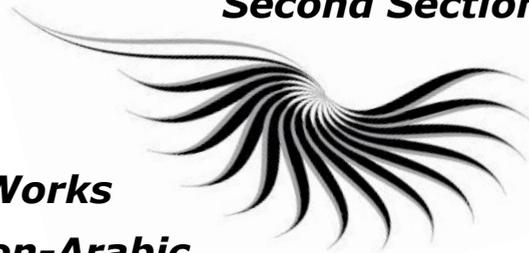


***Second Section***



***Works  
in Non-Arabic  
Languages***





## **Mother and Daughter Relationships**

### **In Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*: A Psychological Perspective**

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#### ***Abstract:***

Though a lot of work has been done on Jamaica Kincaid's novel, *Annie John* (1985), the researcher believes that writing from a fresh perspective will better illuminate and help decipher the complexities in her work. The challenges in Kincaid's work lie in her keen ability to weave conflicting issues of family, tradition, colonization and slavery into each of her main characters, making it difficult to separate one issue from another, or even to separate a character from her location. However it is not the goal of this paper to separate the issues a character contains, or to explore how Kincaid's characters

are able to feel conflicting feelings toward their family members at the same time. This is an examination of the long-term Electra complexes to understand the development of Annie John's character.

Jamaica Kincaid is probably the most important West Indian woman writing today. She was born Elaine Potter Richardson in 1949 in St. John's Antigua under the pressures of poverty and colonialism. As an only child, Kincaid maintained a close relationship with her mother until the age of nine, when the first of her three brothers were born. The growing size of the family not only

brought about a "keener sense of their poverty" but also enhanced Kincaid's growing sense of isolation from her mother and her environment. Interviewer and *New York Times Magazine* journalist Leslie Garis writes, "Kincaid has never gotten over the betrayal she felt when she began to suffer from her mother's emotional remoteness" (70). Most writings of Kincaid are intimately inspired by these bitter tensions of her youth. The emotional onset of adolescence, as well as the rigid control of a British colonial education system heightened Kincaid's sense of isolation.

### **Keywords:**

Mother-Daughter relationship, Freudian Sexual Development of Relationship, Patriarchy, Adolescence, Childhood, Adulthood, Circling Hand, mental breakdown.

### **الملخص**

مساعدة الأطفال والمراهقين للنجاح اجتماعيا: العلاقة بين الأم وابنتها في رواية "انى جون" لجاميكيا كينسيد.

جاميكيا كينسيد هي كاتبة روائية من أصل هندي غربي كاريبيان، ولدت بولاية أنيجا تحت ظروف قاسية من فقر واستعمار الظاهر بوضوح في أعمالها الروائية. ومن القضايا التي تمت معالجتها في أعمالها هي: العنصرية والنوع والاستعمارية والمراهقة والضيق والعلاقة الحميمة بين الأم وابنتها، فمثلا تبين أعمالها صراع المرأة للانفصال عن الماضي الاستعماري ممثلا رمزيا في صراع بطلاتها مع أمهاتهن، لتشبه شخصياتها النسائية بلاغيا بقوى الاستعمار القهرية.

"انى جون" (١٩٨٥) هي الرواية الأولى لجاميكيا كينسيد وهي قصة تدور أحداثها حول مراهقة تعشق أمها إلى حد

عكس ذلك تجدها مقدمة على أمها بكل تحدٍّ لأنها تعتبر الأب منافس معها في حب أمها علر الرغم من أن الأب يتفانى في عمله لإطعام أسرته وهو المؤسس الفعلى لبيت الاسرة.

فجأة تفاجأ الابنة أن أمها قد خدعتها بالفعل لأنها وعدتها في طفولتها بأنها لن ينفصلا مدى الحياة حتى بعد الكبر وفجأة تجد الابنة عكس ذلك لأن الأم تطلب الانفصال عن ابنتها وقت المراهقة لاعتبارها كائناً اخر غير الطفلة الأولى من حيث التطور الفسيولوجى والسيكولوجى. حينها يحدث التصادم وتعتبر الابنة الأم عدواً لها وتأخذها نداءً وليس صديقاً، بل وتشبهها بالاستعمار المسيطر على المنزل وأفراده بلا شفقة أو رحمة.

**الكلمات الدالة :** علاقة الأم بابنتها -

فرويد- الأبوية- الطفولة - المراهقة- النضج

العبادة، ولكن أثناء نموها فسيولوجيا وجدت نفسها تتعد لا شعوريا وبالتالى أحست "انى جون" بوهم الأمن وبدأت تتجه غير مدركة نحو انفصال آخر وهو انفصال نفسى؛ وبما انه توجد علاقة ذاتية بين البطلة "انى جون" وكاتبة الرواية جاميكا كينسيد"؛ نجد أن الأحداث مرتبطة ببعضها البعض وتضع جاميكا نفسها دائما مكان البطلة بشكل واضح.

