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S(mothering) the subject formation in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*.

**Female subject formation in postcolonial
Caribbean fiction.**

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C-essay 15 ECTS credits

Department of English | Fall 2018

English C

Abstract

This essay investigates Jamaica Kincaid's the book *Annie John* (1985) and its protagonist Annie John's search for a coherent self-and/or a de-colonized identity through a subject transformation. Using postcolonial feminism, including theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha and Stuart Hall, I suggest that the protagonist Annie John does not perform a subject transformation as she is unable to embrace the state of hybridity needed to perform such a transformation. Annie John is a colonial subject drawn to the two worlds in which she resided, the East and West- and cannot create herself in the presence of them both. I conclude that Annie John's mother, under the influence of colonialism and patriarchy, is part reason as to why Annie John is unable to perform this transformation. With the help of postcolonial feminism, I find that as Annie John cannot recover her mother from this double oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. The conclusion of this essay proposes that the protagonist Annie John does not manage to create a subject formation as she is not able to reside in a state of hybridity between her own culture and that of her colonizer.

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1. Introduction

Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*, published in 1985, takes place on the colonized island of Antigua, where the protagonist Annie John lives with her mother and father. As the eponymous protagonist of the book, Annie John narrates the story from the first-person point of view in this book that is said to bend conventional standards of its genre. The plot focuses on the surroundings of the young girl Annie John and her relationships with friends and family, the creation of identity and sense of self. The book tells the tale, in episodic form, of Annie John going from being pre-pubescent girl and adoring daughter enjoying her mother's full attention and love to witnessing the fall of her matriarch, and goes on to explore her desire for female closeness in friendships in colonial Antigua. On this journey, Annie John experiences herself in relation to her colonized context, and the book can be explored from aspects such as identity, colonialism, and gender as the protagonist tries to complete a subject formation. The book can be divided into three acts, pre-pubescence, puberty, and post-puberty. The first act is filled with love and intimacy between Annie John's mother and herself. In this act the closeness between them is nearly incestual as the mother/daughter duo knows no boundaries, bathing together, dressing alike and the mother chewing hard foods for her daughter like a mother bird feeding her babies. The second act is a sort of limbo, in which Annie John finds herself sick, confined to her bed and struggling to find direction in her life. This is portrayed as a three-month period of darkness and rain from her perspective. In the second and third act of the book, Annie John deals with feelings of hatred and resentment towards her mother as the time has come for her to become more independent.

The climax of the story comes when Annie John is introduced to the world of adulthood as she goes through puberty and tries to perform a subject formation in order to create her own cultural identity. Annie John and her mother have existed as one until Annie John's puberty, not really including her father in this intimacy. When Annie John discovers her parents in bed together she realizes the bond between her parents in the context of patriarchy and colonialism and starts to demolish the intimacy she has had with her mother. This realization of an intimacy to which Annie John is not invited sets off her rebellion against everything her mother approves of.

Many scholars have adopted a feminist approach to the text while dissecting the mother/daughter relationship of the book. As the book is authored by a Caribbean postcolonial writer, the dominant colonial discourse must be seen in relation to it. This essay will look at what postcolonial theorists suggest that a subject transformation from a colonized

into a de-colonized subject has to entail, and examines whether the book follows the theoretical path that postcolonial theorists suggest could be the way for such a subject to make a subject formation into a wholeness of a cultural identity.

The aim of this essay is to explore whether Annie John's character achieves a successful subject formation and is able to de-colonize herself as a colonized subject in Antigua. I will use postcolonial feminist theory to analyze the book and I argue that the character Annie John does not complete a successful subject formation and de-colonization. I will further present the idea that Annie John does not manage to complete this subject formation as she cannot co-exist with the two worlds of East and West within her.

2. Previous research

Annie John, is widely regarded as Bildungsroman, focusing on the growth and development of the eponymous character. Many scholars and theorists have explored female relationships in the book such as the mother/daughter one, as well as the female friendships that become vital for Annie John's development. Some theorists have chosen to take a psychoanalytic approach, asserting that the mother/daughter bond between the two is a result of the oedipal-complex and that the book might even be pushed as far as to be considered a psychological study of real-world mother/daughter issues. Others have kept the postcolonial perspective and examined aspects such as the importance of Annie John's relations with her friends and family in the search for her own identity/wholeness, suggesting that Annie John's revolt against her mother and society is a revolt against colonialism.

The development of Annie John's autonomous self in search of her wholeness seems to be a focal point for most readers. This is investigated alongside colonization, identity, and gender. Often these topics involve and/or focus on either the mother/daughter aspect or on Annie John in relation to her female friendships in the book. Most researchers who have read the book believe that the journey that Annie John takes from her homeland at the end of the book is an allegory for her finding her own identity, and should be seen as her presenting herself as a de-colonized subject- completing a subject transformation. I however disagree with the previous researchers as I do not find that Annie John presents herself as a de-colonized subject in the end of the book. As the theoretical framework will present there are multiple theories that state how a colonized subject can come to terms with their surroundings and in that way de-colonize themselves. Most scholars press on the difficulties of postcolonial

subject-formation; some are more positive than other about the transformation/subject formation.

2.1 Mother/Daughter in previous research on Annie John.

The mother/daughter aspect of *Annie John* is subject to most of the scholarly research. Theorist Roni Natov perceives the book to be a psychological study. In her article "Mothers and Daughters: Jamaica Kincaid Pre-Oedipal Narrative," she explores the psychological aspect of the mother/daughter relation in the book, focusing on the psychology of mother and daughter as one. This is done in order to support her claim that *Annie John* can be seen as a psychological study of the bond between mother and daughter, based on the fact that the book is essentially autobiographical (11). She states that the focus of the book is the psychological stages of the mother/daughter relationship being developed and ultimately broken. Natov quotes Adrienne Rich ("Of Woman born" 1976), who claims that a mother/daughter bond is one that is essentially a missed, unexplored territory in written form (1). The idea is that the story of the connection and estrangement of mother and daughter is a story untold in literature.

Natov looks at imagery connected to *Annie John's* mother throughout the narration process through the lens of the pre-phase of the Oedipal complex, that is of, or related to, the Oedipus complex (2). Natov turns to feminist theorists Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, whom she claims offer an essential perspective on language when describing the stages of self-development in children (2). Kristeva and Irigaray's psychoanalytic writing, which is majorly influenced by Jaques Lacan's psychoanalyst theories, attempts to point to the "body of the mother" as an overlooked writing issue (2). With this they are saying that the essence/idea of women in written language is naturally there, claiming that semiotic writing-styles such as rhythm and melody, are directly connected to the stages of infants in the womb experiencing the world through the mother's body (3).

