

acquainted with daffodils, Lucy frames the poem within a Caribbean context by casting Mariah's "beloved daffodils in a scene she [Mariah] had never considered, a scene of conquered and conquests; a scene of brutes masquerading as angels and angels portrayed as brutes" (30). As with Annie John, imperial texts serve as points of departure from which Lucy can revise a colonial history. Using Wordsworth's poem, Lucy translates in meaning and into place the significance of daffodils within her colonial education. Again, the tables are turned as Lucy interprets the daffodils into a "scene of conquered and conquests" that evokes the struggle between good and evil, masters and slaves, colonizer and colonized.

In her interpretation of daffodils, Lucy attempts to bridge the "daffodil gap" by re-contextualizing a European history into a framework constructed around the Caribbean experience. Her tableaux underscores the colonizer's distorted version of history where the masters *appear* as angels and the slaves are *portrayed* as brutes. Lucy's depiction of history as a masquerade recalls Annie's presentation of it as a farce, where truth is twisted into a glorious lie and the masters, who had "such a lot to be ashamed of," are celebrated and remembered while the slaves, who had "done nothing wrong, except sit somewhere, defenseless," are vilified and forgotten. And so, where Annie John revises a false history so as to translate it into a context in keeping with Caribbean history, Lucy reassesses and interprets the function of imperial texts in a colonial education.

Subsequently, the reclamation of voice is introduced as Lucy loses and then regains it through a reinterpretation of the poem. As Helen Tiffin explains in her article, "Cold Hearts and Foreign Tongues," the colonial values that infuse Lucy's education are an integral part of her identity where the master's tongue serves to silence her own:

“Through Wordsworth’s poem, the politics of aesthetics has already been absorbed into Lucy’s heart; she is dressed in it, but she has also eaten it, internalised it.... Learning *by heart* the culture of others strangles self-expression—the absorption of their aesthetics, indeed their ‘tongue,’ cuts off one’s own” (918). And while Lucy must revise history so as to relate it to her personal experience, she must also take into account the contradictions and ambiguities that are part of her upbringing as she reinterprets the poem’s function and translates the master’s language into a Caribbean context.

To Lucy, the daffodils “looked simple, as if made to erase a complicated and unnecessary idea” (29). This idea of “erasure,” here embodied in daffodils, recalls the indoctrination of colonial values that threatens to erase the Caribbean body. As she explains the significance of daffodils to Mariah, Lucy stammers and bites her tongue (29). Thus, speech is affected, or perhaps more appropriately, infected, by colonial indoctrination, as the master’s language threatens to “erase” Lucy’s voice. Only by distancing herself from the daffodils is Lucy able to gain her voice back, as she translates the symbolic daffodils into a more personal scene of “conquered and conquests” (30). As she translates settings, she reinterprets language, and in doing so her stammering and tongue-biting (gibberish?) are replaced by voice. Her use of the master’s language, English, turns into a manipulation of words as she reinterprets the meaning of “brutes” and “angels” to identify, accordingly, the masters and the slaves. The master’s language then functions not only as an inhibitor of but also as a source for voice. Lucy loses her voice through indoctrination, yet regains it through the appropriation and subversion of the master’s language.

This manipulation of language recalls the many tongues Lucy has held in her mouth

as well as her experimentation with boys, one whom she “continued to kiss long after I had ceased to care about him one way or the other, just to see how undone he could become by my kisses” (82-83). Lucy’s experimentation with kissing a boy draws an association between colonialism, language, and the body where “by manipulating the tongues of others—putting *her* tongue in *their* mouths—Lucy takes back control of her own voice and body from capture by European texts of all kinds....” (Tiffin, “Cold Hearts and Foreign Tongues” 920). To Lucy, kissing a boy is a way to exert control over her body as she recaptures it from patriarchal systems that threaten to erase it. More importantly, however, the overt physical control in the act of kissing by which the “tongue” serves as an instrument to recapture the (physical) body corresponds to subtler means of control in the act of writing where language (the tongue) functions as the tool by which to revise and re-enter the historical narrative (the textual body).

