

## **Filling the Void: Portraits of the Female-Father in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* and *Season of Adventure***

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### **Abstract**

*While George Lamming portrays paternal identity, alienation and exile as thematic preoccupations of *In the Castle of my Skin* and *Season of Adventure*, father absence remains a major concern in his artistic depictions of fatherhood in these narratives. The phenomenon of father absence creates a void which the mother must additionally fill, and the presence of this void provokes as well as fosters androgyny. Androgyny is the state of having traits of both genders and refers to the opposites within. Thus, the two texts bring the notion of the synthesis of the masculine and feminine principles in the human psyche fully to the fore. The key mother characters in both novels exhibit the image of Carl Jung's "Father Archetype" which is categorised as stern, powerful and controlling. Reading these mother characters as "female fathers" forces the attention from them as women and mothers, hence, radically unsettling the conventional notion of who a father is. Using Jung's psychoanalytic concept of anima/animus as framing and analytical tools, this paper challenges the stereotypical portrait of the hegemonic male parent and furnishes an option for a re-envisioning of masculinity and fatherhood in the context of parental authority, role performance and conduct. It construes, arguably, that the abilities of the mother characters to bear and rear children, cross gender role boundaries and compensate for their offspring's absent fathers, are irrefutable. In this way, both novels do not just recommend themselves as masculinist texts, but they also show how the mother characters qualify as fathers, albeit, female fathers.*

**Key Words:** Father Absence, Female Father, Portraits, Masculinity, Anima/Animus

### **Introduction**

The strong male father is usually not a central or defining trope in the Caribbean family construction. Thus, Lamming's fathers are generally absent which creates room for the androgynous mother whose only option is to act double parental

roles as both mother and father. Set between two epochal phases of post-slavery and colonial backdrop in Barbados, *In the Castle of My Skin* portrays G's mother as protective, strong, responsible and focused. Conversely, *Season of Adventure* is set in San Cristobal, Lamming's imaginative representation of his formerly colonised territory in the Caribbean Island, where he depicts Agnes Piggott, the key mother character in the narrative as strong willed and formidable.

Fatherhood is a multifaceted concept and has been explained to include the roles attached to moral guidance, breadwinning, sex-role modelling, marital support, and nurturance (Lamb 24, Parke 256, Zoja 13). Within the above definition, G's mother and Agnes Piggott qualify as fathers. It is instructive that Beth Erickson's idea of the "sperm fathers" (69) as well as Richard Driscoll and Nancy Ann Davies's notion of the "sperminator dad" (126), reverberate with the two absent biological fathers in Lamming's selected novels. Driscoll and Davies describe this category of father as a man whose sole input as a father is his role at the conception of his child. Hence, the "sperm" or "sperminator" father, typically epitomised by G. and Fola's fathers, refers to a man who has no other contribution towards his child as a father, apart from his sperm. As a result, his lone partner remains inundated with a dual parental-role. Thus, in this study, a female father is a woman (whether married or unmarried) who, by the circumstance of the absence of the father of her child(ren), is impelled to cross conventional parental role boundaries in order to effectively protect, nurture, train, provide for, discipline and morally guide her offspring. Consequently, the depiction of the two females in *In the Castle of My Skin* and *Season of Adventure* exemplify the notion that gender is no longer a fixed or an unchangeable fact.

In Jungian thinking, "anima/animus" refers to the masculine designation in women, and the masculine in men, which is an indication that the psyche has both male and female characteristics. How do anima and animus as important Jungian concepts manifest in the behaviours of Lamming's female characters in the selected novels? Closely examining these psychoanalytic concepts provides an important starting point. According to Carl Jung, anima represents the female element found in all males while animus represents the male element found in all females (*Secret of the Golden Flower* 60). This postulation is based on Jung's recognition that human beings are fundamentally bisexual. Therefore, for him, one must learn to accept one's psychological bisexuality if one must achieve psychological wholeness. Also, in *The Visions Seminars Volume 2*, Jung writes that everything that falls into the unconscious is possessed the animus. He explains that the female's animus can hurt relationships by unconsciously

engaging the male's anima. When the anima and animus begin to disagree, they are served by a store of suppressed feelings of irritation, resentment, envy, authority and fear (497-98). These explanations clearly resonate with the attitudes, conducts and the general interactions of the two female father characters (G.'s mother and Agnes) with their family members. However, one of these characteristics must, at a particular time, gain ascendancy over the other.