Natov's analysis focuses on the narrative through the images of the mother's body, this because the pre-oedipal narrative she has chosen is one where all conflict and movement center around the mother (3). She focuses on the pre-and post-pubescent bonds between mother and daughter and says that in *Annie John's* pre-pubescent phase she has no sense of self and is immersed in her mother: she "as the infant, (...) experiences no boundaries between her body and her mother's" (Natov 4) and therefore experiences her and her mother

as one. This is why, Natov claims, the separation to come between mother and daughter is so painful. The post-pubescent stage is experienced as the split between the two when the daughter becomes a sexual being and the two women experience themselves as rivals (9). This split causes a shift of the oedipal complex that makes it go from focusing on mother-daughter to daughter-father. This shift, Natov suggests, appears when Annie John finds her parents having intercourse.

Natov claims this split to be the shift into the Symbolic Order, a stage Lacan borrowed from the works of Freud. In this stage, Lacan claims, the "appearance of the something other forces the child to separate from the mother" (2) in order to subdue their longing for the mother. In the text, she states that during this stage before puberty girls will identify with their mothers, as they experience themselves in relation to the natural bond that exists between them. This bond is something that later will become difficult for the girls as they struggle to separate themselves from their mothers, leading to them deny the mother as something other and as a result denying themselves (2). This article focuses primarily on showing the psychological stages of identification and separation in the progression of a mother-daughter bond, stating that the bond created is one that at times threatens autonomous self-identification, but is ultimately a vital source of nourishment (14) and growth to create Annie John's own wholeness.

Taking it a step further, embedding the historical aspect of colonization in Annie John, Adlai Murdoch, in "Serving the (M)other Connection: The Representation of Cultural Identity in Jamaica Kincaid Annie John" focuses not only on the Oedipal conflict when writing about Annie John establishing an identity of her own, but also on the impact that colonialism has had on Caribbean writers and their work (1). The article maintains that the idea of Lacan's alienation can be used to explore the book (2). In this alienation, the subject desires a whole identity to feel complete, but is alienated from herself in a split where this wholeness cannot be attained. Annie John, in this case, is seen as unable to create herself in resonance with the world around her, and therefore identifies with the image of the mother in the hopes of becoming "a coherent self" (325). Murdoch has a similar idea to that of Roni Natov, namely the idea that the separation of mother/daughter can be seen as the main event of the book. Murdoch however, chooses to focus on racial and cultural differences as the initiator of the split between Annie John and her mother (328) rather than focusing on the psychological aspects. Thus, in contrast to Natov, Murdoch rejects the idea that a sole oedipal reading of the mother/daughter relationship in Annie John is necessary (327). She argues in her article that

the separation of the mother/daughter in *Annie John* is both a separation brought about by the cultural differentiation from her mother as well as the Oedipal complex (328), adding a racial difference between Annie John and her mother.

Murdoch claims that this merged identification of mother and daughter that Annie John experiences is functional up to the point when Annie John realizes the falseness of the merged identity. She interprets the split as racial and cultural rather than sexual (325). Both Natov and Murdoch find that after Annie John sees her parents having intercourse, the split of mother and daughter is completed and the previously merged identity of mother and daughter as one ceases to exist. While Natov describes this split as the realization of women as sexual rivals and The Symbolic Order, Murdoch presents the cultural structure of a West Indian household as a matriarchal household (328) and says that the act of lovemaking between mother and father is often interpreted as an act of violence of the father towards the mother (332) placing the father as the head of the family. Murdoch presents that this act can be seen as Annie John realizing her mother is not her matriarch, and makes her think of her mother as less powerful than before. As Annie John sees her mother has fallen from the matriarchal structure in which she has lived, she is faced with the differences between her and her mother. The difference between her mother's Creole roots and her own Antiguan one establishes her mother as "something other" than herself. Annie John's mother is, according to Murdoch, painted as foreign on multiple levels, the most prominent one being the creation of identity in accordance with race and culture (327).

The portrait of her mother as racially and culturally foreign must, according to Murdoch, be seen in the context of the colonialism of the Caribbean. Annie John's mother is of Dominican heritage and has made a voyage to Antigua from her own colonized country and therefore her mother has a different colonial background than her daughter, adding to the racial and cultural split between the two. As the history of the island's colonialism is brought up, the differences seen in Dominica and Antigua's context helps us to understand Annie John's view of her mother as different from herself. Murdoch explains that Caribbean island inhabitants have a "tendency (...) to see those from other islands as different" (333). Her mother and her heritage have, compared to Annie John's and Antigua, a darker colonialist past- with a history of prolonged slavery (327). This prolonged slavery in the Dominican Republic is the result of the island being one of the colonized Islands that had to undergo a trial-period of freedom of slavery, in contrast to Antigua that was not subjected to this trial

period but freed immediately¹ (327). The mother's difference must be an unacceptable otherness that does not resonate with Annie John in order for her to be able to create her own identity (333). This unacceptable otherness I agree with as it is displayed when Annie John throughout the book tries to recover her mother from the double oppression, yet continually fails to do so. The difference between Annie John and her mother, the conforming of patriarchy and colonialism, is too big for Annie John to reconcile with.

2.1.1 Relationships and Colonialism in previous research Annie John.

Keja Valens's article "Obvious and Ordinary: desire between girls in Jamaica Kincaid Annie John" claims that the book uses the becoming of a young lady as a negotiation of the character's coming to awareness of colonialism (123) as well as to display the power relationships between the colonized and colonizers. Valens focuses on the split from the mother as a separation that is not troublesome as a split per se but rather troublesome in the fact that the split from her mother requires Annie John to begin to conform to colonial femininity (126). Valens chooses to, unlike Murdoch and Natov, not focus on the mother as a catalyst in connection to the issues of the book, and also rejects the notion of the pre-oedipal/oedipal complex (126). Valens instead claims that Annie John's female-female desire is a symptom of anti-colonial struggle against heteronormative traditions brought by colonialism (123), rather than attempts at replacing the bond she has lost with her mother (126) or searching for her own identity in light of that split.

