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Writing Back to Figures of Authority: Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*
and
A Small Place

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To my son Wayne and to those who believed that I could accomplish it.

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As I go on writing, I feel less and less interested in the approval of the First World, and I never had the approval of the world I came from, so now I don't know where I am. I've exiled myself yet again.

Jamaica Kincaid

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Abstract

The present dissertation analyzes the use of literature as a form of resistance to Empire in *Lucy* and *A Small Place* by the West Indian writer Jamaica Kincaid. As a migrant writer living in the US, Kincaid has produced a counter-narrative against figures of authority represented by the British colonialism and the Caribbean motherland, aiming at undermining essentialist constructions of the Caribbean. I discuss Kincaid's appropriations of Lucifer, from Milton's *Paradise Lost,* in the characterization of the protagonist of *Lucy*, who rebels against any form of authority. I also analyze Lucy's process of self-fashioning through art.

Resumo

A presente dissertação analisa as obras *Lucy* e *A Small Place*, de Jamaica Kincaid, considerando o uso da literatura como forma de resistência ao Império. Jamaica Kincaid, escritora caribenha residente nos Estados Unidos, vem produzindo uma contranarrativa direcionada às figuras de autoridade representadas pelo colonialismo britânico e pelas figuras maternas desconstruindo as visões essencialistas do Caribe. São discutidas as apropriações que Kincaid faz do personagem Lúcifer, de *Paraíso Perdido* de John Milton, na caracterização da protagonista Lucy, que se rebela contra qualquer forma de autoridade. Analisa-se também o processo de construção do eu de Lucy através da arte.

Introduction

> But what I see is 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 […] and worst and most painful of all, no tongue.
>
> Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

The flourishing of the British Empire started with the "age of discovery" in the sixteenth century, and lasted until the 1950s. Considered the largest empire in the world, England reached its glorious days during the Victorian era; during this period the production of literature helped to inscribe the power of empire in the imaginary of both the colonizers and the colonized (Boehmer, 1995:12-59). The British conquests raised the curiosity of ordinary people about the lands that were being "discovered" overseas, and nineteenth century writers focused on the experience of European colonial enterprises. As Boehmer points out: "In general, texts described as colonial or colonialist are taken to be those, like *King Solomon's Mines* or Kipling's poems, which exhibit a tinge of local colonial colour, or feature colonial motifs—for example, the quest beyond frontiers of colonization" (1995:2). Colonial literature contributed to the cultural enterprise of the Empire by making the colonized peoples accept the English culture, and naturally deny their origins (Ashcroft *et al*, 1989: 3).

During the nineteenth century, English Studies became an academic subject, and allied with the teaching of literature helped to maintain the natives under the authority of the British Empire. Generations of colonized children, who were educated during that time, became accustomed to reading the British classics; these texts, consequently helped to obliterate their native cultures. According to Ashcroft, "More

than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" (1989:1).

In order to resist British cultural authority, native writers began to write back: " As Lamming implies, the texts that were regarded as icons of European culture, and especially those that symbolized its claims to authority became the object of repeated colonized appropriations: *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe*, 'Heart of Darkness'" (Boehmer: 1995:205). Through these readings, writers educated during the colonial period were able to build narratives in which the dialogue between colonial and post-colonial realities disavowed the official voice of the Empire. As post-colonial narratives represent means of resistance to the oppression exerted by imperialism— expressed either by political or economic authority— this type of literature is precisely that "which critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives" (Boehmer, 1995:3). For this reason, literature has become the efficient tool to what Rushdie called "writing back to the center".

The Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid, who was raised during colonialism, migrated as a teenager to the United States, where later she became a writer. Kincaid spent her childhood and early adolescence in St. John's, the capital of the island. Although she focuses on multiple issues related to her life in the Caribbean, the effects of colonization are central to her works, and amongst them slavery is crucial, since Kincaid descends from African slaves, like the majority of her island's population (Paravisini- Gebert, 1999:1).

Being a former colonized subject (Antigua achieved its independence only in 1981) Kincaid addresses different authority figures in her work by adopting an aggressive writing style which fits post-colonialism. In order to justify the usage of the

term "post-colonial" instead of "postcolonial" in this work, I choose Ashcroft's explanation about his choice of the hyphenated form, as it emphasizes the effects of "the historical 'fact' of 'colonialism.'" Thus, the term is connected to the history of oppression of colonized peoples regarding textual production, "rather than towards the fetishization of theory itself." Ashcroft includes in his proposition Appiah's definition of the hyphen, which stands as a form of "'space-clearing' gesture," representing a political act vis-à-vis the reality of political oppression (Ashcroft, 2001:10).

Lucy (1990) and *A Small Place* (1988) have a similar narrative style, as Kincaid addresses hegemonic discourses — England and the US. Kincaid's anger towards colonialism permeates both narratives. In *A Small Place* Kincaid draws comparisons between Antiguan colonial history and the present post-independence period in order to depict the damages resulting from both, such as corruption: "For the answers on every Antiguan's lips to the question 'What is going on here now?' is 'The government is corrupt. Them are thief, them are big thief'" (1988:41). Kincaid reproduces the Antiguans' broken English; thus, one can see that they lack even the language with which they could fight the foreign and corrupt power. Since the days of sugar plantation, Antiguans' impoverished life results mainly from the failed transition from enslavement into freedom. Former slaves continued to serve their masters, and England, after building a profitable empire, left the natives without a proper education; therefore, nowadays the island lacks a library, an effective education and health system. The economy based on tourism has replaced the plantations, and the politicians' greed prevents the place from prospering. As a result, the people are second-class workers in hotels and clubs. In *Lucy*, Kincaid extends the topics related to the British colonialism and turns to those connected with the protagonist's life as a former colonized, also

revealing aspects concerning the American lifestyle and Lucy's relationship with her mother.

I decided to analyze these books in order to discuss Kincaid's counter-discourse in relation to the different figures of authority in her symbolic paradises—the motherland and the mother—which are interconnected to the notions of origin, ethnic identity, exile, displacement, and, most importantly, resistance to any kind of authority. The analysis of both works will be presented through their intertextual relation to British colonialism in the Caribbean. Other works by Kincaid, a collection of interviews and also John Milton's *Paradise Lost* were chosen in order to support my claim that Kincaid builds a counter-discourse which resists the history generated by the British and American imperialism in the Caribbean by adopting a fierce style as a writer.

Renowned critics such as Frank Birbalsingh, Bill Ashcroft, Edward Said, Carole B. Davies, George Lamming, and Roland Walter have pointed out Kincaid's ability to bravely speak out against the European presence in the Caribbean, which has led her people to dislocation, dispossession, and alienation. Besides the authors cited, I also rely on ideas developed by the Indo-British writers Salman Rushdie and Gayatri Spivak, whose writings are related to oppositional narratives, or narratives of cultural resistance. In relation to identity, I mainly use Stuart Hall's concepts and interpretations regarding cultural identity, Julia Kristeva, and Stephen Greenblatt's theory on self-fashioning.

Chapter I deals with the different historical contexts in Kincaid's narratives. Based on the history of oppression in the Caribbean, I present Kincaid's narratives as an alternative to (re)write the Caribbean "home". Nowadays, Kincaid is part of a group of immigrant writers living in the US; however, at the age of sixteen, she migrated to the US with an employment visa. Thus, Chapter I shows Kincaid as the immigrant who

later chooses self-exile. The 1960s rebellious movement, which contributed to most of woman's achievements in society, together with feminism, form the backdrop in *Lucy*, since the narrative happens in 1969. The social, cultural, and political situation during those years helped to foster her protagonist's rebellious behavior. Therefore, Kincaid is able to convey in her narratives her experiences as a hybrid woman who belongs to both worlds—Antigua and the US—that encounter and enable her to occupy a "third-space" in order to (re)write the history of her characters and hers as well.

In both works, Kincaid shows the suffering of the Caribbean subjects with the oppressive power of the British Queen. Kincaid's anger is towards enslavement, colonization, and American imperialism, which altogether have turned the island into a commodity and a mere place for tourist attractions.

Chapter II presents a discussion of Kincaid's lost paradises. The first of these paradises is the motherland, usurped by the authority of the British Empire. Kincaid's second paradise is purely psychological and linked to maternal love. West Indian writers often focus on the mother figure and their protagonists' relationship with them as DeCaires & O'Callaghan explain: "Connections between mother and 'motherhood' are explored as the sense of 'home' and place are gendered in much of the writing" (1994:626). Indeed, the mother figure and the Caribbean home seem to be strongly related, but this relation reveals itself as an ambivalent configuration, for it creates a love/hate tension impossible to be resolved. In colonial or even post-colonial literatures, the motherland often represents England, or Western culture; however, in this work the representation concerns the Caribbean.

In *Lucy* the love and hate problematic relationship between Lucy and her motherland may be understood in the light of Kincaid's own relationship to the land, as presented in *A Small Place*. Kincaid's talking back to figures of authority in *Lucy*

concerns both the protagonist's connection to her Caribbean motherland and her defiant remarks about her mother. This symbiotic relationship explained by Davies as "perhaps the best presentation of conflicted mother-daughter relationship in Caribbean literature so far. And the mother is a symbolic figure here because she can also be read as the Caribbean, as well as all Lucy rejects in female subordination" (1996:123).

   Lucy contains biographical elements which mingle with the author's life; however, although critics often draw comparisons between Kincaid's personal experiences and her protagonist's, this study focuses on these relations only as valuable inter-texts. In addition to that, I present an intertextual relationship with John Milton's *Paradise Lost* in order to show the function of the character Lucifer/Satan as a model of rebellion for Lucy, the protagonist. Thus, chapter II compares Lucy's attitudes to Lucifer's as both of them search for power and freedom from similar modes of authority. Kincaid presents a heroine who ironically depicts her life back at home and also in the white American world: Lucy's feelings are related to dislocation, dispossession, and displacement. Therefore, Lucy, carrying the stigma of a servant, decides to find her own place in this "New World".

   An important issue to Caribbean literature is the "thematic questions of (quests for) 'identity', a holistic sense of self" (de Caires & O' Callaghan, 1994:627), meaning that the Caribbean subject, after experiencing the fragmentation created by colonialism, has tried to become a whole. According to Hall & Du Gay "the concept of identity […] is not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one" (1996:3); therefore, the subject has to re-articulate and establish his/her identity through the problematic of race, the legacy of slavery, gender, and class, generated by colonialism. According to Terry Eagleton, the struggle for identity is crucial to the production of a sense of selfhood:

What any oppressed group has most vitally in common is just the shared fact of oppression. Their collective identity is in this sense importantly negative, defined less by shared positive characteristics than by a common antagonism to some political order. That negative collective identity, however, is bound over a period of time to generate a positive particular culture, without which political emancipation is probably impossible. Nobody can live perpetual deferment of their sense of selfhood, or free themselves from bondage without a strongly affirmative consciousness of who they are. Without such self-consciousness, one would not even know what one lacked; and a subject that thinks itself complete feels no need to revolt. In this sense, the "negativity" of an oppressed people—its sense of itself as dislocated and depleted—already implies a more positive style of being. (1990:37)

Kincaid's negative feelings towards the British colonization, expressed in her narratives, build a counter-discourse which points to her desire for freedom, and authority over her individual choices as a Caribbean.

Chapter III, then, presents this process of construction of identity through Lucy's identification with the character Lucifer. However, Lucy rejects the identifications with her mother's authoritative attitudes, which remind her of the British colonization and her female submission to this power. As Lucy's narrative develops, she reveals herself as a very angry person; her personality evolves based on the feeling of revolt against her family and the British colonization. And her discontent brings her to a state of non-conformity with her situation as a subaltern in the US. Lucy also denies her

employer's American upper class view of the world. I rely on Stephen Greenblatt's theory on self-fashioning to discuss Lucy's construction of a self-identity which empowers her and gives Kincaid's *Lucy* the status of an oppositional narrative. This last section also shows Lucy's development from the servant to the artist.

Chapter I

Lucy and *A Small Place*: Jamaica Kincaid's Narratives of Resistance

> I had realized that the origin of my presence on the island—my ancestral history—was the result of a foul deed; […] that I was not a Briton and that until long ago I would have been a slave.
> Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*

In "Imaginary Homelands", Salman Rushdie comments on the position of writers who, living away from the home country, may find themselves straddled between two cultures: "It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt" (1991:10). As Rushdie, today many writers who live away from the everyday problems of their homelands may find it difficult to deal with the persistent memories of the past in order to reconstruct their peoples' histories and consequently their own through writing. On the one hand, these writers may be redeemed by their act of redescribing their world "as a necessary first step towards changing it" (Rushdie: 1991:14); on the other hand, writing away from the home country may put the writer in the position of the outsider, the deserter. Therefore, it is a challenging task to look back and re-negotiate their own histories, and write alternative visions on them.

Jamaica Kincaid is an immigrant writer, who was born in Antigua, in the Caribbean, but lives in the United States. She is considered a post-colonial writer as her narratives of resistance talk back to hegemonic powers, and aim to (re)write the present experiences of the former colonized peoples. Cruz explains the nature of this (re)writing:

> Literature, for most Caribbean writers, becomes the means by which the individual tries to recapture and reconstruct a history that has been effaced and denied. Fiction and historical data blend in an attempt to reconstruct the artistic representation of a history that should have been. At the same time that history is used as the foundation of these literary representations, literature also creates a history of its own in which the borderlines between facts and fiction disappear. (1998)

Thus, the re-writing of the Caribbean present in Kincaid's works creates possibilities for her to talk back to figures of authority which are represented by her Caribbean mother/land, colonialist England, and the US imperialism.

In *A Small Place* (1988) and *Lucy* (1990), Kincaid shows the effects of Antigua's colonial past and post-colonial situation, as she reveals the other (hi)stories involved in both processes which constitute the Caribbean subject. In order to accomplish this (re)writing, Kincaid shows her discontent in her narratives by juxtaposing the Caribbean past experiences to its present situation.

A Small Place is a non-fictional narrative in which Kincaid addresses the foreign tourists and re-tells the history of Antigua during colonization and after independence by ironically using the model of a travel guide. Kincaid describes the

beauties of Antigua along with the effects of the British colonization, and also the results of imperialistic politics.

In the novel *Lucy*, the protagonist goes to the US (the name of the city is not mentioned, although it seems to be New York city) to work as an au pair, and has to deal with the fact that even though she is away from her colonial background, she still feels as a subaltern. In other words, as her ancestors had been Africans brought to the West Indies as slaves, she would always face prejudice.

