

Writing the Caribbean: A Special Cluster

Producing the Colonial Subject: Romantic Pedagogy and Mimicry in Jamaica Kincaid's Writing

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Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge: it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare has said of man, 'that he looks before and after.' He is the rock of defence [sic] of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of landscape and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. (Wordsworth "Preface" 259)

It is out of season to question at this time of day, the original policy of a conferring on every colony of the British Empire a mimic representation of the British Constitution. But if the creature so endowed has sometimes forgotten its real significance and under the fancied importance of speakers and maces, and all the paraphernalia and ceremonies of the imperial legislature, has dared to defy the mother country, she has to thank herself for the folly of conferring such privileges on a condition of society that has no earthly claim to so exalted a position. A fundamental principle appears to have been forgotten or overlooked in our system of colonial policy—that of colonial dependence. To give a colony the forms of independence is a mockery; she would not be a colony for a single hour if she could maintain an independent station. (Cust qtd. in Bhabha 85)

Still holding me close to her, she said, in a voice that raked
across my skin, “It doesn’t matter what you do or where you go,
I’ll always be your mother and this will always be your home.”
(Kincaid *Annie John* 147)

The intersection of two vectors, the effects of colonial education on Antiguan society and the effects of a mother’s love on her daughter, lies at the heart of Jamaica Kincaid’s body of writing.¹ Kincaid scholars, however, encounter the persistent problem of how to theorize the relationship of these two forces: the public colonial education that connotes largeness and the political, and the small, private and individualized mother-daughter relationship.² This article draws a connection between Kincaid’s critiques of colonial pedagogy and her abiding concern over mother-daughter relationships by arguing that these two themes mirror each other through their common origin in the imposition of a mimetic subjectivity.

I chose the epigraphs above to suggest the “binding” nature of Romantic poetry, colonial discourse, and Kincaid’s representations of colonial mothering all share claims to authority that are based on an assertion of knowledge about the subjectivity of the other. These three central modes of Kincaid’s discourse claim the primacy of the dependence of the “vast Empire of human society” (259), the colonized state, and the colonial child on the mother(land) by defining the relationship in terms of permanence and inevitability because it is warranted by the other’s condition. In Kincaid’s first novel, *Annie John*, the mother can no more imagine her children as independent subjects than Sir Edward Cust can imagine the colonies able to govern their own affairs as independent nations. Kincaid’s novels, *Anne John* and *Lucy*, depict a profound ambivalence in the mother-daughter relationship that stems from the mother’s desire to impose her own subjectivity onto the child. Kincaid twins this theme with the view that the canonical Romantic poetry taught in colonial classrooms is fundamentally connected to the ideologies of colonial control. Reading the linkages of these themes reveals that the destructive power of both stems from an imposition of a way of seeing the world on the child’s subjectivity.

It should be emphasized at the outset that this investigation involves a particular subset of Romantic poetry which celebrates the canonical male Romantic poet's subjectivity because this is the body of works against which Kincaid's characters react and rebel. While my thinking about Romanticism have certainly been influenced by the work of feminist and postcolonial scholars, which has broadened the aesthetic definition of Romanticism, these new interpretations are not part of the canon Kincaid uses intertextually in her writing.³ The ongoing re-invention of Romantic studies encompasses both seemingly apolitical poems, as well as Romanticism's complementary interest in alienation, marginalization, revolution, and social outcasts. Those Romantic works that celebrate the poetic imagination and the consolidation of the self through nature, usually taught as part of the literary canon, comprise the subject of this article.

In the first section I perform an analysis of the ideologies I have termed "Romantic pedagogy," and stress their importance in the formation of colonial subjectivity. Let me now define exactly what I mean by "Romantic pedagogy" or "Romantic subjectivity." In describing the texts studied in the colonial schoolroom as well as the discourses surrounding the education of the subaltern subject as "Romantic," I mean to invoke the inscription in the writings of a new form of subjectivity which came into being in the early nineteenth century. This new discursive self foregrounded its abilities as a subject who views and experiences. Marlon Ross states that the "Romantics . . . help prepare England for its imperial destiny. They help teach the English to universalize the experience of 'I' . . . to organize the universe by celebrating the universal validity of parochial English values" (31). The reason behind the appeal of Romantic poetry to colonial educators lies, I believe, in what Jerome McGann calls an essential aspect of canonical Romanticism: it works hard to hide its ideology behind a facade of seemingly apolitical topics. McGann notes, "the poetry of Romanticism is everywhere marked by extreme forms of displacement and poetic conceptualization whereby the actual human issues with the poetry is concerned are resituated in a variety of idealized localities" (1). Until recently, canonical Romantic poems as they were read and taught were distinguished by their ability

to hide their ideological content while consciously attempting to shape the consciousness of the reader.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, wrote of his wish to “reduce all knowledge into harmony,” exemplifying some of the universalizing tendencies in canonical Romanticism to which I have referred (138).⁴ While individual systems of knowledge may have value, for Coleridge they are merely “isolated fragments of truth” which need to be united by an overarching history of human achievement (138). Coleridge, like Wordsworth, privileges the poet as a universalized viewing subject who collects and disseminates knowledge. Children need to mimic such a subject in order to develop their own intellects:

Impulse and power should be given to the intellect, and the ends of a moral being be exhibited. For this object thus much is effected by works of imagination—that they carry the mind out of self, and show the possible of the good and great in the human character. The height, whatever it may be, of the imaginative standard will do no harm; we are commanded to imitate one who is inimitable. (“Education” 401)

This passage by Coleridge sounds remarkably like writings by those in charge of British colonial education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both Coleridge’s theories, and British colonial educational writings advocate the amalgamation of knowledge produced around the world, while at the same time ensuring a hierarchical relationship between knowledge produced abroad and at home. They call for the child or colonial subject to imitate “the height . . . of imaginative standard” which is, of course, a subjectivity created by the English. If Coleridge propounded the theory, it was Wordsworth who created an innovative method of representing the self. His work played a role in the development of imperialism and modernity and should be seen as more than merely a poetic innovation. According to Saree Makdisi:

What is driving Wordsworth’s nature poetry is not an interest in what Blake would call raw or “vegetable” nature as such, but rather his obsession with a new mode of vision and above all

a new mode of subjectivity to which that vision is tied. What Wordsworth is elaborating here is a way of viewing and controlling the world: a new way of imagining and representing and even producing the whole world from the standpoint of a solitary observing subject. This form of visuality is the mode of production of the bourgeois subject, who is in turn the key framing element—the primary ideological and cultural focal point, a cultural episteme of power—of the whole project of modern imperialism. Without such a focal point, modern imperialism simply would not have worked, or it would have taken what would be to us, its inheritors, an utterly unrecognizable form. (67–68)

