

Re-imagining identity formation in the Caribbean context: A postcolonial appraisal of Kincaid's *Lucy*

*Oluchi Chris **Okeugo**¹& Virginia Obioma **Eze**²

¹Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

²Use of English Unit, School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

*Corresponding author: oluchi.okeugo@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

Despite the enormous research and profound textual analysis within literary criticism, many studies in postcolonial feminist criticism shares the fundamental premise that feminist literature shapes and sustains the gaze of its audience with regards to its social significance, not just as an art but as a central representation, in both aesthetic and mimetic dimensions. This paper explores the re-imaging and identity formation in the black Caribbean context through the lens of postcolonial appraisal of Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*. The woman, as the feminist postcolonial subject, grapples with irreconcilable tensions as she negotiates life in the postcolonial and societal otherness. Hence, black Caribbean women's identity formation has played a significant role in the works of Jamaica Kincaid owing to the distinctive qualities her protagonists (heroines) embody. The journey toward identity formation is a prevalent theme in the Caribbean literature of the postcolonial and culturally dispossessed people. The researcher has taken *Lucy* as the primary source of data for qualitative analysis and adopts Postcolonial Feminist Theory as the theoretical framework for the evaluation of the text. This study attempts to ascertain Kincaid's depiction of re-imagining identity formation, especially in the black (Caribbean) women.

Keywords: Caribbean context, Jamaica Kincaid, identity formation, mimetic content, postcolonial feminist theory.

Introduction

Reflecting on identity in the Caribbean context, Davies (1994: 14) asks, 'how does one understand a Caribbean and define a Caribbean identity in a region that is multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural, and ideologically plural?' To further extend the argument, Davies (1994) opines that 'black women's writing should be understood through boundary crossings and not fixed categories. She argues that black American writers and black Caribbean writers share common ground in terms of race, gender, and migration. Therefore, their writings ought to be read intertextually instead of treating each of them as part of different genres'. Davies also provides analyses about the identity formation of the migrating black female subject. She states that 'the re-negotiating of identities is fundamental to migration as it is fundamental to black women's writing in cross-cultural contexts. It is the convergence of multiple places and cultures that negotiates the terms of black women's experience that in turn negotiates and re-negotiates their identities' (p. 3).

Conforming to the Caribbean canonical agenda established by male writers, Jamaica Kincaid's work has more in

common with Caribbean women writers, who have suffered and, to some extent, still suffer "alienation within alienation," as Kenneth Ramchand has remarked. Ramchand (1970) asserts that this is because they are marginalised by sexual prejudice within a literature already marginalised by cultural or racial prejudice. The writers, therefore, delineate agendas alter/native to the androcentric canon, illuminating previously unexplored areas of Caribbean experience and bringing to the foreground the nexus of gender and cultural positioning. Although there are differences, Caribbean women writers share a concern for questions of personal identity and personal relationships, stressing the mother-daughter bond. Often reflecting their direct experience, they celebrate matrilineal links and create strong and self-supporting female characters, who, in the words of Helena (1993), "struggle and survive because of their basic respect for life and depend on a strong bonding between and among

women in their communities in the fight for basic survival". (p. 88). Exploring the particular intersections of race, class, and gender in the Caribbean context, women writers tell a different story, one revealing a distinctly feminine sensibility, and uncover the richness of Caribbean

experience. Jamaica Kincaid fully participates in this tradition in that she responds to the androcentric canon with women-centred plots and feminine narrative modes.

Theoretical framework

Postcolonial feminist theory is primarily concerned with the representation of women in once colonized countries and in the West. It focuses on the construction of gender difference in colonial and anti-colonial discourses, representation of women in anti-colonial and postcolonial discourses, with particular reference to the work of women writers. The postcolonial feminist critics raise a number of conceptual, methodological, and political problems involved in the study of the representation of gender.