In this chapter, I will discuss the different contexts which surround Kincaid's narratives, starting with the political situation in the Caribbean regarding colonialism, post-colonialism, and imperialism, as well as Kincaid's experiences as an Afro-Caribbean immigrant in the US during the 1960s. Kincaid's narratives are permeated by the cultural and political effects which concern the feminist movement in the 1960s, and its subsequent "waves", since she wrote *A Small Place* and *Lucy* about twenty years after her arrival in the US. Witnessing these different changes in history made her build a rebellious attitude and resistance typical of writers who are part of minority groups in the context of the civil rights and feminist movements. Therefore, in order to analyze *Lucy* and *A Small Place*[1], I will focus the discussion on notions such as exile, diaspora, hybridity, and gender which inform her rebellious narratives within a post-colonial framework.

1.1 - The contexts of Kincaid's narratives of resistance

Christopher Columbus "discovered" Kincaid's small island, Antigua, in 1493, and later it became part of a sugar plantation; however, the scarcity of fresh water

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[1] Hereafter, *A Small Place*, *Lucy* and *Paradise Lost* will be represented by the initials *SP*, *L* and *PL*, respectively.

and the Caribbean resistance discouraged European settlement for over a century. In 1632, a group of Englishmen from the island of St. Kitts established a successful settlement. In 1684, an enterprising man called Sir Christopher Condrington arrived in Antigua to investigate whether the land would support the sort of large-scale sugar cultivation; later Antigua became part of the plantation system. Kincaid relates the arrival of the Condringtons on the islands of Antigua and Barbuda as well as their connection to slavery:

> When Antiguans talk about "The Nation" (and they say "The Nation" without irony), they are referring to the nine-by-twelve-mile-long, drought-ridden island even smaller than Antigua; they are referring to Barbuda, an island even smaller than Antigua (Barbuda was settled originally by a family from England named Condrington; this family specialized in breeding special groups of black people, whom they then sold into slavery). (*SP*: 51)

Antigua became self-governing in 1967, but political independence came in 1981 when it became part of the British Commonwealth (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999: 1), and it is currently under the US imperialist domination. Therefore, in this brief view of the history of Antigua, one may see that the Caribbean has constantly been the stage for the struggles for independence.

The history of the Caribbean—the West Indies—is surrounded by various aspects composing a dreadful beginning, which, according to the Barbadian author George Lamming, started with Columbus's misnaming it: "A curious thing about the West Indies is that we started mis-named, and much later, we decided it was too late to change it" (1996:1).

Approximately two hundred years after Columbus's discovery, England engaged in the process of exploitation of the Caribbean. The British tried unsuccessfully to force the natives into working on the plantations. Later, they brought European people, who were poor immigrants from Europe, to work in small properties as indentured servants. However, this maneuver was not successful because of the high prices of sugar and a bigger demand on workers; at the end of the sixteenth century, as the need to cultivate sugar grew, the European started to "import" labor from Africa and Asia. Thus, during the following centuries, about 9,750,000 slaves were brought to the Caribbean Islands (Azevedo; Herbold, 1986:18).

These different peoples came from Africa and India as indentured laborers to serve their European masters from France, England and Spain; Lamming points out that "Both groups of people [Africans and Indians] came into the society to perform precisely the same function, and for a long time had precisely the same relation to the domestic center of power whatever the territory they were in" (1996:3). Lamming demystifies Columbus's "discovery" as he explains the situation these people experienced in regard to the plantation system:

> The concept of discovery—a false concept, in a sense—because there already were people living there—now shifts to the Caribbean where, for a long time, we had lived in what one can call imperial frontier. (…) Then, this monster, sugar—this thing associated with sweetness—comes in and dominates the labour of the masses. Sugar has no respect for colour. When sugar, as a crop, was experimented with, it was found that it would require a large labour force, and in Barbados, St Kitts, Antigua and other places, small white land holders were driven off, some to settle in

the southern United States. Sugar means land. So the concept of

the imperial frontier had to shift to coincide with what we have

since come to know as plantation society. (1996:2)

After the establishment of the plantation system, the Caribbean people

started to be displaced in their own lands, which led to a political fragmentation

common to all Caribbean populations; later, people under domination began to rebel

against their imperial rulers (Lamming: 1996:3,4). Regarding the slaves' potential

attitude of rebellion, Ashcroft explains: "Where possible, slaves were isolated from their

common language group and transported and sold in 'mixed lots', as a deliberate means

of limiting the possibilities of rebellion" (1989:146). According to Lamming, what had

been seen as Columbus's heroic act was instead an "act of genocide", since about thirty

years after the "discovery" of what Columbus thought would be the West Indies, the

aboriginal population had been destroyed.

The Caribbean people have experienced a fragmentation which is due to

their former colonial conditions and present post-independence problems. Considering

the cultural diversity of the Caribbean subjects and their histories of oppression which

different empires inflicted on them, the construction of Caribbean culture is based on

the images of ancestral roots long lost during colonization and its peoples' contact with

colonial lifestyles. *The Empire Writes Back* discusses the Caribbean formation today: "

The present-day population of the West Indies consists of a variety of racial groups all

more or less in ancestral exile, and all still subject to the hegemonic pressures of their

former European owners, and, more recently, to that exercised in the region by the

USA" (Ashcroft *et al*, 1989:146). Thus, the Caribbean faces a difficult reality which

seems impossible to be resolved, a situation which Kincaid comments regarding the

freedom from enslavement which never happened, for new masters came, thus leaving

the West Indians in the permanent condition of subalterns to either the European or the American hegemony: "Eventually, the masters left, in a kind of way; eventually, the slaves were freed, in a kind of way" (*SP*: 80). Kincaid ironically comments on the only change that has happened in Antigua: the masters are different now. British colonization has ended, but the British allied with the Americans to rule the island, "[I]ts government, which has been controlled by the Bird family for more than thirty years, has been plagued by corruption and frequent scandals" (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999: 1). Thus, the island has experienced a transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism showing that the masters are still around.

Kincaid's colonial experiences have led her to narrate the wrongdoings of the neo-colonial politics, which take place in the Caribbean even after independence, as Walter calls attention to:

> [A] political consciousness that denounces as it reveals an other Antigua, showing the island's true lack of colors (and liberty) as an ongoing effect of neocolonial politics after independence and linking it to all those small places which continue to grapple with their in-between cultural ontopologies as a result of these politics. (2001:462)

In *A Small Place*, Kincaid addresses the tourists, but also the Antiguans who seem to live unaware of their ancestry and of the cultures that constitute them as a people. Kincaid reports her discontent in relation to the Antiguans' submissive attitude towards the past, which consequently directs their present, and asserts: "In Antigua, people speak of slavery as if it had been a pageant full of large ships sailing on blue water, the large ships filled up with human cargo—their ancestors" (54). In *Lucy*, the narrator relates her origin to enslavement: " I had realized that the origin of my presence on the

island—my ancestral history—was the result of a foul deed" (135). Davies cites the lines above at the beginning of the first chapter of *Black Women, Writing and Identity*, and associates Lucy's recognition of her roots to the need for a transformational resistance:

> Further, the Caribbean understood (within the context of the Americas) as the history of genocide, slavery, physical brutality, as in the Kincaid recognition with which I began, demands some sort of understanding of culture either as oppositional or as a resistance, and further as transformational if we are to recoup any identities beyond the ones imposed. (1994:12)

According to Davies, the acknowledgment of the past linked to enslavement is necessary to encourage the Caribbeans' resistance to the essentialist view Western society has upon them; in Lucy's case the burden of a colonized subject whose ancestors had been slaves is rooted in her identity. Therefore, she has to oppose or resist the constructions of her identity associated to the British colonization and reflected in her life abroad: "[T]he first thing she said to me when Mariah introduced us was 'So you are from the islands?' […] I was about to respond to her in this way: 'Which islands exactly do you mean? The Hawaiian Islands? The islands that make up Indonesia, or what?'" (*L*: 56). Lucy clearly wants to impose her identity by arguing against the view others have of her as being "the girl from the islands". However, her concern with Americans' limited opinion of her may indicate that she has internalized their prejudice against Caribbeans.

Resistance is an aspect undeniably identifiable in the Caribbean literature, and according to Ashcroft, it is central to the struggles between imperial power and post-colonial identity: "The question of resistance lies at the forefront of analysis

because the concept of resistance has always dwelt at the heart of the struggle between imperial power and post-colonial identity" (2001:13). Resistance can be understood from a positive perspective, as the subject "reclaims" a new identity—one that is free from essentialist constructions. Ashcroft comments that the positive effect of resistance is a transformational opposition:

> But the most fascinating feature of post-colonial societies is a 'resistance' that manifests itself as a refusal to be absorbed, a resistance which engages that which is resisted in a different way, taking the array of influences exerted by the dominating power, and altering them into tools for expressing a deeply held sense of identity and cultural being. (2001:20)

I argue that Kincaid appropriates writing, which is the most important tool minority groups have used, to resist the British and American hegemony. Ashcroft explains: "While the soldiers and politicians have gained most attention, it is the ordinary people—and the artists and writers, through whom a transformative vision of the world has been conceived—who have often done the most to 'resist' the cultural pressures upon them" (2001:20). Thus, Kincaid conveys her resistance through a writing that disrupts hegemonic discourse; she refuses to remain in silence in face of all the cruelties done to her people. The effective result of resistance is best described by "the term counter-discourse coined by Richard Terdiman in 1985" (Ashcroft, 2001:32), which in post-colonialism is frequently connected to the appropriation and subversion of canonical texts. Walter explains: "Kincaid in and through the act of writing, uses this lived state of liminality as a signifying enunciative caesura intent on adding an alternative vision to the one offered by Western discourse" (2001:462). Kincaid's

political narratives question colonial discourse by resisting its views on issues of ethnicity, gender, class, and so forth.

Kincaid's narrative is based on the effects of colonization and her resistance to them, which shows the ambivalence of her work, since the construction of her people's identity includes the negative side of a colonial past as well as all its positive aspects, such as the British education. Thus, in *A Small Place*, Kincaid uses resistance as she exposes that her people have a history which is not in the history books: "You have brought your own books with you […] one of those books explaining how the West (meaning Europe and North America after its conquest and settlement by Europeans) got rich" (*SP*: 9).

In Antigua, the lack of opportunities is added to the lack of freedom to speak which Kincaid criticizes in an interview: "If I hadn't become a writer, can you imagine living in a place like that in which you are not allowed to speak?" (Birbalsing, 1996:147). Kincaid refuses the silence expected from marginalized individuals. According to Bell Hooks: "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, and growth possible" (1999:340). Kincaid as former colonized subject defies any oppressive force through her narratives, and as she talks back to these forces, she denies this silence and achieves the necessary power to make her story heard.

In *A Small Place*, Kincaid reverses the roles of Africans and Europeans in the history established by the English people, and the Africans are presented as the noble creatures, whereas the Europeans are the beasts: "Again, Antigua is a small place, a small island. It is nine miles wide by twelve miles long. It was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493. Not too long after, it was settled by *human rubbish*

from Europe, who used enslaved but *noble* and *exalted human beings* from Africa…" (80; my emphasis) During colonization, Europeans traveling back home used to describe the native peoples encountered during their exploration as savages, beastly, brutish, and so forth; Africans were in a worse condition of inferiority and were viewed as non-human. In the passage cited Kincaid reverses it, as she maintains the frame for description of the new found land but re-places the adjectives in order to abrogate the British discourse, that is, she refuses "the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words" (Ashcroft *et al*, 1989:38). Thus, from a minority perspective, Kincaid reveals the other side of the story, as she denounces the atrocities the British committed in the past, and proposes an alternative history, which rejects all master narratives. Instead of only opposing the politics of oppression, Kincaid proposes a new angle to the Caribbean histories, and frees herself to broaden the array of issues in her works. Concerning the historical context in which Kincaid was raised, Davies comments:

> Thus, Kincaid's work cannot be located primarily within the "post-colonial," for her work is, among other things, a literature of resistance on issues of race, gender, class, location and so on. Kincaid's generation is one which witnessed the transition, throughout the major Caribbean islands, from the colonial to the ideology of "independence." This writer is also of that generation who as children witnessed beginnings, grew up with the language of independence and new flags, anthems, etc., celebrated and then promptly recognized as adults that there were new colonial formations and American imperialism and how painful it had

been to be put out in the sun with flags as children to wave at some member of the royal family as we marched to independence. So for us it is necessary to create "elsewhere" worlds and places and consciousness. (1994:89)

According to Davies, the Caribbean writers must create "elsewhere" worlds, that is, other ways to establish their authority in order to reveal, recover, and transform their realities.

Ashcroft states: "In *A Small Place* the Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid adopts the deceptively simple style of a knowing child (Kipling's 'half-devil and half-child') to interrogate those patterns which establish the English as superior and Antiguans as necessarily inferior" (Ashcroft *et al*, 1995:85-86). The reference is to Kipling's imperialistic poem "The White Man's Burden", in which the "third world" people are seen as wicked and child-like: "Your new-caught, sullen peoples/Half-devil and half-child."[2] Thus, Kincaid uses the second person pronoun, in a direct manner and a very simple style, as she makes use of the "half-devil and half-child" identity assigned to colonized peoples in Kipling's poem. On the other hand, Kincaid "deceptively" writes a travel guide to Antigua which shows that Kipling's "ignorant Caribbean child" is a very well informed and ironic writer. Through the appropriation of a child-like style, Kincaid demonstrates that the third world child has grown into full awareness, and it does not tolerate to learn any more lessons from the colonizers. Therefore, the so-called 'half-devil, half-child' decides to rebel against authority:

Nothing can erase my rage—not an apology, not a large sum of money, not the death of the criminal—for this wrong can never be made right, and only the impossible can make me still: can a

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[2] Information available at < http:// www.online-literature.com/kipling/922/>

way be found to make what happened not have happened?" (*SP*: 32)

Resistance and rebellion against all forms of authority are relevant to this work, since Kincaid is part of a complex post-colonial frame, whose aspects are linked to an array of issues which surround her works, as her topics of interest range from the public—colonialism and imperialism in the Caribbean—to the private, where home, motherhood, ethnicity, and gender are markers of her works. As Frank Birbalsingh states:

> Writers after 1965 (the third stage) espouse post-Independence interests […] although in chronological terms, Kincaid belongs with the third-stage writers, she is sharply critical of post-independence Antigua as well as America, suggesting a point of view too broad to be classified. (1996:xi, xii)

Chronologically, Kincaid belongs to the period ranging from 1965 to 1980; thus, it will be worth discussing the social, cultural, and political context of the 1960s, especially feminism, as well as its history until the 1980s, in order to discuss her themes within the frame of Caribbean literatures in English.