Makdisi argues that without this revolution in literary subjectivity, the colonial enterprise would not have succeeded, or would have been at the least very different, because Wordsworth's revolution in seeing made possible the ethnocentrism necessary for imperial ideology.⁵ Wordsworth's poetry normalized a mode of writing that now seems unremarkable: that of the individual consciousness imposing its view on the reader. It is, of course, paradoxical that an individual poet's subjectivity was powerful enough to be thought of as a "universal" expression of national identity, but that is how Wordsworth came to be seen in the later nineteenth century.⁶

In contrast to Makdisi's investigation of the role Wordsworthian viewpoint played in the development of imperial ideology in the metropole, I am more interested in how the adoption of this view point in the colonies constructs postcolonial subjectivity as it is represented in the works of Jamaica Kincaid. Texts that use this new model of authorial subjectivity were handpicked for use in colonial education. These literary texts allow for the dissemination of not merely Eurocentric values, but of a new way of observing the world from the viewpoint of a detached observer sorting through impressions "recollected in tranquility" to produce a vision of the world that replicates the viewpoint of the colonizer. They teach English aesthetics, values, and language. The role Romantic poems play in colonial education, especially the lyric poem "Daffodils,"

as I will discuss in the first section, and Coleridge's poem "This Lime-Tree Bower" as I will discuss in the second section, is merely a smaller representation of this larger concept of poetry as a primer for Romantic subjectivity in Kincaid's work.⁷ In the reading that follows, I will foreground the effects of the popularization of "Romantic" subjectivity as a model to make sense of the world.

This new way of thinking about canonical Romantic poetry as enabling the colonial enterprise provides insight into the connection between Kincaid's colonial education in Romantic poetry and her characters' intersubjectivity with their mothers. I build on this analysis in the second section to illustrate the parallels Kincaid draws between daughters' and colonized peoples' attempts to separate from their mother(lands). The ruptures produced by colonial education have their corollary in the rupture between mother and daughter in Kincaid's novels. Rather than seeing the struggles between Kincaid's female characters and their mothers as "universal," I argue that their colonial subjectivity always co-exists with their status as daughters. This analysis produces a new understanding of the ways in which the Romantic subjectivity propagated in the colonial classroom continues to construct the colonial subject even after political independence from Britain.

I. Romantic Poetry as Colonial Discourse

Kincaid's *Lucy*, like other Caribbean writings, identifies Romantic poetry, specifically Wordsworth's poem "Daffodils," as a manifestation of cultural imperialism.⁸ The protagonist, Lucy, remembers her recitation of "Daffodils" when she was a pupil of Queen Victoria's Girls' School in the Caribbean. Lucy comments that this act of memorization and declamation marked "the height of my two-facedness: that is, outside I seemed one way, inside I was another; outside false, inside true" (18). This poetic performance intensifies Lucy's split subjectivity, causing in her a kind of Du Boisian double consciousness.

For Lucy, speaking Wordsworth's words within the context of the colonial school makes manifest the splitting of reality that is inherent in colonial discourse, as Homi Bhabha tells us in a familiar passage: "two attitudes towards external reality persist; one takes reality into considera-

tion while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates 'reality' as mimicry" (91). Lucy's double consciousness highlights her interpellation as the colonized school child who is praised for how she "nicely . . . pronounced every word . . . placed just the right amount of special emphasis in places where it was needed, and how proud the poet, now long dead, would have been to hear his words ringing out of [her] mouth" (18). While receiving praise for her mastery of Wordsworth's poem, Lucy remembers that "inside I was making a vow to erase from my mind, line by line, every word of that poem" (18).

What is so wrong with this poem? How could a seemingly simple poem about a man's ennui tempered by the memory of flowers come to stand in for the indignities of imperial education? Why should this poem, of all the English poems taught in the imperial curriculum, become an actor in a horror story that is repeated throughout the empire? How does this poem about a flower become, as Kincaid writes in *Lucy*, a narrative where daffodils are "cast in a scene . . . of brutes masquerading as angels and angels portrayed as brutes" (30)? By understanding the Romantic ideology contained within this poem and the reason it was used in colonial classrooms, we can go beyond a simplistic critique of the foreignness of the flower as the main reason for its negative associations in the memories of the formerly colonized.

To think of "Daffodils" as colonialist discourse may seem like a huge leap, since the poem is neither thematically about colonialism, nor did Wordsworth intend it to be used as such. "Daffodils" is colonial discourse by virtue of the way it was used. The lessons of colonial education include the ambivalence integral to colonial discourse, where the colonized subject is offered the possibility of becoming like, but not the same, as the colonizer. As Bhabha suggests, colonialist discourse's "predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a 'subject peoples' through the production of knowledges" that "construe[s] the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis or racial origin, in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction" (70). I want to emphasize that the rhetoric of colonial education, like other colonial discourses, contains this same ambivalence, this same splitting of the subject, since this is a major legacy of the use

of Romantic pedagogy. Secondly, it is crucial to note that critics of colonial education and cultural imperialism have traditionally understood them as an imposition of culturally unfamiliar or inappropriate subject matter, rather than as a conditioning of subjectivity.

I will start with this second contention. Many critics point to the inappropriateness of “Daffodils” and other texts of colonial education as stemming from its subject’s unfamiliarity to the children. Alison Donnell writes “The poetic subject (daffodils) signifies the forced adoption of the motherland and the attendant suppression of difference” (50). However, studies of colonial education show that the aim was not necessarily to erase difference, but to create and maintain difference.⁹ Students in colonial schools were never expected to become English, just to mimic the norms of the colonizer on the way to becoming better colonial subjects. This colonial desire, manifested as educational policy, worked to produce colonized subjects trained in English culture but not actually English.