تظهر القصة عقدة الكترا عند بطلة

القصة وكيف إن العمل درس من وجهة نظر نسائية سيكولوجية من قبل؛ حيث إن الأم على علاقة قريبة من ابنتها مقدمة كل الحب والتفانى وبعد ذلك كل السلطة والغطرسة، وبدلا من أن البنت تقدم على أبيها لإظهار كل مابداخلها نحوه فإنها على

## ***Introduction***

The kindness of Annie's mother can initially be seen from the lengthy baths that she gives her, the fact that she kisses her before sleep even though Annie is supposed to lose the kiss as punishment, and the time that she takes to retell Annie the family history as seen in her trunk. When Annie starts to dislike her mother, the mother still appears to be reasonable. Annie's initial anger at her mother starts because her mother insists on that they are separate people, which Annie cannot accept. Because Annie's anger at her mother appears to be an outgrowth of Annie's immaturity, it does not appear initially that Annie's mother has done anything wrong in suggesting the true fact that she and her

daughter are separate people.

After a brief look at the various psychological conditions affecting Kincaid's heroine we are able to draw certain conclusions on Annie John. As a young child, like all children (according to Freud), Annie John is deeply attached to her mother. While this attachment is generally supposed to last until about the fourth year of one's life, Annie never transfers this affection to her father, in what Freud would dictate as a step in the right direction toward normal female sexual development. Instead Kincaid's heroine transfers her Oedipal attachments to extra-familial lovers. This transference takes place in the middle of adolescence for Annie. Part of the reason for this familial disintegration is because as each woman matures physically she

comes to realize she is not the center of her mother's universe. She determines she must compete with her father for the affections of her mother, and also comes to terms with her mother's own perceived role in the household. As a young, Annie identifies her mother as head of the household. In fact the mother figure has betrayed the daughter in allowing her to think (a) that mother and daughter would never be separated and that no one would ever come between them, and (b) that they are powerful. It is not until adolescence that each young woman comes to terms with the subjugation of her own mother through marriage and motherhood and the expectations society applies to these roles.

"Being a mother is the noblest of jobs in this world. Our relationship with our daughters is

one that has far reaching affects on the development and socialization of our daughters from birth to adulthood" (Garis 2).

Though a lot of work has been done on Jamaica Kincaid's novel, *Annie John* (1985), the researcher believes that writing from a fresh perspective will better illuminate and help decipher the complexities in her work. The challenges in Kincaid's work lie in her keen ability to weave conflicting issues of family, tradition, colonization and slavery into each of her main characters, making it difficult to separate one issue from another, or even to separate a character from her location. However it is not the goal of this paper to separate the issues a character contains, or to explore how Kincaid's characters are able to feel conflicting feelings toward their family members at

the same time. This is an examination of the long-term Electra complexes to understand the development of Annie John's character.

Kincaid's work has been examined from a feminist, psychological perspective before, but this method is different in its inclusion of Sigmund Freud's preverbal and pre-Oedipal stages. Instead of continuing to work under the assumption that Kincaid's heroines are subconsciously trying to fulfill their Oedipal urges toward their fathers, Kincaid's heroines are actually perpetually fixated on their mothers to the point of treating these connections like romantic relationships. Kincaid's father figures are relegated to the peripheries of her texts while the mother figures take center stage as the site of adoration, love, desire, and later patriarchy and betrayal.

During the latency ages and years, 6-12 years old, a daughter looks up to her mother as an idol and the perfect image of what she strives to be when she is older. The Self Psychology Theory of Normal Child Development states that all children, at some point in their development, need validation and acknowledgment from parental figures. Over time, these lead to the child's capacity to feel pride and take pleasure in their accomplishments, and to feel a sense of competence: "It is important to know that a mother's response to her influence the development and maintenance of self-esteem and self-assertive ambitions in her. A mother's response should mirror back to her child a sense of worth, which in turn creates the development of self-respect" (Hurlock 13).

Children who are deprived of these essential responses or who instead are subjected to criticism, ridicule, or abuse for their efforts to achieve, their development could freeze at that stage in their life. They grow older, but that certain part of "self" stays at that stage in development and they continue to respond to people around them as a young needy child (Rose 100). This will get in the way of forming healthy relationships with others. As adults, they will always be looking to some outside source for approval or recognition (Garis 40).

The relationship between mother and daughter only grows according to Chodorow because of the recognition the young girl sees of her mother in herself. This is a "primary identification – a sense of oneness; primary love – not

differentiating between her own and her mother's interests: and extensive dependence"(69). In terms of Kincaid's heroines these young women do not turn their libidinal attractions to their fathers, though their recognition of their mothers in themselves is abundantly clear. Natov goes on to say that:

In their identification with the mother, girls experience themselves as inextricably linked to, defined, and completed by this connection. The struggle to separate from the mother, then, is particularly wrenching for girls, for to separate is to deny the mother, which for girls is also to deny some part of the self (2).

For Freud, normal sexual development can begin once the

young boy has given up his desire to replace his father and begins to see himself in his father, thus leaving his fixation on his mother in favor of extra familial sexual desire. By this definition of Freudian sexual development, the heroines never progress beyond their Oedipal yearnings for their mothers, thus entering into what he describes as "normal" sexual development (Jung 308).