1.2 - (Re)writing Home: exile, diaspora, and hybridity

Elaine Cynthia Potter Richardson was born in 1949 on the island of Saint John in Antigua, and lived there until 1965 when her family sent her to Westchester, New York, to work as an au pair, at the age of 16. Later, she became the writer Jamaica Kincaid, a name that connects her directly to the Caribbean; as she was born and raised

there, Kincaid's narratives are permeated with elements from her life in Antigua, which she seems to view as home.

In a 1991 interview, Jamaica Kincaid states that she made herself into a sort of exile. She explains: "It wasn't intentional. It is one of those things that I realized I was doing as I was doing it, and when the time came for me to become an American citizen, I didn't" (Birbalsingh, 1996:143). Exile is often seen as the result of expulsion from one's motherland—consequently as a negative experience. According to Peters, " 'Exile' suggests a painful or punitive banishment from one's homeland. Though it can be either voluntary or involuntary, internal or external, exile generally implies a fact of trauma, an imminent danger, usually political, that makes the home no longer safely habitable" (Peters, 1999:19). Kincaid does not belong entirely to the condition of exile pictured above, except for the fact that her family "banned" her from Antigua in order to help them financially, so her reasons to migrate were mainly economic:

> I had no idea that I would write…I was going off to be a servant, a caretaker of children, and possibly get an education, possibly become a nurse, possibly become something else. But essentially, no one really cared if those things happened. What they cared about was that I help my family. They meant that once I got out I should send money home and support my family. (Birbalsing, 1996:146)

Kincaid, decided to live in exile given the experiences she had in the US, the people she had access to, and her choice of embracing the writing career. In the introduction to *Talk Stories*, Kincaid states: " Shortly after I turned sixteen years of age, I was sent to America by my family to work and earn money to support them. I did not like any of it

at all. I did not like being sent away, and then I did not like sending them the money I had earned" (2001:10).

According to Davies, "migration and exile are fundamental to human experience" (1994: 128); thus, migration is a two-way road because the migrant perceives the new place he/she inhabits based on the experiences acquired at home and his/her experiences abroad as well.

Kincaid experiences objectification—for she is seen as labor force, not as a subject—both back home and abroad since her condition in the US as a second-class worker reminds her of slavery and indentureship. Thus, exile for her is viewed as an ambivalent experience, that is, both a sort of expulsion from home to work as a "slave", and as the opportunity to create a new self, to be free from family bonds, and to build her career as a writer.

Kincaid could profit from the encounter with a different culture, in spite of the difficulties she faced as an immigrant. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said presents an alternative view on exile, and cites Kincaid amongst the group of exiled writers:

> Exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates who are dispossessed and expatriated, becomes something closer to a norm, an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classic canonic enclosures, however much its loss and sadness should be acknowledged and registered. The reader and the writer of literature […] no longer need to be tied to an image of the poet or scholar in isolation, secure, stable, national in identity, class, gender, or profession, but can think and experience with Genet in Palestine or Algeria,

with Tayeb Salih as a Black man in London, with Jamaica
Kincaid in the white world, with Rushdie in India and Britain, an
so on. (1994: 317)

Therefore, in exile, Kincaid acquires the skills and financial conditions to write, as she
evokes the experiences from the past and from her new life in the white world, which
makes it possible for her to perceive different worlds.

Lucy presents the story of an immigrant girl who had to leave her island in
order to study and work in the US. Lucy's feelings are ambivalent, as she at times feels
homesick but mostly rejects her home. When she arrives, the new place evokes the
nostalgia brought by homesickness, as she reports: "[B]ut still it was sunny, and that
was nice and made me miss my home less" (5). Lucy's statement is ambiguous: the
warm weather evoked the memories of home, which made her feel comfortable in the
US; on the other hand, this same weather enphasized her condition of homelessness.
According to Peters, "exile is pining from home" (Peters, 1999:20); thus, it alludes to
the common picture of the exiled subject longing to be back home. Homelessness
constitutes a similar process since the feelings of anguish and mourning for the home,
which belongs to the past, shape the experiences of the exile and the immigrant: As
Lucy cannot go back home without achieving her goals, she is in a sort of exile.

Lucy longs for home and idealizes the love for her mother and her island.
According to Freud, "the nostalgia for the home country is in actuality a nostalgia for
the mother's body" (quoted in Edmondson, 1999: 78). In Lucy's case, the anguish
resides in the psychological loss of her mother and consequently the impossible
recovery of "home." On the other hand, Lucy remembers the poor and difficult life the
island offered to her family; therefore, she despises her motherland and decides to find
home in the US. Lucy's feelings of love and hate are directed to home, either in the

representation of home as the mother, which is ambivalent because Lucy loves the "good" mother figure, but hates her when in Lucy's view she represents a type of stepmother from fairy tales—with all the obstacles for Lucy's new life. This mother figure is also problematic because she represents the colonial past Lucy tries to escape, and then, in order to become free she rejects the memories brought by her mother.

Kincaid is able to portray in *Lucy* the narrator's feelings of displacement both in the West Indian home and in her US homelessness, as the narrator displays her feelings towards her land, her people, and her condition abroad as a servant: "But now I, too, felt that I wanted to be back where I came from. I understood it, I knew where I stood there. […] I was only an unhappy young woman living in a maid's room, and I was not even the maid" (6-7). At the end, Lucy explains: "We went back to the apartment, and I realized when I crossed the threshold that I did not think of it as home, only as the place where I now lived" (156). Here, Lucy might be implying that she did not feel at home, her situation was temporary, thus, she is the wanderer trying to establish a home that means both financial and emotional security.

Lucy's fragments of memories are joined with her critical observations of life in a foreign country which leads her to the awareness of her situation as an immigrant. As the title of the first chapter ("Poor Visitor") suggests, Lucy is the visitor who came from a very poor place and now does not know how to behave when in contact with different people—she acts as anyone else who is in strange surroundings would. As Lucy remains silent during meals, Lewis, her employer, tells her of an uncle who got used to living with monkeys and did not know how to behave in the company of human beings anymore, which shows the idea of inadequacy and of an almost inhumane condition implied in the title regarding the way the poor live, and the way they behave when contrasted with wealthy lifestyles (14). Birbalsingh comments on the

Caribbean emigration to the US and Canada, and the conditions of these Caribbean immigrants abroad:

> The problems which Caribbean immigrants encountered abroad are different from those they faced in their homeland. At home they faced poverty, exploitation, and social and political insecurity, while abroad they encountered racial discrimination, second-class citizenship and alienation. (1990:x)

As Kincaid had migrated to the US as an au pair, and as a second-class worker, she had to work hard to become a writer. After becoming a respected writer at *The New Yorker*, she did not see advantages in going back to her poor country: "I will never become an American citizen. […] It would not be at all impossible that if I went to Antigua I could get killed" (Birbalsingh, 1993:143). According to Kincaid, at home she would not be allowed to talk back the way she has done in the US. Kincaid implies that, first, she will always be a citizen of Antigua no matter her location, and second, even if she wanted to return one day, she could be killed because she is a writer who is accused "of having a sharp tongue…" (Birbalsing, 1999:147), for she is eager to denounce the government wrongdoings.

For writers like Kincaid, who are living outside the West Indies, the focus of narrative slides back and forth from the experiences of displacement at home to the experiences in exile. As Davies states:

> Home can only have meaning once one experiences a level of displacement from it. Still home is contradictory, contested space, a locus for misrecognition and alienation. […] The woman as a writer then doubly disrupts the seamless narrative of home and so of nation. Further, her location in a variety of social and political

contexts allows internal critiques of new inscriptions of coloniality and imperialism. (1994:113)

Kincaid's narratives connect her with a home which concerns her individual experiences, her growing up as an Afro-Caribbean girl; on the other hand, home is also related to her people's collective experience of oppression during colonization. In *The Politics of Home*, George affirms that home is the site for the struggles of the self: "What all this indicates is that homes are not neutral places. Imagining a home is as political as imagining a nation" (1999:6). In imagining home as her private place, Kincaid reveals the problems related to her home country. Davies comments on Kincaid's ambivalent critique of her own land:

> What I am seeing here, then, is a self immersed in a Caribbean consciousness which it both accepts and rejects, engages and struggles with. This is made even clearer in her more polemical exploration of tourist culture and neo-colonial culture and its reductiveness, violence, and destructiveness. Kincaid seems to be asserting that the relationship to home is not innocent and idyllic; it is fraught with conflict, tension, bitterness and struggle. (1994:126)

In the US, Kincaid's position is ambivalent as she is the outsider, who represents the "other"—the Antiguan writer, whose discourse is identified by her cultural differences. However, in Antigua, Kincaid critically observes her community as the insider/native who has remained outside socially and geographically; therefore, in her view, her comrades reject her along with the tourists: "They do not like you. *They do not like me!*" (*SP*: 16). Kincaid confirms her position: "I always thought I was an outsider—for all sorts of reasons: I was too tall; I was too thin: I was too flat-chested; I was too bright

when I wasn't supposed to be; we were too poor; my mother was a Dominican: I was always outside" (Birbalsing, 1996: 147).

Kincaid's otherness is marked by her mixed origins: her parents were "a Carib Indian and a part-Scot, part-African Dominican policeman" (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999:2). However, she chooses to take the burden of her African ancestors as she shares with them a common history of oppression in the hands of the British colonizers, and for this reason Africa became the metaphor for the oppression in the Caribbean (Hall, 2003:41). Therefore, the discourse of slavery and oppression has been re-appropriated as a means of healing.

Kincaid is able to explore the oppressive relations resulting from the European and American hegemony in the Caribbean; she writes from the perspective of the diaspora, and as someone whose "formative years are significantly shaped by living abroad" (Birbalsingh, 1996: 143). However, Kincaid rejects her affiliation to the diasporic movement in literature, since it usually refers to the communities of Caribbean immigrant writers living outside the Caribbean who have become citizens in the countries they chose to live. Thus, she argues during an interview:

> I'm not sure that 'diaspora' is the right term for the writers you
> describe. I consider myself Caribbean. I am a citizen of Antigua,
> and I live here [USA] because it would be hard for me to live
> there and work. I made myself into a sort of exile. It wasn't
> intentional […] So I don't consider myself a diaspora writer.
> (Birbalsingh, 1993:143)

The concept of diaspora is rooted in the history of the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt towards the Promised Land. The captive becoming free is, according to Hall (2003: 28-29), the metaphor of black discourse in the New World because the diasporic

movements are also connected to the dispersion of African people throughout the New World by means of enslavement. Later, the concept was re-appropriated when after 1945 colonized or former colonized peoples went to the imperial centers—among them England, and later Canada and the United States—in search of financial and educational opportunities, and mostly better standards of living.

The access to different cultures shapes Kincaid's identity as she occupies a new location, so the differences that she perceives in the new culture she is inserted in transform her identity. Kincaid finds herself in a state which is a consequence of the "liminal" space she occupies—a hybrid location—where the she is able to cross the boundaries between "here" and "there" simultaneously (Bhabha, 1984: 9). In this new place, Kincaid adopts a position in which she is neither Antiguan nor Caribbean-American. As Rushdie affirms: "Our identity is at once plural and partial" (1991:15), which explains the ambivalent feelings the immigrant writer may have vis-à-vis a different culture. Therefore, Kincaid is the immigrant writer who carries her own cultural traits and also the new ones, which reinforce her differences in the American cultural " whole".

Kincaid confirms her choice of living in the US as a respectable writer, since she constructed her career and life there, not in Antigua. By choosing the US as her home, Kincaid may be transforming it into a literal third space, where she is free to talk back, as she states in an interview: "Once I came to America, I could rebel against that voice, and that way of looking at the world" (Birbalsingh, 1996:144). Therefore, Kincaid assumes the position of a rebel, which authorizes her counter-discourse.

1.3 - The feminist movement: the beginning of rebellious years

Kincaid arrives in the US in the midst of one of the most important movements in modernity: she witnesses the development of the feminist movement in the US during its first political phase in the 1960s and 1970s, and as it moved towards the discussion of gender in the 1980s (Scott, 1991: 64-68).

As a black Caribbean woman living during the 1960s in an imperial center, Kincaid encounters in feminism the basis for her rebellion against her home country, and society in general. Thus, she fights for her liberation not only as a woman but mainly as a human being formerly subjected to colonial oppression. Living in the US during the feminist movement, which contributed to the accomplishments of women in American history, Kincaid is able to experience the revolt of women who wanted to have rights in society, women who fought for the end of female's subordination to a patriarchal society, who wanted to become "visible", and gain control over their bodies and lives.

Rivkin and Ryan in "Feminist Paradigms" point at the effects of patriarchal society upon women: "For the women's movement of the 1960s and early 1970s the subject of feminism was women's experience under patriarchy, the long tradition of male rule in society which silenced women's voices, distorted their lives, and treated their concerns as peripheral" (2000:527). As patriarchy is "a relation between men and other men" (Fox-Genovese, 1982: 22), it puts female in a position of exclusion from the male world, therefore, constraining women's lives to the domestic field; in the case of colonized women, a marginality which overlaps with gender, race, and social class. In her novel *Lucy*, Kincaid reflects this subaltern condition within a male dominant society, as Lucy states: "But I did not know men very well then; the things I did know

about them were not so very good" (159). This thought reflects Lucy's notion of the interconnection between men and dominant discourse.

Although Kincaid's works are not grounded on feminist discourse, she surely received the impact of the movement, which is seen in different features of her works: "In working with issues of race, class, and sexualities, as well as gender, feminist discourses have come to stress difference and oscillation of margin and center in the construction of personal and political identities" (Kaplan, 1990: 359). These issues are very representative in Lucy—a girl who faces bias at home—as she blames her mother for complying with patriarchal oppression in order to restrain her as submissive and as servile:

> I was an only child until I was nine years old, and then in the space of five years my mother had three male children; each time a new child was born, my mother and father announced to each other with great seriousness that the new child would go to university in England and study to become a doctor or lawyer or someone who would occupy an important and influential position in society […] To myself I then began to call her Mrs. Judas…(*L*: 130)

In a moment in society when women were gathering forces to fight for their rights, Lucy sees that her mother did not help her to change the future that awaited her. Lucy judges her mother as a traitor—a "Mrs. Judas" in allusion to Judas who betrayed Christ—for conforming with the controlling patriarchal project which denied women the autonomy necessary to live their lives outside the domestic sphere.