While the postcolonial theorist struggles against the maiden colonial discourse that aims at misrepresenting him as inferior, the task of a postcolonial feminist is far more complicated. She suffers from "double colonization", a term Peterson and Rutherford (1995) refer to as the ways in which women have simultaneously experienced the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. In other words, the woman as a postcolonial subject has to resist the

control of colonial power not only as a colonized subject, but also as a woman. In this oppression, her colonized brother is no longer her accomplice, but her oppressor. In his struggle against the colonizer, he even exploits her by misrepresenting her in the nationalist discourses. Not only that, she also suffers at the hands of Western feminists from the colonizer's countries, whose misrepresentation of their colonized counterparts imposes silence on their racial, cultural, social, and political specificities, and in so doing, acts as a potential oppressors of their 'sisters'. The study explores these challenges of a postcolonial feminist, for it is in her struggle against the postcolonial and feminist theorists that she can assert her identity as a postcolonial feminist subject rather object self.

Postcolonial feminist theory exerts pressure on mainstream postcolonial theory in its constant iteration of the necessity to consider gender issues. Postcolonialism and feminism have come to share a tense relationship as some feminist critics point out that postcolonial theory is male-centered and has not only excluded the concerns of women, but also exploited them. Postcolonial feminist theorists have accused postcolonial theorists not only of

obliterating the role of women from the struggle for independence, but also of misrepresenting them in the nationalist discourses. Said's (1997) seminal study *Orientalism* accorded little attention to female agency and discussed very few female writers. Bhabha (1994); asserts that the ambivalence of colonial discourses explores the relationship between a 'colonizing' subject and a 'colonized' object without reference to how the specifics of gender might complicate his model. Davies (1994), suspicious of the male-centered bias in postcolonial critique, asks, "where are the women in the theorizing of postcoloniality?" (p. 80).

The necessity for relief functions as one of the most powerful weapons for resisting colonialism; and for establishing the space of a postcolonial identity. In Jamaica Kincaid's novels, *Lucy* is a text that reflects feminism and postcolonialism.

Undeniably, the findings of postcolonial feminist theory formed an important framing and structural apparatus that illuminated the inner life of Kincaid's young protagonist.

Consequently, after the initial attempts to apply postcolonial feminist theory to

Kincaid's work, it was influenced by the nationalist critical trend, which was preoccupied with the search for national and cultural identity and with establishing a national tradition intended to counteract imperialism. Nationalistic and cultural critics enquired into the ways Kincaid has anchored the imaginative re-workings of mother/daughter tensions within the culture of her homeland. Their reading concentrated not so much on the psychic development of the girl-child or the acquisition of appropriate gender roles as on how Kincaid creatively combined the theme of the daughter's resistance to the mother with her resistance to colonial culture.

This research agrees with McClintock (1995), who affirms that "the global militarization of masculinity and the feminization of poverty have thus ensured that women and men do not live postcoloniality in the same way, or share the same singular post-colonial condition." (p.634)

A quest for identity in Kincaid's *Lucy*
The quest for identity remains a fundamental and persistent theme in Caribbean literature. Kincaid (1990: 23) justifies that in the statement, "I wish everyone would stay where they come

from because when we go to other places, you eventually exploit" (p.23). In other words, Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* is a crucial source of data when it comes to the discussion of identity formation caused by migration. From the perspective of a marginalized female subject, the eponymous protagonist grapples with the physical transition she has chosen to endure, leaving her native Caribbean Island and moving to a rather large city in the United States, not for a temporary visit, but for a more permanent stay. In this novel, Kincaid offers a critique of Antigua's colonial history under British rule. She examines Britain's colonial power through the lens of the mother-daughter relationship, also considering the mother-daughter dynamic as a relationship between "the powerless and the powerful." More importantly, Kincaid juxtaposes the cultural experiences of the United States and Antigua to create a multilayered literary narrative that both defines and redefines Caribbean identity within a transnational and postcolonial context.