Colonial educators, even in later periods, harnessed Romantic literature’s power to introduce a new subjectivity in order to create colonized subjects who are loyal to the British motherland. During the Victorian period, interest in education at home turned toward the responsibilities of the British nation to its colonies. The Bishop of Antigua, William Walrond Jackson, seemed well versed in Wordsworth’s discourses on the particularly impressionable nature of children as he addressed the London-based “Ladies Society for Education in the West Indies” in 1860:

Childhood is of all seasons the best in which to make impression,—in which they are most readily produced and take the firmest hold upon the mind. And usually, in his tastes and habits, in his modes of thinking and acting, in his moral sentiments and feelings in mature life, the man is very much what the influences exerted upon him in youth, in childhood, even in the nursery and the cradle, were adapted to make him. (12)

Jackson echoes Wordsworth’s “The child is the father of the man” in order to justify an almost arrogant measure of control over the creation of the colonized child’s subjectivity. Not content to teach subjects,

colonial education provides a new subjectivity, a moral framework for the child's outlook on life, creating sympathy within the child for the English way of life.¹⁰ This nineteenth-century creation of the canonical Wordsworth, and the role poetry itself should play in the lives of readers, had a profound impact on the lives of West Indian readers. As Trinidadian historian and Marxist critic C.L.R. James writes of his childhood in the 1930s: "In my youth we lived according to the tenets of Matthew Arnold; we spread sweetness and light, and we studied the best that there was in literature in order to transmit it to the people—as we thought, the poor backward West Indian people" (73). It is not merely the anthologies and the selection of the poems that transmit Englishness through poetic subjectivity, it is a theory on how literature fits into society itself that James recognizes here.

The ideologies of English Romantic poetry functioned pedagogically in West Indian schools of the later twentieth century as well. In a 1963 publication *School Methods with Younger Children: A Handbook for Teachers in the Caribbean* Elsa Walters emphasizes the development of children's aesthetic senses through the memorization and imitation of the Romantic views of poetry, as well as their connection to England through their use of Received Pronunciation. Teachers in the West Indies were told that, "poetry is one of the means by which children may be lead to experience beauty of thought and feeling expressed in words" (Walters 173). However, not all words or languages are acceptable forms of expression:

Children have learned whatever language they know by hearing it; they cannot learn English if they do not hear English spoken. For most children, the teacher's voice is the one he will most often hear speaking English, and the one he will imitate. It is most important, therefore, that every teacher should do all in his power to make his own speech as clear, correct and pleasant as possible. (169)

The teacher must, along with the English poetry, help to divest the children of their patois in order to join the larger English-speaking world. This text uses literature to teach a new subjectivity by "experiencing

beauty of thought and feeling expressed in words” (Walters 173), as well as norms of Englishness. In doing so, *School Methods* joins a host of texts reaching back through the nineteenth century. It is probably not accidental that *School Methods* was adapted from a West African edition put out by the same publisher.

To return to the issue of Romantic pedagogy, it should be noted in passing that the Romantic era has long been associated with an increased interest in the child and in pedagogical theories. One might even say that childhood as it is currently understood in the West is a Romantic invention.¹¹ Wordsworth’s poetry largely concerns itself with childhood subjectivity and its relationship to the creation of adult identity, which manifested itself in the widespread use of his poetry in texts compiled for children within Britain.¹² Romantic poetry, as well as Romantic pedagogy, exerted a powerful influence in the English-speaking colonies.

While the introduction of a foreign flower in the colonial curriculum does indeed signify a kind of cultural imperialism, the traditional critical account does not perform the hermeneutic of this essay in reading “Daffodils” as colonialist discourse. Rather than attributing the splitting of the school-child’s consciousness to the foreign nature of the flower or the linguistic hegemony of the standard English Wordsworth uses, Kincaid suggests in *Lucy* a different way to read the importance of this poem to colonial education: the poem helps train the colonized child to perform a subjectivity in which the experiences and values of the poet become more important than those of the child. This model of romantic pedagogy appeared in many different parts of the British Empire, as Shirley Lim writes remembering her fascination with “Daffodils” as a child in colonial schools in Malaysia: “even at that early age, I knew the image was not central to the poem” (128). Instead Lim remembers that this poem contained within a colonial “schooltext anthology” taught her the “sovereignty” (128) and “supremacy of the subject” (129). The invitation inherent in Romantic poems such as “Daffodils,” asks the reader to see the world through the poet’s eyes, and develops a different kind of subjectivity on the part of the colonized school child.

To understand how the promise of colonial mimicry fails, as well as the gendered and raced implications of this failure, we have to turn

to Kincaid's *Lucy*. The contrast between poetics and lived experiences occurs repeatedly in the novel. When Lucy leaves her home in the West Indies to become a nanny in New York, she encounters her privileged employer, Mariah, a woman whose world is as unblemished and unpoliticized as her relationship to spring and daffodils. Lucy describes photographs of this family as "six yellow-haired heads of various sizes tied together by an unseen string. In the pictures, they smiled out at the world, giving the impression that they found everything in it unbearably wonderful" (12). Mariah's enthusiasm for yellow extends to daffodils, which she wishes to share with Lucy.

The terms in which Mariah describes spring and daffodils are distinctly Romantic, and I would suggest that it is her own training in Romantic subjectivity that makes it possible for her to have an intimacy with nature through its invocation of her childhood.¹³ Mariah's goal, throughout the novel, mirrors those of canonical Romantic poetry insofar as she wants Lucy and her children to occupy the same subject position, "*to see things the way she did*. She wanted us to enjoy [her country house], all its nooks and crannies, all its sweet smells, all its charms just the way she had done as a child" (36 emphasis added):

One morning in early March, Mariah said to me, 'You have never seen spring, have you?' And she did not have to await an answer, for she already knew. She said the word 'spring' as if spring were a close friend, a friend who had dared to go away for a long time and soon would reappear for their passionate reunion. She said, 'Have you ever seen daffodils pushing their way up out of the ground? And when they're in bloom and all massed together, a breeze comes along and makes them do a curtsy to the lawn stretching in front of them. Have you ever seen that? When I see that, I feel so glad to be alive.' And I thought, So Mariah is made to feel alive by some flowers bending in the breeze. How does a person get to be that way? (17)

I have cited this passage at length since it is the phrasing of the invitation as much as the content that is important.¹⁴ Kincaid explicitly con-

nects a Romantic view of nature—an interconnectedness of the self and the natural world—with a suspect ignorance of political realities.

Although Lucy tells Mariah how she was forced to memorize “an old poem” about daffodils and made to declaim it in front of all the pupils at Queen Victoria’s Girls’ School, Mariah cannot grasp the significance of this memory of colonial education. Mariah’s relationship to daffodils, spring, and the natural world has been conditioned by her own schooling in Romantic ideology. Mariah cannot comprehend Lucy’s rejection of a Romantic relationship with nature. This rejection, the novel implies, comes from the character’s consciousness of the natural world as a space of hard physical labor, not as a source of pleasure.

