

# Double Identity in Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*

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## **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the eponymous protagonist in the novel *Lucy*, written by Caribbean author Jamaica Kincaid who now lives and works in the United States. The protagonist is a female immigrant from a Caribbean postcolonial society and this paper will analyze her quest/struggle as not only a foreigner and immigrant but also as a woman of color in the multicultural context of the United States. As immigrants undergo a physical change in environment, they also experience a significant change in their identities. Their identities as immigrants are reconstructed as they assimilate to the political, social, and cultural norms of a group of people they identify with. These changes are usually influenced by race, class and gender. This paper will highlight how in the United States, the immigrant experience is intertwined with the Black experience through *Lucy's* character. More specifically, it will analyze *Lucy's* role as a woman, her sexuality and her position as a domestic laborer that forces her to take on the identity of a Black woman along with her Caribbean identity.*

The novel *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid focuses on the eponymous protagonist and how she is a product of double identity. *Lucy* is analyzed as a foreigner/immigrant from the Caribbean as well as a woman of color within the United States. Although migrants and immigrants are generally understood to be those who settle in another country, immigrants are distinct from migrants because they undergo more than just physical displacement; their identities change as well. They leave their native country and try to integrate themselves into their new country by exchanging one identity for another. This identity formation is usually influenced through components such as race, class, and gender. This paper will explore the dynamics of gender, sexuality, the lingering effects

of colonialism in postcolonial societies, the traditional roles of domestic labor and the confounded perceptions concerning women of color in both American and Caribbean societies. Drawing on criticism by Sharon Harley who addresses the relationship between Black women and domestic work, Ketu Katrak who discusses the resistance and oppression of a woman's body in a postcolonial society, Gary Holcomb who explains the concept of sexual migration, as well as other critics, this essay will analyze how Kincaid intertwines the immigrant experience and the Black experience that forces *Lucy* into a realm of global Blackness in which *Lucy* is identified by her Black racial identity instead of her ethnicity. Therefore, *Lucy* is not only seen as Caribbean woman but also a Black

woman in America, which forces her to take on two separate identities.

Similar to Lucy, as a native of a Caribbean island, the struggle in identifying who I was once I began to live in the United States was a great one. From my understanding, I was a Caribbean woman who lived in America and my Black racial identity had absolutely no significance in defining who I was. However, living in America for fifteen years has had a great impact on those I identify with and how other people identify me. While I can identify with other Caribbean people, Americans associate me with African-Americans because of my Black racial identity. Paul Silverstein, who explores the process in which immigrants are categorized through racialization, argues that, “race remains salient in the everyday lives of immigrants” because it is “an inescapable social fact” (Silverstein 364). Silverstein also points out that, “immigrants are categorized along the “color line”” (Silverstein 365), which simply means that people in the United States will associate immigrants with a particular group of people based on the similarities in their biological makeup. For this reason, the protagonist Lucy struggles with taking on the identity of a Black woman once she has arrived in America.

Born in St. Johns, Antigua, Jamaica Kincaid creates a semi-autobiography, through Lucy, reflecting the experiences she endured as an immigrant within the United States. Lucy, who is considered an antihero because of her unconventional persona, happens to flee from the West Indies to America. Prior to her arrival, Lucy is known as the girl from (what is assumed to be) Antigua, who has spent her entire life in mental and physical bondage because of the cultural norms that her society imposed on her gender. She is a product of a postcolonial society which affects how she perceives herself being controlled and defined by other people. In an interview, Kincaid herself states, “I do come from this tradition of possessing and claiming yourself, because if you don’t possess and claim yourself, someone else will” (Ferguson 184). Stacey Floyd-Thomas and

