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“If the world wanted to meet me it would have to do so through England”: Gender and Transculturation in the Writing of Jamaica Kincaid

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Introduction

The 2001 film *Life and Debt,* a documentary that examines the pitfalls of capitalism and neo-colonialism in contemporary Jamaica, opens with a narration adapted from Jamaica Kincaid's 1988 essay, *A Small Place*:

> [if] you come to Jamaica as a tourist, this is what you will see. If you come by airplane, you will certainly land in Montego bay. And certainly not in Kingston. You were thinking of the hard, and cold, and long days you spent working. Earning money so that you could stay in this place. Jamaica…. You are indifferent to the fact that you can enter this country simply by showing your driver's license. You are indifferent to this fact because you can travel anywhere. The thought that a citizen of Jamaica would have to give an exhaustive account of how and why they have lived to visit your native country, had never crossed your mind. (4:30-5:30)

Though Kincaid's original essay focuses on Antigua, the director, Michael Manley, uses the essay to foreground the bleak economic conditions in Jamaica as the country seeks aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. While one might hesitate before applying a culturally and historically specific text like *A Small Place* to another location, Kincaid's essay effectively speaks to many of the experiences of colonial subjects in the Black Atlantic throughout the twentieth century. The film highlights the elasticity of Kincaid's representations of contemporary colonial hegemony. *Life and Debt* merely brings Kincaid's work to life, offering visuals and media footage to supplement and reinforce Kincaid's claims. Throughout the documentary, Jamaica emerges as a victim of western hyper-globalization because of the IMF and World Banks's inhumane economic aid that required an end to trade

protections and other safeguarding practices that were intended to prevent unfair competition, food shortages, and civil unrest.

Throughout Kincaid's body of literature, she does not make references to any creole islands or territories other than her own birthplace of Antigua. Nonetheless, the seamless application of Kincaid's essay to *Life and Debt* speaks to Kincaid's ability to draw powerful connections between particulars and generalities. Kincaid's works regularly consider the relationships between Antigua and other creole nations, Britain and America, as well as colonialism and neocolonialism. Moreover, Kincaid's deeply personal approach to her writing, often speculated to be a semi-autobiographical product of her experiences living in Antigua during the collapse of Britain's colonial empire in addition to later moving to United States and working as au pair during in 1980s New York City, formulate extraordinarily accessible and clear condemnations of colonial and neo-colonial institutions. Kincaid's three most critically acclaimed works, *A Small Place* (1988), *Annie John* (1985) and *Lucy* (1990), closely revolve around Kincaid's life experiences, often leading scholars to make little distinction between the three narratives. However, each narrative offers a unique take on the complex negotiations of power that play out in the unique conditions of the colonial and neo-colonial space.

A Small Place, *Annie John* and *Lucy* each rework the challenge for past territories of fallen colonial empires to reconcile their experiences of subjugation in an era of neocolonial authority. In *A Small Place* (1988), Kincaid suggests that in addition to the past overt oppression Antiguans suffered under colonialism, they must now debase themselves to ignorant tourists as well as face undue economic restrictions from western nations. More broadly, *A Small Place* theorizes the colonial playing field, a game in which Antiguans unfairly compete with the neo-colonial tyranny of western politicians and tourists. Likewise, Kincaid regularly juxtaposes the

scarcity of resources and social mobility in Antigua with the extraordinary power and wealth of the Queens of England. Meanwhile in Kincaid first novel, *Annie John* (1985), Kincaid imagines a young surrogate for herself living in a British colony and attempting to understand the nuances of her Antiguan identity. Because *Annie John* follows the universal experience of a young girl's coming of age and eventual rejection of maternal influence, the work is uniquely situated to comment on the complex interplay of colonialism within the family unit. More specifically, the protagonist faces challenges with language and representation as her mother polices English colonial values. Finally, in *Lucy* (1990), Kincaid imagines an older surrogate for herself, living among the colonizers. The protagonist of *Lucy* offers an opposing narrative where instead of a colonial subject commenting on the intrusion of colonial and neo-colonial authority, a colonial subject enters the realm of a neo-colonial authority—New York City—and comments on issues of representation and privilege. Moreover, *Lucy* offers a unique situation in which the narrator, an au pair from the West Indies, confronts an American woman who is entirely unaware of her own power and privilege. Likewise, *Annie John* centers around a protagonist that struggles with her relationship with her mother as she acts as a perpetrator of English colonial values. *A Small Place* and *Lucy* complement one another as they offer divergent perspectives on the neo and post-colonial world.

This thesis engages with two strands of commentary on Jamaica Kincaid and colonialism. One centers on the legacies of colonialism, focusing particularly on the hegemony of the English language and the problem of representation that is exacerbated by the female figures of the monarchy, while the other focuses on Kincaid's representation of female relationships (particularly mother-daughter relationships) alongside references and allusions to the English canon.

In chapter one, "British Imperial Rule and Gender in *A Small Place*," I will begin with a discussion of the post-colonial theorists most relevant to the unique position of women in *A Small Place.* Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak each work to tease out the pervasive and overwhelming influence of imperialism on colonial subjects. While Pratt established a more progressive and empowering conception of the colonial space, Said and Spivak offer particular case studies that speak to the unique position of the women in Kincaid's work. More specifically, Said's constructions of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* as well as Spivak's relation of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* hold broad sweeping implications for how Kincaid imagines herself in relation to the British literary canon. Furthermore, this section will consider how Kincaid frames the tension between herself and colonial institutions in her explanation of the English language as it confines imperial subjects to discuss their views in the terms of the imperialist. A crucial component of this work is the contrast Kincaid draws between herself and Queen Victoria, and Kincaid's assertion that Queen Victoria's power and meaning are transparent to her and other Antiguans.

In chapter two, "Transculturation and Maternal Hegemony in *Annie John* and *Lucy*," I will turn to Kincaid's two novels with a discussion of female coming of age alongside the influence of the British literary canon. While *A Small Place* considers the broad implications of national agenda and the imperial machine, *Annie John* and *Lucy* consider how issues of colonial hegemony play out in intimate familial relationships. More specifically, I will evaluate Kincaid's appropriation of the English and Christian canons in order to subvert the colonial influences on her mother and childhood. I will then suggest that Kincaid formulates her own series of parables alongside these allusions in order to conceptualize her own misgivings with maternal hegemony.

Finally, this section will conclude on the influence of the English canon on mothers' conceptions of sexuality and coming of age.

Chapter I

"The figure of the woman disappears": British Imperial Rule and Gender in *A Small Place*

November 1st, 1981 was a momentous day in the history of Antigua. The island declared independence from the United Kingdom and the people chose to remain in the commonwealth under a constitutional monarchy. Leading up to independence, Antigua faced a shrinking agricultural economy, the United Kingdom's trade protections faltering with the rise of free trade (O'Loughlin 234). The collapse of the agricultural industry, an industry defined by the legacy of slavery, led Antigua to develop a tourism-based economy dependent on the influence of wealthy, predominantly white vacationers. Jamaica Kincaid published *A Small Place* in 1988, seven years after the end of British rule, in order to respond to the ever-growing pressure of neo-colonialism in the nation's budding tourism industry. In this book-length essay, Kincaid adeptly links the values of the British colonial rule she experienced as a child to the contemporary introduction of a tourist driven economy through her examination of Queen Victoria and the monarchy. Despite Kincaid's historical distance from Queen Victoria, writing nearly a hundred years after her death, she repeatedly returns to Queen Victoria's image and legacy. While Kincaid's fascination with Queen Victoria and monarchy is not unique, it signals the degree to which Kincaid understands the legacy of her reign as a form of ongoing imperial hegemony. To many, Queen Victoria is perhaps best known not as a colonial oppressor but rather for her ability to bring stability to the monarchy through her embodiment of domesticity. But Kincaid's discussion of Queen Victoria's empire demonstrates the unique ability of a female monarch to enforce not only oppressive policy, but also a cultural expectation of domesticity in women. In other words, Queen Victoria embodies the intersection of gender performance and colonial oppression in *A Small Place*.

Queen Victoria subjugates Antigua not only within the confines of her lifetime, but also through her legacies of domesticity and dominance over Antiguans.

Kincaid ultimately shows that the female figures of the British Monarchy, from Queen Victoria to Queen Elizabeth, from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, hold an outsized ability to dominate public discourse and dictate the distribution of resources in Antigua. *A Small Place* emerges as a cautionary tale for former colonial territories attempting to declare independence. Kincaid demonstrates both the continuities and disjunctions of Antigua pre- and post-independence as the nation continues to propagate imperial ideology. While many post-colonial scholars recognize the ways in which white women have been complicit or actively supported the imperial mission, few have considered how the discourse surrounding gender, specifically in the colonial space, leads to the perpetuation and propagation of imperial abuse in the latter half of the twentieth century.[1] For while many scholars have written about gender and imperialism, they often focus on masculinity and imperial dominance, or femininity and imperial subjugation.[2] Kincaid inspires us to analyze constructions of femininity alongside both imperial dominance and subjugation.

Throughout *A Small Place*, Kincaid compares the agency and autonomy of Antiguan women, from herself to local leaders, to that of Queen Victoria, Queen Elizabeth, and Princess Margaret. This comparison moves beyond the standard colonizer/colonized binary in order to reveal how Kincaid's figures are forged by their gender identity. Relevant to this discussion is Edward Said's work in *Orientalism* to establishes the role of the colonial Other and Gayatri

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[1] Chaudhuri, Nupur. *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance.* E-book, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.04617.

[2] Fraiman, Susan. "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1995, pp. 805–821. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1344068. Accessed 1 Dec. 2020.

Chakravorty Spivak's work on the status of women in the colonial space and literary representations of British women. In her essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Spivak argues that the emergence of Jane Eyre as a feminist heroine required the vilification of figures like Bertha, or Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, who come from the colonial space and lack agency. Like Spivak, I argue that in Kincaid's understanding, the valorization of Queen Victoria as a female icon requires the denigration of Antiguan women. But I go further to suggest that misogyny acts not as a unification of women across spatial and racial boundaries, but rather as a potent tool in imperialism's arsenal of subjugation.

The first section of this chapter builds a foundation by analyzing the work of Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) speaks to the critical development of an Other in western scholarship, while *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) offers a famous and critical reading of what I think is a companion text to *A Small Place*: Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park.* I then discuss Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), which reconfigures the power dynamics in the colonial space, seeking to focus on the agency and voices of colonized peoples. Pratt's work empowers colonized subjects, allowing critics to listen carefully to figures like Kincaid who question those at the apex of authority. Meanwhile, Spivak directly considers the discourse surrounding the most female notable figures of Britain in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985) as well as issues of female voice and agency in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). Spivak claims that figures like Jane Eyre do not only exist in contrast to, but also as a product of colonized women. The second section turns to Kincaid's representations of Queen Victoria to demonstrate how Queen Victoria's legacies of domesticity and dominance continue to suppress the voices of female imperial subjects, Kincaid included. The section continues with a more contemporary

discussion of Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret in order to consider the forms of imperialism produced by female emblems of the British monarchy in the twentieth century. More specifically, Kincaid argues that Antiguan citizens and administrators are complicit in Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret's rule—literal and symbolic—over Antigua as the island diverts resources and infrastructure to satisfy the perceived demands of royal influence. The figure of Princess Margaret offers a particularly unique perspective into this dynamic, as the royal figure furthest from the seat of power may in fact be the most privileged. In the final part of this chapter, I consider the plight of Antiguan women, particularly as the resources and support of imperial Britain wanes and that of neo-colonial tourists waxes. I will suggest that Kincaid frames the female head librarian of Antigua as a foil to Queen Victoria, as she fails to obtain the agency and capital necessary to build a library that is independent from Britain.

