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# Jamaica Kincaid: A Multi-Dimensional Resistance to Colonialism

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JAMAICA KINCAID: A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL RESISTANCE TO COLONIALISM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2012

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Title: Jamaica Kincaid: A Multi-Dimensional Resistance to Colonialism

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In this dissertation, “Jamaica Kincaid: A Multi-Dimensional Resistance to Colonialism,” I argue that colonialism, or its impact, as a relation of power is threaded through the related themes of gender/sexuality, the environment, and global capitalism in Jamaica Kincaid’s work – in other words I am interested in how the intersection of these themes enhances Kincaid’s critique of the impact of colonialism on the people of Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. By colonialism or its impact, I refer to the structural imposition directly or indirectly of cultural, political, and economic control of the people of Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. The major contribution of my study to the field is the identification, through a postcolonial materialist feminist theory framework, of the intersections of these themes and how that makes clearer many of the subtleties that often leave foggy the impact of colonialism on Antigua and the Caribbean.

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Throughout my writing of this dissertation I have also been inspired by the memory of my deceased mother, Eliza, and sister, Odessa, and my tenth grade English teacher, William “Sonny” Walker. The inspiration of my mother was important because it was she who encouraged me not to drop out of high school over 50 years ago in Little Rock, Ark., after I became disillusioned by our family’s impoverished condition and our high school being closed for a year because of racial strife. Unknowingly, Mr. Walker managed to challenge and inspire me, when after our high school reopened in 1959 I did not write a research paper on the origin of jazz for his class, and he had me transferred to a remedial English class and suggested that I should “just go into the Army.” Little did he know how impoverished our family was, that we lived in a rural area and commuted to Little Rock city schools, that I had no means of

transportation to the city's only African American library. All of this notwithstanding, somehow my sister, Odessa, always managed to maintain her honor roll status in high school, but she was unable to obtain adequate funds to complete college. Odessa and my mother, whom we lost in 2001, were the greatest cheerleaders for my being the first and only member of the family to graduate from college. We lost Odessa too in 2009 when I was writing my dissertation proposal. I wrote in a poem that, "Though your rose never fully bloomed, you still managed to smile and wish me well when mine did." With these memories of my mother, my sister, and Mr. Walker, I knew that *not* completing my dissertation and earning my doctorate was not an option. I know that they are still wishing me well.

I am also most grateful to my wife, Cheryl, and my daughters, Leenisha Jean, and Pamela Lynn, for the support that they have given me during this process.

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## INTRODUCTION

The problem with the major and often overriding postcolonial themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment in Jamaica Kincaid's works is that while she often blends them together in her narratives readers tend to not focus on how they are linked or the significance or importance of their linkage. Critics even tend to critique either these themes or related sub-themes separately. It is not at all unusual, for example, to find in Kincaid's works a discussion about the gender and/or sexuality of a character in an Antigua setting and in the same discussion there might be a shift to describing how impoverished the nation is, or what the landscape, plant or animal life, weather, or sea is like. I believe that only through a close examination of such narratives, using a postcolonial materialist feminist approach, can one determine that these major postcolonial themes – gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment - are threaded through them and this threading gives the narratives special significance. In this study I argue that colonialism, or its impact, as a relation of power, is threaded through these themes in Kincaid's works. I also argue that the intersection or fusion of these three themes work together to effectively enhance and strengthen her broader theme on the lasting and damaging impact of colonialism on the people of Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. I argue in this study that slavery of the past and colonialism has a tremendous negative on colonized and former colonized people in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean as a whole. By colonialism or its impact, I refer to the structural imposition directly or indirectly of cultural, political, and economic control of the people of Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. By Anglophone African Caribbean I mean the English-speaking nations of the Caribbean with majority populations of people of African descent. Before winning its independence in in 1981, Antigua, the focus of much of Kincaid's writing endured nearly 350



years of colonialism and slavery. I acknowledge the influence of earlier works of resistance by postcolonial scholars and writers like Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and C.L.R. James on this study. For example, as Frederick Louis Aldama notes, Cesaire in his *Discourse on Colonialism* book dealt with reluctance of European colonizers to relinquish control over their colonies around the world:

Coming in the aftermath of World War II, his book is a wide-sweeping critique of the West in light of its fight against fascism. After a war in which the ‘civilized’ countries of Europe fought against any notions of racial superiority, Cesaire points out the fact that most European countries are hanging on to their colonies with a similar view of racial superiority that is conflated with a version of humanism. He challenges the insidious effects of the West’s notion of humanism, which claims a certain universality, all the while at the expense of humans who supposedly don’t conform to the categories that are established as universal (91).

One of the aspects of my study deals with the fact that in many ways those colonizers, the British in particular, in conjunction with First World imperialistic powers like the United States, even today, still have not completely relinquished what amounts to control of former colonized countries like Antigua and Jamaica. Rajeev S. Patke notes that in his *Black Skins, White Masks* Fanon deals with his perception of how the sexuality of former enslaved and colonized blacks is influenced by their relationships with whites:

The sexuality of the colonized person is shown as fraught with racial tension concerning dominance and submissiveness. It is argued that male sexuality is shaped by the ambivalent desire for conquest over, or violation of the white woman, and female sexuality is characterized by the black woman’s desire for acceptance by, or submission

to, the white man. The sexuality of the colonized person is thus rendered as depraved in itself and threatening to whiteness. The effect is to alienate men and women from their own bodies and their skin color (163-64).

While I acknowledge the influence of Fanon's work, which portrays a rather convoluted view of the sexuality of former colonized persons, my study draws more on the later works of Barbara Bush and Jenny Sharpe, which I shall mention later, in analyzing the often distorted view of the sexuality of former colonized African Caribbeans, especially African Caribbean women. As Sarah Fulford notes, Spivak in her "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" essay rereads Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* alongside Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* to argue "that the Creole woman from the (Caribbean) colonies is portrayed as a beast for the greater glory of the British woman, Jane Eyre" (421). "Spivak takes up the issue of how the figure of the madwoman, Bertha Antoinette Mason, in *Jane Eyre* converges with the colonial image of the Other who is dehumanized into an object or 'it,'" she notes (421). My study deals with the dehumanization of the colonized woman too, in terms of the imposition of sex/gender ideologies that degrade and treat her as unequal to males under a British system of patriarchy and a gendered division of labor under capitalism. Stephen P. Sheehi notes that Said, in his *Culture and Imperialism* book critique's Jane Austin's *Mansfield Park* by citing the almost absence of slave plantations in Antigua. "...The leisure of Sir Thomas Bertram's family, for example, is sustained by the plantations in the West Indies. That is, while little mentioned in the narrative, the existence of slave plantations in Antigua facilitates the reproduction of the Bertram's lifestyle and therefore, is central to the reproduction of the novel itself," he writes (396). In my study we see some of the colonized mimicking the behavior of the colonizers by overlooking, dismissing, or ignoring the impact of slavery and colonialism as it appears that both the author and characters

are doing in *Mansfield Park*. Bella Adams notes that in his *The Black Jacobins*, which discusses the French and Haitian revolutions, Caribbean writer C.L.R. James “undermines the authority accorded to a white European intelligentsia by imperialism, along with challenging those Marxists, Trotsky among them, who regard race (and popular culture) as marginal to the revolution” (259). Adams adds, “As James sees it, the black struggle requires a more critical negotiation by Marxism, although this is not to privilege race over class” (259). In Kincaid’s works the characters struggle with issues of race and class, but they don’t seem to necessarily rate one over the other. Kincaid, who is highly critical of the shortcomings of capitalism, is often torn and ambivalent when dealing with race and class, as James is in *The Black Jacobins*. So in resisting the negative impact of slavery and colonialism in her writing Kincaid is among a number of postcolonial writers who have done so in the past. My study is based on my investigation of multiple layers of intersections of three major themes – gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment (including nature and gardening) in all of the ten works, or collaborated works, of Kincaid’s that the study encompasses. Part of the uniqueness of my study is in the main postcolonial materialist feminism theoretical framework drawn from *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference and Women’s Lives*, edited by Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham. I also use the arguments of a number of other materialist feminist theorists from this text, along with those of a number of non-materialist feminist theorists.

### **The Theoretical Framework**

In *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference and Women’s Lives* Hennessy and Ingraham argue that, “If feminism is to maintain its viability as a political movement aimed at redressing women’s oppression and exploitation worldwide, the theory that underlies feminist practice cannot eclipse the material realities that bind race, gender, sexuality, and nationality to

labor” (2). Crediting the work of Hazel Carby, they note that, “Much of the work of the materialist feminist has been to delineate how patriarchal practices have been differentiated across social groups.” They note that Carby “examines how patriarchal arrangement of family, sexuality, dominance, and dependence have been historically differentiated for black men and women and how the state has made use of these structures in the service of a racialized division of labor” (11). Hennessey and Ingraham also argue that, “While the concentration and global diffusion of capital has made the class possessing power more difficult to identify, it is precisely because capitalism has become more pervasive, insidious, and brutal that a rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its class dynamics is politically necessary now” (2). And they state further that, “A feminism that aims to improve the lives of all women and at the same time recognizes their differential relation to one another cannot ignore the material reality of capitalism’s class system in women’s lives” (3). By postcolonial materialist feminism theoretical framework, I refer to my use of Hennessey and Ingraham’s arguments about redressing women’s gender and sexual oppression, gender discrimination in the division of labor, the impact of slavery and colonialism, capitalism, and racism, and the exploitation of the environment in Antigua and the Caribbean.

I use those arguments to examine the intersection of the major themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism and the environment in Kincaid’s works from a postcolonial materialist feminist perspective. In doing so, I push postcolonial studies more toward an emphasis on the analysis of global capitalism and class. For example, take Hennessey and Ingraham’s argument about the “material realities that bind race, gender, sexuality, and nationality to labor.” Throughout the works that this study examines we encounter an Anglophone or English-speaking African Caribbean population that is basically poor or lower

middle class at best, in which women are laden with responsibility for the stability of the family (total responsibility in many cases) while men are free to pursue whatever goals that suit them, whether it be in the workplace, education, sexuality, or in some other area. However, while there is a difference in the way that patriarchal rule under African Caribbean rule affects gender roles for women in Kincaid's works the impact is not much different than that under British colonial rule. The psychological impact, however, is often worse for some of Kincaid's female characters, who are not only degraded and treated with inequality because of their gender, but also because of their race, and class, because gender for women is also a class under colonial ideology and the gendered division of labor that exists under British patriarchal colonial rule. The one factor that affects male and female characters equally in Kincaid's works is the lingering impact of capitalism imposed on Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean through its heavy dependence on trade agreements with richer nations or organizations controlled by those nations, and tourism. Hennessy and Ingraham's arguments here, I believe, are most effective. I apply their idea that colonialism is a form of capitalist accumulation that structured a division of labor that subordinated colonized women and produced damaging ideologies of sexuality, gender, and race. Under this system, the land and nature were also subordinated.

The gender and sexuality roles of Kincaid's characters are often affected by the history of British slavery and colonialism, racism, capitalism, and exploitation of the environment in Antigua or elsewhere in the African Caribbean. The landscape and environment of Antigua have been shaped or altered by the aforementioned and this shaping or altering of the landscape and environment has influenced the thinking and outlook of the people of Antigua and other parts of the Anglophone African Caribbean, the main focus of this study. The countries that comprise the Anglophone African Caribbean, which now have African Caribbean leadership, were all once

colonized by the British, who also maintained slavery of descendants of Africa. This study demonstrates, as Hennessy and Ingraham assert in general, that the roles of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment (including gardening and nature) were closely intertwined or connected during slavery and colonial rule and continues to have a profound effect on those who were and are victimized by it, especially women. In Kincaid's works we see the roles of gender and sexuality for African Caribbean women being negatively influenced by the whole production system of capitalism and patriarchy left over or inherited by African Caribbean men, particularly in her four novels, *Annie John*, *Lucy*, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, and *Mr. Potter*. In general the women's aspirations for life are much lower than those of men and their gender and sexuality roles are generally seen as primarily for the accommodation of men, whether they are in the home, workplace or elsewhere. As Hennessy and Ingraham argue:

It is important to remember that poverty is not mainly a function of gender or race but a permanent feature of capitalism that affects children and men too. The socially produced differences of race, gender, and nationality are not distinct from class, but they play a crucial role – both directly and indirectly – in dividing the work force, ensuring and justifying the continued availability of cheap labor, and determining that certain social groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned. In this division, it is often children who lose the most; in fact, the vast majority of the world's poor are children (2).

Indeed, it is children, female children, who seem to lose the most in Kincaid's novels under the continuing system of capitalism and patriarchy in Antigua, as this study explicates. However, all African Caribbean females in Antigua seem to suffer more from the remnants of British slavery

and colonial rule than African Caribbean men do, in experiences that range from sexuality development, to motherhood, to the workplace.

So how is all of this intersected or connected to global capitalism in Kincaid's works? The bulk of my postcolonial materialist feminism study of how and to what effect Kincaid intersects her major themes of gender and sexuality with the theme of global capitalism is focused on *A Small Place*, *My Brother* and *Life and Debt* (a documentary film in which Kincaid collaborates with producer-director Stephanie Black), because much of the focus in these works is on global capitalism and how its uneven impact from trade agreements with richer nations, borrowing practices, and lack of balance in imports, has affected the Caribbean, Antigua and Jamaica in this case, negatively. The audience for *A Small Place*, which is about Antigua, is the foreign tourist, but the people who are victimized the most by the negative impact of global capitalism are the country's women, because of patriarchal colonial rule. In *My Brother* and *Life and Debt*, too, in addition to Kincaid's brother, Devon, it is women who are affected the most, in Antigua and Jamaica respectively, by the negative impact of global capitalism. In *My Brother*, Antigua's indebtedness to richer nations has left it unable to purchase the only life-saving antiviral drug available at the time to fight the deadly HIV-AIDS virus. This has a negative impact on Devon, a victim of the virus, but it also victimizes women in Antigua because of the aggressive sexual attitude of many Antiguan men, who refuse to wear condoms for protection from this virus. In *Life and Debt* Jamaican women are victimized the most, because their membership in the workforce is larger. Their victimization occurs when local agriculture producers and manufacturers have to stop selling their products abroad because they cannot compete with larger foreign producers and a number of foreign-based manufacturers. Reacting to local labor pressure, the foreign producers and manufacturers relocate their operations outside of

Jamaica. Hennessey and Ingraham argue that, “Class objectively links all women, binding the professional to her housekeeper, the boutique shopper to the sweatshop seamstress, the battered wife in Beverly Hills to the murdered sex worker in Bangkok or the Bronx” (3). My postcolonial materialist feminist framework also cites examples of Kincaid’s intersecting the theme of gender and sexuality in *Mr. Potter*, where the only loyalty or respect that Mr. Potter, who turns out to be the father of the narrator, has is to his job as a chauffeur and those whom he serve, foreigners. He has no loyalty to or concern for the many women whom he has fathered children by, not the children themselves, and not other African Caribbeans.

Through my postcolonial materialist feminism framework I argue in this study, as Hennessey and Ingraham do in general, that women’s unpaid labor roles such as mothering and housewifery are not acknowledged enough by males in Kincaid’s work. The effectiveness of Hennessey and Ingraham’s argument that, “It is precisely because capitalism has become ever more pervasive, insidious, and brutal that a rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its class dynamic is politically necessary now” is evident throughout the works analyzed in this study. Actually, numerous examples of Kincaid intersecting the theme of gender and sexuality with that of global capitalism can be found in *My Brother*. There she discusses at length her brother Devon’s patriarchal sexual habits with Antiguan women even as he is dying of HIV-AIDS. In the same critique she condemns rich First World nations for their stranglehold on the Antiguan economy through indebtedness to them, so much so that it cannot purchase the anti-viral drug AZT, the only medicine available to fight HIV-AIDS at the time. My postcolonial materialist feminism theoretical framework connects sexuality, race and gender to capitalism as a global system in Kincaid’s works. And how do I use postcolonial materialist feminism theory to connect the themes of gender and sexuality, and global capitalism with the theme of the



environment? While the theoretical work of Hennessy and Ingraham does not address the environment in depth, as it does the issues of gender and sexuality and global capitalism, Hennessy and Ingraham acknowledge that a new generation of scholars is addressing more recent social developments like the Green Revolution and ecofeminism. In addressing how Kincaid links the themes of gender and sexuality and global capitalism with the environment as they relate to Antigua and the African Caribbean, I draw on the work of materialist feminist Gwyn Kirk from the text edited by Hennessy and Ingraham. Among the non-materialist feminist scholars whose work that I draw on are Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renee K. Gosson and George B. Handley, editors of *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, in which they argue:

Although North American ecocritics often inscribe an idealized natural landscape that is devoid of human history and labor, the colonization and forced relocation of Caribbean subjects preclude that luxury and beg the question as to what might be considered a natural landscape. Against the popular grain of U.S. ecocritical studies, we argue that addressing the historical and racial violence of the Caribbean is integral to understanding literary representations of its geography (2).

Included in the historical and racial violence that DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley say should be addressed when studying the Caribbean is the violence against the environment there, which included deforestation and destruction of indigenous animal life, and the violence against African slaves who worked under atrocious working conditions to maintain the sugarcane crops that resulted from deforestation. I utilize Kincaid's *At the Bottom of the River*, *My Garden Book*, and *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* texts mostly for my postcolonial materialist feminist analysis of her intersections of the environment theme with her themes of sexuality and

global capitalism. I use those texts for Kincaid's own memories and other visions about Antigua's environment, nature, and gardening, and their role during the period of slavery and colonization. The three aforementioned texts are replete with references to the environment, nature, and/or gardening, in which Kincaid often links the themes of the environment (including nature and gardening) with gender and sexuality, and global capitalism, as DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley advocate. The postcolonial materialist feminism theoretical framework that I use for this study also draws on the theoretical views of other texts, including Maria Mies' *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. With this theoretical context in mind, it is important to know the historical, cultural, and social context that this study uses to analyze Kincaid's work, especially that of Antigua, on which the major portion of this study is focused.

### **The Historical, Cultural, and Social Context**

The earliest known human dwellers on the small island of Antigua, the birthplace of Jamaica Kincaid in the Caribbean, were around 3100 BCE, according to Bryan Dyde (5). This earliest group of people was "from a site on Little Deep Bay on the east coast, but more substantial evidence of the presence of meso-indians around 1800bc existed on the opposite coast, a site near Lignumvitae Bay," Dyde says (5-6). "These originated in South America as 'maritime nomadic wanderers,' and are now usually referred to as Ortoiroid people, after a site found at Ortoire in Trinidad," he notes (6). According to Dyde, the Arawaks, an Indian tribe, "were the first people to produce any lasting effect on the island's landscape and its animal and plant life." (6). He says, "At least thirty settlement sites (for the Arawaks) have been found, all around the coastline, with dates ranging from the first century to around AD 1100." Another group of Indians, known as the Caribs, "began to enter the Caribbean (including Antigua) during

the fourteenth century, and had taken over all the Lesser Antilles well before 1500,” Dyde says (6). “Although identified by tribal names in some islands these new arrivals have never been called – in connection with Antigua – anything other than Caribs,” he adds (6). It is commonly believed by historians that European and African diseases, malnutrition and slavery killed most members of these tribes.

The English, under the leadership of British representative Thomas Warner, settled on Antigua in 1632 and Barbuda, another small island nearby, in 1684. The two small islands now comprise one nation. “It is not known when the first (African) slaves were brought to Antigua: one or two may possibly have come with Warner in 1632, but generally they were an insignificant part of society there until after the middle of the century,” Dyde notes (20).

“During the 1660s it was these (landowners) who were already planting the crop (sugarcane) with which Antigua was to be linked for the next 300 years, and for the cultivation of which it seemed that only slaves (from Africa) could provide the necessarily large labour force,” he adds (20). Slavery was not abolished in Antigua until 1834. “And so, in a suitably chastened and somber mood, at one minute past midnight on 1 August 1834, the island’s 29,131 slaves became free,” Dyde writes (115). However, British rule of Antigua and Barbuda continued from 1632 to 1981, with the exception of a brief period of French rule in 1666. According to Dyde, “On 31 July...the Antigua and Barbuda Constitution Order was signed into law in London and the future of the two islands as a unitary state was settled. Three months to the day later, at midnight on 31 October, the new country came into being” (292). As this study will indicate later, British slavery and colonization brought gender and sexuality issues for women in Antigua, especially African Caribbean women, and those issues have remained a problem in the island nation.

## Gender and Sexuality

In order to provide a clear understanding of how the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment are related and intersect to make stronger Kincaid's critique on the impact of colonialism this study looks at how the three themes played out during Antigua and Barbuda's periods of slavery and colonization. This study is especially focused on how Kincaid illustrates how the roles of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment shapes the lives of characters in her works, especially the female characters. For example, in examining Kincaid's four novels, this study utilizes two chapters to explore how she depicts the theme of gender and sexuality to expose remnants of the effect of colonialism in Antigua and Dominica, another Anglophone African Caribbean country, and how that theme intersects with her themes of the environment and global capitalism. Placing those themes in the context of the impact that slavery and colonialism had on African Caribbean women in Antigua and the Caribbean is essential to understanding the roles that gender and sexuality play in the lives of the characters in *Annie John*, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, *Lucy*, and *Mr. Potter*. Barbara Bush notes, for example, that:

Black women were further differentiated from white women in a sexual sense. From the tales of early travelers to Africa, West Indian whites gleaned a superficial and inaccurate impression of West African sexual mores, polygyny in particular. They were appalled by the idea of a man having more than one wife in some West African societies, whilst refusing to admit to the hypocritical double standard (chastity for women, sexual license for men), which existed in their own society. Polygamy gave them an excuse to perpetuate this double standard on the plantation in a particularly invidious way. In the eyes of white men, the sexual function of black women placed them in a separate

category to black men. Out of this basic division grew the belief that slave women had different aspirations, needs and functions (1).

Bush argues that “just as the urban poor and peasant of eighteenth – and nineteenth – century Europe were accused of promiscuity as a subordinate class, so were blacks, but racial complexities enhanced the distortions in the cases of slaves” (5). She says, “This ethnocentric class bias resulted in a denigrating attitude to slave mores which have persisted up to the present day, especially in relation to discussions on the slave family” (5). Bush notes too that, “In common with women in virtually all cultures, the slave woman was subordinate to *all* men and hence suffered sexual as well as economic oppression” (8). And she adds, “In this sense, her white European counterpart fared little better than she did herself. However, the slave woman, subjected to both black and white patriarchy, in addition to experiencing class exploitation was also a victim of racism” (8). Furthermore, the practice of concubinage, the practice of white men paying slave women to live in their household primarily for sexual purposes and with a status lower than that of his wife, was prevalent in the Caribbean, more so than in other areas colonized by England. As Jenny Sharpe notes:

When placed within the frame of a model of resistance, their (slave women’s) action would be characterized as accommodation to slavery. Yet, for the women to resist, they would have to refuse their sexual slavery, which begs the question of what such refusal might look like. Because of the structures of slavery that sanctioned their sexual appropriation by white men, slave women had extremely limited options. They could be raped, paid a small sum for their outward “cooperation,” or enter into more formal and long-term agreements, but there was no position for which they could refuse (xvii).

So it is clear from the studies of Bush and Sharpe that the history of African Caribbean sexuality, especially for the female, is complex. Most scholars on the subject today seem to agree with the studies of Bush and Sharpe that African Caribbean gender and sexuality roles have been influenced by the experience that African Caribbeans had with white males and females during slavery and colonialism, but they also argue that African Caribbean sexuality in the English-speaking Caribbean is also influenced by other experiences, which adds to the complexity of its understanding. While the roles of gender and sexuality in Antigua are complex, the role of global capitalism is just as complex.

### **Global Capitalism**

In this study the term global capitalism refers to the impact that economic activities such as the importing of goods and services and trade and lending agreements involving Antigua and other Anglophone African Caribbean nations and larger capitalist countries like the United States and the nations of Europe have on Antigua, the African Caribbean in general, and their economies. Sugarcane crops and the labor of slaves from Africa fueled the economy of Antigua and Barbuda during the early part of the country's history. "Preferential treatment of the main export crops of sugar and bananas is the recurring story in the annals of Caribbean trade," notes Ransford W. Palmer (3). It was not until the 1950s and 60s that questions were asked about how Caribbean nations would fare without preferential treatment by organizations like the World Trade Organization. According to Palmer, the British's answer was a federation with a central bureaucracy. "But that experiment quickly failed because the economic disparity among island economies was too large at the time," he notes (30). The structure of the Caribbean economy evolved from agriculture toward services over the period of 1970 to 2000. Today tourism, largely from the United States and Europe, dominates the Antiguan economy, accounting for nearly 60

percent of the country's goods and services. Its agricultural products are largely for domestic consumption.

With little experience in dealing in fully competitive trade, most Caribbean countries, including Antigua, seek to negotiate trade agreements with much larger and wealthier countries like the United States and those of Europe, which often results in excess indebtedness to those other nations sometimes and reliance on the International Monetary Fund or some other country or international organization for financial assistance. IMF policies often require painful spending reductions and cutbacks on programs that are popular in the borrowing Caribbean country. Like other Caribbean and so-called Third World nations, Antigua often has to rely on third parties like the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund and/or the World Bank, which are largely controlled by the U.S. and European countries, to maintain trade agreements. It is with this background and in this context that this study analyzes Kincaid's use of global capitalism in *A Small Place*, where she bares the economic shortcomings of Antigua for visiting tourists; *My Brother*, where she does a bit of conscious raising with the United States and other so-called First World nations about what she perceives as the use of unfair economic leverage over small countries like Antigua; and *Life and Debt*, where the film's director, in collaboration with Kincaid, uses the same language from *A Small Place* to "inform" visiting tourists about the "underside" or "downside" of Jamaica just as Kincaid "informed" them about the underside of Antigua in *A Small Place*. I use this background and context to analyze how Kincaid intersects the global capitalism theme with the gender and sexuality, and environment themes. As with gender and sexuality, and global capitalism, understanding the role of the environment in Antigua and Caribbean life is important for this study.

## The Environment

Seodial Deena notes that, “Colonial and postcolonial Caribbean writers have depicted their land and environment in a reverential, personified, and intimate manner, a harmonious and symbolic setting for their characters and actions” (367-78). He adds, “This personification creates a rather complex and interesting mosaic relationship between the people and their landscapes” (378). That is the context in which this study analyzes Kincaid’s use of the environment as a theme and how she intersects it with the themes of gender and sexuality and global capitalism in *At the Bottom of the River*, *My Garden Book*, and *A Walk in the Himalaya*.

Deena notes:

On one level, the colonizer rapes the land, sets out to conquer violently the environment, and encounter resistance. He uses his social, political, and economic authority/power to condemn the landscape as evil and destructive; whereas the colonized respects the land and environment, celebrates their energy and beauty, and draws strength from their fountains of life (368).

Deena’s suggestion that the “colonizer rapes the land, sets out to conquer violently the environment,” seems to suggest that the colonizer does so for capitalistic reasons as was often the case with his sexual exploitation of the African Caribbean woman. This blending in the themes of environment, gender and sexuality, and capitalism is characteristic of the intersecting of the themes that this study analyzes. This is the context in which this study analyzes Kincaid’s intersection of these themes and how that intersection enhances and enriches her critique of the impact of colonization in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. Interestingly, some books featuring studies of multiple themes in Kincaid’s works have been written by critics,



however none highlighting a materialist feminist analysis of how one or more of her themes intersect throughout her works has been published.

### **A Review of Literature**

Whereas I consciously connect major themes of Kincaid's work in this study, many other critics have tended to treat them separately. Some may actually connect the themes in one way or another, but my study seeks to build an analysis that is deeply historical and materialist feminist in its striving to connect gender and sexuality and environment with capitalism as it developed in colonial form. Even though the two reference books that I will mention are helpful, they inculcate a fragmented view of Kincaid's works. However, one of the most inclusive books dealing with various themes in the works of Kincaid, *Jamaica Kincaid: A Literary Companion*, by Mary Ellen Snodgrass, provides a very helpful resource, especially to students, librarians and teachers. Sections of the guide are structured thematically and organized from A-to-Z. Thirty-eight of the 84 themes could easily be used as sub-themes under the three themes in my study – gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment. For example, Snodgrass' abortion, adaptation, autonomy, belonging, and betrayal themes could fit reasonably well under the gender and sexuality theme in my study. Likewise, colonialism, death, displacement, egotism, food, healing and health, and materialism would fit well under the global capitalism theme in my study. Only gardening and order from Snodgrass' study would fit well as sub-themes under the environment themes in my study.

A big difference in the Snodgrass study and my study is the fact that it does no analysis of whether any of the 84 themes intersect or blend in with each other and the impact of such intersection. Snodgrass does however provide cross-references to other related issues and suggestions for additional reading. Anna Borgstrom notes that up until the time of *Jamaica*

*Kincaid: A Literary Companion*, in 2008, “other full-length studies of Kincaid’s craft have, in contrast been structured by focus on her novels, where each chapter, or part of a chapter, focuses on and presents a close examination of one text at a time” (567). In parenthesis, Borgstrom states that, “The only exception to date is Diane Simmons’ award-winning study *Jamaica Kincaid* from 1994, where half the study is devoted to a few selected central themes and techniques of Kincaid’s, and the other half to analyses and close readings of each of her published full-length texts” (567). Snodgrass’ work, with its thematically structured guide and its broad list of subjects provides a very useful service to students, teachers and others who have a variety of interests in Kincaid’s work. Borgstrom observes that toward the end of the guide, there is a glossary of terms used in Kincaid’s texts and an appendix of forty-three suggested writing and research topics. She also notes that, “While the suggestion draws attention to issues and themes central to Kincaid’s writings many of them require a familiarity with several, if not all of Kincaid’s texts – which many readers will not have” (568). One of the big advantages of my study of three of Kincaid’s major themes is that I not only explain how each theme functions separately with respective story lines in the respective works, I also explain how the three themes connect, intersect or work together to make clearer Kincaid’s critique of the impact of colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean.

Diane Simmon’s *Jamaica Kincaid* from 1994, which Borgsrton referred to earlier, addresses four themes from Kincaid’s works in the first four chapters. Those themes are loss, betrayal, self-betrayal, and language, in several of Kincaid’s works that had been published at the time, including *Annie John*, *At the Bottom of the River*, and *Lucy*. The last four chapters of the book are devoted to close readings of *At the Bottom of the River*, *Annie John*, *Lucy* and *A Small Place*. The themes discussed in the first four chapters are discussed in that order.

Just as Snodgrass' *Jamaica Kincaid: A Literary Companion* serves readers, students, teachers and librarians well in being a first to provide an extensive analysis of the many themes in the works of Kincaid, the same can be said for Simmons' *Jamaica Kincaid's* pioneering that kind of analysis-reference book, despite the limited number of four themes analyzed. My study of Kincaid's works seeks to take this area of analysis even further by analyzing the intersections of three of her broad or major themes in nine of her works, and another work, *Life and Debt*, in which she collaborated. In doing so, the goal is to enhance and enrich the understanding of Kincaid's critique of the impact of colonialism in Antigua and the African Caribbean.

Many critics deal with multiple themes in Kincaid's works, but they don't attempt to write about them in any deliberate fashion as connected to one another. Some of the more notable ones on the theme of gender and sexuality include, Gary E. and Kimberly S. Holcomb's "I Made Him": Sadomasochism in Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother*" (2002); Kathryn E. Morris' "Jamaica Kincaid's Haunted Bodies: Engendering a Carib(bean) Woman" (2002); Ed Chamberlain's "Queering the Space of Home: Counterpublics, Sexuality and Transnationalism's in Kincaid's *My Brother*" (2007); and Jennifer Rahim's "The Operations of the Closet Discourse of Unspeakable Contents in *Black Fauns* and *My Brother*" (2006.) The Holcombs' essay undertakes a psychoanalytic study of sexuality in *The Autobiography of My Mother*, which they read as "the act of breaking silence, the 'crier' using pain and punishment to demonstrate the brutality of history written ineradicable onto the bodies of West Indian people" (996). The focus of the study is "a depiction of a scene of sadomasochism, with an Afro-Carib woman bound by her white European lover, then following the steps typical of S/M psychodrama" (996). The analysis is an interesting one because of the well-known efforts to keep discussions of sexuality on a rather subdued level in the Caribbean and the fact that the passage is actually fairly subtle in

the novel, when compared to some of the other passages that deal with sexuality. The Holcombs argue that the scene permits Xeuila, the female character involved, “to rewrite the history of cruelty and barbarism enacted on her heritage, the centuries of a pain legally regulated, narratologically scripted, epistemologically determined by the master...” (975). That argument of the Holcombs does have credibility, given the history of imposed white male-black female sexual relationships during the period of slavery and colonialism in Antigua and the Caribbean, especially the African Caribbean. Morris’ work examines what she calls “Kincaid’s portrayal of Xuela’s self-making as a re-fashioning of that ‘bleak, black’ space,” from a postcolonial-feminist perspective (954). She argues, “Kincaid constructs a metaphor of sexual devouring as a response to colonial history’s objectifying representation of the Carib people as ravenously sexual and cannibalistic” (954). Again, given the often imposed sexual relationships between the white male slave owner or colonizer and the black female slave or colonized person, Morris’ argument, too, has credibility. Using a queer theory perspective, Chamberlain argues that Kincaid’s “*My Brother* rhetorically queers the characters’ lived experience, the terrain of a Chicago bookstore, and Kincaid’s own homeland of Antigua through Kincaid’s narration of a lesbian woman’s coming-out story” (78). He also argues that, “Kincaid repeatedly leverages her male ‘husband’ as a means to narrate her own heterosexuality” (78). Chamberlain’s arguments might be on somewhat shaky ground, because it seems that Kincaid’s narrative is only reporting the facts, as she knows them. Although she does on occasion offer her opinion on the facts that she learns about, on the occurrences that Chamberlain mentions Kincaid seems to be just repeating what she has learned about her brother, and the people who know him well. And mentioning her husband as she is mentioning the homosexuality of others should not be necessarily taken as a defense of her heterosexuality. Although it is not clear what Rahim’s theoretical framework is if

there is one, she argues that “*My Brother* belongs in the new generation of Caribbean literature that has brought to the table the turbulent geography of sexuality, and openly challenges myth of normative heterosexuality” (1). And she is correct; it does exactly that because homosexuality is virtually a forbidden subject for discussion in Antigua and the Caribbean. Overall, the essays provide further affirmation to some of the things that my study discovered about gender and sexuality in Kincaid’s works, but they provide no formalized, deliberate analysis of how the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment are intersected in Kincaid’s works, as my study does.

Several of the notable essays that analyze the theme of global capitalism and gender with a materialist feminist analysis in the works of Kincaid, in full or in part, include Betty Joseph’s “Gendering Time in Globalization: The Belatedness of the Other Woman and Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy*” (2002); Rick Mitchell’s “Caribbean Cruising: Sex Death and Memories of Congo Darkness” (2003); and Kezia Page’s “What If He Did Not Have a Sister [Who Lived in the United States]?” Jamaica Kincaid’s *My Brother* as Remittance Text” (2006). From a feminist perspective, Joseph argues that Kincaid’s novel *Lucy* “is a classic test of telescoped international division of labor that places two women (Lucy, the young black West Indian nanny and Mariah, her white well-to-do New York boss) from both sides of the divide in a face-off that explores the possibility of an international feminism” (72). The key word that gives Joseph’s argument credibility is “possibility” because both women are feminists in their own right, so the possibility of feminism with an international flavor is a possibility in Mariah’s household as long as Lucy, and Mariah for that matter, remains. But, Lucy, disgruntled by the turn of events back home in Antigua, her multiple sexual relationships, and what seems to be Mariah’s pending breakup with her unfaithful husband, Lewis, departs. Mitchell argues, from a Marxist perspective, that in A

*Small Place*, Kincaid “utilizes irony and a second-person narrative to force the tourist/reader to acknowledge his complicity in Caribbean oppression” (13). Mitchell captures well the intent of Kincaid’s *A Small Place*. Although it is not clear what Page’s theoretical framework is, the essay on Kincaid’s *My Brother*, focuses on Kincaid’s bringing money from her First World home in the United States to pay for the anti-viral drug ATZ for her brother, Devon, in Third World Antigua. “Monetary remittances or unilateral transfers to the Caribbean mirror other cultural transactions, such as literary remittances, which are themselves fraught with problematic social and political implications,” Page argues (38). This is a valid point of view from one perspective, but there are studies that show that there are many people in the Caribbean Diaspora who regularly send money to family members from the United States, Canada, Europe and elsewhere on a regular basis and with no disappointments whatsoever. Overall, however, these essays on the individual theme of global capitalism in Kincaid’s works provide further affirmation of a lot of the things that my study found. However, none of them study the intersection of the themes of global capitalism with gender and sexuality, and the environment themes.

My study found that there are fewer scholarly essays that analyze Kincaid’s dealing with the theme of the environment, including nature and gardening, but there are some. One of the more notable ones is Sarah Phillip Casteel’s “Jamaica Kincaid’s and Michael Pollan’s New World Garden Writing” (2007). With no particular theoretical framework, Casteel, in a comparative study, argues that Kincaid and Pollan “emphasize the relations of power and the histories of dislocation (both human and botanical) that are encoded in New World landscapes and this establishes garden writing as a genre...” (112). Casteel argues further that the genre established by the writers “supports the articulation of a postcolonial sense of place” (112). As with the essays on gender and sexuality, and global capitalism this essay on the environment

theme in Kincaid's works provides further affirmation of some of my study's findings, but it provides no analysis of how the theme of the environment is intersected with the themes of gender and sexuality and global capitalism in Kincaid's works, as mine does.

Most of the attention on Kincaid's work, both books and essays, has been focused on mother-daughter relationships and male-female relationships in general. More critics are beginning to analyze gender and sexuality in her works from a broader perspective, and the same is true for issues of global capitalism in her works. Kincaid's dealing with issues of the environment in her work is receiving far less attention from critics at this time, but that attention is growing. I find it fascinating that three major themes – gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment – do intersect in Kincaid's works and those intersections do enhance and shed additional light on the impact that colonialism, in its cultural, political, and economic dimensions, had in the past and still has on Antigua and the Caribbean today. But this is perhaps not as evident to those who have not read all of Kincaid's works, to the casual reader of her works, or for critics who do not attempt to theorize their connections. For a thorough understanding of the importance and significance of Kincaid's works for the field of postcolonial studies, I believe we must understand how colonialism is the underlying factor in the major themes that she develops and how they intersect or connect with the broader theme of the damaging impact that colonialism had and is having on Antigua and the Caribbean. I first explore the ways Kincaid writes about the gender and sexuality of her characters, and explain how these are related or connected to what she writes about the environment, and global capitalism, and vice versa.

My analysis of the intersection of global capitalism themes with the environment and gender and sexuality themes suggest that colonialism or neo-colonialism is the intersection point

for the three and there are interrelations among these themes as well. My analysis shows that colonialism is an interlocking system that combines male domination, the domination of nature, and ownership of private property, which is a form of capitalist domination. I explore all three of the major themes and how they connect or intersect with what Kincaid has to say about the impact of colonialism on the people of Antigua and the Caribbean, the most dominant theme in her works.

### **Summary of Chapters**

My study is divided into an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. An introduction of the subject matter covered in the study is necessary because there is always the possibility that some readers are not familiar with Kincaid's works and others might be familiar with only some of her works. Four chapters, two of them focusing on gender and sexuality, and the other two focusing on the environment and global capitalism, help facilitate a look in Chapter Five at how each of the three major themes intersect with Kincaid's broader theme, the negative impact of colonialism, and her critique of its impact on Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. How the themes are interrelated or connected to each other is the focus of Chapter Five. The first two chapters focus on gender and sexuality because of its broader coverage in Kincaid's works. A conclusion is useful because it gives the readers some idea about what I believe is accomplished in the study. This way the reader can decide if they agree or disagree.

Chapter One, titled "The Pain of Colonialism in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*" focuses on how colonialism continues to contribute to the difficulty that the two main characters in the stories have in adjusting to life sexually and as young women in general. Annie in *Annie John* and Xuela in *The Autobiography of My Mother* are haunted by the lack of good relationships with their mother (in the case of Annie) and stepmother (in the case of Xuela),



and they find these troubling relationships, which are influenced by the restrictive practices of British colonial rule, a hindrance to their growth and development as young women. I argue that gender and sexual inequalities are central to Annie and Xeula's difficulties and their resistance to the colonial ideologies that imply that women are inferior to men. Kincaid shows the resistance of the characters to these ideologies in a number of ways, among there are rebellion and anger, which is central to the action of the characters in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Two, titled "Anger's 'Gender Equality' in *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter*," I continue my exploration of Kincaid's use of the gender and sexuality theme to show women's resistance to the negative ideological impact of colonial for women. I focus on the complicity of women characters in the novel with male patriarchy and how Kincaid uses the anger of the narrator in *Lucy* toward her mother and the anger of the narrator of *Mr. Potter* toward her father to dramatize the damage of that complicity and emotional and psychological scars left by its colonial ideology on the women. I cite the sources and reasons for the anger of Lucy, the narrator in *Lucy*, and Elaine Potter Richardson (the name of Kincaid at birth), whom we learn later in the story, is the narrator in *Mr. Potter*. I offer a comparison and analysis of the anger shown by the narrators in *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter* over the disappointment in the two main characters' mother and father, respectively, as an illustration of the characters resistance to the negative ideologies of colonialism. I also cite the female complicity with patriarchal rule by Lucy's mother and Elaine's female family caretaker and other women as examples of the impact of negative ideologies. Slave and colonial ideologies contribute to the lack of equality when it comes to both males and females developing their sexuality. I argue further that the outrage and anger vented by the women, who are most affected by this inequality, is directed equally toward women who are

complicit and men who are arrogant practitioners, and this is another way that colonialism has lasting and crippling effects on Antigua and the Caribbean.

Chapter Three, titled “Meditating on Past Colonialism in *My Garden Book*, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, and *At the Bottom of the River*,” explores how Kincaid demonstrates in those three works the connection between environmental destruction and colonial oppression in Antigua and the African Caribbean by engaging in three creative methods – critical meditation, historical reflection, and iconic-dual observation. While Kincaid’s idea of meditation seems to be based on the kind of meditation practiced by Buddhists, which calls for complete reflection and thought on one’s total being, including things about one’s self might not be fully familiar, Kincaid’s meditation seem to have differences too. For example, Kincaid’s meditation on what she perceives as injustices done to Anglophone African Caribbeans and countries of the Caribbean through British patriarchal colonial rule and slavery seems to “pre-meditated” and well thought out, with her knowledge of history. So it is not necessary for her meditations to be long and drawn out, but they are always clear and focused and aimed at explicating the negative impact of centuries of slavery and colonialism on African Caribbeans and their island nations. She approaches the theme of environment (including nature and gardening) as a means of bringing readers to think about the harsh effects of colonialism in ways that they might not normally think about it. Symbols and metaphors that she discover while working in her garden or on a camping trip, for example, often lead to the kind of meditation that she does about Antigua and/or the Caribbean as a whole and the injustices imposed on it by slavery and colonialism , especially the Anglophone African Caribbean. This is Kincaid resisting in the tradition of Cesaire, Fanon, Said, Spivak, and James. The chapter offers an analysis of her meditation and reflection on the environmental damage done to the Caribbean by British

colonials as she establishes her garden at her home in Vermont, her writing about a journey through the Himalayan Mountains to collect flowers and other plants for her home, and her critiquing of the colonial and patriarchal domination of nature in a series of short stories. While, the series of short stories seems to clearly establish Kincaid as an ecofeminist or one who endorses the movement or theory that applies feminist principles and ideas to ecological or environmental issues, I think it can be said that Kincaid's arguments in all three texts – *My Garden Book*, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, and *At the Bottom of the River* – offer an ecofeminist critique of colonialism and the environment.

In Chapter Four, titled “Recolonization in *A Small Place*, *My Brother*, and *Life and Debt*, the focus is on how Kincaid is resisting the negative impact of slavery and colonialism and global capitalism. She does so by focusing on issues like dependence on foreign tourists, foreign financing and high interest rates from the United States and European lenders, and heavy reliance on other nations for such basic needs as food and health care in an anti-capitalism critique of global capitalism in Antigua, Jamaica and the Anglophone African Caribbean. The picture that she presents of the negative impact of global capitalism in the Caribbean is one that amounts to a virtual recolonization of Antigua and other Anglophone African Caribbean nations. The chapter also deals with Kincaid's focus on corruption in Antigua and the Caribbean and provides an analysis of *A Small Place*, *My Brother*, and *Life and Debt* (a documentary film and collaborative work of Kincaid and director-producer Stephanie Black) for what they have to say about the negative impact of global capitalism in Antigua, Jamaica and other parts of the African Caribbean. I argue that Kincaid's arguments in the three texts – *A Small Place*, *My Brother*, and *Life and Debt* constitute an anti-capitalist critique of capitalism.

Chapter Five, titled “Critical Intersections: The Three Themes Come Together,” provides a focus on how Kincaid uses three different techniques or creative methods in her works to show that colonial ideologies related to race, gender, sexuality, and class are related and intertwined with ideologies related to patriarchal domination, economic domination through capitalism, and control of the environment. The chapter, a critique of how these three major themes in Kincaid’s works – gender and sexuality, the environment, and global capitalism intersect and make for a powerful statement about the often insidious effects of colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. It is a continuation of Kincaid’s resistance to 350 plus years of the negative impact of slavery and colonialism on the African Caribbean people of the Caribbean, particularly Antigua and Jamaica, which are the central focus of Kincaid’s work in this study. The whole point of this chapter is to provide the reader, through written illustration and demonstration, a summary of how these three important themes in Kincaid’s works often intersect with each other and how they have meanings that are significant for understanding the messages that are conveyed in her works. I conclude that reading Kincaid’s works are more meaningful when one pays particular attention to her major themes, which include gender and sexuality, the environment, and global capitalism. And further, when paying attention to the three particular themes, the reader will find even more meaning and significance in Kincaid’s work when they are aware of the points at which these themes intersect, blend together, or tie in with each other.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**THE PAIN OF COLONIALISM IN ANNIE JOHN AND THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF MY MOTHER**

**Introduction**

In this chapter, my main argument is that Jamaica Kincaid, in her *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* novels illustrates the damaging effects of the British patriarchal colonial system in twentieth century Antigua and Dominica by showing the ways that it causes deep and lasting physical and psychological pain – pain perpetrated by ideologies of gender/sex that are internalized and replicated by teachers, parents, and lovers.

The physical and psychological pain suffered by Annie, the protagonist in *Annie John*, and Xuela the protagonist in *The Autobiography of My Mother*, is complicated and complex because ideology is complicated and complex. Ideology is complex and complicated, as the *Oxford College Dictionary* states, because it involves “a system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political policy...” (675). And further, ideology is complicated and complex because, as the dictionary defines it, it is “the ideas and manner of thinking of a group, social class, or individual; the critique of bourgeois ideology” (675). Annie and Xuela, the young African Caribbean women who are the main characters in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*, are facing and dealing with a multiplicity of ideologies related to politics, economics, race, and gender in the novels. As Terry Eagleton says, “Nobody has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology” (1). Nevertheless, he has listed “some definitions of ideology currently in circulation,” (1) and my discussion of Kincaid’s multi-dimensional critique of the negative impact of colonialism on gender and sexuality in this chapter will utilize some of those definitions, at one point or another. Those definitions of ideology listed by Eagleton include:

...the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life; a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class; ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power; false ideas which help to legitimate a dominate political power; a systematically distorted communication; that which offers a position for a subject; forms of thought motivated by social interests; identity thinking; socially necessary illusion; the conjuncture of discourse and power; the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world; action-oriented sets of beliefs; the confusion of linguistic phenomenal reality; semiotic closure; the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure; the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality (2).