The religious undertones found in Lucy’s revision of Wordsworth’s poem are brought to the fore as Lucy recalls her first reactions to a biblical story where Jesus feeds the multitudes with seven loaves and a few fish. Her primary interest then was to know how the fish was served, as she asked her mother, “But how did Jesus serve the fish? Was it boiled or fried?” Lucy’s question echoes a deeper concern of the post-colonial condition as she offers a seemingly simple explanation for her question:

It wasn’t such an unusual question. In the place where I grew up, many people earned their living by being fishermen When I had inquired about the way the fish were served with the loaves, to myself I thought, Not only would the multitudes be pleased to have something to eat, not only would they marvel at the miracle of turning so little into so much, but they might go on to pass judgment on the way the food tasted. In our house, we all preferred boiled fish. It was a pity that the people who recorded their life with Christ never mentioned this small detail, a detail that would have meant a lot to me. 39

In the words of a seven year-old, Lucy articulates the crux around which post-colonial narratives revolve: Where do I fit within the larger historical narrative? Through her questioning, Lucy offers an alternative reading of the master's discourse as she fills in the gaps with a running commentary that punctuates/punctures the story with an underlying post-colonial preoccupation. As with Wordsworth's poem, Lucy is unable to identify with the story of Jesus' life and thus resorts to her experience in order to bring it in line with her reality.

By commenting that it was not God, but *man* who wrote the Bible, Lucy undermines, at multiple levels, western hegemonic strategies that strive to establish and maintain control over the Other through "factual" history and "divine" authority. Written and translated by the master, the Bible serves as a powerful "pre-text" to the colonial enterprise. Using the English book as a metaphor for textual hegemony, Homi Bhabha explains, "The discovery of the book, is, at once a moment of originality and authority...an insignia of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline" (102). The Bible thus becomes, in Bhabha's terms, one of the "signs taken for wonders." However, in keeping with subversive postcolonial strategies, Lucy's account subtly interrogates the nature of what constitutes "factual" history and "divine" authority. In her observations, Lucy carefully points out that Christ's life was written by man and as such, provides a subjective view of history: it is "the people who recorded their life with Christ" who have control over how and what is told about a specific moment in time. Translated from the original, Lucy's *version* of the Bible, presumably King James' version, bears the mark of the colonizer; hence, authorial intention as well as textual

interpretation is put into question. As Simon During remarks in his essay "Postmodernism or Postcolonialism Today": "Of all the works that created new print languages, none had more authority than the sacred books....The sacred books, as vehicles of God's word, cannot be translated." Thus, "to deliver the Bible (or the Koran) to *any* demotic language is not just to allow nationalism to overpower the old church, but for meaning to precede form, for communication to precede revelation—it is to admit, in fact, the arbitrariness of the sign" (32).

This "arbitrariness of the sign" points to the usefulness of the Bible and texts in general as tools by which to impose and maintain hegemonic codes of conduct. Emerging from imperial centers, texts instituted norms of conduct and thus established fixed terms of "othering" where "Native 'other' and 'cannibal' became linked concepts in a European psyche already politically and religiously alert for signs of this ultimate sacrilege/sacrament" (Tiffin, Decolonising Fictions 42-43). However, Lucy's observations unseat the very tenets that hold up the Bible as "divine" and western history as "factual." By commenting that, indeed, the Bible was written not by God but by man and history far from being objective is a carefully sorted story that addresses and serves the interests of the dominant culture, Lucy reveals textual, and more specifically, divine history as malleable and subjective. History and its subjective nature, thus become, to borrow a phrase from Helen Tiffin, "a self-referring and self-serving" narrative that speaks to the interests of the culture that produces it.

