‘Home and Away’: Reconstructing Identity in Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy*

Eleanor Anneh Dasi

**Introduction**

Displacement and loss characterise the African diaspora as far as the world of the Atlantic is concerned. Forcibly uprooted from the place of their birth, Africans finally found a new home in the plantations of the New World (the West Indies and the Americas) after over a century of psychic wandering. But even then, living with the knowledge of a cultural and ancestral void in their origins still ensured a kind of psychic emptiness. This was made worse by the constant reminder, due to colonial presence and influence, that the African descendants, especially of the West Indies, had nothing to call their own; nothing to prove beyond doubt that they belonged where they are. Even after what seemed to be a withdrawal of colonial pressures, and the independence of the nation states created in this region, this situation still very much prevailed. Authors from this region of the globe have had to grapple with this dilemma. Edward Kamau Brathwaite particularly notes in ‘Calibans’ that the West Indians did not have anything that was correct because it was not European and it wasn’t African either because [they] were not supposed to have anything surviving from Africa. Africa was dumb. Africa had come speechless from across the Atlantic.¹

What this implied was that everything they could ever have or be was determined by the force of the institution that took them there. Here again, the people had to face the dilemma of a double consciousness, which necessitated a negotiation, whether ideologically or literally, of the implications of the Middle Passage. As evident in their works, most West Indian writers have revisited this question of physical displacement either for the search for psychological equilibrium or for the cancellation of the false labels and judgements on the African people.

Another wave of displacement came after colonialism with the migration of large numbers of people mostly from the colonies to the imperial metropolis. Social, economic and political instabilities that came with the decolonisation processes greatly accounted for this shift. The phenomenon is very common today and influences fields of learning in diverse ways. Naturally, literature has not been left out of this new wave of events. Many emerging postcolonial writers have migrant backgrounds and their personal experiences of migration are translated into their works, which have come to serve as metaphors for identity reconstruction. In addition, these writers focus on the specific contexts that encourage migration, the cold reception the migrants may receive in the metropolis, the continued experiences of racial and class hostilities and the resulting sense of alienation.

In view of the above, the first part of this essay centres on the link between home and exile, with the latter seeming more or less a continuation of colonial experiences. The next section focuses on the inconsistencies and hypocrisy of the colonial enterprise. It is noted amongst other things that the human condition is almost the same everywhere. Thus cultural/class differences are not necessarily indicative of superiority and inferiority. It is this knowledge and understanding that give Lucy the courage to reconcile home with the new environment in order

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to remake herself, as discussed in the third segment. Inevitably, the conclusion attests to Kincaid’s success in achieving an identity that cuts across race, class and gender divides.

Home vs Exile

Patriarchal and colonial limitations on women have been a major setback to women’s desires to explore themselves and their talents within their communities. Worse still is the fact that traditional womanhood acknowledges complete superiority of maleness thus creating a continuous ideological/generational conflict with modern generations of women. Ironically, therefore, traditional women are custodians of the very cultures that bind them to patriarchy. Women who have had aspirations to make an impact on the social order have rebelled against societal dictates with a view to re-asserting themselves. Others have had to migrate from their cultural environments to find freedom, fulfilment and agency in foreign lands.

Jamaica Kincaid’s 1990 novel, Lucy, comments seriously on the theme of migration with an initial impetus from her previous novel Annie John.2 It seems Lucy takes up from where Annie John leaves off; Annie John closes just when Annie boards the ship for England as a way towards a new beginning and Lucy opens with Lucy entering the United States where she hopes to work, learn and experience a life different from the one at home. Life at home is seen as insidious, especially with the stifling presence of patriarchal and colonial control. Migration for both Annie and Lucy is the only integral options it offers both escape and an opportunity for a better and fulfilling life.

Lucy’s primary difficulty is that her mother is of the old generation of women who still stick to traditional roles of womanhood, and whose view of life, even with the changing times, is very much fixed. Her intention of raising Lucy to continue the line is the main cause of conflict between them, and eventually becomes one of the motives behind Lucy’s migration. First of all, the birth of three male children after Lucy comes with a significant change in Lucy’s status as a product of her parents’ union. Her mother’s conformity to patriarchy warrants her shifting attention to the boys, for each of them, aspiring greatness and celebrity. She abandons her feminine attributes to acclaim, with humility, satisfaction and a sense of achievement, her sons’ coming into the world. ‘The absence of red lipstick on her mouth after they were all born’3 unquestionably speaks to her complicity with patriarchal inclination for males as opposed to females. Being a female, no similar plans are envisaged for Lucy, and she is, on the contrary, expected to work towards ensuring the success of her siblings. The limits that go with the fact of being a female, the mother’s role as agent of such ascribed prejudice and the disagreement that ensues between them about life principles and preferences become a source of frustration to Lucy. She is nonetheless determined to stand out of, and away from that order which the mother represents and makes the first step by moving away. But the fact of leaving home is not a solution in itself for Lucy has to grapple with the longstanding binaries of white/black and male/female. Her encounter with Mariah, her white employer in New York, presents another facet of the limitations women face irrespective of race and class. Though of different backgrounds, Lucy sees (the best and worst of) her mother in Mariah and the master/servant

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3 Jamaica Kincaid, Lucy (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990) 130. Further page references to this text will be included in parentheses in the text.

relationship that connects them from the beginning soon extends into a mother/daughter tie. Mariah tries to shape Lucy in her own image much in the same way as Lucy’s mother does, making Lucy treat her with affection and resentment. As their relationship grows, Lucy comes to realize that Mariah’s wealth and privilege do not protect her from female vulnerability as she faces the bitterness of an unhappy marriage. This situation however aids Lucy in her journey to independence and freedom.