As a writer, Kincaid may have received influential input from writers—who preceded the famous and rebellious 1960s—belonging to the women's movement dating

back to the so-called first wave. An important writer from this period is Virginia Woolf who believed that "women had always faced social and economic obstacles to their literary ambitions" (Selden; Widdowson; Brooker, 1997:125).

Kincaid witnessed the second "wave" of feminism since her arrival in the US in 1965, during the years working for *The New Yorker*, from1974 to 1995 (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999: 11-12), up to the publication of her first novel, *Annie John* (1985). She publishes *Lucy* in 1990, about two decades after her arrival in the US. The narrative dates back to 1968—the year of Lucy's arrival in the country—and the story ends a year later when Lucy turns twenty. During this first year away, and free from the constraints of her family and colonial upbringing, Lucy is able to liberate herself, showing a lifestyle which reflects the social and cultural context of the sixties in the US.

In *Lucy*, Kincaid shows signs of the second wave moment when Mariah and Lucy converse about the history of women:

> She spoke of women in society, women in history, women in culture, women everywhere. Mariah left the room and came back with a large book and opened it to the first chapter. She gave it to me. I read the first sentence. "Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female—this word is sufficient to define her." I had to stop. (131-132)

Lucy disagrees as she sees this as a totally limited definition, for she was more than a womb; she was somebody with aspirations in life regardless of her sex. In the passage above, Kincaid's *Lucy* argues against biology as a marker of sexual difference. The idea that a "woman is nothing but a womb" helped to confine women's differences to biological features: "Arguments which treat biology as fundamental and which play

down socialization have been used mainly to keep women 'in their place'" (Selden; Widdowson; Brooker, 1997:128).

The reflection of sexual liberation is present in Lucy's relationship with Peggy: "It was our custom on Sunday afternoons to go for a walk in the park and look around, then pick out men we imagined we would like to sleep with. […] I had smoked quite a bit of marijuana and was feeling quite happy and otherworldly" (88, 99). The use of drugs was an act of defiance against rules in society, and, combined with sex, encouraged new experiences: "…we went back to my room and smoked marijuana and kissed each other until we were exhausted and fell asleep" (83). Lucy also chose to have sex with a man she met in a store in spite of her relationship with Paul (117). At that time, women in general celebrated their bodies by means of free love, which together with drugs were part of the counter-culture which contributed to liberate human sexuality towards individual freedom.

In a rebellious attitude towards life throughout the story, Kincaid's Lucy shows her desire for freedom as she avoided being emotionally tied to anybody: "I was only half a year free of some almost unbreakable bonds, and it was not in my heart to make new ones. […] I had been carousing around town, going to movies and visiting record stores and buying marijuana and smoking by ourselves…" (63,71). Lucy discovers and envies the position of men as the rebels in history, and consequently the heroes. Then, Lucy wants to be the "hero", as the French painter whose life could be found in the pages of a book: "I had just begun to notice that the lives of men always are" (95). Thus, Lucy recognizes herself as the *other* (a woman), and through the definition, "I was not a man," she shows her desire for the authority and freedom men have. The narrative at this point discusses gender roles, as Lucy recognizes the socially constructed characteristics which differentiate men and women.

Kincaid's female marginality is aggravated by her position as a black immigrant from the "islands". In this chapter, I presented Kincaid's situation as undeniably ambivalent concerning her locus of enunciation as a former female colonized, who stands in a marginal position, though she lives in the center (US), and writes to the center. Kincaid is an Afro-Caribbean and self-exiled writer, who comes from the margins and addresses both her past and present home from a liminal condition. Thus, despite her ambivalence in relation to Antigua, Kincaid is able to build fierce narratives of resistance which gives her a distinctive position as one of the most renowned writers within the post-colonial circle.

CHAPTER II

Figures of authority in Kincaid's Lost Paradises

> The stories of the fallen were well known to me, but I had not known that my own situation could even distantly be related to them.
>
> Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*

The Caribbean islands mean for tourists, who are tired and seek relaxation abroad, a place for pleasure and escape from their daily routines. These tourists (mostly European and American) who exploit the beautiful Caribbean sceneries seem to be unaware of the islands' problems. In her small book, *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid disrupts the concept of the Caribbean as a paradise since it deals with the history behind her small island, Antigua, which is far from being a paradise for its inhabitants.

Kincaid exposes the misconception that the Caribbean is a paradise for tourists and for the island's inhabitants, and claims that freedom is still denied to Antiguans. In *A Small Place*, she argues that Antiguans face the tourists who visit the country with disdain, as they are not happy in their own "paradise": "They [the inhabitants] are too poor to escape the reality of their lives; and they are too poor to live properly in the place where they live, which is the very place you, the tourist, want to go" (*SP*: 19). Unfortunately, this paradise is the stage for the exploitation which tourists fail to acknowledge: Kincaid narrates how the European and American tourists spend their vacations on the island, unaware of the true history of their people (the European and Americans) and the Antiguans. As Davies claims: "[…] Jamaica Kincaid, in *A*

Small Place, attacks the construction of both the tourist and the 'native'. It is a hard critique which links various forms of colonial domination to tourism and internal exploitation" (1994:25). Antiguans accept the fact that the Caribbean economically depends on tourism, which makes Kincaid denounce the foreign occupation that continues in the act of every tourist who enters and leaves the Caribbean landscape. These tourists' attitudes bother her since they do not seem to acknowledge that the Caribbean was the scenery for terrible events:

> That water—have you ever seen anything like it? Far out, to the horizon, the colour of the water is navy-blue; nearer, the water is the colour of the North American sky. From there to the shore, the water is pale, silvery, clear, so clear that you can see its pinkish-white sand bottom. Oh, what beauty! Oh, what beauty! You have never seen anything like this. You are so excited. You breathe shallow. You breathe deep. […] But the Caribbean Sea is very big and the Atlantic Ocean is even bigger; it would amaze even you to know the number of black slaves this ocean has swallowed up. (*SP*: 13,14)

The most revealing fact about the Caribbean is not the natural beauties but the exploitation of such small islands which have been placed on the margins of developed societies, as Kincaid argues in *A Small Place*:

> You have brought your own books with you, and among them is one of those new books about economic history, one of those books explaining how the West (meaning Europe and North America after its conquest and settlement by Europeans) got rich: the West got rich not from the free (free—in this case meaning

good-for-nothing) and then undervalued labour, for generations, of the people like me you see walking around in Antigua […] and so you needn't let that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination develop into full-fledged unease, discomfort; you could ruin your holiday. (*SP*: 9,10)

The use of second person narrative in *A Small Place* demonstrates how Kincaid directly interpellates the tourists, as she shows how the Caribbean world differs from the British and American:

Since you are a tourist, a North American or European—to be frank, white—and not an Antiguan black returning to Antigua from Europe or North America with cardboard boxes of much cheap clothes and food for relatives, you move through customs swiftly, you move through customs with ease. (*SP*: 4)

Instead of improving the inhabitants' lives by giving them dignity, the government seems to have transformed the place into a recreational facility for tourists. Antiguans have continually acted not as the owners of their land but as subalterns: "[T]he Hotel Training School, a school that teaches Antiguans how to be good servants, how to be a good nobody, which is what a servant is" (*SP*: 55). Thus, the opportunities for a better life in the Caribbean are not available for its people because the paradise has already been "discovered" and occupied by aliens for hundreds of years.

According to Davies, "Jamaica Kincaid's work deals solidly with the Caribbean working class/peasant experience and the interaction with both British colonialism and American imperialism" (1994:116). Thus, Kincaid reveals that the relations between the British and American domination has managed to confine the

Caribbean territory to poverty. In a study on the fragmentation and loss of identity in Caribbean literature, Décio Torres Cruz affirms: "Dentro de uma perspectiva econômica, a parceria dos iguais das nações desenvolvidas sempre rejeitará o espaço periférico, absorvendo a diferença apenas como um modo de consumo sem permitir que lhe seja fornecida a sua autonomia de produção" (1998:146). The Caribbean history reflects the partnership between these equal nations (England and the USA), which still control the Caribbean people and their land.

In *A Small Place* Kincaid talks back to the Caribbean by indicating her discontent; similarly, in *Lucy* the protagonist also shows her anger towards her Caribbean home since the issue of colonialism is present through Lucy's accounts of her British upbringing during her early life in the West Indies. However, the most relevant target for Lucy's rebellious attitudes is the figure of the mother, described as a very strict person and as someone who had betrayed her:

> I pointed out the ways she had betrayed herself. I said I believed she had betrayed me also, and that I knew it to be true even if I couldn't find a concrete example right then. 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 becoming a slut. (*L*: 127)

All Lucy despises is the way her mother had raised her to become an echo of her, another woman in society who would act in the same submissive manner, get married and be contented with her household chores. In a short story called "Girl", Kincaid shows how the Caribbean women raise their daughters, and prepare them to live their lives as to their household chores and sexuality. The account is about a mother who is

responsible for passing on to the daughter all the advice necessary for a woman to live her life respectfully; in the imperative mood, the mother tells the girl to do a series of things required from women in the West Indian society:

> this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming;[…] don't squat down to play marbles— you are not a boy, you know; […] this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming. (1978:29)

The advice the mother gives the daughter in order to prevent her from being "a slut" seems to be one of the main roles of mothers in the West Indian society, which is due mainly to the morals and religiosity of the colonial period, as deCaires and O'Callaghan explain:

> Older women within the community are indicated for their role of socializing girls to become 'young ladies'. This oppressive 'ladyhood' is associated with Christian and Victorian strictures as to respectability and morality with their attendant taboo on the expression of sexuality. (1994:628)

According to Paravisini-Gebert, "The mother's injunctions stem from a need to guide the daughter's behavior toward conforming to social and sexual patterns she has imbued from Antiguan's English colonizers" (1999:51). Thus, the mother in the story represents the colonizer's interests as she perpetuates the role women have in the conservative Antiguan society. In order to construct the Antiguan female subjectivity, the mother has a very important function as she educates her daughter to live according

to the rules set by a colonial society. Kincaid's "Girl" and *Lucy* are intersected by the mother's authoritative reproachful remarks about the daughter's behavior.

Lucy comments on her mother's worries about her. She contrasts her life to the one desired by her mother, and affirms that she had become a different person:

> I had been a girl of whom certain things were expected, none of them too bad: a career as a nurse, for example; a sense of duty to my parents; obedience to the law and worship of convention. But in one year of being away from home, that girl had gone out of existence. (133)

Kincaid's feeling in relation to her mother as "the great powerful person" is well portrayed in Lucy's ambivalent relationship with her mother. The figure of the mother is Kincaid's most important paradise, as she states in an interview:

> Some people say I have grown up in a paradise […] so it's not this paradise that's a big influence on me. It's not the physical Antigua. It's the paradise of mother in every way: the sort of benign, marvelous, innocent moment you have with the great powerful person who, you realize, won't let you go. (Birbalsing, 1996:147)

The conflicting relationship between Lucy and her mother, who is the strongest figure of authority in the novel *Lucy*, indicates a metaphorically constructed paradise. According to Simmons:

> The paradise which Kincaid's young protagonists lose is, first, their mother's love. The preoccupation with loss, which is seen as the withdrawal of love by a once adoring mother, is a theme running through Kincaid's fiction. […] Here and in other works,

this paradise becomes a hell as the mother's love turns to obsessive control and mocking contempt. (1998)

Lucy's life in Antigua is intrinsically related to the mother figure. In the US, the presence of the mother is also intense, for Lucy cannot escape her memories. Physically free from the powerful mother, Lucy is ready to search for an ideal home, away from the financial and emotional troubles experienced back home as well as the condition of colonized subaltern. Thus, the American life reflects the dreams of opportunity any poor Caribbean woman would like to have in order to succeed despite the difficulties encountered; however, Lucy is not satisfied with her situation, and keeps searching for a better life. Lucy refuses to be a servant in the US —"a good nobody", according to her views of who a servant is; Lucy, through the American views of happiness and success, intends to pursue her ambitious project of becoming someone important one day.

In this chapter, I discuss how the Caribbean as well as the mother's love became lost paradises in Kincaid's narratives, and the tempestuous and ambivalent attitude Lucy has towards the Caribbean, her mother, and the British. These figures of authority will be discussed, especially in *Lucy*, where Kincaid, through counter-discourse, tries to release the protagonist from her mother's power and authority to follow the example of the rebellious Lucifer, from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, so that she can build her counter-narrative, that is, present her alternative view on colonial society.

2.1 - Kincaid's intertextual discourse: textual appropriation through religion and education

Christianity played an important role in the colonization of the New World since the European used it to teach the natives the English language intertwined with British culture. As deCaires and O'Callaghan state: "A frequent target in West Indian literature has been the alienating effects of colonial education, usually buttressed by the teachings of an authoritarian Christianity" (1994:628). Thus, religion is at the basis of the British colonization in the West Indies in order to "educate and civilize" the colonized.

In *Marvelous Possessions*, Stephen Greenblatt notes that the missions of Spanish conquerors were different from the Spanish missionaries, who never took interest in teaching the natives to speak Spanish; on the contrary, these missionaries learned the native languages in order to preach the Scriptures:

> A grande esperança de Colombo era que a língua espanhola como que veiculasse a religião espanhola: "Em Castela, aprendendo a língua, com muito mais presteza receberão o batismo e garantirão a salvação de suas almas" (i.88). Essa, no entanto, é a visão de um explorador, não de um missionário; os frades que chegaram na esteira da descoberta e da conquista estudaram laboriosamente as línguas nativas e, como observa Inga Clendinnen, "mostraram pouco entusiasmo em ensinar o espanhol a seus catecúmenos, pois o conhecimento do espanhol abriria caminho a influências perniciosas ameaçando seu próprio papel de mediadores entre espanhóis e índios." (1996:147)

The British, the French, and the Spanish regarded religion as a part of their conquests. Thus, the explorers forbad the natives to speak their mother tongues, which would accelerate the learning of a new language and would help the Europeans to consolidate the enterprise of colonization.

The colonizing countries also required the colonized peoples to learn their literature. Edward Said reports: "Since one of the purposes of colonial education was to promote the history of France and Britain, that same education also demoted the native history" (1990:75). This act of demotion of native education is revealed in *Lucy*, when the girl talks about her experiences concerning colonial education during her childhood.