Laura Gillman both explore the Black radical subjectivity in the writings of Black women. Thomas and Gillman argue that, “the struggle of Black women [allows them to] wrest their identity from the strong holds of hegemonic normativity” (Thomas and Gillman, 534). They also believe that, “the problem of identity is the problem of seeing oneself through the eyes of others” and to fix that Black women should “move beyond this legacy of ontological Blackness, the Blackness that Whiteness created” (Thomas and Gillman, 535). Understanding this, Kincaid illustrates that desire to define oneself through Lucy’s character. This gives us a clear understanding of Lucy’s desire to create an identity outside of her cultures traditions. Lucy is neither timid nor shy; she is highly opinionated and very outspoken. Though she is all of these things, she is also an inexperienced nineteen year old girl who enters the context of a new world in hope of becoming the woman she has always wanted to be. In the process of doing so, her identity as a foreigner/immigrant becomes articulated, both by her own choice and by the cultural forces around her, with the image of being a Black woman within the United States. Lucy physically becomes a part of the American cultural space because of her physical re-location while she emotionally holds on to parts of her Antiguan identity. This ultimately doubles her identity as she is perceived to be not only a foreigner but also a Black woman because of her physical attributes which associates her with every woman of color in America.

Lucy finds herself working as an au pair for a White upper-middle-class family, Mariah, Lewis and their four daughters. Throughout the novel, although Lucy never admits to being a part of the Black race, as she values her Caribbean identity more, she often gives a few hints that allow the reader to imagine that she is a woman of color. For instance, on the journey to Mariah’s childhood home, Lucy observes a few physical differences between herself and the passengers on the train. “The other people sitting down to eat dinner all looked like Mariah’s relatives; the people waiting on them all looked like mine...On

closer observation, they were not at all like my relatives; they only looked like them... Mariah did not seem to notice what she had in common with the other diners, or what I had in common with the waiters" (31). At this point, Lucy is analyzing not just the difference in race, but also social class whereas the Black people who seem to look like her are serving the White people who seem to look like Mariah. However, though their physical appearances might look the same, she certainly understands that there are only similarities in the physical aspects of their lives, and that their experiences happen to be very different. As Lucy has the ability to separate her Black racial identity from being Black in America, the people in her environment do not.

Understanding the role of an au pair, "a foreign girl employed to look after children and help with housework" (OED), domestic labor consumes Lucy in both the Caribbean and American world, and this is the first area where Lucy's identity as a woman of color is doubled. Lucy is introduced in the novel as a figure who takes on the conventional role of "the helper." While she comes to America to study to be a nurse, she is also assigned to take care of Mariah and Lewis' four children: "I was the young girl who watches over the children and goes to school at night" (7). Lucy acknowledges her dissatisfaction with the physical space she inhabits when she describes the room she is given to stay in: "The room in which I lay was a small room just off the kitchen—the maid's room...a box in which cargo traveling a long way should be shipped. But I was not cargo, I was only an unhappy woman living in a maid's room, and I was not even the maid" (7). This description taints Lucy's image in numerous ways as she is seen as not just a domestic help, but as Kincaid's language suggests through the reference to "cargo," also a slave. The paradox of sleeping in the maid's room without being considered a maid also influences Lucy's tense relationship with the actual maid. For instance, upon arriving, the maid makes it very clear to Lucy that "everything about me was so pious it made her sick to her stomach and sick with pity just to look at me" (11).

Seeing Lucy as also a woman of color explains the belligerence the maid has towards her, whereas Lucy's pompous attitude influences the negative response from the maid. In this case, Lucy's ability to disassociate herself from the world of labor, as if she is better than that, gives off an arrogant impression that the maid does not like because they are both perceived as Black women in America despite their ethnic identities.

As Lucy struggles to define who she is, her Black racial identity becomes problematic because the expectations of Black women in America are purposely imposed on her. The White American women fail to differentiate the difference between Lucy's Antiguan identity and her appearing physically as a Black woman. As a result, Lucy adopts a nanny-like image, exemplifying a maternal role towards Mariah and Lewis' children. Without the title of being mother she ultimately demonstrates motherly tendencies towards the children, especially towards Miriam. She expresses great love for Miriam:

I loved Miriam from the moment I met her. She was the first person I had loved in a very long while, and I did not know why. I loved the way she smelled, and I used to sit her on my lap with my head bent over her and breathe her in. She must have reminded me of myself when I was that age, for I treated her the way I remembered my mother treating me then. When I heard her cry out at night, I didn't mind at all getting up to comfort her, and if she didn't want to be alone I would bring her into bed with me; this always seemed to make her feel better, and she would clasp her little arms around my neck as she went back to sleep. Whenever I was away from them, she was the person I missed and thought of all the time. I couldn't explain it. I loved this little girl. (53)

This is considered a false imitation of a mother-daughter relationship/bond in which Lucy is playing the role of mother to a child that is not hers. More specifically, it suggests that the work responsibilities of Black women

in America are usually dedicated to taking care of White women's children. Although Lucy grows attached to Miriam, she still remains as the unhappy Black woman taking care of her White employer's child.