For Wordsworth, daffodils give the poet a moment of happiness when he first encounters them: “I gazed, and gazed, but little thought / What wealth the show to me had brought” (11–12). However, the real payoff for him poetically comes later:

They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils. (15–18)

“Daffodils” expresses that most Romantic of hopes—the delights of the natural world can provide solace when recollected later. It is these exact sentiments that lead the speaker in “Tintern Abbey” to turn to his sister after describing his childhood delight in the outdoors and say:

If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! (144–47)

The “healing thoughts” of the natural world perceived through the eyes of childhood are not accessible to Lucy, not only because of the legacies of slavery, but also because the presentation of this poetic ideology is, for her, inextricably linked to colonial education. She cannot experience the flowers divorced from their context of colonial education anymore than Mariah can comprehend that connection:

I said, '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 she had never considered, a scene of conquered and conquests; a scene of brutes masquerading as angels and angels portrayed as brutes. This woman who hardly knew me loved me, and she wanted me to love this thing—a grove brimming over with daffodils in bloom—that she loved also. Her eyes shrunk back in her head as if they were protecting themselves, as if they were taking a rest after some unexpected hard work. It wasn't her fault, it wasn't my fault. But nothing could change the fact that where she saw beautiful flowers I saw sorrow and bitterness. The same thing could cause us to shed tears, but those tears would not taste the same. We walked home in silence. I was glad to have at last seen what a wretched daffodil looked like. (30)

Clearly it is not the daffodils themselves which infuriate Lucy, but the fact that she was forced "to learn by heart a long poem about some flowers I would not see in real life until I was nineteen" (30). The metropolitan reader takes Mariah's place as "a scene she had never considered," plays out with all of its implications of British conquests. Kincaid uses this passage to name the role the colonized child must play in learning the poem, that of "conquered" and "brute" receiving education and civilization. *Lucy* glosses the tension between the actual poem, and the colonial agenda it has come to represent. Lucy's reaction to seeing actual daffodils is one of rage. She states that she wants "to kill them. I wished that I had an enormous scythe; I would just walk down the path, dragging it alongside me, and I would cut these flowers down at the place where they emerged from the ground" (29). Lucy cannot explain these urges to Mariah: "how could I explain to her the feeling I had about daffodils—that it wasn't exactly daffodils, but that they would do as well as anything else" (29).

This mimicry is the promise held out by Wordsworth's poem—it promises to teach the reader how to experience life as Wordsworth does.

The poem's rearticulation of reality trains the reader to see as Wordsworth sees, and it is this training in mimicry that allow the poem to fit so well into the colonial curriculum. As one of the key poems in Wordsworth's canon, "Daffodils" is didactic, training the reader in how to experience consciousness, to relish the "flash upon that inward eye/ Which is the bliss of solitude" (15–16). The poem demonstrates that an aesthetic experience might not be immediately appreciated: "I gazed, and gazed, but little thought / What wealth the show to me had brought" (11–12). Later it comes to have meaning through the repetition of thought. One can see how such an ideology of displacement and mimicry by insisting that the reader experience the world through the poet's subjectivity does the work outlined by the colonial educators. When Mariah and Lucy pass the freshly plowed fields that Mariah looks forward to as a sign of spring, Lucy says, "Well, thank God I didn't have to do that.' I don't know if she understood what I meant, for in that one statement I meant many different things" (33). As in much of Kincaid's writing, this provocative statement is not elucidated. It is meant to evoke a complex history of slavery, forced agricultural labour and resistance to that labour after emancipation, but its referentiality is left up to the reader.

In a series of provocative essays published in the *New Yorker*, Kincaid elaborates on the distinctions between gaining pleasure from the natural world, botany, and its practical application, agriculture. She explicitly attempts to educate the privileged readership of the *New Yorker* about the connections between gardening, agriculture, and imperialism. As Kincaid notes, the reasons why West Indians might not draw pleasure from plants is a legacy of slavery:

And yet the people of Antigua have a relationship to agriculture that does not please them at all. Their very arrival on this island had to do with the forces of agriculture. When they (we) were brought to this island from Africa a few hundred years ago, it was not for their pottery-making skills or for their way with a loom; it was for the free labor they could provide in the fields. . . . Perhaps it makes sense that a group of people with such a wretched historical relationship to growing things

would need to describe their current relationship to it as dignified and masterly (agriculture), and would not find it poetic (botany) or pleasurable (gardening). ("Alien" 50)

Kincaid's essay, when understood in the context of colonialism, reads as an indictment of poetic pleasure in the natural world that masks the realities of capitalist agriculture. Ironically, perhaps, she does not hesitate to make a blanket pronouncement about the feelings of Antiguan people towards the natural world. Assuming the power to name the subjectivity of people other than herself is itself the prerogative of the Romantic artist.

Lucy makes clear that the purpose of West Indian school children reciting "Daffodils" is to teach them to appreciate and to emulate a specifically Romantic subjectivity—one predicated on a distance from lived experience and an appreciation for beauty that must be learned. It is not the immediate experience of seeing the daffodils that is important, but Wordsworth's ability to turn this vision into a lesson for moral fortitude: "They flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude." After reading *Lucy* we know that such a position is dangerous because it suggests that reality and beauty come from experiencing the colonizer's thoughts, by being led into knowledge discursively rather than through one's actual experiences. This is not only Romantic ideology but also colonial pedagogy. Canonical Romantic poetry, *Lucy* demonstrates, makes the perfect vehicle for colonial ideology.

II. "Hypocrisy and Breasts": Mimicking the Colonial Mother

If, for Wordsworth, it is the figure of the poet who looks "before and after" ("Preface" 738), then for Kincaid, it is the woman searching for the meaning of her relationship with her mother who must "look backward and forward" (*Autobiography* 3). For the colonized child, already subject to the divided consciousness that is the product of Romantic pedagogy, the presence of a mother who insists on a similar mimicry is truly terrifying. Lucy associates Romantic pedagogy with her mother's attempts to make her into an "echo," a mimic woman. We might read the presence of examples of Romantic pedagogy in Kincaid's work along

with her numerous examples of mimetic mothering as an allegory of the difficulties of subject formation for the colonized subject during the crisis of independence from the mother(land).