Lucy’s job as an au pair, though not altogether fulfilling, sets the arena for a new beginning. The joy of leaving home is marred by unfamiliar climatic conditions which plant in her feelings of dislocation and alienation. The psychological release and freedom that she hopes to get in this distant land become doubtful. Her pessimism is evident in her analysis of the situation, ‘my past – so familiar and predictable that even my unhappiness then made me feel happy now just to think of it – the other my future, a gray blank … I felt cold inside and out, the first time such a sensation had come over me’ (5-6). The comforting welcome embrace that Lucy expects to receive turns into a perplexing sense of loss, loneliness, unbelonging and uncertainty symbolised by the hard winter. She rejects the past yet the present ignores her; thus the future is undoubtedly one of in-betweeness. But before she settles in this new position, she must negotiate her way through the constant intrusions from the past (colonial and patriarchal domination) into the present that threaten the future.

The constant reminders of Lucy’s position as colonial subject fuel her determination to stand firm on her desire to be apart and away from colonial/patriarchal hold. The description of her room in her employers’ house – ‘The ceiling was very high and the walls went all the way up to the ceiling, enclosing the room like a box … in which cargo travelling a long way should be shipped’ (7) – simply adds to her desolate and alienated state from which escape seems impossible. Yet this circumstance continues to push her towards her quest for individuality as she consciously or unconsciously responds to this ensnaring description with a vehement rejection, ‘I was not cargo … I was not even the maid’ (7). At this point, she already has a positive perception of herself as being worth more than a commodity and/or a labour tool. Lucy does not allow her job as an au pair to define and mark her socio-economic significance but instead braves her new situation even in her loneliness. This strong detachment from subject position is a conscious engagement in a process of decolonisation of the mind that will help Lucy come to terms with the captive/captor and master/servant binaries.

Besides asserting her human value inside the domestic realm, Lucy also tries to cross over boundaries of race. Kincaid oddly introduces race prejudice not with a black/white divide but rather with a black/black schism. Lucy’s encounter with the African-American maid provides another forum for her to defend herself within the cultural spheres that society has carved out for her. Ironically, both of them have a common history which makes them similar in the racial and political domains of their past and present worlds but the maid assumes a status of superiority and mocks Lucy’s nun-like colonial mannerisms. Her provocative challenge to a dance with Lucy is a way of claiming a civilization that avers supremacy; but which supremacy is inextricably linked to the ‘inferiority’ of other independent civilisations. Lucy’s positive reaction to this taunting degradation demonstrates her ability to transcend the limits of race and difference. While the maid dances to the rhythm of three white singers, Lucy bursts into a typical West Indian Calypso. Displaying a sense of pride in her origins is a way of claiming herself and her history through that origin.
In attempting to recreate her identity, Lucy must also overcome theoretical and ideological clashes. The contradictory interpretations that underlie Lewis’ tale of an uncle who raised monkeys and eventually enjoyed living with them rather than with humans, and Lucy’s dream of Lewis chasing her are a point of focus. Both anecdotes have similar meanings when understood from their native cultural backgrounds (they are intended to bring those concerned close to each other) but when interpreted from the opposite culture, they have varied connotations. Lucy’s white employers understand her dream from an entirely differing perspective, which earns her the appellations ‘poor visitor,’ and ‘Dr Freud for visitor’ (15). Lucy’s native interpretation of her dream conflicts with Mariah’s Freudian analysis of it and this jeopardises Lucy’s position in, and alienation from both cultures – another driving force for her to seek an independent identity. The superiority and all-inclusiveness of western theory is evident here; laying claim to an ideological stance whose validity can be questioned in given contexts. Lucy definitely would have been scandalised if she were given the interpretation linked to Freud’s theory of the sexual drive (symbolised by her nakedness, and Lewis’ effort to catch her). Her falling into a hole has however been read as a pointer to her entrapment in white ethnocentric standards and the difficulties she will encounter as she rambles her way through to independence.