Valens asserts that *Annie John* struggles to undermine the heteronormativity brought by colonialism, by intertwining female-female desire rather than conforming to the British model of female-male marriage. Natov's idea of the split is that Annie John realizes that women are sexual rivals and understands the idea of maternal castration, while Murdoch's interpretation of the split is racial and says that Annie John experiences despair at the heteronormative idea of domestication (127). Throughout her article, Valens discusses desire and domination, and how the relationships between Annie John and other females link love

¹ The island of Dominica was one of the Caribbean islands that was exposed to trial-periods of freedom for their slaves. People from opposite Caribbean islands tend to see each other as different, these types of distinctions would be useful when comparing the mother and daughter as they have somewhat different heritages. Valens, Keja. "Obvious and Ordinary: Desire between Girls in Jamaica Kincaid's 'Annie John.'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2004, pp. 123–149. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3347307.

and cruelty together. Valens links the love/cruelty in the book to the possible confusion in the relationship of colonized and colonizer (124). She presents the idea that this confused love/cruelty relationship can be linked to Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry. Valens explains that Bhabha's theory entails the colonial subject's mimicry of their colonizers as a subdued rebellion against them. The colonized subjects would in this rebellion "perform according to the colonizers ruling orders, but in fact, revises those orders through repetition with a difference" (125).

Annie John has, in her game of love/cruelty with other girls, stepped into a game of domination reminiscent of that of colonial domination (137). The female-female desire in the book is normalized through the relations Annie John builds with her female friends such as Gwen and The Redhead Girl. Valens concludes that the journey from Antigua is Annie John leaving the undesirable experience of forced heteronormativity (144) and that the book undermines the ordinary binary relationship of colonized and colonizer, as well as the order of coming of age in Antigua (147).

Murdoch states that Annie John is unable to create her own identity and therefore identifies with the image of her mother in the hope of creating a completed identity for herself. I would agree with Murdoch that in *Annie John*, the subject-formation of the protagonist is incomplete; however, I do not agree with the idea that Annie John identifies with the image of her mother in hopes of becoming a whole. Annie John's final hope to create a complete identity is for her to leave Antigua as the inability for her to create her own identity stems from patriarchy and colonialism. In school, she is taught to desire a Western logical sense of values and in her community drawn to her Caribbean history. I, therefore, agree with Murdoch's idea of the split being racial and cultural but want to emphasize that Annie John's split from her mother is a result of colonialism and patriarchy and that she fails in de-colonizing and performing a subject formation.

This essay will focus on the subject of postcolonial identity in the book. I agree with Roni Natov's idea that historical context is vital for the way in which we view the book and that the subject is alienated from herself. This alienation is a split where the protagonist Annie John desires a whole identity that is not achieved. I suggest that Annie John realizes that there are two colonizing structures existing in her world and feels the need to conform to one, but is confused as to which one. Annie John sees her Antiguan community of strong female contact as well as the logic and attraction of the West that her mother conforms to and is confused. Rather than aligning myself with the idea that Valens entertains, that Annie John's becoming

of something is in despair at heteronormative ideas of domestication from the West, I believe that the negotiation of her awareness stems from the collision of the two worlds trying to co-exist. Annie John cannot create herself for she is being drawn into both worlds and feels that she does not belong fully to either one, not achieving a hybrid state.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Postcolonial feminism

Postcolonial feminism emerged in response to colonialism and the Eurocentric view of feminism and women. Postcolonial feminism rejects the idea of oppression against women being universal and instead encourages us to take a feminist intersectional approach towards the issues. The division of first world and third world feminism allows third world women to critique the way in which first world feminism tended to generalize women and oppression of them as a whole, not taking into consideration economic, geographical and historical differences.

John McLeod writes in *Beginning Postcolonialism* that the term "first world" feminism should be seen as useful when looking at problems and possibilities of using first world feminism in a colonial context (200). Postcolonial theory is about the third world woman taking back agency and re-writing the history from which they were excluded. The main idea is for the women who were formerly colonized to be able to critique the ways that colonized women of colonialism were re-produced or made invisible by colonialism and patriarchy. Caribbean postcolonial feminism in literature has since the rise of the Caribbean woman writer dealt with issues of the de-centering of the male subject, the symbol of the Caribbean mother and the subject formation of the individual in a colonized context.

3.1.1 De-centering the privileged male subject

Belinda Edmondson, in her book *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's writing in the Caribbean Narratives* (1999), states that Caribbean women have not had a stable relationship with the idea of nation and belonging. Edmondson says that mid-century Caribbean males wrote their works while migrating from the Caribbean to the West, looking to England as sovereign. She declares that males claimed their position as writing in exile and that in that way they were able to keep themselves connected to the idea of nationalism in the eyes of the British. The term, Edmondson uses as a double term, one side being referred to as

"internal exile", and the other as a "self-imposed "exile (140). The first term is defined as an alienation from society, and the latter as a displacement from society, allowing the writing subject to write from distance. This distance would be a geographical distance that was to encourage objectivity when writing about the Caribbean home. According to Edmondson, the first generation of male Caribbean writers wrote in in geographical distance from the Caribbean, often London or France (140), hoping to be treated as equals by the Western colonizers.

Edmondson's argument as to why Caribbean women have later had to re-conceptualize the construction of the literary canon (141) is that the male exiled writers' voice was corrupted by British colonizers' views. As the males were considered as writing in exile, women were identified as economically poor immigrants in their migration to Europe, providing the males with a more privileged position to write postcolonial literature that excluded the agency and voice of the third world woman that was later re-conceptualized (144). Women later appeared with a mission to re-write the colonial history that they had been excluded from, writing against the phallic historical account of national belonging and gender.

The male exiled author who dominated the Caribbean literary canon until the 1970s (113) had a phallic nationalism that claimed the image of the colonized subject as the body of a mother in need of rescuing. As men formulated the Caribbean experience, they rejected femininity in their depiction of the Caribbean in all areas but the symbolism of the motherland. The idea of the motherland as a symbol has been used by male authors in the Caribbean canon, but rather than using it as an engagement of women it has been a representation/symbol of their country. As the phallic narration has rejected the mother and women in the writings of male exiled authors, women emerged in the 1970s and re-claimed the mother, asserting a value to the colonized female body.

Caroline Rody, in her book *Daughter's return: The African-American and Caribbean Women's Fictions of History* (2001), writes that recovering the mother has previously been to claim a "subversive identity and a mission " in women's writing (116). However, in recent texts, there has been a revision into a more authoritative voice of the female subject written in women writers' texts. This voice displays powerful bonds among the female community and more questioning of gender inequality (119). As the daughterly desire for the figure of the mother is a common motif in Caribbean writings of women, the issue is complex and contradictory. The desire for a strong mother that resides in a land of oppressive history mirrors the "paradox of reclaiming a history of disaster and disempowerment" (120).