Women and Post-colonial Theory: Queen Victoria's Shadow

While *A Small Place* seeks to expose contemporary forms of oppression in Antigua, Kincaid focuses considerably more of her work on the female figures of the monarchy than of Antigua. The disparity between Kincaid's attention to Antiguan and royal figures reinforces much of the west's conceptions of creole people as the Other. Thus, Edward Said's work, *Orientalism,* offers an important understanding of how Kincaid conceives Antiguan identity as the Other in relation to British monarchs. Kincaid suggests that British monarchs require an opposing figure or counter narrative in order to maintain their hegemony, a clear example of Said's conceptions of the 'Orient'. Moreover, in *Culture and Imperialism,* Said suggests that many British writers, such as Jane Austen, require a kind of Other in order to conceive the tranquility and power of British nobility. I suggest that in fact Austen's protagonist, Fanny Price,

cannot exist without opposing figures like Kincaid. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak further speaks to this process of othering as she explores the glorification of another British heroine, Jane Eyre, at the expense of an Antiguan woman, Antoinette, in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." Spivak provides further insight into the challenges of Kincaid to find a voice free from western influence in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Lastly, Mary Louise Pratt offers useful terms for conceiving colonial relations, asserting the colonial space to be a 'contact zone' as well as stressing the hypocrisy of elite westerners through the term 'anti-conquest'.

To set the foundation of this discussion of the post-colonial scholarship surrounding *A Small Place,* Edward Said offers insight into the process of othering that occurs in the contact zone.[3] Said's landmark text, *Orientalism,* considers how western writers construct imperial subjects in their work. Moreover, Said explains the notion of the orient or 'the other,' an important term when considering Kincaid's subject position relative to the female British monarchs. Said explains the origin of the orient, claiming:

> [In writing, the] Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal." But the way of enlivening the relationship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence. (38)

Moreover, Said later notes that most every scholar that considers the orient has "kept intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability" (164). Said's definition of the Other is significant to my

[3] See for a feminist perspective: Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale University Press, 2020. *JSTOR,* www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvxkn74x. Accessed 1 Feb. 2021.

argument on two levels. First, Said asserts that the Other is a kind of underground or shadow version of the West. Second, the 'other' is distinctly feminized. Kincaid reimagines the landscape of Said's definition of the orient as she draws power from her distinctions between Antigua and Britain. Kincaid refuses to identify with western culture, instead playing into the idea of Antiguan women as an undifferentiated mass of Other. Kincaid discusses Antiguan women very little compared to her representations of female monarchs that each receive individual references speaking to their superior status. Thus, it would be possible to argue that Kincaid perpetrates the stereotype of the Orient. However, this tactic serves a more trenchant purpose. Kincaid is actually representing the ramifications of imperial legacy, as well as orientalism, on Antiguan identity.

Though *A Small Place* effectively challenges the legitimacy of British colonial authority in its own right, Kincaid's claims appear most prudent when her work is read alongside hallmarks of the British canon such as Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. While Edward Said provides little insight into the unique position of women in the colonial space, his work, *Culture and Imperialism,* suggests a similar reciprocal relationship between women emblematic of British culture and imperial subjects to Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." Said received a great deal of critical praise for his evaluation of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park,* which points out the importance of maintaining an empire to sustain the domestic life of elites in Britain.[4] I contend that *A Small Place*, authored by an Antiguan Other, serves as a worthwhile companion text to *Mansfield Park*. Unlike *Wide Sargasso Sea, A Small Place* makes no reference or allusion to *Mansfield Park. Wide Sargasso*

[4] See Michael Gorra, "Who Paid the Bills at Mansfield Park?," in New York Times Book Review, 28 Feb. 1993, p. 11.

Sea gained notoriety because it dispels the sexist and racist depictions of the only creole character in *Jane* Eyre: Antoinette. *A Small Place* achieves a similar premise as Kincaid shows the toll of legacies of slavery and disenfranchisement that even low-ranking English nobility, like Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*, continue to take on female Antiguan subjects. Whereas *Wise Sargasso Sea* serves as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, *A Small Place* functions as a sequel to *Mansfield Park.* Both Rhys and Kincaid predicate their texts on the temporality of their characters in order to give agency to their protagonists. Just as Rhys's characters explore the time before the writing of J*ane Eyre* and around the time of abolition in Jamaica, Kincaid's characters reconcile the deep-seated hegemony that stems from the slavery in Antigua at the time of publishing *Mansfield Park.* In addition to Kincaid's relation with Rhys, Kincaid emerges to have a particular kind of relationship with the protagonist of *Mansfield Park*: Fanny Price. While Fanny Price and Jamaica Kincaid have a kind of reciprocal relationship, they are forever separated by their temporalities and yet mutually relevant. Kincaid and Price are dependent on the existence of Britain and Antigua, respectively. Their opposing positions, Antiguan Other and British self, are contingent on each other's existence. The triumphant figure of Fanny Price could not exist without the resources of Antigua and the people of Antigua are implicated into her narrative by their labor and production of wealth.

Said's assessment of the Mansfield Park estate focuses on its dependency on the Bertram's Antiguan plantation. This dependency underlines the importance of the economy of colonies to England, even when those colonies are unseen and unrepresented. Said explains that in *Mansfield Park*,

> What sustains this life materially is the Bertram estate in Antigua, which is not going well. Austen takes pains to show us two apparently disparate but actually convergent

> processes: the growth of Fanny's importance to the Bertrams' economy, including Antigua, and Fanny's own steadfastness in the face of numerous challenges, threats, and surprises. In both, Austen's imagination works with a steel-like rigor through a mode that we might call geographical and spatial clarification. (85)

In this argument, Fanny Price holds a similar position to the character of Jane Eyre as they both seek to establish stability in their respective novels. Jane ultimately marries Mr. Rochester and resolves his past relationship with a mentally-ill Jamaican woman. Meanwhile, Fanny gains the admiration of Sir Thomas by representing a stability unavailable to him in Antigua due to slave revolts on his plantation. Both Fanny and Jane bring a sense of peace and conclusion to their works, conclusions that necessarily exclude West Indian people, places, and influence.

To this end, Said readdresses Austen's work to explicate the purpose behind Austen's references to Antigua. While Said works to extrapolate Austen's spatial logic, I work to understand that of Kincaid. Said postulates the significance of Austen's references to Antigua, stating:

> My contention is that … Austen reveals herself to be *assuming* (just as Fanny assumes, in both sense of the word) the importance of an empire to the situation at home. Since Austen refers to and uses Antigua as she does in *Mansfield Park*, there needs to be a commensurate effort on the part of her readers to understand concretely the historical valences in the reference; to put it differently, we should try to understand *what* she referred to, why she gave it the importance she did, and why indeed she made the choice, for she might have done something different to establish Sir Thomas's wealth. (89)

Said formulates a call to action for readers of Austen to intently consider her references to Antigua. In my discussion of Queen Victoria, Queen Elizabeth I and Princess Margaret, I too

hope to understand what Kincaid referred to, why she gave them the importance she did, and why she made the choice to include them in her work.

Analyzing Kincaid's use of Queen Victoria as an emblem of British imperial influence requires an evaluation of the post-colonial scholarship relevant to *A Small Place. A Small Place* was written in 1988, in between Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985) and Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). These theoretical works are relevant not only because they offer insight into Kincaid's motivations behind her depictions of the monarchy, but also, they reflect a scholarly conversation that is both led by women and contemporary to the power dynamics present in Kincaid's work.

Just as Kincaid, Pratt seeks to shift the understanding of colonial writing away from the imperialist in favor of empowering imperial subjects. Using the term *contact zone,* which refers to the colonial frontier typically featuring unequal interactions between Europeans and creole peoples, Pratt attempts to address the misrepresentation of colonized subjects in western writing, calling for a reconstruction of the contact zone (8). Moreover, Pratt calls for greater use of terms like *transculturation* which refers to the idea that colonized subjects are not forced to choose between complicity or rejection of the colonizer, rather they hold autonomy in the ways they integrate the dominant culture with their own (10). Furthermore, Pratt coins the term *anti-conquest* which refers to the "strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (9). Anti-conquest offers insight into the motivations of each of the female representatives of the monarchy discussed in this thesis. *A Small Place* works to assign responsibility to the tourism industry as well as the figures of the monarchy for their role in the continued suppression of

Antiguans, a call often left unanswered. Thus, anti-conquest is a useful term when considering how to assign responsibility in the colonial space, even as the neat colonizer/colonized binary slips away in a post-colonial context. Anti-conquest speaks to the unique position of female imperialists, such as Queen Victoria, Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret, who remain powerful because of widespread fascination with their performances of domesticity, reflected in everything from Antiguan infrastructure to royal tours. Their associations with femininity and purity offer a great deal of public interest and secure a modicum of innocence. Pratt's work regarding the contact zone and anti-conquest is helpful for diagnosing the state of the female imperialist, as *A Small Place* gives examples of how each of these figures is seen as innocent.

One the other hand, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak offers perspective on the opposing figure, the state of the third world woman, in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). While Kincaid cannot be described as a third world women (due to her ability to transgress colonial authority and find agency), she also struggles to reconcile her own voice and language in relation to colonial history and western intellectuals' entanglements with the imperial system. She speaks to the power of the English language to suppress imperial subjects through the term "epistemic violence," or harmful discourse due to intentional or unintentional ignorance (Dotson 236). Spivak emphasizes the challenge of female representation amid hegemonic systems, stating "between patriarchy and imperialism … the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman'" (102). Spivak exposes how the female voice cannot escape from the confines of the Western image of a "third-world woman," an image exempted from historical and contemporary agency. This critique is relevant to Kincaid, who considers the struggle for history and authority in Antigua by accusing the English language of acting as a criminal. Spivak adeptly offers a

theoretical framework to understand the challenges facing subaltern women; however, her focus on gender only helps to understand the status of the colonized woman. Thus, in order to understand the relationship of figures like the head librarian to Queen Victoria, we need a theoretical framework that conceptualizes the gendering of colonial rule itself.