Although Eagleton's definition of ideology is broader than the one found in most dictionaries, it can serve as a sort of a "working" definition for analyzing the ordeals that protagonists Annie and Xuela are enduring during their coming of age years under British patriarchal colonial rule in Antigua and Dominica in the Anglophone African Caribbean during the mid and early twentieth century. The focus of

Chapter One is on the "pain of colonialism" experienced by Annie and Xuela. By "pain" I mean a category of negative emotions and bodily injuries: fear, alienation, lack of empathy, unhealthy attachments, confusion, loss of identity, physical pain, anguish, etc. From a slave and colonial existence, to a colonial existence, and finally to an existence under independence that is influenced by the ideological legacies of colonialism and slavery, capitalism, and patriarchal rule, African Caribbean women, and Annie and Xuela among them, are affected by a history that is complicated and complex. That kind of pain is reflected in this observation by A. Lynn Bolles in her "Women and Development" essay:

Women of the region (the West Indies, specifically the English-speaking women of the Caribbean, like Antigua and Dominica where Annie and Xuela reside), whether poor or from the working or the upper classes, have been subject to inequalities based on their gender. These gender inequalities have a historical precedent so pronounced that the resultant sociological structures continue to impact every contemporary Caribbean country. Enslavement and its impact on the majority of African-descended women fostered the development of Creole cultures. This slave system constructed social hierarchies of color and class and, in some areas, the indenture of immigrant workers (259).

Bolles' assertion that women from the region "have been subject to inequalities based on their race" has a kind of two-edge sword meaning for these women who are of African descent, in that they faced these inequities not only because of their gender in general, but also because of the fact that they are African Caribbean women, which I will discuss in more detail later. Because there is this multiplicity of pain and the many complexities associated with it, there is a need for redefining the word "pain," associated with African Caribbean women, something that many people still think of as either psychological or physical, but probably not both for many people. I argue that, in the two novels, *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*, the two main female characters, Annie and Xuela, encounter and suffer dual pain, physical and psychological, that stems from gender/sex ideologies and ideologies related to race under colonialism. As Bolles observes, the history of gender (and sexual as well) inequities for African Caribbeans, women in particular, are so deeply entrenched in Antigua and Dominica that they continue even today under African Caribbean rule, and many people, including some scholars, believe they are likely to continue for some time despite the development of women's movement there, such as the one

advocated and articulated by the materialist feminists in this study. However, according to Bolles in her essay, “Doing It for Themselves: Women’s Research and Action in the Commonwealth Caribbean,” “Increasingly, women from the English-speaking Caribbean are engaged in the process of replacing bankrupt ideas with one which positively affect the women of their countries” (153). Bolles adds, “Helping to shape or initiating the course of development for women specifically, or for the nation as a whole, women from the Anglophone Caribbean are clearly audible these days” (153). Organizations cited by Bolles as being involved with the women’s movement in the Anglophone Caribbean include the Women and Development Unit (WAND), the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), and the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN).<sup>1</sup>

I argue that Kincaid’s writings in the two texts studied in Chapter One demonstrate that the “pain” wrought by damaging colonial ideologies of gender/sex is emotional pain felt in the body as a material reality, which is perpetrated by everyday structures that are supposed to nurture and sustain us. Colonialism is felt and lived, in other words. What Kincaid demonstrates here is part of her overall multi-dimensional resistance to colonialism, as the title of this study suggests. The theme focused on here is gender and sexuality under British patriarchal colonial rule in Antigua and Dominica and how two young African Caribbean women fare under it. In this chapter, I illustrate the damage wrought by colonial ideologies of gender/sex and how Kincaid resists it by showing the full spectrum of painful emotions and injuries. I argue that her

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<sup>1</sup> WAND, according to Bolles, was one of the first organizations to focus on women’s issues in the Caribbean. There are four parts to WAND’s programs: consciousness-raising, training, technical assistance, and communications, according to Bolles. It is headquartered at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Bolles says CAFRA “is a group composed of feminists activists and feminists/activists researchers who together construct their own agenda for planning and implementing social change for women throughout the entire region, including Spanish, Dutch, and French-speaking areas. DAWN, which located its secretariat at WAND offices in 1990, according to Bolles, is a network of activist researchers and policy makers from primarily developing countries. “Through its committees it seeks to develop alternative frameworks and methods to attain the goals of economics and social justice, peace, and development free of all form of oppression by gender, class, race, and nationality,” Bolles says.



works demonstrate how these ideologies are internalized into daily life at minute levels of interaction, education and aspiration of Annie and Xuela in early and mid-twentieth century Antigua and Dominica, part of the intricate English-speaking African Caribbean.

### ***Twentieth Century Antigua and Dominica***

Early on in *Annie John*, Annie, the main character, in the mid-twentieth century Antigua narrative comes into conflict with her manners teacher, “someone who knew all about manners and how to meet and greet important people of the world” (27-28), an event that foreshadows many other difficulties that she will have in dealing with gender and sexual inequalities for African-Caribbean females under British colonial rule. *The Autobiography of My Mother* also provides evidence early on that Xuela too, in early twentieth century Dominica, will have multiple struggles with her deep resentment and rebellion against gender and sexual inequality under British patriarchal colonial rule. Part of Annie’s and Xuela’s rejection of British colonial rule seems to be motivated by their perception that the British see themselves as superior, and, therefore they (the British) have inherited authority over African Caribbeans, whom they (the British) view as inferior. The lives of these two African Caribbean young women are hampered by gender and sexuality inequalities in Antigua and Dominica, both small Caribbean West Indies islands, which are populated predominantly by the descendants of former black slaves from Africa. These countries are part of the Anglophone or English-speaking Caribbean. Both are former colonies of England. The hampering of the lives of Annie, in Antigua, and Xuela, in Dominica, is tied to patriarchal British colonial rule in these countries at the time. And patriarchal colonial rule of African Caribbeans is tied directly to British importation of black slaves from Africa to Antigua and Dominica and its colonization of those countries, in which the African Caribbeans worked Britain’s highly lucrative sugarcane crops. This colonization took

place in Antigua between 1632 and 1981, when colonization ended with the country gaining its independence, and between 1635 and 1978, when Dominica gained its independence, after periods of colonization by both France and England. This cumulative history of African Caribbeans in Antigua and Dominica and the rules of patriarchal colonialism that they are forced to live by in the early and mid-twentieth century seeps into the ideology of everyday life or by Eagleton's definition, "the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality," especially for African Caribbean women. So the pain that Annie and Xuela are feeling is not tied or related just to their current circumstances in life, but to their countries with histories not just of gender and racial inequality under colonialism, but of slavery as well. In a sense, the pain is cumulative.

### **The Theoretical Framework**

For my main theoretical framework, I use materialist feminist thought, especially theory that addresses the nexus of gender, race, and class. For example, materialist feminist Hazel Carby has done exemplary work on this historical intersection in her "Listen White Women" essay in *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference and Women's Lives*, edited by Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham. She argues that, "It can be argued that as processes, racism and sexism are similar. Ideologically, for example, they both construct common sense through reference to 'natural' and 'biological' differences" (211). Carby is very much aware that a great deal of the sexual and gender ideology about black women, be they African Caribbean women or black women from the United States, has been derived from distorted or contorted images of their sexual relationships with white male slave masters and colonialists during slavery and colonialism, which I will address later in this chapter. I also use Hennessy and Ingram's definition of gender ideology from their text which says, "An essential feature of capitalism's

gendered division of labor is gender ideology – those knowledges, beliefs, and values that present women’s oppression as natural” (12). I also use comments from other materialist feminists like Maria Mies, from Hennessey and Ingraham’s text and from Mies’ own text, *Patriarchy & Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor*, and from other materialist feminists and non-materialist feminists as well, to enhance my argument. For now, I want to discuss several dimensions of capitalism under colonialism as it relates to the degradation, unequal treatment, and oppression of African Caribbean women.

One such dimension is the center/periphery as it relates to the capitalistic economic system under which British colonists prospered in British controlled Antigua and Dominica. According to *A Dictionary of Sociology*, the center/periphery model or dimension in capitalism “suggests that the global economy is characterized by a structured relationship between economic centers which, by using military, political, and trade power, extract an economic surplus from the subordinate peripheral countries” (<http://www.encyclopedia.com>). The dictionary also notes that, “One major factor in this is the inequality between wage-levels between core and periphery, which make it profitable for capitalist enterprises to locate part of their production in underdeveloped regions (<http://www.encyclopedia.com>). In *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* we see the British patriarchal colonial system at work under a capitalist economic system in which women in general are treated as being unequal to men not only because of gender/sex ideologies, but also because of the center/periphery dimension of global capitalism, which also devalues their work. For the African Caribbean women in the two novels, the unfairness is even greater because of the black/white dimension.

Regarding this historical racial ideology, Carby argues further that, “The fact that black women are subject to the *simultaneous* oppression of patriarchy, class, and ‘race’ is the prime

reason for not employing parallels that render their position and experience not only marginal but also invisible” (211). “Furthermore, we cannot easily separate the two forms of oppression because racist theory and practice is frequently gender specific. Ideologies of black female sexuality do not stem primarily from the black family,” she adds (112). In saying that black female sexuality does not stem directly from the black family, Carby is acknowledging that black females, who have as part of their history slavery and colonialism, have not always had an influence in the development of sexual and gender ideologies about them. And so it is with Annie and Xuela under colonialism, it is the impact of centuries of British slavery and patriarchal colonial rule that disallows them to develop their gender and sexuality roles in a manner that is equal to that of males, be they white and British or African Caribbean males. This study examines the role that colonialism has played in all of this.

While this study examines the role of colonialism as a mode of capitalist accumulation in general, in this chapter I highlight the role of colonial ideologies in general, but also specifically colonial ideologies of gender/sex that have an impact on African Caribbean women. Those distorted or contorted gender and sexual images of African Caribbean women are on display in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* as Annie and Xuela explore and develop their gender and sexuality roles. Carby says, “History has constructed our sexuality and our femininity as deviating from those qualities with which white women, as the prize objects of the Western World, have been endowed. We have also been defined in less than human terms” (110). Also on display in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* is the gendered division of labor as it relates to global capitalism and the false consciousness that it perpetuates. As Eagleton might argue in his definition of ideology, capitalism, as it relates to African

Caribbean women of the early and mid-twentieth century, is a “medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world,” sometimes falsely and in an unequal way.

At the center of this unequal development of gender and sexuality roles for Annie and Xuela, too, is the fact that they face heavy restrictions, in Annie’s case, from her mother, and in Xuela’s case, from her family female caretaker, Eunice Paul, who is also known as Ma Eunice. They also face heavy restrictions from the system of patriarchal colonialism and economic oppression under British capitalism, all of which causes them to feel cornered on their islands, Antigua and Dominica. Annie and Xuela are so heavily affected by gender and racial ideologies that they ultimately end up leaving Antigua and Dominica. In this chapter, I articulate how ideology perpetuates false consciousness and daily practices that inculcate submission and cause pain under a “sexual division of labor,” a division that Mies refers to as an “international division of labor,” which also has a system of race/gender subordination.

In the Caribbean, particularly in Antigua, colonial ideologies developed into a system of race/gender subordination in which skin color marked one’s status and power in a hierarchy of race and class. Gender/sex ideologies were developed to reinforce patriarchal colonial rule in a system that developed a portrayal of black women. As Carby asserts in her *Reconstructing Womanhood* book, “In the face of what was constructed as the overt sexuality of the black female, excluded as she was from the parameter of virtuous possibility, these baser male instincts were entirely uncontrolled...the white slave master was not regarded as being responsible for his actions toward the black females slaves” (27). Carby’s assertion is supported by the writing of Natalie Z. Zacek, who says, “Perhaps the most prevalent image of the English West Indian colonies (like Antigua) in the era of sugar and slavery is of these islands as places of sexual license, in which white settlers enjoyed boundless opportunities for sexual gratification both with

one another and with their slaves” (169). Zacek also writes that, “In order that white women be placed on a pedestal, black and mixed-race women, both enslaved and free, had to assume the blame for all varieties of sexual immorality, to be denigrated universally as libidinous creatures...” (171). This imagery and background serves as a backdrop for the problems that Annie and Xuela, young African Caribbean women living in island countries dominated by the influence of capitalism and patriarchal colonial rule under the British, will face in developing gender and sexuality roles and their economic livelihood. These problems will be reflected in the various dimensions of Annie and Xuela’s lives.

### ***Painful Ideologies in Different Dimensions of Characters’ Lives***

As I have suggested, the two novels, *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*, portray characters as confronting painful colonial ideologies in different dimensions of their daily lives. Both of the texts are laden with examples of how the legacy of British slavery and colonial rule has a negative impact on the lives of these women. I begin with a discussion of how the characters are portrayed as being pained by the domination of their mother and female caretaker, respectively.

Early on in *Annie John*, Annie comes into conflict with her manners and piano teachers because she resents the fact that they are British and she rebels against what she (Annie) perceives as her mother’s desire for her to know “all about manners and how to meet and greet important people in the world” (27-28). She says this about her piano teacher: “The piano teacher, a shriveled-up old spinster from Lancashire, England, soon asked me not to come back, since I seemed unable to resist eating from the bowl of plums she had placed on the piano purely for decoration” (28). As materialist feminist Lindsey German states, “It is simply not true that sex roles and gender definition are always forced on women” (157). “Often women are some of

the strictest enforcers of oppressive sex roles as for example when mothers force their daughter to conform to these roles,” she adds (157). In this case, because of what Annie refers to as “this young lady business” her mother sends her to a teacher who is English to learn to be a “proper young lady.” When Annie performs acts of rebellion with the manners teacher she is sent for sessions with the piano teacher, whom she also rebelled against. A similar rebellion takes place with Xuela in *The Autobiography of My Mother*.

*The Autobiography of My Mother* also provides evidence that Xuela too struggles early on with resentment and rebellion against British colonial rule. She says, “That the first words I said were in the language of a people I would never like or love is not now a mystery to me; everything in my life, good or bad, to which I am inextricably bound is a source of pain” (7). So there are very clear indications that their problems in accepting British colonial rule and resentment toward their mother and family female caretaker will add complexity to any other problems that Annie and Xuela might have later in life. Therein lies the theme – the pain of colonization – of this chapter. In one scene in *The Autobiography of My Mother* Xuela faces disappointment when she breaks a piece of china in the home of Ma Eunice, her family female caretaker. Here is the way that Xuela expresses her disappointment and resentment for Ma Eunice’s punishment for her breaking the china and its lack of effectiveness or impact on her (Xuela). “Why should this punishment have made a lasting impression on me, redolent as it was in every way of the relationship between captor and captive, master and slave, with its motif of the big and the small the powerful and powerless, the strong and the weak...” (10)? Xuela sees Ma Eunice’s irritation, caused by her (Xuela’s) breaking of the china, as an obsession with the mimicking of British culture and values. “She meant to keep me in this position until I said the word ‘I am sorry,’ but I would not say them, I could not say them,” Xuela says (10). “It was

beyond my will; these words could not past my lips. I stayed like that until she exhausted herself cursing me and all whom I came from,” she adds (10). This cold, detached, rebellious attitude of Xuela is part of the pain and oppression that she and Annie face.

At one point in *Annie John*, Annie refers to the routine that her father practices every morning as her mother prepares his breakfast before he departs for work, which includes shaving and then stepping outside to a shed to bathe in cold water because he believes that it will strengthened his back. The morning rituals that both her mother and father conform to begin precisely at seven with the stroke of the bell at the Anglican church. Early on Annie recognizes that under British colonial rule females, whether they are girls or grown women, are expected to conform to practices that are different than those that males are expected to follow. This passage is sort of a forecast of the shift in the mother-daughter relationship for Annie, the narrator, and her mother, from one of warmth and closeness to one that is laden with conflicts:

During my holidays from school, I was allowed to stay in bed until long after my father had gone to work... I would lie in bed awake, and I could hear all of the sounds my parents made as they prepared for the day ahead. My mother made my father his breakfast, my father would shave, using his shaving brush that had an ivory handle and razor that matched; then he would step outside to the little shed he had built for us as a bathroom to quickly bathe in water that he had instructed my mother to leave overnight in the dew (13).

This routine is an example of materialist feminist Mies' patriarchy and accumulation argument about the gendered division of labor. She says in her *Patriarch and Accumulation on a World Scale* book that, “The concept of labor is usually reserved for men’s productive work under capitalist conditions, which means work for the production of value.” (45). She adds, “Though



women also perform such surplus value–generating labor, under capitalism the concept of labor is generally used with a male or patriarchal basis because under capitalism, women are typically defined as housewives, that means as non-workers” (46-47). Mies’ contention is that housewives in the capitalist division of labor are not given adequate credit for all of the work and contributions to the system of production that they deserve. She also contends that much of what housewives do is not even considered work in the capitalist division of labor. Recognizing the differences in expectations and the treatment of males and females under British colonial rule, Annie says, “If I had been a boy, I would have gotten the same treatment, but since I was a girl, and on top of that went to school only with other girls, my mother would always add some hot water to my bathwater to take off the chill” (12-13). Annie recognizes early in her life that the way females are treated and accepted or not accepted in Antiguan society will be considerably different from the treatment and acceptance that males receive. A number of Eagleton’s definitions of ideology are applicable here, like “ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power,” “the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relation to a social structure,” “identity thinking,” and “the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality,” for example. Annie’s ideas or thoughts about the inequality of her predicament as it relates to daily routines and certain expectations “legitimizes” the dominance of male patriarchy or “political power.” And *conforming* to certain daily routines and expectations is the “indispensable medium” that females must use to be accepted by males in Antigua and African Caribbean society. Annie’s thinking about the expectations for her as a female involves “identity thinking,” thinking about her identity as a female and her role in Antiguan society. This whole process of Annie’s thinking about her predicament amounts to “the process whereby social life is

converted to a natural reality,” in accordance with Eagleton’s definition of ideology. Similar struggles against the negative impact of British patriarchal colonial rule are also faced by Xuela.

Xuela, too, has an early awakening to the inequities and incongruities of British colonial rule, but from an African Caribbean woman. She says, “My teacher was a woman who had been trained by Methodist missionaries; she was of the African people, that I could see, and she found in this a source of humiliation and self-loathing, and she wore despair like an article of clothing, like a mantle, or a staff on which she leaned constantly...” (15). Xuela’s teacher’s “humiliation and self-loathing” probably stems from what Mies calls a “double-faced” practice that boomeranged on the colonizers in the Caribbean in the nineteenth century” (177). She notes that:

In order to be able to freely exploit the slaves, they had for centuries defined them outside humanity and Christianity. In this they were supported by the ethnologists who said that the Negroes did not belong to the same ‘species’ as the Europeans. Hence, slaves could not become Christians because according to the Christian Church England no Christian could be a slave” (177).

This is an example of pain produced by colonial racism. Early on Xuela recognizes that British colonialism, and earlier slavery, has left African Caribbeans, or at least some of them, with an identity deficit, which has caused them to not be able to appreciate or not relate to their native and/or indigenous culture and values. This is most evident in the fact that Xuela objects to the imposition of the language and religion of the British. Her Methodist-taught African Caribbean teacher personifies both through her action, which are approved by her family female caretaker, Ma Eunice.

The fact that their mother and family female caretaker’s expects loyalty and allegiance to, and adoration of the British Empire and England, its center, disturbs both Annie and Xuela

throughout the texts. But both Annie and Xuela find themselves internalizing this rage, because they don't feel that they can talk about it with the women whom they have the closest relationship with, Annie with her mother and Xuela with Ma Eunice. Annie is confused and finds odd or strange the talk of some of her classmates: "One girl told of a much revered and loved aunt who now lived in England and of how much she looked forward to one day moving to England to live with her aunt; one girl told of her brother studying medicine in Canada and the life she imagined he lived there ..." (40). Xuela, who seems to be aware of much of England's former colonial possessions, is probably aware that Canada, also a former British colony (majority white) has prospered since its independence from Britain, as opposed to the predominantly black Antigua's struggle with poverty. However, she finds disturbing some words at the top of a map in her classroom. "There was a large wooden table and a chair facing the three long desks; on the wall behind the wooden table and chair was a map; at the top of the map were the words 'THE BRITISH EMPIRE.' These were the first words I learned to read," she says (14). Eagleton's definition of ideology comes into play here because of the "body of ideas" embraced in the establishment of and maintenance of the British Empire. Both women learn early about the vastness of the former British Empire and how it influenced the rest of the world, especially their Antigua and Dominica, and they also learn firsthand that that influence was, and is, often negative. A case in point is the fact that both Annie's and Xuela's coming of age sexually is also troubling, because of the restrictions or perhaps ineptness of the key female figures in their lives, who by tradition are expected to be nurturers and teachers for young women. Annie is surprised at the "small turfs of hair" under her arms and has a confused response when she begins menstruating, a clear indication that she is having problems developing her sexuality:

On the morning of the first day I started to menstruate, I felt strange in a new way – hot and cold at the same time, with horrible pains running up and down my legs. My mother, knowing what was the matter, brushed aside my complaints and said that it was all to be expected and I would soon get used to everything. Seeing my gloomy face, she told me in a half-joking way all about her own experience with the first step in coming of age, as she called it, which had happened when she was as old as I was (51).

This is a very nurturing moment for Annie. But despite the mother's sharing knowledge with Annie about her sexuality, the immediate impediment to Annie having a *thorough* knowledge of her sexuality is still her mother, who is the enforcer of British customs and tradition in their household, and the difficulty and complex relationship she has with Annie. She seems either to not be able to bring herself to talk in a more enlightened and encouraging way to Annie about what she has experienced in her sexuality development or to feel she would be violating what she believes British customs and traditions call for in such a matter.

Then, there is the coming of age situation with Xuela. After she has resided with Ma Eunice for years, her father, in what seems to be a rather abrupt manner, decides that she (Xuela) should go to live with Monsieur and Madam LaBatte, an older middle class couple whom he has befriended. All of this takes place without any questions raised by caretaker Ma Eunice. Xuela is oppressed and abused by Mr. LaBatte. At the age of sixteen Xuela becomes Monsieur LaBatte's mistress and is impregnated by him with the permission of Madame LaBatte. This whole situation is frustrating to Xuela, not only because of the way her sexuality is developing but also because she never understood Monsieur and Madam LaBatte. Xuela asks, "To want desperately to marry men, I have come to see, is not a mistake women make, it is only, well, what else is left for them to do? I was never told why she (Madam LaBatte) wanted to marry him (Monsieur

LaBatte)” (64). How can Xuela’s sexual submission to Monsieur LaBatte be explained? One explanation might be that concubinage, a practice that was widespread in the Caribbean during slavery never ended. In the practice of concubinage white male slave owners kept black females in their homes for sexual services with the knowledge of their white wives. “Concubinage was not a sexual transgression against domestic life, which is a reading we have inherited from the abolitionist and missionaries who condemned the practice as immoral,” writes Jenny Sharpe (xxii). “Rather, it was part of a normative West Indian domesticity in which slave women served in such intimate capacities as the surrogate mothers of white children, secondary wives of white men, and mothers of their mixed-race children” (xxii). It can be argued with a great deal of credibility, I believe, that Xuela’s relationship with Monsieur LaBatte is the equivalent of twentieth century concubinage.

Although the text does not identify Monsieur LaBatte as white or of European descent, his sexual relations with Xuela could at the very least be described as a continuation of the patriarchal rule that was practiced under slavery and colonialism, even if he is African Caribbean. Ultimately Xuela will undergo the dark experience of getting an apparently illegal, secretive, and pain-filled abortion by a woman who has practiced on many women in her secluded area. This is the scene that Kincaid portrays:

She (a woman called ‘Sange-Sange’) gave me (Xuela) a cupful of thick black syrup to drink and then led me to a small hole in a dirt floor to lie down. For four days I lay there, my body a volcano of pain; nothing happened, and for four days after that blood flowed from between my legs slow and steadily like an eternal spring. And then it stopped. The pain was like nothing I had ever imagined before, it was as if it defined pain itself; all other pain was only a reference to it, an imitation of it, an aspiration to it. I was a new

person then, I knew things I had not known before, I knew things that you can know only if you have been through what I had just been through. I had carried my own life in my own hands (82).

This passage illustrates clearly the theme of this chapter, whose focus is on the physical and psychological pain suffered by the characters in these texts. It seems that Eagleton's "socially necessary illusion" definition of ideology comes into play here, in that the characters seem to take as the norm an African Caribbean teen's pregnancy and the acceptance as the norm the corruptive practice of back-alley abortions, whereas in reality the pain and shame associated with it says it is not. The illegal abortion received by Xuela in a hidden location is in contrast to the situation that Mies describes in France in 1971 when many prominent women signed a declaration that they had had abortions and many women took to the streets to protest abortion laws. "The women who had come out into the streets did not want to disappear again in the anonymity of their isolated homes. They were keen to join or form new women's groups. These women's groups discussed initially the problems of the abortion law," she says (25). "But soon they developed into consciousness-raising groups, where not only problems of abortion were discussed, but experiences were exchanged about one's sexuality, one's experience as a mother, a lover, a wife," she adds (25). This kind of outpouring of resistance or rebellion in situations like Xuela's or elsewhere in the Caribbean in the early twentieth century, in light of the continuing patriarchal rule that is thriving under colonial rule at the time, was not likely to happen. Nevertheless, it is this kind of postcolonial materialist feminist action that Mies and Hennessy and Ingraham advocate for bringing about the necessary reforms to insure gender and sexual equality for women. According to Bolles in her "Doing It For Themselves: Women's Research and Action in the Commonwealth Caribbean" essay, a few years after the women protested

abortion laws in France similar women's movements in the English-speaking Caribbean were initiated. She writes in her "Doing It Themselves: Women's Research and Action in the Commonwealth Caribbean" essay:

In many ways the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) fueled the current research, the scholarship, and activism by and on women in the English-speaking Caribbean. From the region, many women researchers, scholars, and activists engaged in development projects or conducted research on women-focused issues because of their own stake in the process. Caribbean women acted as concerned citizens, as members of government agencies and educational institutions, as members of political parties and women's activists groups, and as scholars committed to social change (169).

However, this movement for changing the system of patriarchal oppression of women in the African Caribbean came too late to have an impact on the coming of age lives of Annie and Xuela. Even though they live in separate island countries in the African Caribbean the impact of patriarchal rule under British colonialism on their lives is similar.

Like Annie, who lives on the small island of Antigua, Xuela, who lives in Dominica, another small island in the Caribbean, is pained by the legacies of racism and colonial rule and their restrictions, especially the double standards for development of male and female gender and sexuality roles. Annie is frustrated when her mother tells her to recognize that she is approaching womanhood because she is not sure what all of the implications of that statement are:

...My mother informed me that I was on the verge of becoming a young lady, so there were quite a few things I would have to do differently. She didn't say exactly just what it was that made me on the verge of becoming a young lady, and I was so glad of that, because I

didn't want to know. Behind a closed door, I stood naked in front of a mirror and looked at myself from head to toe. I was so long and bony that I more than filled up the mirror, and my small ribs pressed out against my skin (26-27).

The implications of "becoming a young lady" for Annie's mother probably stemmed from an idealized twentieth century version of the expected role of white women during slavery. What Hazel Carby says about the so-called idealized-woman in American literature in the twentieth century is probably not far from the expectation for African Caribbean women during the same period. According to Carby in her *Reconstructing Womanhood Book*, "The parameters of the ideological discourse of true womanhood were bound by a shared social understanding that external physical appearance reflected internal qualities of character and therefore provided an easily discernible indicator of the function of a female of the human species..." (25). Carby adds, "Men associated 'the idea of female softness and delicacy with a correspondent delicacy of constitution' and recoiled if a woman spoke of 'her great strength, her extraordinary appetite,' or 'her ability to bear excessive fatigue.'" (25). The epitome of Annie's frustrations and confusion about what it means to become a woman and the development of her sexuality is probably found in passages from *Annie John* where Annie is humiliated, abused and embarrassed by a male student. This scene takes place when Annie encounters, Mineu, a male student whom she has thought fondly of until he almost succeeded in accidentally hanging himself while re-enacting a murder that took place years ago:

At first, he (Mineu) just looked at me. Then he said, 'Oh, yes. Annie. Annie John. I remember you. I had heard you were a big girl now.' As he said this, he shook my outstretched hand. His friends stood off to one side, a little bit apart from us. They stood in that ridiculous way of boys: one leg crossing the other, hand jammed deep into their



pockets, eyes looking you up and down. They were whispering things to each other, and their shoulders were heaving with amusement – at me, I could only suppose (99). The near-fatal incident involving Mineu had happened when he and Annie were younger and were playing together. Both of their mothers had become disturbed by the incident. Now, years later, Mineu seems undaunted by the incident and treats Annie in a very condescending manner. “He and his friends walked off, their backs shaking with laughter – at me, no doubt,” she says (100). This situation seems to fit circumstances described by Linden Lewis in conjunction with male masculinity in the Caribbean. Lewis says, “If at one level masculinity is about acquiring, maintaining, or reproducing power, then it invariably comes into conflict with femininity, which is forced into struggling politically to claim a space – a right to coexist – in this social matrix” (97-98). Annie is still embarrassed by the near fatal incident that both she and Mineu remember from years ago, but she is polite and remains silent while Mineu maintains a posture of arrogance and disrespect toward her. As Lewis asserts, when she “comes into conflict” with this arrogance and disrespect she struggles for a “right to co-exist.” It could be said, in terms of the gender and sexual inequalities that Annie and Xuela face under British colonial rule, that they are both indeed struggling for the “right to exist,” and struggling as “dependents” as Mies might see it in a gendered division of labor under the capitalist structure of colonialism. They are the victims of an ideology that says women are weak and dependent on men for their existence and well-being. In most societies mothers are expected to be the ones who help daughters or females in this sort of “battle of the sexes” or struggle for the “right to exist.” In *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*, Annie and Xuela are not getting the support that they need in their struggle. That lack of sufficient support, especially from the mother and caretaker, is one of the subthemes of this chapter.

I argue that Annie and Xuela's frustrations with the development of their gender and sexuality roles during their coming of age years can be attributed to their mother and family female caretaker's expectations for their adherence to British values, traditions, and customs. Because this inadequacy is so dominant in Annie's mother and Ma Eunice, they forget how essential their roles are as educators, nurturers, and encouragers during this period. On the other hand, this focus on how widespread and important the role, or division of labor is for the mother and caretaker reinforces Hennessy and Ingraham's postcolonial materialist feminist argument. While the shortcomings of Annie's mother and Xuela's female caretaker, Ma Eunice, are apparent in the texts, the broadness of their work and responsibilities is not always so apparent. Apparent or not, or measured or not, that broadness exists and the mother and caretaker are falling short in the meeting of their responsibilities for their respective young women. We see through the mother and Ma Eunice that patriarchal British colonial rule holds them responsible for seeing that these young women display "ladylike" behavior and develop into fully grown women in accordance with British values, traditions, and customs. We also see that both Annie and Xuela are not only confused by the meanings of these expectations for their coming of age, they reject them. All of this is an illustration of the gender/sex ideology of colonialism. It is an illustration of Eagleton's "signs and values in social life" definition of ideology. In the mostly absence of the fathers, the mother and female caretaker are not doing a very good job of what is expected of them under patriarchy and British colonial rule. Although the mother and Ma Eunice do not have to bear the economic responsibility for the family, as many African Caribbean mothers do, they are still laden with a disproportionate share of the child rearing responsibilities. That can be attributed to the unfair and unequal division of labor that Mies attributes to patriarchal rule. Jaipaul L. Roopnarine notes that, "Within the patriarchal strictures of Caribbean

society, women must battle with the duality of designating family headship to men while shouldering a lion's share of the child rearing..." (74). As I reveal throughout this chapter, this gendered division of labor causes a great deal of pain, both physical and emotional, for Annie and Xuela.

The characters in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* are portrayed as being pained by the imposition of British education, culture, and values in their daily lives. Take this passage, for example, where Annie is responding to the manner of her headmistress at school. "...The headmistress, Miss Moore. I knew right away that she had come to Antigua from England, for she looked like a prune left out of its jar a long time and she sounded as if she had borrowed her voice from an owl. The way she said, 'Now, girls...'" (36). While Annie might have already been somewhat rebellious against the authority of any adult, it seems that her rebellion is reinforced or doubled here against Miss Moore because of cultural and racial differences. Then there is that sense by Xuela that the British projects the "mother country" to be the ideal, superior to all others. That is reflected when Xuela encounters a picture of England's countryside. She says:

Of course it was not a picture of heaven at all; it was a picture of the English country idealized, but I did not know that, I did not know that such a thing as the English countryside existed. And neither did Eunice (who reared her at a young age); she thought that this picture was a picture of heaven, offering as it did a secret promise of a life without worry or care or want (9).

The picture that Xuela observes is a reminder of the English pastoral, which Rob Nixon reminds us to view with caution. "As an imaginative tradition, English pastoral has long been both nationally definitive and fraught with anxiety. At the heart of the English pastoral lies the idea of

the nation as garden idyll into which neither labor nor violence intrudes.” he says (239). “To stand as a self-contained national heritage landscape, English pastoral has depended on the screening out of colonial spaces and histories, much as the American wilderness ideal has entailed an amnesiac relationship toward Amerindian wars of dispossession” (239). So Xuela is wise beyond her years in rejecting the imagery that is fostered on her by the picture that she sees, a picture that, for Annie, probably obliterates the British history of slavery and colonialism. Such a thought for her is probably not only unrealistic, it is probably also confusing and depressing.

Being forced to study British literature by authors with whom they cannot identify is another source of frustration, anxiety, bitterness and stress for both Annie and Xuela. Annie apparently becomes somewhat disturbed when one day at school she sees her teacher, Miss Nelson, reading William Shakespeare’s drama *The Tempest*, which has been portrayed by many critics as the earliest text to deal with the initial or coming expansion of the British Empire and its colonization, slavery, etc. She says:

The morning was uneventful enough; a girl spilled ink from her inkwell all over her uniform; a girl broke her pen nib and then made a big to-do about replacing it...All this Miss Nelson must have seen and heard, but she didn’t say anything – only kept reading her book: an elaborately illustrated edition of *The Tempest*, as later, passing by her desk, I saw (39).

The text of the drama has been assailed by many postcolonial critics for its portrayal of Prospero, its main character, as the stranded duke of Milan, stranded on an island, where he treats Caliban, a supposedly savage “other” native of the island, with contempt, harshness, and indignity.

According to Peter Hulme, “*The Tempest* takes place in the dangerous waters between Naples

and Tunis,” (56) but it might just as well have taken place in the Caribbean when we analyze it for its impact on postcolonial thought. One of the major disagreements that critics have about the text is whether Caliban actually attempts to rape Prospero’s daughter, Miranda. Even critics who see Miranda as the victim of attempted rape question what *The Tempest* implies about the legitimacy of British expansionism and its stereotyping of the sexuality and intellectual capacity of indigenous people beyond the British borders at that time. For example, Paul Brown writes:

The issue here is not whether Caliban is actually a rapist or not, since Caliban accepts the charge. I am rather concerned with the political effects of this charge at this moment in the play. The first effect is to circumvent Caliban’s version of events by reencoding his boundlessness as rapacity: his inability to discern a concept of private, bounded property concerning his own dominion is reinterpreted as a desire to violate the chaste virgin, who epitomizes courtly property. Second, the capacity to divide and order is shown to be the prerogative of the courtly ruler alone. Third, the memory legitimizes Prospero’s takeover of power (131-51).

This can also be seen as an example of Eagleton’s “conjecture of discourse and power” definition of ideology, whereby false, misinterpreted, or distorted information is used as an argument for acquiring and maintaining power over a segment of the population. Even at her young age, Annie has apparently heard negative interpretations of *The Tempest* by others, so to discover that her teacher is so obsessed with reading the book that she is either unaware of or indifferent to problems or misbehavior in her classroom is highly disturbing to Annie. The disdain for the way that early British literature portrays people who are of a different race or speak a different language has *not* always received the focus of critics. According to Ania Loomba, “The relationship between colonialism and literature was not, until recently, dealt with

by literary criticism” (63). “Today, the situation seems to be rapidly reversing itself, with many,” she adds (63). Loomba also notes that:

Imperial historians even claimed that English literature (especially Shakespeare), and English education in general, had fostered ideas of liberty and freedom in native populations and that it took Western Enlightenment notions of democracy and fraternity to make Indians or Africans demand equality for themselves! This dynamic is perhaps best symbolized by Shakespeare’s Caliban. (79).

There are also other passages in the two Kincaid texts where English literature, or Annie and Xuela’s being forced to study it, causes resentment. In one scene in *Annie John*, for example, Annie shows resentment toward *Paradise Lost* because she has to make copies of it as punishment by her headmistress. She says, “I was ordered to copy books I and II of *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton and to have it done a week from that day. I then couldn’t wait to get home to lunch and the comfort of my mother’s kisses and arms” (82). This seems to be another one of those nurturing and comforting moments for Annie from her mother, but the unfortunate part is that they are fleeting, not lasting. It seems that Annie is exhausted, because of resentment, by the very thought of having to copy *Paradise Lost*, a book that she apparently has come to detest. But there is also a scene where Annie actually speaks favorably of a British literary text, although perhaps not for exactly all of the right reasons. She says of Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*:

My most frequent daydream now involved scenes of my living alone in Belgium, a place I had picked when I read in one of my books that Charlotte Bronte, the author of my favorite novel, *Jane Eyre*, had spent a year or so there. I also picked it because I imagined that it would be a place my mother would find difficult to travel to and so would have to write me letters addressed in this way: *To: Miss Annie Victoria John, Somewhere, Belgium* (92).

So British literature has both negative and positive impacts on the two protagonists. On the one hand it causes resentment because they are forced to learn and practice, or appreciate, the culture of other people and not their own, but on the other hand some of the literature offers hopes or dreams of something more positive than the restrictions and degradation of colonialism. Carby's assertion that black women, African Caribbean women in this case, "are subject to the *simultaneous* oppression of patriarchy, class, and 'race' is evident in the two texts. Another negative for Annie, however, is that the literature, in this case, encourages the thought of her withdrawal from her mother in a way that is not positive. This portrayal of ambivalence, or shifting back and forth on some issues, is characteristic of Kincaid in much of her work, especially her multi-dimensional critiques of gender/sex, the environment, and global capitalism as they relate to colonialism, which is the overall focus of this study.

Then there are examples in the texts where both Annie and Xuela feel that they are victims because they resent having to honor others' mimicry of British culture and values, as was the case with Xuela and the breaking of Ma Eunice's china. On one occasion Xuela finds very disconcerting what she observes and hears among the congregants of her church as they say goodbye to each other and head to their homes after worship:

They bade each other goodbye and returned to their homes, where they would drink a cup of English tea, even though they were quite aware that no such thing as a tea tree grew in England, and later that night, before they went to bed, they would drink a cup of English cocoa, even though they were quite aware that no such thing as a cocoa tree grew in England (142).

Xuela finds disturbing African Caribbeans' adoption of or mimicking of British traditions, culture, and values, instead of practicing their own. Annie also finds disturbing a similar kind of situation when she encounters four boys across the street from her:

I was about to do this (sit on the sidewalk and cry) when I noticed four boys standing across the street from me; they were looking at me and bowing as they said, in an exaggerated tone of voice, pretending to be grownup gentlemen living in Victorian times, 'Hallo, Madame. How are you this afternoon?' and 'What a pleasant thing, our running into each other like this,' and 'we meet again after all this time,' and 'Ah, the sun, it shines and shines only on you" (95).

Annie seems particularly disturbed by the incident of harassment and mockery, which she viewed as mimicry of British men's often-insincere approach to British women during the Victorian Era of the nineteenth century, perhaps because of something she said earlier in the text. She had said, "All of us celebrated Queen Victoria's birthday, even though she had been dead a long time. But we, the descendants of the slaves, knew quite well what had really happened, and I was sure that if the tables had been turned we would have acted differently" (76). Annie's reference to Queen Victoria seems to be a reference to her long reign, the longest of any British monarch at the time. The era is known as a period in which women endured severe restrictions of their gender and sexuality roles, while men's freedoms received few restrictions. It seems that for Annie, understanding the complexities of British colonization and why it lasted so long is oppressive enough, but her male peers' practice of mimicry about the era adds yet another layer of oppression and frustration. The young men seemingly wanting to adopt or continue the traditions, culture, and values of their former colonizers only adds to Annie's coming of age bitterness and oppression. So her bitterness and oppression become continuous.



A pattern of continuous rebellion or resistance becomes characteristic of both Annie and Xeuila, throughout *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*. The rebellion is against a multitude of things, from British education to culture, historical figures to literary figures, language to values, etc. And in their rebellion, the girls (later women) find that their rebellion, while it might satisfy their desire to resist, is having a negative impact on their character and outlook on life. For example, Annie develops a sense of guilt that makes her feel undeserving of winning first place in a history competition because of her misbehavior:

For taking first place over all the other girls, I had been given a prize, a copy of the book called *Roman Britain*, and I was made perfect of my class. What a mistake the perfect part had been, for I was among the worst-behaved in my class and did not at all believe in setting myself up as a good example, the way a perfect was supposed to do (72-73).

Annie admits her dislike of girls from England and continues her misbehavior toward them. She notes, for example, “Ruth I like, because she was such a dunce and came from England and had yellow hair. When I first met her, I used to walk her home and sing bad songs to her just to see her turn pink, as if I had spilled hot water all over her” (73). On the other hand, Xuela rebels against or rejects the idea of reading a book on John Wesley, one of England’s earliest and most prominent Protestant religious leaders:

He (her father) gave me books to read. He gave me a life of John Wesley, and as I read it I wondered what the life of a man so full of spiritual tumult and piety had to do with me. My father had become a Methodist, he attended church every Sunday; he taught Sunday school. The more he robbed, the more money he had, the more he went to church; it is not an unheard-of linking (40).

Xuela's feelings about having to read a book about John Wesley reflect on more than just the British and colonization. They also reveal her feelings of contradiction about the British's teaching and actual practice of their religious values as well as their adoption of and contradictory teaching-practice of these values by African Caribbeans, including her father. Her suggestion that her father is corrupt is significant because corruption, which often runs rampant in former colonized countries like Antigua and Dominica, is one of the negative legacies left by British colonization, a theme that I will deal with in Chapter Four where the main focus will be global capitalism. Largely, the empire being driven by patriarchy, capitalism, slavery, and a desire to proselytize the Christian religion, can explain the long endurance of British colonization and its many negative effects. Knowledge of this is a part of what drives Annie and Xuela's resentment.

There are also other resentments that Annie and Xuela have for the British. For example, Annie was offended by the thought that a girl by the name of Ruth might have been brought to Antigua from England when she really did not want to be there. She says, "Ruth had come all the way from England. Perhaps she did not want to be in the West Indies at all. Perhaps she wanted to be in England, where no one would remind her constantly of the terrible things her ancestors had done..." (76). Xuela took offense at the fact that she (Xuela) "knew the history of an array of people I would never meet" (59). "That in itself should not have kept me from knowing of them; it was that this history of people that I would never meet - Romans, Gauls, Saxons, Britons, the British people - had behind it a malicious intent: to make me feel humiliated, humbled, small," she adds (59). Then there is the scene, where Xuela is walking on the road between Roseau and Potter's Ville in Dominica, when she remembers the story about a man of Carib (indigenous people of the Caribbean) and European ancestry who was murdered by his half-brother, an

Englishman. She says, “It was at Massacre that Indian Warner, the illegitimate son of a Carib woman and a European man, was murdered by his half-brother, an Englishman named Philip Warner, because Philip Warner did not like having such a close relative whose mother was a Carib woman” (87). Apparently people who were of mixed race backgrounds lived in great danger for a long period in the West Indies. This remembrance by Xuela instills fear in her because she too has Carib ancestry. She is filled with so much fear that she “passed through Mahaut (another town or village in Dominica) crawling on my stomach, for I was afraid I would be recognized” (88). As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin note, some of the worse features of colonialism took place in the Caribbean with the annihilation of native populations. They write:

In the Caribbean, the European imperial enterprise ensured that the worst features of colonialism throughout the globe would all be combined in the region: the virtual annihilation of the native population of Caribs and Arawaks; the plundering and internecine piracy amongst the European powers; the deracination and atrocities of the slave trade and plantation slavery, and the subsequent systems of indenture which ‘stranded’ Chinese and Indians in the Caribbean when the return clauses of indenture contracts were dishonored (145-46).

To be so afraid that she crawls for the length of time that she did, apparently Xuela knows at least a part of this history of her people. This kind of fear is perhaps also part of what drives the deep dislike and resentment of the British by Annie and Xuela, and their sometimes erratic and sometimes not-so-honorable behavior. Their pain seems endless.

Finally there is the pain and confusion over class issues that are so prominent in the resentment, bitterness, and pain that both Annie and Xuela feel because of British colonial rule in

their countries, Annie in Antigua, and Xuela in Dominica. This is apparent when Annie's Brownie troop is surrounding the flagpole as the British flag is raised. "We began our meeting with the whole troop standing in the yard of the Methodist church forming a circle around the flagpole, our eyes following the Union Jack as it was raised up; then we swore allegiance to our country, by which was meant England," she says (115). Lack of or loss of identity by one when they feel that they do not fit in with a certain social or economic class and the struggle to gain or regain it are some of the major problems that are common to the people of all colonized or former colonized countries, whether they are in the Caribbean, Asia, Africa or some other part of the world. This seems to be the case with both Annie and Xuela, and in this case, Xuela, when she does not feel comfortable in saluting the British flag because of her lower social class. That is also evident when Xuela becomes distraught with her father, a wealthy and corrupt policeman in Dominica, who is supposed to distribute surplus materials to the poor, but refuses to give a poor man by the name of Lazarus nails. "I loved to look at him (her father) when he wore his dress uniform of navy-blue serge pants and white cotton twill jacket with gold buttons, the uniform he wore to a parade celebrating the English king's birthday," Xuela says (189). "But at that moment when he denied Lazarus the nails, he started to become real, not just my father, but who he might really be," she add (189). Xuela's father's lack of empathy for his own people, African Caribbeans, is produced by colonial racism. This is not so much a problem for him because his job and economic status with the colonial administration blinds him to his plight, but it is very troubling and unpleasant to Xuela because she is not blind to it. "My father did dispose of some of the things in the proper way, giving them to people in need, but just enough not to cause a scandal; the rest he sold, and the more a person was unable to pay, the more they were in need, the more he charged them," she says (188). Her well-to-do father does not show empathy

for the poor, a status that describes most African Caribbeans, his own people, in both Antigua and Dominica.

Further evidence of Xuela's father's lack of empathy is evident when she says, "And what could my father have been thinking as he sat in that room, as he sat on a chair which was a copy of a chair seen in a painting of some dreadful Englishman's drawing room, a chair copied by the hands of someone of whom he had no doubt taken advantage" (190)? The father has lost his empathy for his own people; his mimicry of the British is embarrassing to Xuela. Hennessy and Chrys, Mies, Carby and other materialist feminists would probably argue that strong advocates of capitalism view Xuela's feelings of oppression over her father's lack of empathy and Annie's feelings of oppression over having to swear allegiance to "our country" as "natural" for women. This is the kind of situation in which Kincaid, in accordance with Hennessy and Chrys, Mies, Carby, etc. al, seems to be saying in essence, "Not so fast, let's get this straight! Enough is enough!" But the painful ideologies of colonialism continue to thrive, causing even more pain.

### ***Living with Multiple Pain of Gender/Sex Ideologies***

The novels demonstrate that "pain" is felt in multiple ways and lived by women dealing with colonial ideologies of gender/sex. For example, Annie and her friends meet secretly among the tombstones in the cemetery to rub their breasts. They believe that their breasts will grow if a boy massages them, but they have no contact with boys. Annie says, "On hearing somewhere that if a boy rubbed your breasts they would quickly swell up, I passed along this news. Since in the world we occupied and hoped forever to occupy boys were banished, we had to make do with ourselves" (50). Girls and boys have very little contact with each other in school under British colonial rule so there is very little opportunity for Annie and Xuela to explore or develop friendships with the opposite sex during their coming of age years. So their knowledge or lack of

knowledge about how to develop friendships with them is left totally to the discretion of the mother and family female caretaker, who conform completely to restrictions imposed by British patriarchal rule under colonialism. The restrictions that Annie and the other girls are expected to conform to in conjunction with the development of their sexuality is reflected in this statement by Linden Lewis. "In the Caribbean, sexuality seems to be something men have and are free to explore, while women are expected to relate to it defensively," Lewis says (7). He adds, "Though from time there are claims of female sexual autonomy in the region, women's sexuality is still policed by social and gender convention in ways that do not seem to constrain the behavior of men" (7). Lewis' statement reflects the way women in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* are expected to deal with their sexuality under British colonial rule. Both Annie and Xuela run afoul of those expectations and while their doing so might cause some consternation for others, their greatest condemnations come from their mother, and female family caregiver respectively. Although Xuela is seventy years old when she is narrating *The Autobiography of My Mother*, much of the story deals with her life as a young woman and the turbulence in her gender and sexuality development. As mentioned previously, after enduring a difficult relationship with Ma Eunice, as a teenager Xuela is sent to live with Monsieur LaBatte, and his wife, Madame LaBatte. Not long after Xuela's father decides to take her to live with the older married couple, her sexuality and coming of age becomes convoluted. What she learns about the couple contributes to this. For example, Kincaid writes:

When they (Monsieur LaBatte and Madam LaBatte) first met, he would not marry her. He would not marry any woman. They would bear him children, and if the children were boys, these boys were given his full name, but he never married the mothers. Madame LaBatte found a way: she fed him food she had cooked in a sauce made up of her own

menstrual blood (a practice of obeah or sorcery, practiced in the Caribbean), which bound him to her, and they were married. In time this spell wore off and could not be made to work again. He turned on her – not in anger, for he never became aware of the trap that had been set for him – he turned on her with the strength of that weapon he carried between his legs, and he wore her out” (64-65).