The literary works of female Caribbean writers have some unique concepts in their worlds of political, racial and gender issues. One of these concepts is that of the matrifocal family that holds the mother as the head of the family. This entails the lack of a male power-figure, a male head of the family and stands in contrast to Western phallic patriarchy. The importance of this matrifocal family structure in the Caribbean is that it allows for the mother to step into a position of power, and therefore allows for a different relationship between the mother and the children of the household. Hazel Carby, in her article "*White Woman listen!*" *The Empire strikes back* (1982), claims that colonialism interrupted the Caribbean family-structure, and replaced it with that of colonized familiar patterns, imposing British structures on the Caribbean family (121). Carby here speaks of a structure that emerged during slavery of the indigenous population that was made up of fractured kinships structures in the Caribbean family. The Caribbean family structure that was in a sense created by the British undermined/resisted the matriarchal family with the mother as the head of the family. The theme of community and motherhood is what marks the writing of Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* as postcolonial writing, based on the model of Caribbean women as mothers and nurturers in a community narrative. A typical aspect of the Caribbean household and mother would be that of the continuation of cultural traditions, in *Annie John*, the Obeah²-traditions is seen as a big part of the female community, introduction a strong matrifocal female community in which Annie John grows up.

3.1.2 Re-conceptualization of Caribbean Women.

In *Reimagining Migration through the Act of Writing in Anglophone Caribbean Women's Narrative*, Alisa K. Braithwaite looks to Belinda Edmondson's statement that Caribbean women have had to "re-conceptualize" the tradition of what it is to be a postcolonial individual in the literary world (144). As Braithwaite notes, Edmondson uses Foucault to discuss nation and discursive formation of the Caribbean (2). In this discursive formation, Caribbean female authors are attempting to rewrite their history of binary relationships of black/white, men/women, oppressed/oppressor through the life of their female characters. Jamaica Kincaid re-writes the binary opposition of men/women in *Annie John* by excluding the phallic voice, choosing to focus on female empowerment and presenting a matrifocal environment. Caroline Rody suggests that the idea of re-conceptualizing Caribbean

² Obeah is a spiritual belief and practice in Jamaica, originating from West Africa.

women should entail a lack of migration from the motherland, and states that the Caribbean home is "not a place to be fled nor a prison" (122) but should act as a catalyst to uncovering one's own identity. In her book, she refers to the colonized subjects attempted wholeness of a Caribbean identity as "a contest between homes" (112) referring to both the motherland and West as home. Braithwaite claims that blending home and away can undo the nationalism that has taken root in the land, and Edmondson says that by creating a new place that combines home and away into a place where co-existing is possible can give room to women writers to make their voices heard and confront their placelessness (145).

3.1.3 The split subject.

Where Rody, Braithwaite and Edmondson believe that there can be an achievement of a subject formation that entails a whole cultural identity, either by blending home and away (Rody/ Braithwaite) or re-writing against the phallic accounts of history (Edmondson), theorist Stuart Hall complicates the idea of home and identity by claiming that a cultural identity is never finished and that there is no self that can be found.

Stuart Hall in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1994), says that the idea of cultural identity is a complicated matter. Hall says that the idea of cultural identity comes from history (225), stemming from previous societies that have grown and developed with influences of other cultures. The concept of cultural identity itself is not fixed- it is a constant process that will never reach its end goal. In the case of East/West, he says that the West made the East see themselves as something other in relation to them and that the idea of cultural identity is "becoming as well as being" (225). The idea of cultural identity is unstable and contradictory as it mimics something (another identity for example) but is seen as something different than what it mimics. Hall says that because the idea of cultural identity is not fixed one cannot have a whole identity, therefore the wholeness cannot be attained. The lack of or completion of the wholeness of cultural identity is, according to Hall, a simplification of the complexity of the issue. He refers to "diaspora identity" as those identities that are "producing and reproducing themselves" (235) in the motion of historical events.

Homi K. Bhabha, in his book *The location of Culture* (1994), introduces the term "hybridity" in relation to how colonial subjects are formed "in-between, or in excess of, the sum of the parts of difference" (2) e.g. race/gender etc. Bhabha and Hall's terms diaspora and hybridity refer to the creation of a new identity within the area created by colonization, a dual

citizenship in the same residence. Bhabha uses the term to analyze the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. The concept of cultural difference focuses, according to Bhabha, on the issue of ambivalent cultural authority (51), that is, the attempt to dominate another country in the name of a sovereign power produced in differentiation from another land. Bhabha states in his book that cultural enunciations are created in a third space that he refers to as the "Third Space of enunciation" (54), also known as hybridity. This third space is an ambivalent space in which a "cultural identity can be created and emerge" and therefore the idea of any kind of pure culture is illogical (55), much like Hall's idea of the never ending process of subject formation. Bhabha claims that in order to stop the creation of the East as exotic and different, one must acknowledge this third space as a place of cultural hybridity, and then choose to embrace it just like Caroline Rody feels that the home, even if split by two motherlands, should be where one finds their own identity/subject formation.

Theorist Gauri Viswanathan in *Masks of Conquest* (1989) talks about the distancing of the colonized subject from its own traditions in order to strip the colonized subject from its cultural identity. The fact that the book *Annie John* is written in English shows us the agency of not only Annie John in the book, but Jamaica Kincaid as re-claiming herself as an author and also re-claiming English as her language. Viswanathan says that the colonizers' political control over the colonized actually created a gap between the colonial subject and its tradition, telling us that the use of Western culture and language majorly impacted the colonized. When previous theorists such as Edmondson and Braithwaite claim that wholeness can be achieved, they place no emphasis on the effect of the loss of the mother tongue and imposing of British culture through societal structures such as British schooling, and its damaging effects on the colonial subject. Viswanathan states that the English language that was integrated via the British school system was the ultimate move of domination and that it did in fact act as a "device aimed at creating a sense of distance between the native Indian and its traditions" (121). As the stripping of language and cultural tradition occurs through the British school in *Annie John*, it could be seen as part of the events leading up to the failure of Annie John to de-colonize herself as a postcolonial subject. The use of Viswanathan in this essay is based on the idea that the Western colonizers ruling over India and Caribbean are somewhat similar. Thomas Macaulay's idea of Indian education set the model for colonial education in general in the British Empire and therefore I believe that the idea of Viswanathan can be incorporated, not to generalize, but to understand the colonization process by the British.