Lastly, Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" brings together the concerns of these theoretical texts, explaining the relationship between the English woman and the third-world woman or Fanny Price and Jamaica Kincaid. Spivak arguing that the construction of a British female subject in full possession of her individuality cannot occur without the existence of a fictive Other, a subaltern woman. Spivak's primary example, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, demonstrates that Jane Eyre could not develop (as she is commonly understood) without the ballast of figures like Rhys's Antoinette[5]. Spivak claims that Bronte's *Jane Eyre* forms a contemporary feminist icon at the expense of women like Rhys's Antoinette:

> [in] this fictive England, [Antoinette] must play out her role, act out the transformation of her 'self' into that fictive Other, set fire to the house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction. I must read this as an allegory of the epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer. (251)

Spivak argues here that the emergence of Jane Eyre as a feminist heroine requires the denigration—even the self-sacrifice—of Antoinette. Similarly, I argue that in Kincaid's understanding, female monarchs only have cultural and political power insofar as Antiguan women are exploited and suppressed.

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[5] See for Kincaid's take on *Jane Eyre*: Kincaid, Jamaica. *Annie John*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985.

The Complicity of Female Monarchs in the Imperial Machine

The figure of Queen Victoria appears as a reoccurring and complicated image throughout Jamaica Kincaid's body of work. Kincaid repeatedly returns to the icon of Queen Victoria because Kincaid sees her as having established a domestic and misogynistic legacy that haunts Antiguan women even up to the 1980s. Given Queen Victoria's ability to affect the consciousness of imperial subjects, it is worthwhile to consider how her reign may produce a gendered interpretation of the imperial project. In his essay, "Theatrical Monarchy: The Making of Victoria, the Modern Family Queen," Bernd Weisbrod asserts that Queen Victoria feminized a once powerful male symbol in order to protect her royal status (242). In other words, because Queen Victoria disguised her power with her domesticity, she reinforced the importance of performing domesticity among all her female subjects, many of whom did not have privilege to spare. In this vein, Susan Kent considers maternal representations of Queen Victoria in her work, *Queen Victoria: Gender and Empire*, arguing that her "appeal lay in her ability to conform to the model of a middle-class wife and mother, an image her advisors and ministers worked hard to project" (169). Kent complicates this image by claiming that "the British people did not know how active she was in the actual running of the country. That was kept from them" (169). Kent's assertion that the British people are not allowed to see Queen Victoria's role outside of the domestic realm demonstrates the power of the British patriarchy to demand the appearance of subservience from its female monarch. In these ways, Queen Victoria's reign established a misogynistic legacy that relegates even the world's most powerful women to the realm of domesticity.

Central to Queen Victoria's legacy is the tense relationship between her image and Antiguan identity. Kincaid frames Queen Victoria in her colonial education as she is said to

represent “a beautiful place, a blessed place, a living and blessed thing”: England (31). Significantly, her beauty appears to negate her role as an imperialist and ruler, emphasizing her more feminine attributes and the redeeming nature of being “blessed.” Immediately following, Kincaid contrasts this generous account of Queen Victoria with her own assertion that the English are really “ugly, piggish individuals,” a criticism void of the protections of feminine beauty (31). This juxtaposition allows Kincaid ultimately to claim that when she sees the figure of Queen Victoria, she does not see the beauty of England, but rather “the millions of people, of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that an excess of love sometimes brings, and worst and most painful of all, no tongue” (31). This comparison of Antiguans to the authority of a female monarch, Kincaid to Queen Victoria, emphasizes the stark differences in their ability to find voice within the English language. The term “tongue” serves as a synecdoche for the English language. Thus, the notion of “no tongue” demonstrates the systemic barriers to expressing crimes of imperialism (Kincaid 31). While a lack of voice suggests an inability to be heard, a lack of a tongue suggests that the words cannot even be spoken. The loss of history and culture, the inability to speak, allows for imperialist oppression to dominate the collective memory of society. A tongue encapsulates a culture’s identity, allowing individuals to share their lived experiences. In the case of Antigua, the tongue, English, serves as a reminder of both colonial rule and an inability to move beyond it. Kincaid attempts to make her own distinction, one that empowers Antiguans: Antiguans reject the language of the oppressor, the image of Queen Victoria, just as the English reject Antiguans and creole culture.

For Kincaid, Queen Victoria’s embodiment of domesticity exacerbates the difficult position of Antiguan women as they try to express themselves outside of a singular

representation of beauty or even the English language. Kincaid reveals that she and her fellow Antiguans cannot challenge Queen Victoria's authority, let alone her domestic legacy, due to the limitations of their language. Kincaid understands English, an imposed and artificial tongue in Antigua, as the language of the criminal. In Kincaid's view, Antiguans are left both denigrated and unrepresented as a result of the language of the criminal. Thus, Kincaid questions the legitimacy of the English language as a form of creole expression stating:

> For isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? For the language of the criminal can contain only the goodness of the criminal's deed. The language of the criminal can explain and [express] the deed only from the criminal's point of view. It cannot contain the horror of the deed, the injustice of the deed, the agony, the humiliation [inflicted] on me. (31-2)

Kincaid asserts that the language of the criminal limits all viewpoints to that of the English imperialist and cannot begin to portray Kincaid's subject position. Kincaid remains painfully unable to find an alternative mode of communication due to the intentional destruction of creole language under imperialism. While Kincaid rejects the English language, it may not be due to an inherent lack of vocabulary or grammatical structure that would allow her to express her experiences. Rather, she seeks to position her subjectivity outside of the English sphere of influence. The success of English language hegemony suppresses Kincaid's ability to criticize the imperial project and its misogynistic wake. Given that the monarch serves as the final arbitrator and lead performer of English culture, Queen Victoria emerges as the ultimate (and silencing) criminal.

Though Jamaica Kincaid directs the majority of her criticism towards Queen Victoria and the monarchy, she also questions the lack of accountability of Antiguans in perpetuating her image and influence. Kincaid rejects the continued celebration of Queen Victoria's birthday as a national holiday: "[in] Antigua, the twenty-fourth of May was a holiday—Queen Victoria's official birthday. We didn't say to [ourselves], Hasn't this extremely unappealing person been dead for years and years?" (30). The rhetorical question serves as both a condemnation of Queen Victoria as an "extremely unappealing" dead person as well as a criticism of Antiguans' continued propagation of her influence (30). Kincaid escalates her criticism of Queen Victoria when she compares the Antiguan consciousness of Queen Victoria to that of the English. Kincaid compares her experience to that of a British government official, asking him, "'do you know that we had to celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday?' So he said that every year, at the school he attended in England, they marked the day she died. I said, 'Well, apart from the fact that she belonged to you and so anything you did about her was proper, at least you knew she died'" (30). Kincaid assigns the ownership of Queen Victoria to the government official in an attempt to liberate Antiguan consciousness, despite Antigua's continued membership in the commonwealth. Moreover, the disparity between Queen Victoria's birth and death provides further evidence of the inverse relationship between Britain and Antigua, celebrating different sides of the same coin. Kincaid's comment that Antiguans did not know Queen Victoria died portrays England and the Queen as a kind of undead figure, somehow still dominating Antiguan public consciousness. Antigua remarkably remains under the influence of a monarch that no longer exists. The nation continues to protect, celebrate, and propagate her legacy. Interestingly, Kincaid both rejects and envies the government official's ability to honor Queen Victoria as she feels excluded from her death and the contemporary monarchy. Given the legacy of Queen Victoria for growing and

maintaining the British empire, Antiguan women like Jamaica Kincaid exist as the subjects or shadow to her reign. Unlike her novels, Kincaid writes *A Small Place* in the first person, directly reacting to and commenting on the intrusion of Queen Victoria. For example, Kincaid herself admits that "I met the world through England, and if the world wanted to meet me it would have to do so through England" (33). Kincaid's distaste for Queen Victoria may stem from the disparity in their agency. Queen Victoria maintains a great deal of unmitigated influence even as a dead figure. Meanwhile, Kincaid, a passionate and alive Antiguan remains excluded not only from the interworking of Antiguan society, but also the ability to stand in her own right. So long as Queen Victoria's legacy reigns in the hearts of British subjects, women like Kincaid will exist in her shadow. Kincaid herself emerges as the colonial and inferior antagonist to the reign of Queen Victoria.

Unfortunately, the death of Queen Victoria fails to mark the end of British intrusions on Antiguan culture. In addition to Queen Victoria's legacy, Kincaid considers depictions of Queen Elizabeth II today in order to challenge and discourage the perpetuation of contemporary markers of colonialism. While Kincaid offers few direct accounts of her experiences with Queen Elizabeth II, she highlights the queen's intrusion into the infrastructure of Antigua and her encroachment on Antiguan autonomy. Kincaid questions the influence of the British monarchy by focusing her narrative on the experiences of Antiguans. She explains that because Antigua maintains a position in the commonwealth, the island continues to rely on the administrative systems of England. For example, Antigua continues to use monarchical iconography because "Antigua has no stamp designer on the government payroll; there is no building that houses the dyes and the paper on which the stamps are printed; there is no Department of Printing," raising the question, "who decides to print stamps celebrating the Queen of England's [birthday]?"

(Kincaid 52). Antigua's limited ability to produce distinctive stamps may not be the most egregious of imperial crimes; however, the stamps demonstrate an unwillingness to think beyond British imperial iconography.

Furthermore, when the stakes are higher—regarding, for instance, the allocation of state resources—the Queen continues to receive priority without criticism. The Queen's comfort ultimately supersedes Antiguans' quality of life: for example, the main road in Antigua "was paved for the Queen's visit in 1985 (when the Queen came, all the roads that she would travel on were paved anew, so that the Queen might have been left with the impression that riding in a car in Antigua was a pleasant experience)" (Kincaid 12). Evidently, public works and government initiatives continued to prioritize British imperialists, monarchs, at least until 1985, four years after Antigua's independence. Perhaps if resources were not diverted towards the pavement of roads, the island could fund a department of printing that is representative of Antigua, or rebuild its library. Clearly, the monarchy holds a unique ability to dictate the policy and daily life of imperial subjects, Antiguans, while holding little to no official authority (particularly given that the Commonwealth is a voluntary association that no longer pays taxes to Britain, outside of paying for Royal tours (Goodey)). Ultimately, this allocation of resources sets a precedent in Antigua in which the needs of visitors are prioritized over the needs of citizens. Seeming small impositions such as the depiction of the Queen on stamps and significant infrastructure projects alike are evidence of unchallenged British hegemony on Antigua.