Mothers in Kincaid's texts enact an allegory of colonialism by forcing the child's subjectivity to become a mimicry of her own, just as colonial educators did. Kincaid draws a parallel between Mariah's wish, rooted in a pedagogy of Romanticism, that Lucy "see the world as she does," and Lucy's mother's wish to make her "into an echo" (36). Lucy notes that her rebellion against her mother

would have come as a complete surprise . . . for in her life she had found that her ways were the best ways to have, and she would have been mystified as to how someone who came from inside her would want to be anyone different from her. I did not have an answer to this myself. But there it was. (36)

Unlike Fredric Jameson, however, I resist the notion that all texts from the formerly colonized world should be "read as . . . national allegories" ("Third-World" 69).¹⁵ Such a limited understanding of Kincaid's project would not permit me to perform the reading in the last section in which I understand Kincaid to be concerned with questions of Romantic authority and aesthetics in the construction of the colonial subject. This section makes use of the conceit of the allegory in order to show that discourses of the colonial and the familial construct each other in Kincaid's work. I take Jameson's point that some texts of decolonization, "even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension" ("Third-World" 69). My feminist corrective to Jameson's formulation, as should be evident in the section on the deployment of Romantic ideology, is that many types of discourse originating from the perspective of the male colonizer should also be read as invested with their own libidinal dynamic of desire for control and reproduction of the colonized subject.

The critical confusion about the meaning of Kincaid's "harshness" in her treatment of her mother characters, as Moira Ferguson puts it, stems from the repetition of the mother country/imperial possession dyad in Kincaid's texts (1). If we agree with Giovanna Covi that the

central rubric of all of Kincaid's work is "the articulation of the effects of colonialism on subjectivity, specifically on female subjectivity" (37), then we need to look at the roots of the formulation of the self in the discourses that influence her writings. The last section completed some of this work, pointing to the effects the training in the poetry of the Romantic period has on Lucy's sense of self. In this section I want to look at the rhetorics of mother-daughter relationships in Kincaid's writing as a metaphor for the ways colonial discourses construct the colonized subject and to argue for the continuing effect of these discourses on contemporary Caribbean subjectivity.

Kincaid's work should be understood in the context of Antigua's comparatively late independence from Britain in 1981.¹⁶ One of the central shocks of decolonization for Antiguan stemmed from their having been educated to exist in an Empire that no longer existed. Kincaid glosses this transition as suddenly moving the nation from the nineteenth to the twentieth century: "You see, the educational system in Antigua, well, Antigua has this incredible history. It went from colonialism to the modern world—that is, from about 1890 to 1980—in five years . . . So my education, which was very "Empire," only involved civilization up to the British Empire—which would include writing—so I never read anything past Kipling" (Cujoe 217–18). While this is clearly Kincaid's own presentation of her colonized self and seems to be anti-colonial hyperbole in that it serves to reinforce that England's self-conception as the mother-country to its colonies, it is in this way that it has parallels with Kincaid's representations of the relationship between mothers and daughters.¹⁷ The right of the British government to lay claim to their imperial possessions was repeatedly articulated in terms of a parent's imperative to guide and control the child.¹⁸ Indeed, seeing the relationship of the nation and the citizen in terms of parent and child was popularized by the literature of the Romantic era. Colonial education emphasized creating a colonized subject who is recognized as similar to the colonizer, but different enough to justify continued rule.

Kincaid articulates the hierarchy inherent in the British urge for cultural reproduction in *A Small Place*: "And so everywhere they went they turned it into England; and everybody they met they turned English.

But no place could every really be England, and nobody who did not look exactly like them would ever be English, so you can imagine the destruction of people and land that came from that" (24). Kincaid frames the dislocation of colonial mimicry in familial terms: "what I see is the millions of people, of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland" (31). *A Small Place* reconfigures the colonial family from one with England as the mother country to her child-like dominions into a family in which the violence of imperialism makes orphans of its colonized subjects.

In a short story titled "My Mother," Kincaid constructs a mother-daughter relationship along the fault lines of ambivalence. Written using modernist stream of consciousness and surrealism, "My Mother," begins with the narrator "wishing my mother dead" (53). The daughter's wish for her mother's death causes her own: "Standing before my mother, I begged her forgiveness, and I begged so earnestly that she took pity on me, kissing my face and placing my head on her bosom to rest. Placing her arms around me, she drew my head closer and closer to her bosom, until finally I suffocated" (53). The closeness of the mother and daughter, continues: "I fit perfectly in the crook of my mother's arm, on the curve of her back, in the hollow of her stomach. . . . we merge and separate, merge and separate; soon we shall enter the final stage of our evolution" (61). This final stage consists of the narrator "sitting on my mother's enormous lap" in a utopian space of a lime tree bower "whose petals are imperishable" (61).

Kincaid's fictionalized depiction of the mother-daughter merge evokes Coleridge's poem, "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison." This poem famously creates a sense of the poet's vision of what his readers *should* see as he produces an idealized version of a walk his friend must take without him. Coleridge's poem is another example of the tendencies of canonical Romantic poetry to produce a poetic narrator who educates the reader about the proper way to experience the world.

In "This Lime-Tree Bower," Coleridge addresses his friend Charles Lamb, a city dweller who the poet imagines to be in particular need of nature: "For thou hadst pined / And hungered after nature many a year / In the great city pent" (28–30):

So my friend,
Struck with deep joy, may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily, a living thing
Which acts upon the mind (37–42)

Nature, seen through the poet's eyes as an educational tool that can change subjectivity by "act[ing] on the mind," works in this poem as an antidote to Lamb's entrapment in an urban landscape. The pedagogy of this poem functions similarly to how "Daffodils" was used to inculcate a subjectivity that was attuned to Romantic aesthetics.

Kincaid's story "My Mother" invites us to connect the power of Coleridge's vision for his young friend with the mother's power to create her child's subjectivity. Kincaid imagines the narrator and her mother merging during a walk, in much the same way as Coleridge imagines a union with Lamb: "as we walked along, our steps became one, and as we talked, our voices became one voice, and we were in complete union in every other way. What peace came over me then, for I could not see where she left off and I began, or where I left off and she began" (60). This peace, however, never lasts in Kincaid's work. Pre-Oedipal bliss always ends for the child; the Lime-Tree Bower always becomes a prison.

