unexplored for now, Forrest's account vividly alludes on how the female indigene approaches the boats and indulges in an orgy of pleasure, symbolized by the allusion of "the delights of the land" His thought reveals how,

"we had no thought for the island — that damned unspeakable unreachable haunting beautiful green island, forever within sight but forever out of reach. That night the delights of the land came to us — and we were conquered and corrupted by it before we had the chance to conquer it for ourselves." (Bushnell, 1971, pp. 2–3)

The arrivals of the expedition into the *Kealakekua* (which in Hawai'ian language means the pathway of the God) bay where the locals were mistaken the Westerners for their God, Lono is positioned as the contact zone, the site of colonial encounter. The natives are described as utterly in awe of the false presence of divinity in which their most revered spiritual leader (*kahuna*), the High Priest Pu'uo and the Chief Kalaniopuu had to assume a subservient position:

"The Indians threw themselves down upon the deck, the lesser chiefs and lesser priests in most abject prostration, the High Chiefs and the High Priest in a crouching posture less abased but nonetheless subservient. The Old Chief assumed the crouching position last, settling into it slowly and stiffly, as if it were a position new to him, never before faced with superior rank." (Bushnell, 1971, p. 45)

The idea of subservient natives and overseeing White men delineates the nature of colonial relationship which started since the exact moment of the contact zone. The expeditions collectively grouped all indigenous people they encounter as "Indians" a misleading label dating back from Columbus' discovery of the New World. (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 7) The idea of exoticism of Hawai'i tropical sights and the visual spectacle of colorful garments worn by the nobility remains associated with the fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar. The following passage delineates how the Englishmen, unaccustomed of hearing Hawai'ian chants and wailing considers these practices as barbaric, and creates a mental imagery of what other savage practices the Hawai'ians might do,

"To this nautical music the entry of the Hawaiians was timed, accompanied by warning cries from their High Priest. We heard his weird wailing high above the clamor of our own salute, long before we could see his aged head appear in the companionway. Its savage note sent a chill into our expectations, and we wondered what alien behavior our guests would bring with them into the ship." (Bushnell, 1971, p. 59)

Entering the island of Hawai'i, the expeditions are further appalled by the savage and barbaric practices of the indigene. Upon arriving at the place of worship (*heiau*), built as a pyramid of rock, the lowest class of the society (*kauwa*) were forced to prostrate and was frightened by the arrival of the supposed deity. The novel follows Forrest's inner thought as follows,

"I was revolted by the needless cruelty of the priest, who treated them like animals. And like animals they appeared, especially with their naked bodies prone against the earth, their rounded buttocks with their shadowed cleft so much like the bodies of smooth procumbent swine. I had never before remarked the resemblance of the human body to the animal, quite likely because I had never seen the human body so nakedly in that position of abasement." (Bushnell, 1971, p. 84)

The 'animality of the indigene', as Deyo argues constructs a discursive animalization of the indigenous people, in which they are dehumanized and considered on a parallel status with animals, or in other words, the non-human. (2014, p. 95) This dichotomy functions as an essential part of the poetics of domination, in which the indigene is derogated as wild and savage, on contrary with the rationality of Western nations. As the harbinger of civilization from the enlightened world, Captain Cook's expedition denigrates the Hawai'ians as primitive, and the deification of Cook as the God Lono is legitimized upon this basis. This perspective is narrated in the novel as follows:

"Reasoned Captain Clerke. "Why should they not look upon us as gods, visiting them from some remote heaven, with you our chief god? This is a primitive people, having no connection with the enlightened world we know. To them we, with all our advancement, must indeed be like gods, and they can hardly fail to be in awe of us." (Bushnell, 1971, p. 96)

As the narrative progresses, the supposedly authoritative colonial discourse based upon Western superiority is undermined through the emerging voice of the indigene. The nature of this novel as a fictionalized account of Captain Cook's last voyage allows for the emergence of indigenous voice which challenges the entrenched ideology of Western superiority. Several characters in the novel, such as the *kahuna* Kailiki, son of the High Priest is acknowledged by Forrest as a learned man, who is able to discern the contradiction of Hawai'ian society in which the ruling class legitimizes their authority based on religion of fear.