Lucy's dismantling of the master's text, specifically, the Bible, not only contributes to a revision of history but also points to Lucy's impending redefinition of self. Her actions are in keeping with her identity. Named after Lucifer, Lucy struggles against

“divine” supremacy, embodied not only in Western texts but also in the God-like figure that is her mother. The idea of naming presented in Annie John is thus revisited in the last chapter of the novel as Lucy views her name not only as a source of pride but also as an identifying force: “It was the moment I knew who I was....Lucy, a girls’ name for Lucifer. That my mother would have found me devil-like did not surprise me, for I often thought of her as god-like, and are not the children of gods devils? I did not grow to like the name Lucy—I would have preferred to be called Lucifer outright—but whenever I saw my name I always reached out to give it a strong embrace” (152-153). Moreover, Lucy has gone a step further than Annie in her attempt to redefine her identity. As Moira Ferguson explains: “Annie John’s name is also her mother’s; at another anticolonial level, she must stop mimicking the master’s name. She must refuse to mimic or do so only as long as she chooses.” In contrast, “Lucy... embraces the antithetical name wholeheartedly. Lucifer is configured, after all, as the perfect Western villain. Lucy finds part of her postcolonial identity in that name, a female version of the quest for identity that involves confrontation with the mother-God” (Jamaica Kincaid 127). Thus, Lucy, unlike Annie, does not turn to but against her mother as a way to define herself. Her name is not a reflection of her mother, but an opposing force that struggles against the figure of a God-like mother.

Having named who she is, Lucy is now ready to write herself. Using the notebook Mariah has given her, Lucy writes her full name across the top of the page. Significantly, by writing her name across the page, Lucy writes across class, race, and national lines as she embarks in the decolonizing project of self-definition. Whereas Mariah earlier provided Lucy with books⁶ that inscribed Lucy’s condition as Other, Lucy now maps

herself unto the master's world: "The notebook...enables her to reverse the colonial project since the notebook visually signs patriotism in its red, white, and blue composition....this time Lucy is the vandal who conquers the original invaders. She will use the mark of the colonizer on behalf of the postcolonial agitators" (Ferguson, "Lucy and the Mark of the Colonizer" 254).

The closing of the novel, however ambiguous, points to a new beginning—uncharted territory—as Lucy weeps over the notebook and her death wish, "I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it," as well as her name become "one great big blur" (164). Although inconclusive, I would like to argue that the ending does intimate a resolution: "death," a return to the past, will no longer be a choice for Lucy. She once loved her mother to the point of self-erasure, to the point of death,⁷ and in a moment of weakness, she yearns to return to this moment one last time. However, her death wish—her desire to return to the maternal fold—is dispelled as her tears dissolve, although they do not erase, this person that was. No longer a child, Lucy ceases to be defined by and through the mother and can now begin to define herself. Her past recorded, the body remembered, Lucy "the character has evolved into the author of her own autobiography" and can now free herself from memory's bonds (Chick 103). She will no longer forget herself in someone else for she has created a self-history that not only begins to "invent" (as Lucy had hoped (135)), but more critically starts to define her postcolonial identity.

The idea of history as a narrative, as a story with a definite and defining perspective, is revisited in Kincaid's The Autobiography of My Mother. Here, the protagonist opens up a narrative space in which to define herself by first examining and dismantling the master's narrative, namely textual history. Controlled by the dominant culture, textual

history serves as a powerful tool of the hegemonic project as it seals specific interpretations of history, those of the colonizer, through the written word. Sealed in texts, these interpretations become paradigmatic and totalizing as "the book assumes a greater authority than the experience of the colonised" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, The Post-colonial Studies Reader 9). Thus, these interpretations, sealed and defined as "official" history, in turn define and dismiss oral history as "legend" or "myth." As a consequence, the master's account eclipses the native's experience where "such accounts will always operate to confine and control the text's cultural 'other' [the native] and to absorb, marginalise or vilify alterity in general" (Brydon and Tiffin 80). In the hands of the colonizer, history, a many-sided story, becomes a slanted, restrictive account told from the dominant culture's perspective.