Lucy's image is being tainted in a way that is beyond her control; Americans perceive her to be something that she is not. Their perception of Lucy comes from the ideas they know about Black women in America, which are usually African-American women. Because they, Mariah and Dinah, focus solely on her physical appearance as she is Black, they disregard the fact that she is a Black Caribbean woman and not a Black American and/or African-American woman. Failing to understand this, allows Lucy's image in America to be misconstrued. For example, Dinah, Mariah's best friend, also appears as an upper-middle-class White woman who imposes the role of a domestic laborer upon Lucy. During the first moment in meeting Dinah, Lucy recognizes their difference in language and conversational idiom, which is based on social hierarchy as well as race. Dinah's first question to Lucy, "So are you from the islands?" (56) is full of self-righteousness. This sense of superiority makes Lucy feel belittled and embarrassed: "I did not like the kind of women Dinah reminded me of... Dinah now showered the children with affection—ruffling hair, pinching cheeks, picking Miriam up out of my lap, and ignoring me. To a person like Dinah, someone in my position is 'the girl' as in 'the girl who takes care of the children'" (57-58). Dinah's reference to Lucy as a 'girl' instead of a 'woman' illustrates how people from different racial backgrounds identify themselves in contrast to others. Lucy understanding herself as a young woman, despite her race, and Dinah referring to her as a girl because of her Black racial identity, demonstrates a lack of respectability between the two characters that comes from the confounded perceptions they have for one another. Because of Dinah's social status and White racial identity she perceives herself to be a woman opposed to Lucy who is simply just a girl. The notion of being seen as the help is also in correlation to women

of color as lower class subjects producing domestic labor as an ultimatum for income instead of their own personal choice. Lucy is now identified as a domestic laborer because of both her race and social class, someone who is inferior both socially and culturally.

Sharon Harley demonstrates this concept of Black women in America being constrained to domestic labor in her book *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work*. Reflecting on the post-slavery practices of Black women in America, Harley argues that "although Black women were now legally free, their postbellum work differed little from that of their enslaved and free ancestors" (Harley 4). During slavery, household slaves (usually female) were confined to taking care of their masters children. The nanny role is still apparent today as it was during slavery and after slavery. More specifically, the idea of mothering another woman's children has always been a racial/economic issue, whereas it is a necessity for Black women to take care of White women's children in order to feed their own children and that domestic labor is the only form of labor Black women could produce: "Black women from Emancipation experienced discrimination based on both race and gender... despite the freedom, Black women continued to do work similar to that performed during slavery" (Harley 7). In Lucy's case, although she is an immigrant from the Caribbean with possibly little to no history or knowledge on slavery, the images, history and traditions of Black women in America are being imposed on her in regards to employment because of her Black racial identity. She is placed in a space (the maid's room) where she can only be identified as a domestic laborer and she is regarded by White women like Dinah as a young, subservient girl rather than a fully grown and independent woman despite the love and affection she showers on Mariah's daughter Miriam. Lucy recognizes the similarities she shares with the actual maid of Mariah's household, as both of them are Black, working-class women. Consequently, although she has only just arrived from the Caribbean, Lucy's social and cultural position becomes articulated with the historical background of Black women in America,

who because of racial discrimination, lack work opportunities outside of domestic, care giving careers.