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The core of Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* (1985) is the loss of love in childhood. Kincaid's vivid imagery encapsulates the moment of Annie's devastating break with her mother:

At that, everything stopped. The whole earth fell silent.

the two black things joined together in the middle of the room separated, hers going to her, mine coming back to me...But I couldn't move, and when I looked down it was as if the ground had opened up between us, making a deep and wide split. On one side of the split stood my mother...on the other side stood I, in my arms carrying my schoolbooks and inside carrying the thimble that weighed worlds (102-3).

In addition to exploring emotions of loss inherent in the mother-daughter bond, Kincaid also crafts her main characters as metaphors for the oppressive forces of colonization. Moira Ferguson comments, in her

critical analysis of *Annie John*, that Annie's mother exists as an allegory of "an imperial presence", an external force that "protects and indoctrinates" and inspires the girl's rejection of colonial domination (81). The colonialist themes that run throughout Kincaid's fiction infuse depth and political significance into her work. As Diane Simmons, in *World Literature Today*, states, "At heart, Jamaica Kincaid's work is not about the charm of a Caribbean childhood, nor is it about colonialism. Nor, finally, is it about black and white in America. At heart, her work is about loss" (466).

The primal scene in *Annie John* takes place after Annie has begun to go through puberty and her mother has tersely told her that things between the two of them must change. "Because of this young-lady business, Annie Sr.

has begun to look unfavorably upon Annie, Annie Sr.'s expectations of her changing with Annie's changing body" (27). After weeks of growing disapproval on the part of Annie Sr. toward Annie, Annie attempts to prove herself with a certificate of merit from Sunday school. She says, "I rushed home with my certificate in hand, feeling that with this prize I would reconquer my mother – a chance for her to smile on me again" (30). However when Annie returns home, she believes the house empty until strange sounds lead her to her parents' bedroom. Annie finds her parents making love, but her eyes are fixated on her mother's hand circling her father's back in a loving caress. She says, "If I were to forget everything else in the world, I could not forget her hand

as it looked then. I could also make out that the sounds I had heard were her kissing my father's ears and his mouth and his face. I looked at them for I don't know how long" (31). Annie, having fallen out of favor with her mother rushes home to seek her acceptance and is confronted with the primal scene. This moment changes things between Annie and her mother forever. As if she had walked in on her lover with another person, Annie vows that "all that was finished now" between her and her mother (32). "Their paradisiacal hiatus is over", and things between the two women take a sour turn as Annie attempts to assert her own individuality and sexuality, which both prove completely different from those of her mother (Spitz 415).

After Annie removes herself

from her parents' bedroom, instead of discussing the events that just transpired, Annie stands near her chair "half draped over the table, staring at nothing in particular and trying to ignore my mother's presence. Though I couldn't remember our eyes having met, I was quite sure that she had seen me in the bedroom" (31). This dual voyeurism – Annie watching her mother but not leaving the room and Annie Sr. watching Annie but not asking her to leave the room- leads to a seminal confrontation between the two, as Annie Sr. asks:

...in a voice that was sort of cross and sort of something else, "Are you just going to stand there doing nothing all day?" The something else was new; I had never heard it in her voice

before.

I couldn't say exactly what it was, but I know that it caused me to

replay, "And what if I do ?" and at the same time to stare at her

directly in the eyes. It must have been a shock to her, the way I

-spoke. I had never talked back to her before (31).

It is almost as if Annie Sr. has challenged Annie with her sexuality, a challenge which causes Annie to "talk back" to her mother in defiance. Annie's mother turns away in defeat, knowing that Annie accepts her behavior as betrayal, as Annie vows that from now on everything between she and her mother will be different. Following the primal scene and the family meal Annie and her

mother go on their customary Sunday walk, saying, "My mother did not come with us. I don't know what she stayed home to do. On our walk, my father tried to hold my hand, but I pulled myself away from him, doing it in such a way that he would think I felt too big for that now" (32). Perhaps Annie does not believe herself "too big" for these kinds of gestures at this point, but "she is completely aware that a divide now separates herself from her parents" (Chodorow 902).

The pre-Oedipal phase of development is Roni Natov's focus in her treatment of the relationship between Annie and her mother. In discussing Annie's pre-Oedipal adolescence Natov helps illuminate the relationship between the pre-Oedipal/preverbal phase in Annie's life and what Freud himself

describes as "normal". About femininity he says:

We knew, of course, that there had been a preliminary stage

of attachment to the mother, but we did not know that it

could be so rich in content and so long-lasting, and could leave behind so many opportunities for fixations and dispositions.

during this time the girl's father is only a troublesome rival; in

some cases the attachment to her mother lasts beyond the

fourth year of her life ( Vol. XXII 119).

Throughout the entirety of the novel, Annie's father is continuously relegated to a peripheral role in her family life. Though Mr. John built their house and every single piece of furniture

in it "with his own hands", it remains clear that Annie Sr. is the focal point of Annie's familial sphere, and the focus of her own affections. Of her parents Annie says, "when my eyes rested on my father, I didn't think very much of the way he looked. But when my eyes rested on my mother, I found her beautiful" (18). Annie's father is almost a nonentity from her point of view, barring the few times Annie mentions him as a rival of her mother's affections (Garis 269).