In Xuela's recounting of an incident about a mysterious woman who, with her beauty, lured a boy to his death, Xuela reveals how thin yet rigid a line there is between "history" and "myth":

it came only to exist in our minds, an act of faith, like the Virgin Birth for some people, or other such miracles; and it had the same power of belief and disbelief, only unlike the Virgin Birth we had seen this ourselves....It was almost as if the reality of this terror was so overwhelming that it became a myth, as if it had happened a very long time ago and to other people, not us. I know of friends who witnessed this event with me and, forgetting that I was present, would tell it to me in a certain way, daring me to believe them; but it is only because they do not themselves believe what they saw with their own eyes, or in their own reality. This is no longer without an explanation to me. Everything about us is held in doubt and we the defeated define all that is unreal, all that is not human, all that is without love, all that is without mercy. Our experience cannot be interpreted by us; we do not know the truth of it. Our God was not the correct one, our understanding of heaven and hell was not a respectable one. Belief in that apparition of a naked woman with outstretched arms beckoning a small boy to his death was the belief of the illegitimate, the

poor, the low. I believed in that apparition then and I believe in it now.
(36-38)

By juxtaposing the event of the "Woman in the River" with that of the Virgin Birth, Xuela reveals how in the crossing of this line—from what is oral to what is written—"myth" is transformed into history. Using the metaphor of the English book, Homi Bhabha addresses this power of the written word to construe and legitimize reality: "The discovery of the book installs the sign of appropriate representation: the word of God, truth, art creates the conditions for a beginning, a practice of history and narrative" (105). Validated by the written word and authenticated as "official" history, the text supersedes any experience outside of it. Consequently, the "book," specifically the Bible, as it is translated and interpreted by the colonizer, becomes an account of the colonizer that in turn precludes any account of the Caribbean as told by the colonized. Thus, the Caribbean people, already spoken for, their reality already interpreted, are relegated to silence: "Our experience cannot be interpreted by us; we do not know the truth of it. Our God was not the correct one, our understanding of heaven and hell was not a respectable one."

Bereft of the textual tools by which to "capture" and analyze (objectify) experience, the spectators resort to an "othering" of their own whereby the transformation of reality into myth leads to a self-dissociation from the experience and a perceptual split in identity: "the reality of this terror [the apparition] was so overwhelming that it became a myth, as if it had happened a very long time ago and to other people, not us" (37). This double image of "othering"—the first in relation to the (European) Self and the second within the (Caribbean) Other—points to the crippling effect of a colonial education on the

Caribbean psyche. The dissociation between self-perception and reality, as presented by the spectators, mirrors the numbing effect that a doctored colonial history has on the colonized subject. Falling outside "the sign of appropriate representation," the Caribbean people and their experience have no recourse by which to remove themselves from suspicion or guard themselves against erasure: "If our schooling was successful, most of us would not have believed we had witnessed such a thing" (49). Thus, the Caribbean experience becomes a suspect reality, where the Caribbean identity dwells in a state self-doubt. As Xuela explains: "I know of friends who witnessed this event with me and, forgetting that I was there, would tell it to me in a certain way, daring me to believe them; but it is only because they do not themselves believe what they saw with their own eyes, or in their own reality" (37).

However, through her account of the Woman in the River, Xuela demystifies the colonizer's account of history as she questions the verity of it. Refusing to succumb to textual authority—"I believed in that apparition then and I believe in it now"—Xuela dismantles the European construct of history that denies the reality of her experience. Her account, she claims, is as "real" as that of the Virgin Birth, if not more so, for "unlike the Virgin Birth we had seen this for ourselves." By exposing a many-sided story whose "truth" rests solely on the narrator, she brings to the fore the predicament faced by the Caribbean people of finding a voice by and a framework in which to tell *their* story. Unable to extricate themselves from the colonial condition from which they emerge, post-colonialist texts resort to interpellating European discourses as a way to reestablish identity. Thus, the paradoxical nature of validating an experience through a reassessment of cultural values that negate it is brought to the fore as Xuela grounds her account within

a Caribbean framework that allows for contradictions and ambiguities to exist.