Lastly, Kincaid examines a royal female figure that lies on the outskirts of the power and influence of the monarchy: Princess Margaret. While Princess Margaret shares in the privilege and notoriety of the monarchy, she ultimately rests in the periphery of the crown. Nonetheless, Kincaid does not find a sense of kinship with Princess Margaret, rather she discusses Princess

Margaret in a formidable exposé of the royal façade that protects modern imperial influence. Princess Margaret often escapes critical attention given her figurative and literal distance from the British throne, but in *A Small Place* Princess Margaret represents the same exploitation and suppression of Antiguan women as Queen Victoria and Elizabeth II. In the scathing narrative of Princess Margaret's visit in 1962, Kincaid explains that Princess's Tour of Antigua was little more than an attempt by the royal family to distract from the scandal surrounding her relationship with a divorcé, rather than an opportunity to support the colony. Princess Margaret faced severe limits on her domestic arrangements as a result of her duty to the crown – she was not permitted to marry a divorcé, and was sent to the West Indies in an effort to overshadow her scandal with pomp and circumstance. Kincaid brings to light Princess Margaret's personal motivations behind her tour of Antigua in order to undermine her public performance of imperial rule:

> no one told us that this person we were putting ourselves out for on such a big scale, this person we were getting worked up about as if she were God Himself, was in our midst because of something so common, so everyday: her life was not working out the way she had hoped, her life was one big mess. Have I given you the impression that the Antigua I grew up in revolved almost completely around England? Well, that was so. (33)

While Kincaid was quite young during Princess Margaret's tour, this passage demonstrates how the British monarchy's wake autonomously maintains an imperial machine, suppressing the ability of Kincaid to form a distinctly *Antiguan* identity. Kincaid's introduction of Princess Margaret's tour as a product of an "inappropriate" private relationship undermines Princess Margaret's contribution to imperial statecraft. Kincaid tears down the construction of a pure façade around Princess Margaret's tour, asserting that there is no difference between the princess

and anyone else facing a volatile domestic life. Yet Antiguans are expected to uproot their lives in order to watch this person tour of their own nation. While the royal tour appears as an opportunity for the solidification of imperial bonds, Kincaid focused on Princess Margaret's domestic quagmire. Kincaid detracts from the wonder and celebration of Princess Margaret's visit, justly questioning her contribution to the lives of Antiguans. In layman's terms: Princess Margaret fails to live up to the hype. Princess Margaret's visit serves as a solution to a British problem, not an Antiguan one, demonstrating the continued use of Antigua as an asset rather than an obligation that requires support and reparations. Ironically, Princess Margaret serves as a symbol of British superiority, yet her status as a princess and a woman leads the monarchy to hide her away from the scathing British press. The monarchy prioritizes self-preservation over Princess Margaret's romantic interests, dispatching her on a royal tour in Antigua— like a princess locked in a tower. Princess Margaret's normalcy and humanity—her distance from the throne—allows Kincaid to chip away at the legitimacy of the monarchy's influence on Antiguan identity as she appears as a petulant princess, undeserving of the monarchy's ownership of Antigua.

As in previous examples, Kincaid uses Princess Margaret's visit to emphasize the culpability of Antiguans in advancing contemporary British hegemony in Antigua. Kincaid portrays Princess Margaret as a continuation of the shortcomings of Queen Victoria as Kincaid considers the appearance of the Governor's house in Antigua. The Governor's house serves a literal and figurative embodiment of the Queen's influence in Antigua as it:

> was surrounded by a high white wall—and to show how cowed [Antiguans] must have been, no one ever wrote bad things on it; it remained clean and white and high. (I once stood in hot sun for hours so that I could see a putty-faced [Princess] from England

> disappear behind these walls. I was seven years old at the time, and I thought, she has a putty face). (Kincaid 25)

Again, Princess Margaret falls short of Kincaid's expectations as her "putty face" fails to live up to the high white wall (25). The wall clearly symbolizes a sense of purity and higher authority, standing as an imposing, white, constructed edifice to imperial domination. Moreover, the "putty" color of Princess Margaret's face, while related to the metaphor of the white wall, suggests a polluted or darkened version of purity. Ultimately, Kincaid seeks to underline the difference between expectations and reality on Princess Margaret's tour of Antigua. Kincaid's feelings of disappointment towards Princess Margaret allows her to question the presence of the monarchy. Kincaid accuses Antiguans of cowardly behavior for failing to vandalize the falsely pure white walls of the Governor's house. The wall, like Princess Margaret, indicates the pervasive nature of hegemony on Antigua, a hegemony co-produced by both the monarchy and Antiguans themselves. Princess Margaret's tour—a make-believe fairytale—serves as a reminder of an imperial machine that hides the diverse figures living under colonial rule behind a façade of purity and goodness.

The Head Librarian and the Oppressed Status of Antiguan Women

Much of Kincaid's *A Small Place* focuses on the failure of the monarchy to represent the Antiguan people or to help their cause. From Queen Victoria to Princess Margaret, the women of the monarchy emerge as figures in opposition to the Antiguans. Moreover, the women of the monarchy each receive dedicated references in *A Small Place*, while very few individual Antiguans are mentioned throughout the work. However, one Antiguan figure that Kincaid prominently discusses is the female head librarian. The head librarian offers a possible bridge

between royal figures and Antiguan women: she once served as the protector of a colonial institution, the Antiguan Library, a beacon of western civilization on the island. However, as the grip of British imperial rule softened after Antigua declared independence, the influence and resources of the library dwindled. The head librarian emerges as both an alter ego to and a safe guarder of Queen Victoria's legacy. In Kincaid's telling, the librarian, one of the few beneficiaries of the previous imperial regime, now loses her privilege thanks to neocolonialists who glorify the "old" Antigua under which she thrived, while refusing to support the nation's current institutions. The librarian transitions from actively promoting the monarchy's influence, to seeking to establish a library that honors Antiguan identity and history. While Kincaid repeatedly criticizes the complicity of Antiguans in the maintenance of imperial influence, the head librarian holds a more ambivalent position in the history of Antigua, a leader who both perpetuated imperial propaganda and fought for Antiguan recognition. The librarian once acted as a bridge across the Atlantic, between the monarchy and its imperial state; however, she concludes her career as an ordinary Antiguan, struggling to overcome the legacy of imperialism.

After an earthquake in 1974, the Antigua library is relegated to a small space "above the dry-goods store, in the old run-down concrete building, [which] is too small to hold all the books from the old building, and so most of the books…. are in cardboard boxes in a room, gathering mildew, or dust, or ruin" (Kincaid 41). Despite the head librarian's efforts to raise money for a new library from tourists, the books remained there until a new library was completed in 2014, forty-years later and well after the publication of Kincaid's essay. The delay in the construction of the new library was not due to a lack of effort from the librarian, but rather from the ambivalence of Britain, the historic protector and colonizer of Antigua, to invest in present-day Antigua and Antiguans.

The librarian's refusal to focus her efforts on the restoration of the library demonstrates a rejection of the narrative Queen Victoria left behind on the island because she seeks to establish a library that is representative of Antiguan—rather than British—history. However, this initiative drives the librarian to seek resources from the members of an exclusive tourist hotspot known as the Mill Reef Club, a private community made up of American and British homeowners that control over five miles of Antiguan coast line. Kincaid accuses the members of this club of serving as neocolonialists, extracting vacations and pleasure from the island, while offering little in return. The librarian finds herself groveling to these island elites in an attempt to find "anybody with money or influence to help the library, apologizing to people … who are shocked and offended by the sight of the library sitting on top of a dry-goods store" (Kincaid 44). Prior to the damage to the library, the librarian is "very proud of her work [and] her association with such an institution, for, to see her now, she looks like the exact opposite of her old self" (Kincaid 45). The woman is stripped of the respect she once garnered as the safe guarder of a colonial institution, now apologizing for its sorry state of affairs to neo-colonialists who refuse to support the institution. The librarian emerges a foil to Queen Victoria as she seeks to create an Antiguan identity outside of the Queen and Britain's image. This rumination about the questionable fate of a woman in the remnants of colonial rule exposes the lack of progress in the advancement of female voice. The librarian is caught between the lost privilege of her colonial past and the present reality of a nation unable to thrive after leaving behind the resources of British imperialism. The librarian is forced to debase herself to a neo-colonial authority, the members of the Mill Reef Club, perhaps in attempt to return to the security an imperial authority affords.

Though the librarian engages with the members of the Mill Reef Club, her actions are not an endorsement of their influence; she simply seeks their money. The Mill Reef Club, while a

new introduction of authority over Antiguans, continues to prioritize the legacy of British imperial rule over supporting the institutions of present-day Antigua. Kincaid shares their ambivalence towards new markers of Antiguan independence, writing that the librarian was left to hope that "the people at the Mill Reef Club will relent and contribute their money to the building of a new library, instead of holding to their repair-of-the-old-library-or-nothing position. (The people at the Mill Reef Club love the old Antigua. I love the old Antigua. Without question, we don't have the same old Antigua in mind.)" (44). Kincaid's distinction is quite clear: the Mill Reef Club seeks to advance the legacy of historic British dominance over Antigua through the restoration of the old library under the guise of imperial nostalgia and Antiguans seek to build a new library that honors the experiences of present-day Antiguans. Unfortunately, access to capital exacerbates the disparity in this mindset, explaining the forty-year lapse in construction. The librarian remains unable to access their wealth without the promise of a return to oppressive, colonized or "old" Antigua. The librarian now stands as an oppressed Antiguan, struggling to maintain a library in a decrepit facility above a grocer, far from the privileges of imperial institutions. Thus, the librarian stands in the shadow of Queen Victoria, despite her commitment to colonial educational institutions like the library itself.

Conclusion: Female Monarchs and the Women They Erase

In her biography of Jamaica Kincaid, Diane Simmons claims that:

> [*A Small Place* explains] to white readers the incredibly complex effect, on white and black alike, of centuries of domination, showing them their own continued participation in a way that may not have been visible to them before. She is also trying to explain, to

> herself as well, what the psychological effects of slavery, colonialism, and their aftermath have been for the black residents of Antigua. (137)

Simmons adeptly emphasizes the struggle for Kincaid, and likely Antiguans, to transcend the temporality of colonialism. Kincaid writes *A Small Place* in an attempt to reconcile her own complicated position in Antigua. Kincaid accomplishes something similar to Spivak's construction of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* as well as Said's understanding of *Mansfield Park.* Kincaid creates a reciprocal relationship between herself and her fellow Antiguan women with the female figures of the monarchy. Scholarship has yet to consider how a figure like the head librarian exists as a kind of alter ego or shadow figure to Queen Victoria. While Kincaid's narrator emphatically rejects colonial and royal influence throughout her essay, the librarian waivers between complicity and outright rejection of colonialism's institutions. The librarian remains caught between patriarchy and imperialism as she cannot find lasting power even when she seeks shelter in colonialism's institutions. Meanwhile the female monarch cannot shed her dominion even as misogyny tries to restrain her. Though Queen Victoria shares in the limitations patriarchy places on her influence, she escapes the oppressive reach of imperialism, instead acting as its guiding hand.

Simmons makes an important point about Kincaid's readership. Kincaid knowingly writes to a largely white audience as she seeks to implicate their complicity with the sins of colonialism. Kincaid successfully calls upon her reader to engage with her text and reflect on their own actions. While Kincaid's work focuses on evidence of epistemic violence committed by Queen Victoria and other female monarchs, her accusations fit the majority of European-descent bourgeoise subjects. While the glorification of female monarchs most obviously could not take place in public discourse without the othering of colonial subjects, Kincaid incriminates

all white people in this process. Kincaid more directly writes of bourgeois complicity in her two most significant works of fiction: *Annie John* and *Lucy*. In both novels, Kincaid considers more closely how colonial subjects negotiate and take on elements of imposed dominant cultures (such as the figures of the monarchy) in order to ultimately reject them. Moreover, Kincaid suggests that even mothers often fall prey to perpetrating colonial values, especially during the childrearing of their daughters.