Harley also discusses how Black women in America work as a necessity for the survival of their families (Harley 5). Correspondingly, Lucy connects their history with the expectations the Caribbean society has of her and her male siblings:

Each time a new child was born [her brothers], my mother and father announced to each other with great seriousness that the new child would go to university in England and study to become a doctor or lawyer or someone who would occupy an important and influential position in society. I did not mind my father saying these things about his sons, his own kind, and leaving me out...But my mother knew me well, as she knew herself: I, at the time, even thought of us as identical; and whenever I saw her eyes fill up with tears at the thought of how proud she would be at some deed her sons had accomplished, I felt a sword go through my heart, for there was no accompanying scenario in which she saw me, her only identical offspring, in a remotely similar situation. (130)

The low expectations Lucy's family, especially her mother, has for her comes from Lucy being a woman. Women within Caribbean societies are compelled to take on domesticated careers such as nursing. This influences Lucy's decision to stop attending school to become a nurse. She states, "Whatever my future held, nursing would not be a part of it...I was not good at taking orders from anyone, not good at waiting on other people" (92). Therefore, when Lucy comes to America and takes on another identity as a nanny, she states "I could hardly imagine spending the rest of it [her life] overseeing their children in one situation or another" (110). As a result, Lucy recognizes the image of a domestic laborer consistently being imposed on her, and deviates from those practices. That is to say Lucy's understanding

of her femininity through her mother as they are identical influences a desire to break away from her mother's uncompromising standards of life. Her Antiguan identity replicates her mother's expectations: to pursue a nursing career suitable for a woman. Representing the standards of womanhood in a patriarchal society, Lucy's mother supports the traditional norm that imposes gender as an influential factor on one's career. However, her mother's domesticated view on their gender motivates Lucy to distinguish her own identity as more than a domestic laborer.

Despite the effect of her mother's expectations on limiting Lucy's identity, there is another aspect of Lucy's Caribbean background that gives her agency. Lucy's experiences of living in a post-colonial Caribbean society complicate the relationship she has with Mariah. Although they build a close bond, while Mariah is persistent in trying to embrace Lucy as both an immigrant and a woman of color, she also attempts to re-identify Lucy through a master-servant relationship. When Mariah vacations at her childhood home, she tries her hardest to introduce and expose Lucy to the things she loves, in hope that Lucy would love them as well. However, with no hesitation, Lucy rejects Mariah's attempts in trying to include her in a world she does not know or belong to. For instance, prior to Mariah mentioning that spring is important to her because she loves flowers, Lucy reflects on a traumatizing experience from her childhood concerning flowers:

I remembered an old poem I had been made to memorize when I was ten years old and a pupil at Queen Victoria Girls' School. I had been made to memorize it, verse after verse, and then had recited the whole poem to an auditorium full of parents, teachers and my fellow pupils. After I was done, everybody stood up and applauded with an enthusiasm that surprised me...I was then at the height of my two-facedness: that is, outside I seemed one

way, inside I was another; outside false, inside true. And so I made pleasant little noises that showed both modesty and appreciation, but inside I was making a vow to erase from my mind, line by line, every word of that poem. (18)

Through this anecdote, Lucy conveys strong contempt towards her British-style education. Antigua is a postcolonial society who was once under the British rule, thus their entire culture and society was constructed from British colonial ideologies. Hence, Lucy is forced to learn about things, such as daffodils, that she could not relate to. For this reason, her sense of “two facedness” comes from having two identities in her own country. She is forced to endure all of Britain’s teachings and customs but yet she still feels as an outsider because she cannot embrace British traditions. This explains why she vows to erase the memories of that poem from her mind; her initial goal is to not just rid her mind of the poem but to also to forget the history of her country being colonized by Britain. Mariah of course does not understand the hostility in Lucy’s voice as she is telling the story, and intentionally brings the daffodils into her life after Lucy explains this. Upon seeing the flowers she was forced to learn about for the first time, Lucy quickly responds to Mariah with great contempt stating, “Do you realize that at ten years of age I had to learn by heart a long poem about some flowers I would not see in real life until I was nineteen?” (30) It is not until Lucy’s strong reaction towards seeing the flowers that the notion of the “conquered and the conquests” (Oczkowicz 147) becomes evident. However, whether Mariah understands that concept or not she will always lack the ability to understand that “nothing could change the fact that where she saw beautiful flowers I saw sorrow and bitterness. The same thing could cause us to shed tears, but those tears would not taste the same” (30). Therefore, Lucy being understood as an iconoclast in her own country allows her to be identified with the nonconformists of American societies, which are Black people.