Significantly, Xuela, as do Annie John and Lucy, chooses to speak the colonizer's language rather than the French patois spoken by the colonized. Her choice is not so much a rejection of her culture, as it is a decision to appropriate a language that has oppressed her. What was implied in Lucy and Annie John is now articulated as Xuela refuses to use a language that will mark her as a victim of a system, and instead, opts to use the master's language while transforming it into her own. As she explains in a description of an encounter with her stepmother: "She spoke to me then in French patois....She would do this to me all the time we knew each other...I recognized this to be an attempt on her part to make an illegitimate of me, to associate me with the made-up language of people regarded as not real—the shadow people, the forever humiliated, the forever low" (30-31).

Aware of language as signifier, Xuela refuses to be marked by it. Instead, she recognizes the power that language has to signify and chooses to speak as signifier while subverting the oppressive encoding of the master's language. Voiced by the Other, the encoding of the master's language is nullified as the Other uses it to redefine an identity that encompasses the contradictions of a European/Caribbean upbringing. As Simon During notes: "In both literature and politics the post-colonial drive towards identity centres around language, partly because in postmodernity identity is barely available elsewhere. For the post-colonial to speak or write in the imperial tongues is to call forth a problem of identity, to be thrown into mimicry and ambivalence" (41). Yet, it is in this ambivalence, in this interplay of language, that the postcolonial subject escapes restrictive definition. Xuela's choice ultimately explodes the binary constructs that constrict the

Caribbean subject as she appropriates herself of dualities—signifier/signified, Other/Self, master/slave—and voices them into a language where binary demarcations no longer hold. Thus, language becomes malleable as it voices the experience of the Other while redefining the latter into Self.

By giving voice to the marginalized culture through the master's speech, language, now voiced by the Other, is redefined through context and new meaning inhabits the word. What had been a discourse uttered by the Self (the dominant culture) now becomes a response on behalf of the marginalized, and more importantly, the Other, empowered by language, voice, can now articulate and redefine it(Self). It is thus not merely a matter of using the master's language but redefining its terms into an articulation of the Other as Self. As Soyinka explains: "And when we borrow an alien language to sculpt or paint in, we must begin by co-opting the entire properties of that language as correspondences to properties in our matrix of thought and expression" (qtd. In Gates 84).

In The Autobiography of My Mother, this "borrowed" language that was once used to revise history, is now used to articulate an account of the postcolonial subject. Confronted by her teacher about some letters that she had written to her father, Xuela remarks: "I had, through the use of some words, changed my situation; I had perhaps even saved my life. To speak of my own situation, to myself or to others, is something I would always do thereafter. It is in this way that I came to be so extremely conscious of myself, so interested in my own needs, so interested in fulfilling them, aware of my grievances, aware of my pleasures" (22). With the master's language at her disposal, Xuela not only speaks in but writes herself out of it. Speaking from the body, to use Cixous' term⁸, Xuela can finally engage in a self-articulation on and in her own terms. It

is her desires, her needs, and not the master's terms that will inform her writing.

Engaged in a discourse of self, Xuela no longer needs to look to and struggle against the past for self-identification. The forces that have shaped her she can now accept not as disabling but as empowering: "I am of the vanquished, I am of the defeated. The past is a fixed point, the future is open-ended; for me the future must remain capable of casting a light on the past such that in my defeat lies the seed of my great victory, in my defeat lies the beginning of my great revenge"(216). Where Annie and Lucy oscillate between past and present, Xuela, no longer looking to but *at* the past, can now move beyond it and define herself within the immediate. More importantly though, for Xuela the "future is open-ended," visionary: yet to be written and waiting to be transformed. She may be "of the vanquished," "of the defeated," but she will not remain so. She will use it to empower her future, as her revenge lies in the transformation of defeat into victory, of Other into Self.