Chapter II: Transculturation and Maternal Hegemony in *Annie John* and *Lucy*

"To refuse to use the dominant language and to be thereby silenced … is to continue to grant the power structure its own terms" (Simmons 67).

A baby girl was born on May 25, 1949 to a low-income family in St. John's Antigua. She enjoyed a close relationship with her mother from the moment she was born, but as she grew into her adolescence, and her three brothers entered the world, their relationship waned. The young girl was very successful in her colonial school, often performing as a top student. Unfortunately, her mother forced her to leave school at the age of seventeen in order to help support their family. In 1966, she was sent to the suburbs of New York City to work as an au pair and become the family breadwinner. Instead, she embarked on a new life in the United States, cutting ties with her family and navigating a myriad of attempted schools and jobs. The young woman ultimately found success as a writer, leading her to seek a namesake that better encapsulates her Antiguan identity as well as offers a degree of anonymity from her native community: Jamaica Kincaid.[6] Jamaica Kincaid was born Elaine Potter Richardson, a family name that could no longer bear the weight of her ambitions. Thus, there is little surprise that the protagonist of one of Kincaid's most celebrated works, *Lucy*, famously struggles with her namesake. Instead of choosing a new legal name, she (with the accidental help of her mother) reinvents her name connecting Lucy to Lucifer. Lucy describes Lucifer not as a bleak state of fallen morality, but as an empowered and liberated son of God. This linguistic maneuver, a kind of parable, is indicative of a complex process known as transculturation or the negotiations of power and consciousness surrounding the imposition of colonialism onto creole peoples (Pratt 7). Kincaid's *Lucy*, and her earlier work *Annie John*, reveal the value of appropriating from imposed cultures and literary traditions in order to grant creole people power on their own terms.

[6] "Her Story." *BBC World Service.* Retrieved March 19, 2021.

While the previous chapter dealt with colonial hegemony amongst women at the extremes of power in *A Small Place*, this chapter will consider how Kincaid manages colonial hegemony within the family unit in *Annie John* and *Lucy*. More specifically, Kincaid constructs mother-daughter relationships that are deeply marked by colonialism, relationships that thus feature intensely complex power negotiations. Kincaid conceptualizes this phenomenon through her allusions to the English literary canon, especially the works of Milton, Wordsworth and Brontë. While many scholars have considered how post-colonial authors engage with and abstract the English literary canon, most notably Ashcroft in *The Empire Writes Back*, there is little commentary on how mothers uniquely influence the canon of their daughters or how daughters appropriate from the canon in order to condemn maternal influence. In the works of Kincaid, the British literary canon, colonial hegemony, mothering and maternal hegemony are acutely interrelated. Furthermore, a number of scholars have written about Kincaid's constructions of colonialism and motherhood, but there is still more to be said about how Christianity inflects the reader's perception of both institutions. In this matrix of colonialism and motherhood, Christianity remains both omnipresent and understudied.

The first section of this chapter will explore a theoretical framework rooted in Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and* Transculturation. Particularly useful are Pratt's terms transculturation, imperial eyes and anti-conquest in discussing how Kincaid's *Lucy* and *Annie John* record the significance of gender (and maternal hegemony) in references to the British canon. The second section will turn to how Kincaid's Christian (and occasionally Obeah) allusions inflect her protagonists' relationships with their mothers. Interestingly, Lucy's mother rarely employs Christian allusions in the text; instead, they appear in Lucy's internal vitriol against maternal influence. Meanwhile, Kincaid more directly engages and criticizes her

maternal figures in her appropriation of the British canon as her protagonists employ the canon in order conceptualize their own identity. In fact, Kincaid's Christian and canonical allusions appear to formulate a series of parables that foreshadow contemporary events throughout *Lucy.* The final section will turn to issues of propriety in *Annie John* as the protagonist's mother conceptualizes sexuality and coming of age through the lens of English propriety.

Pratt's Transculturation at Work: The (Colonial and Maternal) Canon

The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures provides an important framework for understanding Kincaid's implementation of the British literary canon. This landmark work in the study of post-colonial literature considers how post-colonial writers, like Kincaid, negotiate and transform hallmarks of British colonialism from the literary canon in order to find a distinct voice. Bill Ashcroft et al. explains that:

> through the literary canon, the body of British texts which all too frequently still acts as a touchstone of taste and value … which asserts the English of south-east England as a universal norm, the weight of antiquity continues to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world. This cultural hegemony has been maintained through canonical assumptions about literary activity, and through attitudes to post-colonial literatures which identify them as isolated national off-shoots of English literature, and which therefore relegate them to marginal and subordinate positions. (Ashcroft 7)

In other words, the British literary canon serves as a justification and tool for imperial oppression that continues to exclude post-colonial writers today. Nonetheless, Kincaid famously engages with the works of Wordsworth, Bronte and Milton in an attempt to express her own liberation from colonialism. Ashcroft later shifts power away from the canon citing that post-colonial

writers now lead the dismantling of the ideological assumptions of elite Western discourse and that "[the] post-colonial text is itself a site of struggle for linguistic control, as the power which it makes manifest is yielded up to the appropriating discourse" (76, 114). While *The Empire Writes Back* offers a valuable survey of post-colonial literature, Ashcroft often falls prey to a Manichean model easily criticized for its simplicity. Nonetheless, Ashcroft formulates an invaluable argument to Kincaid's *Lucy* and *Annie John*. Kincaid implements elements of the British canon not simply because they are familiar; rather, she seeks to reframe their meaning in contemporary society as emblematic of imperial abuse. Moreover, Kincaid liberates her protagonists from colonial oppression through her reconstructions of elite western discourse.

Within the mold of *the Empire Writes Back,* Diane Simmons considers how Jamaica Kincaid's works fit into both the English and post-colonial canon. Diane Simmons most notably discusses how Kincaid engages with hallmarks of English literature from her colonial education in her work "Jamaica Kincaid and the Canon: In Dialogue with *Paradise Lost* and *Jane Eyre*." Simmons notes that while many post-colonial writers have tried to ignore colonial literary traditions, Kincaid (and a new wave of writers) find their voice in their repressed traditions', or as Francois Lionnet explains, the "'dialogue with the dominant discourses they hope to transform'" (Simmons 67). In essence, instead of assimilating to, Kincaid appropriates from, English culture in order to convey her own identity as a liberated imperial subject. Kincaid manages this appropriation through a particular emphasis on language, as Simmons stresses that "[to] refuse to use the dominant language and to be thereby silenced, she argues, is to continue to grant the power structure its own terms" (67). Simmons adeptly connects Kincaid's references to the British canon to her rejection of colonialism and the English language. However, Simmons offers little discussion of the ways gender influences Kincaid's relationship to the British canon.

Moreover, Simmons does not explicitly discuss the weight and utility of Kincaid's Christian allusions that often buttress her references to the British canon.

Moira Ferguson and Ian Smith build on Simmons's conceptions of the canon addressing issues of gender alongside the British canon in *Jamaica Kincaid: Where the Land Meets the Body* and "Misusing Canonical Intertexts: Jamaica Kincaid, Wordsworth and Colonialism's 'absent things.'" Ferguson contends that Kincaid formulates the intersection of colonial territorialization and her protagonists' embattled relationship with her mother through a double articulation (colonial and biological) of motherhood (Smith 804). Ian Smith takes Ferguson's work a step further, asserting that in *Lucy*, Kincaid articulates both motherhood and colonial rule as canonical authority, meaning source and influence (804). Smith adeptly suggests that mothers are the source of children's conception of societal expectations (whether colonial or creole):

> The mother dwarfs the daughter, having established herself as the moral and authoritative center that seems to push the daughter's interests aside, minimizing their import…. The enduring emotional struggle in the novel is about the daughter's inability to separate completely from the mother and to resist the reinscription into her experience of burdensome (colonial) maternal codes. (805)

Smith astutely posits that mothers act as a kind of arbitrator of their children's canon, offering a potential explanation for Kincaid's unique intertwining of gender and the British canon. Moreover, Smith introduces the power of the daughter to resist colonial and maternal expectation. The value of Smith's argument lies in his acute awareness of colonialism's effects on Kincaid's conceptions of mothers. While Smith insightfully equates maternal and colonial hegemony, there remains more to be said about the specific processes of cultural mixing most

evident in Kincaid's work. Smith's work begs the question: how might Kincaid draw power from this equation?

In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt resolves some of the clouded ambiguity surrounding issues of the canon in postcolonial literature in *The Empire Writes Back*. Pratt more directly addresses post-colonial writers' implementation of the British canon. Alongside her pioneering of the terms 'contact zone' and 'anti-conquest,' Pratt sees the term 'transculturation' as not only affording colonial subjects greater agency, but also more accurately encapsulating their experiences. Pratt repeatedly works to raise the voices of colonial subjects, arguing that:

> If one studies only what the Europeans saw and said, one reproduces the monopoly on knowledge and interpretation that the imperial enterprise sought. This is a huge distortion, because of course that monopoly did not exist. People on the receiving end of European imperialism did their own knowing and interpreting…. Ethnographers have used [the term 'transculturation'] to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. (7)

While advocating against the perpetuation of a history told by the victors is not particularly new, Pratt suggests that the victims of colonialism interpret and engage with the dominant culture on their own terms. Ultimately, Pratt seeks to raise the voices of colonial subjects to the same authority of colonial rulers in the discourse of imperialism. Pratt further emphasizes the importance of agency in transculturation, stating that "[while] subjugated peoples cannot readily control what the dominant culture visits upon them, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it, and what they make it mean" (7). In the works of Jamaica Kincaid, references to the British literary canon emerges as the most obvious

appropriation and implementation of the dominant culture by a subjugated person. Nevertheless, I believe there is another component to Kincaid's appropriation of the dominant culture: her use of Christian allusions to denigrate both colonial and maternal hegemony. In fact, Kincaid's references to Christianity most often appear alongside her protagonists' allusions to the British canon their criticisms of mothers. Christianity emerges as a moral standard that when applied to British literature and maternal parenting discourse denotes hypocrisy and suppression of a distinctly Antiguan voice.