Duane Shultz and Sidney Shultz explain that accepting the emotional qualities of both sexes opens new sources of creativity and serves as the final release from parental influence" (111). Perhaps, even as important as the examination of these concepts in this paper, is the explication of their workings which, more or less, gives more insight into issues of parental influence and equally challenges some long-held ideas concerning conventional parenting gender roles and dispositions. Thus, it becomes imperative to point out that male fathers such as Mr. Piggott in *Season of Adventure*, do not become weak or incompetent when the female anima gains ascendancy over the male animus. Likewise, female fathers such as G.'s mother and Agnes, do not become who they are - male-oriented, when the male animus topples the female anima. Rather, at some points when the endowed qualities are required for survival, they manifest.

As a result, the concept of anima/animus is used to interrogate the characters of G.'s mother and Agnes Piggott in *In the Castle of my Skin* and *Season of Adventure*, respectively. Both characters are read as masculinized women or arguably, as individuals whose well-developed animus gain ascendancy over their femininity, thus activating their masculine sides as they confront the tasks associated with fatherhood.

### **Portraits of the Female Father in *In the Castle of My Skin* and *Season of Adventure***

George Lamming is representative of the emergent Anglo-Caribbean writers who are concerned with paternal identity and fatherlessness as evidenced in the protagonists of *In the Castle of My Skin*, *Season of Adventure* and *Natives of my Person*. Thus, the visibility of the omniscient mother character and the invisibility of the irrational father character is a status quo which troubles the two narratives from their very beginnings. For instance, right from the first line of *In the Castle of my Skin* when the reader gets to meet G.'s mother, the expression "my mother," is conspicuous and continues to pervade the entire chapter. The novel is a *bildungsroman*, hence, traces the psychological, social and physical development and growth of the boy, G., as a nine-year old child in Barbados till he leaves for

Trinidad to take up a teaching appointment as a young adult. It is instructive to note that in contrast to the presence of G's mother for most part of the novel, his father is completely absent. G.'s father's location even remains indeterminate till the end of the narrative. Since roles are tied to statuses, the mother-characters who are compelled to fill the void created by the absence of their children's fathers by taking on roles which are conventionally associated with the male gender, are analysed as fathers.

*In the Castle of My Skin* begins with G. staying indoors for the torrential rain on his ninth birthday to cease. He gets tired of staring through the window and goes to a quiet corner where the roof is not leaking. While in this state of melancholy, his thoughts begin to drift and he lets out part of his ruminations when he divulges to the reader: "And what did I remember? My father who only fathered the idea of me had left me the sole liability of my mother who really fathered me. And beyond that my memory was a blank" (11). G's declaration that his mother actually fathered him becomes a direct condemnation of his father's absence and his way of dealing with it. This commentary speaks to his unequivocal ratification of his mother's fatherhood status as clearly non-negotiable.

Also, it is perceptible from the barrage of questions G. posed to his mother about his other relations without asking about his father, that he has given up on the man. The fact that he had just finished reflecting on his father's absence makes his silence concerning any inquiry on his father more surprising. It is significant that the boy is silent concerning his father while he makes detailed inquiries about his other relations outside his nuclear family. In what would appear like a desperate search for some sort of a father figure, G. brings his mother under a series of grilling by raising specific questions:

'Where you say my grandmother went?'

'To Panama,' my mother answered. 'It was the opening of the canal. She is now in Canal Zone. It's time who wrote her a letter.'

'And my grandfather who was your father?' I went on.

'Oh, he died, my child; he died before I was born.'

'And my uncle who was your brother?'