So far, the introductory background of this study provides a micro-analysis of Lucy's post-migration experiences and her deliberate retreat into a space of isolation at the end of the novel. Her constant nostalgic feelings and

reminiscences of her homeland and the cultural tension that is created by her black body and the history of black people in America completely distinguish her and sets her in an eldorado of her re-imagined identity. Her memories of Antigua are reminders of the primary source of her cultural identity. These memories, though not always pleasant, help Lucy to embrace her position as an Antiguan woman and also open up other possibilities for the future. Race, on the other hand, disrupts Lucy's Antiguan identity when the African-American identity is imposed upon her by those in America. Lucy does not embrace this imposition that could invite an Antiguan-American identity and instead perpetuates the cultural tension between the two. In this study, the researchers assert that Lucy takes on pieces of the black American identity even though she does not perceive herself that way. Her conscious attention to the relationship that she has with her biological mother, a relationship that reflects Antigua's historical past and the master-servant dynamic she has with Mariah, is prominently depicted in the text. The element of being powerless in relation to the powerful is what initially motivated Lucy's migration. Assuming that she could avoid this problem in the U.S., Lucy is disappointed when Mariah takes on a

similar position of colonial authority. In response to the overbearing mother-daughter relationship, Lucy resists both cultures to enable her to achieve a sense of liberation. As a result, Lucy rejects the possibility of a multicultural identity for a position of solitude that is only beneficial for selfhood and leaves her without a defined cultural identity.

Kincaid's anger and political commitment are then re-inscribed in her second novel, *Lucy*, which continues the personal saga begun in her earlier fiction. Kincaid's *Lucy* records the emotional struggle of a girl growing up and coming to terms with the changes affecting her perception of herself and the external world. The North American setting, where the protagonist is caught within new power relationships that replicate old ones, offers a wider perspective on the conflict with the biological mother and the colonial motherland, whose memory still haunts the girl obsessively. While the relationship with her white employer seems to replicate the one with her mother, the imperialism of North American society echoes the logic of British colonial power. The text articulates the quest for identity of a colonial subject confronting the white Westland, and offers alternative visions on politics and history. Lucy confronts

colonial and imperial power structures and gives voice to her own version of the story, seeing it from the perspective of a subaltern subject who finally will become the agent of her own destiny. Like the protagonists of the earlier works, Lucy is able to carry on with her struggle against oppression thanks to the self-determination inherited from the African world her mother embodies.

The process of migration is not only responsible for evoking memories of the homeland but also significantly disrupts Lucy's cultural identity. Though *Lucy* is very much about the Antiguan experience, it is also about the American experience—an experience that becomes complicated by cultural differences and racial similarities. Kincaid, however, suggests that Lucy is exempt from, or rather should be excluded from, the conversation surrounding issues of race. When Ferguson (1994) enquires about the parallels between her work and that of African-American women writers like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, Kincaid responds, 'I don't think American women have much we Caribbean women can draw from, I mean the use of language is different, and their concerns are much different' (p.164). On the other hand, the researcher suggests that language cannot be a cultural barrier between African-

American women writers and Caribbean women writers, particularly in Kincaid's case, given that all of her novels, like theirs, are written in English. Needless to say, the concerns of black people in America and the Caribbean prove to be the same: that of oppression by a ruling power. In my opinion, Kincaid's argument that black Americans are obsessed with a nationality that asserts their presence of being black in a predominantly white space proves to be a similar reflection of the Caribbean problem, being extremely concerned with the fact that their identity is a replica of someone else's. Evidently, both cultural groups are consumed and defined by the more dominant group; therefore, conversations comparing the two should highlight their similarities more than their differences.

In light of that, Majerol (2007) acknowledges that there is a sort of tension between people of the Caribbean and African-Americans, a tension that can be "a hindrance to the development of a Caribbean American identity" (p. 259). Despite Kincaid's beliefs, Lucy is a product of such an identity. Her decision to be a permanent visitor in the United States requires that she live in America and identify with a specific group of people. In America, it is impossible to discuss notions of identity without first

discussing race. "Where" Lucy comes from does not have as much significance as believed because a black woman in America will always be identified by race first, while her nationality comes after. Even if Lucy does not accept the identity of the African-American woman placed on her by those in the U.S. (which she does not), it is an identity she cannot escape.