Christianity & the Canon

While Kincaid ultimately seeks to subvert the canon formulated by her mother and British colonialism, she appropriates from a number of Christian allusions throughout her novel, *Lucy.* Kincaid's unique interplay of Christianity and motherhood plays out in the intimate relationship between her protagonist, Lucy, and her mother. However, they do not appear in the typical fashion of western discourse. Kincaid constructs Christianity as a foreboding message that signifies oppression. Kincaid spends the majority of *Lucy* attempting to expose the often-disregarded privileges of wealthy New Yorkers, contrasting their bourgeoise excess with accounts of colonial oppression from her protagonist's childhood in Antigua. An excellent example of this occurs when Lucy equates her childhood babysitter, Maude Quick, to Christianity. Lucy accuses Maude Quick of conforming to a conventional western sense of morality, while actually serving as an abusive caretaker. Lucy explains the source of Maude's cruelty stating that "her father was the head of jails—Her Majesty's Prisons—and I used to think of her as my own personal jailer" (Kincaid L 111). While Maude's association with the colonial

prison system demonstrates the often complicit (although in this case explicit) nature of Antiguan women in colonial abuse, Kincaid appears to be more interested in how her mother conceives of Maude. Unfortunately, Lucy reveals that her mother, unaware of Maude's childrearing technique, continues to sing a "Psalm of Maude," praising her commitment to family and good etiquette. Thus, Lucy responds in anger stating that "'[when] I turn nineteen I will be living at home only if I drop dead'" (Kincaid L 112). By calling the ignorant praise of Maude a psalm, Lucy implicitly suggests that a psalm may present a façade or an overly positive narrative. While a simple reference to a psalm appears in only a minor scene of the novel, it speaks to Kincaid's greater relationship with Christianity and motherhood in *Lucy*. The common thread in Lucy's employment of Christian terminology (especially in relation to her mother and later surrogate mother) is that it appears in moments of abuse and fallacy. Evidently, Kincaid purposefully appropriates from the British cultural practice of Christianity in order to expose larger issues of abuse within her protagonist's childhood.

Unfortunately for Lucy, Maude reemerges in the novel when she makes a surprising visit to Lucy's new home in New York City. Because Lucy refuses to open or respond to her mother's letters, her mother resorts to asking Maude, a now fellow New York immigrant, to inform Lucy of her father's death. After sharing the news, Lucy narrates that Maude "left after bestowing on me her benediction of an embrace; apart from everything else, she left behind her the smell of clove, lime, and rose oil, and the scent almost made me die of homesickness" (L 124). Evidently, Lucy dislikes Maude; however, in this case, it is not simply due to her poor babysitting. Rather, she reminds Lucy of the smells of her mother's home, thus stripping Lucy of her ability to evade homesickness. Kincaid inserts the Christian term "benediction" to clarify her feelings of antipathy towards Maude. In addition to Maude's benediction, she left behind a letter from

Lucy's mother. In the letter, Lucy learns of the fallout of her father's passing: her mother is left in destitution, taking on debt to bury her father (Kincaid L 126). The news drives Lucy to write back with anger for her mother's ignorance of her financial reality as she explains that "I said that she had acted like a saint, but that since I was living in this real world I had really wanted just a mother. I reminded her that my whole upbringing had been devoted to preventing me from being a slut" (Kincaid L 127). Lucy's accusation leads to two conclusions. One, Lucy's resentment of her moral upbringing heightens as she learns her mother's own shortcomings. Two, Lucy utilizes Christian allusions in order to convey the negative aspects of her childhood. Regardless of Lucy's vitriol, Kincaid formulates an interesting binary: saint and slut. Whereas the saint, Lucy's mother, is left in destitution, the slut, Lucy, is independent and financially stable. Clearly, Kincaid regularly signposts Lucy's criticisms towards other women via Christian discourse and allusions. However, these allusions serve a far greater purpose than mere signposts. Kincaid's references to Christianity allow her to reinvent a once colonial institution, usurping, rather than refuting, the British canon of knowledge.

During Lucy's transition to life as an au pair in the context of a metropole—the Upper East Side of New York City— she constructs her world through a more nuanced series of Christian allusions. Perhaps one of the most complex allusions occurs in an interaction between Lucy and her employer's maid. The maid approaches Lucy with disdain as Kincaid explains that "[one] day the maid who said she did not like me because of the way I talked told me that she was sure I could not dance. She said that I spoke like a nun, I walked like one also, and that everything about me was so pious and made her feel at once sick to her stomach and sick with pity just to look at me" (L 11). According to the maid, Lucy has achieved her worst fear: embodying a Christian identity. Moira Ferguson discusses this interaction, claiming that "[the]

maid in Lewis and Mariah's house is more candid, though no more empowered than is Lucy by her recognition of race/class differences in this domestic realm. Attuned to an intra-class pecking order, she tries to make Lucy feel stupid and worthless, charging her with speaking as if she were calcified" (11). While Ferguson adeptly situates the discord between Lucy and the maid in the class issues of a domestic realm, she does not attend to the role of Christianity in the negotiations of this pecking order. The maid uses Christianity as a tool to veils her overt racism behind a visceral reaction to piety and nuns. While Kincaid certainly uses this scene to comment on the intra-class pecking order of domestic employees in the United States, she also intentionally evokes a Christian sentiment in order to expose the maid's racist conclusions. Once again, Kincaid enages with colonial values of Christianity in order to uncover experiences of racism.

Kincaid further explores issues of religion and motherhood in her work, *Annie* John, as the protagonist experiences a coming of age while growing up on Antigua. While the novel rarely references Christianity, it offers a few accounts of Obeah religious practices. Significantly, these rare yet thorough references offer an opposing and formidable nexus to that of Christianity and the canon. The following passage emphasizes the importance of privacy in the Obeah faith in regard to the act of bathing. While Kincaid writes about Christianity in moments of criticism, she speaks of an Obeah faith with care and intimacy:

> My mother and I often took a bath together. Sometimes it was just a plain bath, which didn't take very long. Other times, it was a special bath in which the barks and flowers of many different trees, together with all sorts of oils, were boiled in the same large cauldron…. We took these baths after my mother had consulted with her obeah woman, and with her mother and a trusted friend, and all three of them had confirmed that from the look of things around our house – the way a small scratch on my instep had turned

> into a small sore, then a large sore, and how long it had taken to heal…one of the woman my father had loved, had never married, but with whom he had had children was trying to harm my mother and me by setting bad spirits on us. (AJ 14-5)

Kincaid details an extraordinarily intimate act: a mother and daughter bathing together. The passage suggests that when Annie's mother faces difficult and unfortunate circumstances, she turns to a creole religious authority, rather than Christianity. In general, Kincaid offers a limited and conflicting account of Annie's mother's religious identity. Nonetheless, there appears to be a clear separation between references to Christian and Obeah practices. Moreover, this suggests that Annie and her mother develop their intimate relationship and close bonds privately. While this makes it difficult to discern Annie's mother's role as the arbitrator of Annie's canon, the few scenes that do occur deserve close attention. Kincaid often references Christianity in her works, but there are not any scenes that actually depict Christianity in practice. While Smith and Simmons may assert that Kincaid intertwines maternal and colonial hegemony, Christianity complicates this nexus. If maternal and colonial hegemony serve a parallel purpose in the lives of Kincaid's protagonists, how does one make sense of maternal creole practices? Are maternal creole practices subversive to colonial hegemony? These rare instances of indigeneity demonstrate the complex nature of colonial and maternal hegemony as neither offer a uniform experience. While this Obeah practice allows the protagonist to bond with her mother, it exists in contrast to the overwhelming number of criticisms against her influence. Most significantly, it is a moment unmarred by colonial influence, thus not necessitating a challenge to a dominant language or power structure. Moreover, this small scene suggests that Kincaid only employs Christian allusions to censure Western practices, effectively using a larger and opposing culture against itself.

Kincaid's Parables

While Kincaid employs a significant number of Christian allusions as signposts for her distaste for British oppression, they often also serve a more trenchant and structural purpose. More specifically, in *Lucy*, Kincaid shifts back and forth in time in order to use her protagonist's childhood to explain her interpretation of events in the present. Interestingly, Kincaid often closes these sections of her novel with a religious allusion that speaks to the present-day scene. I argue that Kincaid purposefully formulates a series of religious parables in order to afford readers both an Antiguan and a British canonical perspective. The parables serve as prime examples of Kincaid's appropriation of British culture to condemn not only colonial, but also maternal, hegemony. The structure of parables allows Kincaid to show that the colonial oppression her protagonist experiences as a child continues today, even if it appears in a less blatant form. Moreover, these parables demonstrate the independence and agency post-colonial authors may draw from reinterpreting and appropriating British canonical literature.

The most commonly discussed religious reference in *Lucy* scholarship revolves around Lucy's namesake. When Lucy asks her mother why she had named her Lucy, the mothers responds under her breath, "'I named you after Satan himself. Lucy, short for Lucifer. What a botheration from the moment you were conceived'" (L 152). Many scholars take the analogy of Lucifer to Lucy to mean that Lucy stands in opposition to her mother (Oczkowicz 155). However, Kincaid offers a more slippery representation of this connection. Lucy identifies with Lucifer's fall from grace, seeing herself as a kind of off-shoot of her mother's influence. Thus, shortly after her mother's shocking quip, Lucy frames her namesake in the terms of Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

> I knew well the Book of Genesis, and from time to time I have been made to memorize parts of *Paradise Lost*. The stories of the fallen were well known to me, but I have not known that my own situation could even distantly be related to them. Lucy, a girl's name for Lucifer. That my mother would have found me devil-like did not surprise me, for I often thought of her as god-like, and are not the children of gods devils? (Kincaid L 153)

In a rare moment, Lucy identifies with a tangible construction of Christianity via Milton. Kincaid discusses Milton's *Paradise Lost* in relation to Lucifer and Lucy's own name as a kind of parable that later allows her to adjudicate her boyfriend's possessive and misogynistic behavior. Regardless, Lucy finds agency in her connection to the devil, perhaps because the devil serves as an antithetical and liberated figure. In this way, she is thinking like William Blake, who in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* discusses the complicated nature of Milton's devil: "[Milton] had created a Satan endowed with energy and fire, more attractive to the perceptive reader than his God, who was Destiny, an inescapable despot…. Milton was therefore 'a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it'" (6). Because Milton accidentally writes a more attractive and interesting characterization of the antagonist— the devil—Lucy identifies with his character. Lucy sees Lucifer not as the source of evil in the world, but as a child of God. In this scene, Kincaid navigates both Lucy's relationship with her mother and her relationship to Milton and the British canon. The devil maintains his origin, endowed with an angelic legacy, while also living outside of God's expectations. Perhaps Lucy also wishes to maintain the best elements of her Antiguan identity, while establishing her own moral expectation in the United States. Nonetheless, this scene exemplifies the maternal influence in the establishment of Lucy's canon. Lucy is expected by her mother to be familiar with the "stories of the fallen" (from the bible to Milton and Shakespeare) in order to understand the reference to Lucifer. But Lucy's

identification with Lucifer counteracts the intended influence of the British canon on Kincaid, as she revels in the immoral behavior of the devil and, simultaneously, his connection to God. Moreover, the establishment of this parable is crucial to her later degradation of her boyfriend.