Edyta Oczkowicz discusses this relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, which he illustrates as the transitional moment of cultural and psychological translation in correlation to Lucy being placed at the crossroad of her Antiguan identity and her American identity (Oczkowicz 144). He implies that “Lucy is a mental outcast and moral convict who refuses to accept what she is told to be” (Oczkowicz 146). In this case, Mariah’s attempt in persuading Lucy to see beauty in the daffodils initially fails because Lucy knows from her personal experience that there is no beauty within them. More specifically, Oczkowicz analyzes the poem to dictate “whose beauty she was told to assimilate without ever seeing the flowers themselves... the metaphor for the act of the colonization seen by the colonized” (Oczkowicz 146). At this point, Lucy struggles with her present reality as it is a reflection of her postcolonial experiences. Though no longer living in Antigua, her postcolonial life becomes a reality within America. Oczkowicz conveys this concept that Lucy can never forget her post-colonial experiences as it is a part of who she is. Therefore, in order to liberate herself from her past she must be able to acknowledge her past during her present, in which she will always be seen or identified as the colonized instead of the colonizer. With good intentions, Mariah tries to embrace Lucy from an American perspective opposed to a British one where Lucy describes her to be “a woman who wanted to show me her world and hope that I would like it, too” (36); however, the history of Great Britain and America appear similar as both countries have been in positions of power/control, which leaves Lucy still feeling as if she is the servant in the world of the master.

In an attempt to understand the formation of Mariah’s mentality, Lucy does not inquire about her authority but investigates specifically how she got to be the way she is (Oczkowicz 149)- someone who can take on an identity that does not belong to her. For example, after catching fish for dinner Mariah jokingly sings, “I will make you fishers of men” (37). Lucy does not perceive

this to be a joke and, following Mariah's next comment, "This is super. Let's go feed the minions" responds by thinking, "It's possible that what she really said was 'millions,' not 'minions.' Certainly she said it in jest. But as we were cooking the fish, I was thinking about it. 'Minions.' A word like that would haunt someone like me; the place where I came from was a dominion of someplace else" (37). This anecdote also demonstrates the relationship between masters and their servants. It is a biblical reference in which Jesus, the master, states to his disciples, the servants, what Mariah says to Lucy: "I will make you fishers of men" (37). Correspondingly, the literal meaning of the term "minion," (a servile dependent) constructs the idea of Mariah being someone who has great power, enough power to support the "millions/minions." Furthermore, Mariah then explains to Lucy that she has Indian blood in her which is the reason for her great ability in catching fish and hunting: "She says it as if she were announcing her possession of a trophy. How do you get to be the sort of victor who can claim to be the vanquished also" (40-41). In this case, Mariah unknowingly contradicts her role of being the victor. While Lucy perceives her to be the victor because of her race, class, and history of being the oppressor, Mariah wishes to identify with the vanquished in order to make Lucy feel more comfortable. It can also be said that Mariah's strongest desire is to demonstrate a sense of similarity in their respective experiences in order for Lucy to see her as an equal. Because Mariah does not understand the history of oppression although she is in some way a part of it, she cannot thoroughly understand Lucy's being both Caribbean and Black in America. Significantly, Kincaid also states in her interview with Ferguson that, "It really is a form of theft and conquest... what is incredible is how the conquered world would take the identity... when people in the conquering position take things, it doesn't threaten their identity. But the weaker people feel—that's why they clutch or hold on so tight and define them narrowly, really leading more to their defeat" (Ferguson 168). By

this Kincaid means that the people who have been conquered struggle to create an identity outside of the one their conquerors have already created for them. Although it has a much greater impact on the conquered than the conqueror, identity is only problematic to those who have to accept it because it is not their own. Lucy is an example of this, whereas she understands that her identity as a Caribbean woman has already been created for her. However, she opposes her premade identity and creates her own in which she becomes an extraordinary young woman of color. Kincaid also argues that winners can do anything they please, even if it means taking on someone's identity that is not even their own. In both instances, Mariah is the conqueror/winner in which she has the capability and the desire to control the people around her, especially Lucy. Therefore, Lucy deviates from what Mariah wants and expects of her in order to form her own identity.