In *Lucy*, the protagonist gets her inspiration from the British literature she read as a child; later she appropriates and discusses these texts in a very questioning and ironic manner. Lucy mentions the role that religion played during her life back home as she refers to the Bible:

> On the last day I spent at home, my cousin—a girl I had known all my life, an unpleasant person even before her parents forced her to become a Seventh-Day Adventist—made a farewell present to me of her own Bible, and with it she made a little speech about God and goodness and blessings. Now it sat before me on a dresser, and I remembered how when we were children we would sit under my house and terrify and torment each other by reading out loud passages from the Book of Revelation… (8)

Kincaid subtlety uses one of the passages in *Lucy* to show this relationship between colonizers and natives. Lucy is on the veranda immersed in thoughts about her past while Mariah comes back home from a fishing trip: "I was sitting on the veranda one day with these thoughts when I saw Mariah come up the path, holding in her hands

six grayish-blackish fish. […] She sang out, 'I will make you fishers of men,' and danced around me" (37) Mariah starts a conversation with Lucy, and adds: " Aren't they beautiful? Gus and I went out in my old boat—my very, very old boat—and we caught them. My fish. This is super. Let's go feed the minions" (37). As Mariah says the word "minions", which means a "servile dependent, follower, or underling (subordinate inferior)"[3], Lucy for a moment thinks she intended to say "millions". Anyhow, the word "minions" reminds her of the word "dominion": "It's possible that what she really said was 'millions' not 'minions.' Certainly she said it in jest. But as we were cooking the fish, I was thinking about it. 'Minions.' A word like that would haunt someone like me; the place where I came from was a dominion of someplace else" (37). Then, Lucy decides to tell a story to Mariah in a manner very close to a parable:

> I became so taken with the word "dominion" that I told Mariah this story: When I was about five years old or so, I had read to me for the first time the story of Jesus Christ feeding the multitudes with seven loaves and a few fishes. After my mother had finished reading this to me, I said to her, "But how did Jesus serve the fish? Boiled or fried?" (37,38)

Lucy describes Christ's miracle of feeding the hungry people, who were his followers (minions), and links the words "minions" and "dominion", to the situation of oppressive servitude between the Caribbean and the British. The word also reminds Lucy of a prior situation connected to slavery, since for every slave there is a master.

Mariah, as a superior person, provided food for Lucy, a minion. Thus, it is clear that along with her authority as the employer (Lucy's "master"), she also had the role of teacher, which implies the ambiguous meaning of the word "master"—both the teacher

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[3] Merrian-Webster on line dictionary.

and the superior being. This may also imply a critique of the role of both the school system and the church during colonization.

Native peoples thought that the British colonizers would accept them if they assimilated the education within the colonial modes; instead, their status as underprivileged people became more visible in a world of masters and servants. The British chose to be the masters of oppression, and the Caribbean people were not given any choices in life, as Lucy ironically states: "I know it would have mattered to me. In our house, we all preferred boiled fish […] Through it we could hear the clink of the cooking utensils as we cooked the fish Mariah's way, under the flames in the oven, a way I did not like" (38,39).

Kincaid appropriates what British literature offered her in order to argue against the structures of power conveyed by the educational system, as she explains in an interview: "It seems so interesting that the people who have been most influential in destroying the psychologically whole me, have also given me the language to understand this" (Birbalsingh, 1996: 147, 148).

Kincaid's writings are part of this "printed" world that women, especially those coming from a colonized or oppressive society, have to conquer in order to talk back. Caren Kaplan comments: "Women have a history of reading and writing in the interstices of masculine culture moving between use of dominant language or form of expression and specific versions of experience based on their marginality" (1990:357). In fact, it is this so called marginality which encourages Kincaid to write in such a defying manner, and she echoes Caliban when using the "language of the criminal" to talk back: "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?" (*SP*: 31).

In *Lucy*, Kincaid clearly shows how British literature at first dazzles the protagonist, who takes the authors and their characters into her life: "I called myself other names: Emily, Charlotte, Jane. They were the names of the authoresses whose books I loved" (*L*: 149). But Lucy rejects the authoritative manner in which she learned this literature, and she recalls the time when, as a child had to memorize a poem and recite it: "I remembered an old poem I had been made to memorize when I was ten years old and a pupil at Queen Victoria Girls' School. […] After I was done, everybody stood up and applauded…" (18). Lucy confesses to Mariah how she had wished to forget that day, and Mariah seems to be in awe: " 'What a history you have'" (19). Later, Lucy comments:

> 'Mariah, do you realize that at ten years of age I had to learn by heart a long 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 of conquered and conquests; a scene of brutes masquerading as angels and angels portrayed as brutes. (*L*: 30)

Through Lucy's anger, Kincaid uses her ability to invert the roles the British have played as the civilized and their constructions of Antiguans as the uncivilized—the "brutes." Thus, by answering Mariah back, Lucy refuses to be silent; instead of constructing a weak character that devalues her Caribbean experiences, Kincaid builds in Lucy the confidence and rebellion necessary to resist the British imposition, and shows Lucy's strong attitude towards any authoritarian system that tries to annihilate her identity. Interestingly, Kincaid receives her inspiration from British literature, which enables the construction of an effective counter-discourse through her narratives. By questioning the authority of the dominant discourse present in colonial literature,

Kincaid is able to "dismantle it and reinscribe it, that is, not destroy it but give it a different structure and functioning" (Culler, 1997:126).

2.2 - Lucy and Lucifer: inspiration for rebellion

John Milton experienced the political and religious struggles that took place in England during his epoch. Thus, *Paradise Lost* has been widely discussed from its political angle revealing the models present during Milton's time which showed a parallel between the angelic hierarchy in heaven and the ecclesiastical hierarchy on earth. Although hierarchical models, among other issues, are present throughout Milton's epic, my interest in *Paradise Lost* concerns the analogy Kincaid presents in *Lucy*, since she connects her protagonist to the rebellious character from *Paradise Lost*—Lucifer. Therefore, in this chapter, the comparisons drawn between *Lucy* and *Paradise Lost* are made in order to analyze Lucy's colonial and post-colonial condition as compared to Lucifer's rebellion.

According to Spivak, the nineteenth-century British literature was a "crucial part of the cultural representations of England to English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored" (1999: 113). This literature, which culturally represented the Empire so well, inspires Kincaid who acknowledges the importance of canonical works, especially the Bible (Genesis and Revelations) and *Paradise Lost*, in her life as she starts to feel that there was a common characteristic which connected her to these stories:

> I never knew that those things were such an influence on me—
> these religious images […] What's most interesting is how
> influential some things have been; for instance, the biblical books

of Genesis and Revelation were my favourite things to read for a long period of time. Revelation is a pretty terrifying thing for a child to read; but it conveys the idea of a 'paradise lost' never to be regained, and that is a big motif in my work. (Birbalsingh, 1996:147)

This "paradise lost" that Kincaid reports as "never to be regained" is central to her work because what she views as the innocence typical of the Carib Indians had already been destroyed by the British sinful acts during colonization, leaving Kincaid's ancestors without any history prior to colonization. Due to colonization, Kincaid's land never had the chance to become a paradise; therefore, her paradise which could never be regained, since it never existed in the first place.

The situation in which the native peoples from the West Indies found themselves in face of the power of the European colonization is similar to that of the characters in *Paradise Lost*, which are marked by their struggles after the Fall to overcome their displacement caused by their expulsion. According to Cruz, "the Caribbean paradise experienced the Fall after colonization" (1998); therefore, the tensions experienced from this situation may be compared to the discourses of power, as Sá reports:

The choice of images in *Paradise Lost* for a crucial moment in one of the Western grand narratives of human history– the Fall– challenges the informed reader or critic to consider the relation between the acquired condition of Adam and Eve and the discourses of power and colonization in face of the New World. (2004)

Lucy's interest in questions of justice and injustice is associated to this Caribbean "acquired condition", which is marked by the beginning of enslavement and along with it the inevitable Caribbean loss of both paradises—the land and the choices of freedom—vis-à-vis colonization.

Lucy explains: "When I was quite young and just being taught to read, the books I was taught to read from were the Bible, *Paradise Lost*, and some plays by William Shakespeare. I knew well the Book of Genesis, and from time to time I had been made to memorize parts of *Paradise Lost*" (152). Lucy's readings of *Paradise Lost* inspire her to reject her subaltern condition; therefore, she decides to follow the example of the character Lucifer. According to Simmons, through her own readings of *Paradise Lost* Kincaid rebels against colonial education by finding strength in Lucifer:

> But while Kincaid has explored the negative impact of colonial education, she has also made positive use of the English classics. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, she says, taught her that questions of justice and injustice could be considered and articulated, inspiring her to express her own sense of wrong. Though this was undoubtedly not the intention of colonial educators, the young Kincaid found a hero with whom she could identify in *Paradise Lost*, the defiant outcast Lucifer. (1998)

A woman living in a patriarchal society, Lucy acknowledges the questions of justice and injustice as she sees the lack of choices in her life—first at her home/land, and later in an upper-class household in an imperial center. Kincaid transforms Lucy into a woman who searches for a higher place in society. According to Gilbert and Gubar, the image of Eve is closely related to the fallen angel: "Milton's Eve falls for exactly the same reason that Satan does: because she wants to be 'as God,' and because, like him, she is

secretly dissatisfied with her place, secretly preoccupied with questions of 'equality'"
(1984: 197). Thus, Lucy is worried about her future in a society where she has neither a
privileged position nor specific skills.

By mentioning the "stories of the fallen" (*L*: 154), Kincaid recounts not only
Lucy's displacement but also her own, as she claims in an interview: "Milton's work
left me with this feeling of articulating my own pain, as Lucifer did, that it seemed too
that if you couldn't say what was wrong with you then you couldn't act… I felt quite
aggrieved as a child…I did feel that I was cast out of my own paradise" (Simmons,
1998). Thus, in *Lucy*, the tensions rely on the ideas of origin, loss, and displacement
which lead the protagonist to rebellion.

Paradise in Milton's epic is related to the "obedience" of Lucifer, Adam, and
Eve to God, in places (Heaven/Paradise) where the hierarchy is maintained through
servitude. Peace is not disturbed until Lucifer, moved by envy, rebels against God's
sovereignty, which culminates with the end of immortality:

> Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit, of that forbidden tree
> whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat
> (1.1-4)

Later in the epic, Eve, lured by Satan, disobeys God and eats the forbidden fruit. Lucy
feels as one of the "fallen" because she is in search of a powerful knowledge—
forbidden knowledge—which will diminish her feelings of insecurity, loss and
displacement. Therefore, Lucy rejects the state of a less significant being and the

structures of power that surround her; however, she does not propose a different social organization.

Thus, if one takes into consideration Octavio Paz's discussion of the concepts of revolution, rebellion and revolt, Lucy's rebellious acts and attitudes are not based on revolutionary principles, that is, she does not seek changes in society, but only defies authority. According to Paz, rebellion alludes to the Christian religion, but in a negative way, that is, related to hell: the "fallen prince"; hence, the rebellious lives in eternal inconformity, always on the margins (1996:261-65). Here may reside the impossibility for Lucy to come out of her situation of non-conformity since her rebellion is based on Lucifer's acts which cause no positive changes in her life and perpetuate the negativity of the character as if it were her highest accomplishment in life.

In *Paradise Lost*, the political situation in heaven resembles the structure of power held by the British king to rule England and the colonies. The power of the king may be compared to God's, as he is the authority in heaven and paradise. In the following verses Milton refers to God, using ambiguous language:

> Who can impair thee, mighty King, or bound
>
> Thy Empire? Easily the proud attempt
>
> Of spirits apostate, and their counsels
>
> Vain,
>
> (7. 608-610)

These lines may refer both to the Empire of God and to the British Empire, which proudly proclaimed itself the "voice of God". According to Bryson, "The political structure of heaven itself is drawn on a model of a king and his princely magistrates", therefore, Milton by comparing Satan to the British tyrannical figures undermines the

hierarchical power of the British society during the time he wrote *Paradise Lost* (Bryson: 1999).

In *Lucy,* Kincaid's representation of Lucifer as a hero for Lucy makes her protagonist a rebellious heroine, who imitates Satan, and becomes a kind of female devil. Lucy's mother explains her choice of name: "I named you after Satan himself. Lucy, short for Lucifer. What a botheration from the moment you were conceived" (*L*: 152). Lucy continues by explaining her acceptance of the name, as she declares:

> I was transformed from failure to triumph. It was the moment I knew who I was. […] I knew well the Book of Genesis, and from time to time I had been made to memorize parts of *Paradise Lost*. The stories of the fallen were well known to me, but I had not known that my own situation could even distantly be related to them. Lucy, a girl's name for Lucifer. (*L*: 135)

The "brave" decision Satan took to reign in hell instead of serving in heaven appeals to Lucy: she leaves her homeland to try to succeed in the USA. Lucy states: "When I left my home I had wrapped around my shoulders the mantle of a servant" (95). Thus, Lucy's feeling of displacement is similar to Lucifer's as she leaves home, which in her opinion was not a very nice place, in order to experience a better situation, and finds disappointment:

> A person would leave a not very nice situation and go somewhere else, somewhere a lot better, and then long to go back where it was not very nice. How impatient I would become with such a person, for I would feel that I was in a not very nice situation myself, and how I wanted to go somewhere else. (*L*: 6)

Lucy resents what the British colonialism had done to her island and decides to leave home and find a better place, but things are not that simple. Her frustration may be compared to Satan's own frustration. Satan, willing to ascertain his sovereignty, is taken by surprise after he arrives in Hell and dislikes the place where he would have to establish his kingdom. Banished from Heaven, he acknowledges that there is no space for remorse:

> Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,
>
> Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat
>
> That we must change for Heaven?–this
>
> Mournful gloom
>
> (1.245-248)

Lucy's words echo Lucifer's and reveal her disillusionment in the description of her arrival in the USA: "I had come the night before, a gray-black and cold night before […] It was not my first bout with the disappointment of reality and it would not be my last" (*L*: 4). In *Paradise Lost*, Lucifer explains his feelings towards Hell, and his final separation from God:

> Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat
>
> For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
>
> Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid
>
> What shall be right: farthest from him is best
>
> Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made supreme
>
> Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,
>
> Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,
>
> Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,
>
> Receive the new possessor–one who brings

A mind not to be changed by Place and Time.