Gary Holcomb discusses this exchange, claiming that "[if] the Mother personifies good, which means that she derives her identifying power from that polarity—an act that signals possession of the Apollonian realm—then the daughter must realize her own territorial agency by taking what is available to her, embodying the bad [Dionysian], evil, inhabiting the body of the slut" (302). Holcomb intuitively emphasizes a kind of battle over good and evil that plays out in mother-daughter relationships during the daughter's coming of age. However, he appears too interested in archetypal oppositions, rather than accurately capturing the mystifying relationship between Lucy and her mother. More significant, I argue, is Lucy's lack of belonging or sense of place in Christendom. Christendom stands in the way of Lucy's relationship with her mother, portraying their differences as a proverbial chasm between good and evil, God and Lucifer. Lucy's mother indelibly marks her relationship with Christianity. While Lucy may admit that her relationship with her mother fits into an Apollonian-Dionysian conflict, she feels distanced from all of the Biblical figures except for Lucifer. Kincaid glorifies the figure of Lucifer because he stems from as well as circumvents his paternal oppressor. Moreover, Lucy's mother does not clearly represent a figure of light and goodness, as she neither embodies or polices it. Instead, she curates (intentionally or unintentionally) her daughter's knowledge of the world and her canon.

The curation of Lucy's canon relative to Milton's *Paradise Lost* allows Lucy to frame her contemporary relationships within the parable of Lucifer and the stories of the fallen. Lucy begins her allusion to Lucifer with a discussion of the legal documents that serve as her

identification. Lucy alleges Lucifer to be the inspiration for her namesake in the present-day in order to differentiate herself from the past familial implications of her middle and last name. Following Kincaid's Milton allusion, Lucy describes her first days living in her own apartment with her roommate, Peggy. Lucy's boyfriend, Paul, gives a house warming present to Lucy, a picture of Lucy in which she "was naked from the waist up" (Kincaid L 155). Lucy views this gift as watershed moment because she then decides that "[that] was the moment he got the idea he possessed me in a certain way, and that was the moment I grew tired of him" (Kincaid L 155). Lucy not only rejects Paul's gift because she understands it in the terms of a male, colonizing gaze, but also because she identifies with the freedom of figures like Lucifer. In other words, Lucy's identification with Lucifer parallels her acceptance of her sexuality and independence.

Pratt offers a worthwhile theoretical framework for Lucy and Paul's interaction in her conception of the most archetypal figuration of anti-conquest. Pratt explains the hallmark figure of anti-conquest, the so-called 'seeing man,' as "an admittedly unfriendly label for the white male subject of European landscape discourse—he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess" (9). Thus, Paul's symbolically possessive gift, his intrusion on her journey to autonomy, compels Lucy to rebuke their relationship. In fact, Lucy reinvents Paul's imposition, later suggesting a kind of sexual awakening or maturity: "Paul stayed in my bed with me. I had never had a man stay with me in my own bed. If I had imagined that such a thing would be a desirable landmark, it meant not much to me now; I only made a note of it" (Kincaid L 156). Remarkably, Lucy implies that she now views sharing a bed with a man as well as intercourse without the burden of sexual impropriety. Not unlike Lucifer, Lucy liberates herself from the claiming gaze of a patriarchal figure. Lucy's acceptance of sexuality allows her to identify with Satan's

liberation from the influence of his father, God. Kincaid's parable of Lucifer, his fall from grace and rise to freedom, illuminates Lucy's resentment of Paul and allows Lucy to find agency.

One of Lucy's most extensive engagements with Christianity occurs when she reframes the infamous parable of Feeding of the Multitude from the New Testament of the Bible. Lucy frequently uses these canonical scenes as an opportunity to define herself—usually in opposition to their received meaning or importance. For instance, instead of reveling in the glory of Christ's miracle, Lucy inquiries about the quotidian detail of dietary preferences. Lucy wonders:

> When I had inquired about the way the fish were served with the loaves, to myself I had thought, not only would the multitudes be pleased to have something to eat, not only would they marvel at the miracle of turning so little into so much, but they might go on to pass a judgment on the way the food tasted. I know it would have mattered to me. In our house, we all preferred boiled fish. It was a pity that the people who recorded their life with Christ never mentioned this small detail, a detail that would have meant a lot to me. (Kincaid L 38-9)

Lucy sees the stories that make up her experience of Christianity as unaccommodating, unable to speak to the experiences of its followers. Kincaid asserts that while Lucy's request may seem trivial, it would have allowed her to adopt a more relatable and accessible view of Christianity. While this anecdote largely pokes fun at the structure of parables, it underscores Christianity's figurative and temporal distance from daily life as well as its suppression of a distinctly Antiguan voice.

Significantly, both Kincaid's discussion of Lucy's namesake as well as her interpretation of the Feeding of the Multitude are followed by section breaks that signal a jump in time from the Lucy's past to her present. For instance, Kincaid follows up her discussion of Lucy's

namesake with the significant realization that Lucy no longer finds sexual intimacy to be a notable experience and that she is quitting her job as an au pair (L 156). Likewise, after her discussion of the Feeding of the Multitude, Lucy rebukes Mariah, her boss and American surrogate mother, for claiming a kind of camaraderie with Lucy's creole and racial experiences because she has "Indian blood" (Kincaid L 39). In the structure and order of these sections, Kincaid uses Christian allusions from Lucy's childhood as religious parables to expose the perpetuation of colonial oppression in contemporary exchanges. Kincaid buttresses her parables with scenes of Lucy's present-day identity formation, clearly appropriating the English canon in order to develop the protagonist's characterization. Kincaid turns this Christian parable into a highly personal parable of identity formation.

Lucy's discussion of the Feeding of the Multitude stems from Mariah's successful catching of a fish. After Lucy's parable about the temporal and figurative distance of Christianity from her familial identity, Mariah shares: "I have Indian blood [and] that the reason I'm so good at catching fish and hunting birds and roasting corn and doing all sorts of things is that I have Indian blood. But now, I don't know why, I feel I shouldn't tell you that. I feel you will take it the wrong way" (Kincaid L 39-40). Mariah exemplifies a complex figuration of Mary Louise Pratt's concept of anti-conquest. While Mariah believes she has creole ancestry, she clearly holds the privilege of rich, white subject (Pratt 9). Besides the overt racism in Mariah's commentary, she also diminishes Lucy's perspective (feigning ignorance of the little worth of a perspective that justifies fishing abilities through racial tokenism). Lucy adeptly questions Mariah's position, stating that "underneath everything I could swear she says it as if she were announcing her possession of a trophy. How do you get to be the sort of victor who can claim to be vanquished also?" (Kincaid L 40-1). Again, anti-conquest refers to the "strategies of representation whereby

European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (9). Mariah seeks a modicum of innocence through a perverse kinship with Lucy. Mariah seeks this kinship with Lucy on the basis of a vague racial otherness, inevitably forming a chasm in their relationship. Lucy's challenge against the parable lays the groundwork for her to challenge Mariah's identity.[7] Kincaid addresses the Feeding of the Multitude with a matter-of-fact commentary that forms a kind of parable in itself: a preference for boiled fish, an account of the fish's reception, matters as much as the chef who carried out the meal. In other words, Mariah's conceptions of race and her own identity matter in so much as Lucy receives them.

Kincaid develops another style of parable in *Lucy*, in this case founded in British literature rather than Christianity. Kincaid infamously evaluates the influence of Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," an assessment that marks a similar literary device to her use of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the Feeding of the Multitude. Wordsworth's poem stands as a common trope in post-colonial literature of colonial education (Smith 815). In one of the most powerful scenes of the novel, Lucy challenges Mariah:

> Mariah, mistaking what was happening to me for joy at seeing daffodils for the first time, reached out to hug me, but I moved away, and in doing that I seemed to get my voice back. I said, 'Mariah, do you realize that at ten years of age I had to learn by heart a poem about some flowers I would not see in real life until I was nineteen?' As soon as I said this, I felt sorry that I had cast her beloved daffodils in a scene she had never considered,

[7] See Nagle, Rebecca. "How 'Pretendians' Undermine the Rights of Indigenous People." *High Country News*, 2 Apr. 2019, www.hcn.org/articles/tribal-affairs-how-pretendians-undermine-the-rights-of-indigenous-people.

> a scene of conquered and conquests; a scene of brutes masquerading as angels and angels portrayed as brutes. (Kincaid 30)

While there is already a large body of scholarship regarding this construction of daffodils as an arm of colonial hegemony, there is little conversation regarding the reference to angels and brutes that closes this section of the novel (Bergren 38). Kincaid returns to the symbol of daffodils and Wordsworth's poem because it speaks to the pervasive and often subtle nature of colonial hegemony. However, this particular reference serves a more structural purpose to the novel. As Betty Joseph discusses in "Gendering Time in Globalization: The Belatedness of the Other Woman and Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*," this scene is less about the daffodils as "they would do as well as anything else," and more that "Kincaid invites us to read this scene as a parable of the belatedness of the other [or oriental] woman—one who is always coming into a world that has already been made for her" (74). Joseph adeptly stresses that this concluding rumination acts as a parable in the novel: female colonial subjects are denied the autonomy to construct their own world, forced to exist as an Other in a pre-fab world. Kincaid's most clearly reveals the meaning of her parable in her reference to brutes masquerading as angels. Lucy takes a clear stance that Mariah's affinity for the beauty of daffodils holds little weight in comparison to the atrocities of colonial influence. Furthermore, Kincaid constructs this parable in the terms that her surrogate mother may understand. On one hand, Kincaid stresses her geographic distance from daffodils to show the disconnect between colonial influence and creole people. On the other, she equates daffodils to brutes masquerading as angels to reveal the dark underbelly of the British canon in the minds of colonial subjects. To sum up, Kincaid's periodic deployment of parables always occur shortly before moments of significant strife. Moreover, they typically appropriate hallmarks of the British canon, from the bible to Wordsworth, in order to speak to greater issues

of colonial and maternal hegemony. Throughout, Kincaid's parables reveal her own interest in subverting the British canon within its own terms as well as to condemn contemporary forms of colonial oppression.

Maternal Shortcomings: Sex Education and Glorification of Virginity

Both *Annie John* and *Lucy* feature female protagonists that experience a sexual coming-of-age heavily inflected by the demands of propriety. While coming-of-age is a universal experience, Kincaid's protagonists face a process uniquely marred by colonial history: they must reconcile the complicity of their own mothers in colonial hegemony. The limitations of maternal and colonial gatekeeping are perhaps best understood in the context of Pratt's transculturation. Transculturation suggests that subjugated peoples choose how to incorporate the dominate culture with their own; however, the intimate intersection of mother-daughter relationships and colonialism muddles the term. Because British education "attempted to erase female sexuality and to control the female body," female colonial subjects are left to conceive their own understandings of sexuality, outside of, but influenced by colonialism (Byerman 95). However, while it is important to begin with an understanding of the manipulation of sexuality by colonial institutions, maternal figures in Kincaid's works serve as the most pervasive influence on their children's conceptions of sexuality.