This is Xuela taking a guess as to why Monsieur and Madam LaBatte ever married each other because she had come to notice a lack of closeness and warmth in their relationship. Her understanding of the LaBattes is complicated by the story of obeah practice that Madame LaBatte told her. For Xuela, the idea of being married to a man that she does not love is troubling when she thinks about the LaBatte’s marriage, but ironically this model will be the example that she will later follow. It seems that the manner that both Annie and Xuela ultimately develop their gender and sexuality role is guided by the knowledge or lack of knowledge that they received from their respective households.

Although the households in which Annie and Xuela spend their early years are not single-parent households, they are households where the mother is the dominant parent and the father is mostly absent. In the cases of both Annie and Xuela, the daughters become alienated from the mother and family female caretaker in Xuela’s case, and eventually leave home at a relatively young age. This along with the negative impact of restrictions and British colonial rule, which are reinforced by the mother and stepmother, will have a negative impact on Annie and Xuela’s development as women, especially their gender and sexuality roles. These are the situations and circumstances of British colonial rule in Antigua, in the mid-twentieth century, and in Dominica in the early twentieth century, which contributes to the bitterness, distrust, and frustration of the protagonists in these two Kincaid novels, Annie in *Annie John*, and Xuela, in the *Autobiography*

*of My Mother* respectively. They will grow up with their bitterness, distrust, and frustrations in households run by women. That bitterness, distrust and frustration stems from the restrictions and expectations imposed on them by the authority of British colonial rule, which is largely enforced by the British educational system, their mothers, and the absence or infrequent contact with their fathers. And the impact that British colonization has on them will have a negative impact on the relationship that they have with those women, Annie's mother and Xuela's family female caretaker, and the development of their gender and sexuality roles as women. In Annie's case there might even be an instance of her questioning her heterosexuality.

Several passages of *Annie John* portray Annie sharing hugs and kisses, and closeness and warmth with her female classmates. Although this is not clear from a close reading of the text, some passages could be interpreted as being on the borderline of intimate lesbian behavior. Conceivably, Annie could be viewed as questioning her heterosexuality, something that is not uncommon among both males and female during the coming of age period of their lives. In one passage there is a scene with Annie's friend Gweneth, in which Annie says, "I would then laugh at her (Gweneth) and kiss her on the neck, sending her into a fit of shivers, as if someone had exposed her to a cold draft when she had a fever" she says (50-51). Although the text is not clear on what Annie's feelings and thoughts are as she sends Gwen "into a fit of shivers," it is conceivable that Annie's frustration with her mother and life in Antigua has led to her questioning her heterosexuality. If this is part of Annie's frustration, the words of materialist feminist Charlotte Bunch might be useful to her. "Lesbian-feminism is based on a rejection of male definition of our lives and therefore crucial to the development of a positive woman-identified identity, of redefining who we are supposed to be in every situation, including the workplace," Bunch asserts (56). "What is that definition? Basically, heterosexuality means men



first. If you don't accept that definition in this society, you're queer," she adds (56). Essentially, Bunch's materialist feminism would probably relieve Annie of any fears that might lead her to question her heterosexuality. Annie's and her female classmates' frustrations with their own sexual development under British colonial rules continue throughout the text:

. Oh, how it would have pleased us to press and rub our knees together as we sat in our pew while pretending to pay close attention to Mr. Simmons, our choirmaster, as he waved his baton up and down and across, and how it would have pleased us even more to walk home together, alone in the 'early dusk' (the way Gwen has phrased it, a ready phrase always on her tongue), stopping, if there was a full moon, to lie down in a pasture and expose our bosom in the moonlight. We had heard full moonlight would make our breasts grow to a size we would like (74).

Annie and her female classmates' sexual curiosity and their seeming to sometimes want more parental or adult supervision and guidance for their coming of age experiences leads me to a pilot study done on the sexual attitudes of students from Trinidad and Tobago at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies. The study was done by Dianne Douglass, Sandra Reid, and Rhoda Reddock (216). According to the authors, "Females and males described very different avenues through which they learned about sex. The young women in this study, contrary to the account in *Annie John*, reported that older women, like their mothers, aunts, older sisters and cousins were the ones who taught them about sex" (227). The study also found that they "gained knowledge from friends, books and television" (227). Interestingly, the study also found that "African-Trinidadian females and African-Trinidadian males place responsibility as the top indicator of womanhood and manhood" (227). "This was also mentioned by Indian females. Mental maturity expressed in 'decision making' for African-Trinidadian women and

expressed in ‘questioning not just accepting’ for Indo-Trinidadian women, was also an important marker for womanhood,” according to the authors (227-28). Again, I argue that Annie and Xuela’s frustrations with the development of their gender and sexuality roles during their coming of age years can be attributed to their mother and family female caregiver’s expectations for their adherence to British values, traditions, and customs. Because this inadequacy is so dominant in the mother and female caregiver they forget how essential their roles are as educators, nurturers, and encouragers during this period, as the pilot study suggests. On the other hand, this focus on how widespread and important the role, or division of labor, is for the mother reinforces the postcolonial materialist feminist argument. For example, the importance of the role that mothers or the female caretaker is expected to play in helping their daughter or her ward develop her sexuality in a respectful and smooth way through knowledge is illustrated by Xuela’s lack of knowledge and the complications that she faces later. Xuela’s experience is one that says sexuality is too often viewed as dirty, dangerous and threatening by some African Caribbeans.

### **Viewing Sexuality as Dirty, Dangerous and Threatening**

Women in the novels are indeed taught to regard their sexuality as dirty, dangerous and threatening. Later in *The Autobiography of My Mother* we find that Xuela’s gender and sexuality roles are deeply complicated by her marriage to a European man by the name of Philip, who she does not love and her sexual relations with a married man by the name of Roland, a stevedore whom she loves, but his wife hates her. The complications that she faces are revealed in this passage:

And Roland’s wife called me a whore, a slut, a pig, a snake, a viper, a rat, a lowlife, a parasite, and an evil woman. I could see that her mouth formed a familiar hug around these words – poor thing, she had been used to saying them. I was not surprised. I could

not have loved Roland the way I did if he had not loved other women. And I was not surprised; I had noticed immediately the space between his teeth. I am not surprised she knew about me; a man cannot keep a secret, a man always wants all the women he knows to know each other (171).

The first complication Xuela faces is the fact that she is married to Philip and she does not love him. She marries Roland because it brings her wealth, privilege, social status and cultural comforts, and because she is convinced that she will not find someone she loves with a background and social status similar to her lower economic and social status. On the other hand, she finds comfort in a sexual relationship with Roland because of the similarities in their social status, despite the fact that he is married. This is part of the second part of the complication, which includes the fact that Roland wants to impregnate her and she refuses to allow him to do so. Jaipaul Roopnarine notes that:

For most African Caribbean men there are three essential components to manhood: rampant heterosexual activity, provisioning for the family economically, and being the head of the family. Early and frequent heterosexual activity with several partners serially or concurrently in several relationships is seen as a strong reflection of manhood and a sign of maturity. The number of offspring that result from the sexual relationships, both within and external to the union or family is tangible proof of the man's virility (74).

Roland seems to live up to all or most of the ways that Roopnarine says that African Caribbean men view manhood. This view of manhood, Xuela's apparent acceptance of most of it, and the fact that she has apparently followed Madame LaBette's model in marrying for economic security instead of sincere love and affection leaves Xuela with a convoluted and disturbing

understanding of her gender and sexuality roles. Like Madam LaBatte, Xuela's desire to be without economic worries gets her into a situation where she will become victimized by the differences in gender and sexual equality for men and women. She is a victim of sexual oppression and capitalist oppression as well, which are among the dangers and consequences of colonial ideologies for African Caribbean women.

### ***Damaging, Restrictive and Painful Consequences of Ideology***

Because of the imbalance caused by sex/gender ideologies and the fact that the main characters in the two novels have to restrict their movement and freedom, this system of ideologies has very damaging, restrictive, and painful consequences that begin at a very early age. This passage in *Annie John*, where Annie recalls an incident of sexual violence against her by Mineu, demonstrates that:

Feeling that in this whole incident Mineu had been cruel made me remember something. It was the last time that we had played together. In a game we were making up on the spot, I took off all my clothes and he led me to a spot under a tree, where I was to sit until he told me what to do next. It wasn't long before I realized that the spot he had picked out was a red ants' nest. Soon the angry ants were all over me, stinging me in my private parts, and as I cried and scratched, trying to get the ants off me, he fell down on the ground laughing, his feet kicking the air with happiness. His mother refused to admit that he had done something wrong, and my mother never spoke to her again" (100).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty suggests that the best understanding of male violence, especially sexual violence, against women comes from analysis of such violence in specific societies. "Male violence must be theorized and interpreted *within* specific societies, in order to understand it better and effectively organize to change it," she says (58). Mies argues that, "All of our

examples give evidence of the fact that violence against women is a historically produced phenomenon that is closely related to exploitative men-women, class and international relations” (169). Mineu’s sexual violence against Annie is at a very early age, his mother’s refusal to acknowledge that he engaged in such an act, and Annie’s mother’s merely “never speaking to her again,” is an indication of the way sexual violence against African Caribbean females is dealt with in Antiguan society. It is the kind of sexual dominance that Carby says black women, including African Caribbean women, have been dealing with since the days of slavery, although Mineu probably would have received some kind of punishment during slavery.

It could be argued that Mineu probably felt less prohibited from carrying out the violence against Annie because he felt that he was less likely to be punished under Antigua’s patriarchal system, which is controlled by men. But under slavery he probably would have been punished by owners, even though they were also patriarchal. The fact that patriarchy rule is in place and effective is evident by the fact that neither Mineu’s nor Annie’s mother condemns Mineu. It is clear from a close reading of the text in *Annie John* that the inequality and even the abuse women receive at the hands of males is accepted as the norm and often not condemned, if not condoned. This passage, in which Annie’s mother chastises her over the incident but not Mineu confirms as much. “She (Annie’s mother) went on to say that after all the years she had spent drumming into me the proper way to conduct myself when speaking to young men, it had pained her to see me behave in the manner of a slut (only she used the French-patois word for it) in the street and that just to see me had caused her to feel shame,” Kincaid writes (102). In laying all of the blame for the violent incident that Annie encountered with Annie, Annie’s mother seems to be evading her moral responsibility to support and protect her daughter. Materialist feminist M. Jacqui Alexander notes that, “Morality is a feminist issue not only because women who are ‘wives’

become the grounds on which some very narrow definition of womanhood are redrawn, but also because the very formulation of morality is underwritten in fundamentally gendered terms” (148). Alexander argues further that, “The postcolonial state has moved to suppress women’s autonomy and women’s political organizing by attempting to disrupt the praxis of feminist and radical progressive movements that has focused on the politics of everyday life as a terrain of struggle” (148). And as Mies says, “Violence against women, therefore, seems the main common denominator that epitomizes women’s exploitation and oppression, irrespective of class, nation, caste, race, capitalist or socialist systems, Third World or First World” (169). In *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* morality surrounds feminist issues, and the novels illustrate that patriarchal colonial rule and its moral shortsightedness have a negative impact on the lives of the two main characters, which are affected by a number of kinds of violence, including sexual violence. This ideological damage reinforces frustrations. The sexual abuse or violence against Annie and Xuela’s illicit sexual relationships with men show in a very explicit way the pain and trauma of their coming of age years, especially in Xuela’s situation.

### ***Epitomizing and Redefining the Pain from Gender/Sex Ideology***

I argue that the existence of Xuela’s sexual affairs with Monsieur LaBatte, and Roland, both married men, epitomizes the kind of re-enforcement of the frustrations and confusions that Xuela is facing over her gender and sexuality roles as she develops into womanhood. Xuela is suffering the fate of many other women around the world in the sense that she is being exploited sexually, by both her husband, Philip, and her lover Roland, as other women are being exploited in similar ways. In choosing to marry her husband and become a housewife purely for economic security Xuela, in a sense, by Mies analogy, becomes a double “sex object.” “The whole strategy (of a gendered division of labor) is based on a patriarchal, sexist and racist ideology of

women which defines women basically as housewives and sex objects,” Mies says (142).

“Without this ideological manipulation combined with the structural division of women by class and colonialism, this strategy (gendered division of labor) would not be profitable for capital,” she adds (142). While Mies’ critique can be used to indict the oppression of Xuela, it is even more useful as an indictment of patriarchal British colonial rule in Antigua and Dominica, and the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean during the early and mid-twentieth century, when African Caribbean women were experiencing inequities in their development of gender and sexuality roles. This raises a question of whether the definition of pain, ideological pain, for African Caribbean women should be redefined. The system of ideological suffering faced by the main characters in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* prompts the need for redefining the meaning of pain, from both the physical and psychological perspective. In these novels sometimes pain is simultaneous, both physical and psychological, and sometimes it comes singularly. And sometimes it is masked, seemingly without definition. Despite the frustration that Annie and Xuela feel over the gender and sexual inequalities in Antigua and Dominica under patriarchal British colonial rule in the mid and early twentieth century respectively, those inequities continue under patriarchy and African Caribbean rule in those nations today. Xuela reflects on her own grandfather’s background and the way that he has treated women and his own children in Dominica:

This man named John Richardson (narrator’s grandfather) was a trader of rum and had lived all over the English-owned West Indies, longest in Anguilla, before he settled with his wife, Mary, in Antigua; he had many children with many different women in these places where he had lived, and they were all boys and they could tell that they were the

sons of John Richardson because they all had the same red hair, a red hair of such uniqueness that they were all proud to have it, the hair of John Richardson (182).

In examining or reflecting upon her father's past too, Xuela, seems to conclude that there is no likelihood that equality will become the basis for determining the proper gender and sexuality roles for women in Dominica, or Antigua for that matter, or the Anglophone African Caribbean as a whole, anytime in the immediate future. She comes to this conclusion by reflecting on the conversations of her father about the many sons that he has fathered:

This I knew because my father would tell people that he was a son of this man and he would describe his father in this way, as a man who had lived in this place and that place and had children, all of them boys with red hair, and that whenever he himself saw a man with red hair he would know that this man was related to him and he would always say these things with pleasure and with pride and not with irony or bitterness or sadness at the trail of misery this drunk from Scotland would have left in his wake.

I did not have red hair, I was not a man (182-83).

Despite this rather pessimistic outlook for gender and sexual equality in in Dominica (and Antigua and the rest of the African Caribbean) by Xuela, a report prepared by Sheila Roseau, Antigua and Barbuda's director of gender affairs, for the Ministry of Education, Gender, Sports and Youths in May of 2010 for the Eleventh Session of the Regional Conference of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in Brasilia, Brazil, is a bit more optimistic. According to the report:

Antigua and Barbuda has pledged its commitment to the Secretary General's campaign, Unite to End Violence Against Women, and has partnered with a number of agencies including UNFPA, United Nations Development Fund for



Women and CHAA to strengthen state accountability and community action to end gender-based violence, particularly rape and sexual violence.

(<http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/noticias/paginas/6/38906/Antigua/Barbuda.pdf>).

The report also noted that, “The participation of women in both the home and the labour force reveals that the challenges in the day-to-day lives of Antiguan and Barbudan women are often doubled...The Directorate of Gender Affairs continues to work towards providing support for self-employment initiatives...”

(<http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/noticias/paginas/6/38906/AntiguaBarbuda.pdf>). The more optimistic outlook for gender and sexual equality for Antigua, Dominica and the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean by the Antiguan government notwithstanding, the John Richards and sons and grandsons of John Richards, or the likes of them, are likely to be in Antigua and Dominica for some time to come. Mindie Lazarus-Black writes that “Even if Antiguan and Barbudan men are no longer ‘seeing’ the mother of their child, they will spend several hours each with their children” (393). And she adds, “This form of familial organization is very common throughout the English-speaking Caribbean West Indies, and it crosses social classes, although it occurs with somewhat greater frequency in the lower class” (393). So the evidence seems to be there. Gender and sexual inequities in the Anglophone African Caribbean are not likely to disappear anytime soon, even under African Caribbean rule. But one can hope that what the Antiguan government has pledged to do will help.

### **In Conclusion**

In conclusion, the overall effect of the system of colonial ideology imposed on the female characters in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* under patriarchal rule is the

control of women's labor – to maintain a gender division of labor that disallows women from moving much beyond the home and domestic sphere.

Despite their enduring rebellion or resistance to the negative impact of British patriarchy and colonial rule, it is very troubling for Annie and Xuela during the mid and early twentieth century, respectively. Their social behavior and general development as young women are affected by it. The restrictions that it imposes on women either directly or indirectly also affect Annie and Xuela's gender and sexuality development in negative ways early in their lives. Because the system of patriarchy is so entrenched with the remnants of British colonial rule and its impact has lasted so long on Anglophone African Caribbean women they are not optimistic it will end anytime soon, even under African Caribbean rule. The sexual division of labor theorized by Hennessy/Ingraham is at work. Women's work is not seen as work. Their work is seen as having no added value. In her critiques of this gender/sex colonial ideology, Kincaid is resisting it in a literary way, as the theme of this work suggests.

## CHAPTER 2 ANGER'S GENDER 'EQUALITY' IN *LUCY* AND *MR. POTTER*

### Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that Jamaica Kincaid illustrates in her novels *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter* the dynamics of female complicity with colonial patriarchy in Antigua and the English-speaking African Caribbean – among which are the dynamics of anger and alienation among women.

In the novels, Kincaid dramatizes the daily dynamics of gender/sex oppression, which is perpetuated by both men and women. Ironically, and inadvertently, an oppressive and convoluted gender/sex system which is the source of anger for Lucy, the main character and narrator in *Lucy*, and for Elaine Cynthia Potter Richardson (the birth name of Kincaid), the narrator and daughter of the main character in *Mr. Potter*. A key focus of Chapter Two is on how Kincaid uses the complicity of Lucy's mother and Elaine's stepmother and other women in the narratives, but particularly the anger of Lucy and Elaine, to dramatize the physical and psychological scars of gender and sexual inequality left by patriarchal rule in Antigua and the African Caribbean. While the complicity of the Lucy's mother, Elaine's stepmother, and other female characters in the novels is an inherent and non-orchestrated part of the system of patriarchal rule, the anger of the two protagonists is directed at the Lucy's mother, unexpectedly, (by Lucy), and also at Elaine's father (by Elaine). In the case of Elaine, she directs most of her anger at her father. That is why we compare the anger that Lucy has for her mother, a female figure, and that which Elaine, has for a her father, a male figure, and conclude that the angers are "equal" in contributing to the psychological and physical pain of the two protagonists. The anger of the protagonists and the complicity of women, including mothers, within the system of British patriarchal colonial rule make for an explosive mix in the novels.

Traditionally, and historically, mothers in most societies have been considered to be the chief nurturers, role models, and advice providers for daughters, but that role becomes quite distorted and counter-productive for the mother and stepmother in *Lucy and Mr. Potter*, respectively, because of their complicity with the system of British patriarchal colonial rule. However, in this chapter I also focus on an element of similarity that strikes a balance between the feminine and the masculine – a daughter victimized and angered by the gender and sexual arrogance of a father and a complicit stepmother, in the case of the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, and a mother’s complicity with the gender and sexual arrogance of a father, in Lucy’s case. I argue that both situations contribute “equally” to the pain of colonialism for the protagonists in the novels. The “equality of this pain” caused by both genders is central to the theme of this chapter.

Lucy’s major source of anger is female-based and directed at her mother, whom she detests. A young, newly arrived African Caribbean immigrant from Antigua and nanny for a wealthy white couple in New York, Lucy detests her mother because of what she perceives as unreasonable restrictions that her mother has imposed on her. The rules, imposed under British tradition and rule during Lucy’s formative years in Antigua, proves to be counterproductive to Lucy’s growth and development as a young woman. The major source of anger for Elaine Cynthia Richardson (the name of Kincaid at birth), whom we learn later in the story is the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, is male-based and aimed at her father, Nathaniel Potter. The narrator perceives Mr. Potter as an arrogant man who has fathered a multitude of children, all females (including herself), whom he takes no responsibility for rearing or supporting financially. A thread of commonality can be found in the angers held for the respective male and female who are the major hindrances to the gender and sexuality development and attainment of equality for the two female protagonists in the novels. The hindrances are greatly influenced by patriarchal

colonial rule under the British. In both cases, the anger is spurred by the victimization of women by the system of patriarchy that began under British slavery and colonization and continues under male African Caribbean rule. Convoluted is the term that I use to describe the system.

### **Internalizing of Damaging Ideologies**

The system of British patriarchal colonial rule, in which Annie and the narrator in *Mr. Potter* grew up under in Antigua in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is convoluted because it leads to the two young women internalizing damaging ideologies about their gender/sexuality from an oppressive and complicit mother, and from a stepmother and father in Elaine's case. For example, at the end of the novel, Lucy has severed most of her emotional ties to others in New York, including Mariah, the wealthy white woman that she has worked for as a nanny since her migration from Antigua. Though she had seemed to be enjoying her new life in New York, some of the things that Lucy has taken up or encountered are more out of her rebellion to the difficult and repressive relationship she had with her mother under British colonial rule in Antigua. This plays a large role in her leaving the island. Lucy's anger is climaxed when after not responding to any of her mother's letters she learns from a family member that her father has died in Antigua and left her mother without any income. It is no wonder then that angrily and reluctantly Lucy sends her mother some of the money she has saved for an apartment. Her mother marrying an unfaithful man who cannot manage money and the difficult relationship that developed between mother and daughter as a result drives her anger. On the other hand, the anger of Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, is directed mostly at her father, Mr. Potter, her stepmother's complicity with his arrogance and patriarchal dominance notwithstanding.

Whereas Lucy is dominated by the lingering anger at her mother because of her mother's acceptance of marriage to a man, Lucy's father, who cheated on her and did not contribute to her

financial support, the narrator in *Mr. Potter* eventually becomes dominated by anger at her father because he has fathered many daughters and does nothing for the well-being of any of them. Yet he admires a “son” (who is not really his) of a woman by whom he has no children. It is no wonder then that the narrator in *Mr. Potter* is angry too. Her life has been affected negatively by the arrogance of her father under the system of British patriarchal colonial rule in the Caribbean, which stems from the belief in male domination and superiority, ideologies espoused by the British colonials in Antigua and the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean. Both slavery and colonialism by the British contributed to the lack of equality in males and females, and women’s inadequate development of their gender and sexuality roles. But the negative impact on African Caribbean women is the greatest. The outrage and anger vented by the African Caribbean women narrators in both novels, who are affected the most by this inequality, is directed equally at a woman who is complicit, in *Lucy*, and a man who is an arrogant practitioner, in *Mr. Potter*. and a stepmother who is complicit. Kincaid, in these two texts, *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter*, is arguing that this is another way that colonialism is having lasting and crippling effects on Antigua and the African Caribbean. Again, I also focus on an element of similarity that strikes a balance between the feminine and the masculine – a daughter victimized by the gender and sexual arrogance of a father and the complicity of a stepmother (whose existence is known only through mentioning in the narrative), in the case of the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, and a mother’s complicity with gender and sexual arrogance, in *Lucy*’s case.

Ironically, this twisted or convoluted system under patriarchal colonial rule, in which the mother and stepmother are complicit, leads to the young women’s internalizing gender/sex oppression. Whereas *Lucy* is dominated by the lingering anger at her mother the narrator in *Mr. Potter* eventually becomes dominated by anger at her father, more so than at her complicit

stepmother. Again, I argue that in the two texts, Kincaid is demonstrating that this is another way that colonialism is having lasting and crippling effects on Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean.

### **The Theoretical Framework**

For my main theoretical framework, I use materialist feminist Maria Mies' argument from her *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* book, that women "should here and now begin to refuse our allegiance to and our complicity with this system, because women are not only victims of capitalist patriarchy, they are also, in varying degrees and qualitatively different forms, collaborators with the system..." (224). Ironically, mothers, conventionally the source of nurturance, love, and support, *are* actually the primary sources of anguish and ambivalence – and targets of anger and resistance in *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter* because of their complicity in capitalist and patriarchal colonialism. In addition to the mothers, other women characters in the two novels also show complicity with the system of patriarchal rule.

I use Mies' argument that, if women "want to regain autonomy over our bodies and over life in general, we must start by renouncing the complicity with patriarchy" (224). Although Mies is addressing her call for a regaining of autonomy primarily to middle class women in developed countries at the time, she is anticipating that such a movement would eventually spread to women in underdeveloped or so-called Third World nations like Antigua. And it has, as we mentioned in Chapter One. While Mies recognizes that there is a great need for a feminist movement to seek an end to female complicity with patriarchal systems in formerly colonized countries like Antigua, she also realizes that the leadership for such a movement will need time to develop a strong movement that will be able to maximize their effectiveness. The reason that it will take time is because many of the women in so-called Third World are impoverished, or

relatively impoverished and preoccupied with meeting the basic needs of their families – needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health, and education. In the meantime women’s anger and the reinforcement of colonial ideologies in Antigua, the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean and other Third world nations will continue.

### **Anger and the Reinforcement of Colonial Ideologies**

The anger of the two main characters in the novels, Lucy and the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, along with the complicity of the mother and stepmother, reinforce the colonial ideologies of gender/sex. At the age of nineteen, as Lucy is becoming more and more involved with the development of her sexuality with men that she has met in New York, she reflects back on her first sexual relationship. That first sexual relationship, and perhaps the uneven relationship that her mother has with her father, seems to lead her to an attraction-detachment sexual attitude toward men. As Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, continues to learn more about the arrogance of Mr. Potter toward the women whom he has children by her anger continues to grow. Lucy’s feelings of both sexual attraction and detachment toward men are shown in this passage when she speaks about Hugh, one of her current lovers in New York , and Tanner, her first lover in Antigua:

As I kissed Hugh, my tongue reaching to caress the root of his mouth, I thought of all the other tongues I had held in my mouth in this way. I was only nineteen, so it was not a long list yet. There was Tanner, and he was the first boy with whom I did everything possible you can do with a boy. The very first time we did everything we wanted to do, he spread a towel on the floor of his room for me to lie down on, because the old springs in his bed made too much noise; it was a white towel, and when I got up it was stained with blood. When he saw it, he first froze with fear and then smiled and said, “O,” a note too



triumphant in his voice, and I don't know how but I found the presence of mind to say, 'It's just my period coming on.' I did not care about being a virgin and had long been looking forward to the day when I could rid myself of that status, but when I saw how much it mattered to him to be the first boy, I had been with, I could not give him such a hold over me (82-83).

Lucy's not wanting to give a boy "a hold over me" probably stems from her fear that if she becomes too emotionally attached to any of her lovers she could become what she perceives as a victimized woman who tolerates the sexual arrogance and neglect of a man as her mother does. Kincaid shows Lucy as striking a balance, as much as a balance can be struck, between sexual attraction and sexual detachment. Mies addresses this kind of situation this way:

A necessary consequence of non-exploitative relations with ourselves, nature, other human beings and other peoples or other nations will be regaining of autonomy over our bodies and our lives. This autonomy means, first and foremost, that we cannot be blackmailed, or forced to do things which are against human dignity in exchange for the means of our subsistence or our life. Autonomy in this sense should not be understood individualistically and idealistically – as it often is by feminists – because no single woman in our atomized society is able to preserve her autonomy. Indeed, it is the antithesis of autonomy if it is understood in the narrow egoistic sense (212).

Mies, in recognition that women will face situations like that, which Lucy faces, is saying that women should still fight to maintain autonomy or control over their bodies as much as possible. Acknowledging that no woman lives in an ideal world where she will never have to compromise the principles in which she believes, Mies is saying that women should at least fight or struggle to maintain as much or as many of those principles as possible. That is what Lucy is doing. As a

young woman coming of age, she yields to her sexual attraction to men, but she draws the line by saying: “When I saw how much it mattered to him to be the first boy, I had been with, I could not give him such a hold over me.” She is forming a psychological barrier (or detachment, if you will) that will not allow men to dominate her with the kind of arrogance and neglect that her mother has accepted in her father. This prompts Lucy to recall examples of complicity not only in her mother’s case, but in other women as well.

### ***Complicity of Lucy’s Mother and Other Women***

Lucy recalls an incident in Antigua which convinces her that women, her mother in particular, are complicit in the maintenance of the system of patriarchal colonial rule. She sees women as being complicit when they fight over men, as she recalls from an incident that involved some of her mother’s friends in Antigua. Lucy’s mother accepts as friends women who fight over men, who see them as sex objects, who fathers children by them with no intent of supporting the child or the mother. This passage, in which Lucy recalls an incident in Antigua, serves as an introduction to why Lucy will come to believe that women, her mother in particular, are complicit in the maintenance of the system of patriarchal rule that began under British slavery and colonial rule and continues under Anglophone African Caribbean rule:

She (Sylvie, a friend of Lucy’s mother whom her mother did not say much about) had gotten into a big quarrel with another woman over this: which of the two of them a man they both loved should live with. Apparently Sylvie said something that was unforgivable, and the other woman flew into an even deeper rage and grabbed Sylvie in an embrace, only it was not an embrace of love but an embrace of hatred, and she left Sylvie with the marked cheek. Both women were sent to jail for public misconduct, and going to jail was something that for the rest of their lives no one would let them forget (24).

Lucy will eventually come to believe that women in Antigua and the Caribbean accept the gender and sexual arrogance of men because that is what is expected of them (women) under the tradition and practices of British colonial rule, because they are not seen by men as their equals, and they do not see themselves as the equals of men. The extent to which these women will carry their complicity seems unlimited.

The incident about which Lucy speaks serves as an example to Lucy about the extent to which women in Antigua will go to – to violence – to be accepted by men, despite their (men's) sometimes arrogance and irresponsibility. All of this seems to be either a seldom-spoken-of, but tolerated at least to some extent, part of the Anglophone African Caribbean social culture, which may have been practiced since the establishment of slavery and colonialism under the British in Antigua. Also, Mr. Potter's actions of irresponsibility are a personification of that practice. Indeed, Kincaid's overall posture in this autobiographical novel is to condemn and detest her father for his gender and sexual arrogance, although there are points at which she seems to empathize with him because of his unfortunate circumstances early in life. Near the end of the *Mr. Potter* narrative she appears to feel sympathy for him. As Mary Ellen Snodgrass notes:

*Mr. Potter* is Kincaid's most redemptive novel. Tenderly, as though protecting Potter from a cruel fate, she probes his loveless infancy and his mother's abandonment in 1927, when he passes to Mrs. Doreen Shepherd and her husband, Llewellyn, after Elfrida Robinson, at age 21, drowns herself off Rat Island. At a turning point in the boy's life, the author demands, 'Can a human exist in a wilderness, a world so empty of human feeling: love and justice?' (147).

One might be able to easily conclude that while Kincaid, the narrator, might in learning of the pain of Mr. Potter's childhood come to feel his pain. But in doing so that pain turns to anger.

And that anger, throughout most of the narrative, is what leads Elaine, the narrator, to detest her father for his gender and sexual arrogance, mainly his fathering of so many children and taking no responsibility for helping to rear or provide financially for none of them. Yet these women tolerate his treatment of them. The narrative portrays complicity with patriarchy by a number of women who are loyal to Mr. Potter.

### **Complicity of the Women Loyal to Mr. Potter**

Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, who in learning even more about her father's neglect of the girls that he has fathered and the women that gave birth to them, is discovering a statistic that has been prevalent in the Anglophone African Caribbean for quite some time. As Mies notes, "In the Caribbean, more than a third of all households are not headed by a male breadwinner" (119). What Elaine learns is that female complicity with patriarchy is alive and well throughout Antigua. So when the narrator discovers the following it is not new for Antigua or the Caribbean, but that does nothing to make her any less angry:

...And his (Mr. Potter's) shirts were always so well washed and ironed by one of the many women living in houses with only one room, and each one of these women was the mother of one of his children and all these children were girls but none of them was me. I was not yet born, my mother was just leaving Dominica after many violent quarrels with her father over the direction her life should take, my mother did not yet know of anyone named Potter and so could have no inkling of me, her firstborn, her only daughter (119).

In learning that one of the women whom Mr. Potter has fathered children by and neglected is one who carefully irons his shirts and keeps him neat for his chauffeur job, the narrator sees yet another example of his male chauvinism and arrogance and is further angered by it. She says, "And these women bore him children, all of them girls, all of them his very own children, his

very own issue, and all of them a burden, all of them, the daughters, needing support of one kind or another: food, clothing, and then schoolbooks and after all, his love, and why above all, his love; why include such a thing as love?" (119). Here the narrator uses a castigating tone to condemn her father for his actions. In saying that, "all of them his very own children, his very own issue," it is as if she is asking how Mr. Potter could be so inhumane to his own flesh and blood, children whom everyone knows to be his very own. Mr. Potter as a chauffeur has middle class status and access to the few who have wealth and power in Antigua, and he uses all of the aforementioned exclusively for his benefit, not for those whom he should have some responsibility to help, because they have helped him by bearing his children, ironing his shirts, etc. He is the personification of one who contributes to what materialist feminist Margaret Benston calls "the material basis for the inferior status of women" (19). "In a society in which money determines value, women are a group who work outside the money economy. Their work is not worth money, is therefore valueless, is therefore not real work," she says (19). "And women themselves, who do this valueless work, can hardly be expected to be worth as much as men, who work for money," she adds (19). Elaine's father's personification of one who contributes to the notion that women are inferior irritates and infuriates Elaine to no end. He holds what Mies would argue to be a "superior" position in a gendered division of labor, the equivalent of an indictment by Kincaid and materialist feminists.

This indictment of Elaine's father, Mr. Potter, will continue throughout the novel, tinged with an occasional bout of empathy that quickly returns back to anger. She asks, "And who was Mr. Potter in all of his full goodness? Who was he? And those daughters of his – and one day I would be among them but at that time he did not even know my mother, Annie Victoria Richardson – those daughters of his with their crises..." (119-20). The narrator is further angered

because her father is able to maintain a good name, a job that gives him middle class status and dignity, despite his not sharing responsibility for the care of his children, his daughters. This situation is a reinforcement of Mies' argument about the international division of labor and how it works against the gender and sexual equality of women worldwide. She writes:

Not only do the BIG WHITE MEN OR Mr. CAPITAL profit from the exploitation of their own women and of Third World women, so also do the small white men, the workers. Not only do the Big Brown or Black Men profit from the exploitation of 'their' women, but also the small black or brown men. And the big and small white women also share in the profit from the exploitation of both small brown and black men and women in the colonies (142-43).

Mies' words are befitting because in her analysis of the international division of labor we find that much of the labor or work of women, childbearing and rearing, household chores, etc. is not even counted in the capitalist system of production and therefore it has no added value in such a system. So in the Antigua of the narrator (formerly ruled by white male British colonials and now ruled by black male African Caribbeans) the women who bore Mr. Potter's children and still serve him with their physical labor and/or their sexuality have no value. And Mr. Potter is exploiting them too, just as they have been exploited by the British colonials and others.

Likewise, Lucy's fate is not any better.

Lucy, when reflecting on all of the unopened and unread letters that she has received from her mother, becomes distraught at the thought of saying so often that she did not want to be like her mother, she becomes even more distraught at the thought that she is indeed like her mother. This passage spells out the dilemma, as she sees it:

...She (Lucy's mother) spoke to me in a language anyone female could understand. And I was undeniable 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 of 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).

The passage is a tell-tale sign for the point of demise in the relationship between Lucy and her mother. As Mary Ellen Snodgrass notes, "Lucy Josephine Potter, a 19-year-old émigré, remembers her mother, Annie Potter, as the colonizer, the obdurate symbol of mother England" (152). "Lucy recalls her mother's betrayal in ousting the daughter from her affections and replacing her with three younger sons," she adds (152). Clearly, the relationship between mother and daughter has hit rock bottom, so to speak, and Lucy's anger at her mother has reached a new height. On the other hand, Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, is not any less unhappy about knowledge that she keeps gaining and the thoughts that she keeps having about the arrogance and irresponsibility that her father, Mr. Potter, is showing to her, her 10 sisters, whom he has fathered, and the women who bore his children, including her mother. She will observe a number of other examples of women who are complicit in Mr. Potter's colonial patriarchy.

### **Complicity in Accepting Mr. Potter's Indifference to Women**

For example, the women who tolerate Mr. Potter's saying unkind things about them after they have made his breakfast and washed his clothes are complicit in patriarchy. In this passage the narrator frames her father's character and his arrogance and patriarchal treatment of women.

“Mr. Potter arrived in the garage where there were the three cars, had eaten eggs and oat porridge and bread that had been buttered and cheese and had drunk cups of Lyons tea and had said unkind things in an unkind way to a woman who washed his family’s clothes and then said unkind things in an unkind way to the woman who had just made his breakfast,” Kincaid writes (6). Here we begin to see further how Lucy’s mother’s complicity with patriarchy is as damaging to the goals of gender and sexuality as is Mr. Potter’s patriarchy. It seems that he takes all of the services that women provide for him for granted. He says unkind things about them instead. The narrator of *Mr. Potter* is angered further by more of the gender and sexual arrogance that she sees in her father when he expresses indifference toward the fact that a mother giving birth to a child whom he fathered has died. That occurrence is revealed in this passage:

...Mr. Potter was thinking of a woman, her name was Yvette, who had just died while giving birth to Mr. Potter’s first child, a girl named Marigold; this name Marigold was given to the little girl by Yvette’s relatives and it had no significance to them whatsoever and it had nothing at all to do with Mr. Potter, he had not had much to do with Yvette in the first place. And when Mr. Potter thought of this woman, Yvette, who had just given birth to his first child with the same name of Marigold, he was not thinking of how the world was filled with happiness, he was not thinking of the golden glow that transformed the world when it had first been born, its new light thick with transparency, its wonder, its mystery, its never-to-be knownness, its frustrations which would lead to anger and how that anger would lead to a blankness and how it was that in such blankness he, Mr. Potter, existed (9).

By not speaking up about Mr. Potter’s not showing support for the family of the mother of one of his children, who has died, other women are complicit with patriarchy too. It is clear from the



passage that Mr. Potter, the narrator's father, is indifferent if not outright callous in dealing with the news that the mother of a child that he fathered has died. Mr. Potter's action reinforces Mies' assertion that, "Speaking up about this system of male dominance, giving it certain names like 'sexism' or 'patriarchy' has not reduced the ambivalence...but rather intensified and broadened it" (6). Certainly, from the perspective of the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, that is what has happened. Her anger toward her father has been intensified, no doubt about the death of the mother and the fate of the child, among other things. Snodgrass notes that Kincaid portrays *Mr. Potter* as a "mere sower of seed" (149). "Parturition for him is painless because he 'did not have a uterus that shuddered in agony, for he was a man, and he did not have a menstrual cycle, for he was a man'" she says, quoting from the narrative (149). All of this reflects the attitude of the narrator about Mr. Potter's indifferent or callous lack of response to the death of a woman who gave birth to one of his children. And along with the narrative about the complicity of Lucy's mother and that of other women in *Lucy* demonstrates the full impact of gender and sexual inequality for African Caribbean women in Antigua. This makes Kincaid's multi-dimensional critique of gender and sexuality in these first two chapters an effective portrayal of the damaging effects of patriarchy and women's complicity with it in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. Both the action of Lucy's mother and Elaine's father are equally damaging. About Mr. Potter, it could be said that Kincaid makes Mr. Potter the face of patriarchy under colonialism through Elaine's exploration of his deeds.

Elaine, the narrator and daughter of Mr. Potter in *Mr. Potter*, studies the faces of all of his other daughters, her sisters, and tries to determine if their facial characteristics reveals anything about their father, his moral character, his temperament, his inadequacies, and she concludes that they do not. However, she is stunned and angered further when she learns that her father has in

no way mended his ways. In fact, she suspects that he is continuing his ways by paying visits to women whom he has not fathered children by and the possibility that he might father other children and share no responsibility for them looms. This passage reveals her feelings about the facial characteristics of her sisters:

And all these daughters looked like him, they all bore his nose, a broad piece of bone covered with furled flesh lying in the middle of his face, and his nose was itself, just his nose, and could reveal nothing about him, not his temperament, not his inadequacies, not all that made up his character, his moral character, his nose revealed nothing about him, only that all his children, girls, bore his nose, their noses were exact replica of his (120-21).

Though it is a futile exercise, in studying the facial characteristics of her sisters, it seems that Elaine, the narrator, is trying to find something about them that might help her understand her father's arrogance and irresponsibility in fathering so many children and taking no responsibility for their care and financial support. But her study comes up empty and she is left with her anger, which grows deeper. I agree with Snodgrass, who says, "The author (Kincaid) lambastes Potter for sexual profligacy by celebrating his ten daughters and the son (whom Mr. Potter admires but did not father) resulting from Potter's cuckolding by Mr. Barnes, a prosperous undertaker" (147). "He feels no love for his many daughters – beginning with Marigold, daughter of Yvette, and continuing with Charlotte, Emily, Heather, Irish, Jane, Lily, Reseda, Rose, and Elaine. They pose a constant financial burden that he chooses to ignore," she adds (147). When the narrator can find no clue that would justify Mr. Potter's arrogance and irresponsibility, her search for a cause for empathy is essentially ended and she is left with a sense of tragedy and filled with more

anger. That sense of tragedy and fulfillment with anger climbs to an even higher level when she discovers Mr. Potter on his way to a woman's house and is singing. This is what Elaine recalls:

‘Why ya, why ya, why ya lef you pomm-pomm outside, why ya lef you big fat pomm-pomm outside,’ sang Mr. Potter, to himself and only to himself, as he went to see a woman who had not yet become the mother of one of his many girl children, or as he went to see the mother of one of his girl children but the child was somewhere, as if she had not yet been born and if she was born, as if it had never been so (140).

As I said, this scene reinforces the narrator’s belief that her father is beyond hope for changing his attitude toward the daughters that he has fathered and the women who bore them. It brings to mind the imagination of materialist feminist Mies who says, “It would be revealing to study the analogies between the words for men’s sexual organs and the tools which men have invented in different historical epochs and the different modes of production” (57). She adds, “It is not accidental that in our time men call their penis a ‘screwdriver’ (they ‘screw’ a woman), a ‘hammer,’ a ‘file,’ a ‘gun,’ etc.” (57). An analogy or comparison between the words and tools that men use in production to the way that Mr. Potter treats women is befitting, even though it could only add to the anger of Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter*. If a prize were to be offered for who possesses the most anger over colonial patriarchy or complicity with it, Lucy or Elaine, it would be tough to decide.

Clearly, Lucy, the narrator in *Lucy*, continues to be obsessed by the anger at her mother, whom she believes bears responsibility for enforcing, through complicity, the rigid gender and sexual inequality that she experienced under patriarchal rule in Antigua, which has hampered her development as a young woman. On the other hand, Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter* continues to be equally obsessed with anger at her father, Mr. Potter, who has fathered many girls,

including her, and has not taken responsibility for the care or financial support of any of them or their mothers. In summation, this amounts to a kind of convoluted gender and sexual “equality” in terms of equal condemnation or anger toward the male and female deniers of gender and sexual equality. Ironically however, this is not the kind of gender and sexuality equality that the two protagonists in the novels are seeking, nor is it the kind of gender and sexuality that Rosemary Hennessy, Chrys Ingraham, Maria Mies and other materialists feminists are advocating. They argue for a reordered division of labor in which the value of work, and therefore the lives, of women will be considered as equals. Although it might be tough to decide who holds the most anger over colonial patriarchy and complicity with it, between Lucy and Elaine, the scale “might” tip toward Elaine because of Mr. Potter’s claiming a son that is not really his.

### **Complicity in Ignoring Mr. Potter’s Claiming of a Son**

In not speaking out against, or accepting Mr. Potter’s pride in claiming a son who is not his own while totally neglecting his many daughters born out of wedlock, women who bore his daughters without him taking any responsibility for their care or financial support are being complicit with patriarchy. This passage details Mr. Potter’s favoritism for a child that is not even his own:

And then Yvonne (mother of one of his girl children) had another child, a boy this time, but Mr. Potter was not his father, Mr. Potter was not the father of this little boy, the father of this little boy was a fashionable undertaker in the city of St. John’s Antigua, and Mr. Potter loved his son, and the father of his son was someone who administered to the dead and Mr. Potter loved his son best of all his children and all his real children were girls and

he was the father of all these many girls but he did not love them, he only loved his son whose real father was a fashionable and well-regarded undertaker (156).

The picture that Kincaid portrays of Mr. Potter is one of a man who is willing to share no responsibility to any of his own children, who happen to be all girls, but is willing to claim and admire the only male child that one of the mothers bore, a child that has been fathered by another man. This is an unpleasant pictorial of Mr. Potter's character. It infuriates the narrator to no end and it helps Kincaid in demonstrating, through her multi-dimensional critique, the harsh impact and complexity of the legacy left by colonialism's imposition of patriarchal rule and its attendant gender and sexual inequality for Anglophone African Caribbean women. As materialist feminists Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James suggest, this is the kind of situation that prompts some feminists to "no longer wish to use their strength to sustain even sexual relationships with men" (46). They write:

We can explain the extent to which degraded relationships between men and women are determined by the fracturing society has imposed between man and woman, subordinating women as objects, the 'complement' to man. And in this sense we can see the validity of the explosion of tendencies within the women's movement, in which women want to conduct the struggle against men as such and no longer wish to use their strength to sustain even sexual relationships with them, since each of these relationships is always frustrating (46).

Between the deliberate complicity with patriarchy by Lucy's mother, the oppression of women that the narrator of *Mr. Potter* sees in her father, and what I will discuss latter, Lucy's own complicity with patriarchy, we can see and understand the kind of frustration that Della Costa and James speak of – the kind that women have with men and their practice of gender and sexual

inequality. It is the kind that causes the angers in both Lucy and Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter*. When we study the yearning of the mothers of Mr. Potter's many daughters and those daughters for the attention and support of Mr. Potter and his adoration for a son that is not really his we can see further how his arrogance and irresponsibility is equally damaging to the chances for gender and sexual equality for women in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean in the future. This passage helps in demonstrating that:

...And Mr. Potter exhaled loudly a sound, a sigh, and he went from the day's end at Mr. Shoul's (Mr. Potter's employer) garage to the many houses which were really one room with four windows and he could see all the women who were the mothers of his girl children and all the girls with the broad fleshy nose, and he looked at his children, all of them girls, and looked at their mothers, women who longed for his presence and for his presence to remain a constant day after day, and then when he went away he would return with the same intensity and self-possession as when he left (151).

Mr. Potter will continue his routine of going to "many houses" to "see all the women who were the mothers of his girl children." A very telling part of Mr. Potter's character is the narrator's assertion that "when he went away he would return with the same intensity and self-possession as when he left." In other words, Mr. Potter's visit to the women and the girls is more like a ritual to tease them and for him to garner more admiration from them, not to satisfy them in anyway, for he is far too indifferent and emotionless for that. As I said, Mr. Potter's actions "might" tip the scale toward Elaine in a contest between she and Lucy for who is the angriest over patriarchy and complicity with it, but that is not by any means a certainty, given Lucy's anger at so many women over their complicity. But this anger will not do anything to prevent the

diminishing of the roles of women, which is evident in an observation by Lucy of the action of one of Mariah's friends.

### **Seeing the Roles of Women Diminished**

Through Dinah, a friend of Mariah's, Lucy is seeing the roles and dignity of women become diminished through complicity in the excess valuing of physical and material possessions, a trait associated with the extremes of capitalism and patriarchy. As Lucy "sizes up" Dinah in this passage she seems to see in Diana's cherishing of Mariah's possessions a kind of patriarchy victimization that she sees in her mother:

To a person like Dinah, someone in my position is 'the girl' – as in 'the girl who takes care of the children.' It would never have occurred to her that I had sized her up immediately that I viewed her as a cliché, a something not to be, a something to rise above, a something I was very familiar with: a woman in love with another woman's life, not in a way that inspires imitation but in a way that inspires envy. I had to laugh. She had her own husband, she had her own children (two boys, two girls), she had her own house in the city and one on the lake – she had the same things Mariah had, and still she likes Mariah's things better. How to account for that" (58).