One day when her father arrives home for lunch earlier than normal, Annie comes home to find her parents already deep in conversation, and Annie's mother only greets her "absentmindedly". After mulling over her meal in silence she thinks:

I could not believe that she

couldn't see how miserable I was

and so reach out a hand to comfort me and caress my cheek,

the way she usually did when she sensed that something was

amiss with me. I could not believe how she laughed at

everything he said, and how bitter it made me feel to see how

much she liked (83).

For many critics the female Oedipus complex seems to be at work in Kincaid's texts. Roni Natov addresses some of the implied female Oedipal longings within *Annie John* in her essay "Mothers and Daughters: Jamaica Kincaid's Pre-Oedipal Narrative":

As she snuggles against her father, she is a child who has wet

her bed, but on his lap she feels the stirrings of sexuality and

the surfacing of Oedipal feelings. "Through the folds of my

nightie, I could I could feel the hair on his legs [...] A funny

feeling went through me that I liked and was frightened of at

the same time, and I shuddered". She retreats from these

feelings, from sexuality altogether, as she returns to her

original source of sustenance,

her mother (11).

Annie also works to separate herself from the girl who wanted to be a smaller version of her own mother. She says:

We both noticed that now if she said that something I did reminded her of her own self at my age, I would try to do it in a different way, or, failing that, do it in a way that she could

not stomach. She returned the blow by admiring and praising

everything that she suspected had special meaning for me (87).

These antagonistic relationships are the result of our heroines' struggles to differentiate themselves from their mothers and more

importantly, the circular colonial lives they symbolize.

Adolescence is a phase when relationships with peers slowly replace the relationship with parents. As your daughter grows and moves beyond her latency age years, it is normal for daughters to believe that their mother cannot possibly understand her or how she is feeling. It is part of the development process. It is generally short-term phenomenon and during these times, if moms can persevere through these few years there's usually a regaining of closeness by the late teens/young adulthood. "Research tells us, that the mother- daughter bond is so enduring that despite continued bouts of conflict, that 80 to 90 percent of women at midlife rate their relationship with their mother as good" (Tannen 110).

It's important not to personally take the "I hate you" and "You're so mean" messages. They are merely words of "frustration and volatile" emotion. At these times stop yourself and do not stay in close proximity to her. Let her anger calm and it may be best to let her "unwind" until she's ready to come to you. "Remember you are the mature and understanding adult and need to act in that fashion" (Viorst 107).

In the middle of adolescence Annie finds herself in an all-girls school, and becomes ensconced in a world in which young men simply do not exist. "The girls in her class engage in all sorts of pseudo-sexual behavior, as hormones surge Annie finds her classmates pinching each other's bottoms and in each other's laps, arms wrapped around necks"

(Annie 37). As the girls grow a bit older and begin to mature physically, each change is shared among them, from sprouting breasts to the commencement of menstruation. Annie and her friends compare and explore each other's bodies among the gravestones behind their school during their recess, making with each other for lack of and disinterest in boys:

On hearing somewhere that if a boy rubbed your breasts they would quickly swell up, I passed along this news. Since in the world we occupied and hoped forever to occupy boys were banished, we had to make do with ourselves. What perfection we found in each other, sitting on these

tombstones

of long-dead people who had been the masters of our ancestors! (50).

While it is in her relationship with Gwen, that Annie first begins exploring her sexuality on a more physical level, it is in her relationship with the Red Girl that "Annie's sadomasochistic urges surface". The Red Girl, who does not bathe or change her clothes frequently, represents the antithesis of everything Annie is expected to be. She never washes her hair or hands, "And on top of that, she had such an unbelievable, wonderful smell, as if she had never taken a bath in her whole life" (57). Unlike Annie, who as a young girl frequently took ritualistic baths with her mother, the Red Girl's mother seems

completely unconcerned with "her hygiene and personal presentation" (Harris 109). The Red Girl also represents a darker sexuality that is mired in faithfulness and secrecy. Annie meets the Red Girl behind the backs of both her mother and Gwen, knowing that both would feel hurt and would disapprove of such an unruly friend. Distinct from the tame and adoring romance between Annie and Gwen, the Red Girl introduces Annie to the pleasures of pain:

Then still without saying a word, the Red Girl began to pinch

me. She pinched hard, picking up pieces of my almost

nonexistent flesh and twisting it around. At first. I vowed not

to cry, but it went on for so long that tears I could not control streamed down my face (63).

In each stage of development we have "a psychological task. The psychological task of adolescence is the task of becoming one's own person". While growing up children imitate parental and adult roles, but during this period of a person's life it is a time for separating from the day-to-day influence and control of parents. It is also a time when "young people lesson their dependence upon parents for love, support, care, direction, and security". Adolescence is "a phase when relationships with peers slowly replace the relationship with parents". Your daughter is separating from you and learning to have an independent existence from her mother. This period in

young people and their parents' lives is neither simple nor easy, and in many respects it is similar to "a period of mourning, loss and grief" (Yung 204-5).