'My brother went to America,' my mother said. It's years now. The last we heard he was on a boat and

then take sick, and is probably dead for all we know.' Her feelings were neutral. (12)

In the exchange above between mother and son, the reader clearly recognises some traditional masculine traits which are written into the character of G.'s mother. For example, her emotional silence on her brother's probable dire fate speaks to her strong personality and by implication, her masculine disposition. Toni Morrison, apparently latching on Jung's concept of the anima and animus, acknowledges the psychological bisexuality of humans in relation to the masculine side of femininity when she argues that the "archetypes created by women about themselves are rare, and even these few that do exist may be the result of a female mind completely controlled by male-type thinking" (22). G's mother as well as Agnes Piggott are, no doubt, among the few female archetypes whose psyches are controlled by male-type thinking. The fact that G. reports that his mother's "feelings were neutral" when she discloses that her brother possibly died at sea en route America, further attests to her stable psychological temperament. Taking a cue from Andrea Doucet's seminal work, *Do Men Mother? Fathering, Care and Domestic Responsibility*, the analysis of Lamming's female fathers becomes more engaging. Thus, varying Doucet's title slightly, we get a different interrogation: "Do Women Father?" This question finds an answer as G's mother and Agnes' resolute two-fold parental duties are individually examined to assess their performances as fathers by the end of the novels.

In Lamming's first novel, *In the Castle of my Skin*, much of what the reader grasps about G's mother is from G's assessment of her. Although, her portraiture is stern, firm, aggressive, strict as well as care-oriented, in spite of all these, she experiences "inter-role" conflicts in the performance of her two-fold duties and must psychologically engage in role transitions (as she swings between roles). While Barbara Rau explains inter-role conflict as tension which is experienced "when pressures arising in one role are incompatible with pressures arising in another role (77), Blake Ashforth, Glen Kreiner and Mel Fugate explain that "role transition is the psychological movement between roles" (84). Thus, G.s' mother has of overwhelming bouts of frustration which she has to deal with occasionally as she reacts to the burden of double parental roles in her determination to raise a successful son. The mental and psychological strain this engenders is underpinned in the narrative when G says of his mother: "I had grown used to these sudden explosions of anger. They seemed to me uncalled for, but they had become so frequent in recent times that I thought my mother couldn't help it. She wasn't naturally quarrelsome, but in the last three or four years she had grown terribly

anxious about everything (263). This is an indication that despite the fact that G.'s mother comes across as very strong and focused, female fatherhood is not without a considerable level of stress.

Although G's mother painstakingly fathers him, inculcates in him the quest for intellectual pursuits and educates him on what it means to be a respectable man; this comes with expensive price tags. Her accomplishments do not come easy for a parent who must cross role boundaries to establish herself as a successful father, she tells G., "I have no easy time bringing you up" (265). The complex and often tasking requisite movement along gender (parental) role performance which must be navigated as she exits one role as a mother and enters another role as a father (and vice versa), or as she takes on both roles simultaneously, can be very arduous. While, G's mother is depicted as strong and hegemonic, the conflicting nature of her double parental role takes a toll on her which is evident in the times she is shown to break down emotionally in the novel.

Nonetheless, conventionally powerful masculine traits are discerned in the character of G.'s mother. She, thus, becomes a prototype of the "castrating father" who instils her son with so much fear. Granting that she is weighed down by the responsibility of both materially providing for G. and also funding his education, she does not only make sure he takes his studies seriously but also monitors the company he keeps and his spirituality. The reader gets an insight into this side of her parental conduct on the day G. prepares and leaves for Sunday School while his friends Bob, Po King and Boy Blue were playing hop-sotch at the street corner. His mother quietly trails him to ensure he does not get diverted by them, so she urges him from a distance to keep moving, in order to make certain he does not stop at the street corner to relate with his friends. G. recounts this incident:

When I reached the corner I looked back to see if she was still there, and her voice with the sharpness of a bullet castrated my glance. 'What you looking back for?' she shouted. I kept my head straight and stepped with meticulous care round the corner, ignoring Bob and the boys at hop-sotch. I walked ahead, never looking back for fear she might be there behind me, ready to make a judgement on my intentions (115).