The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

(1.249-255)

Likewise, Lucy continues to report her disappointment as she imagined she would never be a subaltern again, for her new life in the US would rescue her from her resentment of being part of the dominated, the colonized world. In the lines below are the signs of Lucy's first impressions at her arrival in the US:

What a surprise this was to me, that I longed to be back in the place that I came from, that I longed to sleep in a bed I had outgrown, that I longed to be with people whose smallest, most natural gesture would call up in me such a rage that I longed to see them all dead at my feet. Oh, I had imagined that with my own swift act—leaving home and coming to this new place−I could leave behind me, as if it were an old garment never to be worn again, my sad thoughts, my sad feelings, and my discontent with life in general as it presented itself to me. In the past, the thought of being in my present situation had been comfort… (*L*: 6,7)

As a fairy tale that ends abruptly and leaves Lucy with the pain of ordinary life, the quotation above shows Lucy's homesickness and unhappiness as she feels just as one more duped person in search of the American Dream. Thus, she realized that many other people along with her regarded this dream as "a fixture of fantasy":

Now that I saw these places, they looked ordinary, dirty, worn down by so many people entering and leaving them in real life,

and it occurred to me that I could not be the only person in the world for whom they were a fixture of fantasy. (*L*: 4)

Thus, Lucy has to re-shape her dreams if she wants to overcome her despair in relation to the prospects of a new life. She affirms that a sense of hopelessness about her future invades her thoughts, since nothing is the way she wanted it to be and, confronted with her expectations, all the brightness of her dreams disappears: "If I had to draw a picture of my future then, it would have been a large gray path surrounded by black, blacker, blackest" (*L*: 8). The adjectives in gradation show Lucy's negative picture of life, unhappy with her leaving home, and also with her present situation echoing Lucifer's feelings in hell. Kincaid ironically also points to Lucy's condition as a black woman who tends to become "blacker and blackest", that is, hopeless in face of life in a white world.

Kincaid declares about *Paradise Lost*: "There is something else from *Paradise Lost* that I seem to put in my work: 'Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven' (Book I: 263). I completely believe that. But I had no idea it was so pervasive in my work" (Birbalsingh, 1996: 147). This statement reinforces the idea that Kincaid views her land as a type of heaven/paradise which she decides to reject and exchange for hell, a life in an imperial center which at first offered her the same second class jobs she had found at home. In fact Lucy and Lucifer/Satan were both not only in the conditions of rebels, who wanted to install their sovereignty, but also exiles, trying to find home in their displacement. Lucifer is cast out from Heaven to Hell, and Lucy leaves her very small island—a paradise turned into Hell by the British— and travels to a vast country, full of people from everywhere else, and as displaced as she is.

Lucy's life does not change in spite of the changes of places: wasn't her mind as in Satan's motto always making a hell of heaven, and a heaven of hell? Lucy

desires a mind "not to be chang'd by Place or Time", and this pursuit suits both herself and Lucifer, for their wish to rule continues. As things do not change in her life, Lucy declares, "I had come to see the sameness in things that appeared to be different" (91). The changes in place did not alter the way things happened. The problem here seems to be related mostly to Lucy's mind, which cannot be at peace, than to the choices of places, for the world offered her too little wherever she went. Her "paradise" can never be regained; thus, she would have to unwrap the mantle of the "fallen angel" (*L*: 95) around her shoulders, and renounce her condition of subaltern.

In order to acquire power, Lucy desires to be her mother. This feeling may trigger a deeper structure of power, as the mother/daughter dyad may represent an authority so strong as the dyad Queen/colonized. Lucy subverts authority by comparing herself to her mother and at the same time denying the authority of the mother. Thus, Lucy rebels against the "stony-face, sourmouth woman" (*L*: 135) who represents the British, as she mentions that she did not want to sing a choir in school, which was in respect to the queen: " 'Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves; Britons never, never shall be slaves,' that I was not a Briton and that until not too long ago I would have been a slave" (135).

Both Lucy and her mother are in an inferior condition in patriarchal society; they suffer for being women, black, and colonized. According to Gilbert and Gubar, Eve figures as the first female submitted to man, and consequently to patriarchal society: "And just as Satan is humbled and enslaved by his desire for the bitter fruit, so Eve is humbled by becoming a slave not only to Adam the individual man but to Adam the archetypal man, a slave not only to her husband but, as de Beauvior notes, to the species" (1984:197). I use this comparison here to discuss that in Lucy's mind her

mother, one of her 'species', should have fought on her side against the biased view of society on women, especially Caribbean women.

Lucy blames her mother and England for turning her into a displaced person, but Lucy knows that she has to learn to live with her past in order not to "make a hell of heaven", as she had done at home: "One day I was living silently in a personal hell" (*L*: 131). Then, away from home, she continues to feel miserable because she senses that "everything remains the same and yet nothing is the same." And she adds: "As each day unfolded before me, I could see the sameness in everything; I could see the present take a shape–the shape of my past" (90). Lucy's situation as a servant takes her back to a subaltern condition similar to that she had on the island; however, she may find comfort in the future that lies ahead of her, unlike Satan and his fellows, who are doomed to wander, and to have Hell as a home:

> Heaven's fugitives, and for their dwelling-place
>
> Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame,
>
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity
>
> (2.57-58, 148)

Despite being a servant, Lucy holds on to her name in order to extract some rebellious power: "I did not grow to like the name Lucy—I would have much preferred to be called Lucifer outright—but whenever I say my name I always reached out to give it a strong embrace" (153). Lucifer receives his name from God, the creator, whereas Lucy receives her name from the mother, a strong figure of authority, compared to a kind of female god: "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?" (153). Lucy, who sees her mother performing the role of a tyrannical goddess, acts as the devil in defiance to this power.

Whereas Lucifer/Satan has the images of God as part of his past, Lucy finds her mother as her past, which is confirmed by her mother's reply: "you can run away, but you cannot escape the fact that I am your mother, my blood runs in you, I carried you for nine months inside me" (90). Thus, she reveals the mother's almost omnipotent presence in her life.

In this chapter, the comparisons established between *Lucy* and *Paradise Lost* show the evidence of rebellion as a sign of resistance to the positions both Lucifer and Lucy had in their "paradises": Lucifer wanted to be as powerful as God; his pride and envy moved him throughout his plans of revolt, and while trying to pursue his dreams he becomes trapped in hell. Similarly, Lucy wanted to be free from the figures of authority in her life: at home, in the private sphere, she had the authority of her mother, and, in the public sphere, she had to "serve" the British queen. For this reason she rejects both types of authority, as she wants to have control over her own life, so that she may have opportunities which are different from those dictated by her mother or her motherland. Lucy's own situation was one of rebellion against a society that did not allow women to choose; furthermore, she wanted to rule, instead of being expected to serve, as she states:

> I was not good at taking orders from anyone, not good at waiting on other people. Why did someone not think that I would make a good doctor or a good magistrate or a good someone who runs things? […] It allowed me to cut quite a figure of authority among my peers. (*L*: 92)

Thus, Lucy repeats the models of dominance she despises, as Ashcroft states: "The struggle for power over truth in some sense 'mimics' the metropolitan impulse of dominance…" (Ashcroft *et al*, 1989:168).

Lucy finds inspiration in *Paradise Lost* to rebel against the colonial power the British had through the figure of an almost "divine" power represented by the King in Milton's time. The British colonizers repeat this pattern of power in the West Indies by the actions of a "motherly" Queen. However, through literature, Kincaid resists the dominance and the effects of that monarchical authority still present on her island.

Kincaid's Lucy also searches for a "home", which is a metaphor for the mother/motherland dyad. However, instead of mourning her colonial past or resenting that "everything remained the same" Lucy may take the chance to negotiate with her present and fragmented identity in an imperialist country. Thus, Lucy, in order to make her horizons brighter has to continue her search for a new life instead of feeling like Lucifer "doomed to build wrong upon wrong" (139).

CHAPTER III

Self-fashioning and the Search for a New Beginning

> There is no looking glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us—hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I?
>
> Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

In a short story called "In the Night" (1996), by Jamaica Kincaid, the girl who narrates the story longs for the love of a woman, her mother, and says: "This woman I would marry knows many things, but to me she will only tell about things that would never dream of making me cry; every night, over and over, she will tell me something that begins, 'Before you were born'" (1996:569). This girl inquires about her origins, but she wants to connect herself only with happy events, not with her condition of a descendant of slaves or Carib Indians who suffered from colonization. Since Lucy both rejects and idealizes the love of her mother and of her home country, her feelings are similar to those of the narrator of the short story.

Motherhood is a recurrent theme in Kincaid's works, and in *Lucy* the focus of narrative is the desire of separation from the dyad mother/motherland as well as the search for an identity, which craves to establish itself despite the sorrowful past at home. Thus, Kincaid constructs her own identity through the attempt of (re)writing her story via Lucy, as Pivato affirms: "In a sense the agency of the main character in the narrative parallels that of the author with the freedom to tell his own or her own story"

(Pivato: 1996). The quotation does not refer to autobiographical works, but to the agency minority groups exert in their writings, as they desire their experiences to be known, and relevant to their own historical construction as well as that of their group.

This chapter concentrates the discussion on Lucy's self-construction while she searches for a better life. In the process she identifies with her mother, Mariah, and Peggy; however, her mother constitutes the strongest and most ambivalent source of identification. In order to achieve authority and autonomy over her life, Lucy behaves as a "bad" and rebellious girl, and plans a definite separation from her mother. The final focus of analysis will be Lucy's progress by means of self-creation as an artist, in which Kincaid seems to depict her own journey as a Caribbean migrant towards maturity and a successful writing career.

3.1 - Lucy's search for identity through female figures

Lucy, who was born in 1949, tries to know herself as a female teenage West Indian immigrant in the US in order to assert her identity: "These documents showed everything about me, and yet they showed nothing about me. They showed where I was born. They showed that I was born on the twenty-fifth of May 1949" (148). Lucy seems to search for the proofs of who she is as she keeps informing the things her documents show: "They showed how tall I was. They showed that my skin and my eyes were the same color, brown, though they did not say if the shades were identical" (148). Lucy, then, talks about her name:

> These documents all said that my name was Lucy—Lucy
> Josephine Potter. I used to hate all three of those names. I was
> named Josephine after my mother's uncle Mr. Joseph, because he

was rich, from money he had made in sugar in Cuba… The Potter
must have come from the Englishman who owned my ancestors
when they were slaves; no one really knew, and I could not blame
them for not caring to find out. (149)

Lucy traces back the meanings and the origins of her full name, and discovers that her name does not match the identity she searches for: "When I had first begun to think of the significance of my three names, I disliked the name Lucy, because it seemed slight, without substance, not at all the person I thought I would like to be even then" (149). There, Lucy confesses her desire for an identity that does not reside in her first name, for she considers it "slight", i.e., unimportant, minor. Thus, Lucy searches for some kind of identification that would help her to fashion her own self.

The strongest role model for Lucy during childhood was her mother: "My past was my mother […] And I was undeniably that – female. Oh, it was a laugh […] I was not like my mother− I was my mother […] But my mother knew me well, as well as she knew herself: I, at the time, even thought of us as identical" (90-130). Lucy affirms that as a female she was her mother, implying not only a symbiotic relationship with the mother figure, but also the submission to the gender rules of the Antiguan society.

Lucy was an only child until she was nine years old, when her mother got pregnant with the first of her three boys, and after each boy was born her parents would make plans for their brilliant lives as they would be sent to schools in England. Until then, Lucy had not perceived that she was being raised to be "nobody", since her parents had never talked about any plans for a successful career:

I felt a sword go through my heart, for there was no
accompanying scenario in which she saw me, her only identical

offspring, in a remotely similar situation. […] and I began to plan a separation from her that even then I suspected would never be complete. (130-131)

After her brothers' birth, Lucy started to see herself as a separate entity from her mother; she goes through the mirror stage, and her plans for separation began. According to Lacan, before the mirror stage the child does not have a self-image which defines it as a separate person; on the contrary, it sees itself as a "whole" reflected in the gaze of the Other—the mother: "The child assumes the mother is himself, and his primary desire is for her desire (of him)" (Rivkin & Ryan, 2000: 123). After separation starts, the individual becomes fragmented and never achieves wholeness again.

As Lucy grows older, she no longer intends to please her mother in order to be accepted. After her first winter in the US, Lucy admits: "I could now look back at the winter. It was my past, so to speak, my first real past—a past that was my own and over which I had the final word" (23). Thus, Lucy does not want the past to restrain her plans of independence, as she adds:

For I felt that if I could put enough miles between me and the place from which that letter came, and if I could put enough events between me and the events mentioned in the letter, would I not be free to take everything just as it came and not see hundreds of years in every gesture, every word spoken, every face? (31)

Lucy thinks that by rejecting her family, along with her homeland and its colonial past, she may escape her mother's authoritarian love and become a different person. In fact, Lucy has the illusion that she may be able to construct her identity by herself; therefore, she fights for a physical and psychological separation from her "oppressed paradise", occupied by "the bad minded people who used to rule over it"

(*SP*: 23), as well as a separation from her mother, who reminds Lucy of this past. This can be understood as part of the process of individuation; as Brandão points out in his discussion of the significance of Oedipus (1985:11), human discourse happens when rupture occurs, which is fundamental for the process of reconnection; therefore, the consciousness of separation is the primary condition for the beginning of culture—in Lucy's case, a new beginning and an identity of her own.

In the process of separation, Lucy mourns the loss of her mother's love, and feels that perhaps this is the only true love she has ever had: "My life was at once something more simple and more complicated than that: for ten of my twenty years, half of my life, I had been mourning the end of a love affair, perhaps the only true love in my whole life I would ever know" (132). For Lucy, it becomes almost unbearable to achieve this separation because she would have to renounce her "only true love". This love Lucy desires is, according to Kristeva, the love necessary to enter the "symbolic and ethic Other so difficult for a woman"; moreover, "with the arrival of a child and the start of love (perhaps the only true love of a woman for another person…) maternity is a bridge between singularity and ethics" (1986:297). Then, through this "bridge" both the child and the mother experience the bond with each other, even before birth, which enables it to enter the world of socialization and subjectivity. However, Kristeva relates the dyad mother/infant to the abject, and points to the individual psychosexual development, which is marked by the moment the child and the mother are separated, and the child begins to see the boundaries between itself and its mother. According to Kristeva, the mother, not the father, constitutes the Other; thus, she makes use of Lacan's mirror stage, but gives importance to the mother as the important link to the child, and consequently, subject development, saying that it is the mother who is responsible for making the child enter the space of the Symbolic. But since the mother

is the abject, the child both loves and rejects her, especially the girl child; thus, women are caught in a trap: by rejecting the mother, and identifying with the father, they are in fact, rejecting themselves. The mother constitutes what is minor and repulsive in patriarchal society; therefore, female bodies, the immigrant, and the dispossessed in general are the abject (1982: 2). Lucy feels that she has to separate from the mother and motherland—the abject—in order to create a new space for her in society.