Annie Sr. certainly exhibits resentment for Annie's youthful freshness when, upon seeing Annie speak with a group of boys out in public, repeatedly berates her as a "slut", notably spoken in French Patois, the language consistently reserved in Kincaid's novels as the language between women. When Annie returns from her outing in which she canoodled with Mineu and his friends, she is confronted with her mother's fiery anger:

She went on to say that, after all the years she had spent drumming into me the proper way to conduct myself when speaking to young men, it

had pained her to see me behave in

the manner of a slut (only she used the French-patois work for

it) in the street and that just to see me had caused her to feel

shame (102).

The gift of independence is so important. A mother should allow her daughter her independence as she goes through this process and stage of development. "Moms, give her permission to be herself and not another "you". The daughter should be whom she wants to be". It is not healthy for a mother to make her daughter be like her. If a daughter is having trouble during adolescence, it is often because both mother and daughter don't know who are they. They are learning who they are and

just trying to fit in, "Let her become her genuine self. Let her learn who that itself is. Celebrate that special girl" (Heung 106).

Annie is "berated" so fiercely that she begins to feel she is drowning in the word "slut" instead of water, leaving her grasping for a comeback: "As if to save myself, I turned to her and said, "Well, like father like son, like mother like daughter" (Annie 102). The fight between Annie and her mother stops at this point and their "two black things" meet in between them. Annie's mother, threatened by her progress into adolescence and her transformation into a sexual creature, tears her down, breaking her attempts to differentiate herself from her mother. Interestingly, Annie uses this same tactic of similarity to point out her mother's own flaws,

highlighting Annie's belief that her mother has parlayed her sexuality into her current life of disinterested comfort (Annie 307).

Annie John is a story of a girl's coming-of-age. On a conscious level the protagonist is contemplating death, friendship, sexual desire, and the development in her body; she is also experiencing a deeper need to cut herself off from her mother, even in the process she must hurt them both. Narrated exclusively by the fifteen-year-old, first-person protagonist, *Annie John* explores the inseparable bond between mother and daughter as it provides both the illusion of security and the movement toward psychological separation. Influenced greatly by autobiographical elements, the novel traces Annie's coming of age, from her innocent adoration of her

mother, who has the same name, through her rejection of her mother in the effort to establish her own individual identity, to her departure from home, the island of Antigua in the West Indies. Annie's quest is not only to emerge in adolescence with her own self-identity but also to integrate the complexity of her Caribbean heritage with its legacies of colonization, cultural differences, and pluralist ideologies. She seeks an individuality based on her separateness from all those around her (Tannen 132).

In the opening chapters, the book's "languid rhythms, sensuous imagery, and sharply honed sentences" revolve around the dominant image of Annie's mother's hand. At ten, Annie learns of the death of a girl younger than herself who has died in her mother's arms. She spends

her childhood completely within her mother's world. She studies her shopping in the market, talking to her friends, eating her meals, and laughing with her father. She bathes in her mother's intimacy, revealing in the scents of oils and flowers in their common bath. When Annie learns that her mother has helped to prepare a dead girl's body for burial, she recoils in horror. Her innocence broken by the reality of death foreshadows the end of her childhood and initiates the inevitable separation from her mother as Annie moves toward adulthood (Murdoch 33).

Annie John chronicles the life of the main character, Annie John, from the age of ten until the age of seventeen. Annie John lives with her mother and father in a city on the island of Antigua. During her tenth year, Annie becomes obsessed

with the idea of death after spending the summer outside the city near a cemetery and learning that children die. When she returns to the city, Annie starts stopping by funeral parlors just to watch mourners. One day, a young hunchbacked girl of her age dies. Annie rushes from school to attend the girl's wake where she gets to view the dead girl's body. Later, she realizes that in her excitement she forgot to bring the fish home for dinner. She makes up a small lie, but her mother knows the truth. For her punishment, Annie is forced to eat her dinner outside under the breadfruit tree (Parvisini 66).

My mother and I often took a bath together. Sometimes it was just a plain bath, which did not take very long. Other Times it was a special bath in which the barks and

flowers of

Many different trees, together with all sorts of oils, were Boiled in the same large cauldron (Annie 3).

Annie describes this scenario in the beginning of the second chapter, "A Circling Hand". The initial portions of this chapter describe Annie's early childhood with her mother. Annie views that early world as a paradise in which her mother and she were completely united. The ritualized baths were particularly intimate scenes during which the mother and daughter almost joined their bodies back together, as they had been before Annie's birth. Since Annie desires to stay permanently united with her mother, these moments of bathing represent some of her happier times with her mother. As the novel continues,

Annie's ability to enact the intimacy that these baths created will fail. Annie spends the majority of the book fighting against the idea that she and her mother are separate people" I was sure I could never let those hands touch me again; I was sure I could never let her kiss me again. All that was finished" (16).