Whilst G's mother remains care-oriented, her portraiture is unyielding. She overtly exerts "paternal" authority over her son by constant threats. However, as he grows into young adulthood and gets ready to pursue further education in Britain, she remains undaunted. On the eve of his departure she lets him know her disposition towards his sense of maturity, independence and masculinity, in no uncertain terms:

If you grow to one hundred you're my child ...and when you see the others playing man, an' doing as they please, just tell them that you sorry, 'tis different with you, 'casuse your mother ain't that sort of woman. Let them know I don't play, an' that a child is a child for me. Nothing more or nothing less (264).

Equally, she monitors how he handles his personal items and ensures that he is well-groomed. Sometimes, she goes to meticulous extents to implement the standard she has set for him. For instance, there is the occasion where she frets over how he uses his shoes. Again, G. divulges to the reader that:

She was fierce, aggressive, and strict. She had a feeling, it seemed, that I would enter some secret conspiracy with the pebbles against the shoes, and when I returned home in the later afternoon, she examined the tips and soles and heels with a closeness I had noticed in jewellers testing gold (114).

Jung's concept of the human psychological bisexuality makes it possible for a character like G's mother to become associated with Freud's figure of the castrating father who instils his son with so much fear, of which she becomes a prototype. Although, G's mother is depicted and analysed as a hegemonic female who becomes emblematically significant in the light of the role performance of the female father in *In the Castle of my Skin*; her relationship with G., however, becomes increasingly problematic as he matures into manhood. In spite of his physical development, she doggedly supervises G. and makes sure he takes his studies seriously. She insists the boy must respect and honour her as his parent, and one of the ways he must accord her "the right and proper respect" (265) is in paying attention to her whenever she speaks to him. Subsequently, when she feels

G. is not fully listening to her, she threatens to physically punish him. She goes as far as even getting a stick, but, her boy had become a man. G. says, "I caught the stick and held it tight while she tried to wrench it away. She was like a fencer who had the odds against her. I was taller and much stronger" (266). Despite the fact that her son is no longer a child, his mother insists he is not too big for her disciplinary actions.

Eventually, G.'s mother's hegemonic fatherhood style would become less effective in the areas of chastisements and admonishments, and as a consequence, her absolute authority over him progressively wanes as G. begins to occasionally challenge her mother's threats of physical discipline. However, she continues to monitor how he handles his personal items to ensure that he is not careless with them and that he appears well-groomed all the time. Remarkably, she does not only continue to dominate G., but, also continues to influence and exercise paternal authority indisputably over him even as an adult. As G. prepares to leave for Trinidad on a teaching appointment, his mother realises that her choice of education for him has conditioned him to be separated from her, hence, her tension mounts further. Even before they settle to enjoy the elaborate farewell dinner she had prepared for just the two of them on the eve of his departure, she cautions him further and delivers a parting warning:

You're a man now, but you better remember what the old people say. What sweeten goat's mouth burn his tail. You can play man when you cross the sea tomorrow but not now. You're my child now, an' I don't care how old you be, once I'm alive you got to have the right and proper respect for me. If you grow to one hundred you're my child. So you just put that in your pipe and smoke it, and when you see the others playing man an' doing as they please, just tell them you sorry, 'tis different with you, 'cause your ain't that sort of woman. Let them know I don't play, an' that a child is a child for me. Nothing more an' nothing less. (264)

Like *In the Castle of My Skin, Seasons of Adventure* also begins with a child's ruminations and subsequent a quest for her biological father. However, unlike G., Fola she makes efforts to trace her heritage through the ceremony of souls at the Forest Reserve in San Cristobal. Later, her crises of paternal identity makes her



confront her foster father, Mr. Piggott, with questions about her paternity. Although, she has been told that her father was dead, she still pesters her Mr. Piggott for answers. She desperately demands information about her biological father from Mr. Piggott: "All right, you say he is dead, she shouted, and Piggott felt the treachery of other ears behind him. But even the dead used to be. Who is he, Piggy tell me, Piggy, who was my father?" (127). This query rightly should be posed to her mother, Agnes. Obviously, her mother's stern disposition discourages Fola from confronting her mother on her