Kincaid's work does not tell the story one might expect, however. If Kincaid's daughters might stand in for Antigua and her mothers for England, then our knowledge of independence struggles in the Caribbean would lead us to believe that separation from the mother would be desirable.¹⁹ In Kincaid's 1996 novel, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, the narrator Xuela defines herself through the loss of her mother during her birth. Her motherlessness represents a failure of lineage, an inability to trace a national or racial bloodline because of the trauma of colonization and slavery. Xuela's own mother was given away at birth, an act that compounds Xuela's status as a motherless child:

That attachment, physical and spiritual, that confusion of who is who, flesh and flesh, which was absent between my mother and her own mother was also absent between my mother and

myself, for she died at the moment I was born, and though I can sensibly say to myself such a thing cannot be helped—for who can help dying—again how can any child understand such a thing, so profound an abandonment? I refused to bear any children. (199)

The “confusion of who is who,” then, seems to be a necessary element for a child’s psyche. Belonging is a necessary precondition for separation. Xuela’s motherlessness marks her as a permanent outsider to identity:

Who was I? My Mother died at the moment I was born. You are not yet anything at the moment you are born. This fact of my mother dying at the moment I was born became a central motif of my life . . . For years and years, each month my body would swell up slightly, mimicking the state of maternity, longing to conceive, mourning my heart’s and mind’s decision never to bring forth a child. I refused to belong to a race, I refused to accept a nation. I wanted only, and still do want, to observe the people who do so. (225-26)

The severed bloodlines, both literally in the case of Xuela and her foremothers and allegorically of Xuela’s loss, stand in for the losses of family and psychological continuity under colonial rule. This vision of motherlessness in a colonial society tells us much about mothering and national identity. Xuela’s fantasy of being mothered relies on an image of a mother who is whole—whose identity, whose flesh, is not marked with the scars of history. The wholeness of the mother makes possible the identity of the child. This ideal of a mother outside of history and colonial identity is not possible for Xuela herself and so she does not bear children. Xuela notes that “The crime of these identities, which I now know more than ever, I do not have the courage to bear” (226). So Kincaid’s characters desire separation, from the mother and the colonial motherland, but without an identity to move towards, either racial, national, or personal, their quest becomes blocked.

The daughters in Kincaid’s novels *Lucy* and *Annie John* long for separation from their mothers while they are simultaneously bitter about ending the “peace” the narrator of “My Mother” feels in their union.

"Why I wonder" says Annie John, "didn't I see the hypocrite in my mother when, over the years, she said that she loved me and could hardly live without me, while at the same time proposing and arranging separation after separation" (133). At the same time that this separation causes Annie pain, she makes clear that her departure for England, "which unbeknownst to her, *I* have arranged to be permanent" is a result of her growing similarity to her mother, "So now I, too, have hypocrisy, and breasts" (133). The "hypocrisy" that Lucy, like Annie John, feels is her inheritance from her mother shows up again in what Kincaid argues is Antigua's inheritance from Britain.

Like colonial justifications for rule, which are based on the so-called benefit to the colonized (justifications that were thrown into question during decolonization struggles) Lucy is shocked to learn that although she feels "identical" to her mother, her mother privileges her sons. Lucy, like a colonial subject attempting to "return" to Britain, is treated as a second-class citizen. In this analogy, the sons are the "real" children of the mother(land); Lucy is a secondary colony. After Lucy's three younger brothers were born:

my mother and father announced to each other with great seriousness that the new child could 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. I did not mind my father saying these things about his sons, his own kind, and leaving me out. My father did not know me at all; I did not expect him to imagine a life for me filled with excitement and triumph. But my mother knew me well, as well as she knew herself: I, at the time, even thought of us as identical; and whenever I saw her eyes fill up with tears at the thought of how proud she would be at some deed her sons had accomplished, 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. To myself I began to call her Mrs. Judas, and I began to plan a separation from her that even then I suspected would never be complete. (130–31)

Our knowledge of the use of Romanticism as a pedagogical tool for teaching subjectivity alerts us to the politics of Kincaid's ambivalent portrayal of mothers in her works. Romantic subjectivity when deployed as a colonial discourse teaches the child to emulate the 'norms' of Englishness. The mothers in Kincaid's work demand a similar kind of mimicry from their daughters, which explains their negative effect on their daughters' developing subjectivity. Mimicry of all kinds becomes political in postcolonial discourse, as Kincaid's work shows, both within the family and without.

Kincaid's works have something to teach us, I think, about the results of colonial education even after independence. Kincaid's daughters can never simply leave their mothers—the lessons of mimicry have been too strong. Lucy describes with defeat her attempts to separate from her mother:

My past was my mother; I could hear her voice, and she spoke to me not in English or the French patois that she sometimes spoke, or in any language that needed help from the tongue; she spoke to me in language anyone female could understand. And I was undeniably that—female. Oh, it was a laugh, for I had spent so much time saying I did not want to be like my mother that I missed the whole story: I was not like my mother—I was my mother. And I could see now why, to the few feeble attempts I made to draw a line between us, her reply always was '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.' How else was I to take such a statement but as a sentence for life in a prison whose bars were stronger than any iron imaginable? (90–91)

Lucy's prison-house of simulated identity leaves her without access to an individuated subjectivity. Lucy becomes a colonial subject not only through her indoctrination into the norms of Romantic poetry, but through her creation and then partial erasure at the hands of her mother. As I suggested earlier, a fragmented mother figure, as Lucy's mother is when she consents to erase herself (she privileges masculin-

ity over femininity) makes a whole female identity for the daughter impossible. Lucy's mother, then, becomes a phallic mother, incapable of engendering a female child able to create and maintain a separate identity.

Colonial education and the prison of Lucy's mother-defined female identity ensure a subjectivity for Lucy that is divided and incomplete, hallmarks of colonial indoctrination. In arguing this I differ from critics such as H. Adlai Murdoch who see the drama of the daughter's departure in Kincaid's work as "the outcome of her recognition of an existence which she has outgrown and a step toward the establishment of a newer, more valid one" (326). Instead, as this article demonstrates, both the daughter and the Antiguan nation in Kincaid's writing find themselves bound to the mother(land) by the ties of mimic subjectivity even after moves have been made to establish their independence.

The mimic relationship between mother and daughter exists on a continuum with the mimic relationship between Mother Britain and her colonies. Kincaid notes that "the character of the Antiguan people is influenced by and inherited through conquest, from the English people," resulting in a culture that "imitates their rulers" in both small and large ways ("Alien" 47-48). In *A Small Place*, Kincaid writes that even after independence from Britain in 1981, Antiguanians mimic British culture to the extent that they rehearse British rituals in the celebration of their Independence Day. Antiguanians, Kincaid tells us, "are so proud of [Independence] that each year, to mark the day, they go to church and thank God, a British God, for this" (9). Even after "years and years of agitation . . . deeply moving and eloquent speeches [made] against the wrongness of your domination over us" the trauma of the colonized subject is such, according to Kincaid, that their lives can only be described as a "ruin" and a "debacle" (*Small* 35-36).