In consonance with critical reconsideration on racial identity, Majerol (2007) points out, "appears as a learned concept, or a social construct, rather than something that is natural, inevitable or obvious". (p.262). In Lucy's case, it seems to be because of her black body and how it determines her social class. Taking a moment to think of physical space once again, Lucy expresses dissatisfaction that the room she lives in is like Kincaid (1990) 'a box in which cargo travelling a long way should be shipped. But I was not cargo. I was only an unhappy young woman living in a maid's room, and I was not even the maid' (p.7). Lucy is placed in this room by her white employers because of her social position as a poor black woman. This imagery of being moved, particularly like cargo—an inanimate object, or even property—certainly draws conclusions that relate to the history of slavery for people of

African descent. What Lucy is also saying here is that she is not "cargo," meaning that she rejects any connection to the identities of slaves in America who, after certain historical movements, became African-Americans. It is then clear that she acknowledges the history of African-Americans, but does not want to accept that the racial qualities she shares with them could have resulted in her sharing their history as well.

Furthermore, Lucy's resistance to the black American identity that is being imposed on her ultimately fails in her role as a domestic laborer. Her position, in the eyes of Dinah, is 'the girl who takes care of the children' (p.58), which also gives reason to Dinah's question, 'So are you from the islands?' (p.56). To a person like Dinah, being white and perceived as superior to minorities in any context, Lucy has no individual identity; therefore, she must belong to the community she most resembles, the black community. Even so, Lucy differs in perception. She is 'the young girl who watches over the children *and* goes to school at night,' (my emphasis), opposed to the young girl who just watches the children. Lucy's ability to receive an education that might grant her an opportunity outside of the domestic work space is what she believes distinguishes her from the "mammy"

identity generally given to poor black women who are domestic laborers in America. However, this nanny-like identity is more deeply rooted than she presumes it to be. In taking care of Mariah's four children, Lucy then becomes a sort of "other-mother" to the girls. With the youngest daughter in particular, Miriam, Lucy expresses that, 'I loved Miriam from the moment I met her...I couldn't explain it, I loved this little girl' (p.53). This illusion of a mother-daughter relationship only highlights the relationship between black women in America and the historical effects of slavery that forced them to be the primary caregivers of white women's children.

In an attempt to find a solution to the problem of cultural identity, Lucy thinks herself to be successful in her role as an artist figure of misidentification. This false sense of liberation does allow Lucy in some way to separate herself from both Antiguan identity and American identity. Lima (1993) observes that Lucy seems permanently displaced, both here [New York] and there [Antigua], and neither here nor there at one and the same time.

However, the researcher argues that Lucy possesses a multicultural identity that

fuels her permanent homelessness because she constructs herself out of the very cultural identities she rejects. For Lenz (2004), he posits that in struggling to find her individuality, 'Lucy's standpoint changes and multiplies' (p.111). What multiplies is her understanding of two cultures, allowing her to experience what Linda Lang-Peralta calls 'cultural schizophrenia' (p.33). Yes, she achieves solitude and a sense of individuality, but Lucy cannot just be Antiguan, for that would neglect the American experience, which also plays a crucial role in shaping her. It is obvious that Lucy does not accept this fate for herself, and my imposition likely detracts from what she believes to be a great accomplishment and opens up questions about who is responsible for the creation of identity, the individual or the imposer. Nevertheless, despite Lucy's effort to welcome the various cultural influences that have shaped her individuality, Kincaid (1990) effectively demonstrates that Caribbean identity can only be achieved through movement and cultural exchange, as it is what allows *Lucy* to be an Antiguan-American entity. As for Lucy, maintaining selfhood without cultural influences requires that she stay in a state of transition. It is the only way she can truly mean: 'I did not think of

America as home, only as the place where I now live' (Kincaid, p.156).

Self-formation and independence in *Lucy*
Kincaid's novel *Lucy* is woven with paradoxes. This fiction chronicles the arrival of a nineteen-year-old woman from a small West Indian Island to the United States of America, where she takes employment as a nanny. It is significant to note that instead of travelling to England, the imperial motherland, Lucy has journeyed to America, its contemporary rival.