Embracing her sexuality is the most essential component in Lucy's identity formation within the novel. It is the most unconventional aspect of her image as a Black woman in America whereas her sexuality is the only thing she has the ability to control. Notably, Lucy has no control over her race, class or her gender the way she has full control over her sexuality. Because of her eagerness to increase the number and variety of her sexual experiences (King 370), Lucy adapts the image of the single Black promiscuous woman in American society. Gary Holcomb, whose research focuses on travel literature, believes she is represented as a sexual traveler who willingly accepts the identity of the slut (Holcomb 297). This concept of sexual migration demonstrates "the role of traveler that deeply informs Lucy's anxieties about being an immigrant" (Holcomb 298). In other words, Lucy's existence in the New World is defined through her desire for physical pleasure. Lucy's desire to enable herself through promiscuity is strongly influenced through the relationship that she has with her mother. Her mother, in constant attempt to implement the traditions of the patriarchal society in the Caribbean, is what forces Lucy to leave

Antigua in the first place. She states, “An ocean stood between me and the place I came from, but would it have made a difference if it had been a teacup of water? I could not go back” (10). Lucy’s purpose in coming to America is a way of denouncing her mother and her country. As she no longer wants to be a part of that patriarchal society, more specifically, because her mother is an advocate for patriarchy, Lucy perceives freedom for women to be in the United States. Not going back to Antigua is an important psychological and emotional decision for Lucy, for she could not go back or else she would die from mental bondage. Therefore, her freedom lies in any place that is not her native country and any place without her mother. Keith Byerman analyzes the motif of anger that Kincaid uses throughout her novels, understanding that the anger is toward the effects of colonialism and more specifically, Antigua culture. Comparatively, Byerman’s reason for which she could not return home is due to the “problematic role of the mother in shaping the daughters place in culture and society” (Byerman 91). Byerman argues that Lucy’s anger towards Antigua comes from the uncompromising relationship she has with her mother. Because her mother plays such an influential role in her life, “Female identity within Antiguan culture can only be defined in terms of the mother, and since, the mother passes down the culture, she is the source of national identity” (Byerman 97). For this reason Lucy’s entire upbringing as she believes “was devoted to preventing her from becoming a slut” (127). Taken from one of Kincaid’s earlier novels, *At The Bottom of the River*, “Girl” emphasizes the expectations of women that Antiguan mothers imposed on their daughters:

On Sundays try to walk like a lady and not the slut you are so bent on becoming...you mustn’t speak to wharf-rat boys not even to give directions...This is how to behave in the presence of men who don’t know you very well, and this

way they won’t recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming. (“Girl” 3-4)

The conversation between mother and daughter here analyzes the predestinated idea of Lucy being a slut that is based on her gender and not her promiscuous actions. The voice of the mother can illustrate a sense of dictatorship whereas the daughter must live by the teachings of her mother. A sense of hopelessness that mothers have for their daughters is also depicted, in which they believe their female children will eventually become sluts although their teachings convey the total opposite of such behavior. Also, the relationship between men and women is solely identified through sexual desire, as if it is impossible for men and women to have any kind of communication outside of sexual activity. Therefore, in order to deviate from such authoritarian beliefs, Lucy takes pride in embracing the slutty identity that her mother already ordained on her life before she even began her journey to promiscuity.