The trauma of colonization is due, in large part, Kincaid suggests, to colonial pedagogical practices: "you loved knowledge, and wherever you went you made sure to build a school, a library (yes, and in both of these places you distorted or erased my history and glorified you own)" (*Small* 36). In an interview Kincaid states:

One of the things that inspired me to write was English poets, even though I had never seen England. It's as if I were a blind person too . . . I memorized Wordsworth when I was a child, Keats, all sorts of things. It was an attempt to make me into a certain kind of person, the kind of person they had no use for, anyway. An educated black person. I got stuck with a lot of things, so I ended up using them. (Bonetti)

“Stuck with” Romanticism, as all westernized subjects are to some extent, Kincaid works with and through its aesthetic and political lessons to focus on her society:

I would not have ever, ever been able to say, ‘you know, I really need to write this, I really need to get rid of these images,’ but that’s what I was doing. A sort of desire for a perfect place, a perfect situation, comes from English Romantic poetry. It described a perfection which one longed for, and of course the perfection that one longed for was England. I longed for England myself. These things were a big influence, and it was important for me to get rid of them. Then I could actually look at the place I’m from. (Bonetti)

Surprisingly, in moving her gaze from the Romantic “perfect place” that she writes about in early stories such as “My Mother,” to more trenchant political observations of her mother(land) in later works, Kincaid re-encounters Romantic pedagogy in the form of institutionalized mimicry.

The hope that the departure of daughters in Kincaid’s fictional writings might enable a subjectivity not bound by mimicry of the mother is not held out for post-Independence Antigua either. If the colonial school’s lessons to Kincaid and her characters have been those exercises in colonial mimicry, then her writings instruct her readers in the far reaching effects of Romantic pedagogy on the West Indian family and society. Although a reading of the mother-daughter relationships in *Annie John* and *Lucy* as allegories for the difficulties of postcolonial separation from the motherland allows us to see the connection between

the familial and the colonial, Kincaid's non-fiction work discusses the imperial legacies on the family in a different way. "In a society like the one I am from," Kincaid writes, "being a child is one of the definitions of vulnerability and powerlessness" (*Brother* 32). Kincaid shows that the lessons of domination and control learned in the colonial classroom, the method of managing the colonized child, created a culture in modern Antigua where weakness is exploited and ridiculed.

The question remains: where does Kincaid's deconstruction of the legacies of Romantic pedagogy leave the postcolonial subject? Poet Derek Walcott scolds the contemporary West Indian writer who "wants to effect an eugenic leap from imperialism to independence by longing for the ancestral dignity of the wanderer-warrior. . . . they are children of the nineteenth-century ideal, the romance of redcoat and savage warrior, the simplification of choosing to play Indian instead of cowboy" (125). Such a stance, according to Walcott "is the hallucination of imperial romance" (125). Kincaid's work, when considered within the context of the civilizing mission of the colonial classroom, shows the postcolonial subject's interpellation in the binaries of the Romantic "nineteenth-century ideal" that Walcott describes. Such an escape from the structuring narrative of the colonial enterprise, Kincaid's writing reveals, will not be easy to achieve.

The ending of *A Small Place* explicates Kincaid's theorization of the condition of postcoloniality when it repeats a refrain from earlier in the text that "all masters of every stripe are rubbish, and all slaves of every stripe are noble and exalted; there can be no question about this" (80). Kincaid then qualifies her hyperbole:

Of course, the whole thing is, once you cease to be a master, once you throw off your master's yoke, you are no longer human rubbish, you are just a human being, and all the things that adds up to. So too, with the slaves. Once they are no longer slaves, once they are free, they are no longer noble and exalted; they are just human beings" (81).

Although Kincaid describes the condition of postcoloniality as a "ruin" and a "debacle" she refuses to valorize a subjectivity created in the

wake of decolonization (*Small* 36). Indeed, she breaks with the writings of other West Indians in their immediate moment of independence by rejecting even the comforts of an imaginary return to (and thus an imitation of) pre-colonial African culture: “As for what we were like before we met you, I no longer care,” she writes in *A Small Place*. “No periods of time over which my ancestors held sway, no documentation of complex civilizations, is any comfort to me. Even if I really came from people who were living like monkeys in trees, it was better to be that than what happened to me, what I became after I met you” (*Small* 37).

Kincaid neither escapes nor embraces mimicry as a solution to the problem of subjectivity for the postcolonial subject. Returning to Antigua after decolonization Kincaid notes, “All the things I had thought made it a bad place were gone—but it was worse, and it’s not that things would be better should they go back in time” (Cudjoe 225). Her work takes a more complicated route, presenting us instead with the dilemma of the Caribbean subject, trained to mimic the subjectivity of their colonizer only to their detriment. Reading Kincaid’s writing is valuable, and indeed urgently needed, since it tells a different story of the drama of decolonization, showing that it is not notions of English superiority, but an English way of seeing that continues to grip Caribbean families and culture after political independence.

Notes

- 1 Born Elaine Potter Richardson in Antigua in 1949, the writer and social critic Jamaica Kincaid immigrated to the United States in the late 1960s. Kincaid’s contributions to *The New Yorker* first brought her work to the attention of literary critics. Since then she has published four novels, three works of non-fiction, numerous short stories and brief articles.
- 2 In a recent essay, de Abruna comments that, “Kincaid’s primal theme, repeated well past the point of obsession, has been her abiding resentment of her mother, connected with, but not overriding, her resentment of cultural imperialism” (181). While noting the centrality of these themes, critics have not produced a satisfactory interpretation of the meanings of these themes when read together. For example, Timothy finds “the most puzzling moments” in Kincaid’s work to be “the emotional break between the mother and daughter” and the “violence of the daughter’s response” (233). De Abruna’s essay, “Jamaica Kincaid’s Writing and the Maternal-Colonial Matrix,” addresses the erasure of the colonial context