Ferguson (1994) echoes Kincaid's words in an interview. Thus, 'everybody is always looking for a way out. And what was their way out? The new world: Identity Fresh! But of course, you can. There is much thing to an independent and self-made being' (p.502).

This explains why, in the final chapter of *Lucy* (1990), Kincaid's protagonist claims her self-definition by following her "intuition" and asserts her identity through "memory," "anger," and "despair": she unequivocally admits: 'I understood that I was inventing myself, and that I was doing this more in the way of a painter than in the way of a scientist. I could not count on precision and calculation; I could only count on

intuition. I did not have anything exactly in mind, but when the picture was complete, I would know. I did not have a position; I did not have money at my disposal. I had memory, I had anger, I had despair' (p.136).

For Lucy, only when she comes to terms with what the colonial history of her home island has done to her can she invent herself, although her past might flood her with the sensation of anger and despair. Only when she invents herself by following her intuition, like a painter, can she keep her autotelic self in progress rather than indulging in the scientific regulation of her identity as an essence. Kincaid (1990) Lucy remains acutely aware of her positioning within all structures of American society, including the home. We observe:

... The room in which I lay was a small room just off the kitchen - the maid's room. I was used to a small room, but this was a different sort of small room. The ceiling was very high and the walls went all the way up to the ceiling, enclosing the room like a box - a box in which cargo traveling a long way should be shipped. But I was not *cargo*. I was only an unhappy young woman living in a maid's room, and I was not even the maid (p.7).

While the spatial configuration of Lucy's room evidently denotes containment, this representation is suggestive of the fact that Lucy's respectable position of service as a nanny is a not-so-distant echo of her ancestors' enforced servitude in this land. In terms of the theorizing narrative, the depiction of Lucy's *dream* deconstructs the space which Western theory often seeks to construct between cultural difference and sexual difference, in order to present the way in which these two models of differentiation are intimately bound within the construction of a female post-colonial subjectivity. It is this same denial of cultural difference which also necessitates Lucy's resistance to the discourse of Anglo-American feminism within the novel. Mariah, Lucy's supposedly liberal and liberated white employer, who constructs her as the 'poor visitor' in need of rescue, attempts to provide this through the ostensibly more authentic voice of feminist discourse. Lucy reveals her core identity as we discern her disposition:

Mariah left the room and came back with a large book and opened it to the first chapter. She gave it to me. I read the first sentence. Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an

ovary; she is a female - this word is sufficient to define her.' I had to stop. Mariah had completely misinterpreted my situation. My life could not really be explained by this thick book that made my hands hurt as I tried to keep it open. My life was at once something more simple and more complicated than. (p.132)

To Lucy, the text is meaningless and burdensome as it is not rooted in context. Lucy must reject the language of the surrogate mother because it rejects her specific cultural and historical positioning. The language of the text, like that of Mariah herself, speaks to middle-class white women, with little awareness of its exclusivity. The generalized statements concerning gender, which Mariah's feminism advocates, do not correlate with the cultural differences between women that Lucy has already observed. Although one would not wish to deny the very real marginalization which the novel clearly reveals, that Lucy does experience as a woman within her home society, her Caribbean cultural heritage is clearly womanist feminist both in ethos and in practice.

Baffled by American women's obsessions with ageing and beauty, Kincaid (1990),

Lucy asserts her own code which confidently articulates a positive female subjectivity: 'Among the beliefs I held about the world was that being beautiful should not matter to a woman, because it was one of those things that would go away, and there wouldn't be anything you could do to bring it back.'(p.57) From her childhood in the Caribbean, Lucy has also learnt of the herbal aids to abortion from her mother and thus is in possession of one of the primary objectives of the early American women's movement - over fertility. Moreover, her Caribbean upbringing has instilled in Lucy the significance of solidarity amongst women: 'It was my mother who told me that I should never take a man's side over a woman's It was from her own experience that she spoke' (p.48). As well as exposing the alienating ethnocentric bias of a certain type of Anglo-American feminism, Lucy's simple statements seem to suggest that within Caribbean women's lives, theory and practice are not discrete, as Kincaid juxtaposes gender politics which are to be lived with those which are to be argued.