The concepts previously brought up by Gauri Viswanathan and Stuart Hall I believe can be connected to the ideas of Homi Bhabha and hybridity. The works of Viswanathan, Hall, and Bhabha tell us that the Caribbean is a space of hybridity that is still in creation. This third space of enunciation is one that is layered and transcultural and the process of this enunciation will therefore never be finished. Both Hall and Bhabha claim that a return to a pure identity is unobtainable as there is no "unproblematic, transcendental law of origin" (226). My reading and interpretation of Hall and Bhabha does not mean that Caroline Rody and Belinda Edmondson's works are fruitless, their claims that wholeness can in fact be achieved by merging East and West simply invites a different angle to the postcolonial studies.

As Annie John cannot exist in the "Third Space of enunciation", she fails to construct a hybrid self and to de-colonize her as a postcolonial subject. Annie John can be seen as attempting to answer the question of what happens when one is taught to desire Englishness in a postcolonial setting, the successful initiation of British culture could create such a split in the postcolonial subject that the subject in question would be unable to resonate in that setting, and the only answer is to turn to self-imposed exile away from her colonized mother.

As Rody says that Caribbean women have "undertaken to reimagine the regions history" (108) the idea of hybridity and women's writing have excluded the possibility of cultural erasure, Caribbean women re-imagine a hybrid state and thereby avoid cultural erasure. Due to the Caribbean history of slavery and indigenous homicide, there is no sole Caribbean culture to be found, only a hybrid identity that is in constant movement. As women re-write their history, the cultural traditions of Caribbean women and mothers, such as the Obeah-women and the general female nurturing communities live on. This cultural renewal allows women to force a nuanced view of Caribbean women that does not allow for rejection of the mother or for the mother as a colonized body to be rescued and bring with it self-representation in the Caribbean women's literature. Rody says that the Caribbean mother in literature has given light to a new structure of "daughterly engagement" (61) with the maternal past. This she claims signifies the arrival of a new woman author that define themselves as inheritors of their history, and display this history proudly through the re-claiming of the mother. Rody, in her book, argues that the Caribbean mother is presented with ambivalence, often as a symbol of the motherland, filled with a love/hate relationship with her children, much as *Annie John*.

4. Analysis

4.1 Mother/daughter nurturing imagery.

The mother is Annie John's connection to her culture and nature as well as her safety, the book uses imagery such as water to portray that vision. The recurring images of water in the book symbolize her mother's nurturing, often with similarities to the womb such as spilling vessels and bathtubs filled with water in which they bathe together. In the traditions of the Obeah³ women's cultural belief of protection, water represents the nourishment and intimacy that Annie John has with her mother. The nurturing and cultural function of the water is also revealed as Annie John and her mother go and bathe in the sea each Sunday after church upon receiving news from the doctor that Annie John has "weak kidneys and a bath in the sea" (42) is recommended as a healing process. The water also represents the mother's journey from Dominica to Antigua and foreshadows Annie John's future journey.

The symbolism foreshadows an independent journey that Annie John will undertake, and also foreshadows what is supposed to be the beginning of Annie John's rebirth during the second act of the book. During her three months' illness in which it constantly rains "The sound the rain made as it landed on the roof pressed me down in my bed" (109) Annie John retreats into herself, and during this time, the matrifocal community around her comes together to heal her with its culture. Ma Jolie, an Obeah woman from the community comes over and bestows her cultural customs on Annie John, lighting candles and incense in order to heal her. Ma Chess, Annie John's grandmother comes and settles "on the floor at the foot of my bed, eating and sleeping there" (125) sending Annie John positive energy and healing. As the female community comes together for Annie John, she is eventually healed, wakes from her darkness ready to reclaim herself.

The final act of the book shows Annie John leaving Antigua by boat, crossing a sea while lying in her cabin, listening to the waves making "an unexpected sound, as if a vessel filled with liquid had been placed on its side and now was slowly emptying out" (148). As the previous images of water have been connected to the mother in a womb-like sense, this emptying of a vessel can be read as the womb emptying out and indicate a final severing, a rebirth. The journey away from Antigua is an ambiguous ending to Annie John's story as the

³ Obeah is a spiritual and healing practice originating from the West Indies during enslavement. The rituals focus on healing and protection. The women who practice these healing rituals are called Obeah Women.

mother and daughter once again display their love for each other, but choose to be an ocean apart.

4.1.1 Mother/Daughter subject formation.

The relationship between Annie John and her mother takes a drastic turn when she turns twelve and at the same time reaches puberty. This is where Roni Natov reads the book as a complex mother/daughter relationship that focuses on psychological confusion, while others like Keja Valens supposes that this split between mother/daughter is due to the idea that Annie John must now conform to the traditions of heteronormativity of male/female British traditions. Rather than focusing on the mother/daughter issue and the aspect of British implications as separate issues as Natov and Valens does, I suggest that Annie John's failure to perform a subject formation and recover her mother is due to a combination of the two issues.

Throughout the book, we are faced with ambiguous scenes of Annie John hating her mother, but not being able to completely commit to her hatred as she also loves her mother deeply. Annie John's confusion about her feelings for her mother could symbolize the way in which she is torn between her motherland and the West, the mother is good as she is loving and represents her cultural heritage, yet bad as she has conformed to patriarchy. The mother's big failure in the book is according to Annie John, the conforming to patriarchy that Annie John discovers when she finds her mother in bed with her father. This scene depicts the mother's hand circling in the air above her father's back, and is used as a symbol for the mother's death in the eyes of Annie John, "(...) her hand! It was white and bony as if it had long been dead" (30). This scene is what breaks Annie John's unconditional love for her mother as it is clear to her that her mother has conformed to patriarchy, which in Annie John's eyes is a betrayal. Annie John's inability to commit to either hating or loving her mother goes with her inability to choose her motherland and identity because she has grown up with both her Antiguan culture as well as her British colonizers' culture.

Caroline Rody's idea of recovering the body of the colonized mother in the Caribbean literature is not applicable in the case of Annie John, Annie John cannot recover her mother or what they have lost in the Oedipal split. The previous bond the two shared dies as the mother embraces patriarchy and whatever the mother does after the split is pointless to Annie John, who feels her mother has betrayed her and the Caribbean female community. Annie John is

confused as to her feelings of belonging in her colonized land because she is, as Rody describes, a child torn between a mother who is both good and bad (113). The mother is seen by Annie John as ambiguous as the mother is her nurturer but at the same time cannot be recovered from the patriarchy that she has conformed to. Her mother's straying to patriarchy leaves Annie John confused as to what path to take and hinders her beginning her process of forming a coherent identity through a subject formation.