Lucy leaves for the US not to go to college, but to be an au pair, and study in an evening school in order to become a nurse. She arrives in a household "made up of a husband, a wife, and their four girl children. The husband and wife looked alike and their four children looked just like them" (12). Lucy describes this family's lifestyle giving an account of how they live, their behavior during meals, how they carry out conversation, and in the first chapter, "Poor Visitor", she states: "They [the children] would spill their food, or not eat any of it at all, or make up rhymes about it that would end with the words "smelt bad." How they made me laugh…" (13). As Lucy gets to know Mariah, she criticizes her employer's attitude towards life, and asks herself: "How does a person get to be that way?" (17); later she repeats the question to herself when Mariah gets upset about the weather: "How do you get to be a person who is made miserable because the weather changed its mind, because the weather doesn't live up to your expectations? How do you get to be that way?" (20). Then, Lucy wonders about Mariah's life, and concludes:

> Mariah was beyond doubt or confidence. I thought, Things must
> have always gone her way, and not just for her but for everybody
> she has ever known from eternity; she has never had to doubt,
> and so she has never had to grow confident; the right thing

always happens to her; the thing she wants to happen happens.

Again I thought, How does a person get to be that way? (26)

Unlike Lucy, who came from a small Caribbean island and had to make her way through life, Mariah, an American middle-class woman, seemed to have all she wanted.

Lucy connects both her mother and Mariah to her life—past and present—by commenting on the similarities and differences between them. Lucy analyzes her love for Mariah: "The times I loved Mariah it was because she reminded me of my mother. The times I did not love Mariah it was because she reminded me of my mother" (58). It was reasonable for Lucy to feel that way, since Mariah was friendly and affectionate, but other times her employer's caring for her acted as a constraint.

Lucy remembers her mother's plans for her: "I had come to feel that my mother's love for me was designed solely to make me into an echo of her; and I didn't know why, but I felt that I would rather be dead than become just an echo of someone" (36). What Lucy does not want is the repetition of her mother's life; moreover, she wants to flee from the colonial past that encapsulates her. Instead of being confined to domestic roles, she wanted a different life and the chance to be "somebody", but the shaping of her Caribbean self into a new person demanded a redefinition of her identity. As Hall explains, identification "is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group" (1996:2). Therefore, Lucy's prior identification with a mother who stood for the Caribbean female does not represent her expectations anymore.

Lucy's mother was a perfect example of female subordination, a woman devoted to her family; she served her husband: "My mother was devoted to him. She was devoted to her duties: a clean house, delicious food for us, a clean yard, a small garden of herbs and vegetables, the washing and ironing of our clothes" (126). Lucy

could see that Mariah's life, which seemed to be perfect, was also centered on her marriage: "Mariah did not know that Lewis was not in love with her anymore. It was not the sort of thing she could imagine. She could imagine the demise of the fowl of the air, fish in the sea, mankind itself, but not that the only man she ever loved would no longer love her" (81). In Lucy's criticism, she sees the flaws of these two women in letting their marriages weaken their lives, for they did not have other goals besides taking care of their husbands and children; they should be taking care of themselves.

Lucy finds inspiration for rebellion in Peggy, a girl about her age: "She couldn't wait to get away from her family, she said; they were a bunch of absolutely nothing. How I envied the contempt in her voice, for I could see that her family held no magic over her" (91). Lucy identifies with Peggy's similar interests in becoming free from family bonds. She recognizes that Peggy's family was different from hers, because they did not seem to affect her life. Lucy, on the contrary, was running away from the strong ties that connected her to her family.

After moving in with Peggy, their differences become more obvious: "In the less than twenty-four hours we had been together under the same roof. Our differences had been piling up […]. How am I going to get out of this?—the thought was welling up inside me, but I quickly placed a big rock on top of it" (154-155). Peggy represents another mode of female identification for Lucy, and during a period of time, inspires Lucy. Although Peggy is rebellious, her identification is rejected when Lucy recognizes that they have different objectives in life. Thus, the attempt Lucy makes to identify with other female figures in the narrative is a visible search for identity.

Although Lucy seeks to identify with Mariah and Peggy, her mother constitutes the strongest person in Lucy's life. Lucy loves her mother's characteristics that bring strength, whereas she hates all the flaws of her mother, who constantly

remind her of her own origins. For this reason, their relationship is based on contradictory feelings of love and hate:

> It was not from feelings of love and longing that I did this; quite the contrary. It was from a feeling of hatred. There was nothing so strange about this, for isn't it so that love and hate exist side by side? Each letter was a letter from someone I had loved at one time without reservation. (20)

Unfortunately, Lucy is not capable of dealing with the ambivalent feelings towards her mother.

As discussed before, Lucy's already planned rupture with her mother happens when she leaves home. In the US, Lucy maintains the desire of creating a new life for herself. Her first step towards the construction of identity is the rejection of her mother's authority, which resembles colonial authority. For this reason, Lucy intends to create her own self and to become an autonomous subject.

3.2 - Self-fashioning: the encounter between Lucy and authority

Lucy may be seen as a version of *bildungsroman*, since the narrative advances portraying the protagonist as a heroine: Lucy, a poor Caribbean au pair, who comes from the "fringes of the world" with the "mantle of a servant" (*L*: 95), decides to overcome difficulties in the imperial US in order to be "somebody". Lucy is not sure about her future, and, in a rebellious act, decides to create a new life for herself. As Lucy seeks other female role models, which fail her expectation, Lucifer remains the strongest figure of rebellion in the narrative. Kincaid constructs Lucy's image as a subversive young woman; firstly by rejecting her mother's authority, and secondly by acting like Lucifer, the protagonist achieves a counter discourse in which her anger for

being a subaltern is always expressed through the negation of everything that is considered to be right.

In *Renaissance Self-fashioning* the historian Stephen Greenblatt analyzes the constructions of the subject from More to Shakespeare, taking into account these writers' historical contexts. Greenblatt coined the term "self-fashioning", which refers to the creation of the self:

> As a term for the action or process of making, for particular features or appearance, for a distinct style or pattern, the word had been long in use, but it is in the sixteenth century that *fashion* seems to come into wide currency as a way of designating the forming of the self. […] But, more significantly for our purposes, fashioning may suggest the achievement of a less tangible shape: a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving. (1982:2)

Kincaid addresses different people through her protagonist's personality; thus, I discuss Lucy's self-fashioning in order to analyze her journey towards empowerment as a writer. As previously discussed, Lucy rebels against figures of authority—the British queen, the mother, and the motherland—and chooses to become a female version of Lucifer. She refuses the meaning of Lucifer's name as "light-bearer", and prefers its meaning after his fall: "enemy" or "adversary" in Hebrew[4]. Lucy, then, gets to be extremely rebellious as she imitates Lucifer's attitudes in order to acquire power. However, as discussed in chapter II, Lucy identifies with the hostile character of *Paradise Lost*, and may be in danger of imitating the same mode of authority she wants to attack.

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[4] Information available at < http://www.paradiselost.org/5-cast.html > access on 26 September 2005

Through the use of a "bad" character, Lucy achieves a strong persona that authorizes her counter-discourse and points towards her new identity. Lucy behaves as a brave girl, as when she was in a dark, uncared, and full of trash neighborhood, she states: "None of this frightened me; on the contrary, I found it quite thrilling" (96). She accepts the fate of a fallen angel, which shapes her into a bold person. According to Althusser's essay on "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", subjects are ideologically constructed, thus, "interpellated (called into being) within ideologies and that this is inescapable; that is, that we become conscious under the power of construction resident in imaginary subjection". Michel Pêcheux, following Althusser's proposition, analyzes the discourse of the subject in the fields of semantics and linguistics. He argues that subjects are constructed in three forms: the "good" subjects, the "bad," and through "disindentification". According to Pêcheux, "the second mode produces 'Bad' subjects who result from 'counter-identification'; they refuse the image offered and turn it back on the offerer" (quoted in Ashcroft, 1989: 170). I relate Pêcheux's proposition of "bad" subject to Lucy, since she refuses the options her mother and the British colonial society offer her; however, as she fights these authorities, Lucy remains locked within a search for power which in her view will lead her to an identity of her own.

In order to refuse the authority of the Other, Lucy carries "two-facedness" as her mark. When a child, in school, she had to recite a poem: "I was then at the height of my two-facedness: that is, outside false, inside true" (18). Thus, Lucy's inner self is the opposite of what her mother or the British education had taught her to be; thus, she shows a self which is in conflict. When she meets Paul, she explains her "two-facedness":

> I said, "How are you?" in a small, proper voice, the voice of the girl my mother had hoped I would be: clean, virginal, beyond reproach. But I felt the opposite of that, for when he held my hand and kissed me on the cheek, I felt instantly deliciously strange; I wanted to be naked in a bed with him. (97)

She greets Paul: outside what her mother had intended her to be, inside how she really felt— a female Lucifer. According to Greenblatt, this encounter between that which brings authority and a subversive power is one of the necessary steps for the process of self-fashioning:

> [S]elf-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss. (1980:9)

Lucy's mother acts as the authority; on the other hand, Lucy's personification of Lucifer functions as the alien. The rebellious and subversive feelings Lucy has require her to choose a position and act accordingly, and eventually she dismisses her mother's teachings and follows the subversive power within herself. Walter comments:

> Obliged to memorize and recite Wordsworth's poem "I wandered Lonely as a Cloud," Lucy begins to wear a mask that undermines her British education […] This mask, I want to argue, can be seen as a de- and rearticulation of Du Boisian "veil," a translation of "double-conscience' into double-vision. (2001:461)

Walter explores the "veil", a concept used by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* regarding the African American experience. Du Bois's veil is related to his experience as a Negro in the intellectual world:

> After the Egyptian and the Indian, the Greek and the Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (1982:45)

Like DuBois's Negro, Lucy is in the position of exclusion as a young woman, coming from a colonized world, wearing "the mantle of a servant". For this reason, Lucy wears her own mask, a substitute for the Du Boisian "veil", which protects her from a world that is not fully known to her during childhood and early adolescence; nonetheless she refuses to see this world through the eyes of the colonizer or white American society. Lucy's mask does not impede her own vision; on the contrary, it hides her feelings of revolt and non-conformity during a time when she was powerless in face of the life she had as a colonized subject. Later, Lucy reveals the same feelings, as she is an immigrant, a former au pair who has not decided yet what to do with her life: "I was numb, but it was from not knowing just what this new life would hold for me" (144).

As Lucy refuses to become what her family and society expected from her, she looks forward to becoming a different person, whom she does not know yet. A desire to put the past behind controls her thoughts as she states, after reading another of

her mother's letters: "The object of my life now was to put as much distance between myself and the events mentioned in her letter as I could manage" (31). Then, Lucy rejects all the memories the letters from her mother bring to her, which represents a refusal of her mother's love:

> I thought of opening the letters, not to read them but to burn them at the four corners and send them back to her unread. It was an act, I had read somewhere, of one lover rejecting another, but I could not trust myself to go too near them. I knew that if I read only one, I would die from longing for her. (91)

In "Technologies of the Self", Foucault analyzes Alcebiades's rejection of his admirers during adolescence: "Earlier, he had rejected them all in the bloom of his beauty because he wanted to be the dominant, not dominated. He did not wish to be dominated in youth, but now he wants to dominate others" (quoted in Martin; Gutman; Hutton, 1988:24). In general terms, Lucy is afraid of loving and of becoming subjected to love for she provides the explanations for not being in love with Hugh (Dinah's brother): "If I enjoyed myself beyond anything I had known so far, it must have been because such a long time had passed since I had been touched in that way by anyone; it must have been because I was so far from home. I was not in love" (66-67). Lucy shows her desire to be independent as she insists that the reasons for her happiness do not depend on another person's love.

After Lucy's arrival in the US, she writes home to say how beautiful everything was even though she felt the opposite:

> I wrote home to say how lovely everything was, and I used flourishing words and phrases, as if I were living life in a greeting card—the kind that has a satin ribbon on it, and quilted hearts and

roses, and is expected to be so precious to the person receiving it that the manufacturer has placed a leaf of plastic on the front to protect it." (10-11)

Lucy's letter was fashioned in order to pretend that her life was perfect; the "flourishing words and phrases" were used on purpose to show how wonderful life was, and as beautiful as a greeting card, so that her family and friends could see how safe and happy Lucy is in a superior condition abroad.

Later, she writes to her family again, and explains: "Not too long before, out of politeness, I had written my mother a very nice letter, I thought, telling her about the first ride I had taken in an underground train" (20). By using the term "out of politeness", Lucy refuses the purpose of family letters, which is to bring comfort to the loved ones, indicating that Lucy deliberately wants to convince her mother that she is very happy away from her, and she is not homesick. In fact, Lucy treats her mother as a stranger, as she has to be polite, and instead of telling the truth about her feelings, she reveals hypocrisy. Lucy despises her mother's advice expressed in the first letters she receives:

She wrote back to me, and after I read her letter, I was afraid to even put my face outside the door. The letter was filled with detail after detail of horrible and vicious things she had read or heard about that had taken place on those very same underground trains on which I traveled. (20,21)

Lucy becomes very critical of her mother's remarks, for her care means that even away she tries to control Lucy's life, to imprison her. Lucy's dreams contribute to her unconscious sensation that she might be in prison; for instance, the dream she had during her first night at Lewis and Mariah's apartment:

I felt compelled to know where this nightgown came from, and I started to examine it furiously, looking for the label. I found it just where a label usually is, in the back, and it read "Made in Australia."[…] As I opened my eyes, the word "Australia" stood between our faces, and I remembered then that Australia was settled as a prison for bad people, people so bad that they couldn't be put in prison in their own country. (*L*: 9)

Again, she realizes that she might be a bad girl who had to be sent away to a cold and distant place, where the good opportunities she sought in life would continuously be denied to her. The construction of the character's identity as a possibly bad person continues as Lucy has another dream in which she falls into a hole: "Eventually I fell down a hole, at the bottom of which were some silver and blue snakes" (14). This hole filled with snakes alludes to hell, as Lucy is unconsciously afraid of what the future holds for her.