In The Autobiography of My Mother, the idea of naming as self-identification presented in Annie John and Lucy is revisited once more where it is finally, and critically so, abandoned. Turning inwards, to the body rather than to a textual past, Xuela, unlike Annie and Lucy, no longer needs her name in order to define herself. Whereas Annie John, in an attempt to define herself, earlier declares "My name is Annie John" (130), Xuela now responds, "And your name, whatever it might be, eventually was not the gateway to who you really were... To look into it, to look at it, could only fill you with despair; the humiliation could only make you intoxicated with self-hatred" (79). Xuela realizes that her name is not a source of identity, but the master's projection of it, and to invoke her name in an attempt to negate or erase the past, to be reborn, is an impossibility

for as Xuela states, "the name of any one person is at once her history recapitulated and abbreviated" (79). Thus, she must look beyond what is written, beyond what has been named, for her identity lies not in some great big book, but in the writing of her(Self). She cannot rewrite the past, but she can inscribe the present and envision the future. And this is what she does at the closing of the novel:

This account of my life has been an account of my mother's life as much as it has been an account of mine, and even so, again it is an account of the life of the children I did not have, as it is their account of me. In me is the voice I never heard, the face I never saw, the being I came from. In me are the voices that should have come out of me, the faces I never allowed to form, the eyes I never allowed to see me. This account is an account of the person who was never allowed to be and an account of the person I did not allow myself to become. (228)

Where she earlier imagined her beginning as pages with "no writing in them...unsmudged, so clean, so smooth, so new" and her future as one "that would have filled volumes," Xuela's account inscribes itself at the interstice between the two. Her account converges time and space as the pages of her life tell of what was, what is, and what would have been. Fiction and reality merge, as Xuela, mirroring Kincaid's actions, reveals herself to be the fictional author of the novel. No longer an account of the past, but an articulation of the present, Xuela's "revenge" is thus complete: she has transformed a narrative about the Other into a narrative from and of her(Self).

This appropriation and subversion of the master's tools—as seen in Annie, Lucy, and Xuela—enables Kincaid to redefine what it means to be "from the Caribbean" while resisting a narrow, one-sided definition. Her cultural reassessment, while engaging in a postcolonial dialectic, leaves room for multiplicity where the many cultures of the Caribbean can find unity through and within plurality. As Ferguson explains: "Kincaid's

colonial and post-colonial texts, then, are indelibly marked by opposition to the hegemonic project. In that sense, Kincaid is a voice-giver, inviting us to read against the grain, exposing the suppression of heterogeneous utterances. Kincaid's resistance to illicit or corrupt authority is a form of nonviolent decolonization that complements a post-colonial agency" (Jamaica Kincaid 6).

The conflicting forces of the dual society in which Kincaid was brought up do not weaken, but rather strengthen the ever-changing discourse of the Self. As Cixous points out in "The Laugh of the Medusa": "To admit that writing is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live, undoing the work of death--to admit this is first to want the two, as well as both, the ensemble of the one and the other, not fixed in sequences of struggle and expulsion or some other form of death but infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another" (1096). That is, writing not as a resolution to contradiction, or as a way to resolve a conflict, but as an ongoing process where flux and dynamics save us from the perils of reaching a dead-end which would only lead to further oppression through labeling.

This redefinition of Self that resists oppressive labeling, is found in Xuela's reassertion of her identity as an individual one apart from that of a politicized entity: "I refused to belong to a race, I refused to accept a nation, I wanted only, and still do want, to observe the people who do so. The crime of these identities, which I know now more than never, I do not have the courage to bear. Am I nothing then? I do not believe so, but if nothing is a condemnation, then I would love to be condemned" (226). It is not, as Kincaid explains in her interview with Simmons, to be simply a political, racial, or

gender(ized) identity, but to be an individual. In Kincaid's own words: "It's just too slight to cling to your poor skin color, or your sex...when you think of the great awe that you exist at all" (17).