While theorists such as Caroline Rody do claim that recovering the mother's body is possible, as well as the creation of a wholeness in literature, Annie John shows that it is impossible to reclaim the body of the mother and that the process therefore cannot begin as history of patriarchy and colonialism is in the way. These aspects do not allow the mother and Annie John to live in symbiosis since the mother's perception of the world was altered when she entered the phallic order. Annie John thinks that her mother embraces sexual hypocrisy in as Annie John, who is used to her mother's liberated view on the human body as they bathe together in the nude etc., is suddenly not allowed to be sensual in her own skin. The daughter can no longer dress like her mother and is dressed in the British school uniform with boxed-pleated skirts and buttoned-up cotton shirt. Her mother also scorns Annie John for interacting with boys as that is considered slutty (102). Though Annie John finds her mother guilty of hypocrisy and conformed to patriarchy, she keeps returning to her mother in the hopes of recovering her from patriarchy. The return to her mother is impossible for her as the loss of her mother is a traumatic event, for her and the split will eventually be final.

The impossibility of living with the Oedipal split from her mother and the unwillingness of Annie John to live without it is displayed in the book. Murdoch and Natov's ideas are that if the split does not appear then the entrance to The Symbolic Order would not be possible and the development of a hybrid or cultural identity would not be possible as the mother/daughter would be stuck in a Lacanian mirror-stage where, as Natov and Murdoch have found, the mother and Annie John would not be separated and stay as one merged identity. Entering The Symbolic Order inserts the subject into language, which aids in the shaping of an identity. It is impossible for Annie John not to resent the split that ultimately drives her away from her mother, but it is a necessary step in the possible process of Annie John to de-colonize herself as a subject.

4.1.2 Male vs Female

Jamaica Kincaid's use of a female community attempts to exclude the idea of patriarchal and phallic males being interesting and presents a narrative that is centered around being a black woman. This attempt to exclude patriarchy and the phallic notion is important to see in the text as this is Kincaid's way of trying to challenge the existing paradigms of female/male discourse. The male/female aspects of the book present a willingness to break free from patriarchy and re-write history, as well as the inability to fully do so. From the ambiguous name of the book as *Annie John*, presenting both the binary's of female and male - to the protagonists' inability to recover her mother's body, the book is torn between the strong female community and the strong patriarchal hold that has had its hold in the culture.

Caroline Rody says that by recovering women's voices or the colonized body of the mother, authors write about female empowerment, recovering Caribbean women's voices. Rody says that a strong female community presents the bonds between the Caribbean female community as powerful rather than economically poor and voiceless (119). The focus of the mother/daughter bond is vital for *Annie John*'s attempted subject formation, and the female community is depicted as powerful and healing. The Obeah women in the book come together in times of need, and Ma Jolie and her Obeah culture heal *Annie John* during her illness. Female empowerment is also seen in the lack of attention to *Annie John*'s father and other male subjects in the book. What matters in *Annie John* is the female community and the idea of re-writing the history of colonial and patriarchal oppression against third world women. The book attempts to re-write history from a black perspective and focuses on the black female empowerment of a Caribbean community, rather than on reproduction of third world women in a Western context.

The mother and the father in the book are depicted as oppositions, Kincaid's choice to re-write the binary oppositions leads to the Caribbean matrifocal view taking the lead as the father is in no way depicted as authoritarian. Kincaid chooses to steer away from the family structure that Carby presents the imposed British structures (121) and fills the mother's past with stories of her as a passionate strong-willed woman and a journey from another motherland while excluding the father. *Annie John* tells us that her mother at the age of sixteen filled a trunk with her belongings and sailed across the sea from Dominica to Antigua: "Two days after she had left her father's house, she boarded a boat and sailed for Antigua" (19). The mother is depicted as independent and brave while the father gets very little focus in the book and is compared unfavorably in relation to the mother. *Annie John* tells of her father

being dependent on his grandmother until the age of eighteen: "(...) his grandmother would awake at half past five or so, a half an hour before my father, and prepare his bath and breakfast" (23).

This perspective shows Kincaid creating her own postcolonial discourse in a female universe, where the female community represents power and femininity and the blackness of her mother as an asset. This plays into the de-centering of the male subject, as the male voice is not given any agency in the book and is therefore stripped of its previous power over narrative. The exclusion of the phallic voice thus endorses the female empowerment that the women Caribbean authors turned to in order to reclaim the body of the mother. Whereas men formulated the earlier Caribbean experience, through rejecting femininity, women now hold the power. The choice to cut the male subject out, essentially de-centering the male in her book, plays into the idea of the sexy bad girl that Annie John could be made out to be by her mother and the voice of patriarchy. When talking to the boys she meets on the street, Annie John's mother who has conformed to patriarchy calls her a slut (102) in accordance with Western views. Annie John and her mother inhabit the roles of colonized and colonizer, where Annie John is the insubordinate colonized subject who rebels against her mother (and therefore the West). Caroline Rody says that the insubordinate subject would be a "subversive identity" (116) accompanied by the female desire for other women, that acts against the phallic Western representation of the woman. Annie John's subversive identity is accompanied by female-female desire that creates a sexy bad girl that rebels against her surroundings. Even in this perspective of Kincaid attempting to re-write the colonized women's history with patriarchy, the underlying issue of the phallic is visible. As the "sexy bad girl" is a way to take back the female body and sexuality with female-female desire, it is also enforcing the exoticization and eroticized view of the black woman.

Annie John creates highly intimate relationships with her female friends of the same age while trying to replace her lost mother that she is unable to recover. She does not adhere to one specific girl but seeks one that suits her for the moments. She and her friend Gwen have secret meetings, talking about marriage and their future and saying that they will not become their parent. But as they grow up, Gwen conforms to patriarchy and as a result, she experiences the same alienation by Annie John as Annie John's mother. Gwen one day suggests that Annie John marry her brother Rowan, which makes Annie John walk away from Gwen, telling us that she "(...) began avoiding Gwen and our daily walks home" (53), showing her resentment for patriarchy ripping her female community apart.

Annie John then meets a wild-child girl that she refers to as "The Red Girl" in chapter four. The Red Girl has not yet conformed to the Western idea of femininity and patriarchy as she acts wild and free- climbing trees "better than any boy (56)"-- and is seen as somewhat of an outcast by society for it. The Red Girl intrigues Annie John, who develops an erotic relationship with her where they stand outside the colonial system of expectations as well as the gender roles that it presents. The Red Girl represents everything Annie John wishes to be, and acts as a catalyst in Annie John's rebellion. She is the opposite of everything that Annie John rebels against, her mother dislikes the girl who does not go to school nor does the girl's mother try to make her conform to patriarchy or make her wear colonial clothing. The relationship between the two girls could be a symbol for Annie John's desire for a free Antiguan culture, where The Red Girl represents nature and Antigua.