"He was a remarkable man, that priest who was no priest, that savage who was more civilized in many ways than Ledyard and Bligh, his counterparts in our ships Before we had arrived, he had already discarded for himself, as being false, the religion of fear by which his father and the chiefs kept their people in subjection; but he was so alone in his society that he could have little hope of changing it." (Bushnell, 1971, p. 129)

Presenting the figure of an educated indigenous people threatened to undermine colonial rationality of domination based of the dichotomy of civilized and primitive. Forrest's account of his time in Hawai'i illustrates his willingness to learn traditional custom, the name of Hawai'ian deities and Hawai'ian language (*Olelo Hawai'i*). The understanding of local heritage, instead of imposing Western values and culture instead of condemning those customs as heathenish and barbaric conceptualizes a decolonizing critique of discursive structures of colonialism. (Najita, 2006, p. 121) This excerpt from the novel is narrated as follows,

"Her father, and Pu'ou, his father, were kahunas who served other deities as well, for in their religion there were many gods and goddesses. I was relieved to learn that many of them were good and kind, and that only some were the cruel malevolent ones whose images I had seen in the temple and on the canoe that had circled our ship" (Bushnell, 1971, p. 113)

Furthermore, the traditional dance and music, previously interpreted as savage and barbaric in the prior passages is reinterpreted and recontextualized within Hawaii's historical background and cultural heritage. As an oral society with no developed writing system before the arrival of the Western powers, Hawai'ian tradition and heritage is preserved through cultural performances such as *hula* dancers and chants (*mele*). Moreover, these performances were intended to articulate the familial and reciprocal relationship between the Hawai'ian natives and the land (*aina*). (H.- Trask & Kay, 1991, p. 25) The preceding passages delineate Forrest's acceptance and acknowledgement of the local customs, an affirmation that undermine the West/non-West demarcation:

"I do not hold with others of our company, like the sophisticate Burney, that their dance is primitive, their music barbaric. Nor is it uniformly objectionable to the more delicate of our tastes. (Bushnell, 1971, p. 92)

Forrest's encounters and interactions with the Hawai'ian indigene unsettle colonial discourse legitimized upon the superiority/inferiority binarism. As stated by Ashcroft, ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority and destabilizes structure of domination due to the resulting contradiction. (2003, p. 15) The willingness of Forrest to learn Hawai'ian chant and recorded it in writing subverts the colonial authority of knowledge, in which he moves his orientation from the 'seeing-man' trope or a passive observer into a participant embedded in local tradition and heritage:

"When I had become more versed in their language, I asked Kailiki what was the burden of their chanting that time in the temple. Courteously he told me, slowly and patiently he repeated parts of it for my attentive ear, and in time I came to be acquainted with both the import and the beauty of their chant. I wrote it down, in much of its great length, and I have kept it all these years".(1971, p. 97)

The Hawai'ians in the novel is narrated to recognize the value of literacy as it provides them with the means to ensure the preservation of knowledge for the future generation. Forrest recounts how "they lamented the fact that their nation had no writing, that all their knowledge was transmitted orally from one generation to the next." (Bushnell, 1971, p. 117) The appropriation of the writing system and a foreign language, English, which the

Hawai'ians will later adapt, articulates the counter-discourse in a form of a textual resistance. As Silva emphasizes, "for every exertion of oppressive and colonizing power there was resistance." (2005, p. 2) By its very nature, the ambivalence of colonialist discourse itself causes fractures and slippage, as seen in Forrest's tacit acknowledgement of the Hawai'ians:

"There in the bright clarity of the tropic sun, in the presence of the pagan priest and his heathen idols, I was flooded with light: I saw that Truth has many faces, and that men call it by various names and seek it by various paths, even among the unseen islands in far-off unknown seas." (Bushnell, 1971, p. 93)

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the novel *Return of Lono* by O.A Bushnell contextualizes the complexities of colonial discourse narrated in the form of a travel narrative by foregrounding the ambivalence that exists within this discourse. Narrated in a first-hand account of Forrest's recollection, his account, previously loaded with colonialist outlook which denigrates the natives as heathen and primitive eventually subverts this paradigm, legitimized from superiority/inferiority binarism. As Forrest shifts his perspective from the "imperial-eyes" traveler of a passive observer or ethnographer into an insider point of view of the indigene, the novel *Return of Lono* challenges the supposedly authoritative discourse of the Westerners. In the course of the narration, the portrayal of the indigene subverts the tropes of animality and bestiality by instead emphasizing their traditional custom and heritage based upon mutual respect with the environment. This contradictory nature and ambivalence of colonial discourse destabilizes structure of domination founded upon Western actionability and knowledge. As a concluding remark, it can therefore be stated how a reading of the *Return of Lono* from a postcolonial perspective conceptualizes a decolonizing critique of the discursive structures of colonialism.

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