Although what Lucy sees in Dinah is not exactly similar in a sexual context to the female complicity with patriarchy that Lucy sees in her mother and other women in Antigua, this kind of behavior, from Lucy's view in terms of physical and material possession, is probably similar to women in Antigua preferring to have a sexual relationship with another woman's husband. This is what she had observed in her mother's toleration of her father's sexual involvement with other women. So while the sexual imagery is not there for Lucy, the imagery of a woman being complicit with patriarchal rule by showing an obsession with material possessions, a trait often

associated with patriarchal rule's capitalist influence is there. With Lucy viewing so many women's actions as being complicit with patriarchy it seems inevitable that either she or someone else will raise the question of whether she is currently, or at some point, has been in complicity with patriarchy.

### **The Challenge of Lucy's Own Complicity**

Lucy, too, is complicit in patriarchy when she accepts and "enjoys" the violence of one of her lovers in New York. We can take a closer look at Lucy's views about sex and how shortsightedness in those views further diminishes the chances for gender and sexual equality, and compare that to how the patriarchy of Mr. Potter diminishes those chances. Lucy's views and attitudes about sexual relations have been developed under the very restricted observations of her mother and the customs and traditions of patriarchy under British colonial rule in Antigua and so have Mr. Potter's, and the impact of both are equally damaging in their hindrances to gender and sexual equality for women. We begin by studying this passage from Lucy as she remembers telling Mariah about one of her sexual experiences:

I began to tell her (Mariah) about my life with Paul (one of Lucy's lovers in New York), which was spent almost entirely in his bed. I told her everything that we did, all the small details that to someone with more experience of the world would have gone unnoticed. There was much to take note of; except for eating, all the time we spent together was devoted to sex. I told her what everything felt like, how surprised I was to be thrilled by the violence of it (for sometimes it was that, violent), what an adventure this part of my life had become, and how I looked forward to it, because I had not known that such pleasure could exist and, what was more, be available to me.



I had been speaking in this way for a while when Mariah interrupted and said, 'We (she and her husband, Lewis) have such bad sex.' Those words came as a shock to me, for I had never thought of that. Bad sex. I wondered what exactly did she mean. (113-14).

This passage reveals that Lucy, too, is complicit in the gender and sexual inequality that she, from her perspective, rebels against. The most revealing part of that complicity is found in her acceptance and actually finding enjoyment in violence connected with sex and her lack of understanding of the term "bad sex," which she hears from Mariah. Lucy's acceptance of violence in connection with sex probably stems from the African Caribbean tradition of accepting the dominance of males, and total submission of women in all matters, including sex. While Lucy has shown objections to male dominance in sexual matters in terms of not allowing any of the men that she has been involved with sexually to control her she seems to not be aware that she is being sexually exploited in terms of the number of sexual partners that she is encountering and the violence associated with sex which she accepts and claims to enjoy. As Mies asserts, "Violence against women therefore seems the main common denominator that epitomizes women's exploitation and oppression, irrespective of class, nation, caste, race, capitalist or socialist systems, Third World or First World" (169). In portraying Lucy as one who rejects male dominance on the one hand, but accepts it on the other with regard to gender and sexuality issues, Kincaid is demonstrating the complexity of the impact of British colonial rule and its accompanying patriarchy and capitalist value system. Under this system, African Caribbeans were not valued and African Caribbean women were even less valued. Because African Caribbeans, under slavery and colonialism, had no option but to follow the dictates of a system that viewed them as inferior, they developed traditions that allowed for extensive gender

and sexual freedoms for males and very restricted gender and sexual freedoms for women. On the one hand Lucy is fighting this system, but on the other hand she is capitulating to it. The complexity involved in understanding why Lucy is doing so is part of Kincaid's message about the lingering damages from British colonial rule in Antigua and the African Caribbean. Mies' argues that, "if we (women) reject a biologicistic explanation of our subordination, we must also reject biologicistic reductionism with regard to the phenomenon of male sexist violence" (27). She adds, "It is more realistic to interpret these forms of male violence, and particularly the fact that they seem to be on the increase, as time-bound and specific, and inherently bound up with the social paradigm which dominates our present world called 'civilization' or, in other words, 'capitalist patriarchy'" (27). Mies seems to be saying that if women reject the ideology that says that they are by nature inferior to men, they should also reject the idea that it is natural for men to subject them to violence and for them to accept it. One of the clearest messages from Kincaid's multi-dimensional critiques of gender and sexuality in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean in this study is that that the subject is a very complex and complicated one, and it can't be thoroughly understood without extensive study.

### **Class, Race and a Woman's Complicity in Antigua**

Nevertheless, in twentieth century Antigua, class and race may often explain a woman's complicity with patriarchy. One day as she is recalling what her life with her mother was like in Antigua, Lucy envisions the image and perception of women as inferior when she recalls how her mother had wanted her to be like one of her mother's friends who was a nurse. Lucy detests such an idea and that is part of the reason that she has come to detest her mother so much. Her memory of what her mother wishes for her goes this way:

A nurse, as far as I could see, was a badly paid person, a person who was forced to be in awe of someone above her (a doctor), a person with cold and rough hands, a person who lived alone and ate badly boiled food because she could not afford a cook, a person who, in the process of easing suffering, caused more suffering (the badly administered injection). I knew such a person. She was a friend of my mother's and had delivered me when I was born. She was a woman my mother respected to her face but had many bad things to say about her behind her back. They were: she would never find a man; no man would have her; she carried herself like a strongbox, and from the look on her face a man couldn't find a reason to break in; she had lived alone for so long it was too late to start with a man now. But among the last things my mother had said to me, just before I left, was 'Oh, I can just see you in your nurse's uniform. I shall be very proud of you.' And I could only guess which nurse's uniform she meant – the uniform made of cloth or the one made of circumstances (92-93).

Lucy's thinking about the work of nurses, who are mostly females, falls in line with materialist feminists' theories about the international division of labor that Mies has defined, in which women's work is often of a service nature, such as nursing, or is often taken for granted, ignored or not thought about much. Therefore in the minds of many, men as well as women, women's work is often not valued as high as men in a capitalistic system, if valued as all, according to materialist feminist theory. "Sexual inequality is among the many forms of inequality...generated by the mode of production within the working class," asserts materialist feminist Martha Gimenez (79). She notes further that "pre-existing ideologies and practices set the parameters for the way men and women – at the level of visible relations – have perceived their options and the natures of their relationships from the very beginning of capitalism" (78).

Though the thinking has shifted somewhat, careers such as nursing and teaching, especially on the elementary and high school level, were thought to be “women’s jobs” in Antigua, the Caribbean and probably throughout the world. Lucy angrily detests this notion and in turn angrily detests her mother who carries it. As a young woman in Antigua Lucy often faced questions from her mother about whether she was involved with anyone sexually, which often became a source of anger for Lucy. For Lucy’s mother, this was what she felt was expected of her in conformance with traditions and customs under British patriarchal colonial rule – to see that her daughter remained “pure” sexually.

### **Perceiving a Woman’s Sexual Purity**

In 20<sup>th</sup> century Anglophone African Caribbean society a woman’s perceived sexual purity, etc., is a matter of her status and her family’s status. Lucy also recalls the image that her mother wanted her to maintain as “clean, virginal and beyond reproach,” an image that Lucy rejects for herself as a young woman (97). She thinks of this with disdain when she is with Paul, Mariah’s brother and one of her lovers in New York. “His name was Paul. 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,” she recalls. “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,” she adds (97). Lucy is rejecting the negative perception of African Caribbean sexuality, which causes many people in the Caribbean to shy away from discussions of sexual relations. As Linden Lewis reminds us:

In the Caribbean, sexuality seems to be something that men have and are free to explore, while women are expected to relate to it only defensively. Though from time to time there are claims of female sexual autonomy in the region, women’s sexuality is still policed by

social and gender conventions in ways that do not seem to constrain the behavior of men (7).

This helps to point out another reason for Lucy's rejection of the restrictions that her mother placed on her exploration of her gender and sexuality roles and it is another example of why she is still so angry at her mother, even with her being in New York. On another occasion Lucy takes exception to being in the presence of artists, whom she perceives as representing male domination, something she fiercely opposes. "They were artists. I had heard of people in this position. I had never seen an example in the place where I came from. I noticed that mostly they were men," she says (98). She adds, "It seemed to be a position that allowed for irresponsibility, so perhaps it was much better suited to me – like the man whose painting hung in the museum that I liked to visit" (98). This dislike of artists by Lucy might be explained by another passage later on in the novel in which she is given a photograph of herself taken by Paul. "He brought us a large bouquet of small yellow roses, and he gave me a photograph he had taken of me standing over a boiling pot of food," she says (155). "In the picture I was naked from the waist up; a piece of cloth, wrapped around me, covered me from the waist down. That was the moment he got the idea he possessed me in a certain way, and that was the moment I got tired of him," she adds (155). Lucy's encounter with the artists earlier and her negative image of artists probably represents for her a reflection on colonialism similar to that which Mary Lou Emory sees in the pictures of Lucy and Paul and others displayed throughout Mariah and Lewis' home. "In these pictures a visual culture of the happy nuclear family threatens Lucy by recreating the colonial metaphor of the family and attempting to incorporate her within it," Emory, notes (213). She adds, "She, however, exposes it – literally – through her own photographs of family members which reveal a false domestic happiness on which the colonial metaphor depends" (213). In

short, for Lucy, to recall her family life is to recall her restrictive and unhappy relationship with her mother in Antigua, under British colonialism and patriarchy. And she rejects and detests that, because of the anger that it provokes in her. For Lucy, life that is often portrayed by the artist is not reality. As with many of Kincaid's characters, Lucy and Elaine are often ambivalent about their roles in life. In this instance Lucy is sometimes complicit with patriarchy and at other times she rejects it outright. The restricted, often conflict-filled life that Lucy lived in Antigua, is not the kind of life that artist often portray. Lucy's life in Antigua had been shaped and influenced by her mother's concern about maintaining her family's status, which was probably lower middle class, and the same can probably be said for Xuela and her stepmother in *Mr. Potter*. There are also other reasons why women go along with patriarchy, especially those that fall in the social and economic category.

### **Other Examples of Female Complicity**

We can draw on other examples of female complicity with British patriarchal colonial rule to show that it is just as damaging in its hindrance of gender/sex equality for women as the patriarchy practiced by Mr. Potter. We can do so by looking at other actions of Lucy's mother and the daughters of Mr. Potter. First, we look at other actions of Lucy's mother. In one scene, after she is in New York, Lucy has both affectionate and condemning reflections on her life with her mother, reflecting on the fact that her father's mother and father deserted him at a very young age. She says, "My mother used to bath me in water in which the leaves and flowers of these plants had been boiled; this bath was to protect me from evil spirits sent to me by some of the women who had loved my father and whom he had not loved in return" (124). And later reflecting on her father's upbringing, she says, "And how did this business of not returning the love all these women showered on him get started? His mother, after asking his father to bring

him up, left for England” (124). For a while, it seems that Lucy is having an affectionate remembrance of times spent with her mother and showing empathy for her father as well, but those feelings will soon evaporate. She asks, “How could a woman be called kind when she left her own child at five years old, and gotten on a boat and sailed away? He never saw her again, and when he told me about her he had no idea if she was dead or alive” (125). For a moment Lucy seems to be ready to lay a charge of complicity with patriarchy against her father’s mother as she has done with her own mother, without laying any blame at the door of her father’s father. Then she says, “When he was seven, his father left him with his grandmother and went off to build the Panama Canal. My father never saw his father again, either. He and his grandmother slept in the same bed” (125). This is another example of Kincaid, in her multi-dimensional critique, placing the blame for the poor functioning of Anglophone African Caribbean families in Antigua and other parts of the Caribbean; first, on the shoulders of males for their arrogance and irresponsibility; second, on the complicity of women; and third on the history of slavery and colonialism and their attendant patriarchal and capitalist influences. All of this prompts Lucy to continue her comparing Mariah to her mother.

### **Continuation of Comparison of Mariah and Lucy’s Mother**

As Lucy continues to compare Mariah to her mother in the *Lucy* narrative, the love-hate relationship continues to grow, and as the narrator in *Mr. Potter* continues to learn more about the early life of her father, Mr. Potter, the more she grows to detest him. In her comparison of Mariah to her mother, Lucy at one point, in which she is discussing her new friend, Peggy, thinks of Mariah as being superior to her mother. “I told Mariah about Peggy’s missing her train, and Mariah said, ‘I guess you like Peggy a lot, and, you know, you really should have a friend,’” Lucy says (65). Then she adds, “This was a way in which Mariah was superior to my mother, for

my mother would never come to see that perhaps my needs were more important than her wishes” (65). Lucy’s thinking of Mariah as superior to her mother is probably biased on Lucy’s part because Mariah seems to have no problem with Lucy exploring her sexuality by socializing with her newly found and very sexually liberated friend, Peggy, whereas her British-influenced mother probably would never have approved of her friendship with Peggy. This scene, which follows afterwards, seems to bear witness to that. Lucy says, “He (Hugh, a man from the West Indies) kissed me on my face and ears and neck and in my mouth” (66). She adds, “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 far from home. I was not in love” (66-67). Lucy is trying hard to make a favorable distinction (in Mariah’s favor) about the relations that she had with her mother and that which she now has with Mariah. But the fact that she is reminded that her mother would never have allowed her to explore her sexuality in Antigua and the fact that Mariah gives at least tacit approval is proof that Lucy’s belief, albeit temporary, in Mariah’s “superiority” is a biased or false one.

Lucy’s thoughts are influenced by the difference in Mariah’s and Lucy’s mother’s acceptance of Lucy’s sexual explorations. Lucy’s temporary belief in Mariah’s superiority has more to do with her (Lucy) living in a society or culture that accepts women’s exploring their sexuality more freely. Lucy, on the other hand has spent her early life in Antigua and the Caribbean, in a society or culture that approves of such freedom for men, but not for women. Lucy finds that she has considerably more sexual freedom in New York than she did in Antigua. But, as materialist feminist Martha Gimenez notes, in a capitalist society, such as that which exists in the United States and that which existed under British colonization in Antigua, women often are denied control over their sexuality and reproduction capacity. Gimenez writes, “Given



the different biological roles of men and women in procreation superstructural conditions involve control over women's sexuality and reproductive capacity" (76). She adds, "The precapitalist relationship between producers of the future members of the class is preserved and reproduced under capitalism through superstructural conditions (legal, ethical, religious, ideological, etc)" (76). Although sexual freedom for women is more widely accepted in the United States today, that was not always the case. The "housewifization" of women primarily for supporting capitalist production, the theory espoused by Mies, is practiced in the United States, too, but is just not as dominant as it once was, as Lucy will discover later. A clash between Lucy's desire for sexual freedom and the values imposed by patriarchal rule in capitalist New York is one of the things that will later convince Lucy that Mariah is not superior to her mother and she (Lucy) is really not happy with either one of them. Instead, her situation points to this assertion from materialist feminist Mies:

But whereas many feminists reject biological reductionism with regard to sex-relations and insist on the social and historical roots of women's exploitation and oppression, with regard to race relations, the past and ongoing history of colonialism and of capitalist plunder and of exploitation of the black world by white man is mostly forgotten. Instead, 'cultural differences' between Western and non-Western women are heavily emphasized. Today this colonial relation is upheld by the international division of labor. This relation is not only often eclipsed in the consciousness of white feminist whose standard of living also depend to a large extent on this ongoing colonial relation, but also in that of black women in the 'white world.' The fact that they have the same skin color as their sisters and brother in the 'black world' does not yet automatically put them on the same side as them, because black women are also divided by capitalist patriarchy along colonial and class

line; and class division in particular is often forgotten in the discourse on sex and race (11).

As the passage from Mies suggests it is easy to look first and foremost at the cultural differences faced by Lucy in New York as the main sources of frustrations with her gender and sexuality development, along with the anger that she often displays, especially at her mother. Mies is reminding us that in a situation such as this where race, colonialism and capitalist exploitation are involved we need to look at many sources to find the roots of oppression for women. The complexity of the situation probably accounts for Lucy's tendency to swing back and forth on her feelings about her mother and father. The fact that she is an immigrant and an Anglophone African Caribbean woman is a factor too.

Although Lucy seems to be sometimes having affectionate remembrances of her mother and empathy for her father, the pendulum eventually drifts back to her mother for what she sees as her complicity with patriarchy. "I reminded her that my whole upbringing had been devoted to preventing me from becoming a slut," a rebellious Lucy says of her mother near the end of the novel (127). Then she adds, "I then gave a brief description of my personal life, offering each detail as evidence that my upbringing had been a failure and that, in fact, life as a slut was quite enjoyable, thank you very much. I would not come home now, I said, I would not come home ever" (127-28). Lucy is not only rebelling against her mother, she is rebelling against centuries of stereotypical images of black women and their sexuality. As Ania Loomba notes, "Nineteenth-century medical and popular discourses progressively intensified the linkages between 'blackness,' sexuality and femininity by using one to describe the other" (135). She adds, "The sexuality of black men and especially that of black women 'becomes structured in term of animals, lesbians and prostitutes; conversely the deviant sexuality of white women is

compared with blackness” (135). Later, Lucy sarcastically refers to her mother as a “saint,” but then burns all of her mother’s letters without reading them. “To all this the saint replied that she would always love me, she would always be my mother, my home would never be anywhere but with her. I burned this letter, along with all the others I had tied up in a neat little bundle that had been resting on my dresser, in Lewis and Mariah’s fireplace,” she says (127-28). Filled with anger, Lucy again focuses on what she perceives as complicity with the British influenced and dominated system of patriarchal rule in Antigua that diminishes the chances of women developing their gender and sexuality roles on an equal basis with men. She will later become so disillusioned, after learning of the death of her father and the fact that he left her mother no means of financial support, that she will move from Mariah and Lewis’ household to her own apartment. She will send her mother money, but she will not return to Antigua. On the other hand Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter* feels a temporary pity for her father, Mr. Potter, when she learns that he cannot read or write, both of which she can do.

Elaine also feels empathy for her father’s other daughters, her sisters, when they gather around him seeking his attention and admiration, a feeling that he does not share. The narrator becomes disillusioned when the other daughters quarrel over who is to be loved by their father. “(For Mr. Potter) the end of each hour is the beginning of the next, his end has a beginning and it rests in the smell of girls, each of them with his nose, and one of them can read and can write and perhaps this one shall remove him from the great and everlasting silence,” she says (178). The narrator has hope, temporarily, that she (the daughter who can read and write) will be able to reach her father and perhaps get him to provide a more human or down- to- earth response to the desires and wishes of his daughters. But this is not to be. He is as cold and callous as ever. “And all his girl children (I was not there) gathered around him, all their noses the same in shape and

color, and they looked at him and I looked at him searching for a sign of recognition, but he could not give them any, for he was dead, and his nose no longer looked like theirs,” the narrator says (180). “He was anonymous, the way the dead are, anonymous, and only the living can make sense of the dead, the dead cannot make sense of any living thing. And Mr. Potter’s daughters could not make any sense of him,” she adds (181). Mr. Potters daughters’ will never be able to “make any sense him” and his ways, a tragedy for the daughters, their mothers, and Mr. Potter. In both novels we have an explosive mix of characters, anger in the main characters, aloof fathers and gender/sex ideologies driving the narratives.

### **An Explosive Mix of Characters’ Anger, Aloof Fathers, Gender/Sex Ideologies**

The anger of the female characters, the aloof fathers, and the colonial ideologies of gender/sex in both novels make an explosive mix for leaving lasting damage from colonialism. As Mies notes, “Contrary to the official conservative ideology on women and the family, the family is no longer a place where women can be sure to find their material existence secured” (16). She adds, “Man-the-breadwinner, through still the main ideological figure behind the new policies, is empirically disappearing from the stage” (16). Under colonialism in Antigua this is already the case with Mr. Potter. As materialist feminism argues, African Caribbean women under a capitalist production system in 20<sup>th</sup> century Antigua and the Caribbean under colonialism are often producers of work and childrearing for example, but their work is not viewed as work because of patriarchal views about the role of women. This is what the narrator in *Mr. Potter* discovers and this is at the center of her anger. Toward the end of the narrative the narrator observes the following about Mr. Potter’s death and burial:

And (Mr. Potter’s other daughters) they quarreled over his love, for they had nothing to show for it but their noses. And all through that day of his burial, the rain fell and fell with

such ferocious constancy, as if the world from then on would be made up only of that, rain and rain and rain, and the water gathered up in the hole six feet deep, that was to be Mr. Potter's grave, and it stayed there, waiting, as if it were the beginning of something, a new world, but it was only Mr. Potter's grave and his burial had to be postponed, for the gravediggers could not bail out all the water that had gathered in his grave before nightfall (181-82).

Here Kincaid pictures a man who assigned a lot of importance to himself because of the job that he held as a chauffeur, which lifted him up from the status of poor, a status held by the many girls that he fathered and the women who bore them, yet after his death there is nothing to serve as a reminder that he contributed anything to anyone except the noses of all of his girls which are similar to his.

### ***Replacing Anger with Sorrow for Mr. Potter***

Finally, the narrator in *Mr. Potter* seems to be able to replace her anger with sorrow. She says, "He (Mr. Potter) could not read and he could not write and all of his life and all of his feelings were trapped in a capsule which from time to time he could see in a glimmer, fleetingly, with certainty and then the opposite of certainty" (172). She adds, "And he could not read and he could not write and his life lay still, for he could not make wars or cause events to make a violent reversal. He made female children and all of them had noses that resembled his own" (172). The tragedy, of course, is the damage that Mr. Potter did in hindering the cause of gender and sexual equality for women in Antigua and the African Caribbean. He was aided and abetted by colonialism under British colonial rule, with its attendant patriarchal rule and capitalist structure. One of the reasons that the narrator in *Mr. Potter* had come to detest her father more and more is because she learned of his staunch loyalty to Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd, to whom his

mother had given him before her death. Elaine, the daughter, saw in this loyalty by Mr. Potter his blindness about his past and a denial of who he really was, the father of a multitude of children who's rearing and support he neglected. She says, "And Mr. Potter thrived also in Mr. Shepherd's presence and he grew to be a strong boy and then a strong man and Mr. Shepherd did not like him and did not love him and Mrs. Shepherd never really noticed his existence, not even when she wanted him to run an errand for her" (103). The narrator sees the Shepherds as patronizing, seeing Mr. Potter's only purpose in their lives as serving them, his status as a grown man with a job and responsibility for himself notwithstanding, not to mention the responsibility to his children and the women that bore them, which he has abdicated. This added fuel to the narrator's anger. As Justice D. Edwards notes:

Throughout the narrative, Elaine reveals the hatred between her parents that has scarred her own life. She has been kept from Mr. Potter by an overprotective mother, and her father's profound dislike of Elaine's mother causes him to remain distant. Her anger, though is generally directed at her father, and this becomes acute as she traces the cycle of deprivation and abandonment (138).

Added to this is the fact that the narrator's father abandoned her mother before the narrator was born, when her mother was seven months pregnant. So the narrator's anger is cumulative, the more she learned about her father's neglect of his daughters and his sexual arrogance the more she detested him, despite an occasional moment of empathy for him over the neglect that he himself was the victim of in his early years. Likewise, toward the end of the novel we see mixed emotions much more in Lucy.

### *Mixed Emotions of the Characters*

As the narratives of *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter* progressed we saw signs, at least temporarily, of Lucy showing mixed emotions in her anger toward her mother just as Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter* seemed to be less angry at her father, Mr. Potter, temporarily. As we saw earlier, Lucy's mixed emotions stems largely from Mariah's reminding her occasionally of the more affectionate times that she had shared with her mother in Antigua. Also, as we saw earlier, the mixed emotions of the narrator in *Mr. Potter* stemmed largely from the empathy that she is able to muster for her father upon learning that his mother abandoned him at an early age and committed suicide by drowning herself. This passage is perhaps even more revealing about Lucy's mixed emotions:

Mariah reminded me more and more of the parts of my mother that I loved. Her hand was just like my mother's – large, with long fingers and square fingernails; their hands looked like instruments for arranging things beautifully. Sometimes, when they wished to make a point, they would hold their hands in the air and suddenly their hands were vessels made for carrying something special; at other times their hands made you think they excelled at playing some music instrument, though in fact the two of them were dunces at anything musical (59).

Lucy's identifying a part of her relationship with Mariah with the more affectionate part of her relationship with her mother in Antigua is cut short by the imagery put forth in the fact that both Lucy's mother and Mariah raised their large hands in the air when they wanted to make a point. In saying that their raised hands were suddenly "vessels made for carrying something special" Lucy seems to be entertaining a positive image of the symbolism of her mother's and Mariah's hands, but that notion seems to be quickly contradicted when she alludes to the possibility that

the two might excel at playing instruments with their hand. The contradiction comes when Lucy says they “were dunces at anything musical.” Without Lucy envisioning anything positive for the hands imagery, I surmise that the emphasis on the large hands of Lucy’s mother and Mariah symbolizes control for Mariah, control that Lucy rejects, control that she sees as the equivalent of the patriarchy and gender and sexual inequality that she experienced in Antigua. Materialist feminist Iris Marion Young addresses the need for a remedy to the situation that Lucy faces this way:

Women must have the space to develop positive relations with each other, apart from men, and we can best learn to develop our own organizing, decision-making, speaking and writing skill in an environment free of male dominance or paternalist. Only by being separately organized can feminist women confront the sexism of socialist men. And only in an autonomous women’s movement can socialist women unify with women who see the need for struggle against male domination but do not see that struggle as integrated with an anticapitalist struggle (103).

Clearly, Lucy is trying to derive some benefit from her new relationship with Mariah, her new employer in a rich capitalist country with a system of patriarchy by comparing that relationship with the few affectionate times that she had with her mother in her native country, poverty-stricken Antigua, which also has a system of patriarchy under British colonialism. And she believes that her mother and Mariah represent a furtherance of that patriarchy, or complicity with it. While Young’s suggestion for dealing with the issue might not be a panacea, it could represent a beginning of a solution for the problem that Lucy, Mariah, and Lucy’s mother face. There is no possibility of finding a solution for the problem that Mr. Potter posed, since he is now deceased.



Mr. Potter exemplified the height of African Caribbean male arrogance and irresponsibility under British patriarchal colonial rule, under which the rights of women and their children fathered by him were cut short of his support. But as Snodgrass notes, “According to Jamaica Kincaid’s stereotype of Antiguan life, marriage is an off kilter partnership. For women housewifery requires acquiescence to society’s expectations and to male needs and demands” (134). As for Mr. Potter, marriage was a non-existent partnership and that was damaging to a lot of people, namely the many women whom he has fathered children by and those children, and that was just as damaging as the complicity with patriarchy of which Lucy’s mother and other women in Antigua are guilty.

### **In Conclusion**

In conclusion, the narratives surprisingly portray women, rather than men, who are the ideological agents of the British colonial system, as equal, if not greater, in some cases, perpetrators of the ill effects of patriarchal colonial rule in 20th century Antigua. With the mother and stepmother, who are responsible under the patriarchal colonial system for playing the lead rolls in childrearing and nurturing female complicity becomes a throwback to Mies’ gender/sex based division of labor, which Kincaid is pushing against in this study.

Using the materialist feminist theory articulated by Hennessey and Ingraham and Mies, I am able to conclude that Kincaid has effectively demonstrated that female complicity with patriarchy under the 20<sup>th</sup> century British colonial system in Antigua and the Anglophone Caribbean is just as damaging to gender and sexual equality as patriarchy itself.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**MEDITATING ON PAST COLONIALISM IN *MY GARDEN BOOK*,  
*AMONG FLOWERS: A WALK IN THE HIMALAYA*, AND AT THE BOTTOM OF THE  
*RIVER***

**Introduction**

In this chapter, my main argument is that three of Jamaica Kincaid's works, *My Garden Book*, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, and *At the Bottom of the River*, demonstrate the connection between environmental destruction and colonial oppression in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean by engaging in three creative methods – critical meditation, historical reflection, and iconic-dual observation.

Chapter Three, titled “Meditating on Past Colonialism in *My Garden Book*, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, and *At the Bottom of the River*,” also explores how Kincaid uses the collective theme of the environment (including nature and gardening) as a means of bringing readers to think about the lasting and damaging effects of colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean in ways that they might not normally think about it.

Additionally, the chapter deals with what Kincaid expresses about the environment, nature, and gardening in each of the three texts and how it relates to the continuing, damaging effects of British colonization in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean, including the author's assertion, with reference to plants, that “to name is to possess” in *My Garden Book* (114). This statement, the name of a chapter in the book, has been interpreted as a meditation on colonialism and the erasure of identity that it imposed on the conquered. Among the problems with the environment, nature, and gardening that Antigua faces today as a result of deforestation and the importation of plant and animal life from other parts of the world during colonization is an inadequate supply of drinking water and the need to import much of its food supply. That raises the question of how Kincaid uses critical meditation, historical reflection, and iconic-dual

observation to draw the connection between environmental destruction and colonial oppression in Antigua and the African Caribbean.

### **Use of Critical Meditation and Historical Reflection**

First, I discuss what I mean by critical meditation and historical reflection and how Kincaid uses them as creative methods in the three texts, *My Garden Book*, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, and *At the Bottom of the River*. By critical meditation I mean making observations about, or meditating on, a particular event and then doing a critique or analysis of those observations or meditations. By historical observation I mean making observations about a particular history and using it in a critique. In the texts, Kincaid often makes use of the two methods together, but sometimes she uses historical reflections by themselves. In *My Garden Book*, for example, she states early on her intent to use the environmental history, gardening, and nature in Antigua and the Caribbean to critique the impact of colonialism on that region. Here she uses the two methods together. One day, after she and her family had been living for a while in a house in Vermont, formerly owned by a Dr. Woodworth, she is reflecting on her gardening and her relationship with other gardeners in the area. She says:

When it dawned on me that the Garden I was making (and will be making) resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it, I did not tell this to the gardeners who had asked me to explain the thing I was doing, or to explain what I was trying to do; I only marveled at the way the garden is for me an exercise in memory, a way of remembering my own immediate past, a way of getting to a past that is my own (the Caribbean Sea) and the past as it is indirectly related to me (the conquest of Mexico and its surroundings) (7-8).

The “exercise of memory” that Kincaid speaks of includes the British colonialists’ deforestation of the land in Antigua in order to plant sugarcane and the resulting ecological damage, the importation of a variety of plant and animal life and the depletion of much of the indigenous plant and animal life and the environmental problems associated with this transformation. “The Caribbean’s colonizers brought to the new world a set of cultural assumptions regarding forests, their meaning, and their uses that would impact significantly the ways in which the new territories would fare under colonial control,” notes Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (101). “In the Caribbean, the preference for cleared, usable land was linked to prevailing European notions of economic profit in an age of mercantilistic expansion,” she adds (101). This “exercise of memory” also includes Kincaid’s focus on the toil of the people, her ancestral relatives (slaves from Africa), who were used with little or no reward to carry out this devastation of nature and the environment for the sake of capitalism and wealth of British colonials. As Ramon E. Soto-Crespo says, “*My Garden Book* appears to deal with seasons, plants, and flowers; in fact, it concerns history, cultural institutions, and imperial conquest” (343-44). Gardening and the seasons that come with it in Vermont have various connotations for Kincaid. In the book, Kincaid says:

But what am I to do with this droopy, weepy sadness in the middle of summer, with the color and shape reminding me of mourning, as it does in spring remind me of mourning, but mourning the death of something that happened long ago (winter is dead in spring, and not only that, there is no hint that it will ever come again). Summer does have that color of purple, and the monkshoods have that color, and they start blooming in late July, and I have so many different kinds I am able to have one that will bloom all the way into October; but monkshoods do not look sad, they look poisonous, which they are, and they

look evil or as if they might hold something evil, the way anything bearing the shape of a hood would (12-13).

Summer seems to remind Kincaid of her mourning, mourning “something that happened a long time ago,” no doubt the enslavement of her people and their transport to the Caribbean to help enrich the British colonials. Soto-Crespo argues that, “What this...book makes clear is that for the Diaspora writer mourning can function as a form of political resistance” (344). “Resistance is not just a textual enterprise in *My Garden Book*, because Kincaid connects the garden to the development of imperial institutions and to memory of slave resistance found in Caribbean history,” he adds (344). That is Kincaid combining her critical meditation and historical reflection creative methods. Soto-Crepso’s comments capture the essence of part of the title of this study, “Jamaica Kincaid: A Multi-Dimensional Resistance to Colonialism.” In essence, Kincaid’s meditation on Antigua and the Caribbean’s past history of colonialism and slavery can be viewed as mourning. Her view of monkshoods illustrates her perception of mourning.

For Kincaid, the monkshoods, which begin blooming the color purple in July “look evil or as if they might hold something evil, the way anything bearing the shape of a hood would.” Perhaps Kincaid is thinking of the likes of the garment or attire of a member of the Ku Klux Klan, which is known for its terrorism against African Americans after the Reconstruction Era and beyond in the United States, especially the South. Later on in the text we discover that, with the exception of spring, Kincaid is not particularly enthused with any of the seasons in Vermont, especially as they relate to her gardening. That notwithstanding, Kincaid seems to believe that she has an obligation to remember what happened to African Caribbeans in the past under British colonial rule and she finds her gardening to be a suitable outlet for pursuing this obligation. Although it sometimes agitates her, she is not at all bothered by the agitation. As a matter of fact

the agitation suits her just fine. “How agitated I am when I am in the garden, and how happy I am to be agitated. How vexed I often am when I am in the garden, and how happy I am to be vexed,” she says (14). Focusing on gardening and meditating or reflecting on its relationship to colonialism draws a lot of mixed emotion from Kincaid. As Jeanne C. Ewert notes:

The history of colonial conquest is the history of plant theft and forced resettlement. Even in Kincaid’s own Antigua, the British botanical garden contained no plants native to Antigua, but only those appropriated from other people’s lands somewhere else. She remembers the bamboo grove in the botanical garden where she met with lovers, and the rubber tree from Malaysia under whose shade she and her father sat each afternoon the year they were both ill. The rubber tree is such a potent symbol of colonial appropriation, transplantation, and enslavement... (114).

In her relating gardening experiences Kincaid reflects on the English botanical garden, which she visited often as a child in Antigua. That experience seems to have some painful experiences for her as well as those not so painful, or perhaps even pleasant, like the time spent with lovers. Yet, throughout the text of *My Garden Book* I get the impression that Kincaid wants to remember her past experiences under colonialism in Antigua and the past of her people in both enslavement and colonialism through her gardening. It is something, she seems to believe, that she must do. While the critical meditation and historical reflection creative methods are pretty straightforward in Kincaid’s writings the iconic-dual perspective method is sometimes more complex.

By iconic-dual perspective I mean the use of two easily recognizable symbols, words or figures to make an argument, or to contrast the two. For example, in her writing on nature and gardens Kincaid’s creative method conveys ambivalence and irony, which is constantly dramatized by her use of a iconic-dual perspective of the colonizer/colonized. This is also

illustrated in other action, which shows that postcolonial thought is never far from Kincaid's mind. In 1998 she accompanied a camping group on a trip to Nepal, a country in Asia, near India, to find new flowers and plants for her garden at her home in Vermont. The group bargained with communist Maoists about the price to pay for the use of a school overnight. Kincaid described the bargaining this way. "We were just about to sink into the deliciousness of the danger we were in, when we realized our shoes were crawling with leaches that were eagerly burrowing into our thick hiking socks, trying to get some of our very expensive first-world blood," she says (73). The use of the terms "leaches" and "first-world blood" seems to fix the metaphoric way that so-called Third World countries are often viewed by so-called First World countries in that the Third World countries, many of them former colonies, are always in need of economic and financial help from rich First World countries. For example, materialist feminist Gwyn Kirk, whose theoretical arguments I will use for this chapter, says "Over \$1.3 trillion is jointly owned by governments of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean to northern governments and commercial banks" (350-51). "Leeches" and "first world blood" are iconic symbols set up by Kincaid to contrast, somewhat negatively I should say, the difference between that part of the world and the part of the world where she and the other campers are from. On another night, while processing the events of the day in her tent, while preparing to go to sleep, Kincaid makes this observation:

Not to allow anyone an awareness of the workings of your body is easy to do in our normal lives, where we have access to our own bathrooms, thirty-minute showers of water at a temperature that pleases us, toilets that allow their content to disappear so completely that to ask where to could be made to seem a case of mental illness. After I

had my pee, I took another sleeping pill and went to sleep and did not dream about the Maoists, leeches, or anything else (91).

This contrast of living conditions in a First World nation to those in Nepal, or some Third World or former colonized country, seems to fit some of the things that Kirk argues that feminists and environmentalists need to challenge. Kirk argues that, “Feminists and environmentalist need to challenge the fundamentals of materialism and consumerism, creating a definition of wealth that includes health, physical energy and strength, safety and security, time, skills, talent, creativity, love, community support, a connection to one’s history and culture and a sense of belonging” (362). Kincaid would probably share similar thoughts about the living conditions in Antigua as compared to those in say the United States. We can conclude this from a number of her works, particularly *A Small Place*, where she does make such comparisons. So in comparing the “bathroom” facilities in the mountains of Nepal to those in the United States, we can imply that Kincaid would indeed make a similar comparison between Antigua and the U.S. or even England, the former colonizer. In any case, Antigua, like Nepal, is a relatively poor country. Unlike Nepal, a great deal of the reason for Antigua’s poverty has to do with its colonial past. It is Kincaid’s connection of the colonial past of Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean and the environmental destruction there that this chapter examines from a materialist feminist theoretical perspective.

### **The Theoretical Framework**

As I stated earlier, my theoretical approach for this chapter is drawn mainly from arguments of materialist feminist Gwyn Kirk, who argues that, “Ecological feminist and women environmental activists need to understand and challenge the source of environmental devastation; the unsustainable devastation, the unsustainable priorities, values, and living



standards of industrialized countries based on highly militarized, capitalist economies” (346). Additionally, Kirk argues that “a materialist framework identifies economic and political institutions as the perpetrators of ecological unsound investments” (346). She says that, “It (ecological feminism) allows one to see global connections across lines of race, class, and nation and to build alliances across these lines of differences” (346). I also use the comments of other materialist feminists and non-materialist feminists as well to enhance my critique.

In her three works related to the environment, nature, and gardening in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean Kincaid focuses on ideologies of nature and beliefs that say humans should dominate nature being used as justification for the ecological damage done to Antigua and the Caribbean. An ideology that called for a controlling nature/culture binary, as well as one that utilized a cultivated nature/wild nature binary, were also used by colonialists to justify their damage to nature and the environment. The nature/culture binary espoused the beliefs that if one dominates and controls the nature surrounding a people they can control their (the people’s) culture. On the other hand, the nature/wild nature binary espouses the belief that if one controls the nature of a people with a wild nature, as colonialists believed about African Caribbeans, they could also control the people. These ideologies and practices, in parallel to gender/sex ideologies, which viewed women as inferior and called for their domination and control, were an attempt to impose control over land and nature (and women) in order to better exploit resources (and women). On the other hand, Kirk says, “I see women’s caring work – and this includes environmental knowledge and activism, especially in rural areas where women are farmers and herbalists who understand the visceral interconnections between people and the non-human world – as part of this gendered division of labor” (347). She adds, “While it may be fascinating to hypothesize about why this gendered socialization and division of labor first arose,

one does not need to speculate about ‘essentials’ to see a clear experimental connection between this aspect of women’s lives and their environmental activism” (347). I argue that through the use of her critical meditation, historical reflection, and iconic-dual observation creative methods Kincaid draws a connection between environmental destruction and colonial oppression in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean, which shows an understanding of and challenge of the sources of environmental devastation, as Kirk advocates.

Kincaid sometimes uses subtle examples and symbols from faraway places to illustrate to readers the damage done by colonialism to the landscape and environment in Antigua in and the Anglophone African Caribbean. Memories of plant and animal life and gardens from her childhood are also part of Kincaid’s way of showing the impact of colonialism’s damage to nature and the environment in Antigua and the African Caribbean. Kincaid, in virtually all of her works, mixes nature, the environment, and sometimes gardening, in with a focus on colonialism and its impact on Antigua and the Caribbean. That often includes discussions about landscapes, plants and animal life, the sea, the atmosphere, etc. The challenge of this chapter is to explicate how Kincaid uses this focus on the environment, nature and gardening in her *My Garden Book*, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* and *At the Bottom of the River* texts as part of her multi-dimensional critique of the impact of colonialism on the people of Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. In her *My Garden Book*, for example, she relates plants and gardening to slavery and colonization in Antigua and the Caribbean. This chapter also focuses on an analysis of how Kincaid uses her writing about a journey through the Himalayan Mountains to collect flowers and other plants for her home garden in Vermont to focus on the damaging impact of British colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. Kincaid uses nature and the environment in a series of short narratives in *At the Bottom of the River* to draw

attention to the negative effect of British colonization in Antigua and the Caribbean. The part of the chapter that focuses on this text discusses narratives about a mother-daughter relationship, with Kincaid using nature and the environment to bring people to thinking more about the impact of colonization.

Using Kirk's theoretical arguments, I argue that Kincaid uses the history of British colonials' deforestation and importation of plant and animal life in Antigua to manipulate or control the environment in Antigua and the Caribbean as part of her collective and multi-dimensional critique of the impact of colonialism on Antigua and the Caribbean, especially African Caribbeans. Particularly in *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, she uses subtle examples and symbols to illustrate the damage done. She also uses memories of plant and animal life and gardens from her childhood in *At the Bottom of the River* to show the impact of colonialism's damage.

### **Critical Meditation, Historical Reflection through a Garden Framework**

Critical meditation and historical reflection are the main creative methods for Kincaid's *My Garden Book*, in which she also uses techniques of irony and ambivalence that convey her critique of colonial natures. At one point Kincaid speaks of serious gardens having water, but she says her garden does not have a serious intention. She writes, "In my garden there might be a pond. All gardens, all gardens with serious intention (but what could that mean) ought to have water as a feature. My garden has no serious intention, my garden has only series of doubts upon series of doubts" (15). My interpretation of Kincaid's use of the term "serious intention" here is that it means the kind of attention that gardens usually receive, especially when they are used for growing food. What Kincaid seems to be implying here is that all gardens need water if they are to survive and grow plants, but her garden in particular can't be a serious garden without water

because of its symbolism as a memorial to all of her people who suffered the plight of slavery and colonialism in Antigua and the Caribbean. Her garden, she believes, can't be serious if it does not have a pond to represent the Caribbean Sea. For Kincaid, the only garden that can represent her native Antigua and all of its history is one with a pond:

When I was a child and living in the opposite part of the world in which I now live (and have made a garden), I knew ponds, small, really small bodies of water that had formed naturally (I knew of no human hand that had forced them to be that way) and they were not benign in their beauty; they held flowers, pond lilies, and the pond lilies bore a fruit that when roasted was very sweet, and to harvest the fruit of the lilies in the first place was very dangerous, for almost nobody who loved the taste of them (children) could swim, and so attempts to collect the fruit of the pond lilies were dangerous (15).

This is Kincaid reflecting on what is left of the natural landscape and plant life of Antigua, despite the massive deforestation by the British colonials to make way for sugarcane crops and profits under a system of capitalism. Today, profits are being realized by First World nations in Antigua and other Caribbean nations in another form of capitalism known as tourism. One day while in her garden in Vermont Kincaid spots a fox and is reminded of the capitalism and exploitation during the colonial era in the Caribbean and the current capitalism and exploitation by First World nations. Like Antigua, virtually all Caribbean nations, especially those populated predominantly by African Caribbeans, depend largely on tourism from countries such as those in Europe, and the United States and Canada, to support their economies. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Renee K. Gosson and George B. Handley note, "The culture of tourism has become crucial to the economies of most of the islands. Most Caribbean states are forced to maintain tourist and service sectors that are remarkably like exploitative plantation economies"

(23-24). It is no wonder that Kincaid says, "I most worry in the garden. I am mostly vexed in the garden" (19). Her cause for worry about her native Antigua and the Caribbean is that the onset of tourism has resulted in what some critics are calling neocolonialism. This is an example of Kincaid doing a reflection on history, then meditating on it, and finally critiquing that history. At another point in *My Garden Book* Kincaid thinks of the rabbits that she had seen earlier in her garden and reflects somewhat on her lifestyle in Vermont, a state in a large, rich country like the United States, with some ambivalence, as she does in a number of her works. She says:

I thought of them the (rabbits that the narrator has seen earlier) just an hour ago, when I put three lobsters alive in a pot of boiling water, and it is possible that I will think of them tomorrow when I am eating the lobsters sometime during the day. Will the shells from the lobster be good for the compost? I will look it up in a book, I have a book that tells me what to do with everything in the garden, and sometimes I take its advice and sometimes I do not; sometimes I do what suits me, sometimes I do in the garden just whatever I please (20).

Kincaid's ambivalence is in her reflection on her lifestyle of consuming a meal of lobsters, which is definitely a First World lifestyle as opposed to one of an African Caribbean in a Third World country like Antigua. She seems to make an attempt at soothing or at least easing her ambivalence by asking, "Will the shells from the lobster be good for the compost?" In thinking about the rabbits that inhabit her garden in Vermont, Kincaid recalls that she has a book that tells her "what to do with everything in the garden," like perhaps how to eradicate the rabbits. But her ambivalence takes over and she declares, "Sometimes I take its advice and sometimes I do not; sometimes I do what suits me, sometimes I do in the garden just whatever I please." Her issue of ambivalence is now resolved and she can return to focusing on her garden and meditating on

how it reflects the damage done to African Caribbeans in Antigua and the Caribbean as a whole by British colonialism. As Linda Lang-Peralta notes, “In *My Garden Book*, Kincaid reminds the reader that ‘the two things I like most [are] history and gardening/botany. This nonfiction book confesses an obsession with her garden in Vermont, while analyzing the acquisitive desire and tendency toward conquest...’ (41). This is where Kincaid’s ambivalence comes into play. In this display of her critical meditation and historical reflection creative methods she is torn between perpetuating the history of capitalistic exploitation that colonialists are guilty of and just enjoying her garden. A vital part of that capitalistic exploitation is money, about which Kincaid has some thoughts while in her garden.

### **Espousal of Philosophy about Money**

While visiting her garden in Vermont one day Kincaid decides that her yellow hollyhocks are attractive as they tower over her Aurelian lilies and she would like to have more of the hollyhocks. Her not having enough money to purchase more of the hollyhocks leads to her espousing this philosophy about money, one of the essentials in a system of capitalism:

The yellow hollyhocks (*Aleca ficfolia*) are good towering above the Aurelia lilies, but I do not have enough of them, for a reason (I could not afford to buy as many as I needed, or as many as I wanted) I always find humbling: a lack of money. I do not like money, I only love the ability to dispose of it, and sometimes my disposing of it leads to some comfort for others, but mostly my disposing of money leads to much disappointment for me; for with me satisfaction is elusive (and so worth pursuing); for example, the horrible cut plant (*Rudbeckia maxima*) with its blooms the color of a universal yellow (and sometimes the universal is reassuring and uplifting and inspiring, and then again sometimes the universal is not, just not so at all). And in that summer, this summer! (26).

Kincaid is aware that money or profit is the glue that holds together the system of capitalism; it anchored slavery and colonialism together, which resulted in a harsh impact on African Caribbeans in Antigua. Despite her feeling or belief that she needs to remember the harshness of the impact of slavery and colonialism on her people, Kincaid is still filled with a mind of detest and of protest. Hence, she says “I always find humbling: a lack of money.” The only love that she can find connected with money is her ability to spend it, especially if it is for the comfort of others. Her spirit of protest, detest, and rebellion is amplified further through her challenge to the so-called “universal yellow” color of one of the flowers in her garden. Her problem with the flowers being referred to as having a “universal yellow” probably stems from the way that the standards of what is universal are determined. For example, in English literature standards for what is universal are most often set by academicians representing First World English-speaking countries as opposed to those from a broad spectrum of English-speaking countries like those in Antigua and the rest of the Third World. Another display of her critical meditation and historical meditation focuses on houses, yards and trees.