Mrs. Agnes Piggott is analysed as a female father because she marginalizes her husband, Mr. Piggott, who is a police commissioner. Ironically, he is a symbol of authority in San Cristobal but in his domestic space, his wife is domineering and controlling. The fact that he is a father by the reason of Agnes's daughter, Fola, makes it all too complicated for him because he does not have full control over her as a biological parent. Agnes dismisses her husband as a father fit for her daughter and persistently undermines his influence over Fola. Both spouses appear to be in constant struggle over who calls the shots in the affairs of the family, especially as it affects Fola, with Agnes being clearly the dominant parent. Beyond this, she uses her influence to guarantee Mr. Piggott's job and safeguards his position as a police commissioner as well as positions herself as an authority and sets the boundaries for him. Sadly, the emblem of power and the well-respected police commissioner in the whole Island is grossly feminised in his home while his status and identity as a father remain shaky. Although Piggott provides for Fola, Agnes thinks he is not care-oriented enough. Consequently, she lets him know he could leave if he refuses to be guided by her sentiments and be seen to give Fola the first consideration in all his affairs. Thus, she maintains morbid passionate sentinel over her daughter, warns and constantly reminds Piggott to remember she was instrumental to his job and promotions.

The reader gets a glimpse into Agnes's tough personality when she takes her husband up on his attitude to his police job and makes her position clear to him:

You had all your senses when you decide to do what you do [that is his decision to marry her]. Remember, that... an' remember... I didn't sit back like one o' those women too lazy to move... and I didn't help to prove hel'. I help 'cause it was your own ambition eating up your brain. Don't forget to

remember that the moment you start riding your  
high horse. (100)

Even as it is fathomable that Agnes Piggott attempts to over-compensate for her daughters troubled beginning (as a progeny of rape), her insistence on fathering (protecting, providing, advising, mentoring and nurturing) Fola as a recompense for the girl's crisis of double paternal identity is inappropriate. As a result, Mr. Piggott appears physically and psychologically drained by this female enigma and at a point blurts out, "but why you such a bitch, Agnes?" (99). The bitch which her husband identifies in her is in part, quite simply related to the dogged trait which drives her refusal to submit to him. This element also becomes what gives impetus to her role and status as a female father. Unfortunately, her unwavering paternalistic attitude appears to cripple all the efforts Mr. Piggott, makes towards effectively taking on the position of a father and that of a "man- in-charge" of his household. Beyond this, Agnes uses her husband's shortcoming of not being Fola's biological father and his inability to father children advance her fatherhood interests. She appears to keep fierce watch on Fola, uses her desire for a better future for her daughter to advance most arguments with her husband and holds him responsible for the girl's slightest misdemeanor. For instance, when Agnes does not want her husband to partake in the sharing of some dubious money he found with some of his associates, she manages to factio the subject matter of Fola into the issue so as to back her argument once again:

Little Fola start life with misfortune not having a  
father as she should; but while I got strength to  
work an' eyes to see, nothing go happen to put more  
strain on what I bring into this world. You can  
choose right here an' now. Take your share o' what  
you three find, an' finish this marriage...Don't  
argue Piggy... 'cause I hearing only with Fola's  
ears. (338)

Clearly, in the excerpt above, the reader comes face to face with a typical interaction of an animus female with an anima male, in Jungian terms. Jung explains that "possession caused by the anima can have negative effect on the man (Archetypes 24) while he generally identifies the animus with wholeness (Alchemical Studies 268). In fact, he maintains that no man can converse with an animus for five minutes without being a victim of his own anima (*Aion* 29). The reader sees the victim-inducing aspect of the animus in operation during the