Throughout *Annie John*, Kincaid's protagonist struggles to align with her mother's overbearing conceptions of sexuality that often align with the rules of British propriety. For example, early in *Annie John,* Kincaid shares in great length the articles of clothing and

mementos that Annie's mother preserves from her Annie's infancy. Remarkably, each item holds an intrinsic association with purity and virginity as Kincaid states:

> Now, twenty-four years later, this trunk was kept under my bed, and in it were things that had belonged to me, starting from just before I was born. There was the chemise, made of white cotton, with scallop edging around the sleeves, neck and hem, and white flowers embroidered on the front- the first garment I wore after being born…. there was a pair of white wool booties with matching jacket and hat; there was a blanket in white wool and a blanket in white flannel cotton; there was a plain white linen hat with lace trimming; there was my christening outfit. (AJ 20)

Each item in this list is not only white, but also made of a natural material such as cotton, wool and linen. While one might expect Annie's mother to save a white christening outfit, it is unique to have each item from Annie's infancy be white. Kincaid's repeated references to white clothing places a significant emphasis on the importance of innocence, purity and virginity in Annie's world. Moreover, the emphasis on exclusively natural materials denotes a kind of importance to the natural environment and its creatures (though polyester did not rise in popularity until a decade after Kincaid's birth). These items reveal the outward appearance Annie's mother hoped to share to her community regarding her daughter, that she too is pure, innocent and virginal.

While Annie's mother directly preaches a colonial innocence when dealing with material objects like clothing, she refuses to engage in conversations regarding acts of sex. As Annie progresses further towards a loss from innocence, she overhears her parents engaging in intercourse. The experience leads Annie to shroud sexual experiences with secrecy and deceptions as she explains:

> I could also make out that the sounds I had heard were her lips in my father's ears and his mouth and his face. I looked at them for I don't know how long. When I next saw my mother, I was standing at the dinner table that I had just sat, having made a tremendous commotion with knives and forks as I got them out of their drawer, letting my parents know that I was home…. Though I couldn't remember our eyes having met, I was quite sure that she had seen me in the bedroom, and I didn't know what I would say if she mentioned it. (Kincaid AJ 31)

Annie's compulsion to lie not only stems from the shock to innocence, but also because her mother fails to openly discuss the incident. Annie attempts to circumvent her knowledge of her parents' sex act by focusing on the setting of the table— a task rooted in domesticity and the rules of etiquette. Annie's mother leaves the onus on Annie whether to openly discuss her experience, serving as the agent in her constructions of propriety and sexuality. Moreover, Annie likely feels betrayed by her mother's independent relationship with her father, in a kind of reversal of the typical Electra childhood dynamic. Annie leaves the scene with an unsettled and veiled conception of sexuality—one that relies on propriety and etiquette over openness and honesty.

Unfortunately, Annie's mother exacerbates Annie's struggle to conceive her sexuality when she enters a biological coming of age: her first menstrual period. Yet again, Annie's mother places the burden on her daughter to reconcile and overcome an intimate bodily experience. However, Annie begins to more openly resent her mother's shortcomings in her sex education, stating:

> my mother, knowing what was the matter, brushed aside my complaints and said that it was all to be expected and I will soon get used to everything. Seeing my gloomy face, she

> told me in a half-joking way all about her own experience with the first step in coming-of-age, as she called it, which had happened when she was as old as I was. I pretended that this information made us close—as close as in the old days—but to myself I said, 'What a serpent!' (Kincaid AJ 51-2)

To begin, Annie fails to even directly refer to her "coming of age" as a menstrual period, suggesting that she has not been prepared for this eventuality. Annie's mother neglects to teach Annie about menstruation, merely offering commiseration. Moreover, Annie portrays her mother as unsympathetic towards her experience. Meanwhile Kincaid's accusation that Annie's mother is a serpent suggests that she is both a purveyor of knowledge and a representative of evil or death. Obviously, Kincaid's Christian allusion to a serpent, perhaps in reference to that of Genesis or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, reinforces her negative portrayal of Annie's mother. As Annie comes of age, she repeatedly challenges her mother's childrearing to the point of antipathy and distrust. Thus, Annie appears to be seeking independence from her mother, exaggerating her mother's shortcomings even if she neglects to thoroughly educate her daughter on the experiences of becoming a woman.

In a contrasting narrative, Kincaid turns away from British canonical references like Milton, and considers how a creole religious tradition of Obeah relates to her mother's conceptions of sexuality. In a less contentious scene, Annie's mother offers her an Obeah solution to an accidental or unwanted pregnancy. Annie explains that:

> Without telling me exactly how I might miss a menstrual cycle, my mother had shown me which herbs to pick and boil, and what time of day to drink the potion they produced, to bring on a reluctant period. She had presented the whole idea to me as a way to strengthen the womb, but underneath we both knew what a weak woman was not the cost

> of a missed period. She knew that I knew, but we presented to each other a face of innocence and politeness and even went so far as to curtsy to each other at the end. (Kincaid L 69-70)

Kincaid describes an Obeah practice to carry out an abortion without speaking in specific or direct language. For example, Kincaid describes a pregnancy as a "reluctant period" and the act of an abortion as "a way to strengthen the womb" (Kincaid L 69-70). Annie's mother refusal to speak in earnest about the purpose of this practice reflects a lack of willingness to express personal experiences. Moreover, Kincaid characterizes the private experience of an at-home abortion as a strictly Obeah and creole practice. Meanwhile, Annie and her mother conclude the lesson with an impractical curtsy— as if to negate the practice that has taken place. The potion prevents the public spectacle and ridicule of having a child out of wedlock. Furthermore, Annie and her mother seal their discussion with a curtsy that seemingly returns them to the realm of propriety and innocence. Here, indigeneity emerges as a practical truth, one in which two creole women may discuss the proper way to perform an at-home abortion. Meanwhile, colonial practices, such as the honest and direct use of English language as well as the protocol of a curtsy, emerge as a façade. Here, Kincaid highlights the tension between the public and private spheres for many creole people. While Annie and her mother have chosen to continue a creole practice, they have also chosen to implement elements of British protocol to signal their return to the polite and public world.

Kincaid's *Lucy* relieves the tension between propriety and sexuality as she offers a number of direct and open discussions of female sexuality. Lucy identifies with a kind of sex-positive paradigm in an attempt to rid herself of the stigma surrounding sexual impropriety and virginity. Lucy stands as a feminist figure, contending that she will not cede her own agency to a

male figure, particularly in terms of intercourse. For instance, Lucy claims: “I did not care about being a virgin and had long been looking forward to the day when I could rid myself of that status, but when I saw how much it mattered to him to be the first boy I have been with, I could not give him such a hold over me” (Kincaid L 82-3). Lucy details her experience losing her virginity in an effort to show her commitment to her own autonomy. Lucy does not reveal her virginity because she fears doing so would involve ceding power or agency to the boy. Holcomb considers the implications of sexual impropriety and virginity for an immigrant to America, writing, “[the] maneuver of deploying the slut identity permits Lucy, and by inference Kincaid, to travel in the direction she wishes to move in, one that struggles against being led by an identificatory world view that draws strict boundaries against sexual independence, whether negotiating the roles of immigrant and servant or constraints tied by ideas of national identity” (298). In other words, Lucy overcomes the constructions of sexual propriety in both her Antiguan and immigrant contexts by glorifying the notion of a slut. Kincaid rather effectively shows how sexual dependency relates to womanhood and personal agency. Lucy’s refusal to allow men to feast their axiomatic imperial eyes on her body and virginity liberates her character.

By the end of the novel, Lucy demands openness and honesty in her relationships and rejects naivete. Her relationship with Mariah best exemplifies this trajectory; when Mariah sees her husband’s infidelity as uniquely hurtful, Lucy wants “to say this to her: ‘Your situation is an everyday thing. Men behave in this way all the time. The ones who do not behave in this way are the exceptions to the rule.’ But I knew what her response would have been. She would have said, ‘What a cliché’” (Kincaid L 141). Kincaid and Lucy disavow ignorance; thus, they condemn Mariah’s failure to predict and expect her husband’s affair. Yet again, Mariah seeks to relieve herself of guilt—only this time for the far less consequential crime of shortsightedness. Kincaid

and her narrators hold little patience for women who do not accept the reality of their circumstance. As seen in the previous chapter of this thesis, particularly in the case of Princess Margaret, Kincaid challenges her influence by focusing on Margaret's relationship with a divorcé that initiated her tour of Antigua. Kincaid's works offer a remarkable degree of interplay between the intimate relationships between families and larger societal issues. The elasticity of Kincaid's work extends from the immediate to the extended, the familial to the institutional, and the self to the other. Kincaid adeptly appropriates and reinvents the west's conceptions of their own identity and canon to comment on the challenges of womanhood and identity today. Though the majority of Kincaid's feminine concerns play out in mother-daughter relationships, they are related to broader oppressive issues. Whether Kincaid references the significance of Christianity, the British literary canon, or the complicated interplay of families, she weaves an extraordinary narrative of oppression and liberation.

Conclusion: Concerns and Conversations

On Friday, March 12th 2021, the world once again was captivated by the allure and mystery of England's royal family. After announcing their intentions to step back from royal duties a year before, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, and Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex, starred in a jaw-dropping tell-all interview with Oprah Winfrey regarding their departure from the royal family. Meghan Markle shockingly stated in the interview that there were several "concerns and conversations about how dark [their baby's] skin might be when he was born" (Picheta 1). This claim of racism regarding the color of their baby's skin sparked public debate throughout the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, and the United States of America. Journalists who defended the royal family against claims of internal racism faced public scrutiny. The most ardent defenders, such as Piers Morgan and Sharon Osbourne, lost their jobs. For those most interested in the plight of Meghan Markle in the royal family, her experiences of racism came as little surprise. However, for those who had not followed along at home the unique criticisms she faced as a woman of color joining the royal family, the statement came as a shock.

I bring up this current event because on one hand it underscores the racism of the British monarchy that has always been structurally true. And on the other, it exposes the personal and intimate level of racism within the institution. While the news sent seismic waves through the media, figures like Jamaica Kincaid likely found little surprise in the crown's mishandling of race relations. These unfortunate circumstances lead me to return to Kincaid's image of Princess Margaret and the white wall. Kincaid cries out for Antiguans to vandalize the wall and end their complicity with the monarchy's domination and presence. However, the wall remains unmarred by the people, the Antiguans, it intends to keep out. This figurative representation of the racial divide in Antigua characterizes the power dynamic between British authority and colonial

subjects. Unfortunately, Meghan Markle's interview speaks to how this divide has been brought into the family proper.

What must be noted in the context of Meghan Markle's interview in relation to Kincaid's work is that Black British and post-colonial writers have spoken on the pervasive racism within the royal family and Britain's government for decades. Even today, the British government authors studies asserting the lack of racism across Britain, despite overt cases of discrimination and bigotry.[8] Thus, while Kincaid authored these texts over two decades ago, they are as relevant as ever. While I had yet to discover their relevance until the fall of my junior year of college in a course entitled *Post-Colonial Literature and Theory*, I was immediately taken with Kincaid's conceptions of the monarchy and the colonial empire. Fortuitously, I happened to be viewing the recent hit series *The Crown* on Netflix, which only furthered my interest. It is through this unique set of circumstances that I discovered a fascination with the ways in which colonial subjects cope, in particular, with women (from female monarchs to mothers) that perpetrate colonial abuse.

[8] Landler, Mark, and Stephen Castle. "Upbeat Official Report on Race in Britain Draws a Swift Backlash." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 31 Mar. 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/world/europe/britain-racism.html.

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