4.1.3 Education forming a colonial subject.

School to Annie John represents another place where her two worlds collide. At home and in her community she is nurtured by female companionship and celebration of her heritage/culture, while at the British ruled school the girls compete and a certain kind of logic and reason is being taught. The school reflects Annie John's internal struggle as she finds her two worlds conflicting, she wants to fit into both but also resist them both, the ambivalence corresponds with her feelings of confusion. Annie John is filled with a desire to be good and please her teachers, but also is aware that what they are being taught is the British way. In the classroom, the books consist of Western authors that Annie John describes as books with good people "contemplating and reflecting before they did anything" (38), implying that the ideas of oppositions of West and East as good/bad.

The British educational system in the *Annie John* plays a role in the alienation of Annie John's cultural identity, and it could be seen as a factor of Annie John's inability to establish a new identity. As she goes to school and learns about Western ways she drifts further away from her Antiguan culture. Theorist Gauri Viswanathan says that domination was asserted over colonized people and land through the introduction of the English language and the British school system. As Viswanathan states, the aim was to "distance (...) the native and his own tradition" (107), being placing the subject in a hybrid state. This hybrid state that Annie John is placed in due to education is a central conflict of the book and a state that she constantly tries to resist. The British also asserted the use of English books and manners were to persuade the subjects to conform to the British ruling, Viswanathan states that the

introduction of the English canon to the colonized subjects was" in service of the British imperialism" (120).

The sterile imagery of the school gravely contrasts with the natural imagery of Annie John's mother and home, where bathing in oils (14) and naked in the sea (42) is encouraged. At the same time, Annie John's teacher Miss Nelson represents the modest and logical West, with "ironed hair and her long-sleeved blouse and box-pleated skirt" (39). These two women who play big roles in Annie John's life in a maternal way, guiding and spending much time with her, are like the two worlds of colonized and colonizer colliding. These relationships and settings I believe are a big part of why Annie John feels the need to leave Antigua, the worlds of home and school make the difference between Annie John's two worlds much clearer to her and confuses her as to how these two worlds are supposed to co-exist- or rather how she is supposed to co-exist in these two worlds of dual motherlands. Annie John is ultimately torn between two worlds as the hybridity of East and West does not succeed within her.

4.1.4 Failure of Hybridity in Annie John

Annie John is stuck between British culture and her colonized one, unable to merge her environments she fails to integrate herself and establish a sense of belonging. In her state Annie John is trying to establish herself as an individual while being doubly colonized by patriarchy and colonialism. Annie John and her mother are therefore connected through not only blood but also gender. This autonomy stems from her separation from her mother who has conformed to patriarchy. The mother is a symbol for colonialism and patriarchy and is now to be considered as the body of a colonized mother. The frequent paradoxical feelings that Annie John displays towards the mother in the book signal Annie John's unfulfilled subject formation as she stands with one foot in her Antiguan world with her female surroundings showering her with love and nurture, and the other foot in the colonized British ruling world.

Annie is a postcolonial individual who tries to negotiate her life within the conflicting cultures of her community. As Caroline Rody points out, the idea of identity as a "contest between homes" (112) works in a colonial context where the subject in question grows up in a split world. On the one side Annie John has her female community and culture of her mother, Ma Chess, and Ma Jolie guiding her on the Dominica/Antigua heritage, and on the other

stands the British traditions that Annie John believes her mother has conformed to the colonizers in her eyes. Homi Bhabha's hybridity entails a subject caught between two different somethings, and the loss of an identity but also the gain of a new one, the third space. If Annie John would reside in the third space enunciation that Bhabha presents, as she has a split surrounding of two worlds, she should in theory be able to merge the two together in the creation of the sum of her "excess" something (Bhabha 2). However, Annie John does not manage to embrace the third space to create her cultural hybrid identity, but instead journeys away in the end of the book.

Annie John's attempts to create a coherent self as a subject completely separate from her motherland in the form of a journey is ultimately not accomplished as she is restricted to the role of what Edmondson would label a poor immigrant (144), a subject of colonialization fleeing her motherland. The notion of home and mother along with the apparent sadness that Annie John expresses over parting with her mother makes the ending ambiguous and prolongs the story of Annie John and her Antigua for us. The journey Annie John undertakes to become a coherent self suggests that the people of Antigua have become colonized slaves to patriarchy and the phallic. Annie John looks at her mother as she leaves and states that she needs to leave as she can never be sure if she could tell "when it was really my mother and when it was really her shadow standing between me and the rest of the world" (107).

The journey away from Antigua is Annie John being "unhomed" (9), which Bhabha states is not to be "homeless" but to be unable to accommodate oneself in their current situation, the colonized that need to leave their motherland is therefore exposing themselves to a possibly bigger crisis of wholeness. Annie John is already living in hybridity and therefore a journey away from her motherland will not provide her with a wholeness as the acquisition of a new land and customs should then further her split according to the theories of Bhabha. The negotiation of Annie John's subject formation would, according to Bhabha and Hall, also stem from the fact that the colonizer and colonizer would be engaging in the acts of mimicry (Bhabha, 86), the act of mimicry means that the colonized mimics the act of the colonizer, much like Annie John has mimicked her mother who she now rebels against. The act of mimicry displays that the colonized and colonizer are the "same but not quite" (86), as Annie mimics her surroundings she cannot understand why her two worlds that are "same but not quite" cannot merge into one.

Bhabha's hybridity is meant as the process of reversing "domination through disavowal" (160), meaning the reversal of the idea of a culture being purified, for example the Antiguan culture being purified by the West. This reversal appears when the split subject embraces their third space in which both cultures and identities exist. The embracing of this hybridity is what allows for a reversal of the idea of a pureness, and Bhabha states that if one does not embrace this third space there is no entering it. As Annie John does not enter the third space, for she does not embrace either culture fully nor both slightly, the idea of hybridity or a completed subject formation does not apply to Annie John. Hall and Bhabha both state that there is no pure cultural identity to be found, the creation is a process that will always be added to and never fulfilled.