Lucy had been constantly having the same dream in which her mother gives her a present: "I did not know what the present itself was, but it was something that would make me exceedingly happy; the only trouble was that it lay at the bottom of a deep, murky pool, and no matter how much water I bailed out I always woke up before I got to the bottom" (87). This dream may indicate that Lucy feels that, deep inside, her mother loves her, and wants her to be happy. But as this love is unattainable, the only gift Lucy seems to imagine is freedom: "I understood finding the place you are born in an unbearable prison and wanting something completely different from what you are familiar with, knowing it represents a haven" (95). Lucy wants to be free from her condition as a servant; she dreams of freedom from her present too: "I began to feel like a dog on a leash, a long leash but a leash all the same" (110). Then, Lucy defies

authority in order to become free and fashion her own self. Lucy's story mirrors Kincaid's own encounter with colonial authority, in which she talks back to colonial education in order to fashion herself into a writer.

3.3 - The Discovery of Art: a new beginning

In the chapters "Lucy" and "Cold Heart", Lucy spends most of her time discussing art, and inspired by the photographs she had seen in a museum she discovers that the artists were unique people who stood on the margins just as she would like to be; however, the margins evoke not her situation of inferiority that was due to her origins but a dignified life as a rebellious artist.

Lucy identifies with male heroes, like the French painter whose life was marked by rebellion against "an establishment order he had found corrupt; and even though he was doomed to defeat—he died an early death—he had the perfume of the hero about him." Lucy connects this painter's life to her own and concludes: "I was not a man; I was a young woman from the fringes of the world…" (95). Artists were mostly men, and Lucy decided to be part of the group, which informs her choice of disrupting the gender roles assigned to females: "It seemed to be a position that allowed for irresponsibility, so perhaps it was much better suited to men—like the man whose painting hung in the museum that I liked to visit" (98). In Lucy's opinion, artists were very different from the wealthy people who caused others to suffer:

> And I thought, I am not an artist, but I shall always like to be with the people who stand apart. I had just begun to notice that people who knew the correct way to do things such as hold a teacup, put food on a fork and bring it to their mouth without making a mess

on the front of their dress—they were the people responsible for the most misery, the people least likely to end up insane or paupers. (*L*: 98)

As Lucy is in the process of building a new life, she defines herself by what she is not: "I am not a man", "I was not a Briton", and "I am not an artist". Hall explains: "it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what is not, to precisely what it lacks" that identity can be constructed (1996: 4). Thus, in order to articulate her identity she imitates others as if she were trying these different selves. After meeting Paul, who was also a painter, Lucy decides to take up photography as a probable career. She starts to see the prospects of art; therefore, she undergoes a process of self-construction in order to become an artist.

Through the lenses of a camera, she discovers that art provides a much more interesting result than "real life": "Why is a picture of something real eventually more exciting than the thing itself. I did not yet know the answer to that" (121). Here, by posing the question, Lucy tries to understand life. Then, she decides to change the fact that she is not an artist yet, and tries to imitate the art she sees in the books and comes out with something completely different: "I was trying to imitate the mood on the photographs in the book Mariah had given me, and though in that regard I failed completely, I was pleased with them all the same" (120). By trying to imitate "the mood on the photographs", Lucy reveals herself as a critical observer, and creates something new that pleases her as she re-invents her life through observing the world and "making a note of" it (48). Lucy declares:

But the things I could not see about myself, the things I could not put my hands on—those things had changed, and I did not yet know them well. I understood that I was inventing myself, and

> that I was doing this more in the way of a painter than in the way of a scientist. I could not count on intuition. I did not have anything exactly in my mind, but when the picture was complete I would know. I did not have position, I did not have money at my disposal. I had memory, I had anger, I had despair. (*L*: 134)

Lucy desires freedom from the past that haunts her and also from the present that impedes her to finally become an artist.

Lucy reveals that she intends to change her life "in the way of a painter"; however, she must work hard on her development because she will only know her self-creation when the picture is complete. As Lucy develops the pictures, she also develops her life: she evolves from the servant to the artist. The act of inventing herself, and acting through this self is her only tool to resist and obtain power since she did not have position or money. As the process of copying photographs develops, the results please Lucy as well as the changes in her life, for she had turned out completely different from what she had in mind: by imitating other artists, she became an artist. Lucy's life has been an attempt to be something other than the Caribbean who spoke English, behaved like the British, had a British education, but was not British.

In acting her life in an attempt to become different, Lucy plays the role of a performer. Carlson explains the difference between doing and performing: "we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them, this introduces a consciousness that gives them the quality of performance" (2004: 70). Thus, Lucy's self-creation is achieved through a rebellious doubleness—the inside different from the outside—that is typical of a performer. After trying many different selves, Lucy finally imitates Lucifer by rebelling against being a nice girl servant from the islands. Lucy explains how her identity had changed: her physical appearance had changed little, but inside she was in a

process of enormous change, which would later reflect on her career and life in general, as she states "The person I had become I did not know very well" (133).

Lucy decides she has to keep making new beginnings: "It was January again; the world was thin and pale and cold again; I was making a new beginning again" (133). The repetition of "again" shows Lucy's effort to change her life: "I was now having the life I had always wanted to live. I was living apart from my family in a place where no one knew even my name, and I was free more or less to come and go as pleased me" (158). For the first time Lucy seems free to depart in search of new beginnings and conscious that she would have to continually recreate herself.

The act of beginning again brings a renewal, a kind of rebirth Lucy needs to face the world, and, most importantly, to face herself as this new girl, so different from the one who had arrived a year before. At twenty years of age, and entering adulthood, Lucy decides that it is time for a change, but she keeps the gifts Mariah had given her for Christmas, especially the books which were Lucy's treasure, and a sign of her new life:

> The New Year came, and I was going somewhere new again. […] I had a camera and prints of photographs I had taken, prints I had made myself. But mostly I had books—so many books, and they were mine; I would not have to part with them. It had always been a dream of mine to just own a lot of books, to never part with a book once I had read it. So there they were, resting nicely in small boxes—my own books, the books that I had read. (*L*: 143)

The importance of literature in Lucy's life is so intense that she perceives her life as an unwritten book: "Around the time I was leaving her for the life I now led, I had said to

her that my life stretched out ahead of me like a book of blank pages" (163). Lucy has the need to write her own story in these blank pages. At the end of the narrative, Lucy feels empty as she starts to write and confesses: "I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it" (164). At this recognition, Lucy cries, and her tears make the words become "one great big blur" (164). This indicates her unresolved love-hate bond to her mother and to her friends. However, Lucy may heal her wounds through writing. As Cherrie Moraga states: " All writing is hunger. The longing to be known fully and still loved" (1994:305). Lucy misses being loved and accepted by those close to her.

Lucy has to make choices in life in order to write her story. This fact reveals that self-fashioning continues as a constant re-shaping of her life as a West Indian woman in the white world. Lucy writes her full name in the blank page, a name she used to dislike: "Lucy Josephine Potter". As she signs it, the recognition of who she is rushes over, which may indicate that Lucy is ready to create a new beginning. In the impossibility of identifying with other people, she turns to her name, which represents her identity with all her flaws and her sorrowful past. Lucy examines her past and explains: "I had begun to see the past like this: there is a line; you can draw it yourself, or sometimes it gets drawn for you. Your past is the person you no longer are, the situations you are no longer in" (137). Finally, Lucy perceives that she is not the only person responsible for the writing of her story.

Kincaid's journey is very similar to Lucy's, and curiously, it reflects the way in which Kincaid chose to talk back to figures of authority through writing. When, at the end of the novel, Lucy moves out from Lewis and Mariah's apartment, and sends her mother a letter with the wrong address on it, revealing Lucy's final step towards a physical and psychological separation; a situation that resembles Kincaid's choices as she decided to live in the US. By putting the past behind, Lucy moves on to create a life

different from the one her mother had planned for her; thus, Lucy is free to become a writer.

Conclusion

> I write these words to bear witness to the primacy of struggle in any situation of domination (even within family life), to the strength and power that emerges from sustained resistance, and the profound conviction that these forces can be healing, can protect us from dehumanization and despair.
>
> bell hooks, *Talking Back*

Jamaica Kincaid's writing back to figures of authority operates within the powerful Eurocentric discourse culturally represented by literature. Through her counter-narratives, Kincaid's discourse is leveled with the British imperialistic discourse, and by resisting the universal truth offered by colonialist ideology, she is able to argue against the essentialist construction of colonial subjects as submissive and voiceless. In *A Small Place* and *Lucy*, Kincaid conceives her counter-discourse by denouncing the abuses of power in the Caribbean, and by rejecting the female passivity inscribed in Caribbean culture, which is articulated by a mother figure—disempowered by Empire—unable to talk back.

Kincaid was educated like many other "children of Empire" through the reading of English classics and the Bible; and by appropriating these narratives, she deals with "the mission of Empire," which intended to obliterate the natives' cultural identity. Kincaid was able to flee herself from the oppressive colonization, and in order to become a writer in the US, she had to make her way into the American world of opportunities denied to minorities. In spite of difficulties, she has become a successful writer, who exposes her views not only on the problems of Antigua and, in a broader sense, the Caribbean, but also on the plight and the advantages of migration. In *A Small Place*, Kincaid's powerful narrative shows the reader—either European or American

tourists, and to a lower extent, Antiguans—how deceitful Western discourse can be: "It seems to me that they [white people] are only behaving the way they have behaved because they are in positions of power that enable them to get away with such behaviour" (Birbalsingh, 1996:140).

In *Lucy*, the unresolved relationship between the protagonist and the mother is far from being solved, reflecting Kincaid's unstable relation with the Antiguans who refuse to "talk back". As a hybrid writer, Kincaid occupies a position from which she is able to voice her own discontent towards a male dominant society both in Antigua and in the US. The rebellious 60s influenced Kincaid towards a search for women's dignified space in society—in *Lucy*, for instance, the protagonist narrator resists the roles ascribed to her in both Antiguan and American societies. Thus, Kincaid resists these forces by arguing against the dominant discourse, and by inscribing her own cultural identity. However, this (re)writing of identity is achieved through the negotiation between Kincaid's African roots and her colonial educational upbringing.

Through writing, she is able to deconstruct the historical Caribbean subject, whose identity is constructed through the eyes of the colonizer—the "gaze of the Other." Therefore, Kincaid rejects the objectification of her people, and claims for a (re)construction of identity in which the binary master/servant is obliterated. Antiguans do not have to take the burden of slavery and remain silenced. On the contrary, by looking back they should act in order to change their reality. And Kincaid's angry discourse has the potential to disturb hegemonic discourse in her Caribbean paradise.

Kincaid's Lucy reflects a dissident position, as her counter-narrative is imbued with anger towards her lost paradises. This rebellion is well portrayed in her identification with Lucifer, from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, who is known as the first historical dissenter. Lucy's revolt against her paradise can be compared to Lucifer's

rebellion in *Paradise Lost*; thus, her novel *Lucy* portrays Kincaid's own search for power in order to create her discourse, and consequently, a new identity as a Caribbean writer. However, Kincaid loses another paradise: her mother's love, a paradise embodying her search for acceptance and recognition by Antiguans and her family. Kincaid's paradises are intertwined in *Lucy*, which shows the love/hate ambivalent relationship towards the mother, and the anger towards the motherland, Antigua, in *A Small Place*. Thus, at the end of this work I can conclude that Kincaid loses only one paradise, which represents both the dispossession of land and love. According to Simmons, "the two forms of loss—the lost mother love, the lost home and freedom— are clearly linked for Kincaid" (1998); thus, the need to (re)construct this paradise seems to be a constant task in her life, which is due to the fact that it seems to be a paradise of the mind, only "wishful thinking".

Through the encounter with figures of authority in Lucy's paradises, Kincaid portrays the girl's painful self-discovery: she is not the only person responsible for her fashioning of identity. Stephen Greenblat, in the conclusion of *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, stated about his work: "But as my work progressed, I perceived that fashioning oneself and being fashioned by cultural institutions—family, religion, state—were inseparably intertwined" (1980: 256). As I direct this study towards a conclusion, Greenblatt's recognition perfectly fits my understanding that Kincaid's encounter with figures of authority has shaped her personal life, and her career as a writer. And, this same recognition permeates her ambivalent feelings towards the British, as she points out: "That brings me back to the feeling that you can't denounce or hate people, because you get all sorts of things from all sorts of people. Included in the bad things you get some good things too" (Birbalsingh, 1996: 148). Kincaid's

sorrowful past is essential for her positioning, as a post-colonial writer, in relation to colonization.

As Cruz comments, "the post-colonial predicament is having to choose between two worlds that embody his self" (1998: 26). However, Kincaid's dilemma is related not to the impossible act of choosing—she knows that "this wrong can never be made right" (*SP*: 32)—but to her own predicament as the result of the encounter of these two worlds. Kincaid presents the unchangeable past; on the other hand, she points to a direction which shows that the past could be used positively in order to affect the future.

Through *Lucy* Kincaid is able to picture her own progress: she rises from the position not only of a voiceless female under colonization to the position of a writer but also of a migrant woman who had to leave behind "the mantle of a servant", which she was born with, in order to conquer her own place in the white world. Thus, as in Lucy's journey, Kincaid is able to discover her potential by negotiating with the past in Antigua which together with her experiences abroad have formed her identity:

> I know what I had to leave behind when I began to write, and when I began to look at what I was facing as a writer. I had to come to terms with where I came from—who I was. I had to face the little I came from. However benighted or low it was, it was mine; I would be nothing if I hated it. (Birbalsingh, 1996: 139,140)

Lucy mirrors Kincaid's ambivalent position as a victim of colonization, her rebellious quest for independence from the attachments with her past, and the search for autonomy. In order to fashion her identity towards a new beginning, Lucy looks back,

Greenblatt recognizes that the past plays a very important role on self-fashioning, as he cites Marx:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past. (1980: 209-210)

In an attempt to voice her discontent regarding her colonial upbringing, Kincaid summons the past; but instead of focusing on it, in *Lucy* she brings these memories to the girl's present in order to make her move on towards a future of self-creation where, through rebellious attitudes, she tries to revolutionize her life.

Thus, Kincaid, in order to accomplish her own discourse of power, fashions her self as the intellectual who enters the world of writing through the resistance to dominant discourse. Although Kincaid refuses the goal of British education, which has tried to fashion her into a submissive colonized, she writes back to figures of authority responsible for shaping her mother/land into a subaltern.

Through the acceptance of her origins, Kincaid brings the past and present together in her narratives in order to negotiate with a prior identity that was initially refused. Thus, through writing, Kincaid (re)constructs her own story as a Caribbean, and her identity as a writer is fashioned as well.

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