- in favor of the “universality” of the mother-daughter theme in much Kincaid criticism, as does Ferguson’s in her discussion of Kincaid’s “harshly rendered” portrayals of family, “a fact that has constantly unsettled reviewers” (1).
- 3 See Makdisi, Fay, and Richardson and Hofkosh. Also influential on my work is the movement to correct, in the words of Mellor, the problem of founding “our constructions of British Romanticism almost exclusively upon the writings and thoughts of six male poets” through the recovery of female writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (1). This critical impetus has accompanied an expansion of works considered to be “Romantic,” such the Romantic novel generally.
 - 4 Coleridge differs from Wordsworth, however, in his rejection of Wordsworth’s early embrace of a more rustic “man speaking to men” style of poetic diction. Coleridge embraced a Germanic notion of a high literary language, a *lingua communis*. See Dowling for an extended discussion of nation, literature, and the differences between Wordsworth and Coleridge. Dowling notes, “The influence of Coleridge and, through him, of Romantic philology on Victorian civilization is most obvious . . . when language is taken to express the inner essence of a nation” (36). This influence continues from the Victorian period on to twentieth-century colonial education.
 - 5 That individuals such as Wordsworth might create a revolution in thought is, of course, a point of contention. Works such as Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconsciousness* suggest that the attribution of such power to an individual rather than to a societal zeitgeist is in itself a Romantic fallacy. Regardless of whether or not Wordsworth individually created a new form of subjectivity, as Makdisi suggests, his legacy through the colonial curriculum attests to the power of Wordsworth’s own representations of himself as an innovator.
 - 6 Riede comments that canonical Romantic writings contain the urge to direct the reader’s subjectivity producing “new forms of authoritative discourse” (4) which became institutionalized over time, even as they “evidently reflect profound doubts about their ability to control their own meaning . . . and perhaps also doubts about their right even to try to direct or form the consciousness of others” (3).
 - 7 Henderson usefully points out the “production of a diversity of models for understanding subjectivity,” many of them very different from the Wordsworthian models popularized in his canonical poetry (3). The fact that other ways of conceiving the self were in circulation during the Romantic era should bring home to us that our received notions of proper poetic subjectivity were not inevitable.
 - 8 Caribbean writers such as Edwidge Danticat, Lorna Goodison, Jean Rhys, Michelle Cliff, and Derek Walcott reference Wordsworth’s poem “Daffodils” in connection with colonial education. Brathwaite calls the attempt by Caribbean children to integrate their lived experience with their colonial education, the “snow on the canefields” effect (“English” 19). In the context of the Anglophone

Caribbean, children taught about winter and snow as normative weather, without any context for this, begin to write essays entitled “Snow fell on the canefields.” This gap between experiential reality and textual representation has come to be called “the daffodil gap,” pointing to the centrality of Wordsworth’s poem to postcolonial critiques of British colonial education practices (Tiffin n.7 920).

- 9 For one of the most comprehensive studies of colonial education and literature see Viswanathan.
- 10 This use of Wordsworthian ideals of childhood has important parallels to the figuring of the poet in Victorian England as a source of moral instruction second only to the Bible. See Gill for a full discussion of Wordsworth’s meaning to Victorian religious life.
- 11 See Richardson who notes that the majority of educational theories prevalent today (such as separating children by ages into grade levels) were promoted by various Romantic writers (including Wordsworth and Coleridge) and “were still considered rarefied and avant-garde if not patently absurd toward the end of the eighteenth century, and yet had become respectable, widespread, and destined to prevail by the middle of the nineteenth” (xii).
- 12 Richardson contextualizes the use of poetry anthologies used within Britain and in its colonies: “I have also tried to suggest how pervasively literary genres not usually thought of as didactic were enlisted in the schooling of traditionally and newly literate groups alike . . . the development of poetry anthologies aimed explicitly at subaltern populations in the colonies and, concurrently at young people in England” (*Literature* xv).
- 13 In another passage, reminiscent of Wordsworth’s poetic treatment of older rustic folk, such as in “The Leach Gatherer” and “Michael,” Lucy criticizes Mariah’s treatment of her country home’s caretaker. Lucy rejects a Romantic notion of time, where the childhood past and adult present collide. “His name was Gus, and the way Mariah spoke his name it was as if he belonged to her deeply, like a memory. And of course, he was a part of her past, her childhood . . . Still, he was a real person, and I thought Mariah should have long separated the person Gus standing in front of her in the present from all the things he had meant to her in the past” (33).
- 14 Discursively equating children and the colonized is a well-known imperialist trope with roots in discourses from the Romantic era. Richardson observes: “Those tendencies within later eighteenth-century and Romantic thought that led to the idealization of childhood, of rural laborers, and of “primitive” peoples also supported the view that all three groups were uncivilized and needed to be properly trained or educated—disciplined—if they were to fit into the industrialized and regulated world then in the process of emerging” (*Literature* 155).
- 15 See Ahmad’s excellent response to Jameson’s conception of Third-World literature as national allegory.

- 16 See Dyde for a comprehensive account of Antigua's colonial history and political independence.
- 17 I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out that there must be a necessary separation between the textual "truth" of Kincaid's self-constructions, and the more complex realities of the contemporary Caribbean. My project in this second section of the essay is to look at the textual constructions of colonialism, mother-daughter relationships and subjectivity in Kincaid's work. While Kincaid's writing demonstrates an important aspect of post-independence identity, it would be a mistake to conclude that Kincaid's works are a template for Caribbean subjectivity as a whole.
- 18 Nineteenth-century discourses on the education of European children linked their mission to the education of colonized adults within the Empire, using the guise of education as a mandate for colonial rule. See Stoler for an analysis of this phenomenon.
- 19 All of Kincaid's work clearly reflects her idiosyncratic views on history, colonization, and the Caribbean family. Her writing usually focuses more on oppression than struggle and does not often provide solutions. I view Kincaid's identification of the difficulties presented by legacies of nationalism and Eurocentric economic policies for liberation from colonization as a form of resistance, agreeing with Cooper's assessment of Kincaid's work as struggling against "assimilationist, diasporic internationalism" (186). *A Small Place* might be seen within the context of other women's activism during the late 1980s against neo-colonialism, the policies of the IMF, and the establishment of Free Trade Zones within the Caribbean, such as Women Working for Social Progress and Women against Free Trade Zones: Work with Dignity (see Reddock). Although Kincaid's texts often focus on the effects colonialism rather than active resistance, that has not prevented their use by others; sections from *A Small Place*, for instance, are used as narration in *Life and Debt* (2001), a documentary critical of IMF policies and their effect on the economies of Caribbean nations.

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