Throughout the novel, Lucy's thoughts and dreams testify to the ways in which certain intellectual spaces still remain colonized within Western thought. It is Mariah who is trapped within the

monologic narrative, unable to negotiate the differences between language and living, and self and other, not Lucy. It becomes clear that the narratives of opportunity and belonging (of having arrived) and of liberation (here through feminism) have been trans-culturally marketed in versions which are deeply ethnocentric, exclusive, and with a certain cultural complacency, deny the coexistence of models such as those which Lucy brings with her from the Caribbean.

However, as well as revealing the cultural biases and blind spots within existing theoretical models, Kincaid's novel also explores the basis upon which we evaluate by rehearsing the way in which we judge our notions of the aesthetic and the ideological. This process is staged most crucially within the narrative when Mariah initiates Lucy into the joys of spring by telling her of a field of daffodils. Kincaid presents an autotelic self who is both intimidating and intelligent. Kincaid's *Lucy* (1990) is taken as a symbolic figure of an intellectual giant.

Accordingly, we read:

She (Mariah) said, 'Have you ever seen daffodils pushing their way

up out of the ground? And when they're in bloom and all massed together, a breeze comes along and makes them do a curtsey to the lawn stretching out in front of them. Have you ever seen that? When I see that, I feel so glad to be alive.' And I thought, So Mariah is made to feel dive by some flowers ... How does a person get to be that way I remembered an old poem I had been made to memorize when I was ten years old and a pupil at Queen Victoria Girls' School. I had been made to memorize it verse after verse, and then had recited the whole poem to an auditorium full of parents, teachers, and my fellow pupils. After I was done, everybody stood up and applauded with an enthusiasm that surprised me, and later they told me how nicely I had pronounced every word, how I had placed just the right amount of special emphasis in places where that was needed, and how proud the poet, now long dead, would have been to hear his words ringing out of the mouth. And so I made pleasant noises that showed both modesty and appreciation, but inside I was

making a vow to erase from my mind, line by line, every word of that poem. (p 17-18)

Mariah's admiration for this seemingly simple field of flowers acts as a powerful catalyst for Lucy's memories of cultural imperialism. What is essentially an aesthetic experience for Mariah constitutes a powerful ideological situation for Lucy. Her retrospective vision of reciting Wordsworth's poem works as both a literal example of colonial education and as a metonym for the colonial apparatus' promotion of an aesthetic which is ideologically motivated in its very essence of seeming to be devoid of ideology. 'Daffodils' was promoted pedagogically as an apolitical text, and yet becomes highly politicized when analyzed within the colonial context in which Kincaid places it. The poetic subject (Daffodils) signifies the forced adoption of the motherland and the attendant suppression of difference. In addition, the process of learning by heart further supports the hegemony's underlying need for parody which Lucy, as a schoolgirl, publicly performs but privately attempts to negate.

Her 'double consciousness', or 'two-facedness' as she calls it, is testimony to her ambivalent position as black and

female in relation to colonial cultural authority, which is represented by the poem, the poet, and the institution of the school. By appearing to subscribe to the version of aesthetics pedagogically promoted, but internally reacting against it, Lucy has clearly politicized and resisted the stifling appropriation of a culturally inauthentic voice. Indeed, when Mariah at last takes her to see the daffodils, which she had so carefully and painfully eulogized as a young girl, Lucy's reaction is a spontaneous and most vehement desire to cut them all down: 'It wasn't her fault; It wasn't my fault; but nothing could change the fact that where she saw beautiful flowers I saw sorrow and bitterness. The same thing could cause us to shed tears, but those tears would not taste the same. We walked home in silence' (p.30).

For Lucy, the only way out of seeing 'hundreds of years in every gesture, every word spoken, and every face' is to put distance between herself and things, to avoid all emotional involvement. In the same way, she keeps away from her mother, whose love has become a 'burden' because she wants to make her daughter into an echo of her.