Lucy’s sexual emancipation begins when she arrives in America. Prior to her migrating, she acknowledges her previous sexual experiences when she reflects on a young boy named Tanner, “the first boy whom I did everything possible you can do with a boy” (82). However, the limitations and restrictions on the female sexuality in her former postcolonial world did not allow her to experience more. Therefore, when she leaves home she takes great advantage of her sexual freedom in her new environment. For example, Hugh is the first man she is physically intimate with in America. This happens when they meet each other for the first time: “He kissed me on my face, and ears and neck and in my mouth. If I enjoyed myself beyond anything I had known so far it must have been because such a longtime had passed since I had been touched in that way by anyone” (66). This occurs again in her act of randomly having sex with a man she had only known for two hours: “And then something

happened that I had not counted on at all. At the store where I bought the camera, the man who sold it to me—he and I went off and spent the rest of the day and half of that night in his bed” (116). While Lucy perceives this to have been accidental, she takes pride in her promiscuous behavior as she “planted a kiss on Paul’s mouth with an uncontrollable ardor that I actually did feel [later that day]—a kiss of treachery, for I could still taste the other man in my mouth” (117). For this reason, she is in love with the idea of not committing herself to one man in a physical or emotional way. Lucy gradually conforms into the stereotypical image of Black women in America being promiscuous. Opposed to her former Caribbean society where she could not embrace her own sexual desires, she gradually invites the notion of being a “slut” as a part of her Black American experience.

Lucy’s lifestyle of engaging in premarital sex is clarified by Ketu Katraks critique of cultural tradition controlling the female sexuality in postcolonial societies, which as a result forces women to utilize their bodies as an act of resistance. Katrak argues, “As they negotiate these institutionalized prescriptions of sexual behavior, they face no-win situations: obey the dominant code and survive... or disobey tradition, step outside boundaries, and pay the ultimate price” (Katrak 160). By the ultimate price Katrak is referring to being silenced or forced into exile, which is where Lucy ultimately finds herself. From a historical standpoint, the traditional control of female sexuality was influenced by Victorian’s ideas of sexuality. More specifically, the colonizers perceived themselves to be the “liberators” of the native women, giving them freedom from “barbaric” customs. In this case, “barbaric” is defined as being wild and unsophisticated, therefore, the barbaric customs can be considered as the notion of promiscuity. As cultural traditions have been utilized to control the female sexuality, it also enables women as subjects to the concept of marriage, which allows the male to have dominance. For this reason, Lucy illustrates

a sense of being emotionless and heartless (a form of resistance) when dealing with men. Recalling her relationship with Hugh, Lucy makes it clear of her feelings when she states, “But I was not in love with Hugh. I could tell that being in love would complicate my life just now. I was only half a year free of some almost unbreakable bonds and it was not in my heart to make new ones...to latch on to this boy—man, I suppose was not for someone my age and certainly not for me” (71). Lucy displays Katraks idea in which “she rejects male domination in a marital frame, and creates an autonomous life as a single woman” (Katrak 186). The marital frame Katrak is referring to can be seen as the act of commitment for Lucy. While for postcolonial societies it is tradition for women to gain legitimacy through marriage by being protected by their husbands and being obedient to the rules of patriarchy, Lucy exemplifies resistance against these cultural expectations with no hesitation. Under these circumstances, she gradually embodies the image of the unmarried Black promiscuous woman in America.

Living in America for approximately one year, Lucy comes to the realization that she is no longer the person she was when she first arrived; her identity had changed: “I had been a girl of whom certain things were expected, none of them too bad: a career as a nurse, for example; a sense of duty to my parents; obedience to the law and worship of convention. But in one year of being away from home, that girl had gone out of existence” (133). While it is evident that Lucy gains a great sense of maturity since her arrival, she has also taken on another identity that is not of her Caribbean heritage. The American society in which she now lives perceives Lucy’s Black racial identity to be in correlation with the experiences of Black women in America opposed to her simply being a Black Caribbean woman in an American society. As she experiences both spaces she adapts numerous sub-identities under the position of being seen as a woman of color. Her body

becomes an object/tool in which she is subjugated to domestic labor and she is perceived as the servant/vanquished in relation to obeying Mariah. Evidently, she also becomes an overly sexual being that appears to disregard all thoughts of obligating themselves to the

notion of marriage or a committed relationship. The struggle that Lucy endures as she tries to become an individual ultimately forces her into a space of having two identities. Lucy is now seen as not only an Antiguan but also a Black woman in America.

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