Annie John makes this statement towards the end of the second chapter. Earlier in the day, Annie had rushed home from Sunday school excited to tell her mother about a prize that she had won. Instead, she had found her parents making love. In particular, she had seen her mother's hand tracing a circle around her father's back, a motion that provides the title to the chapter "A Circling Hand". Because her mother's hand was involved in a sexual act, Annie now wants to

fully reject it. Annie sees her parents' sexuality as a means by which they exclude her. In particular, she feels that her mother has completely betrayed her by forming a union with her father. For Annie, her mother has fully neglected and betrayed her through her sexuality and therefore their mother-daughter relationship was permanently changed. "Annie's anger at the existence of her parents' sexuality will continue throughout the novel" (Lindfors 201).

Annie's schooling is also an excellent representation of the colonial forces at work in Kincaid's texts. Annie and her classmates, who also attend a British run and founded girls' school, are repeatedly scolded as wild and uncouth. Though the British, under the guise of patriarchal benevolence, have attempted to

"civilize" these young, black, native Antiguan girls, Annie's teacher exclaims that all of her efforts have been in vain. Annie's good grades make her the perfect of her class, despite her occasionally mischievous behavior. One day during a history lesson, Annie grows bored because she knows the material and starts reading ahead in her book. She finds out that Christopher Columbus was imprisoned later in his life for having offended the Queen. Annie sees a picture of him in chains and writes under it, "The Great Man Can No Longer Move", a phrase that her father once used to describe her grandfather. Her teacher, Miss Edward, sees her and upbraids her for blasphemous behavior. Annie is sent to the principal who takes the perfect position away from her and orders

her to copy Book I and Book II of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. After her scolding, Annie returns home hoping that her mother will cheer her up, but her father and mother seem too absorbed in each other to notice her distress. Furthermore, her mother tricks her into eating breadfruit, something Annie detests, by making it look like rice. When faced with her mother's betrayal, Annie feels complete hatred for her (Annie 103-4).

In "Exiled at Home: 'Daughters of the Dust' and the Many Post-Colonial Conditions", Catherine Cueinella and Renee R. Curry discuss exile and migration and their many varieties:

Exile has a long history.  
Paul Tabori locates the  
earliest exile

"in the flight of the Egyptian  
Sin he about 2000 BC". Since

That historic exile, the humanities has defined the term in

Many ways. "Exile" bears connotations ranging from chosen

Separation to coerced banishment. The overt pathos of exile

Is loss, sorrow, and nostalgia. Scholars remain divided about

Whether the pain of exile stems from the act of separation or

From the longing for the actual lost geography (198).

Generally during summer vacation, Annie and her mother spend all their time together. Her mother lets Annie sleep in and then adds some hot water to the

bath for her. Sometimes they even take a bath together after her mother adds herbs and spices that the obeah woman, a local healer, recommends. After the bath, they usually go to town where her mother teaches Annie how to shop and get the best products for the best prices. Annie thinks that her mother is very beautiful and very wise. Mrs. John (Annie Sr.) grew up in Dominica but came to Antigua when she was sixteen following a conflict with her parents. Annie's father had children by other women too, and sometimes these women curse Mrs. John on the street. One day, Annie returns home and find her parents making love in bed. But she feels rejected when seeing her parents making love in bed; she is not part of their union. In particular, she feels angry at her

mother's neglect of their special relationship and starts to view her coldly (Hurlock 108).

When Annie starts school, she becomes best friend with Gwen. Annie is the brightest student in the class whose essay on the first day of school is praised. Although liked by the teachers, Annie also is popular with the students since she stands up for everyone, is good at sports, and makes rambunctious jokes when in private. Annie and Gwen walk together. Annie tries to use their relationship to "assuage her grief" at being neglected by her mother, but it does not entirely work (Ferguson 27).

Annie eventually befriends the Red Girl, a tomboyish girl from a lower class who runs around dirty and disheveled. Annie admires her unstructured, carefree life and

Annie starts to mimic her by playing marbles. Annie also begins a pattern of petty thievery to buy the Red Girl presents and lies daily so that she can meet up with the Red Girl after school. One day Annie's mother catches her coming out from under the house, where Annie hides her stolen loot. Her mother sees her with a marble and searches everywhere to find Annie's stash. Annie denies that she has any other marbles despite her mother's entreaties and takes pleasure in her mother's inability to find them. Eventually, Annie starts to menstruate and the Red Girl moves away, so Annie stops playing marbles altogether.

Annie's unhappiness comes to resemble a heavy black ball inside her that is covered with cobwebs. Annie cannot easily say what

caused this ball but it makes her feel miserable all the time. Her success continues at school and she is promoted into a class with much older girls. Annie feels socially isolated and even finds Gwen to be a dull companion. Annie dreams of moving to Belgium, a place that Jane Eyre visited, so that Annie's mother can no longer find her. One day after school, Annie avoids Gwen and heads into town instead. Annie starts at her reflection in a store window and feel overcome by sadness at seeing herself look so ugly and ragged. A group of boys nearby starts teasing her and she speaks to one of them since she knew him as a child. When they keep laughing at her, she goes home. Her mother confronts her in the yard and tells Annie that she saw Annie's flirtatious behavior in town. After her mother calls Annie

a slut, Annie loses her temper and says, "like mother, like daughter". Her mother then says that she always loved her best until that moment. Annie senses that something dark has come between them. At dinner that night, Annie tells her father she wants her own trunk like the one that her mother has.