In her book A Small Place, Kincaid places this postcolonial identity that refuses to be pegged down, constricted, left stagnant to rot, into a Caribbean context. Here she redefines the Caribbean, not through the eyes of the colonizer, but through the eyes of the native. Where once Kincaid used her characters to express her disdain of the precarious values afforded to the Caribbean people, she now writes in her own voice using the personal "I." She is now not only writing in "white ink," as Cixous would say--from the good of the mother's milk, exploring mother-daughter relationships--but as "I-woman." Kincaid has written the body, that is, redefined an identity where conflicting European and Caribbean values, are able to be integrated and she is now able to rewrite it into a Caribbean context.

In A Small Place, Kincaid paints a picture of a typical tourist visiting Antigua, an outsider looking in. She condemns the tourist for not being able to see beyond the facade put on by Antigua for him. Throughout the narrative, Kincaid tears away at the layers of the made-up Antigua while revealing the truth behind the mask. She is now dismantling the "master's house" while rebuilding it and claiming it as her own. She accuses the British of having built schools to celebrate their love of knowledge while erasing her people's history; it is the British culture that has robbed Antigua and its people of a language, that has replaced their "mother country" with England, and has imposed what the British think of as a superior culture by which the Other should be defined (36). It is not a persona, but an individual pointing out the criminal, breaking the silence:

Let me just show you how you looked to us. You came. You took things that were not yours, and you did not even, for appearance's sake, ask first. You could have said, 'May I have this, please?' and even though it would have been clear to everybody that a yes or no from us would have been of no consequence you might have looked so much better. Believe me, it would have gone a long way. I would have to admit that at least you were polite. You murdered people. You imprisoned people. You robbed people. 35

As Kincaid earlier states, it this imposed culture that distorts and erases her history, silences and codes her as Other, and leaves her an orphan of the world: "what I see is the millions of people, of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that an excess of love sometimes brings, and worst and most painful of all, no tongue" (31).

Importantly, Kincaid's observations address the problematic nature of using the master's tongue in order to speak of and from herself: "isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? For the language of the criminal can contain only the goodness of the criminal's deed" (31). Yet, Kincaid, as part of the marginalized, transcribes the Other into Self. Appropriating and subverting the master's tools, Kincaid takes a language that has silenced her and transforms it into her own. Her account becomes that of the Self where the native is no longer defined through or by the European. It is Kincaid's history, culture, and identity emerging from the inside rather than the outside: "But let me show you the Antigua that I used to know" (24), "Let me just show you how you looked to us" (35). Writing from the body, from her self, Kincaid, unlike her earlier characters, no longer manipulates the master's language but

rather “dashes” through it, “flies.” The colonizer’s discourse rejected, the bookmarks discarded, Kincaid constructs her own narrative of freedom that seizes, transforms, and explodes the binary constructs on which Other and Self are created. Although speaking in the language of “criminal,” Kincaid has, in Cixous’ terms, emerged from “within” man’s, i.e., the colonizer’s, discourse:

If woman has always functioned “within” the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this “within,” to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it, in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. And you’ll see with what ease she will spring forth from that “within”—the “within” where once she so drowsily crouched—to overflow at the lips she will cover the foam. 1098

If in The Autobiography of My Mother, Xuela writes herself out of the master’s language and into an articulation of self, Kincaid in A Small Place now extends the narrative into an account of the Caribbean people. Whereas in her earlier works she resorted to the interpellation and interrogation of imperial texts, she is now creating her own history, a narrative recounted in a polyphonic “I” that encompasses the contradictions and ambiguities created by the imposition of a homogeneous and hegemonic value system. She earlier observes, “The people in a small place cannot give an exact account, a complete account, of themselves....The people in a small place can have no interest in the exact, or in completeness, for that would demand a careful weighing, careful consideration, careful judging, careful questioning. It would demand the invention of a silence, inside which these things could be done” (53). Yet, having dismantled the master’s house, Kincaid opens a space, a silence, in which the Other can articulate it(Self). The I is not One and Other, but Multiple and Self as she speaks as and

for a small place of many. As Giovanna Covi remarks: "Kincaid has indeed invented a silence in which all the Others, those excluded by the phallic identity of Western tradition, have found a voice—the voice of Woman, of an Afro-American, of a Caribbean, of a radical militant, of a tender child, and possibly many others...." (96).