interactions between Agnes and her husband as well as the occasions when G's mother holds her son hostage by talking to him until the boy gets tired and stops listening or pretends to listen which, in turn, infuriates his mother in no small measure. On these occasions, although both Mr. Piggott and G. appear helpless, but they must unconsciously draw on their anima and bring their innate masculine qualities under control as they relate with an overtly strong wife and mother, respectively. Jung's interest in achieving psychic wholeness is through a harmonisation of the psyche by a balance of the anima/animus. At the psychic level, there are reasonable deposits of anima and animus in everybody, so all human beings are psychologically bisexual. However, the biological considerations (physical) propel each individual to suppress the contra-psychic elements of anima for males and animus for females. When the endowed qualities are required for survival, they manifest. That is why there are mothers (females) who actually father and there are also males who mother. For Jung, Mr. Piggott's attitude towards Agnes's overbearing nature is an indication of his balanced psyche. For instance, as Agnes continues to dominate Mr. Piggott, his anima (feminine psyche) which enables him to be level-headed and endure her excesses by adopting a more gentle personality in an attempt to have a peaceful marriage and home. Thus, he appears agreeable, long-suffering and patient as he continues to extend warmth and tenderness to Agnes and her daughter in the face of glaring provocations by her which further marginalises him.

Along this lines, Lamming appears to depict male-fathers who are often marginalised, absent, basically indolent and seem tangled with the historical facts of the West Indian region. This is contrasted against the portrait of the strong and motivated androgynous mothers who steer the affairs of their households as a result of the absence of their children's fathers. Whether father absence gives rise to the matrifocal family or the phenomena of the matrifocal family gives rise to the issue of father absence is debatable, but these two factors are clear trends in Lamming's narratives. Although, Robert Parkin avows that the matrifocal family is a common phenomenon in some parts of the world where adult males regularly leave home for long periods to work or for some other purposes," (29) this does not seem to be the case in these novels. The absence of G's father in *In the Castle of My Skin* and Fola's biological father in *Season of Adventure* has little to do with work. It is apparent that these father characters simply abandoned their children and their mothers.

Apart from G.'s father and Fola's father, the absence of fathers is also perceptible in other female-headed homes which are common in both Lamming's settings of

Creighton village and San Cristobal. For instance, in Creighton village where mothers are very visible as opposed to fathers, the narrator alerts the reader to the fact that “Miss Foster has six children, three by the butcher, two by a baker and one whose father had never been mentioned, Bob’s mother has two, and my mother one” (24). In this manner, children are generally associated with their mothers while their fathers remain distant figures or completely absent. An excerpt from the dialogue between the unnamed four boys concerning the role of their fathers in *In the Castle of My Skin* also supports the fact that most of the boys have absent fathers:

**Fourth Boy:** My father don't live in the same house...my father couldn't hit me 'cause he don't support me. An' that's why I all right. My mother won't let him hit me 'cause he don't support me.

**Second Boy:** Mine don't support me, but if he beat me my mother would say it shows he wus still takin' an interest. (46)

The snag here is that despite all the efforts that Mr. Piggott makes towards being present (taking an interest) in Fola’s life and normalizing his relationship with her as a father, she rejects him because he is not her biological father. Although he attempts to perform most roles of a father, Fola does not call or refer to him as father, his continuous promises and benevolence towards her, notwithstanding. Mr. Piggott’s plea, “if it’s in my mean, anything you want you can have” (125) fell on deaf ears. Thus, like her mother, Fola relegates Mr. Piggott’s masculinity and identity as a father to the margin. Towards the end of the novel, the reader shares the emotional and heartbreaking lived-experience of Mr. Piggott when the narrator divulges the fact that “[Mr.] Piggott was surrounded by the sad and familiar regret of his life that he was not her [Fola’s] father; he was no one’s father” (127). Ultimately, Fola’s hunger for her biological father is akin to his own hunger for a secured fatherhood which can only be accomplished when he succeeds in begetting children of his own.