Annie suffers a mental breakdown that coincides with a three-month rainstorm and becomes bedridden. In her sickness, her behavior reverts to that of an infant. She cannot be left alone, she wets her bed, and she needs help eating. Both the local doctor and the obeah woman treat her, but she remains ill. Eventually, her grandmother, Ma Chess, comes. She heals Annie not with her powerful knowledge of obeah, but from holding her throughout the days. After Annie is

better, they notice that she has grown even taller than she was. She has to get a new set of clothing before returning to school (Annie 59).

Finally, Annie turns seventeen and decides to leave Antigua to study nursing in England. Now she looks forward to living a separate life and being away from her mother. As she walks to the boat with them, she remembers her young life with its warmth, but acknowledges that there is no space left for her at her parents' house. Her parents wave goodbye as she disappears on the boat and Annie lies in her cabin "with expectations of the future"(Spitz 418)."I could hear the small waves lap lapping around the ship. They made an unexpected sound as if a vessel filled with liquid had been placed on its side and was now emptying out" (Annie 21). This

quote comes at the very end of the final chapter "A Walk to the Jetty" and it is the final statement of the novel. Annie is on the boat that will take her to Barbados, from where she will then head to England. After waving goodbye to her mother, she is lying on her bed in her cabin listening to the water move. The way that she describes the water evokes her final separation from her mother specifically because its terminology parallels that of giving birth. Like the uterus, the waves sound like a "vessel filled with liquid"; furthermore, it sounds like the vessel is "emptying out" as the ship moves away. The watery sounds of the ship are taking Annie John away from her mother just as the act of birth once did. The salty water again plays an important symbolic role. In this second rebirth, Annie

John emerges as an independent separate self who will now fully make her own way in the world (Simmons 78).

Annie John is the narrator and central character in the novel, who therefore dominates the text. Because she is the narrator, everything that the reader hears and sees is "filtered through her voice" (Rose 12). Likewise, the depiction of herself and all the other characters comes as she wills it. As it most evident through her depiction of her mother, her description of what actually happens often takes place with a highly subjective perspective. Although just a growing girl, Annie is a complex figure (Heung 14). In her early youth, she struggles fiercely against the idea of separation from her mother. Her fears about being left alone in the world dominate her early days and when

they are not entirely resolved transform into bitterness and hatred. At the same time, as she grows into her adolescence, she learns to harden herself against efforts to restrict her personal freedom and articulation. Both Annie's mother and her teachers have a firm idea of who Annie should become. Annie manages to evade these definitions and develop a uniquely dual consciousness by both her abilities and her insolence. On the one hand, her ability to adhere to the colonial order allows her to become the best student in the class who made the class perfect and later promoted several grades above her level. On the other hand, she keeps up her feisty spirit by being rambunctious outside the classroom. She entertains the other girls with dirty songs, becomes a thief and a liar, and even an expert in marbles. While some of

these activities carry a dishonest taint, they all prove crucial to Annie's personal development in a colonial atmosphere that tries to define who thinks that she is. Annie's attitude often carries a certain arrogance, especially toward the end of the book where she believes many of the other characters to lack the necessary spirit, like Gwen, however even her defiance and arrogance seem understandable, since they are the tools that allowed her to thrive in a colonial environment that sought to define who is she (Caplan & Lebovicci 119).

The characterization of Mrs. John (Annie Sr.) only comes from Annie because Annie is the sole narrator of the novel. Because Annie hates her mother for much of the book, Mrs. John's character often comes across negatively. Given Annie's strong emotions toward her mother,

however, these impressions are not generally credible. Initially, Mrs. John appears to be a wonderful mother. She is strong, capable, and beautiful. When she walks through the markets in town, the sellers all run to greet her. She contains powerful knowledge about nature, the rituals of obeah, and even about death. It is she who first teaches Annie about death and she who later has the strength to prepare a dead child for the grave. Her ability not to be cowed by the ugly natural elements of the world shows her to be a courageous woman, especially in Annie's eyes.

The kindness of Annie's mother can initially be seen from the lengthy baths that she gives her, the fact that she kisses her before sleep even though Annie is supposed to lose the kiss as punishment, and the time that she takes to retell Annie the

family history as seen in her trunk. When Annie starts to dislike her mother, the mother still appears to be reasonable. Annie's initial anger at her mother starts because her mother insists on that they are separate people, which Annie cannot accept. Because Annie's anger at her mother appears to be an outgrowth of Annie's immaturity, it does not appear initially that Annie's mother has done anything wrong in suggesting the true fact that she and her daughter are separate people.