Annie John feels she does not belong in Antiguan culture, nor the English one. Annie John is not fully Antiguan but also has Dominican heritage on her mother's side but does not embrace any of it. Here, Murdoch's idea of the mother being painted as foreign with racial and cultural differences (Murdoch, 327), is valid as Annie John experiences this cultural difference from her mother and her motherland. She creates herself as "something other" rather than entering the third space to start her subject formation. In *The location of Culture* Bhabha states that the concept of cultural difference focuses on ambivalent cultural authority (51), Annie John's mother inhabits this ambivalent cultural authority as she is the authoritarian over her daughter, yet she herself is culturally ambiguous. Her mother is conformed to Western patriarchy yet still slightly Dominican in identity through traditions and belief. As Antigua is colonized and the pressure for Annie John to belong to either world increases, she splits into an in-coherent postcolonial subject. Annie John's difficulties in decolonizing herself are mostly tied to her failed attempts at detaching from her mother who has committed the betrayal of conforming to patriarchy. The love and hate experienced in their relationships is the struggle and failure of them trying to either re-attach or detach. Annie John is torn between the world that her mother resides in or her heritage, not being able to blend home and away.

Annie John and her mother look at each other with smiles as they wave goodbye, yet Annie John states that "the opposite of that was in my heart (147)," again showing us the sadness of not being able to fully recover (the body of) her colonized mother. As Annie John goes to her cabin on the ferry that takes her away from Antigua, she lays down on her "berth" (148) while hearing a sound "as if a vessel filled with liquid had been placed on its side and now was slowly emptying out" (148). If the symbol of water in the book Annie John is

connected to the nurturing and motherhood of Annie John, then the spilling of the vessel as the emptying of the womb can symbolize the loss of safety, Antiguan culture, and nurture for Annie John.

5. Conclusion

This essay examined whether Annie John could complete a successful transformation a subject formation. Annie John did not achieve this, the becoming of something is a process that cannot ever be finished according to Hall and Bhabha. While the path to a coherent self-and/or a de-colonized identity is the hybridity of home and away according to Bhabha and Hall, Annie John should in theory be able to start the process of re-conceptualize herself as she comes to terms with the hybridity of West/Caribbean and the "Third Space of enunciation" (Bhabha 54) that she resides in. However, Annie John does fail to blend home/away and does in that sense not confront her placelessness (Edmonds 125) and perform a subject formation or de-colonizing process. As Rody claims that the re-conceptualization of Caribbean women should entail the lack of migration from the motherland (122) Annie John can be seen as falling back to the idea of the Caribbean woman as an economically poor immigrant (Edmondson, 144) to be saved by the West as she in the end journeys away from Antigua to the Western world.

Annie John leaves Antigua and emigrates to a European country to go to school, this third world woman would according to Edmondson not be in a favorable position when exiling herself and emigrating to another country. As Annie John is unable to find herself in this "Third Space of enunciation" and instead turns to exile as the trauma makes the idea of embracing hybridity difficult for her, the actual concept of hybridity or blending home/away fails and Annie John, therefore, fails to de-colonize herself as a postcolonial subject. Annie John fails to create her subject formation as she is unable to live in hybridity and unable to resonate herself with blending of home/away and instead turns to exile.

The ideas of Hall and Bhabha tell that the creation of a cultural identity is an unstable process that will never be completed, this as the cultural identities are always in process. This continued process allows Annie John's journey to be interpreted as the beginning of her process. Hall says that it is not possible to create a wholeness, creating an identity is a process that will never end and there is no such thing as a culturally pure identity as that cultural identity is always influenced and in motion. He suggests that identities are created in

representation, not as a “mirror held up to reflect what already exists” (236) and that this representation can help to discover new ways in which the subject can speak. This new representation is what makes *Annie John* such an important representation of the female subject’s formation. Jamaica Kincaid does not mirror that which already exist, but represents a different version of the Caribbean subject’s path to formation through colonialism and patriarchy while attempting to give a new voice to the female subject. *Annie John* does not transform herself, but the process of the book is in itself an important postcolonial work, attempting to portray men as generally uninteresting in the search of the colonized maternal body in history and that the story to be told is that of the third world woman. The father has no real place in the book, nor does the Caribbean male exiled author or the colonizing British males.

The idea of postcolonial feminism is for the formerly colonized women to be able to re-write their history through their own perspective as well as to critique the way they have often reproduced in postcolonial literature. *Annie John* allows for Caribbean women writers to challenge their previous depiction as economically poor immigrants and colonized bodies. *Annie John* tries to exclude men and patriarchy from being in the forefront of the book, focusing on female companionship, family and community. The gesture of cutting out patriarchy in the book is Kincaid’s suggestion of a female allegiance towards the patriarchal and colonizing community, giving the individual an ability to redefine their relationship to the community and to oneself.

Annie John presents a political undertone that portrays Annie John as bound to her colonial context. The cultural-political writing of Jamaica Kincaid tries to write against the marginalization of colonized women. Annie John’s character reveals to what extent the structural and social hierarchy of male and female underline the book, and also tells of the unescapable oppression and patriarchy. The conventional narrative of the book, the ambiguous name of the protagonist, and the subversive identity that exotifies Annie John as a sexy bad girl suggest that she, while trying to challenge the hegemony, still exists in this patriarchal bind. This inescapable oppression also reveals itself as Annie John’s mother, while conformed to patriarchy, introduces her daughter to the victimization of women in a colonized context as she is sexualized and supposed to be domesticated. Annie John learns from her mother that her maturing body should be covered and that the female sexuality is to be suppressed as it is shameful.

While the characters show how the colonial women's identities are constructed within oppression of colonialism and patriarchy, Kincaid's writing also displays community, female empowerment, and patriarchy that is seen from the perspective of a colonized individual. As the goal of Caribbean writers is to re-write their heritage and history, Kincaid has attempted to do so by trying to redefine community, female empowerment, and history by a resistant text that attempts to re-write the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. This re-writing is with the empowerment of culture and the recognition that their Caribbean communities are in a postcolonial state. Caribbean writers wrote about the alienation from their language that has come from the colonialism.

Having her books and characters speak and write in English, Kincaid fights against the notion of English as an oppressive language that was introduced and is tied to the colonizing British school. The mere fact that the book is written in English says that the oppressed are wanting to take back their place in history. It's a story of rebirth and trying to become something/someone in the face of double oppression, and re-writing history through their own perspective, not reproducing women as oppressed but rather like showing female empowerment and having the book stand on its own in a postcolonial context. There is also something to be said about the gesture of trying to cut out patriarchy and colonization from the book. In the book women claim agency and say look at us, we are strong and capable. Even though Annie John as a character fails to de-colonize herself and perform a successful subject formation, the writings of her journey to re-conceptualize herself as something other is an important political stance. *Annie John* explores the political scope of colonialism and patriarchy, attempting to write against the notion of double oppression while also displaying the struggle.

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