One day, while reflecting on what other people’s houses and yards were like in Vermont, Kincaid does some reflecting on what her house and yard and the surrounding houses were like while she was growing up in Antigua. In this passage she reflects on the soursop tree that grew in the yard of a Mr. and Mrs. Roberts and the breadfruit tree that grew in her family’s yard, both of which bore some unpleasant memories for her:

On the soursop tree grew a squash vine (crookneck squash), the seeds of which I now see are offered for sale in distinctive vegetable catalogues; this was an important vegetable in our daily diet, and naturally, I could not stand it. I like it as much as I liked breadfruit, but at the time I could not have known that my dislike of breadfruit was perfectly

reasonable. A breadfruit tree grew in our yard, and my mother, who was obsessively familiar with such things as the nutritional value in kinds of food, knew of the breadfruit's nutritional value: I did not know of the breadfruit's history, but all the same my palates had a revulsion to it that was shared by every Antiguan child I have ever met (44).

Soursop is a large acidic fruit that grows on an evergreen tropical tree of the custard apple family. While the tree is indigenous to Antigua and the Caribbean and its history is not tied to the harshness of colonialism, Kincaid still has unpleasant memories about it, probably because as she says, "this was an important part of my diet," meaning she ate it more often than she wanted to because, unfortunately, it was more available to her family than many other foods were. On the other hand, she believes her dislike of breadfruit, a fruit that was transplanted to Antigua and has a history associated with slavery is "perfectly reasonable." Later in the text Kincaid writes:

The breadfruit is from the East Indies. This food, the breadfruit, has been the cause of more disagreement between parents and children than anything I can think of. No West Indian that I know has ever liked it. It was sent to the West Indies by Joseph Banks, the English naturalist and world traveler, and the founder of Kew Gardens, which was a clearinghouse for all the plants stolen from the various parts of the world these people had been (the climbing rose *R. banksiae* from China was named for his wife). He sent tea to India, he sent the West Indies the breadfruit; it was meant to be a cheap food for feeding slaves. It was in the cargo that Captain Bligh was carrying to the West Indies on the *Bounty* when his crew so correctly mutinied. (Perhaps Antiguan children sense intuitively the part this food has played in the history of injustice and so they will not eat it.) (135-36).



It is certainly understandable why Kincaid and other Antiguans express disdain for breadfruit. Because the colonialists felt that the breadfruit provided a good food supply for the black slaves who worked the sugarcane crops and carried out chores that helped their masters reap profits the slave trade was further enhanced. Kincaid sees the downside of the transplantation of the breadfruit tree to Antigua and the Caribbean because it enhanced further the slave trade. She is also aware of the hard work involved in harvesting sugarcane crops. However, DeLoughrey, in her essay “Globalizing the Routes of Breadfruit and Other Bounties” notes that, “As a whole, the Caribbean was remarkable for its cultivation of transplanted crops with transplanted labor, suggesting a creolization of the world’s plants and people well before any other place on earth” (8). She adds, “By extension, this positions the region at the advent of modernity and globalization. By the mid-eighteenth century, products gained from West Indian slave labor represented a quarter of imports to Great Britain...” (8). All of that notwithstanding, Kincaid in her gardening and memory, finds little solace in the transplanting of the breadfruit to Antigua and the Caribbean. She says, “It grows readily, it bears fruit abundantly, it is impervious to drought, a serious impediment to the growing of things anywhere. In a place like Antigua the breadfruit is not a food, it is a weapon” (37). In the essay “Alien Soil” she writes, “Soon after the English settled in Antigua, they cleared the land of its hardwood forest to make room for the growing of tobacco, sugar, and cotton, and it is this that makes the island drought-ridden to this day” (329). And further, she adds, “Antigua is also empty of much wildlife natural to it. When snakes proved a problem for the planters, they imported the mongoose from India. As a result there are no snakes at all on the island – nor other reptiles, other than lizards...” (329). This critical meditation and historical reflection, I argue, is Kincaid remembering the history of Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean and its control by the British over several

centuries, and the extensive damage that it did to the environment there. This is also Kincaid's echoing or embracing Kirk's argument that, "Ecological feminists and women environmental activists need to understand and challenge the source of environmental devastation; the unsustainable devastation, and unsustainable priorities, values, and living standards of industrialized countries..." Kincaid later meditates and reflects on economic exploitation and environmental devastation related to people of the First World flocking to Antigua and the Caribbean's warmer climate during their harsh winter months.

### **First World's Flight to Warmer Climate**

On an October day as she is planting bulbs for flowers in her garden in Vermont, Kincaid reflects on the coming of winter, which she does not like, and she also comments on the fact that people from the northern climate in the United States like to go to warmer climates like that of Antigua and the Caribbean. She says:

I grew up on an island in a climate that is tropical and therefore am prejudiced. All I see when I look at the history of human beings is that people who find themselves living with this substance, snow, and the stilled landscape that comes with it, go South or long for the warmth that comes from living in the Southern Hemisphere...I come from south (far south, I come from the West Indies) of where I now live, and I love the event called spring and accept that it comes after winter and that it cannot come with winter (60).

There is no direct criticism of Americans for their flocking to the Caribbean in droves as tourists and the damage that reliance on tourism had done to the stability of Antigua and the rest of the Caribbean's economy, not to mention the damages done to the ecology of the beaches there. But in saying, "I come from south (far south, I come from the West Indies) of where I now live, and I love the events called spring and accept that it comes after winter and that it cannot come with

winter” Kincaid seems to be saying in essence that, “If I can come from a warm climate and live with the snow and cold until spring, why can’t you Americans do the same?” Kincaid, is no doubt aware of this assertion by DeLoughrey, Gooson, and Handley that: “Despite the tourist’s presumed love of nature, the fact remains that mountains, rivers, cities, and historical sites do not hold the appeal of denuded paradises of white sand” (24). As Jana Evans Braziel notes, “In Kincaid’s framing, the environmental and human degradation of tourism are linked to the earlier historical violence of the Atlantic trade and slavery of the region...” (115). Kincaid has a keen awareness of ecological damage done to Antigua and the African Caribbean and she wants to articulate it, her tendency here is to be subtle in her criticism of Americans, whose ranks she has now joined. But on a matter of race that that involves the mother of one of her Vermont friends she is somewhat less subtle.

### **A Matter of Race: No ‘Love’ Lost in Love’s Mother**

One summer in Vermont, early in the morning, Kincaid goes to visit her friend, Love. As Kincaid accompanies Love and Love’s mother through their vegetable and fruit garden, Kincaid is reminded not only of the past slavery and colonialism that she and her people encountered over the centuries in Antigua and the Caribbean, she is also reminded of the racial degradation imposed by British colonial rule. Kincaid portrays the situation this way:

As Love and her mother walked around, they removed faded flowers, plants, and vegetables that were ready to be harvested (because Love grows vegetables and flowers quite freely together) and exchanged the silences and sentences typically of people who are bound together in a way they did not choose and cannot help (and so do not like), when her mother came on the bed where the Asiatic lilies were in bloom and broke one of their exchanges of silence by saying to her, ‘Just look at these nigger colors.’ Love

was shocked by her mother saying this, but not surprised; after all, this was her mother, whom she had known for a long time (66).

At first Kincaid seems inclined to become angry by the blatant racist remark by Love's mother in her presence, but she later seems philosophical about the whole matter, perhaps feeling that this occurrence would help with her explication of colonialism's past and continuing negative impact on not only human beings in Antigua and the Caribbean, but on human beings elsewhere and the environment as well. She says, "She (Love) told me of her mother's casual but hateful remark, and I became annoyed with myself for not sensing immediately the true character of the person with whom I had taken a walk in the garden..." (66-67). Kincaid wishes she had known of the racial feeling of Love's mother. "For had I known, I would have embraced the Asiatic lilies and their repulsive colors with a force that perhaps only death could weaken," she comments (67). Then she reconciles by saying, "If someone will go to such lengths to nourish and cultivate prejudice, extending to an innocent flower the malice heaped on innocent people, then I certainly wouldn't want to be the one to stand between her and her pleasure" (67). Kincaid seems to feel that perhaps she could do more to counter the racial attitude of Love's mother by writing about it than to show anger through a verbal outburst. She might have asked herself, what does race have to do with a flowering plant, gardening, nature or the environment? Nevertheless, as materialist feminist Kirk notes, there is a racist dimension to the international environmental debate. "Simply looking at numbers of people and rates of population growth, prominent environmentalists in Northern countries argue that many nations, particularly in Africa and Asia, must cut their high rates of population increase," she writes (358). "They talk in terms of the limited carrying capacity of the planet to support human life and pose the 'problem of overpopulation' as a central (sometimes the central) environmental concern" (358). Could this be

what prompted Love's mother to make her racial comments? Given the complexity of environmental issues in Antigua, the Caribbean and elsewhere around the world, even without the added complexity of the racial dimension, Kincaid may have felt that she could be just as effective in communicating the historical impact of racism from the days of colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean to the present by just mentioning the comments of Love's mother, as opposed to providing an analysis or further commentary. This distraction notwithstanding, it does not keep Kincaid from lamenting the loss of memory for plant life in Antigua and the Caribbean because of the British's deforestation in her critical meditation and historical reflection.

### **Lamenting Loss of Memory for Plant Life**

One day in Vermont, Kincaid is reminiscing about a visit to a garden in the mountains of Jamaica, the plant life in her native Antigua and how many plants in her native country that she does not know the name of and the fact that she regrets her lack of such knowledge:

This ignorance of the botany of the place I am from (and am of) really only reflects the fact that when I lived there, I was of the conquered class and living in a conquered place; a principle of this condition is that nothing about you is of any interest unless the conqueror deems it so. For instance, there was a botanical garden not far from where I lived, and in it were plants from various parts of the then British Empire, places that had the same climate as my own; but as I remember; none of the plants were native to Antigua (120).

In her remembrance, Kincaid points out not only the damage that was done to nature and the environment in Antigua by the British colonials, but also the damage done to the dignity and self-respect of African Caribbeans in her native country. The damage done has been

compounded by the difficulty they have in uncovering the history of that damage. As DeLoughrey, Gosson, and Handley observe:

To foreground the ways in which colonialism has radically altered and transplanted the Caribbean environment is to call attention to how natural histories are deeply embedded in the world historical process, to highlight the organicist assumptions of what might be deemed “natural,” and to underscore the difficulties posed to European and Caribbean writers alike in rendering a history of the environment (6).

And that history is vital to a thorough understanding of the Caribbean. The fact that Anglophone African Caribbeans were robbed of the native plant and animal life of the land that they inhabit and not allowed to develop their own identity, culture, and values aside from those imposed by the patriarchy and capitalist-inspired rule of the British is by far one of the larger tragedies of colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. “The colonial process involved a simultaneous uprooting of plants and people, reminding us that the etymological root of the word ‘diaspora’ is ‘seed,’” DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley remind us (18). “Often the same ships contained flora and fauna as well as human beings for transportation to colonial botanical gardens and sugar plantations across the Atlantic,” they add (18). Although these facts are well documented, I believe they are not well known to readers in First World countries. In the three works of Kincaid’s analyzed in this chapter she is attempting to change that with her multi-dimensional critique. In doing so, I argue that Kincaid is embracing Kirk’s argument that, “It (ecological feminism) allows one to see global connections across lines of race, class, and nation and to build alliances across these lines of difference.” This critical meditation and historical reflection is continued with Kincaid’s remembrance of flower gardens in Antigua.

## Remembering Flower Gardens in Antigua

In a passage in which Kincaid recalls better-off or perhaps middle class African Caribbeans in Antigua who maintained substantial flower gardens, just as the British did, Kincaid also reveals much about her people's mimicry of British tradition and culture because they had little means for developing their own in an environment where they had no control. For example, she writes:

Ordinary Antiguan then (and by 'ordinary Antiguan' I mean the Antiguan people who are descended from the African slaves brought to this island by Europeans: this turns out to be not an uncommon way to become ordinary), the ones who had some money and so could live in a house with more than one room, had gardens in which only flowers were grown, and this would make even more clear that they had some money because all their outside space was not devoted only to feeding their families but also to the sheer beauty of things (133).

On one hand, this mimicry of British culture and traditions robbed the Anglophone African Caribbeans of their own culture and traditions, but on the other hand it resulted in a hybridity (some would say creoling) of cultures and traditions for Kincaid's people, which some critics have argued is a good thing, while others see a mixed blessing at best. For example, Jeanne C. Ewert writes about Kincaid's gardening. "Her passionate acts of collection and appropriation have assembled a fantastic array of exotic flowering plants: all of them, like her, out of place, and without a means of return to the lost regions from which they came," she says (125). Ewert adds, "She does not regret this act of appropriation, because their purpose in her garden is to stand in for her – to represent her alterity, to be without a place, as she is. They represent also a hybrid space – the space where the voice of the colonized insider herself speaks in the tones of

the colonizer” (125). Ewert seems to be suggesting that despite Kincaid’s ambivalence about articulating the cause of a Third World Antigua from her position as a First World resident she feels it is her obligation to do so. This remembrance of a family from Kincaid’s growing up years in Antigua is a reflection of some of her views about Anglophone African Caribbeans’ mimicry of British traditions and culture:

I can remember in particular one such family who lived in a house with many rooms (four to be exact) and they had a lawn always neatly cut and they had beds of flowers, though I can now remember only roses and marigolds, and I can remember this because once I was sent to get a bouquet of roses for my godmother on her birthday; and this family also had in the middle of their small lawn a casuarina tree pruned so that it took the shape of a pine tree (pyramidal), and at Christmas time this tree was decorated with colored light bulbs (which was so unusual and luxurious to me that when I passed by the house at that time I would beg to be allowed to stop and stare at it for a while) (133).

This passage reflects Kincaid’s keen observation about the neighborhood in which she grew up in Antigua. Her lower economic class family lacked many of the material things that some families possessed in Antigua, including flowers in their neatly cut lawns and trees that were decorated with lights at Christmas. She remembers how her family celebrated Christmas.

Further along in that part of the text Kincaid remembers her family having a willow tree that served as a Christmas tree, something that she believes no one in her family knew the origins of at the time. “At Christmas time the willow tree would suddenly be called a Christmas tree, and for a time when my family must have had some money (it would have been only a small amount),” she writes (133-34). “I had a Christmas tree, a lonely spindly branch of a willow tree sitting in a bucket of water in our very small house, though no one in the family, and I am almost



certain no one in the family of the people with the lighted-up willow tree, had any idea of the origins of the tradition of the Christmas tree,” she adds. (134). Sara Louise Kras confirms Kincaid’s account of African Caribbean’s adoption of the British’s celebration of Christmas. “Antiguans have always loved the Christmas season. In the past the Christmas season began about three weeks before Christmas Day,” she says (119). “A carol tree was constructed of wood with crossbars that acted as arms for hanging Japanese lanterns...Christmas (today) in Antigua begins in late November when all the radio stations begin to play Christmas songs” she asserts (119). While Kincaid seems resigned to African Caribbeans in Antigua using trees that are not native to Antigua to celebrate Christmas and the use of non-indigenous plants for other purposes she maintains her ambivalence about it. She says, “It seems clear to me, then that a group of people (her ancestors who were slaves) who have had such a horrible historical association with growing things would try to make any relationship to it dignified (agriculture) and useful” (140). This kind of ambivalence is characteristic of Kincaid in many of her writings. She has strong opinions about the negative effects of colonialism on African Caribbeans in Antigua and the rest of the Caribbean. But she seems to always be mindful of the fact that any criticism that she offers up about the negative way that the First World treats people of the Third world will be viewed in light of the fact that she now works and lives in the First World. Nevertheless, Kincaid also knows that her sensitivity to issues that relate to the environment, nature and gardening stems from the fact that she grew up in a society in which most people are close to nature and agriculture, especially women.

Given the fact that women have dominance in childrearing, they have a lot of influence in the development of cultural values in the Caribbean as we established in Chapters One and Two. This also gives credence to materialist feminist Kirk’s assertion that women in the Third World

countries are closer to nature and more involved with the work of agriculture. Kirks notes that, “Women’s role as primary agricultural producers in many parts of Africa, Latin America, and Asia gives them direct experience and detailed knowledge of ecological issues” (362). She adds, “They are the main users of water in agriculture and forestry, as well as domestic life, and they carry it each day, sometimes several miles. Women are also responsible for finding fuel – wood, crop residues, and manure – another time-consuming and arduous daily task,” she adds (352). Kincaid’s ambivalence about Antiguans’ use of non-indigenous trees in *My Garden Book* probably stems from her knowledge of history, which says Antigua once had a large variety of native trees. “The notion of the Caribbean as new Eden, drawn from biblical and classical iterations of the locus amoenus, found its earliest expression in Christopher Columbus’s own letter and ship logs, where he describes the islands as ‘most beautiful, of a thousand shapes,’ noting, above all, how they were ‘filled with trees,’” notes Paravisini-Gebert (99). Nevertheless, Kincaid’s acceptance on the one hand and ambivalence about other British customs and traditions that involve the use of non-indigenous plant life is her way of showing that it has a mixed, at its best, and a negative at its worst, impact on her people. “When he (Christopher Columbus) saw this new world, he could not find enough words to describe what was before him: the people were new, the flora and fauna were new, the way the water met the sky was new, this world itself was new,” Kincaid argues (154). “It was the New World – but New only because he had never seen it before, new to him in a way even heaven itself would not have been,” she adds (154-55). In recalling Columbus’ view of Antigua’s and the Caribbean’s landscape and environment Kincaid is lamenting the state of that landscape and environment now as compared to then. Here’s how she imagined Columbus reaction might have been to what he saw:

It is a small lump of significance, green, green, green and green again. Let me describe the landscape again: it is green, and unmistakably so; another person who had a more specific interest, a painter, might say, it is a green that often verges on blue, it is a green that is often modified by reds and yellow and even other more intense or other shades of green. To me, it is green and green and green again. I have no interest other than this immediate and urgent one: the landscape is green. For it is on the green landscape that suddenly I and the people who look like me make an appearance (157).

That view is in stark contrast to the Antigua that Kincaid knows today, one that is devoid of much of its native plant and animal life, filled with hotels to accommodate tourists from faraway First World countries, no adequate way to dispose of sewage and waste, and an insufficient drinking water supply, etc. That prompts a bit of meditation by Kincaid.

### **Meditating on Thoughts about the Way Columbus Knew Antigua**

Standing in her garden in Vermont, Kincaid has these thoughts about Antigua the way Columbus knew it and the way she knows it today from a nature and environmental perspective. “The sky is as it always was, the sun is as it always was, the water surrounding the land on which I am just making an appearance is as it always was, but these are the only things that are left from before that man sailing with his three ships reached the land on which I eventually make my appearance,” she says (159). It is this memory and critique of the damage done to Antigua – its landscape, environment, including plant and animal life, and its people under British colonialism that motivates Kincaid in the design and planting of her garden. “Memory is a gardener’s real palette; memory as it summons up the past, memory as it shapes the present, memory as it dictates the future,” she says (219). This is what drives Kincaid’s multi-dimensional critique of colonialism and its impact on the environment in Antigua and the rest of

the Anglophone African Caribbean in *My Garden Book*. On the other hand, she often makes use of the iconic-dual observation creative method in the text that deals with her camping trip to Nepal.

### **Iconic-Dual Observation Perspectives in *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya***

Kincaid's iconic-dual observation perspectives such as that of the colonized/colonizer conveys ironic ambivalence in a number of the passages in her *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*. Throughout her trek to Nepal to find flowers and plants for her garden, Kincaid's thoughts are never far away from her gardening back in Vermont. In this passage Kincaid is meditating on the "transgression" of British colonials by focusing on the transgressors, who deforested Antigua, the garden; and the transgressed, the forests that became sugarcane crops that would be labored in by African slaves:

...Something that never escapes me as I putter about the garden, physically and mentally: desire and curiosity inform the inevitable boundaries of the garden, and boundaries, especially when they are an outgrowth of something as profound as the garden with all of its holy restrictions and admonitions, must be violated. The story of the garden, which is told by the gardener, is homage to the gardener's curiosity and explanation of a transgression by a transgressor (115-16).

I agree with Jana Evan Braziel's argument that, "Kincaid links colonial violence and slavery to neocolonial and capitalist tourist exploitation: those inside and outside have double resonances – masters and slaves, white tourists and black natives; those who owned the plantation, those who tilled the fields, those 'checked in' to luxurious resorts..." (116). Kincaid's metaphoric meditation on Antigua as a garden in this passage is a critique of the impact of colonialism on the people, land, and environment of Antigua and the Caribbean. The iconic-dual observation

focuses on the transgressor/transgressed. Her most prominent uses of the iconic-dual perspective in the chapter, however, are focused on the colonized/colonizer and First World/Third World.

At one point in the narrative of *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, Kincaid and the rest of her hiking group are irritated with their porters in Nepal - who carry their tent and equipment, cook their food and other things – because they have not prepared their food. It is at this point that Kincaid shows ambivalence for being both a First World and Third World thinker. She says:

...I felt in particular: life itself was perfectly fair, people had created many injustices; it was the created injustices that lead to me being here, dependent on the Sherpas, for without this original injustice, I would not be in Nepal and the Sherpas would be doing something not related to me. And then again, the Maoists were wrong, the porters should be fired; they were not being good porters. They should bend to our demands, among which was to make us comfortable and we wanted to be comfortable when we wanted to be comfortable. We were used to being comfortable in own native societies (84).

On the one hand, Kincaid seems to empathize with the porters who empathize with the communist Maoists, but on other hand she does not. That can be likened to many of the people of Antigua, other Caribbean nations and other Third World nations viewing socialism as a more acceptable economic and governmental system for a former colonized people, but finding desirable the goods, services and lifestyle under a capitalistic system of the First World. In her ambivalence-filled meditation Kincaid is advocating some of the materialist feminist principles advocated by Kirk, but at the same time part of that advocating might clash, one side with the other.

### **Where Kincaid and Kirk's Advocacy Might Clash**

For example, Kirk's advocacy calls for feminists to "challenge existing industrial and agricultural production that involves the routine use of toxics, excessive packaging and waste, the pollution of the work place and environment, the oil-intensive transport of goods over great distances" (361). Based on her meditating here, Kincaid seems like she would favor that materialist feminist advocacy point. But Kirk also calls for feminists to "challenge the overconsumption and materialism of rich countries and elites in poor countries, opposing prevalent ideas about modernization, growth, and progress" (361). This is where the ambivalence of Kincaid, with her success as a writer in a First World country might kick in. Kincaid, in her meditation, might ponder two questions that Kirk asks feminists. "I see two fundamental questions for feminists in industrialized countries who are concerned about ecological issues," she says (361). "What is involved in creating sustainable economies worldwide? How can we work toward this change?" she asks (361). My guess is that Kincaid would be empathetic on both questions, but perhaps somewhat less responsive on the second. I imagine that Kincaid's ambivalence and reflection on such questions might be influenced not only by her background as a former colonized person, but also by the sights, sounds, and other experiences she is encountering in Nepal, including what to her sounds like jet engines.

On one of the two days that Kincaid and her group camped and hiked in Topke Gola she described a scene that, if one did not know she was in Nepal it could be mistaken as her envisioning tourists as their plane is landing at a tourist resort (not a tropical site like Antigua or the Caribbean of course, with the snow):

We were surrounded by thousand-foot-high, green-covered mountainsides and above these were snow topped peaks. Coming out of one side of the green-covered mountain

was a fierce waterfall that looked, in its usual way, as if it had been painted on there, so constant was the force of its flow. But unlike the other waterfall of this kind, the long white foam falling silently into an invisible abyss, this one was so close by its constant roar was unrelenting. Sometimes, due I suppose to some distortion caused by the wind or some other natural element, it sounded like the roar of jet engines (152-53).

The snow almost assures us that Kincaid is not envisioning Antigua and/or the Caribbean and their environment. But hesitate for a minute – just evoking the sound of jet engines and possibly tourists seems to suggest that Kincaid is forever mindful of and often meditates on the negative impact that colonialism and neo-colonialism has had and is having on - as she often says in *My Garden Book* and *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* - the place “where I come from.” Understanding Kincaid’s First World/Third World dichotomy, or iconic-dual perspective, notwithstanding its sometimes subtlety is nonetheless critical, I believe, to understanding her critique, which she does in a number of passages. For example, in this passage, when the issue of the porters’ services comes up again, she comes across as a First World resident, which she is, and a former colonized person, which she is:

The sudden rebellion by the porters shocked us. They had been so nice to us, so kind; now, we wondered if all along what we had thought were encouraging words, spoken to us in their native language, was really them mocking us, finding us and our obsession of their native plants ridiculous, worthy of jokes made just before they fell asleep. But we had paid for this and we demanded that they return and make our camp where we wished. They didn’t come back up, and a bitter, sour mood settled over us. We ate a delicious meal of tinned fish and vegetables and then started to walk again” (162-63).

First, Kincaid seems to try to put herself in the place of the Third World porters, imagining how they might have interpreted the actions and behaviors of the crew of campers who have come to their country to take its plants and flowers back to their rich homeland. But then as a First World thinker she utters this capitalistic sounding sentence: “But we had paid for this and we demanded that they return and make our camp where we wished” (163). That passage might be considered a tie into Kincaid’s dichotomy and show of ambivalence; it seems to clearly favor the First World side of the dichotomy. She says, “Crossing over a bridge (made from the trunk of some wonderful gardenworthy tree, that was growing nearby) with a loud rage of water beneath us, we crept away, with nothing to make us sure we had really been there but our memories, and the rug and yak bells we had bought and the many collections of seeds that had been collected” (159-60). The crudeness of the bridge, the thought of danger in crossing it, and the fact that Kincaid and her crew are taking nothing that they valued very highly from the location just visited, seems to serve as a reminder to Kincaid that they are in a Third World country and their expectations should be dictated accordingly. Therefore she returns to her status as a Third World thinker. But that status is short lived when in her reflection on the crew’s visit to Topke Gola Kincaid seems to be reminded of the First World’s commodification of so many things that were once just ordinary parts of nature and the environment. She says:

And I thought this: if weather ever becomes an economic commodity, this part of the world would dominate the market for it. Every way in which the weather can manifest itself represents the ideal way for it to do so. The hot sun was the best hot sun I had experienced. The cold night defined such a thing as the cold night. The snow on the pass going over to Topke Gola seemed a snow that other snow might imitate. The domed sky



seemed to be the place from which skies were made and then dispatched to other parts of the globe (163-64).

In thinking of the commodification of things that were once free and parts of nature and the environment, Kincaid's mindset here is clearly one of a First World thinker. It shows her continuing ambivalence about "living" in two worlds (psychologically that is), the world of a former colonized person and the world of a First World person. Commodification of knowledge about nature and the environment seems to raise the same question that Kirk raises about the commodification of knowledge about life forms. She says:

This commodification of knowledge in a capitalist context raises complex questions about who owns knowledge of life forms and whether indigenous people should have intellectual property rights and be compensated for their knowledge, a debate that feminists in industrial countries should participate in. Genetic engineers who seek protection for modified life forms by taking out patents on their "inventions" pose a similar challenge (355).

While Kincaid's comments about the possibility that elements of nature and the environment of Topke Gola could be commoditized by some entrepreneur might sound intriguing, it also might well have been a sarcastic commentary on commodification in the First World, not a suggestion that Nepal should turn to capitalism. Since Kincaid uses the First World/Third World dichotomy or iconic-dual perspectives on several occasions in the text, I argue that it in effect serves as a critique of First World capitalism.

### **Reflecting on the First World/Third World Dichotomy**

At the end of their journey in Nepal, after their flight had been delayed for three days because of the threat of a Maoist attack, Kincaid says, "We got on an airplane, the kind that is

always pictured in fatal accidents involving people from rich countries in the process of experiencing the world as spectacle” (185-86). This is Kincaid returning to her First World/Third World dichotomy, her ambivalence about her thinking in both worlds. This “spectacle” that Kincaid speaks of is addressed by Kirk, who says, “Many activists groups in southern countries oppose the repayment of external debts and challenge the structural/social adjustment policies that are making many people’s lives much harder” (351). “They argue that many foreign loans were used by their countries’ elites for inappropriate, prestige development in urban centers that have not benefited the majority of the population, or that the country has already lost enormous wealth to northern countries due to their colonization,” she adds (351). Perhaps not in the exact context that Kirk articulates it, but this is a similar situation that Antigua and much of the Caribbean faces as a result of past colonization. And I am convinced that the thought of that situation was never far from Kincaid’s thinking as she experienced the threat of violence from Maoist socialists in Nepal, a country that is trying democracy after being ruled by monarchs for much of its history. All of this prompts Kincaid to do a lot of reflection as her camping journey to Nepal draws near an end.

Near the end of *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, Kincaid reflects on her trek to Nepal and what it means to the making of her garden in Vermont. “As I remembered the beauty of the deep blue starlit sky at night, the day of sunlight brightness and distorted distances, the day of walking among forests of maples and oaks and rhododendrons and bamboo, always at that time I was thinking of my own garden,” she says (188). In *My Garden Book* she had said, “I wanted a garden that looked like something I had in my mind’s eye, but exactly what that might be I did not know and even now do not know” (7). Even after Kincaid’s journey to Nepal in

search of new flowers and plants for her Vermont garden the idea of what it should be like is still growing on her. She observes:

As I walked up and down the terrain in the foothills of the Himalaya looking for plants appropriate for growing in the garden I am now (even now for the garden is ongoing, and a stop to it means death) making in Vermont, the strangeness of my situation was not lost to me. Vermont, all by itself should be Eden and gardenworthy enough. But apparently, I do not find it so. I seem to believe that I will find my idyll more a true ideal, only if I can populate it with plants from another side of the world (189).

In an interview with Kathleen M. Balutansky, Kincaid says she “went from not knowing anything about gardening to really teaching myself botanical Latin, a lot of history of plants, their relationship to conquest and the thing called civilization” (792). “I just became obsessed with it, and I also began to do my own garden. It was while I was in my own garden, thinking of all sorts of things, in this making, that I realized that what I was doing was making a garden out of a geography lesson I had as a child” (792). For Kincaid the ideal garden, which she has yet to make, will have to contain plants and flowers from another part of the world as her Antigua is populated with people from another part of the world. It has to represent things that she remembers from her childhood in Antigua and the Caribbean, like an isthmus, a peninsula, and an island. It has to contain a pond, which will represent or symbolize the water of the ocean that her people were transported on to Antigua and the Caribbean, and the making of her garden must be a continuing and ongoing process as the culture, environment, language, and other changes in Antigua and the Caribbean have been taking place since Christopher Columbus made his discovery there. “It was in my first garden that I discovered the relationship between garden and history, or that you could write a history of an empire through plants. It’s surprisingly shocking

how human beings have changed the face of the earth, the way it looks, the arrangement of the landscape,” Kincaid tells Balutansky (793). “It looks wonderfully unthreatening, but it’s an exercise of power,” she says. That is part of the message that Kincaid wants to get across in *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, as she does in *My Garden Book* and *At the Bottom of the River*. All three of the works are embodied with *some* materialist-ecofeminist themes, but one, *At the Bottom of the River*, flourishes with ecofeminist themes.

### **An Ecofeminist Framework in *At the Bottom of the River* Reflection**

The framework for Kincaid’s creative method in *At the Bottom of the River* is that of an ecofeminist philosophy and historical reflection. In the short stories Kincaid dramatizes a point of view about what will happen if the environment is continually damaged and women continue to be oppressed, especially in the final narrative with the same name as the book title. The book provides a mother’s point-of-view for her daughter about nature and the environment along with a host of other things in Antigua. It also provides a daughter’s point of view about nature and the environment in Antigua, along with a host of other things. As Andrew J. Angyal notes, the first narrative in *At the Bottom of the River*, “Girl,” a mother seems to be lecturing her young daughter about household skills that she needs to learn in order to become a woman in her culture” (3). For example, the mother tells the daughter, “This is how you grow okra – far from the house, because an okra tree harbors red ants; when you are growing dasheen, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your throat itch when you are eating” (4). The mother also tells the daughter, “Don’t pick flowers you might catch something; don’t throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all... This is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back a fish you don’t like and that way something bad will not fall on you” (5). As Kirk argues, this close association of women with nature and environment, especially in the

Caribbean, gives them a kind of connectedness, sensitivity to it, and friendlier perspectives that may be found less in men. She also notes that:

While women's engagement with environmental issues come out of a variety of situations and experiences, I argue that an understanding of their close material connection to the nonhuman environment puts such women on the cutting edge of resistance to ecological destruction, and that such analysis should also be a crucial part of any feminist oppositional project (346).

"Girl" reveals just how close a relationship the young girl and her mother in the narrative are to nature, the environment, and gardening. This is illustrated in the planting and growing of okra and dasheen, catching fish, planting flowers, throwing stones at blackbirds, being knowledgeable about red ants. In making the landscape, the environment, and plant and animal life such a central part of these stories Kincaid is also in essence offering a historical reflection or critique. For example, dashen and okra, which have become Antiguan food staples, were both transplanted from other parts of the world to the West Indies. Dasheen is another name for taro, "a tropical Asian plant that has edible starch corms and fleshy leaves, especially a variety with a large central corm grown as a staple in the Pacific," according to the 2007 edition of *The Oxford College Dictionary* (1402). It was brought to the Caribbean in the 19th century from an unknown location. Okra, according to the dictionary is a "plant of the mallow family with long ridged seedpods, native to the Old World tropics" (954). The dictionary says, "The immature seedpods of this plant [are] eaten as a vegetable and also used to thicken soups and stews" (954). Kincaid portrays the mother and daughter as having a close relationship with and knowledge about nature, the environment and gardening, and Kincaid herself has knowledge of the history of the plants used as food staples and the animal life in Antigua as well. So I think we can read

Kincaid's choice of writing about dasheen and okra as plants that were brought to Antigua and are now food staples that require caution when planting and/or eating as a critique of the negative impact of colonialism on the environment in Antigua and the Caribbean. Interestingly, Kincaid also portrays what the night environment is like in the Caribbean, and what it has been like historically.

### **The Night Environment of Antigua and the Caribbean**

Angyal notes that, in "In the Night" the narrative "shifts from the daytime world of domestic chores to the nocturnal world of mysterious sound and impressions" (3). This narrative deals with what the sounds are like in the night in Antigua, at least in the environment of this mother and daughter. "There is the sound of a cricket, there is the sound of a church bell, there is the sound of this house creaking, that house creaking, and the other house creaking as they settle into the ground," Kincaid writes (7). Then there is the focus on other parts of the environment, like rainfall, mountains, rubber plantations and rubber trees, and the closing and thickening of the flowers. That brings me to Kirk's argument about women's closeness to nature again. "Nature is not something 'out there' somewhere. Rather, people are intimately connected to the nonhuman world in the most profound yet mundane way, through the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and so on," she says (347). "But this long drawn out argument about essentialism is unnecessary and can be avoided by focusing on women's socialization as care takers across many cultures, with overwhelming responsibility for caring for children, the sick, the elderly, and the well-being of their communities," she asserts (347). Kirk's argument is illustrated by passages from the narrative. For example, one reads, "The rain falls on the tin roof, on the leaves in the trees, on the stones in the yard, on sand, on the ground. The night is

wet in some places, warm in some places” (7). Another reads, “In my dream I can hear a baby being born. I can see its face, a pointy little face – so nice. I can see its hand – so nice, again. Its eyes are closed. It’s breathing, the little baby. It’s breathing. It’s bleating, the little baby. It’s bleating. The baby and I are now walking to pasture” (8). And yet another reads, “What are the lights in the mountains?” (8). And finally, this one reads:

In the night, the flowers close up and thicken. The hibiscus flowers, the flamboyant flowers, the bachelor’s button, the irises, the marigolds, the whitehead bush flowers, the lilies, the flowers on the daggerbush, the flowers on the turtleberry bush, the flowers on the soursop tree, the flowers on the sugar-apple tree, the flowers on the mango tree, the flowers on the guava tree, the flowers on the cedar tree, the flowers on the stinking-tore tree, the flowers on the dumps tree, the flowers on the papaw tree, the flowers everywhere close up and thicken. The flowers are vexed” (11).

The passage bolsters Kirk’s argument that women, especially, in this situation, Antiguan women, are close to the non-human world, that they take care of those who cannot take care of themselves – like babies – and they are concerned about the welfare of their communities, like the quality of the air breathed, drinking water, and the food. But Kincaid’s critique can probably be found too in her naming such a large variety of flowers that “close up and thicken at night,” yet few of them are indigenous to Antigua because of the country’s history of deforestation during colonialism. What else would account for her saying, “The flowers are vexed,” as she had been vexed in her garden in Vermont? Then comes a narrative about houses, in which we learn something about houses in Antigua, from the current and historical perspective.

Although the next narrative in *At the Bottom of the River*, “At Last (The House),” takes place between the narrator and an unidentified voice about a dream sequence, it too is loaded

with reflections about the environment, nature, and the atmosphere in Antigua – a typical Antiguan house, sea shells, dead flowers, a hurricane, bedbugs, a hummingbird, a mountain, a beetle, a tree bearing fruit, and a steamer, to name a few things. This opening passage seems to express the desolation felt by one of the narrators, perhaps one of the spouses in a marriage, about the house in which they live. “I lived in this house with you: the wood shingles, unpainted, weather-beaten, fraying; the piano, a piece of furniture now, collecting dust; the bed in which all the children were born; a bowl of flowers, alive, then dead; a bowl of fruit, but then all eaten,” the narrator says (13). The narrative probably speaks to the impoverished environment in which most African Caribbeans in Antigua lived in the past as well as currently. Despite the scientific advancement in control of pests such as ants, apparently the control of ants, red ants in particular, are still a major problem in Antigua because Kincaid has alluded to such a problem in several of her works, including *At the Bottom of the River*. For example, the narrator says, “A baby was born on Thursday and was almost eaten, eyes first, by red ants on Friday” (14). We can garner from this passage that Antiguan live in yearly fear of hurricanes. The narrator says, “When the hurricane came, we hid in this corner until the wind passed; the rain that time, the rain that time. The foundation of this house shook and the earth washed away” (15). If the narrator is accurate, this passage tells us that the hummingbird is not indigenous to Antigua: “In this cage lived a hummingbird. He died after a few days, homesick for the jungle” (17). It seems that the narrator is telling us in this passage some of the things that are not well known about nature and the environment in Antigua. He or she, probably she, says “Many secrets are alive here. A sharp blow delivered quicker than an eye blink. A sparrow’s eggs. A pirate’s trunk. A fisherman’s catch. A tree, bearing fruits” (18). Near the end of the narrative the narrator seems to articulate what amounts to a typical day in Antigua. He or she says, “Another beetle will pause, sensing the



danger. Another day, identical to this day...then the rain beating the underbrush hard, causing the turtle to bury its head ever more carefully. The stillness comes and the stillness goes. The sun. The moon” (19). Antigua’s environmental problem with the red ants or its inadequate preparedness for hurricanes, which are a possibility every season, are examples of where Kirk says poorer countries like Antigua and richer countries like the United States should work together. She says, “There is a need for greater dialogue between those from rich and poor countries, and between middle-class and poorer people in rich countries like the U.S., but this needs to move from a politics of solidarity – implying support for others in the struggle - to a politics of engagement, where we are in a struggle together” (362). Unfortunately, for many so-called Third World nations in the Caribbean, like Antigua, when they have worked with so-called First World nations like the United States and nations of Europe it has often resulted in the First World nation’s exercising leverage, financial, economic, political, military, or otherwise, over the Third World nations as the price for cooperation. Then the narrative switches to what life is like for children and women in Antigua’s deforested environment.

### **‘Life as Predictable as an Insect’ in Antigua and the Caribbean?**

The “Wingless” narrative, which as Angyal says, “projects the child’s wistful and girlish sense of her own innocence, fear, and vulnerability also tells us a lot about nature and the environment in which Kincaid grew up in Antigua, or certainly about the narrator’s attitude about it. For example, she (the narrator) says, “Then again, perhaps my life is as predictable as an insect’s and I am in my pupa stage. How low can I sink, then? That woman over there, that large-bottomed woman, is important to me. It’s for her that I save up my sixpences instead of spending for sweets. Is this a love like no other” (21)? In saying that her life “is a predictable as an insect, the narrator is feeling pretty pessimistic about her life, which she views as being lowly

“in my pupa stage” and believes it can’t get much lower, which probably speaks volumes about the gender and sexual inequality that Kincaid experienced growing up, as this study revealed in the previous two chapters. And not all of it at the hands of males, which accounts for the narrator saying, “It’s for her (‘that woman over there’) that I save up my sixpences instead of spending for sweets.” In addition to the insect metaphor, the other nature and environment focuses of the narrative include talking birds, noisy birds, barren and bitter land, a string of bananas, pond lilies, biting flies, deerflies, a yellow spotted eel, a lizard, large cows, a field of tall grass, a mosquito, a cricket, a land crab, a mongoose, a butterfly, sleeping chickens, a tadpole. Some of the animals mentioned and not native to Antigua have created more problems than they have helped its environment. For example, the narrator says, “That mongoose, now asleep in its hold, now stealing the sleeping chickens, moving so quickly, its eyes like two grains of light...now so still” (27). The mongoose was brought to the Caribbean to kill snakes and rats, but they eventually became pests when they killed domesticated animals used for food. Kincaid’s vivid focus on nature and the environment, especially plant and animal life, so much, is itself part of her historical reflection critique of the impact of colonialism on the environment in Antigua. That focus also includes what the environment is like on holidays.

As Argyal notes, “Holidays,” the next narrative in *At the Bottom of the River*, “records a variety of the child’s sensations and moods associated with lazy, idle hours of holiday time,” (4) but it also gives us a pretty good picture of what impact colonialism is having on nature and the environment in Antigua during Kincaid’s growing up years. Mountains are mentioned a lot in this narrative, with the narrator making mention three times that he or she is sitting or will sit on the porch facing the mountains. For example, at one point the narrator says:

I feel the hot sun beating down on my bare neck...If I go to the village store, I can buy a peach. The peach will be warm from sitting in a box in the sun. The peach will not taste sweet and the peach will not taste sour. I will know that I am eating a peach only by looking at it. I will not go to the store. I will sit on the porch facing the mountains (30-31).

It appears that the narrator is not exactly happy with the condition of her livelihood at this particular moment, because of the hot sun on her neck, her unhappiness with this food source (the peach), and the store where they would buy the peach. So the narrator sits on the porch facing the mountains, seemingly as a source of relief. Mountains played a significant role in Antigua and the rest of the Caribbean as well during the long history of slavery and colonialism. Many of the African Caribbeans that rebelled against slavery and colonialism fled to the mountains to resist capture and punishment. As Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert says:

The history of slave rebellions in the Caribbean can be read as the articulation of the tension between plot and plantation...Slave rebellions – like the establishment of maroon (escaped slave) communities by runaway slaves that functioned as spaces to preserve cultural and religious practices – had as their goal the return to familiar patterns of interactions between the transplanted Africans and the land inhabited by the spirits (188).

So by repeatedly mentioning the narrator's sitting and facing the mountains Kincaid evokes thoughts not only of the devastation to the environment that the British did through deforestation, but also to the harshness of slavery under British colonialism and the cruelty of the slave masters. In essence this becomes a very significant part of

Kincaid's critique of colonialism and its impact on nature and the environment in Antigua and the Caribbean. We also learn in this particular narrative that Antigua has skunks, mosquitoes, bumblebees, a variety of berries and, wild ducks. Some of these things are indigenous to Antigua's environment and some are not, and some are helpful and some are not. That brings us to a narrative about the kind of activities that Antiguan were involved in Kincaid's growing up years in Antigua.

### **A View of a Girl's Life Under Twentieth Century Colonialism in Antigua**

The narrative in "The Letter from Home" tells us, in Argyal's view, answers to one of the most mundane questions, "What did you do today?" (4). In doing so it also answers some questions about what life is like and what nature and the environment is like for young Anglophone African Caribbean girls like Kincaid under British colonialism during her childhood. For example, the narrator says, "I milked the cows, I churned the butter, I stored the cheese, I baked the bread, I brewed the tea, I washed the clothes, I dressed the children; the cat meowed, the dog barked, the horse neighed, the mouse squeaked, the fly buzzed, the goldfish living in a bowl stretched its jaws..." (37). The narrator's utterance is an illustration of Kirk's argument that, "People are intimately connected to the nonhuman world in the profound yet mundane way, through the air we breathe, the food we eat the water we drink, and so on" (347). Kincaid is also showing that African Caribbeans in Antigua maintained their closeness to nature and the environment despite the obstacles imposed by British colonial rule. The next narrative provides more insight on what the life of a young girl was like under colonialism in twentieth century Antigua.

The narrative “What Have I Been Doing Lately” takes us, as Argyal notes, through the child’s eyes, “through a wide range of activities in a rapid and sometimes bewildering and bizarre fashion” (4). In the course of doing so we learn more about the narrator’s thinking about nature and the environment in Antigua during the period of British colonialism in which Kincaid grew up. For example, we learn that the narrator is in an environment that has drizzling and dust in the air and sometimes that dust is damp. The narrator says, “I was lying in bed and the doorbell rang. I ran downstairs. Quick. I opened the door. There was no one there. I stopped outside. Either it was drizzling or there was a lot of dust in the air and the dust was damp. I stuck out my tongue and the drizzle or the damp dust tasted like government school ink” (40). This passage can be read as a Kincaid commentary on the fact that British deforestation of Antigua during colonialism and other damage done to the environment there has left the country unable to grow enough food crops for the local economy and without a stable fresh water supply and it is forced to rely heavily on other countries for many of its basic needs, and this is the cause of the country’s deep indebtedness (government ink). So therefore the narrator answers her own question about, “What have I been doing lately,” with the answer being that she has observed the plight of the country under colonialism, which is not very good, when compared to that of many other nations, especially those in so-called First World Nations. As was stated earlier in this study, race and gender were major factors under British patriarchal rule under capitalism, which included white male domination by gender and race and domination of the environment. The next narrative alludes somewhat to the racial and environmental connection of that dominance, and the complexities that it has spurred.

### **'Blackness' in Antigua and the African Caribbean**

From my perspective, the narrative "Blackness" can be read as either one focused on the identity of the mother, assumed to be African Caribbean, or the feelings or impressions that one gets from dealing with the night. However, it also reveals some things about nature and the environment in Antigua under colonialism. This passage seems to speak more to the identity of the mother, while at the same time addressing nature by its mention of the earth and water. The narrator says, "The blackness is not the earth, though I walk on it. The blackness is not water or food, though I drink and eat it. The blackness is not my blood, though it flows through my veins" (46). It seems that the narrator, assumed to be the mother, is expressing awareness that even if she desired to do so she cannot escape her identity as an African Caribbean, a descendant of African slaves, and any of the negative ramifications that might come with that identity. It is an identity that she is resigned to live with it. She says, "I walk on it," meaning the island of Antigua, and "I drink and eat it," meaning it is what she thrives on, and almost basks in doing so. And she says, "It flows through my veins," meaning that it is absolutely essential to her life. However, the daughter of the narrator does not view blackness quite the same way. Her perspective looks more at nature and the environment:

She (daughter of the narrator) traces each thing from its meager happenstance beginning in cool and slimy marsh, to its great glory and dominance of air or land on sea, to its odd remains entombed in mysterious alluviums. She loves the thing untouched by lore, she loves the thing that is not cultivated, and yet she loves the thing built up, bit carefully placed upon bit, its very beauty eclipsing the deed it is meant to commemorate. She sits idly on a shore, staring hard at the sea beneath the

sea and at the sea beneath even that. She hears the sounds within the sound, common as that is to open spaces. She feels the specter, the first cold, the briefly warm, and then cold again as it passes from atmosphere to atmosphere...My child rushes from death to death, so familiar a state is it to her..." (51).

The narrator seems to be saying that her daughter does not see human events, such as slavery and colonialism perhaps, in their full historical context, but instead sees them as "happenstance," or occurring by coincidence. In other words, she does not get the full picture of how one segment of humankind, which according to the Biblical story had its "beginning in cool and slimy marsh," rose "to its great glory and dominance of air or land on sea." The daughter, the narrator says looks to "odd remains entombed in mysterious alluvium," or perhaps archaeological finds and the archaeologists' interpretations, to events related to human development. In experiencing her blackness and what she has come to believe that it means for her life, the mother probably feels that history and archaeology have not dealt adequately with the story of how Europeans, especially the British, captured Africans in their homeland and transported them to Antigua and other parts of the Caribbean to reap huge profits from their labor in sugarcane crops. Whereas the mother is viewing nature and the environment as an enhancement to her blackness, the daughter is viewing nature and the environment as being indifferent to her blackness. Instead, the daughter sees blackness as having a whole different meaning, that being a condition of nature and the environment. Then the narrative becomes one that focuses on the importance and role of the mother in Antigua and the African Caribbean.