Annie John's second chapter, "The Circling Hand", begins with a lengthy description of Annie's childhood relationship with her mother. From the time she is born until her twelfth year Annie and her mother (Annie Sr.) are nearly inseparable. Particularly during the summers, while Annie is out of school, the two spend almost all of

their time together. Annie is permitted to follow her mother around, "even in her wake", as she completes the daily household tasks (17). This is not because Annie was necessarily much help, but "it was just to include [her] in everything" (Annie 17).

The boundless love between Annie and her mother is particularly clear when, in the course of a good cleaning, Annie Sr. cleans out Annie's trunk. This trunk contains every single article of use and importance in Annie's life – Some as momentous as christening outfits and others as mundane as baby bottles. Every piece of evidence in each stage of Annie's upbringing and major life events are there: pictures, items of clothing, favored toys and trinkets. In the trunk "there was a thermos, in which my mother had kept a tea

that was supposed to have a soothing effect on me; there was the dress I wore on my first birthday: a yellow cotton with green smocking on the front; there was the dress I wore on my second birthday", and the list goes on. Annie describes how her mother would periodically choose a section of their house to scour, and the process is the same when she cleans the old trunk:

If I was at home when she happened to do this, I was at her

Side, as usual. When she did this with the trunk, it was a

Tremendous pleasure, for after she had removed all the things

From the trunk, and aired them out, and changed the camphor

Balls, and then refolded the things and put them back in

their

Places in the trunk, as she held each thing in her hand she

Would tell me a story about myself (21).

Though Annie has heard all of these stories before, she never tires of listening to them, for they represent how much her mother loved her from the very beginning of her life, and how much care she has put in to documenting Annie's young life. Annie's mother left nothing out in her collection of Annie's past: "No small part of my life was so unimportant that she hadn't made a note of it, and how she would tell it to me over and over again" (Rose 22).

Beyond the perceived feelings of inherent "mother love", Annie also expresses ideas concerning the lack of mental and bodily

separation between her and her mother. Annie describes feeling physically connected to her mother in her recollection of the trip she took with her mother to Rat Island: "when we swam around this way [with Annie attached to her mother's back, clinging to her shoulders as she swims], I would think how much we were like the pictures of sea mammals I had seen, my mother and I" (Annie 42). Annie sees herself and her mother as one being. They are so close that to an onlooker they might even look like one creature.

Annie's mother is also a sexual creature, which is one of the reasons that Annie hates her. Mrs. John manages to captivate her husband's attentions as they eat lunch together and later they are actually shown having sex. The legacy of sexual

promiscuity seems to hang over Annie's mother early life. Her flight from Dominica at age sixteen took place after a fight with her father that appears most likely linked with her being engaged in some early sexual activity. Still, although Annie envies her parents' sexual union, Mrs. John does not seem to neglect her daughter by having sexual relationships with her husband. Because Annie's description of her mother is not believable, there is no way to determine if Mrs. John actually neglected her daughter in her attentions to her husband or not (108-109).

After a brief look at the various psychological conditions affecting Kincaid's heroine we are able to draw certain conclusions on Annie John. As a young child, like all children (according to Freud),

Annie John is deeply attached to her mother. While this attachment is generally supposed to last until about the fourth year of one's life, Annie never transfers this affection to her father, in what Freud would dictate as a step in the right direction toward normal female sexual development. Instead Kincaid's heroine transfers her oedipal attachments to extra-familial lovers. This transference takes place in the middle of adolescence for Annie. Part of the reason for this familial disintegration is because as each woman matures physically she comes to realize she is not the center of her mother's universe. She determines she must compete with her father for the affections of her mother, and also comes to terms with her mother's own perceived role in the household. As

a young, Annie identifies her mother as head of the household. In fact the mother figure has betrayed the daughter in allowing her to think (a) that mother and daughter would never be separated and that no one would ever come between them, and (b) that they are powerful. It is not until adolescence that each young woman comes to terms with the subjugation of her own mother through marriage and motherhood and the expectations society applies to these roles.

### Conclusion

Later on in the adolescent stage each young woman also begins to notice the patriarchal role her mother figure plays in her own life as a colonizing force. It is assumed that each woman will replicate the vanquished life of her mother as mother/wife, and all attempts are made on behalf of the mother

figure to ensure each young woman is properly brought up. This generally means that she will adhere to the social and cultural standards ascribed to post colonial women in the West Indies, while no account is ever taken of the heroine's expectations of and hopes for her own life. It is about this time that Kincaid's heroine becomes a sexual being, exploring her own sexuality outside the prescribed social realms of their upbringing. This exploration and later ownership of sexuality is an integral step in Kincaid's character's quest for personal independence, as it blatantly works against gendered cultural restrictions. Sexual freedom becomes a metaphor for personal freedom. The sexual behavior of Kincaid's heroine is particularly subversive because it is physically

unfruitful and non-reproductive. Instead of bearing children and perpetuating the cycles that dictate the lives of their mothers and mother figures, Annie John goes to extreme efforts to prevent childbirth and motherhood, believing the state as one of the main betrayals each mother has committed against herself. Freedom and independence are necessary for Kincaid's characters because so much of her work is commentary on the plight of women in the postcolonial West Indies.

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