Thus, through her writings, Jamaica Kincaid is able to take the events in her life and rearrange them in an impression on paper. Her personal tableau mirrors the realities that affect the Caribbean people, while transforming contradictions, which would otherwise remain stagnant and oppressive, into a dialectic of resistance and revolution. Kincaid's refusal to be pin-pointed as Other—where her identity would be marginalized by a European context—is reflected in her narrative as it escapes a reductive, as well as oppressive, structured definition of what it means to be from the Caribbean. And the voice of the Caribbean as a refusal to be the token Other, the marginalized, the victimized, is resounded through Kincaid's latest character Xuela in the book's closing: "This account is an account of the person who was never allowed to be and an account of the person I did not allow myself to become" (228). Yet, the narrative itself—her account—gives substance, definition, and the body back to the Self. It is she, no longer Other but Self, transcribed into words, into a story--and her presence is felt, her voice is heard. And it is this what Jamaica Kincaid does: she "sounds the voice of the people into the void" (Ferguson 137). As she writes, she (re)writes the body where her voice is the one to tell her history, her life, her Self. Thus, whereas once the Caribbean was viewed from the outside looking in, it is now the inside speaking out.

NOTES

1. For an in-depth discussion on the function of "othering" see G.C. Spivak.
2. The term "bookmarks" I find helpful to this discussion as it properly describes, as I see it, the function of colonial texts within Kincaid's works; that of "marking" centers of imperial thought within her narratives.
3. I use the term "charms" in place of Prospero's books of magic to denote the "spell of history" that Kincaid writes about in The Autobiography of My Mother, (218). As with Caliban who at first is enthralled by Prospero's knowledge, the Caribbean people, subjected to a colonial indoctrination, absorb the myths of a doctored history and thus come to accept the notion of British history as authentic while in turn questioning, if not rejecting, their own.
4. For a thorough discussion on the nature of "freeplay" see Derrida, p.969.
5. In her essay "Cold Hearts and (Foreign) Tongues," Tiffin defines the "daffodil gap" as a "gap between the lived colonial or post-colonial experience and the imported/imposed world of the Anglo-written" (920).
6. Earlier in the novel, Mariah introduces Lucy to books that underline Lucy's position as Other. Among them is a book on Gauguin, about which Lucy remarks: "Of course his life could be found in the pages of a book; I had just begun to notice that the lives of men always are" (95). In her attempts to "liberate" Lucy, Mariah offers her another book, this time a book on feminism. However, such a book does not address Lucy's condition and again Lucy is subjected to a totalizing view of the world: "Mariah had completely misinterpreted my situation. My life could not really be explained by this thick book....My life was at once more simple and more complicated than that" (132).
7. In Kincaid's earlier novel Annie John, the main character Annie identifies herself with the mother: she takes baths with her (14), dresses like her (25), and imitates her every movement (15). However, this all-consuming love for her mother turns to a fear of self-erasure as Annie later observes: "It was a big and solid shadow, and it looked so much like my mother that I became frightened/ For I could not be sure whether for the rest of my life I would be able to tell when it was really my mother and when it was really her shadow standing between me and the rest of the world" (107). This threat of self-erasure is revisited in Lucy, as Lucy receives a letter from her mother via a friend of the family, Maude Quick. Handing the letter to Lucy, Maude exclaims to Lucy: "You remind me of Miss Annie, you really remind me of your mother." Of this episode Lucy remarks: "I was dying, and she saved my life....She could not know that in one careless sentence she