While the next narrative, "My Mother," deals with the closeness of a mother-daughter relationship, it also provides a look at the Antiguan landscape and nature during

the period of colonization in which Kincaid grew up in Antigua. For example, this passage speaks of lime trees, a hummingbird, flowers, the sea, a castor bird, rain, a lamb, and a pasture:

I am sitting in my mother's enormous lap. Sometimes I sit on a mat she has made for me from her hair. The lime trees are weighed down with limes – I have already perfumed myself with their blossoms. A hummingbird has nested on my stomach, a sign of my fertility. My mother and I live in a bower made from flowers whose petals are imperishable. There is the silvery blue of the sea, crisscrossed with sharp darts of light, there is the warm rain falling on the clumps of castor bush, there is the small lamb bounding across the pasture, and there is the soft ground welcoming the soles of my pink feet. It is in this way my mother and I have lived for a long time now (60-61).

The passage begins after the mother and daughter have observed fishermen coming in from their boat with their abundant catches of fish. The mother and daughter relish looking at limes weighing down their trees, a nestling hummingbird, the slivery of the blue sea, flowers whose petals are imperishable, a small lamb in a pasture, and the falling of a warm rain on the clumps of a castor bush. This illustration of a mother and daughter's closeness and their admiring appreciation of nature and the environment again reinforces Kirk's argument about women's "close material connection to the nonhuman environment" and it "putting such women on the cutting edge of resistance to ecological destruction" (346). Kirk's comments also embrace the essence of this study's title, "Jamaica Kincaid: A Multi-Dimensional Resistance to Colonialism," because Kincaid in the three texts that this chapter focuses on is providing a multi-dimensional resistance to



colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone Caribbean, using the theme of the environment, nature, and gardening. In the final narrative of *At the Bottom of the River* the narrator moves at a rather rapid rate to give the reader a view of what could be the consequences of negative changes wrought to the environment of Antigua and the Caribbean if moves are not made to correct them.

### **The Final Narrative and Its Significance**

The final narrative in *At the Bottom of the River*, and perhaps the most significant in terms of Kincaid's critique of colonialism's negative impact on Antigua and the Caribbean, is titled the same as the text, "At the Bottom of the River" and my reading of it is similar to Angyal's. It is a version of the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, before the fall. For example, one passage reads:

...For now here is a man who lives in a world bereft of its very nature...He cannot conceive of fields of wheat, their kernels ripe and almost bursting, and how happy the sight will make someone. He cannot conceive of flocks of birds in migratory flight, or that night will follow day and season follow season in a seemingly endless cycle, and the beauty and the pleasure and the purpose that might come from all this. He cannot conceive of the wind that ravages the coastline, casting asunder men and cargo, temporarily interrupting the smooth flow of commerce. He cannot conceive of the individual who, on looking up from some dreary, everyday task, is struck just then by the completeness of the above and below his own spirit resting in between (63-64).

In the narrative, a female, seems to embrace the idea that man was not inclined to do anything that would alter nature or the environment in which he lives before his fall from

the grace of a superior force or power. “This paradise knows nothing of human joys and sorrow until, in a sudden transition the man wakes from his dream into his ordinary domestic life of breakfast and greetings from his wife and daughter,” Angyal says (5). “The man, apparently a carpenter, then departs for his day’s work, contemplating his projects. The mystery of the ordinary is compounded as the narrator asks, ‘And who is this man, really?’” Angyal adds (5). In offering such a narrative, Kincaid provides credibility to Kirk’s argument that, “A spiritual belief in the interconnectedness of all life forms is then the springboard for environment activism against governments and corporations that repudiate such connections by destroying or contaminating the earth, air, and water as well as a multitude of life forms” (348). The idea that the wishes of a higher spiritual power is violated when the natural order of nature - the land, air, water and life forms that inhabit them - is transformed radically also offers credibility to Kincaid’s argument that colonialism’s deforestation and neocolonialism’s contamination and pollution of beaches in Antigua and the Caribbean is a transgression and violation of people.

This passage in the narrative records a shift to a disastrous situation for the fortunes of the man, his wife, and daughter and the environment in which they live, a shift that helps to mark the entire narrative of the book as ecofeminist:

For tomorrow the oak will be felled, the trestle will break, the cow’s hooves will be made into glue...He seeks out the living fossils. There is the shell of the pearly nautilus lying amidst colored chalk and powdered ink and India rubber in an old tin can, the memory of a day spent blissfully at the sea. The flatworm is now a parasite. Reflect. There is the earth, its surface apparently stilled, its atmosphere

hospitable. And yet here stand pile upon pile of rocks of an enormous size, riven and worn down from the pressure of the great seas, now receded. And here the large view of gold, the bubbling sulfurous fountains, the mountains covered with hot lava; at the bottom of some caves lies the black dust, and below that rich clay sediment, and trapped between the layers are filaments of winged beasts and remnants of invertebrates (66-67).

As Angyal notes, “The mood of the sketch shifts abruptly to images of death and decay as the narrator contemplates how vainly the man has struggled against the threat of death. All that he has done seems to vanish in the darkness and into oblivion” (5). This part of the narrative, though it is only metaphorical in that it represents what materialist feminists view as the ultimate destruction that will occur unless there is a major shift in the way that humankind, especially wealthier nations, treat nature and the environment, gives at least literary credence to Kirk’s argument that:

The point is not to pursue the liberal ideal of equal opportunity for material development in a world that is heading toward even greater ecological destruction; to intellectually deconstruct the complexities of reality without apparent interest in practical reconstruction; or to buy ‘Green’ products – where the emphasis is still on consumption, but to transform relationships among people and between people and the nonhuman world so there is the possibility that our children’s children will inherit a healthier planet and will be able to live in more truly human ways (363).

While the middle part of the narrative focuses on death and destruction, the narrator, as Angyal notes, “mocks the notion that ‘death is natural’ and argues that people must hold on to what they have” (6). That call for people to “hold on to what they have” is

Kincaid's argument that people should protect nature and the environment in their natural state, because when they are transformed radically the greater the risk becomes for some form of destruction that is unnatural. Toward the end of the narrative another shift takes place, a more positive occurrence. With the appearance of the mother, the narrator says:

I saw a world in which the sun and the moon shone at the same time. They appeared in a way I had never seen before: the sun was The Sun, a creation of Benevolence and Purpose and a star among many stars, with a predictable cycle and a predictable end; the moon, too, was The Moon, and it was the creation of Beauty and Purpose and not a body subject to a theory of planetary evolution (77).

As Angyal says, "Maternal love reaches out across the darkness and the years as the narrator recalls the deep love and affection that her mother has lavished upon her" (6). This gives credence, again in at least in literary form, to Kirk's saying, "I see women's caring work – and this includes environmental knowledge and activism, especially in rural areas where women are farmers and herbalist who understand the visceral interconnections between people and the nonhuman world – as part of this gendered division of labor" (347). The narrator's focus on her mother's more caring nature when it comes to nature and the environment is not unlike Kirk's argument that women have a propensity to be closer to nature in many ways, whether it be plant and animal life, agriculture, the landscape, the air, or water, and therefore they often have a better understanding of it than men and perhaps more empathy or concern for its destruction. The story ends with the narrator becoming a transformed figure, who is liberated from her body to reunite with the elements of the earth in freedom, with the implication that the spirit of her mother frees her. The narrative can be read as an analogy to the story of

ecological damage done to Antigua and the Caribbean during the long period of slavery and colonialism and the and dramatic occurrences that will have to take place if that damage is to be corrected.

### **In Conclusion**

In conclusion, Kincaid uses three creative methods – critical meditation, historical reflection, and iconic-dual perspective observation to demonstrate how nature and the environment were severely damaged by British patriarchal colonialism in Antigua. Kincaid often draws on her childhood experiences to make observations about damage to nature and the environment in her native Antigua and the Caribbean. Her three works, *My Garden Book*, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* demonstrates in sometimes subtle and sometimes less than subtle ways, and in sometimes ambivalent and sometimes not so ambivalent ways, Kincaid’s critique of and push against “the unsustainable devastation (to the environment), the sustainable priorities, values, and living standards of industrialized countries based on highly militarized, capitalist economies,” which materialist feminist Gwyn Kirk advocates.

In *My Garden Book*, Kincaid has used her own garden at her home in Vermont to examine and illustrate how nature and the environment were severely damaged by British colonialism in Antigua and the Caribbean. Her *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* draws on often subtle observations during a camping trip to Nepal to find flowers and other plants for her garden, but those subtle observations often add up to a critique of colonialism’s negative impact on Antigua and the Caribbean. In *At the Bottom of the River*, nature, gardening and the environment provide a background to short stories about the relationship of a mother and daughter in Antigua and at the same time a critique of

how nature and the environment fared under colonialism in Antigua. In summary, Kincaid has shown clearly that colonialism has had a very damaging effect ecologically on Antigua and the Caribbean and that impact continues with the neocolonial policies of First World nations toward Antigua and the rest of the Caribbean.

## CHAPTER 4 RECOLONIZATION IN A *SMALL PLACE, MY BROTHER* AND *LIFE AND DEBT*

### Introduction

My main argument in Chapter Four is that things revealed in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* and *My Brother* texts, and by Kincaid and director-producer Stephanie Black in the documentary film, *Life and Debt* constitute an anti-capitalist critique in which they show the negative impact of global capitalism imposed on Antigua and Jamaica during colonialism and afterwards, and the resulting neocolonialism or recolonization. In this chapter, I also analyze Kincaid's deep ambivalence and discomfort with her position of class privilege in the global capitalism of the United States.

By global capitalism, which has also been labeled globalization in a broader sense, I mean the economic component that Hugh Hodges refers to as "the transnationalization...of capital and industry, which has allowed companies to transcend national boundaries and move across the globe to take advantage of cheap labor and to develop new markets for goods and services" (212). This includes the international corporate entities and international agencies operating in Antigua, Jamaica and the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean in particular and the foreign interests that control the tourist industry, production, distribution, and lending and financing in these areas. With such economic dominance eventually comes social and cultural dominance. As Hodges notes:

The threat associated most commonly with the idea of global culture is that it will eventually result in a homogeneous world culture, erasing existing differences between local cultures and leaving in its wake an impoverished, soulless, Americanized (or Europeanized) culture of commodity consumption. As in postcolonial studies, the study of

globalization thus involves questions about the nature and survival of social and cultural identity (214).

In their anti-capitalism critique of global capitalism in Antigua, Jamaica, and the rest of the Anglophone Africa Caribbean, Kincaid and Black's foremost concern are economic in nature, but they are also concerned about the social and cultural impact too. The reliance of former colonized Caribbean nations, like Antigua and Jamaica, on other nations, especially the so-called First World nations like the United States and those of Europe, for so many of their basic needs has been termed a virtual recolonization or neocolonialism by some critics and scholars. By recolonization or neocolonialism I mean what Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman call "a continuing Western influence located in flexible combination of the economic, the political, the military and the ideological (but with an overriding economic purpose)" (3). In essence the economies of Antigua and Jamaica are not controlled by those respective countries because of their need for so much outside help for survival, whether it is the foreign tourists, funding and financing by organizations controlled by First World nations, or their dependence on technical or military support. As Robert C. Young says, "In the neocolonial situation, the ruling class constitutes an elite that operates in complicity with the needs of international capital for its own benefit" (45). Young notes further that, "Effective international (i.e.US) control is maintained by economics, particularly access to capital and technology, together with the policing of world financial organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank (the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) or the International Monetary Fund" (45-46). Kincaid uses the existence of these conditions to argue against the capitalism and colonialism, especially latter-day global capitalism which caused them to exist.



Many critics have noted the “anti-globalization” or “anti-colonial” dimensions of Kincaid’s works, but few have contextualized her narratives with support from theory, especially materialist feminist theory, and history as a critique of capitalism. For example, with reference to Kincaid’s critique of global capitalism in Antigua in her *A Small Place*, Rick Mitchell writes:

At all cost, of course, the Caribbean tourist must repress the negative. Ideally, the negative never rears its ugly, unsettling face during one’s holiday in the sun. But if in spite of one’s best efforts the face of the negative just won’t go away, then one must try to create the illusion, as Marlow (from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*) does for the intended, that the face is something other than what it is (22).

Mitchell’s attention is focused on the globalization from First World nations that is overtaking Antigua and the rest of the Caribbean and the seemingly blindness or indifference to it by First World tourists, but his is not an analysis of Kincaid’s anti-capitalist critique of the impact of colonialism on the Caribbean. In reference to Kincaid’s sending money from her home in Vermont to her brother, Devon, in Antigua to purchase an anti-viral medication to deal with his HIV-AIDS in *My Brother*, Kezi Page notes that, “Remittances represent a significant means of foreign exchange earnings or inflow to Caribbean nations. In Jamaica alone total inflows have climbed from US\$508.8 million in 1994 to more than US\$1.2 billion in 2002” (38). The critic adds, “These figures alone are noteworthy not just as they signify the intensity of the relationship between Caribbean diaspora and home communities but also as they impact other key economic indicators” (38). Page’s essay analyzes the impact of remittance payments on the Caribbean, but it offers no analysis of Kincaid’s anti-capitalist critique of the impact colonialism on the Caribbean. Corinna McLeod writes that, “The question of Antigua’s identity as a nation – is it a tourist resort, a postcolonial nation, a neocolonialist territory? – is mimicked by the multiplicity of

narrative elements found in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*" (77). McLeod's analysis of the narrative is focused on what she perceives as the identity issues that global capitalism poses for Antigua, but it, too, does not offer an analysis of Kincaid's anti-capitalist critique of colonialism in the narrative. Again, I argue in Chapter Four that the economic affairs in Antigua, as articulated by Kincaid in *A Small Place* and *My Brother*, and those portrayed for Jamaica in *Life and Debt* fit the definition of neocolonialism or recolonization as outlined by Williams and Chrisman and Young, and constitutes an anti-capitalism critique of colonialism in Antigua, Jamaica and the Anglophone African Caribbean.

### **The Antiguan, Jamaican and 'Anglophone African Caribbean' Economies**

For the purpose of this study and this chapter, when I refer to the Caribbean economy I refer to the 15 collective economies of the countries that comprise The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) whose membership includes eleven Anglophone Caribbean islands, including Antigua and Jamaica, and Belize, Guyana, Suriname, and Haiti. Most of the CARICOM nations are Anglophone African Caribbean nations. The other Caribbean nations, those whose populations speak Spanish, French, etc., are excluded only for the purpose of keeping the focus mainly on the Anglophone and African Caribbean nations, Antigua and Jamaica in particular. From the time that slaves were brought to the Caribbean in the sixteenth century and through the 1950s and 60s, the time of independence for many of the British colonies, sugarcane and banana crops were the mainstays of their economies. Now, tourism, supported by foreigners, is the main industry, and along with this change has come a multitude of problems for the countries, including Antigua and Barbuda (one country) and Jamaica, the focus of this chapter. According to Ransford W. Palmer, in 2005 "the range in per capita gross domestic product (GPD)" - a measure of national income per person - for CARICOM countries

ranged from \$500 for Haiti to \$17,497 for the Bahamas (1), a testimony to the relative poverty of some of the nations. After the Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda ranked fourth with a GPD of \$10,578, and Jamaica ranked 10<sup>th</sup> with a GPD of \$3,607, despite the fact that it has the largest population of the Anglophone nations in the Caribbean. According to Palmer, CARICOM, formed in 1973, “aims to improve export competitiveness and stimulate growth by encouraging more efficient use of resources,” but that has been rough sledding for the organization (108).

Palmer writes:

Now as World Trade Organization (WTO) rules are bringing the long period of unilateral preferential treatment for their exports to a close, the economic viability of these small countries will increasingly depend on their ability to compete in external markets. Preferential treatment has not prepared them to compete because it has not encouraged technological advancement in production. As a consequence, exposure to global competition is putting added pressure on government to seek new beneficial trade arrangements with their major trading partners. More than ever governments in the Caribbean are preoccupied with negotiating the right trade arrangements that would allow private sector producers to prosper. This is a far more complex undertaking than when the role of government was seen through the prism of socialism in the 1970s as capturing the ‘commanding heights’ of economies (3).

I argue that it is the consequences of these trade agreements that these Caribbean nations, like Antigua and Barbuda and Jamaica, are feeling, like increased dependency, high interest rates, decline in exports, increase in imports, loss of national identities, etc. that Kincaid and producer-director Stephanie Black critique multi-dimensionally, from an anti-capitalism and materialist feminist perspective in *A Small Place*, *My Brother* and *Life and Debt*. The end result

of all of this, I argue, amounts to recolonization or neocolonialism, which Kincaid and Black use in their arguments to condemn capitalism.

### **Critiquing of Issues in Antigua and Jamaica**

In *A Small Place*, *My Brother* and *Life and Debt*, a documentary in which Kincaid collaborates with producer-director Black, issues of global capitalism that affect Antigua and other parts of the Anglophone African Caribbean, especially Jamaica, are critiqued. Among the things discussed in the three narratives are a wide range or multiplicity of economic issues, including dependence on foreign tourists, foreign financing, high interest rates charged by the United States and European lenders, and heavy reliance on other countries for such basic needs as food and health care. Published in 1988, *A Small Place*, whose genre many critics have found difficult to define because of its somewhat unusual narrative, Kincaid takes tourists to places that they would probably not want to go to and describes things that they would probably not want to see, or do, in her native Antigua. It portrays Antigua as a paradise for tourists from and United States and Europe and blames the country's sort of "behind the scenes" conditions such as decaying roads and buildings, inadequate facilities, etc. on the negative impact of global capitalism in Antigua. Kincaid's memoir, *My Brother*, which was published in 1997, is another somewhat unusual narrative because of its subject matter and the pinning of blame. In it she depicts graphically the symptoms and the emotional pain and suffering that her brother, Devon, endures before he dies of HIV/AIDS and pins the blame squarely on the impact of global capitalism in Antigua. Kincaid's collaborative project with Black, the film documentary *Life and Debt*, was released in 2001. Its genre, too, is somewhat unusual for a literary figure such as Kincaid. She collaborates with producer Black, mainly through voice-over narration, to take tourists, this time, to places they probably would not want to see in Jamaica and describes things

that they probably would not want to see, or do, in that country. Jamaica, too, is portrayed as a paradise for tourists from the United States and Europe, and its sort of “behind the scenes” negatives such as high unemployment, the shutdown or relocation out of the country of foreign-controlled plants, and high interest rates charged on loans from international funding agencies, are blamed on the negative impact of global capitalism. In *A Small Place*, *My Brother*, and *Life and Debt*, Kincaid and Black have done analyses of the reasons and causes for these so-called “undersides” or negative economic impacts in Antigua and Jamaica and render their critique on them. One of the creative techniques that they use is a re-conceptualizing of self.

### **Re-conceptualizing of Self in Narratives**

In this chapter, I argue that these three narratives of Kincaid and Black are effective in demonstrating the profound and damaging effects of British patriarchal colonialism and global capitalism because they re-conceptualize the self. That is, they help the readers of the narratives in the two Kincaid books and viewers of the documentary film place themselves figuratively in the place of the people who were formerly colonized, to see and sense or feel what the permanent inhabitants of the Anglophone African Caribbean experience on a daily basis. I also argue that they provide the colonizer or those who have benefited from colonization an opportunity to gain a new sensitivity to the plights of people of nations that are still in effect being “colonized” or “recolonized.” These three narratives, *A Small Place*, *My Brother*, and *Life and Debt*, through their focus on corruption, provide an analysis of this corrosive impact of global capitalism in Antigua and Jamaica in particular, but also other parts of the Caribbean as well, especially the Anglophone African Caribbean. Corruption, seen as another one of the downsides of global capitalism, has a heavy impact on Antigua and its impact is felt in Jamaica too.

Kincaid uses *My Brother*, which is about the death of her brother, Devon, dying of HIV-AIDS in Antigua in the mid-1990s, to highlight in a very strong way the havoc and devastation that global capitalism has on Antigua. The re-conceptualizing of self in this memoir takes place when Kincaid, who currently resides in Vermont and teaches literature and creative writing classes part of the year at Claremont McKenna College in the Los Angeles area, does an introspection of her life as a former colonized person from a Third World nation who has attained great success in a wealthy First World nation. In *My Brother* her struggle with this re-conceptualization of herself is manifested in the form of ambivalence and a feeling that she might be guilty of contributing to the negative impact of global capitalism, which she believes to be a major factor in her brother's death from HIV-AIDS. Gender and sexual inequality for women, even after independence, is also on display in the *My Brother* narrative through the way that Devon disregards the health of women by continuing to have unprotected sex with them. In *A Small Place*, an unusual travelogue of a sort, if it can be described genre wise, Kincaid reveals the "underside" or not positive (from the tourist perspective) side of Antigua in terms of the negative impact of global capitalism. Kincaid's use of the re-conceptualization of self technique is evident in this narrative when the reader is addressed directly time and time against and given unpleasant facts about which she or he is probably unaware of. He or she are "handed" such facts as how they are contributing to the capitalist exploitation of Antigua and the Caribbean in a way that it is almost impossible for one not to think about their roles as tourists in a different way, even with anger perhaps – but certainly not merely as fun-loving, sun-soaking, beer-drinking, beach-loving tourists. Gender and sexuality inequality are on display here, too, in the way women are disregarded. In addition to revealing the "underside" or not positive side of Jamaica in terms of the negative impact of global capitalism and forcing a re-conceptualization of self on

the part of the tourist in Jamaica, *Life and Debt* focuses on gender inequality too in the way that women, who make up the majority of the workforce, are disregarded when it comes to the shutdown of companies and layoff of workers.

### **The Theoretical Framework**

To make my case that Kincaid and Black's narratives constitute an anti-capitalist critique, which bolsters my argument that patriarchal colonial ideology in Antigua, Jamaica and the other parts of the Anglophone African Caribbean under capitalism has resulted in recolonization or neocolonialism, I use the arguments of materialist feminists Rosemary Hennessey and Chrys Ingraham. They argue that a feminist analysis of the class dynamic of capitalism is necessary now. "While the concentration and global diffusion of capital has made the class possessing power more difficult to identify, it is precisely because capital has become ever more persuasive, insidious, and brutal that a rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its class dynamic is politically necessary now" they argue (2). Hennessey and Ingraham's argument that capitalism results in "linking women's identities and bodies, desires, and needs to class matters to feminism because capitalism is fundamentally a class system" (2) supports my argument about the impact of patriarchal colonialism under capitalism in the Anglophone African Caribbean. They argue further that, "Without the class division between those who own and those who labor, capital could not exist" (2), which also supports my argument. Finally, Hennessey and Ingraham argue that, "Women's cheap labor (guaranteed through racist and patriarchy gender systems) is fundamental to the accumulation of surplus value – the basis for capitalist profit-making and expansion" (2-3). I argue that, Kincaid, in her two texts, and she and Black in the film documentary studied in this chapter, use examples of global capitalism in Antigua and Jamaica to illustrate and demonstrate how it has "become ever more persuasive, insidious, and brutal"

with its impact on Antigua, Jamaica and other parts of the Anglophone African Caribbean. In essence, global capitalism has wreaked havoc on the struggling economies of postcolonial Antigua and Jamaica, as well as much of the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean, and ushered in what amounts to neocolonialism or recolonization.

### **Neocolonialism in *My Brother***

Neocolonialism is a focus of *A Small Place*, *My Brother*, and *Life and Debt*. First, I focus on the neocolonialism in *My Brother*. Joseph E. Stiglitz has noted that the outrage over what has become commonly called the Uruguay Round of trade agreements by Western Nations in 1995 was strongly protested by underdeveloped nations because of the high prices demanded (for goods and services of these nations). “In the case of AIDS, the international outrage (over the prices of medications for poorer countries) was so great that drug companies had to back down, eventually agreeing to lower their prices, to sell the drugs at a lower cost in late 2001,” Stiglitz says (9). However, the drug companies’ backing down on their pricing notwithstanding, Uruguay Round agreements still “reflected the interests and perspectives of the producers, as opposed to the users, whether in developed or developing countries,” Stiglitz notes (9). This is the situation that Kincaid faces in her memoir, *My Brother*, when she confronts the crisis of her brother, Devon, dying of HIV/AIDS in Antigua, where the most widely used medicine to treat the disease, at the time, was the anti-viral drug AZT (which was being used mostly in richer countries). This is also an example of Hennessy and Ingraham’s argument that capitalism “has become ever more persuasive, insidious, and brutal.” AZT was unavailable in Antigua and many poor countries in 1997, when Kincaid published her memoir. At several points in *My Brother*, which recounts, with vivid descriptions Devon’s suffering and dying, Kincaid expresses her feeling about the economic conditions that richer nations impose on poorer nations through



global capitalism, which she believes contributed to her brother's death. Kincaid purchases AZT for her brother in the United States and takes it to Antigua for him. One day after observing his suffering she says:

...There was no AZT on the island, it was too expensive to be stocked, most people suffering from the disease could not afford to buy this medicine; most people suffering from the disease could not afford to buy this medicine; most people suffering from the disease are poor or young, not too far away from being children; in a society like the one I am from, being a child is one of the definitions of vulnerability and powerlessness (32).

This observation is sort of a take off point for Kincaid in her brutal assessment of the negative impact of global capitalism on Third World nations like Antigua. *My Brother* addresses the reason why a country like Antigua has a difficult time in maintaining honest government, balanced budgets, private investors, etc. – because of its dependence on wealthy nations that have their own interest as a first concern and the dependent nation as a second or third concern, if there is another concern at all. Devon is caught in a vice or one of the unkind grips of global capitalism. For as materialist feminist Margaret Benston argues, “The starting point for discussion of classes in a capitalist society is the distinction between those who own the means of production and those who sell their labor power for a wage” (17). Neither Antigua nor any of the African Caribbeans that reside there own the means of producing AZT, so Devon has to rely on the United States, or his sister, who now resides in the United States, to get it. This all fits into Kincaid's multi-dimensional critique of the impact of global capitalism in Antigua, Jamaica and the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean and Hennessy and Ingraham's contention that “capital has become ever more persuasive, insidious, and brutal.” But Kincaid, now a successful writer in wealthy America, does not do her neocolonialism assessment of Antigua without

conflicted feelings and ambivalence, and as I mentioned earlier, a re-conceptualization of self, herself. Earlier in the memoir, she had said, “I said to him (Devon) that nothing good could ever come of his being so ill, but all the same I wanted to thank him for making me realize that I loved him, and he asked if I meant that... and I said yes, I did mean that” (21). Her contradictory expressing of feelings is symptomatic of the conflict and ambivalence that she is feeling. She is feeling detachment through class and privilege at the same time that she is feeling empathy for her brother. This kind of conflicted, personal, and tormented reflection on the human side of the tragedy of HIV/AIDS is Kincaid’s way of showing a full understanding of the gravity of the problem in a recolonization or neocolonialism context. Toward the end of *Mr. Brother*, while still in Antigua dealing with Devon’s ordeal, Kincaid reflects back on thoughts she had in the past at a book signing event in Chicago:

I was reading from the book I had written to an audience in a bookstore (and my reading was not complicated by my feeling of sympathy for the owner of this small bookstore, who had her own worries about the ruthlessness of capitalism and the ruthlessness of the marketplace – the two things synonymous and making her ability to earn a living in the way she choose difficult – and the ruthlessness of life itself, and though she never did say this, I gathered, I felt, she meant her own worthiness made her exempt from all this, marketplace, capitalism, life itself; I was sympathetic, since I feel exactly that way about my own self)...(156-57).

Kincaid’s close up encounter with the symptoms of Devon’s HIV/AIDS brings the negative impact of global capitalism on Third World nations like Antigua and Jamaica close up, front and center, and provides additional fodder for her critique of global capitalism in Antigua. As a result of Kincaid’s re-conceptualizing of self process, Devon’s symptoms become metaphors for action

by First World nations like the United States and countries of Europe that do damage to the well-being of people in Third World nations like Antigua and Jamaica – like unfair lending practices, uneven trade policies, and other negative-impact measures. At another point, while in Antigua dealing with Devon’s illness and death, Kincaid encounters a nurse, who is also apparently African Caribbean, whom Kincaid believes symbolizes all of the downsides or negative effects that centuries of British colonization has left on Antigua and its majority African Caribbean population. After being administered AZT, which Kincaid purchases for her brother in the United States, he gains a pound of weight and she is feeling good about the good that she and the medicine seems to be doing. Then Kincaid reflects back, with disappointment and perhaps anger, over the demeanor of a particular nurse who had repeatedly charted Devon’s past weight losses. About the nurse, she says:

The nurse who recorded this on his chart, a Sister, a rank of nursing that continues to exist only in places where the British influence, with its love of status, remains, turned the corners of her mouth down as she did so. This must be a universal expression of disappointment and irritation and sourness, but I have seen it only in the disappointed and the irritated and the sour among women in Antigua. He had been expected to die; no one infected with HIV and as sick as he was at that time had ever come out of the Holberton Hospital alive (47).

For Kincaid, the days of British patriarchal colonial rule, with its class system, is alive and well in this passage. For her the colonizers are gone, but the colonized, represented by the nurse and her demeanor, remain in the form of class-neocolonial ideology. Also, though the former colonizer is gone, from Kincaid’s view dependency on the former colonizer or some newer version from a First World nation like the United States, is still there. Hennessey and Ingraham’s

argument that, “Class objectively links all women, binding the professional to her housekeeper, the boutique shopper to the sweatshop seamstress, the battered wife in Beverly Hills to the murdered sex worker in Bangkok or the Bronx” seems fitting here because the nurse’s thinking seems to be trapped by a colonial ideology that says that by virtue of her status as a nurse she is superior to Devon, her patient. On the other hand, Kincaid’s visit with her brother is bringing back unpleasant memories of why she had left Antigua years earlier for the United States, because of the way that people object to women becoming writers. Kincaid says:

I could not have become a writer while living among the people I knew best, I could not have become myself while living among the people I knew best – and I only knew them best because I was from them, of them, and so often felt I was them – and they were – are – the people who ought to have loved me best in the world, the people who should have made me feel that the love of people other than them was suspect (162).

It is one colonial ideology that causes the nurse to feel superior to her patient under British patriarchal rule and global capitalism and another that caused Antiguan to believe that women should not become writers, which prompted Kincaid to leave the island. What this all boils down to is that under British patriarchal colonial rule and global capitalism women are considered to be all of one class under what Hennessy and Ingraham, Maria Mies and other materialist feminists refer to as a gendered division of labor in which the role of women in production is limited largely to that of childbearing and rearing, as a caretaker of the family and home, rendering of services, and other limited chores designated by men. In this portrayal Kincaid is reinforcing Hennessy and Ingraham’s argument that, “If feminism is to maintain its viability as a political movement aimed at redressing women’s oppression and exploitation worldwide, the theory that underlines feminist practice cannot eclipse the material realities that bind race,

gender, sexuality, and nationality by labor” (2). In other words, they are saying that if the feminist movement is to be effective in diminishing the impact of gender and sexuality inequality it cannot ignore its reality when it comes to labor ideologies that promote inequality, which cut across racial, gender, sexuality, and nationality lines. The attitude of the nurse is an example of that.

In her comments about the nurse and her charting of Devon’s weight Kincaid seems to be suggesting that there is a kind of recolonization going on with the British. The stigma and status of the problem that Devon faces is faced by so many others in Antigua and the whole of the Anglophone African Caribbean as well. In reading *My Brother*, it is fairly easy, I think, for one to wonder how much race plays in how Kincaid views the treatment of her brother and the predicament of her family in general, and her view of Antigua’s decay. While race comes into play in her overall view of Antigua’s postcolonial status as a poor, predominantly black nation dependent upon rich, predominantly white nations of the West, I don’t think she sees race per se at the crux of her brother’s problem. But class, status, and economic dominance by people who are white are at the crux. Kincaid writes:

But it was not racism that made my brother lie dying of an incurable disease in a hospital in the country in which he was born; it was the sheer accident of life, it was his own fault, his not caring about himself and his not being able to carefully weigh and adjust to accept the to-and-fro of life, feasting and famine of life or the times in between, it was the fact that he lived in a place in which government, made up of people with his own complexion, was corrupt and did not care whether he or people like him lived or died (49-50).

A first reading might give the impression that Kincaid is letting British colonizers off the hook and absolving their descendants of any blame for the predicament faced by predominantly black

HIV/AIDS patients in Antigua at the time of Devon's trials and tribulations. Instead, she is saying that black Antiguan politicians are complicit because they have allowed themselves to be corrupt through their dependence on foreign support. That corruption, I believe she is saying, is at least in part, responsible for the inadequate medical resources in Antigua to treat her brother at the time. In essence there is a recolonization through black hands, so to speak, as the trading and lending policies of richer nations dominate and negatively impact nations throughout the Caribbean region.

If the incident with the nurse was not enough to remind Kincaid of Antigua's heavy reliance on outside help to survive economically, Devon's wish to have Kentucky Fried Chicken, prompts further her thinking of Antigua as a neocolonial state and her own re-conceptualizing of self process. She says:

One day, still in the hospital, he rejected the food served to him and the food my mother brought to him, and asked for a serving of Kentucky Fried Chicken, that was the thing he most wanted to eat then. Dr. Ramsey (Devon's attending physician) was visiting him at the time he had this craving, and so he drove my mother to the restaurant, where she bought him a dinner of fried chicken, and she took a taxi back to the hospital and gave it to him. He ate it all and my mother was very happy because she had not seen him eat so heartily in months (51-52).

Devon's preference for food from Kentucky Fried Chicken is yet another reminder to Kincaid of how heavily large international corporations are invested in Antigua and how they not only have a lot of leverage over the country, they have a lot of influence over cultural matters as well, like influencing food choices. This is another re-enforcement of Margaret Bentson's observation that, "The starting point for discussion of classes in a capitalist society is the distinction between those

who own the means of production and those who sell their labor power for a wage” (17). As a poor Third World nation, Antigua’s leaders are probably inclined to permit the United States-based fast food chain to operate a franchise in the country because it provides jobs for Antiguan. On the other hand, it saps needed income from a country that is badly in need of additional revenues. From Benston’s perspective, we can say that Kentucky Fried Chicken has the upper hand because it has the means of production while Antigua is only able to provide “those who sell their labor power for a wage.” Kincaid’s take on this seems to be one of ambivalence, even though as a successful writer and educator in the United States she has overcome the typical gender division of labor that materialist feminists speak of in this study. She still feels ambivalence and guilt about her success, which may be based on issues of gender and class. Initially Kincaid says, “A franchise of this restaurant is in Antigua and it is a fashionable place to go, to be able to afford to buy and eat a meal purchased there” (51). Later Kincaid says of her mother, “She reported this to me with as much enthusiasm and satisfaction as if she had just seen him successfully complete a feat that no human had ever successfully completed before” (51-52). While Kincaid seems pleased that her brother’s appetite is improved she seems to be restraining her concerns about the implications of neocolonialism with the fast food chain being located in Antigua. Later in the text she is confronted with an even bigger example of neocolonialism in Antigua, a beach scene with foreign tourists. In this passage Kincaid seems to at least hint at many of the things that make foreign tourism a blessing and at the same time a curse for Antigua:

My brother, seeing some European women who were swimming together and sharing conversation and laughter, swam up to them and said things that I could not hear and they responded with words that I could not hear. I don’t know what they saw in him, this man so beautiful in the face, too thin in the body, but they indulged his flirtatiousness, perhaps

enjoying this moment with a man they would have found dangerous in their own native surrounding just because of his complexion, this moment so free of friction, in the hot sun. And I don't know what he really saw in them, they were not beautiful in face or body, by the standards of European or Other, or what he expected of them; it was only that he could not help himself, he had seen some women, he had made himself seen by them; the outcome would always be the same: sometimes women had sex with him, sometime they didn't (71-72).

First, Kincaid confronts, at least partially, the issue of tourists from the United States and other First World nations flocking to what they perceive as island paradises in Antigua and other Caribbean countries, not knowing that many of the problems that these countries have with inadequate sewage facilities, polluted beaches, inadequate fresh water supplies, etc. The group of women on the beach seems to be absorbed with having a good time, despite the possibility of a polluted beach. Secondly, she confronts, at least partially, the issue of sexual-racial stereotypes associated with white women and African Caribbean men, which asserts that both tend to lose their inhibitions about race and sex in the relaxed atmosphere of the Caribbean. And thirdly, she confronts, at least partially, the issue of African Caribbean men's sexual arrogance in Devon's flirting with the female tourists, his HIV/AIDS status notwithstanding. As Hennessey and Ingrham have noted, "Historically, the oppression of women and people of color through patriarchal and racist ideologies has been necessary to and embedded in this fundamental structure of capitalist production" (5). They add, "While the ways of making sense that prevail in capitalist societies may serve to legitimate and reproduce divisions of labor benefiting the owning class, however, they do not always succeed in doing so and are themselves often contradictory" (5). In this scene that Kincaid portrays on the beach in *My Brother* both racial and



sex/gender ideologies are on display in a setting of capitalism. While Kincaid is not totally explicit, she seems to be acknowledging the slavery-colonial ideology that says that black men have an insatiable sexual attraction to white women when she says about the women on the beach, “And I don’t know what he really saw in them, they were not beautiful in face or body, by the standards of European or Other, or what he expected of them; it was only that he could not help himself.” On the other hand, this passage could be read as Kincaid’s suggesting that sexually liberated white women from the United States and European countries are more likely to disregard barriers of race and sex when vacationing in a Caribbean paradise. Added to this is the patriarchy shown in Devon’s willingness to flirt with the women despite his HIV/AIDS status.

Further evidence of the neocolonialism in Antigua and Kincaid’s re-conceptualizing of self is found in her remembering how her family had to survive off credit during her childhood. The irony here is that the family’s living off credit back then is similar to the economic status that Anglophone African Caribbean countries like Antigua face now in living off credit from international lending agencies and First World nations. Her re-conceptualizing of self is manifested in the fact that while she accepts having overcome the typical division of labor and she now works and resides in a first World nation, she still feels deep ambivalence and guilt about it. She cannot escape from or relate to the fact that her identity is that of a person from both the First and Third Worlds. Kincaid says:

His illness and death (Devon’s) reminded me again and again of my childhood; this living with credit, this living with the hope that money will come reminded me of going to a grocer whose name was Richards, not the one who was a devout Christian whom later we went to, for the grocers named Richards, whether they had religious conviction or not,

charged us too much anyway and then forced us to pay our debts no matter how unable my parents were to do so; my parents had more children than they could afford to feed, but how were they to know how much food or disease, or anything in general, would cost, the future never being now; only it actually comes, the future later (107).

As Kincaid remembers her growing up in Antigua, she is perhaps reminded that her family's situation was far from being like that of a typical so-called nuclear family existing under a system of capitalism. As Bentson states, "As an economic unit, the nuclear family is a valuable stabilizing force in a capitalist society. Since the production which is done in the home is paid for by the husband's earnings, his ability to withhold his labor from the market is much reduced" (21). Under a nuclear family situation, under capitalism, a father provides enough income to support a wife and children. But with the neocolonialism or recolonization situation in Antigua African Caribbean families are living off credit, just as the country is living off credit. Toward the end of the *My Brother* narrative, Kincaid is reflecting a year later on her actions during the time of the death and burial of her brother Devon. She says, "I felt removed from events, I wished something else was happening. I wished I was complaining about some luxury that was momentarily causing me disappointment: the lawn mower wouldn't work, my delicious meal in a restaurant was not at an ideal temperature..." (178). While she is feeling guilt over her success as a writer in a capitalist First World country while her family languishes and her brother has died from a tragic disease in the poverty of a capitalist Third World nation she is far from being comfortable with that feeling, because she has empathy for her family and others in the African Caribbean who have not been as fortunate as she has. For as Hennessy and Ingraham argue:

As the gap widens between those who own and control the world's wealth and those who do not women's labor continues to be a primary source of capital accumulation. Feeding

and caring for children, attending the sick and the elderly and providing one of the main sources of cheap labor in waged work have been women's longstanding contributions to capital accumulation across the globe (1-2).

Kincaid has defied patriarchal colonial rule and capitalism's gendered division of labor, as defined by Hennessy and Ingraham, by leaving Antigua and becoming a successful writer in the United States. But she shows feelings of ambivalence about it after witnessing the suffering and death of her brother, Devon, under conditions of poverty, which she believes to have been enhanced by global capitalism imposed on Antigua by First World nations. Nevertheless, she is torn between her feelings of ambivalence and a need to return to feeling the success of the First World. I argue that the economic conditions that Kincaid finds in Antigua amounts to recolonization or neocolonialism for the island nation and its African Caribbean population. *My Brother* is an anti-capitalist critique of those conditions, which as Hennessy and Ingraham assert, have become more "passive, insidious, and brutal."

### **Neocolonialism in *A Small Place***

As I said earlier, in her *A Small Place* narrative Kincaid takes tourists to places that they would probably not want to go to and describes things that they would probably not want to see, or do in her native Antigua, a paradise for tourists from the United States and Europe. I argue that this narrative, too, demonstrates and illustrates what amounts to a recolonization or neocolonialism in Antigua because of the negative impact of global capitalism. In her multi-dimensional, anti-capitalist critique of global capitalism on the island nation Kincaid again re-conceptualizes the self, but this time it is that of the tourists. That is, she helps the reader, the tourist, place him or herself in the place of the people who were formerly colonized. Take this passage for example:

...And since you (the tourist) are on your holiday, since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place like that suffers constantly from drought, and so has to watch carefully every drop of fresh water used (while at the same time surrounded by a sea and an ocean – the Caribbean Sea on one side, the Atlantic Ocean on the other), must never cross your mind (4).

The message of the passage probably strikes tourists, who only see the more glamorous side of Antigua, as shocking, for it is unlikely in their thirst for leisure and pleasure in the Caribbean sun that they will know that the island does not have adequate fresh water supplies and the amount of rainfall there is also inadequate. They are even more unlikely to know that the beaches are polluted. However, Kincaid in this re-conceptualizing of the tourist's self sort of forces the reader to confront a question that Palmer raises. He says, "Since the supply of tourist endowments is fixed, a legitimate question these countries must ask themselves is this: will an ever expanding demand for access to these endowments cause them (beaches) to become polluted and therefore, to deteriorate" (43)? He adds, "Although service industries are generally considered to be environmentally clean, the environmental impact of the tourist industry can affect the extent of its development impact. Depletion of the beach as a resource by effluents pumped into the sea is always a threat" (43). Occurrences like this gives considerable strength to Hennessy and Ingraham's argument that, "It is precisely because capitalism has become ever more pervasive, insidious, and brutal that a rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its class dynamic is politically necessary now" (2.) Such occurrences also add to the strength of Kincaid's overall multi-dimensional, anti-capitalist critique of global capitalism in Antigua and the African Caribbean.

That critique is also strengthened by Kincaid's showing that the tourist economy is geared strictly for the foreign tourist, as opposed to local African Caribbean residents. She writes, "Since you are a tourist, a North American or European – to be frank, a white – and not an Antiguan black returning to Antigua from Europe or North America with cardboard boxes of much needed cheap clothing and food for relatives, you move through customs swiftly, you move through customs with ease..." (4-5). Kincaid is aware that the lack of sensitivity to the needs or desires of the local African Caribbeans is influenced by the lack of ownership by African Caribbeans of businesses that serve foreigners, like the hotels, condominiums, restaurants, taxi services, etc. As Palmer notes, "Beyond the expatriate character of ownership is the racial and ethnic concentration of ownership. Caribbean capitalism is characterized by the dominance of minority ethnics in business. This is ostensibly due to their greater access to capital and willingness to take risk" (45). The consequence of a (non-African Caribbean) minority controlling the economic well-being of the majority African Caribbeans in Antigua under a system of global capitalism is great. This unevenness in the access to capitalism's benefits is among the reasons that many newly independent nations like Antigua flirted with the idea of socialist governments and/or economies. This quote from materialist feminist Barbara Ehrenreich explains some of that sentiment:

Marxism addresses itself to the class dynamics of capitalist society. Every social scientist knows that capitalist societies are characterized by more or less severe, systemic inequality. Marxism understands this inequality to arise from processes which are *intrinsic* to capitalism as an economic system. A minority of people (the capitalist class) owns all the factories/energy sources/resources, etc., which must work out of sheer necessity under conditions set by the capitalist for the wages the capitalists pay (66).

What Ehrenreich is saying is essential to an understanding of why so many Third World nations like Antigua have been willing to experiment or at least entertain the idea of adopting Marxism or some form of socialism in their governance and economic system. Many see capitalism as a “make it or break it system” where those with means survive by their own means and those with no means survive only at the mercy of those with means. Though the narrative of *A Small Place* is probably not popular with the Antiguan government, it is no doubt honest and straightforward about the impact of past colonization and current practices of global capitalism as they relate to poor countries like Antigua. I am sure that Kincaid has come under criticism from her own native country for writing stories like the ones in *My Brother* and *A Small Place*, especially since she is a successful author, and has a profession as a college literature professor. Does that mean that Kincaid should not write these kinds of stories? As Justin Edwards argues, Kincaid certainly does not let Antiguan off the hook:

Kincaid does not let Antiguan off the hook. She claims that Antigua’s citizens have failed to adopt the positive aspect of English culture – including an effective education system – and have chosen to take on the habits that do not better their lives. In addition, she argues, the government makes policies that do not help the population. For instance, the neglect of the education system is symbolized in the failure to rebuild Antigua’s own library, which was ‘damaged in the earthquake of 1974’ but still bears the sign ‘REPAIRS ARE PENDING’ (90-99).

I think Kincaid’s writing these kinds of stories about Antigua and the Caribbean has a lot of merit, as long as they have credibility. And they do. I also agree with Edwards, with the exception of what the critic says about Kincaid chiding Antiguan about their failure to “adopt the positive side of English culture” because one of the downsides of colonialism is the fact that

the colonized were virtually forced to adopt the culture of the colonizer. If I can argue that acceptance of capitalism is a matter of culture, I will also argue that this all too often has resulted in a loss of identity. Here the Antiguan are being forced to adapt economically to global capitalism, which means that both the country and the people will have to carry the burden of excessive debt and continue their dependence on foreign help, including that from its former colonizer. This has been shown time and time again to be one of the downsides of capitalism in the aftermath of colonialism. While Kincaid often has harsher criticism of the government in Antigua she often shows ambivalence and is sometimes critical too of Antiguan's adoption of British culture, especially in the broader sense, if culture can include values that would include the embracing of capitalism. I argue that Kincaid is pushing against that in her narratives. This assessment of the impact of global capitalism by Ehrenreich most likely reflects Kincaid's perspective on that side of British culture:

Working-class neighborhoods have been destroyed (under global capitalism) and are allowed to decay; life has become increasingly privatized and inward-looking; skills once possessed by the working class have been expropriated by the capitalist class and capitalist-controlled 'mass culture' has edged out almost all indigenous working-class culture and institutions. Instead of collectivity and self-reliance as a class, there is mutual isolation and collective dependency on the capitalist class (69).

Ehrenreich's analysis sums up what is happening with Antigua and its majority Anglophone African Caribbean residents under global capitalism in late the twentieth century, before and after independence from England in 1981. I argue that the fact that the nation is unable to be self-sufficient economically, because of excessive debt and the need to import basic goods and services from other countries like the United States and those of Europe amounts to the "more

pervasive, insidious, and brutal” recolonization or neocolonialism that Hennessy and Ingraham address. An illustration of the nation’s heavy dependence on richer nations for survival is seen in the fact that even local doctors do not trust the quality of medical care on the island. They fly to New York for care instead. In her re-conceptualizing of self, the tourist’s self, Kincaid asks tourists:

Will you be comforted to know that the hospital is staffed with doctors that no actual Antiguan trusts; that Antiguan always say about doctors, “I don’t want them near me”; that Antiguan refer to them not as doctors but as ‘the three men’ (there are three of them); that when the Minister of Health himself doesn’t feel well he takes the first plane to New York to see a real doctor, that if any one of the ministers in government needs medical care he flies to New York to get it? (8)

We learn a lot about Kincaid’s negative view of the health care system in Antigua in *My Brother* and *A Small Place*. We learn, at least from her perspective, that medical treatment is not always up-to-date, medical facilities are in decay, medical personnel do not always treat patients with respect. Kincaid finds all three occurrences troubling and she wants her readers, tourists, to do the same.