Mr. Piggott tries without much success to fill the void which the absence of Fola’s biological father has created in her life. His efforts are further frustrated by Agnes, who appropriates this vacuum as her sole entitlement as the girl’s biological parent. The reader shares Mr. Piggott’s pains as Fola rejects him, “You’re not my father, not you” (127), she says directly to him. Eventually, despite the chaotic relationship between Fola and Agnes, she chooses her mother as the dominant

parent in her life. At the end, she is seen curling on her mother's laps for paternal protection, as it were, after her ordeal when she is attacked during the Ceremony of Souls at the tonelle. Fola had earlier contested her relationship with Agnes as a conventional mother-daughter relationship, much as she has also queried Mr. Piggott's relationship with her as a father. How she relates to Mr. Piggott is largely due to her mother's over bearing paternal disposition towards her which intensifies the confusion she has to deal with in relation to the absence of a biological father in her life. Fola's confusion which she gives expression to in her "love-hate," "bitter-sweet" relation with her mother, stems from Agnes' unyielding preference to act the roles of both father and mother to her.

Regrettably, Mr. Piggott is disadvantaged by the fact that he has no biological child, so, Agnes uses it as a torture instrument. Thus, the fact of Mr. Piggott's awkward marital relation with Agnes and his very tricky position as a co-parent with her in Fola's upbringing challenges his identity as a father and equally lends complexity to his fatherhood status. On the other hand, Agnes's problematic posture as a wife to Mr. Piggott, a mother as well as a self-imposed father to Fola is discerned from the fact that, unlike G's mother, she barely succeeds in any of the roles. Ultimately, she succeeds in robbing Mr. Piggott of his identity as a father which makes him sad, miserable and lonely. The reader deeply empathizes with Mr. Piggott him as his last hope of fatherhood is shattered by Fola's rejection. Lamming gives the reader a disquieting vignette of his isolation:

Alone, he sat and watched the early light grow thick with clouds over the garden. His eyes were wet. In the solitude of his last wish, Piggott was surrounded by the sad and familiar regret his life had always been known. He was not her father, he was no one's father. His wish had grown dormant. Piggott could feel his last claim [that is Fola as his child], like the weight of some personal inadequacy, painfully dissolve within him (127).

The degree of Mr. Piggott's despondency indicated in the excerpt above is a signal of the high-level animus (the unconscious masculine aspect of his wife's psyche) he contends with and which also overwhelms him. Agnes appears to have carved out a world for herself and Fola, another one for herself and Mr. Piggott and a third one where the three of them relate as a family, but essentially, one in

which Mr. Piggott only functions at the periphery as a non-biological parent – an outsider. Although, G's mother seems to project a stronger portrait of the female-father than Agnes Piggott; yet, in both characters, Lamming's vision of female fatherhood is manifestly established. Tony Simoes da Silva recognises that Agnes remains the most formidable presence in *Season of Adventure*. This is not only in the home where Mr. Piggott's status as a father is wrestled from him and his masculinity grossly marginalised, but also in the entire Island of San Cristobal where she is very prominent. Therefore, Simoes da Silva remarks that her "shadow looms large over the conflict between the powerful elite to which she precariously belongs and the powerless people of the Reserve with whom she once shared her experience (132). This commentary clearly speaks to Agnes Piggott's strength of accomplishment and her formidable animus-driven nature which palpably overwhelms her spouse and seemingly feminises him.

### **Conclusion**

Unlike their children's absent fathers, G's mother and Agnes Piggott's balanced activities both at home and outside of it, guarantees their presence in their children's lives as both mothers and fathers. By crossing gender-role boundaries in order to ensure the successful outcome of their children, both women are thrust into androgynous parental roles. Although, they are females and mothers, but, by also taking on additional tasks which are conventionally assigned to the male parent, they qualify as fathers. Thus, the matrifocal narratives of Lamming are explored through the examination of the role performances, parental attitudes and conduct of these two characters. The concept of anima/animus not only opens a window for the exploration of the competing feminine and latent masculine elements in G.'s mother and Mrs. Piggott's personalities as well as parental dispositions, it also yields useful clues to their search for balance between these elements as they grapple with the challenges of the conflicted experiences of also acting the role of fathers to their children. Thus, like other strong mothers in literary history, such as Princess Nandi, the mother character in Mofolo's epic novel, *Chaka*, who steps in to father her son when the boy's biological father, the Zulu King, rejects him; G's mother and Agnes Piggott successfully fill the void which are left by the absence of their children's fathers.

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