Kincaid's *Lucy* depicts the mother to daughter relationship as metonymic of

the colonial condition, a paradigm of the struggle between the self and the other. As Kincaid puts it in an interview:

...I've come to see that I have worked through the relationship of the mother and the girl to a relationship between Europe and the place I'm from, which is to say, a relationship between the powerful and the powerless. The girl is powerless and the mother is powerful... So it's not unlike the relationship between the conquered and the conqueror (p.45).

Lucy's will to achieve freedom from her colonial heritage and love-hate bond with her mother dictates the behaviour she adopts in her voyage into the Western world. A crucial key to understanding Lucy is her name. Of her full name, Lucy Josephine Potter, Lucy is the only part the heroine really cares about, the other two being related in some way to slavery. Although Lucy first appears to her as a name 'without substance', she comes to appreciate it when she realizes that Lucy is a short form of Lucifer. Understanding that she was named after Satan himself, Lucy comments: "I was transformed from failure to triumph. It was the moment I

knew who I was" (p.152). Lucy is clearly aware of the subversive implication of this name from her reading of *Paradise Lost* and the Bible. But for the reader, the apparently commonplace name also carries a load of ambivalent connotations which reflect the enduring ambiguities of Lucy's colonial inheritance.

Conclusion

From our discussion so far, it is evident that the researchers have appraised the process of identity formation in Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*, acknowledging the construction of distinct self-oriented art, a creation rooted in the postcolonial feminist tradition of aesthetic expression. The novel, as a work of art, engages deeply with the socio-political realities of both its time and ours, and holds an indelible significance in relation to the topic under study. Thus, the challenges and transformations depicted in the text explore issues surrounding a discourse on the autotelic self and the struggle of Caribbean women for self-assertion and liberation.

Kincaid is one of the Caribbean women authors who explore the social positioning of the girl-child through the overlapping lens of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. In her works, it is evident that the dispossessed and

displaced become the symbolic object of struggle between racial ambiguity, gender stratification, and class differences. Though British colonialism plays a significant role in the psychological development of her protagonists and the various modes of resistance they employ in their search for identity, Kincaid skillfully portrays their ability to prevail. Kincaid articulates the violence of British imperialism and the impact on the fragile relationship between an African-identified female protagonist and a mother, deeply entrenched in the rhetoric of British notions of womanhood.

Kincaid's *Lucy* depicts a protagonist who deeply abhors her biological mother's presence and embraces Mariah, whom she prefers and even regards as a mythical or surrogate mother figure. Lucy believes that Mariah will grant her assistance and enable her to attain an autotelic identity, one that is self-directed and free from colonial influence. Kincaid's narrative suggests that the creation of such mythical mothers is not merely symbolic but rather functions as a strategy for resisting and overcoming the domineering legacies of colonialism.

In this study, the researchers have attempted to uncover and develop the

Black Feminist theory that is inculcated by Kincaid's ongoing narrative. We have argued that her fiction is inherently feminist and anti-hegemonic, that her works reflect a progressive trajectory toward theorizing identity formation (selfhood) within a postcolonial framework, and that the articulation of a decolonized female subjectivity is achieved through a politics of resistance both at a physical and a metaphysical level. As we have seen, all this is worked out through parallel representation of motherhood and colonialism, where the conflict between an overbearing mother and her self-assertive daughter may be read as a larger metaphor for the conflict between the imperial motherland and the colony. Through memory, historical revision, and a repositioning of the outsider as a privileged cultural subject and of the borderland as a creative site, Kincaid's *Lucy* succeeds in building up a discourse of opposition and counter-knowledge. Kincaid, in one of her interviews, said: 'I suspect that if I wasn't writing, being the person I am, who has become politically conscious, then I would be throwing bombs. If I didn't have the pen, I would certainly be someone who would take up the sword' (p. 26). Hers is, without doubt, a literary work of resistance and identity reclamation.

ORCID

Oluchi Chris Okeugo: Orcid number: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7747-9684>

Virginia Obioma Eze: Orcid number: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5552-8564>

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