Kincaid almost certainly stuns many of the foreign tourists when she tells them in *A Small Place* that, “It is better that you don’t know that most of what you are eating came off a plane from Miami. And before it got on a plane in Miami, who knows where it came from” (14)? She says, “A good guess is that it came from a place like Antigua first, where it was grown dirt-cheap, went to Miami, and came back. There is a world of something in this, but I can’t go into it right now” (14). As Palmer notes, “The more integrated the (tourist) industry is with the local economy, the greater is its impact on agriculture and manufacturing activity. Reality, however,



indicates that although some backward linkages to local supplies have been created, they channel only a limited share of the total supply of goods bought by the tourist industry” (41). Most tourists travel to the Caribbean from the United States, Europe, or other parts of the world to explore the exotic, including the local or indigenous foods, so the news that Kincaid provides is not likely to be relished by them. Nor is her statement about Anglophone African Caribbean's dislike of tourists likely to be applauded. “Since you are being an ugly person this ugly but joyful thought will swell inside you: their (the Antiguan) ancestors were not clever in the way yours were and not ruthless in the way yours were, for then would it not be you who would be in harmony with nature and backwards in that charming way,” she asks (17)? “An ugly thing, that is what you are when you become a tourist, an ugly, empty thing, a stupid thing, a piece of rubbish pausing here and there to gaze at this and taste that, and it will never occur to you that the people who inhabit the place in which you have just paused cannot stand you,” she adds (17). In what seems to be Kincaid’s effort to make it patently clear that global capitalism is bad for Antigua, and other Third World nations as well, especially those that once endured slavery as well as colonialism, she says:

Do you know why people like me are shy about being capitalists? Well, it’s because we, for as long as we have known you, were capital, like bales of cotton and sacks of sugar, and you were the commanding, cruel capitalist, and the memory of this is so strong, the experience so recent, that we can’t quite bring ourselves to embrace this idea that you think so much of. As for what we were like before we met you, I no longer care. 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

monkey in trees, it was better to be that than what happened to me, what I became after I met you (37).

Kincaid seems to be saying that the “recolonization” or “neocolonialism” that she is observing in Antigua is not just about the nation and people losing control of their self-determination in economic matters, it reaches more broadly to the loss of culture identity too. At least for Kincaid, memory of the use of black people for capital during slavery and colonialism “is so strong, the experience so recent” that she is “shy” about being a capitalist. Kincaid apparently believes many thousands of other African Caribbeans agree with her. In this passage at least, Kincaid seems to be on the brink of advocating for the abolishment of capitalism. As Hennessy and Ingraham assert, socialist and Marxist feminist theory advocate for getting rid of capitalism because of its often unevenness and inequality. “Against the current fashion in western feminism, the tradition of socialist and Marxist feminism does not shy away from the elimination of capitalism as a long-range goal, but holds the importance of this vision as a necessary component of the fight for social justice,” Hennessy and Ingraham write (3). Based on her anti-capitalist critique of global capitalism, these are points on which Kincaid seems, at least in this passage, to be in agreement with the Marxist feminism cited by Hennessey and Ingraham. Kincaid and Black’s arguments in *Life and Debt* are not unlike those made by Kincaid in *My Brother* and *A Small Place*.

### **Neocolonialism in *Life and Debt***

One of the more striking revelations in Black and Kincaid’s *Life and Debt* film, which was released in 2001, is the story of a furniture maker, who now makes coffins after the decline of the furniture industry in Jamaica in the midst of rising gloom and violence. In another segment a Jamaican woman who works in what one might call an International Monetary Fund-supported

sweatshop complains of earning exceedingly low wages sewing underwear for her American employers. The camera catches the scene of fresh, wholesome milk being dumped by dairy farmers because less costly milk powder is being imported from the United States and shifting the demand for local milk supplies. Throughout the *Life and Debt* film documentary Kincaid's voice-over narration addresses tourists in the same re-conceptualizing of self fashion that she addressed them in *A Small Place*, where the focus was on Antigua. For example, as the camera shows a plane load of tourists landing in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and later being welcomed by singing Jamaicans, the narrator says the tourists will be surprised at the speed which they will be able to move through customs inspections, as opposed to the lengthy period of time that it would take a Jamaican returning to his own country. And as the camera focuses on tourists exchanging the currency of their home country for that of Jamaican currency the narrator tells tourists that they will be surprised how much Jamaican currency they will receive in the exchange. But she also cautions them to be aware of how little the Jamaican currency will actually buy. This system of currency exchange is just one of the parts of the global system of capitalism that put Third World nations like Antigua and Jamaica at a disadvantage when they are dealing with First World countries, because of the relative lower values of their currency, which is based on the countries' ability or inability to back up the value of their currency.

What we see at work here in Jamaica is what materialist feminist Margaret Bentson calls "capitalized" forms of production. She says, "Production is rationalized, made vastly more efficient, and becomes more and more public – part of an integrated social network. An enormous expansion of man's productive potential takes place. Under capitalism such social production forces are utilized almost exclusively for private profit" (19). Bentson adds, "If we apply the above to housework and child-rearing, it is evident that each family, each household

constitutes an individual production unit, a preindustrial entity, in the same way peasant farmers or cottage weavers constitute preindustrial production units” (19-20). In the case of the furniture maker, production is made more efficient, as Bentson suggests, because furniture making is no longer profitable, but casket making is, notwithstanding the moral implications that this might have for some. The Jamaican milk producers dumping their fresh milk as a way of pushing back against their American competition is another grueling example. In the IMF-supported sweatshop a woman is sewing goods for such low wages, an amount that a single item of the goods would probably be sold for by the American manufacturer. This is an example of why Bentson says “social production forces are utilized almost exclusively for private profit.” I argue that by using these examples in the film documentary, Kincaid and Black are showing that global capitalism is having a very negative impact on Jamaica. They are also showing that as Hennessy and Ingraham argues, that “capitalism has become ever more pervasive, insidious, and brutal that a rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its class dynamics is politically necessary now,” because of its recolonization or neocolonialism implications.

Another startling revelation of *Life and Debt* is its claim that chicken twenty years old was shipped to Jamaica by mistake, that it should have been shipped to Haiti instead. This was discovered, according to the film, when off-shore poultry wholesalers demanded the return of impounded stocks of chicken. Then there is the sharp contrast between the arguments of Stanley Fischer, then deputy director of the IMF and former Prime Minister Michael Manley on why Jamaica faces such staggering problems as excessive debt, an imbalance of imports and exports, decay, and a rise in violence. Manley depicts IMF as being at the heart of Jamaica’s problem, noting that the fund collects 53 cents from every dollar of Jamaican revenue to repay their \$4.5 billion debt. He also talks about how the country now has to tax its people almost double to pay

IMF the interest and its increased dependence on the IMF. As he speaks the camera alternates between focusing on him and the frolicking tourists, mainly from North America, who are oblivious to Jamaica's economic and social reality. Fischer, on the other hand speaks about what he perceives as economic mismanagement problems created by Jamaica's leaders after the country gained independence. He also says IMF policies were designed to encourage the healthy development of Jamaica's economy. Fischer also contends that Jamaica must have outside help for its economy because it is too small to be self-supporting. "It needed to allow people to buy goods from other countries," he says. But that is not the way that materialist feminists Hennessy, Ingraham and others see the heavy lending to nations like Antigua and Jamaica by international agencies and relatively high interest rates that they charge. As materialist feminist Kirk notes:

Whether the hand-over of political power was relatively smooth or accompanied by extreme turmoil and bloodshed, newly independent governments have been under pressure to improve living conditions for their populations and have borrowed capital to finance economic development. This combination of circumstances has led many commentators to characterize the continuing economic inequalities between rich and poor countries as 'neocolonialism' (350).

That Jamaica needed more outside help in adjusting to its independence is without question, but the conditions for that help seems to be what is questioned. This is the situation that Kincaid and Black depict in *Life and Debt* for Jamaica, which gained its independence from England in 1962. While the IMF sees its role in Jamaica as being helpful to its economic development and survival Jamaicans and their leaders see it as being brutal and dictatorial in terms of stipulations attached to the loans made to Jamaica and other Third World nations. IMF's defense of its lending policies notwithstanding, the agency in practice is an example of Hennessy and Ingraham's

argument that “capitalism has become ever more pervasive, insidious, and brutal,” because of the conditions that it places upon poor countries for assistance. That makes Kincaid and Black’s multi-dimensional, anti-capitalist critique of the impact of global capitalism in Jamaica all the more relevant.

Another one of *Life and Debt*’s more revealing segments deals with the story of exploitation in so-called “free zones” created by the United States. In these “free zones” underpaid and unorganized Jamaicans, primarily women, like the worker mentioned earlier, assemble clothing from materials manufactured elsewhere. Apparently the term “free zones” comes from the fact that clothing to be assembled enters and leaves Jamaica without the manufacturer paying any local taxes. According to Rebecca Conget of the now-defunct New Yorker Films:

The port of Kingston is lined with high-security factories, made available to foreign garment companies at low rent. These factories are offered with the additional incentive of the foreign companies being allowed to bring in shiploads of material there tax-free, to have them sewn and assembled and then immediately transported out to foreign markets. Over 10,000 women currently work for foreign companies under sub-standard conditions...Previously, when the women have spoken out and attempted to organize to improve their wages and working condition, they have been fired and their names included on a blacklist ensuring that they never work again.

([www.lifeandebgt.orgdocs/lifedebtpr.pdf](http://www.lifeandebgt.orgdocs/lifedebtpr.pdf)).

There again, *Life and Debt* portrays life in recolonized or neocolonized Jamaica as being pretty harsh to those, mostly women, workers who would dare upset the government and its economic strategies, and therefore interfere with the global capitalism function of First World nations in

their countries, the United States in particular. This picture of the so-called “free zones” reinforces Hennessey and Ingraham’s assertion that, “women’s cheap labor (guaranteed through racist and patriarchal gender systems) is fundamental to the accumulation of surplus value – the basis for capitalist profit-making and expansion” (3). In this case these companies not only know that these women are so anxious to work that they will work for such poor wages, but they also know if they dismiss them from their jobs there are other women ready to replace them. So they add intimidation to the list of their exploitation tactics to “keep them in line.” As materialist feminist Martha Gimenez notes, “Biology shapes the consequences of capitalist relations of production, exchange, and distribution which place all individual workers in competition for scarce jobs by establishing the material conditions for the development of relations of cooperation between male and female workers based on sexuality and procreation” (80). Also, as materialist feminist Ehrenreich reminds us, “The Marxist/feminist understanding that class and sex domination rest ultimately on force is correct, and this remains the most devastating critique of sexist/capitalist society” (69). I would say that there was probably some consideration of the women’s sexuality and their role in procreation when the bosses at the “free zones,” who were most likely men, decided that they are expendable and fired them for petty reasons. And their firing was the use of a form of force. Another downside of capitalism portrayed in the documentary film is the existence of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs).

Jamaica is used in *Life and Debt* to show the consequences of SAPs on Third World nations. There is also an attempt to show the consequences of liberalized trade policies that global capitalism has spurred on them. SAPs are a conglomeration of economic reforms that countries like Jamaica have been forced to impose in order to receive loans from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-

American Development Bank. Among the various structural “adjustments” are currency devaluations, reductions in government spending, higher interest rates, privatization of state industries, and reductions in trade barriers, such as import tariffs and quotas. *Life and Debt* looks at these adjustments from a number of perspectives, including those of workers, educators, politicians, business people and IMF leaders. Overall the documentary seems to conclude that the adjustments created problems for Jamaica’s agricultural and manufacturing sectors. And it concludes that the country’s foreign debt increased from about 0.8 billion in U.S. dollars in the late 1970s to 7 billion in U.S. dollars by the time the film was produced in 2001. By 2002-3 the debt still amounted to 150 percent of Jamaica’s gross domestic product, a measure of a country’s economic productivity. The film leads one to believe that the reforms may have affected Jamaica’s agricultural and manufacturing sectors the most, but overall it affected all of Jamaica’s economic structure in terms of growth and development. I argue that Kincaid and Black, in their multi-dimensional, anti-capitalist critique is showing that the overall damage done to the economy of Jamaica, other Anglophone African Caribbean nations, and other Third World nations by First World nations and so-called international lending organizations is severe. In addition to the financial and economic problems that they cite, they also make this clear through the problems of general decay and corruption that they cite. It is an effective use of the re-conceptualizing of self, in this case the self of the tourist, who in viewing the film is likely to see him or herself in a somewhat different role as a tourist, one that is not positive. In addition to seeing themselves as contributing to the exploitation of Jamaica and the Caribbean they are more likely to see themselves as contributing to the decay of the region.



### **Decay in *A Small Place* and *Life and Debt***

Early on in *A Small Place* Kincaid, through her re-conceptualizing self process, Kincaid begins informing tourists about the general decay and lack of change in Antigua. “The road sign – a rusting, beat-up thing left over from colonial days, says 40 MPH,” she informs (6). Then she notes, “They use leaded gasoline in these brand-new cars whose engines were built to use non-leaded gasoline, but you mustn’t ask the person driving the car if this is so, because he or she has never heard of unleaded gasoline” (6). She also remembers the damage done to a building by an earthquake more than a decade ago, which has not been repaired. She says:

This (an earthquake) was in 1974, and soon after that a sign was placed on the front of the building saying, THIS BUILDING WAS DAMAGED IN THE EARTHQUAKE OF 1974. REPAIRS ARE PENDING. The sign hangs there, and hangs there more than a decade later, with its unfulfilled promise of repair, and you might see this as a sort of promise of repair, and you might see this as a sort of quaintness on the part of these islanders, these people descended from slaves – what a strange, unusual perception of time they have (9).

Despite the imposition of global capitalism in Antigua and the promises of “progress” that officials of international lending agencies like the IMF and First World trade agreements have promised Antigua has not really benefited. This is evident by the general decay and lack of change that Kincaid points out. As materialist feminists Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James point out, “Within the capitalism system generally, the productivity of labor doesn’t increase unless there is a confrontation between capital and class; technological innovations and cooperation are at the same time moments of attack for the working class and moments of capitalist response” (45). Dalla Costa and James’ assertion that, “within the capitalism system generally, the productivity of labor doesn’t increase unless there is a confrontation between

capital and class” rings true in *A Small Place*. For example, that sign indicating the allowed speed probably has not been changed because the people in the majority economic lower class have not demanded that the government spend the money to make the change, which would require the expenditure of money with capitalists who would produce the new sign. The same goes for the continued use of leaded gasoline and the lack of repairs to the building damaged years ago by the hurricane, a lack of demand – a necessary component in capitalism – from the classes affected has not occurred. It has not occurred because the population is comprised mostly of the poor, and these kinds of changes are not among their top priorities. Even with the dominance of global capitalism, these are not their top priorities. And because these are not the priorities of the people they are not the priorities of the government or the foreign capitalists who control the economy through their recolonization or neocolonialism. But the resulting decay is not exclusive to Antigua. We get at least a glimpse of some of the decay in Jamaica in *Life and Debt*.

The one scene in *Life and Debt* where we get a snippet of the decay in Jamaica is in Montego Bay when a door opens to an expensive hotel room. We see towels twisted into the shapes of swans, a king-sized bed, and then the camera shows us frolicking tourists down by the poolside in their swimming suits and drinking beer. Later we learn from the narrator that Jamaica has inadequate sewage facilities, and in essence the Caribbean is a toilet that consumes its sewage. We also learn that in Kingston, the capital, you can smell it. To drive home the impact of the decay, the film shows a garbage truck rolling into a locale where it is ransacked by young people who scavenge it until there is nothing left for the rodents. Here we see the negative impact of global capitalism on children and young people. They have to scavenge food from a garbage truck, apparently because their families do not have enough income. Under the system

of global capitalism imposed on them their families cannot afford adequate food supplies. As Della Costa and James notes, “Capital, destroying the family and the community and production as one whole, on the one hand has concentrated basic social production in the factory and the office, and on the other has in essence detached the man from the family and turned him into a *wage laborer*” (42). They add, “It has put on the man’s shoulders the burden of financial responsibility for women, children, the old and the ill – in a word, all those who do not receive wages” (42). Under a system of global capitalism, which exploits people by having them work under poor working conditions and pays them inadequate wages, which we have seen in Jamaica in *Life and Debt*, we eventually get the situation that Della Costa and James refer to, capital “destroying the family and the community and production as one whole.” In the use of the image of young people scavenging garbage Kincaid and Black seems to be making a point about the extent of the negative impact of global capitalism on Jamaica, including young people. Again, this reinforces Hennessy and Ingraham’s argument that, “It is precisely because capitalism has become ever more pervasive, insidious, and brutal that a rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its class dynamics is politically necessary now.” That brings me to the issue of corruption and the role that it plays in the problems faced by Antigua and other Anglophone African Caribbean nations.

### **The Impact of Corruption in Antigua and the Caribbean**

Although the focus of *My Brother* and *Life and Debt* is not so much about corruption per se it is often implied in the narratives. However, in *A Small Place* corruption is clearly one of Kincaid’s major themes. For example, Kincaid informs tourists about the corruption of taxi drivers in this passage:

You immediately think that the price is in the local currency, for you are a tourist and you are familiar with the things (rates of exchange) and you feel even more free, for things seem so cheap, but then your driver ends by saying, 'In U.S. currency.' You may say, 'Hummmm, do you have a formal sheet that lists official prices and destinations?' Your driver obeys the law and shows you the sheet, and he apologizes for the incredible mistake he has made in quoting you a price off the top of his head which is vastly different (favoring him) from the one listed (5).

In the prologue to his book, *Caribbean Time Bomb: The United States Complicity in the Corruption of Antigua*, Robert Croam writes, "From Jamaica east to Puerto Rico and down the southward plunge of the sun-splashed island that constitute the *Leewards and the Windwards* and stretch all the way to South America, there is no country so corrupt as Antigua" (3). I am inclined to believe that Kincaid, based on the above passages and others throughout the text, has no argument with Croam. Like Kincaid, Croam notes that the government of Antigua "allows many hotels to pump raw sewage into the sea only a few yards off the most popular tourist beaches" (9). He says, "No island in the Caribbean is more of a public health hazard to tourists than Antigua" (9). Croam also believes that the U.S. military and American government agencies like the Central Intelligence Agency have virtual free reign in the country to use the island for whatever purpose that it chooses because of their financial support of the Antiguan government. Some of Kincaid's criticism about corruption in Antigua involves foreigners too, or at least people who were once foreigners. For example, her earlier reference to what she believes to be the corruption of Syrians in Antigua, who make up a small percentage of the population there. They immigrated to the country while Antigua was still a colony of England. Although she does not express her concerns about corruption among the Syrians in exactly the same terms as she

does with the government Kincaid seems to fear that corruption in Antigua, especially where it takes place in complicity with foreigners, is itself a form of recolonization or neocolonialism.

She says:

People cannot see a relationship between their obsession with slavery and emancipation and the fact that they are governed by corrupt men, or that these corrupt men have given their country away to corrupt foreigners. The men who rule Antigua came to power in open, free election. In accounts of the capture and enslavement of black people almost no slave ever mentions who captured and delivered him or her to the European master. In accounts of their corrupt government, Antiguan neglect to say that in twenty years of one form of self-government or another, they have, with one five-year exception, placed in power the present government (55-56).

Kincaid apparently believes the fact that Antiguan have elected the same man, or a person from the same family repeatedly, with the exception of one election, to head the government has influenced the corruption which she sees.

For example, Vere Cornwall Bird, Antigua's first prime minister after it won its independence in 1981, was still serving as prime minister when *A Small Place* was first published in 1988. Originally, Bird had been revered for his status as a fighter for the country's independence and as a founding father for an independent nation, but he later faced criticism because of the corruption in the country and his long tenure in office. Kincaid says in *A Small Place* that the prime minister has ties to people who practice corruption. "People close to the Prime Minister openly run one of the largest houses of prostitution in Antigua. Some offshore banks are a front for bad people hiding money acquired through dealings in drugs, or the other bad ways there are to acquire money," she says (59). "It is not a secret that a minister is involved

in drug trafficking. That minister and another minister in government benefit from the offshore banks with their ill-gotten deposits,” she adds (59). Despite these kinds of revelations the U.S. government, according to Croam, “displays...avuncular closeness and...financial benevolence because Antigua has virtually abandoned its sovereignty where the giant to the north is concerned” (7). “For example any aircraft belonging to the U.S. government can land on Antigua any time of the day or night, without anyone on board having to go through customs and Immigrations,” he says (7). Kincaid, in her *A Small Place* global anti-capitalism critique is unhappy about the situation. She recalls a conversation she had with a woman who had seemed interested in getting the library repaired. “She said to me then what everybody in Antigua says sooner or later: The government is for sale; anybody from anywhere can come to Antigua and for a sum of money can get what he wants,” Kincaid remembers (47). This woman’s attitude toward the government and all of the other signs of corruption that Kincaid has witnessed prompts her to become even harsher in her critique of the negative effects of global capitalism in Antigua with all of its complexities. For example, she says, “Some gambling casinos in the hotels are controlled by mobsters from the United States. They pay somebody in government who allows them to operate. If they benefit from the operation of these casinos, they – people in Antigua – cannot see in what way, except for the seasonal employment it offers a few people, for after all, all government services are bad” (60). Croam notes that “Antigua is an annual destination for some 200,000 tourists, forty seven percent of whom are from America” (9). And he adds, “These tourists fly into what is advertised as a tropical paradise and the premier ‘up market’ in the Caribbean” (9). I argue that the global capitalism, practiced by First World nations like the United States, big transnational corporations, and international lending agencies like the IMF, is having a very negative impact on countries like Antigua and Jamaica and other countries of the

Anglophone African Caribbean. And that negative impact is complicated further by the complicity and corruption of many of the people serving in the governments of those nations. This is another reinforcement of Hennessy and Ingraham's argument that "because capital has become ever more persuasive, insidious, and brutal that a rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its class dynamic is politically necessary now."

### **In Conclusion**

In conclusion, the rigor of male patriarchy and colonialism dominated by global capitalism has left damaging effects on the people of Antigua and Jamaica, especially Anglophone African Caribbean women, who make up the largest portion of the workplace and are affected the most by it. Rosemary Hennessey and Chrys Ingraham's argument that, "A rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its (capitalism's) dynamic is politically necessary" is reinforced. The realities of economic life in Antigua and Jamaica, as portrayed by Kincaid and Black in *A Small Place*, *My Brother* and *Life and Debt* fit the definition of neocolonialism or recolonization as defined by Williams, Chrisman and Young. At the heart of the neocolonialism or recolonization exposed in Kincaid and Black's anti-capitalist critique, are the consequences that these two Caribbean nations are experiencing as a result of the negative impact of global capitalism - like increased dependency, high interest rates, a decline in exports, an increase in imports, a loss of national identities, decay, corruption, etc. Kincaid and Black are particularly effective in the *A Small Place* and *Life and Debt* narratives, where they demonstrate the profound effects of British patriarchal colonialism and global capitalism by re-conceptualizing the self or helping the reader place himself or herself in the place of the people who were formerly colonized. The portrayals in all three narratives, including *My Brother*, provide a strong reinforcement to Hennessy and Ingraham's argument that, "It is precisely because capital has

become ever more persuasive, insidious, and brutal that a rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its class dynamic is politically necessary now,” especially with regard to the way women are treated in the workplace in Jamaica and the way they are treated by Kincaid’s brother, Devon, even as he is dying of HIV-AIDS.

Jamaica’s IMF-supported sweatshop and the way women are treated there illustrate how “women’s cheap labor is fundamental to the accumulation of surplus value – the basis for capitalist profit making and expansion,” as Hennessy and Ingraham argue. In their anti-capitalism critique, Kincaid and Black have shown that the overall damage done to the economies of Antigua, Jamaica and other Anglophone African Caribbean nations by First World nations and international lending organizations is severe. The resulting problems, as previously mentioned, include an increase in imports, a decrease in exports, increased debt, high interest rates, deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate food supplies, decay, and corruption.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CRITICAL INTERSECTIONS: THE THREE THEMES COME TOGETHER**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter Five, my main argument is that Jamaica Kincaid uses three different techniques or creative methods in her works to show that colonial ideologies related to race, gender, sexuality, and class are related and intertwined with ideologies related to patriarchal domination, economic domination through capitalism, and control of the environment. I show how the three major themes of Kincaid that are focused on in this study –gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment (including nature and gardening) are intertwined or intersected in her works.

In Chapters One and Two of this study we saw how Annie in *Annie John*, Xuela in *The Autobiography of My Mother*, Lucy in *Lucy*, and Elaine in *Mr. Potter* were victimized by the gross gender and sexual inequalities imposed on them by the rigid British system of patriarchal colonial rule under a capitalistic economic system. In these four novels by Kincaid the focus is on the experiences of these young women growing into womanhood where the work and other contributions of women are not valued as being equal to that of men. And in the course of their growing up in the countries of Antigua and Dominica and living under the colonial ideologies that perpetuate these injustices in the twentieth century these main characters are often subjected to humiliation by society in general, males, the British educational system, government, peers (males and female), and even family members. In addition to being subjected to humiliation, they are also sometimes subjected to violence in general and sometimes sexual violence. In addition to ordeals that the main characters face in these novels, we saw similar ordeals or worse faced by other female characters in the novels. However, the outcomes were almost, if not

always, the same. Women were not treated as equals to men, whether it was in the home, education, child care and rearing, or in the workforce with men.

How women are treated in Kincaid's four novels, how the issues of gender and sexual inequality are dealt with, sort of set the stage for exploring two other major themes in Kincaid's works - the environment (including nature and gardening) and global capitalism. Then we came to our Chapter Three. We saw in our analysis of Kincaid's *My Garden Book*, *Among Flowers: Walk in the Himalaya*, and *At the Bottom of the River*, from an environmental perspective, how the domination of African Caribbean women under British patriarchal rule in Antigua and Dominica was not unlike the situation with their past of slavery and colonialism, and not unlike the British's domination of the environment for profit and gain under capitalism in those countries. Initially, that domination of women and the environment was centered in the exploitation of both to reap profits from major crops such as sugarcane and bananas, which resulted in the land being deforested, indigenous plant and animal life becoming extinct, and the import of plant and animal life from faraway places. In our analysis of Kincaid's critique of all of this we found her to be ambivalent about "living" in two worlds, the Third World of her past in impoverished Anglophone African Caribbean Antigua and in her First World, the rich and majority white United States. Having overcome the typical gender division of labor that materialist feminists Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham and other materialist feminists speak of, she makes no apologies for her critique in which she finds a legacy of damaging actions from patriarchal colonial rule. In our Chapter Four my critique extended to the impact of global capitalism in Kincaid's *My Brother*, *A Small Place*, and the film documentary *Life and Debt*, in which she collaborated with producer-director Stephanie Black. We saw the dominance of global capitalism through the incurring of heavy debt from international lending agencies

controlled by First World nations in the Third World's African Caribbean nations of Antigua and Jamaica, along with decreases in exports and increases in imports, etc. We saw African Caribbean women in Antigua and Jamaica, impacted by sexual images fostered on them from the days of slavery, being subjected to inequality because of both their race and gender, all the while keeping in mind that because of the absence of fathers in most homes, they bear most of the responsibility for providing for the economic welfare of their families under what often amounts to impoverished conditions. With their responsibilities for childbearing and providing for their families in the absence of fathers, African Caribbean women in Antigua, Dominica, Jamaica, and probably most of the Anglophone African Caribbean, are more often than not restricted to the home environment, in which they have close identities with the landscape, nature, gardening, animal life and the environment in general. In Chapter Four, I also argued that all of the negative impacts of colonialism on Antigua, Dominica, Jamaica and the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean through gender and sexual inequality, damage to the environment, and global capitalism amounted to a recolonization or neocolonialism.

In Chapter Five, I argue that Kincaid uses three different techniques or creative methods to show the intersection of the major themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment (including nature and gardening), and colonial ideologies associated with them, in her works. Those techniques or creative methods include: a focus of memory and effect on a single powerful image or action from daily life and her wry and ironic meditation on it, her contemplation of point-of-vision in daily life, and her detached, ironic-voice. Kincaid ties together or intersects the three themes – gender and sexuality, global capitalism and the environment (including nature and gardening) in one way or another in most of her works to enhance her overall argument that British patriarchal colonialism has left severe and lasting

damages to the Anglophone African Caribbean. My challenge in this chapter is to show how those themes intersect in the works of Kincaid's that this study analyzes.

### **The Theoretical Approach**

In the previous four chapters I have shown separately how Kincaid uses issues of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment to show the negative impact of colonialism in Antigua, Dominica, Jamaica and the Anglophone African Caribbean as a whole; now my task is to show how these major themes intersect to make her critique stronger. To accomplish the goal of showing how Kincaid's intertwining the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment to make her argument about the negative impact of colonialism stronger I use materialist feminists Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham's argument about socially produced differences and divisions of the workforce and materialist feminist Gwyn Kirk's argument about gender, race, class, imperialism and the global capitalist economy. For example, Hennessy and Chrys argue that:

The socially produced differences of race, gender, and nationality are not distinct from class, but they play a crucial role – both directly and indirectly - in dividing the work force, ensuring and justifying the continued availability of cheap labor, and determining that certain groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned (2).

That argument is used heavily to support my contention that the themes of gender and sexuality and global capitalism are intersection throughout Kincaid's works. Similarly, Kirk argues that, "gender, race, class, imperialism, and the global capitalist economy are connected to ecological destruction and...effective analysis and activism need to be informed by a broad, integrative materialist framework" (346). I use that argument to show that all three of the major themes,

including the environment are linked throughout Kincaid's works. I argue that race, gender, class, the ruthlessness of global capitalism, and environmental issues are intersected in the works of Kincaid and have a mostly negative impact on the characters. I also argue that Kincaid's explication of these issues - which Hennessy and Ingraham and Kirk's theoretical arguments enhance - provide a better understanding and significant meaning to her works. I begin with a discussion of how Kincaid uses a focus of memory and effect on a single powerful image or action from daily life and her wry and ironic meditation on it to critique issues of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment portrayed in her works.

### **Focus on Memory and Effect in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother***

By focusing her memory and its effect on a single powerful image or action from daily life and her wry and ironic meditation on it in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* Kincaid is able to effectively link the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment. For example, in *Annie John* a pig, a girl with red hair and tourists connect the major themes. The pig symbolizes the rural environment in which Annie is growing up in, in her Antigua. In this passage Annie notices people at a distance in the cemetery while she is feeding the pig. "From our yard, I could see the cemetery. I did not know it was the cemetery until one day when I said to my mother that sometimes in the evening, while feeding the pig, I could see various small, sticklike figures, some dressed in black, some dressed in white, bobbling up and down in the distance." she says (4). "I noticed, too, that sometimes the black and white sticklike figures appeared in the morning. My mother said it was probably a child being buried, since children were always buried in the morning. Until then, I had not known that children died," she adds (4). A short time later in the narrative Annie remembers that a girl with red hair had died in her mother's arms, probably an indication that a lot of young people die prematurely in Antigua,

probably because of impoverished conditions, and many of them are girls. “One day, a girl smaller than I, a girl whose mother was a friend of my mother’s, died in my mother’s arms. I did not know this girl at all, though I may have got a glimpse of her once or twice as I passed her and her mother coming out of our yard, and I tried to remember everything I had heard about her,” Annie remembers. (5). She recalls this, “Her name was Nalda: she had red hair; she was very bony; she did not like to eat any food. In fact, she liked to eat mud, and her mother always had to keep a strict eye on her to prevent her from doing that” (5). Here Kincaid seems to set the scene for a situation where the environment is rural and impoverished and African Caribbean females are affected by it in an adverse way as a contrast to the ruthless global capitalism that brings foreigners to the country in the form of tourism. Sure enough, thirty-eight pages later Annie is out swimming in the ocean with her mother and she says, “One day, in the midst of watching my mother swim and dive, I heard a commotion far out at sea. It was three ships going by, and they were filled with people. They must have been celebrating something, for the ships would blow their horns and people would cheer in response” (43). Annie is so distracted by the ships and the tourists that she temporarily loses sight of her mother and is frustrated by the thought that she might have lost her to drowning. But she is relieved when she discovers her mother, “a little bit out of the area in which she usually swam ...just sitting on and tracing patterns on a large rock” (43). Memory of the pig, the girl with the red hair, and the tourists all project powerful images in Annie’s daily life and their effect is just as powerful in terms of her forming her identity, learning about the environment in which she lives, and learning about her social and economic status in life as compared to others whom she encounter.

Hennessy and Ingraham’s argument is also at work here. Race, gender, and nationality are “dividing the work force, ensuring and justifying the continued availability of cheap labor,

and determining that certain groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned.” Annie’s mother is a stay-at-home mother because under British patriarchal rule African Caribbean mothers are expected to stay at home and rear their children, despite the fact that the father, if there is one in the household, is likely being paid a low or meager wage and can barely support all of the family’s needs. Annie being distracted by the tourists on the ships is a reminder that most of the jobs in Antigua are in the tourist industry and the ones that Antiguan have are most likely to be low-paying. The tourists on the ships and the wastes deposited from the ships in the vicinity of Antigua’s beaches brings to mind Kirk’s argument that “gender, race, class, imperialism, and the global capitalist economy are connected to ecological destruction.” The people who are likely to be affected the most, long term, by the pollution of the beaches caused by tourists on the ships, who are most likely white, are the Antiguan, who are black or African Caribbean.

Another intersection of the three major themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment in *Annie John* that involves Kincaid’s focus of memory and effect on a single powerful action from daily life and her wry and ironic meditation on it is found in Mr. Oatie’s casket making, the way Annie is treated as a girl, and the shooing of a chicken out of a garden. One day as Annie is walking home alone from school she has thoughts of what her parents response would be if she went for a swim with another girl and something very unfortunate were to happen. She says, “And the next thing my mother would know, she would be asking my father to make a coffin for me. Of course he would be so overcome with grief he wouldn’t be able to make my coffin and he would have to ask Mr. Oatie to do it” (12). Then she adds, “And he just hated to ask Mr. Oatie to do him a favor, because, as I heard him tell my mother, Mr. Oatie was such a leech he tried to suck you dry by making you pay for everything

twice” (12). Mr. Oatie, the casket maker is consumed by greed, one of the greatest downsides of capitalism. A short time later in the novel as Annie observes that her mother has prepared her father’s breakfast and his bathing water, she concludes this. “If I had been a boy, I would have gotten the same treatment, but since I was a girl, and on top of that went to school only with other girls, my mother would always add some hot water to my bathwater to take off the chill” (13-14). By focusing on a single occurrence that involves her mother’s relationship with her father Annie comes to a realization early in her life that there is no gender equality between males and females under British patriarchal colonial rule in Antigua, a situation that Hennessy and Ingraham, Kirk and other materialist feminists would say needs drastic attention and action now. A few pages earlier the narrative had focused on Annie’s learning about funerals and her curiosity about them. She says this about viewing a body at a funeral home: “I had never seen the person laugh or smile or frown or shoo a chicken out of a garden. So I looked and looked for as long as I could without letting anyone know I was just there out of curiosity” (9). Annie’s use of the “shoo a chicken out of the garden” phrase as an identity marker reminds me of what Kirk says about Third World women in countries like Antigua being close to nature and the environment, that because of this they are more likely to show more concern about the abuse or destruction of the environment. The intertwining of the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment here by Kincaid is something that she does in much of her work.

Another passage from *The Autobiography of My Mother* also seems to connect the narrator’s thoughts about nature and the environment with those about (male) gender and sexuality, and global capitalism in a similar way as well. This passage implies that the narrator is condemning the patriarchal system still in place in Antigua from the days of colonialism. Furthermore, the passage seems to suggest that patriarchal rule, with its gender bias, also



includes capitalist exploitation. The passage also seems to beg for an in-depth explanation of its meaning. It reads:

This man sits on a plateau, not the level ground, and all he can see – fertile meadows, vast plains, high mountains with treasure buried deep within, turbulent seas, calm oceans – all this he knows with an iron certainty should be his own. What makes the world turn is a question he asks when all that he can see is securely in his grasp, so securely in his grasp that he can cease to look at it from time to time, he can denounce it, he can demand that it be taken away from him, he can curse the moment he was conceived and the day he was born, he can go to sleep at night and in the morning he will wake up and all he can see is still securely in his grasp; and he can ask again, What makes the world turn, and then he will have an answer and it will take up volumes and there are many answers, each of them, different, and there are many men, each of them the same.

And what do I ask? What is the question I can ask? I own nothing, I am not a man (131-132).

The question that seems to be begging for an answer is, how does this passage contribute to, or what is its connection to, what Kincaid is saying in this particular work or her other works about the impact of colonialism on the people of Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean? And further, what are the themes in this passage? Do the themes intersect, overlap, or blend together? If so, in what ways? My postcolonial materialist feminist reading of the passage, for example, begins with my interpretation of the last sentence, “I am not a man.” This passage implies that the narrator is condemning the patriarchal system still in place in Antigua from the days of colonialism, in which a man, with his colonial male gaze possesses and dominates nature and the landscape. In doing so, he assumes or thinks he is control of nature or the universe. At

the same time, though, he discovers that other men also assume or believe they too are in control. In other words, after British colonialism's official end, African Caribbean government officials began ruling the country with the same patriarchal rule, only to soon discover that the country's continuing exploitation by the British, other European nations and the United States in essence allow those nations to rule. As Linden Lewis notes:

Given the asymmetry of power relationship within slavery, indentureship and colonialism, it is not difficult to understand how colonialism would have imposed its patriarchal rule on Caribbean society and economies. Based on a developed and sophisticated European system of patriarchy, colonial rule in the Caribbean inscribed male domination into the culture and political economy of the region (103).

Yet she (the narrator), even though she too is African Caribbean, cannot question the African Caribbean's patriarchy's assuming or believing - because she is not a man. Furthermore, the passage from Kincaid suggests that a system of patriarchal rule, with its gender bias, also includes capitalist exploitation. "I own nothing," she (the narrator) says. This is another layer of the intersecting colonialist themes.

Memory of the man and its effect, along with his powerful image is what is dominant here; he is the single powerful image whose memory is focused on by Kincaid with wry and ironic meditation. He "sits on a plateau" where, with a narrow view, "all he can see," with his capitalist perspective, is an environment "with treasurers buried deep within." And, again, with his self-centered, capitalist outlook, "he knows with certainty" it "should be his own." With the patriarchal system still so firmly in place, "all that he can see is securely in his grasp" and he has no fear of losing it. But Antigua, now under an independent African Caribbean government, since gaining its independence from England in 1981, has discovered, like other English-

speaking African Caribbean nations, that it has much to fear as Ransford W. Palmer has noted, “Preferential treatment has not prepared them (Caribbean countries) to compete because it has not encouraged technological advancement in production” (3). Palmer’s statement provides credibility for Kincaid’s subtle but precise meditation on the lingering and damaging impact of colonialism on Antigua and the Caribbean. It suggests that the post-independent Caribbean nations are trapped in a neocolonial trading system that subordinates them to terms of trade established by wealthy capitalist countries. This situation often spurs corruption from within, among government leaders. “The proximity of the small Caribbean states to the United States means that they must struggle to maintain their cultural identity against the constant assault of the U.S. culture,” Palmer notes (152). “But in this struggle there is also an opportunity because cultural identity expressed in arts and entertainment is exportable and, therefore, capable of generating foreign exchange” (152). Yet, much of the landscape or environment of Antigua and the Caribbean is not being used for the people that populate the countries; it is used for the foreigners, on whom they have a heavy dependence – tourists. Also, it does not matter that the majority of the population of the country is of African ancestry after British colonial rule because its system of patriarchal rule, under which women are considered less than equals of men, remains in place. In their “The Sweetest Taboo: Studies of Caribbean Sexualities; A Review Essay,” Jenny Sharpe and Samantha Pinto argue that the forbidden nature of the subject of sexuality in the Caribbean is attributed to a fear of reproducing the negative image associated with black hypersexuality that emerged from a history of slavery and colonialism. While the impact of the patriarchal system on African male and female sexuality in the colonial setting is not as clear in this particular passage, it is in other passages from *The Autobiography of My*

*Mother*, which tell of complications associated with the protagonist's development of her sexuality.

The passage is both a sometimes clear-cut and sometimes subtle example of Kincaid intersecting or blending her major themes of gender and sexuality, the environment, and global capitalism together for mediation on the continuing negative impact of colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean. My analysis of the intersection of global capitalism theme with the environment and gender and sexuality themes suggests that colonialism or neo-colonialism along with their attendant ideologies is the intersecting point for the three themes. And there are interrelations among these themes as well. My analysis shows that colonialism is an interlocking system that combines male domination, the domination of nature, and ownership of private property, which is a form of capitalist domination. This brings me back to Hennessy and Ingraham's argument that race, gender, and nationality are "dividing the work force, ensuring and justifying the continued availability of cheap labor, and determining that certain groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned." We see this at work in the just mentioned passage from *The Autobiography of My Mother*, where the dominant male sees himself as superior to everyone who is not male, and to everything else, including nature. He fears only other males who might compete with him, and is driven solely by the desire to reap capitalist profit. In this case, because Antigua is still under colonial rule at that time, we have to assume that the male figure is white and British. So we have all of the elements that Hennessy and Ingraham mention as dividers of the workforce and those who determine that certain groups will be exploited and others cushioned. Both white and African Caribbean women will be exploited, but white women will be cushioned somewhat. On the other hand, African Caribbean men and women will be exploited, but black men will be cushioned somewhat,

because after all it is a patriarchal system. Now, an example of contemplation of point-of- vision in *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter*.

### **Contemplation of Point-of-Vision in *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter***

Kincaid's use of a "Made in Australia" label, the weather on Lucy's first day in New York, and her serving as a nanny, collectively, is an example of her use of contemplation of point-of-vision to connect the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment in *Lucy*. By point- of- vision I mean that Lucy is able draw on certain occurrences in her new life to form a vision of what her future will be like. In that sense she is a visionary. For example, in *Lucy*, where the theme of gender and sexuality is so dominant, Lucy says:

I felt compelled to know where this nightgown came from, and started to examine it furiously, looking for the label. I found where a label usually is, in the back, and it read 'made in Australia.' I was awakened from this dream by the actual maid, a woman who had let me know right away, on meeting me, that she did not like me, and gave as her reason the way I talked. I thought it was because of something else, but I did not know what. 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 a prison in their own country (9).

Lucy, a black West Indian and the main character, has just relocated recently from Antigua to work as a nanny for a well-to-do white couple, Mariah and Lewis. The point-of-vision in daily life that Kincaid uses here is Lucy's vision of how she and her role will be viewed in Mariah and Lewis' household. Before confronting the "made in Australia" label Lucy is informed by the attitude of the "actual maid" that she will see Lucy's status as a nanny in the household as a step below her's (the maid's). Then when she confronts the "made in Australia" label Lucy is

reminded that like her own country –Antigua - Australia was once a colony of England. She is also reminded that Antigua, like a lot of poor or so-called Third World countries, is a victim of global capitalism, which has resulted in it having to import more goods from richer countries like the United States and countries of Europe than it actually produces for itself. Also, like many other poor countries, Antigua has to borrow money continuously from organizations like the International Money Fund and the World Bank, which are controlled by the United States and nations of Europe, just to continue its existence. The bitter irony for Lucy is that Australia, though it is a majority-white nation and was once a colony of England, is now exporting goods to a rich nation like the U.S., and Antigua, a black nation that was once a colony of England is now dependent on countries like the U.S. for its very existence. When Lucy is awoken by the maid and sees the nightgown that was made in Australia the maid's attitude seems to be one of jealousy, perhaps because she felt that she would have to compete with Lucy for the attention of Mariah and Lewis, their bosses. This is an example of competition within the already gendered division of labor that Hennessy and Ingraham and Kirk say divides and exploits according to gender, race, class and nationality.

A few pages earlier in the narrative Lucy has awoken on her first day in New York to be surprised to find an environment that is literally different, physically different, from that which she had known all of life in tropical Antigua until this point. She says:

I was no longer in a tropical zone, and this realization now entered my life like a flow of water dividing formerly dry and solid ground, creating two banks, one of which was my past – so familiar and predictable that even my unhappiness then made me happy now just to think of it – the other my future, a gray blank, an overcast seascape on which rain

was falling and no boats were in sight. I was no longer in a tropical zone and I felt cold inside and out, the first time such a sensation had come over me (5-6)

Newly arrived from Antigua, Lucy is ambivalent because she lives in two worlds, so to speak - her native Third World in Antigua and her newly adopted First World of New York and the United States. And she has ideas, if not expectations, of what these worlds should be like. But she has ambivalence because when she tries to conform these worlds to her ideas or expectations she is often faced with contradictions. She envisions economic stability (for Antigua of course). Yet, her biggest contradiction probably comes in the discovery of, or facing the reality that not all of Britain's former colonies, including the United States, are poor (if she had such a notion). She will also discover that there is more sexual freedom and equality for men and women, and more attention given to ecological sustainability and racial equality. This all ties in with Kincaid's use of the contemplation of point-of-vision creative method or technique, contemplation of point-of-view of what her life will be like in New York, as compared to Antigua. Here we have a classic example of Kincaid intersecting or blending the major themes of gender and sexuality, the environment, and global capitalism together to remind readers of the lasting and damaging impact of colonialism on Antigua and the Caribbean.

Another example of Kincaid's use of the contemplation of point-of-vision technique or creative method to show the intersection of the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism and the environment intersecting in *Lucy* can be found in the greed of members of an organization that Mariah belongs to, an animal that eats a vegetable plant, and Lewis, Mariah's husband, cheating on her. After working for Mariah and Lewis for a while, Lucy learns that Mariah has written and illustrated a book about "what seemed to them the destruction of the countryside" (75). In the narrative, Lucy, who is aware of Mariah and Lewis' wealth, seems to

question their sincerity about dealing with the environmental problem that concerns them. Lucy says:

Like her (Mariah), all of the members of this organization (to which Mariah belongs) were well off but they made no connection between their comforts and the decline of the world that lay before them. I could have told them a thing or two about it. I could have told them how nice it was to see them getting a small sip of their own bad medicine...she gave me the impression that everything was on its last legs and any day now would disappear from the earth (72).

Mariah and Lewis' concern eventually manifests itself through a disagreement that the couple has about an animal, apparently from the country side, consuming vegetables from Lewis' vegetable garden. Kincaid's reference to "them getting a sip of their own bad medicine" seems to be a questioning of Mariah and Lewis's sincerity about their concern about the environment because of their wealthy status. This is Kincaid again drawing the environment (including nature and gardening) into her narrative to better explicate issues of gender and sexuality and global capitalism, namely Mariah and Lewis' wealth and Lewis' constant watch of his investments in the stock market, in transnational corporations no doubt. Kincaid is drawing a contrast to the environmental issues that the United States and cities like New York face, as opposed to those faced by Antigua and other Caribbean countries. That contrast includes the fact that the problems in the United States are largely self-imposed, whereas those in the Caribbean are largely imposed by foreigners, like those caused by deforestation and destruction of indigenous plants and animal life, polluted beaches, inadequate sewage facilities, etc. A few pages later in the *Lucy* narrative, Lucy returns to a room in Mariah and Lewis' home where the couple, Lucy, and Dinah, Mariah's



friend, had been earlier, where she discovers Lewis and Diana engaging in intimacy. This is the scene that Lucy recalls:

I saw Lewis standing behind Dinah, his arms around her shoulders, and he was licking her neck over and over again, and how she liked it. This was not a show, this was something real; I thought of Mariah and all those books she had filled with photographs that began with when she and Lewis first met, in Paris in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower or in London in the shadow of Big Ben or somewhere foolish like that (79).

This is Kincaid again subtly blending the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment in her narratives. She does this first by questioning Mariah and Lewis' seriousness about environmental issues; secondly, she does it by pointing out their strong commitment to capitalism, which is often a deterrent to strong ecological views; and lastly, by focusing on the couple's marital problems the implication is that despite their wealth and race they are just as vulnerable to issues of gender and sexuality as people in poor or Third World nations, like Antigua. In a careful reading of Kincaid's works, it is almost inevitable that one would make a comparison of how similar issues are presented and whether they are presented from a First World vs. the Third World perspective. Kincaid's critique is a reinforcement of Kirk's argument that, "gender, race, class, imperialism, and the global capitalist economy are connected to ecological destruction and...effective analysis and activism need to be informed by a broad, integrative materialist framework," which is a major part of the objective of this study. I argue that Kincaid's use of the contemplation of point-of-view in daily life techniques as a method of critique helps that objective.

Mr. Potter's ferrying of tourists as a taxi driver, environmental metaphors that describe him, and his shortchanging of his many female children is an example of Kincaid's use of contemplation of point-of-vision to intersect the three major themes in her *Mr. Potter* novel. Elaine, the daughter of Mr. Potter and the narrator in *Mr. Potter* gives us a picture of the impact of global capitalism in Antigua when she tells how her father deals with tourists, whom he drives from one part of the island to another, in this point-of-vision perspective:

Mr. Potter's words emerging from his mouth were consoling and soothing to the many passengers he ferried from one part of the island of Antigua to another, and these passengers denounced climates in which they lived and so therefore hated, and they asked him about the things to be seen through the windows of the taxi: the fields of sugarcane, and just a quick glance revealed the hardship of labor involved in the cultivating and bringing it to harvest, the mud houses with straw roofs, the torn clothes drying on the clotheslines, the half-naked children with swollen stomachs, the indescribable and invisible lushness that they could feel enveloping them; and Mr. Potter would say, 'Yes, Yes, Yes!' and the 'Yes' would be so drawn out, would take so long to come to an end, that perhaps a journey could be made around the world in its entirety before these many 'Yeses' were completed (149).

The narrator paints a raw picture here of global capitalism's exploitation of an impoverished country through the tourist industry and a native of the country's insensitivity to it as witnessed by his complicity in shuttling the tourists, for profit of course, in his taxi. On the next page of the narrative, the narrator uses environmental metaphors to help describe Mr. Potter's character: "Mr. Potter would remain forever...for he had given meaning to this landscape, the sea, the sun shining so brightly in the middle of the noonday sky, the huge black-colored wind, blowing from

the windward direction, devouring the sun that had been so perfectly placed within the noonday sky. He had given meaning to the abolition of forced servitude” (150). This contemplation of point-of-vision is Kincaid saying in essence, “Here we are on this beautiful, tropical island, now a free people, but here we also have this man, who through his manner, seems be oblivious to the fact that servitude is supposed to have come to an end.” Some of the narrative on the next page of the novel focuses on the fact that Mr. Potter has fathered many female children and has married the mother of none of them. The narrator says, “He went from the day’s end at Mr. Shoul’s garage to the many houses which were really one room with four windows and he could see all the women who were the mothers of his girl children and all of those girls with his broad and fleshy nose, and he looked at his children, all of them girls...” (151). The contemplation of point-of-vision, along with the other information, is designed to tell the reader who Mr. Potter is, what type of man he is, to identify his character. There again, is Kincaid blending in the themes of global capitalism, the environment, and gender and sexuality to make a statement of substance about the negative impact that Antigua’s long history of British slavery and patriarchal colonialism has had, and is having, on the people there. It is another example of Hennessy and Ingraham’s argument that race, gender and nationality are not unlike class “in dividing the work force, ensuring and justifying the continued availability of cheap labor, and determining that certain groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned. In this case, Mr. Potter, relatively wealthy by Antiguan standards, is in the cushioned group and the mothers, who bore his children, have no income to support them, and live in the shabby houses in such a beautiful, tropical climate, are the “profoundly exploited.”

Another example of Kincaid using the contemplation of point-of-vision technique or creative method to intersect the three major themes in *Mr. Potter* is found in his saving his

money to buy a car of his own to make a profit, his self-centeredness as a male, and a description of the landscape and the night. Elaine, the narrator in *Mr. Potter*, says about her father, “He worked and worked and saved his money and then bought another car and hired a driver and with the profits from that bought another car and hired another driver, and not once did he imagine that he was imitating Mr. Shoul, not once did Mr. Shoul’s life enter his imagination...” (162). The narrator is showing that Mr. Potter is willing to disregard his dislike for Mr. Shoul, his boss, whom he views as “strange,” because he is a native of the Middle East, but follow his (Mr. Shoul’s) capitalistic ways because of his (Mr. Potter’s) desire for wealth. Elaine also views her father as a self-centered male because of his lack of commitment to any of his many daughters or the women who gave birth to them. She says, “And I imagine my father, that is, Mr. Potter, seeing his face reflected in that tightly wound braid of hair, and loving his reflection to gaze back at him” (163). A few pages earlier in the narrative, the narrator described what the environment was like on the night Louis, the child whom Mr. Potter falsely claims as his son, was born. She recalls:

And Louis was born early in the night and the moon was full and that moon was full of light and the light spilled out onto the sky and colored the clouds in such a way that they seemed like habitable islands, and that moon so overly filled with light made mysterious and magical all the landscapes over which it traveled, and that moon was full and full of light and then that moon grew smaller and smaller and its light grew weaker and weaker and so did Louis, as if the moon, which by happenstance was the moon in the sky on the night he was born, was his destiny. And Louis lived to be forty-five years old and did nothing that mattered, really, and then died of a lung ailment or a disease of the intestinal tract...” (159).

In her use of the global capitalism, gender and sexuality, and environment themes here Kincaid is articulating the complexity of the Caribbean, particularly the Anglophone African Caribbean, and more particularly the complexity of Antigua. On the one hand Mr. Potter dislikes his boss, Mr. Shoul, a Middle Easterner who migrated from Damascus, Lebanon, and Palestine, because he considers him to be strange. Despite this, Mr. Potter is willing to emulate Mr. Shoul's path to business success under the system of capitalism. Also, despite Mr. Potter's unwillingness to claim any of the many girls that he has fathered by many women as his own, he is willing to falsely claim as his son a boy by one of the women that he has fathered girls by, when the real father of the boy is a local undertaker. In describing what the environment was like on the night that the boy Mr. Potter claims as his son was born Kincaid is probably reflecting on the many myths, superstitions, and perhaps even the obeah or voodoo beliefs held by African Caribbeans in Antigua. In showing this complexity Kincaid is perhaps suggesting that one cannot thoroughly know Antigua or the Caribbean, particular the African Caribbean, without first understanding that there are many complexities. As Kirk argues, because of it complexities related to "gender, race, class, imperialism, and the global capital economy," Antigua and the Caribbean can benefit from an "effective analysis and activism...informed by a broad, integrative materialist framework." I argue that Kincaid, with this use of contemplation of point-of-view analysis is contributing to that "broad, integrative materialist framework" here.

### **Use of the Detached, Ironic-Voice in *My Brother*, *A Small Place* and *Life and Debt***

An example of Kincaid's use of her detached ironic-voice to intersect the three major themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment intersecting in *My Brother* is when she focuses on the deteriorated state of the economy and the unavailability of the antiviral drug ATZ in Antigua, Devon's preference for light-skinned women from the

Dominican Republic and his taking sexual risks, risks that infects women with his disease, and the focus on nature and what the environment is like in Antigua. We see the focus on global capitalism and how it has affected Antigua when Kincaid says, "I wanted to ask him, if there was no medicine (ATZ) available, if the people suffering did not have a sister who lived in the United States and this sister could call up a doctor who would write a prescription for some medication that might be of help, what would happen then" (36)? While Kincaid is attempting to show detached feelings about Devon's situation, her wanting to ask that question is ironic because she has come to Antigua for the specific reason of helping her brother. ATZ, an anti-viral medication, is the only drug that can deal effectively with the symptoms of HIV-AIDS at the time, and it is not available in Antigua because the country is burdened with debt to foreign lenders like the International Monetary Fund and rich First World nations like the United States and those of Europe. The gender and sexuality theme can be seen in the sexual preference of Devon for light-skinned African Caribbean women as opposed to dark-skinned women and the fact that he is willing to run the risk of infecting them with HIV-AIDS, and vice versa. The detached and ironic voice in this matter is evident when Kincaid makes this comment about it as merely an observer, while withholding her own very strong and unfavorable opinion about the matter, perhaps in deference to her brother because he is so ill:

Dr. Ramsey (Devon's physician) asked them (Devon and his friends) if they had condoms and they said no. He asked them if they had not listened to anything he had just told them, and they said to him yes, but they would rather die than leave the butter women alone ('Me rather dead dan leave butta women 'lone'). The prostitutes in Antigua are from Santo Domingo (in the Dominican Republic, a Spanish-speaking Caribbean country near Haiti). They are mostly light-brown-skinned black women.

Antiguan men call them butter women. It is believed that a majority of them are HIV-positive (39-40).

The passage focuses on one of the legacies of slavery and colonial ideologies that haunt women of African descent in formerly colonized countries like Antigua - the degradation that women with darker complexions often received, and still do in some instances, from men of African descent, and sometimes, too, from women with lighter complexions who are of African descent. In her use of this gender and sexuality-related passage Kincaid is showing how complex issues of race, gender, nationality, and sexuality are in the Caribbean, particularly in Antigua. While the light-skinned women in the narrative are from the Dominican Republic and probably speak Spanish, the dominant language in that country, they are still considered African Caribbean, perhaps because they are creoles or of mixed race. Under British patriarchal colonial rule what mattered most were the ideologies that enhanced the power, control and enrichment, through capitalistic exploitation, of the white colonials. Kincaid is showing how the complexity of issues related to race, gender, and nationality always works to the colonials' advantage as Hennessy and Ingraham says, "in dividing the work force, ensuring and justifying the continued availability of cheap labor, and determining that certain groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned." In this case the group most profoundly exploited is dark-skinned African Caribbean women and the group most cushioned is the white male colonials.

During Kincaid's visit with Devon to offer her support for dealing with his ordeal they decide to visit the botanical gardens, only to find that they are closed due to a lack of funding. Afterwards they decide a visit to Devon's garden beside the house where he lives, Kincaid becomes absorbed with remembering what the environment, nature and gardening were like and how much she loved it as a child in Antigua. She seems detached or removed from thoughts

about why she left Antigua at first, but the irony of seeing so many things seems to remind her of her childhood and eventually forces her to recall why she left. She recalls, “When I first saw his little garden in the back of his little house, I was amazed at it and asked him if he had done it all himself and he said, Of course (How you mean, man!). I know now that it is from our mother that we, he and I, get this love of plants,” (11). “Even at that moment when he and I were sitting on the lawn, our mother had growing on a trellis she had fashioned out of an old bedstead and old pieces of corrugated galvanize a passion-fruit vine, and its voluptuous growth was impressive, because it isn’t easy to grow passion fruit in Antigua,” she adds (11-12). The garden reminds Kincaid of how close people in the Caribbean, Antigua in particular, are to nature, the environment, and plants and animal life, a life that she once knew as a child. Speaking of a passion-fruit vine that her mother had grown when she was a child, Kincaid says, “It produced fruit in such abundance that she had to give some of it away, there was more than she could use. Her way with plants is something I am very familiar with, when I was a child, in the very place where my brother’s house is now, she grew all sort of vegetables and herbs” (12). Here again, too, as Kincaid remembers her mother’s being restricted to the role of childrearing, housekeeping, gardening, etc. she remembers why she (Kincaid) left Antigua, to become a writer, a job unheard of for African Caribbean women on the island at the time. This is Kincaid explicating the negative impact of the “gendered (and unequal) division of labor” to which Hennessy and Ingraham, and materialist feminists, refer, in her detached, ironic voice.

Another example from *My Brother* where Kincaid intersects the three major themes in her detached, ironic-voice can be found when she learns of Devon’s asking for a serving of Kentucky Fried Chicken, his and Kincaid’s response to the taste of fruit from an imported tree, and the focus on the sexual attitudes of African Caribbean men. As mentioned earlier in Chapter



Four, Kincaid says, “ One day, still in the hospital, he (Devon) rejected the food served to him and the food my mother brought to him, and asked for a serving of Kentucky Fried Chicken, that was the thing he most wanted to eat then” (5). By her use of the Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise, now a transnational or multinational corporation, Kincaid is drawing our attention to global capitalism. Even though she seems to believe that the Kentucky Fried Chicken is not the best meal for her brother because of the severity of his illness she speaks about it in a detached and ironic manner, even though she has some strong and unfavorable opinions about it, again perhaps in deference to Devon because of his illness. Later in the text, as she and Devon takes a walk, she will remind us how colonialism changed Antigua environmentally with the massive importation of plant life. For example, she writes:

My brother and I became obsessed with this tree, its bark, its leaves, its shape, we wondered where it was really from, what sort of tree it was. If it crossed his mind that this tree, coming out of a dormancy, a natural sleep, a temporary death, or just half-dead, bore any resemblance to him right then and there, he did not say, he did not let me know in anyway. We walked on past the botanical gardens, and we came upon some tamarind trees with ripe tamarinds on them; the tamarinds were hanging very high up on the tree and so my brother picked up stones and threw them at the fruit, hoping to knock some down, the way we would have done if we had been school children. He succeeded, we ate the tamarinds; they were not good, they were not bad, they were tamarinds (79-80).

According to the *Oxford College Dictionary*, a tamarind is the “sticky brown pulp from the pod of a tree (the tamarind, a tropical African tree) of the pea family, widely used in flavoring” (1399). In their curiosity about the tamarind tree, Devon and Kincaid seem to know that it is not

indigenous and they wonder where it came from, which part of the world, because so much of the plant life in Antigua is not indigenous as a result of British deforestation centuries ago. After eating the tamarinds, they conclude that their tastes “were not good, they were not bad, they were tamarinds,” the kind of ambivalence that Kincaid sometimes expresses because of her being from a Third World nation and living in and attaining success in a First World country. Ironically, the tamarind tree is a native of tropical Africa. It is not clear in the text that Kincaid and Devon are aware of its origin, but if they are they also express ambivalence about whether its importation to Antigua was good or bad. Having left Antigua because she knew that as a woman she would never be able have a career as a writer there, she reflects on that gender concern, and her own sexuality, and what life is like there for Devon as a male:

And I began again to wonder what his life must be like for him, and to wonder what my own life would have been like if I had not been so cold and ruthless in regard to my family, acting only in favor of myself when I was a young woman. It must have been a person like this, men like this, men who say they cannot help themselves, men who are urges only to be satisfied, men who cannot save themselves, men who only know how to die, not at all how to live – it must have been such a man that my mother knew of when she communicated to me the grave danger to myself should I allow such a person to know me too well, communicated this to me so strongly that I grew up alienated from my own sexuality and, as far as I can tell, am still, to this day, not comfortable with the idea of myself and sex (68-69).

While the central theme of *My Brother* is Devon’s dying and death because of what Kincaid perceives as the rampant global capitalism that is smothering the country through indebtedness to foreigners, corruption, and general decay, she manages to blend that theme in well with the

themes of gender and sexuality and the environment to make clearer the negative impact that centuries of slavery and colonialism in Antigua and the rest of the Anglophone African Caribbean has had and is still having on the region. But while Kincaid is speaking more in an open way about issues related to global capitalism and the environment her expressions about issues of gender and sexuality here are restrained by her unfavorable memories, so when she does speak about them she does so in detached or restrained way and in a somewhat ironic way. I argue that these passages serve as reinforcement for Kirk's argument that, "gender, race class, imperialism and the global capitalist economy are connected to ecological destruction and ... effective analysis and activism need to be informed by a broad integrative materialist framework."

An example of the themes of global capitalism, gender and sexuality, and the environment intersecting in *A Small Place* with Kincaid's detached, ironic-voice include the import of food for tourists from faraway places, a school's refusal to accept girls who were born out of wedlock, and the use of leaded gasoline in cars in Antigua. Tourist are introduced to the negative impact of global capitalism in Antigua early, when Kincaid tells them in a "as a matter of fact way" by saying, "When you sit down to eat, it's better that you don't know that most of what you are eating came off a plane from Miami. And before it got on a plane in Miami, who knows where it came from" (14)? "A good guess is that it came from a place like Antigua first, where it was grown dirt-cheap, went to Miami, and came back. There is a world of something in this, but I can't get into to it right now," she adds (14). As we observed in Chapter Four, Antigua and much of the Caribbean, especially the Anglophone African Caribbean, has to import much of its food supplies because the region produces little of its own and has a lack of sufficient control over agriculture production and costs, which are controlled by large transnational companies

doing business there. Kincaid's narration is ironic because what she is telling the tourist are things that they least expect to hear, or the reverse of what they expected to hear. Shortly afterwards in the narrative Kincaid deals with issues of gender, race, and sexuality. She says:

Then there was a headmistress of a girls' school, hired through the colonial office in England and sent to Antigua to run this school which only in my lifetime began to accept girls who were born outside of marriage; in Antigua it had never dawned on anyone that this was a way of keeping black children out of this school. This woman was twenty-six years old, not too long out of university, from Northern Ireland, and she told these girls over and over again to stop behaving as if they were monkeys just out of trees. No one ever dreamed that the word for any of this was racism (29).

This is Kincaid articulating again in an "as a matter of fact way," this time about race and gender, which often become intertwined or dual issues for black women, in this case African Caribbean women. Under British patriarchal colonial rule, a girl having a child out of wedlock is, no doubt, forbidden or at least frowned upon. So even a white British girl in such a situation would be scorned, but black girls or women, carrying the imagery and stereotyping of a "loose" woman, vis-à-vis slavery and colonial ideologies are likely seen in the worst way possible in colonial society. It is no wonder that Kincaid says, "No one ever dreamed that the word for any of this was racism." As Hennessy and Ingraham argue, even though these are socially produced differences, race, gender, and class, they divide the work force "ensuring and justifying the continued availability of cheap labor and determining that certain groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned." This next passage that I cite could be read, I believe, as Kincaid looking at a either a global capitalism issue or an environmental issue. I chose to read it as her looking at an environmental issue. She tells tourists, again in an "as a

matter of fact” or detached way, “You continue to look at the cars and say to yourself, Why they look brand-new, but they have an awful sound, like an old car – a very old dilapidated car. How to account for that” (6)? Then she says, “Well, possibly it’s because they use leaded gasoline in these brand-new cars whose engines were built to use non-leaded gasoline, but you mustn’t ask the person driving the car if this is so, because he or she has never heard of unleaded gasoline” (6). Again this is ironic, because this is something that tourists do not expect to hear. They expect to hear pleasant things during their venture as tourists. Conceivably, Kincaid is raising both a global capitalism and environmental issue at the same time, but I argue that she is raising an environment issue for the sake of showing how she integrates these three issues or themes – gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment to show the negative impact of colonialism. She is pointing out that in addition to the environmental damage done to their island by the British under colonialism, such as deforestation and the killing of indigenous animal life, Antiguan are now doing damage to the environment there themselves with the use of leaded gasoline in their cars.

Another example of Kincaid using her detached, ironic voice to intersect the three major themes in *A Small Place* include a woman’s resisting capitalistic exploitation and corruption, Kincaid’s mother defending herself as a woman against an insinuation by the Minister of Culture that she might have corrupt intentions, and talk about the role of nature in the lives of Antiguan. For example, Kincaid says this about Antigua’s beaches, all of which are supposed to be public, but are not so public when it comes to allowing Antiguan to use them, “Even though all the beaches in Antigua are by law public beaches, Antiguan are not allowed on the beaches of this (new) hotel; they are stopped at the gate by guards; and soon the best beaches in Antigua will be closed to Antiguan” (57-58). Kincaid’s telling this news to tourists without caution for their

potential shock and embarrassment as First World residents makes her manner one of detachment and it is ironic because it is, no doubt, a surprise, if not a shock to the tourists. This is the negativism of global capitalism at work because the big hotels are owned largely by foreigners and large corporations and operated primarily for tourists from countries like the United States and those of Europe. Earlier in the narrative Kincaid focused on an issue of gender equality that involved her mother's confrontation with the Minister of Culture. She writes:

In one election campaign, my mother was putting up her party's posters on a lamppost just outside the house of the Minister of Culture. When the minister, hearing a great hubbub (my mother would only do this with great hubbub) came outside and saw that it was my mother, he said, perhaps to the air, 'What is *she* doing here?' And to this my mother replies, 'I may be a she, but I am a good she. Not someone who steals stamps from Redonda (a barren rock out in the Caribbean Sea – actually closer to the island of Montserrat and Nevis than to Antigua).' Whatever this meant to the Minister of Culture my mother would not tell me, but it made the minister turn and go back inside his house without a replay (50).

This is Kincaid, again in her detached manner, showing that there are women who are willing to take the risk of confronting men with power and authority under British patriarchal rule when they believe the men to be corrupt and not serving the best interest of the country or the people. She believes the negative effects of global capitalism and the corruption and decay that it brings are at the heart of Antigua's problems. This is ironic because the tourist reader is probably totally unprepared to see the narrator's mother portrayed as a heroine fighting the patriarchy. On the other hand, in most of her works Kincaid is never one to forget about the environment of wherever she is writing about, and most often that is Antigua. Sometimes she even writes about

the environment from locations other than the one from which she is writing. But in this passage from *A Small Place*, she is talking about the environment in Antigua in a way that is not detached, which probably strikes the tourist as ironic, after she has informed them so much about Antigua's "downside":

ANTIGUA is so beautiful. Antigua is too beautiful. Sometimes the beauty of it seems unreal. Sometimes the beauty of it seems as if it were a stage sets for a play, for no real sunset could look like that; no real seawater could strike that many shades of blue at once; no real sky could be that shade of blue – another shade of blue, completely different from the shades of blue seen in the sea – and no real cloud could be that white and float just that way in that blue sky; no real day could be that sort of sunny and bright, making everything seem transparent and shallow; and no real night could be that sort of black, making everything seem thick and deep and bottomless...(there is no dawn in Antigua: one minute, the sun is overhead and stays there until it sets with the explosion of reds on the horizon, and then the darkness of night come again, and it is as if the open lid of a box you are inside suddenly snaps into place) (77-78).

One might ask, why would she write such an alluring and pleasant passage about Antigua in a text that is otherwise filled with messages to foreign tourists about what many would consider the downsides of a tropical paradise? I would say that this is part of Kincaid's overall detached, iconic-voice or critique of the impact on colonialism on her native Antigua. In other words, she has given the foreign tourists insight on some of the negatives about the island, which they did not know. Now she seems to be saying that despite the downsides related to gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and damage to the environment, Antigua still has a lot of assets in

its environmental beauty and the people who inherit it. I argue that she is also advocating the maintenance of that environmental beauty.

An example of Kincaid and Black's use of a detached, iconic-voice to intersect the three major themes in *Life and Debt* include the Jamaican furniture maker turning to making coffins to capitalize on the violence in the country that has resulted from poor economic conditions, the massive unemployment of women who make up the larger part of the workforce as a result of companies relocating out of the country, and the poor environmental conditions caused by inadequate sewage facilities. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, one of the ways that the film documentary portrays the impact of global capitalism is through the furniture maker who turns to casket making after the Jamaican economy declined in the midst of the country's excessive foreign debt, decline of exports, loss of jobs due to companies relocating out of Jamaica, etc. The furniture maker, noticing the rising number of Jamaican deaths caused by violence related to unrest over poor economic conditions, turned his business into a profitable casket making operation. Just as the narrator reveals things to tourists about the downside of Antigua in a detached manner in *A Small Place*, the narrator does the same kind of detached revelations for the tourists in *Life and Debt*. Kincaid and Black also portray for the tourists in a detached or "as a matter of fact" manner the massive layoff of women workers, in plants that have a majority of female workers, when these plants relocate outside Jamaica in order to avoid paying higher wages. The film's portrayal of environmental issues, also in a detached manner, include the narrator's telling tourists that Jamaica does not have adequate means of disposing of its sewage and saying that she could speak further about this, but will not, leaving the tourists to wonder how the sewage is disposed of, with the answer being the ocean, which includes the beautiful beaches that tourists love so much. All of this of course is ironic to the tourist because it is



among the last things that they expected to hear about a tourist paradise. This is a reinforcement of Kirk's argument that "gender, race class, imperialism, and the global capitalist economy are connected to ecological destruction." Kincaid's threading of the three issues together enhances that argument.

Another example of Kincaid and Black using a detached, iconic-voice to intersect the three major themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment in *Life and Debt* include the local woman telling how she earns poor wages sewing underwear for her American employers in an IMF-sponsored sweatshop, off-shore poultry wholesalers demanding the return of impounded stocks of 20-year-old chicken that supposedly was really meant for Haiti, youth scavenging a garbage truck with the gulls and cattle until there is nothing left for the rats, all of which were cited in Chapter Four. The gender issues in the film include its focus on women who have to work for extremely low wages in so-called "free zones" under highly restricted conditions. In a detached, "as a matter of fact" manner Kincaid and Black tell the personal stories of these women about the unfair working conditions at plants where clothing goods are manufactured with cheap female labor and shipped to the United States to be sold at a much higher cost. Ironically, the negative impact of global capitalism, highlighted with the discovery of the 20-year-old chicken intended for shipping to Haiti, but shipped to Jamaica instead, is probably one of its most stark or shocking examples of the negative effects of global capitalism, and certainly is not something that tourists expect to hear. The film's portrayal of youths scavenging a garbage truck sort of highlights both global capitalism and environmental issues in that its focus is on the impoverishment of the country as a result of foreign debt and the poor environmental conditions (people eating from garbage) that are fostered by this impoverishment. That too is presented to the tourists in a detached manner and is ironic to them

because this is something that they do not expect hear about a tourist paradise. I argue that these portrayals in *Life and Debt* enhance Hennessy and Ingraham's argument that, "race, gender, and nationality are not distinct from class, but they play a crucial role – both directly and indirectly – in dividing the work force, ensuring and justifying the combined availability of cheap labor, and determining that certain groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned." In this case the profoundly exploited are the African Caribbeans of Jamaica, especially women, and those cushioned are the foreign global capitalists operating in the country.

### **Other Examples in *My Garden Book* and *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya***

An example of Kincaid using focus of memory and effect on a single powerful image or actions from a daily life and her wry and ironic meditation to intersect the three major themes in *My Garden Book* include Kincaid's speaking of a fox that she sees in her garden as a symbol that represents a handbag of someone who can afford "such a thing," her speaking of the garden as a place "that leads to contentment," and her becoming upset with a man whom she believes cannot relate to her feelings about gardens. In the *My Garden Book* narrative Kincaid has some thoughts about First World global capitalism one day when she spots a fox in her garden in Vermont. She says the fox's coat was "looking like an ornament, a collar of the coat of someone who could afford such a thing, or a part of the handbag of someone who could afford such a thing, or a spectacle on the wall of someone who could afford such a thing and then not have the good sense to say no to it" (18). I see the fox as a powerful image symbolically representing the colonial capitalist who in all of his aspiration for profits presents colorful pictures for gains by exploiting the land and labor of Antigua and the Caribbean and control of subjects of color. Kincaid's reference to the fox's coat can be viewed as a reference to the capitalism of the rich First World nations. Several pages later, in a shift to environmental matters (I consider gardening an

environmental matter when reading Kincaid), Kincaid speaks of finding contentment and satisfaction in the garden, another powerful image symbolically representing Antigua, despite its disturbance of the mind, Kincaid says. She says, “The *Scabiosa ochroleuca* would bring all this, my vision of that area of the garden to rest, the sort of rest that leads to satisfaction, the satisfaction that leads to reflection and contentment (even if the contentment is disturbing, but it is the sort of contentment that leads to disturbance, the disturbance in mind)” (19). I think Kincaid is not only thinking of the garden and finding contentment in it here in the sense of her garden in Vermont, but also in the sense that Antigua was a “garden” before it was deforested by British colonials. She seems to be saying that in addition to finding contentment and satisfaction when she is working in her Vermont garden, she also finds contentment in and satisfaction when she is explicating or drawing attention to the damage done to her larger garden, Antigua, by colonialism. A dozen plus pages later in *My Garden Book* Kincaid deals with a gender issue this way, “I once invited a man to dinner, a man who knows a lot about landscape and how to remake it in a fashionable way. He did not like the way I had made a garden and he said to me what I ought to do is remove the trees. It is quite likely that I shall never have him back for a visit to my house, but I haven’t yet told him so” (34). Here we see the wryness in Kincaid’s ironic “meditation” on the importance and meaning of her garden as a way of remembering the history of African Caribbeans in Antigua. It is apparent that Kincaid, who endured gender and sexual inequality under patriarchal colonial rule, is convinced that the man believes his way of making a garden is superior to her garden because he is a male. But she is not about to accept gender-biased thinking. This is Kincaid, again, blending in, or intersecting the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment to articulate the negative effects of colonial rule in Antigua and the rest of the African Caribbean, especially the Anglophone African

Caribbean. I argue that this embraces Kirk's argument that, "gender, race, class imperialism, and the global capitalist economy are connected to ecological destruction...and effective analysis and activism need to be informed by a broad, integrative materialist framework."

Another example of Kincaid intersecting the three major themes in *My Garden Book* by using focus of memory and effect on a single powerful image or actions from a daily life and her wry and ironic meditation include her talking about American greed under capitalism, her comment about night-soil men's loud talk and their inconsideration for awakening the neighborhood, and her dislike of breadfruit or anything to do with it because of its history in Antigua. One day in Vermont, as Kincaid is out running in her neighborhood with a friend by the name of Meg they spot this house that Kincaid likes and later buys. She does this initial assessment of the house:

That house was at least twenty times as big as the house I grew up in, a house in a poor country with a tropical climate, but I had lived in America for a longtime and had adjusted to the American habit of taking up at least twenty times as much of the available resources as each person needs. This is a trait that is beyond greed. A greedy person is often cross, unpleasant. Americans, at least the ones I am personally familiar with, are not at all cross. They are quite happy and reasonable as they take up at least twenty times as much of everything they need (37-38).

This is Kincaid assessing the opulence and greed that often occurs in countries like the United States, their being practitioners of global capitalism, while seemingly acknowledging that with her liking and wanting to live in the house she too will be a practitioner of that opulence and greed that often accompanies global capitalism. Here perceived American opulence and greed are powerful symbols or images used to convey Kincaid's ambivalence about global capitalism,

despite her acceptance of the fact that she resides and works in a capitalist nation. Kincaid uses this kind of ambivalence in many of her works with themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment. A short time later in the *My Garden Book* narrative Kincaid is describing her neighborhood in which she grew up and some of the things that took place in it when her focus turns to a gender-related concern:

In my yard was a latrine and on Wednesday nights the night-soil men would come and take away its contents; they came on horse-drawn carts, and the clop-clop of the horses and their loud talk always woke everyone up. They were very disrespectful of the sleepy comfort of the people inside, but such consideration would have been possible only if they had been saints; they were not, they were merely night-soil men (43).

This is Kincaid, in her wryness, depicting the callousness, if not arrogance of males, who are so self-centered that they lack awareness that others might be adversely affected by their actions. “The night-soil men will never close the gate, it must always be closed after them, for if it is not, evil spirits will find it much easier to enter our yard and wreak havoc on our lives,” she says (45). She is convinced that the night-soil men are irresponsible and reckless. A short time later the narrative turns to an environmental subject when she speaks of her dislike for breadfruit, one of the plants that was transported to Antigua and used by colonials as one of the main food staples for black slaves in Antigua and the rest of the Caribbean. Kincaid recalls that, “A breadfruit tree grew in our yard, and my mother, who was obsessively familiar with such things as nutritional value in kinds of food, knew of the breadfruit’s nutritional value; I did not know of the breadfruit’s history, but all the same my palate had a revulsion to it that was shared by every Antiguan child...” (44). This is Kincaid, using another powerful symbol or image (breadfruit) in an ironic way, to slip in a reminder about the grave disservice that colonizers did to Antigua and

much of the other parts of the Caribbean, first in bringing enslaved people, second in deforesting the land and robbing it of most of its indigenous plant and animal life, and third, forcing a people to subsist off food, the breadfruit, whose taste they detested. Again, Kincaid blends in the three themes – gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment - well to add further to her sometimes subtle and sometimes pointed critique of the negative impact of colonialism on Antigua and the Caribbean, especially the Anglophone African Caribbean.

Here is an example of Kincaid using here contemplation of point-of-vision in daily life to intersect *two* of the three themes, the environment and global capitalism, in *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*. They include Kincaid’s observation about nature and the environment in Nepal shortly after her arrival for her camping trip and her encountering a woman who wants her hair braided like Kincaid’s. In her observation about nature and the environment in Nepal Kincaid says, “In Nepal, the sky is part of your consciousness, you look up as much as you look down. As much as I looked down to see where I should place my feet, I looked up to see the sky because so much of what happened up there determined the earth on which I stood” (23). “The sky everywhere is on the whole blue; from time to time, it deviates from that; in Nepal it deviated from that more than I was used to, and it often did so with a quickness that brought my mind a deranged personality, or just ordinary mental instability,” she adds (23-24). Kincaid is a keen observer of nature and the environment. This is evident throughout most of her work. In her contemplation of point-of-vision in daily life, she often contrasts the nature and the environment of a new location that she might be visiting with that of Antigua, and in a few instances with that of Vermont, where she was residing at the time that the narrative for *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* was written. It is not clear which location, Antigua or Vermont, she is referring to in saying, “In Nepal it (the blueness of the sky) deviated from that more than I was used to,” but

she is definitely making a comparison of the blueness of the sky in one place versus another, her contemplation of point-of-vision in daily life. Later on in the text she makes another nature and environment comparison. She says:

For those first few hours, I was expecting the landscape to conform to the landscape with which I was familiar, gentle incline after gentle incline, culminating in a resolution of a spectacular arrangement of the final resting place of some geographical catastrophe. This was not so. I walked up toward a ridge, and I thought that when reaching the ridge my whole being would come to something, the something that had made me (go) there in the first place (37).

Here again, this shows Kincaid's keen observation of nature and the environment and her tendency to make comparisons, or contemplation of point-of-vision in daily life. It also shows her curiosity about nature and the environment in general. And again in these passages it is not clear if the nature and environment comparison are being made with that of Antigua or Vermont, nevertheless there is probably a good chance that the comparison is with Antigua since there are a number of other comparisons made with Kincaid's native country in the text. A few pages later in the narrative Kincaid and her camping crew have stopped for a rest in a village and are drinking beer which they had packed in their bags. It is then that a Nepalese woman walks over to ask about her braided hair. Kincaid recalls:

A beautiful woman, with naturally glossed, long black hair, saw my own braided-into-cornrow hair and she found it so appealing that she came and sat beside me to touch my hair. She picked up my long plaits and turned them over and over, and using gestures, she asked if I could make her own hair like mine. I did not know how to tell her that my

hairdo, which she liked so much, was made possible by weaving into my own hair the real hair of a woman from part of the world that was quite like her own (46).

This is Kincaid bringing gender and global capitalism into the picture in a contemplation of point-of-vision manner. Actually race, gender and global capitalism come into the picture. As an African Caribbean woman, Kincaid finds it difficult, even beyond the language barrier, to explain the hair style of a woman of African descent to a Nepalese woman, first because of the physical or textual differences in the hair of Kincaid and the Nepalese women, and second because of the system of global capitalism that made it possible for Kincaid to purchase another woman's hair from another part of the world to have it woven into her own hair. This is another reinforcement of Hennessey and Ingraham's argument that race, gender and nationality "play a crucial role...in dividing the work force, ensuring and justifying the continued availability of cheap labor, and determining that certain groups will be profoundly exploited while others will be somewhat cushioned." Most likely, it is poor women, mostly in Asia, who sells their hair, probably cheaply, to be exported for sale abroad for substantially more by global capitalists who reaps the profits. It is these poor women who are exploited and the global capitalist who are cushioned somewhat, if not substantially.

Another example of Kincaid intersecting two of the themes with her contemplation of point-of-vision in daily life creative method in *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* include her observing the multiplicity of colors for butterflies in Nepal and her First World-Third World perspective on the Maoists, who are socialists. As Kincaid and her camping crew endure rain and finally sunshine again on a stretch of the trek they encounter an environment filled with butterflies. She says:



We walked into a world of butterflies. At first, there were only bright yellow ones, dancing in the blue clear air just above our heads and in front of our faces, and there were many of them, as if someone or something nearby did nothing but produce such wonders. But then many other different-colored ones came by. And they came in combinations of colors that are always so startling when you find them in nature, and only in nature are such combinations of color, maroon and green, red and gold, red with black, blue and gray, aqua blue and black, that never seem garish (59-61).

Here again is Kincaid being the keen observer of nature and the environment, with her contemplation of point-of-vision technique, noticing all of the different colors of the butterflies and their combinations of colors too. But relatively soon after this attention to nature and the environment she will reflect somewhat on socialism vs. global capitalism. She becomes concerned about whether she and the other members of her camping crew are getting the services that they are paying for from the Maoists porters who are carrying their bags. She says, “The Maoists were wrong...they should bend to our demands, among which was to make us comfortable when we wanted to be comfortable” (84). There is irony in the switch from the beautiful scenery of the butterflies to the somewhat grim scene of having to challenge the Maoists porters, of whom Kincaid and her camping team are somewhat fearful. Then she adds, “We were very used to being comfortable, and in our native societies...when we were not comfortable we were not comfortable, we did our best to rid ourselves of the people who were not making us comfortable” (84). It is evident here that Kincaid would like to reap the service benefits of the global capitalist First World in a socialist-leaning Third World country. Earlier she had empathized with Maoists porters because of their having to live in an impoverished country, but now that empathy has turned to self-interest and any inspiration that she gained from

the beautiful environment with butterflies is dissipated. *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* and *At the Bottom of the River* are the two exceptions among Kincaid's works analyzed in this study where it is possible to find numerous intersections of all three of the major themes. The gender and sexuality theme is *not* a major focus of *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* as global capitalism and the environment (including nature and gardening) are.

### **Intersection of Two of the Themes in *At the Bottom of the River***

Unlike *My Garden Book* and that one passage in *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, we could not find points or sections of *At the Bottom of the River* where all three themes – gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment - intersect, but there are a number of instances where two of themes, gender and sexuality and the environment, intersect. An example of Kincaid intersecting two of the major themes, gender and sexuality and the environment with her detached, ironic-voice in *At the Bottom of the River* can be found in the “Girl” narrative where the mother is instructing the daughter with the words, “This is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you, and in the “In the Night” narrative when the narrator refers to the large variety of flowerers that “close up and thicken” at night. In the “Girl,” the first narrative of *At the Bottom of the River*, a mother is instructing her daughter on what she (the mother) perceives as the best way to deal with things that will come up in a relationship with a man. Ironically, she says, “This is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a man, and if this doesn't work there are other ways and if they don't work don't feel too bad about giving up...” (5). The irony and detachment are in the fact that one would not expect bullying to be seen, especially by a mother, as a way to nurture a male-female relationship. The mother seems to be anticipating the possible difficulties that her daughter might have in a relationship with a male in a colonial environment under patriarchal rule. We observed some of

those difficulties in Chapters One and Two of this study, namely sexual arrogance, absence from the family, leaving childrearing solely to women, and failure to provide financial support for their children. A short time later the focus is on nature and the environment, mainly flowers and the night, a switch that is rather ironic because an environment of flowers suggests pleasantness, whereas the earlier talk of bullying suggests a tenses environment. The narrator says, “In the night, the flowers close up and thicken. The hibiscus flowers, the flamboyant flowers, the bachelor’s buttons, the irises, the marigolds, the whitehead-bush flowers, the lilies, the flowers on the daggerbush, the flowers on the turtleberry bush, the flowers on the soursop tree...” (10-11). Throughout *At the Bottom of the River* there is a closeness of females, mother and daughter, to the environment, including nature and gardening. In Kincaid’s blending the two themes, gender and sexuality and the environment, together we learn a lot about what plant and animal life is like and what the landscape and terrain is like in Antigua, and what kind of a relationship a mother and daughter have with them.

Another example of Kincaid intersecting two of the major themes with her detached, iconic-voice in *At the Bottom of the River* occurs when at the outset of the final narrative, with the same name as the main title, the narrator seems to be describing the terrain of the earth, but later says, “A woman now appears at the door. She wears no clothes.” The narrator says:

Her hair was long and very black, and it stood out in a straight line away from her head, as if she had commanded it to be that way. I could not see her feet, and I saw that her insteps were high, as if she had been used to climbing high mountains. Her skin was the color of brown clay, and she looked like a statue, liquid and gleaming, just before it is to be put in a kiln...She stood on tiptoe, her body swaying from side to side, and she looked

at something that was far, far away from where she stood...It was a long time before I could see what it was that she saw.

I saw a world in which the sun and the moon shone at the same time. They appeared in a way I had never seen before: the sun was The Sun, a creation of Benevolence and Purpose and not a star among many stars with a predictable cycle and a predictable end; the moon, too, was The Moon, and it was the creation of Beauty and Purpose and not a body subject to a theory of planetary evolution (76-77).

Despite the gloom and doom envisioned earlier in the narrative, the narrator, in a detached manner now seems to be forecasting a return of the earth's environment to the status or state that it was once in, a biblical Garden of Eve-like state, where corruption and greed from capitalism does not exist and where women have great strengths, as the woman in the passage does. In this ironic switch, the narrator describes the terrain of this renewed world. "In this world, on this terrain, there was no day and there was no night. And there were no seasons, and so no storms or cold from which to take shelter. And in this world were many things blessed with unquestionable truth and purpose and beauty" (77-78). Then the narrator says, "There were steep mountains, there were valleys, there were seas, there were plains of grass, there were deserts, there were rivers, there were forests, there were vertebrates and invertebrates, there were mammals, there were reptiles, there were creatures of the dry land and the water, and there were birds" (77-78). It seems that the narrator is using the theme of gender and sexuality to tell a story or forecast a renewed earth's environment with the help of women, as represented by the woman with such great strengths in the narrative.

## In Conclusion

The themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment intersect in seven of Kincaid's texts and one narrative (the documentary film *Life and Debt*) in which she collaborated. In these texts we see that the negative actions which these themes represent, through their intersection and interrelationships to the past British patriarchal colonialism and global capitalism in Antigua, Dominica, Jamaica and the rest of the English-speaking, African Caribbean, caused lasting damage to the people, cultures, landscape and environment, and economies there. That lasting damage amounts to what many are terming a recolonization or neocolonialism in that region, which this study of Kincaid's works makes clearer.

By not restricting her narratives to the more traditional genres like the novel or memoir, Kincaid is able to use less traditional literary forms to address such issues as gender and sexual inequality, the shortcomings of global capitalism, and damage to the environment in Antigua, Dominica, Jamaica, and the Anglophone African Caribbean as a whole from a variety of perspectives. For example, while the most evident theme is gender and sexuality in Kincaid's four novels in this study – *Annie John*, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, *Lucy* and *Mr. Potter* – the themes of global capitalism and the environment are also easily intersected or intertwined with gender and sexuality. Kincaid largely critiques the shortcoming of global capitalism in *A Small Place*, whose literary form is hard to describe, but is sometimes described as travel literature. She also intertwines an occasional critique of gender and sexual inequality and damage to the environment in the narrative too. In the memoir *My Brother* Kincaid raises questions about the negative impact of globalism capitalism, gender and sexuality inequality, and environmental damage in ways not generally associated with the memoir. In *My Garden Book*, which has been described by some as just that – a garden book - something that is usually not associated with

literary authors, Kincaid critiques capitalism and the damage done to the environment in Antigua and the Caribbean, but she also intersperses an occasional critique of gender and sexuality issues. *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, which has been called a travelogue by some, features sometimes subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle critiques of global capitalism and Western environmental perspectives by Kincaid. In *Life and Debt*, the documentary film, which is usually not associated with literary writers, Kincaid collaborates with film producer and director Stephanie Black to critique global capitalism and gender inequality. There is also at least one point of focus on an environmental issue in the film.

In most of Kincaid's works analyzed in this study, with the exception of *At the Bottom of the River*, one can find intersections of the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment. In *At the Bottom of the River* it is easy to find intersections of two of the themes, gender and sexuality and the environment. While gender and sexuality is not a major concern in *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, I found one instance where that theme intersected with the other two – global capitalism and the environment. In *At the Bottom of the River* the themes of gender and sexuality and the environment resonate in the ten short narratives by virtue of fact that the central characters in stories are females, Kincaid herself in the first and an unnamed mother and daughter in the latter. I argue that Kincaid's blending of the themes of gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment (including nature and gardening) in her works, and in a work in which she collaborates, adds significant meaning and understanding to these works, her works in general that is.

## CONCLUSION

Reading Kincaid's works is more meaningful when one pays particular attention to three of her major themes – gender and sexuality, global capitalism, and the environment (including nature and gardening). In paying close attention to these particular themes, the reader can see even more significance in her works as they become aware of the points at which they intersect, blend together, or tie in with each other. We came to that conclusion by “dissecting” one of the themes (gender and sexuality) in the first two chapters, and the other two (the environment and global capitalism) in Chapters Three and Four, respectively.

In Chapter One, for example, we concluded that the overall effect of the system of colonial ideology imposed on the female characters in *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* under British patriarchal colonial rule is the control of women's labor – to maintain a gender division of labor that disallows women from moving much beyond the home and domestic sphere. We found the sexual division of labor theorized by materialist feminists Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham very much at work. Women's work is not seen as work. Their work is seen as having no added value. In her critiques of this gender/sex colonial ideology, we found Kincaid resisting it in a literary way, as the theme of this work suggests.

Surprisingly in Chapter Two, we were able to conclude that the narratives portray women, rather than men, who are the ideological agents of the British colonial system, as equal, if not greater, in some cases, perpetrators of the ill effects of British patriarchal colonial rule in twentieth century Antigua and Dominica, parts of the Anglophone African Caribbean. With the main characters' mother and female caretaker, who are responsible under the patriarchal colonial system for child rearing and nurturing, playing the lead rolls in all of it there is a reinforcement

of materialist feminist Maria Mies' argument about a gender/sex based division of labor, which Kincaid is pushing against in her critique.

In Chapter Three, we were able to conclude that Kincaid, by using three creative techniques – critical meditation, historical reflection, and iconic-dual observation - examines and demonstrates how nature and the environment were severely damaged by British colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean in particular, but also the whole of the Caribbean as well. To do this she draws on her childhood experiences, her gardening experience in Vermont, and a camping trip to Nepal to make observations about damage to nature and the environment in the Caribbean, particularly the Anglophone African Caribbean. She does this sometimes in subtle and sometimes less than subtle ways, and sometimes ambivalent and sometimes not so ambivalent ways, critiquing and pushing against “the unsustainable devastation, the sustainable priorities, values, and living standards of industrialized countries based on highly militarized, capitalist economies,” which materialist feminist Gwyn Kirk mentions.

Not unsurprisingly in Chapter Four, we were able to conclude that through an anti-capitalism critique, Kincaid is able to show that the rigor of male patriarchy and colonialism, dominated by global capitalism, has left damaging effects on the people of Antigua and Jamaica, especially African Caribbean women who make up the largest portion of the workplace and are affected by it the most. Painfully so, Hennessey and Ingraham's argument that, “A rigorous and revitalized feminist analysis of its (capitalism's) dynamic is politically necessary” is reinforced. The realities of economic life in Antigua and Jamaica, as portrayed by Kincaid and Stephanie Black, producer of the documentary film *Life and Debt*, fit the definition of neocolonialism or recolonization as defined Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman.



In Chapter Five, I demonstrated how Kincaid uses three other creative techniques to show these three themes actually intersect, blend in or tie in with each other in seven of the nine works studied and the film documentary (in which she collaborated). And the other two texts of the nine studied have numerous intersections of at least two of the themes. In these texts and the film the negative actions which these themes often represent - through their intersection and interrelationships to past British patriarchal colonialism and global capitalism in Antigua, Dominica, Jamaica and the rest of the English-speaking African Caribbean - caused lasting damage to the people, cultures, landscape and environment, and economies there. That lasting damage amounts to what many critics are terming a recolonization or neocolonialism in that region.

With Kincaid's approach to resisting the negative impact of the more than 350 years of ideologies of slavery and colonialism in Antigua and the Anglophone African Caribbean as a whole, it is reasonable for one to ask might there be political ramifications or expectations that might result from such an approach. While I cannot answer such a question with any certainty, I am of the belief that Kincaid would be delighted to see political change result from her critique, but I don't believe that she necessarily writes with that intent, or with that expectation, certainly not in the short term. She knows that cultures, ideologies, and values that developed under slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean are deeply entrenched and are not likely to change dramatically over the short term. Kincaid is reminded of this when in her writings she expresses so-called Third World-First World ambivalence about critiquing Third World concerns from a First World podium, so to speak. It is almost as if she has to always ask herself can she, or does she have the right to address Third World issues, now that she is not of the Third World. But on the other hand, few writers or scholars with such wide audiences are better suited to address such

issues, particularly Anglophone African Caribbean issues, than those like herself. Because there are few who are suited for this task, any expectations that Kincaid might have for her critique having a broad impact are most likely long term, which is reasonable, given the formation of a women's movement in the Caribbean over the last decade or so, as I mentioned earlier.

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