From her experiences under colonial rule, Lucy develops a critical and disparate perception of the world, other than what generally obtains within the colonising set-up. These colonising bodies assumed a universality of feelings and expressions towards situations which do not have a socio-cultural resemblance. As Lucy continues to interact with Mariah, she becomes increasingly convinced that Mariah intends to impose her vision of life on her, and in this, she sees a continuation of the colonising project. The daffodils scene has been commonly cited as one of such incidents which express a colonial-like determination to completely wipe out whatever differing view of the world Lucy, or anyone like her, may have. Mariah’s love for the beauty of daffodils is contrasted with Lucy’s sad and traumatic memories of them for she was forced to admire them even without having an idea of what they looked like. Seeing the flowers ten years after makes her spell-bound with rage. ‘Lucy experiences a loss of voice narratively and culturally,’ which ‘loss is also inflected historically’ as she comes face-to-face with this cultural marker. It becomes a tacit reminder of a colonial education that ignored features of her native surrounding and history and this explains her hostility towards daffodils. Not only do they convey a history of conquest but they also increase the native’s sense of cultural dislocation under British hegemony. Mariah, with her affluent American upbringing, mistakes Lucy’s reaction for an amazed exaltation of the beauty of the flowers and leans forward to share in it even after Lucy’s bitter account of her recital. The sympathy she expresses is not profound thus indicating a deliberate refusal to understand Lucy’s history and its relationship with her rage. To Mariah, the splendour of the flowers, their natural and timeless beauty, is enough to cleanse any frightful connection with them, but to Lucy, they remain a dreaded cultural signifier that deprives her of cultural agency but which nonetheless aid her search for that agency.

Cultural differences, race hierarchies and the general inequalities that were established during colonialism are simply discarded by Mariah as she tries to replace them with a universal model – one that can prevail over these differences and enable Lucy to see the world through her own

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eyes. Evidently, Mariah’s perceptions do not only stem from the position she holds but also go a long way to assert and exert the power and authority that go with hierarchical privileges. At the beginning of her relationship with Lucy, her love seems so genuine that Lucy begins to think of her as an adequate version of the mother she always wanted. But Lucy soon realises that all is a scam to eventually impose her vision on her: ‘Mariah wanted all of us, the children and me to see things the way she did’ (36). Those same limitations that Lucy experiences with her mother, and which prompt her desire for escape, recur in Mariah’s attitude though Mariah is not as insistent and authoritative as the mother. Mariah is a little tolerant, permitting Lucy’s friendship with Peggy - a friendship that gives Lucy an opportunity for self-development through sexual exploits, which she freely discusses with Mariah. This slight difference that Lucy experiences in Mariah’s mothering as opposed to that of her biological mother becomes vital in the development of a separate identity.

Despite Mariah’s calm nature, she still remains blind to Lucy’s historical memories; hoping to get Lucy share in another of her favourite experiences, ‘spending the night on a train and waking up to breakfast on the train as it moved through freshly ploughed fields’ (28). Once again, another trope of colonialism is implied – plantation slavery. Much like in the daffodils scene, Lucy’s reaction is fiercely sarcastic: ‘Well, thank God I didn’t have to do that’ (33). Already sensitive to this master/slave dichotomy, Lucy notices, with little embarrassment, the racial breakdown of the people on board. The diners are principally white (‘Mariah’s relatives’), while the servants are blacks (‘her relatives’). These symbols of slavery resonate in Lucy’s consciousness for they do not only remind her of her present situation as servant, but also confirm the white master/black servant relationship maintained through race and class hierarchies. Mariah is not conscious of this binary opposition as she remains glued to her ethnocentric outlook.

Mariah’s attempt to claim a kind of kinship with Lucy through Indian ancestry is ridiculous and most embarrassing to Lucy. The assertion may be a attempt to identify with Lucy’s history of suppression and oppression, or maybe as Moira Ferguson suggests, to desire ‘forgiveness for colonial complicity’ but it altogether rings a false signal (‘To look at her, there was nothing remotely Indian about her. …she says it as if she were announcing her possession of a trophy’ [40]). Indian blood or none, Mariah has not known any history of conquest, marginalisation and dispossession; she has all along lived a wealthy middle class Anglo-American life. This knowledge prompts Lucy’s refusal to give in to Mariah’s attempt at repositioning history, and dismisses Mariah’s hypocritical claim with, ‘How do you get to be the sort of victor who claims to be the vanquished also?’ (41). Mariah’s claim to both identities is contradictory on the one hand, and on the other hand it bespeaks her continuous effort to obliterate the disparities between them so that Lucy’s narrative should be maintained within hers.

Significantly, racial, cultural, economic and class differences define Mariah’s and Lucy’s differing perspectives and worldviews but Mariah’s deliberate disregard for this race and power dynamics sums up to maintaining and perpetuating it. What accounts for the lack of sensitivity that Mariah displays in race and class matters is rooted in her almost ideal life: ‘she has never had to doubt … the right thing always happens to her; the thing she wants to happen, happens’

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Lucy on the other hand has had a different kind of life – one of exhausting frustrations; one in which almost every situation she comes across seems more difficult than the previous, but yet, which help her develop a critical insight into the general human situation.

**Historical/Cultural Paradoxes**

Though Lucy has been constantly trailed by history, events gradually unfold to reveal the inconsistencies of colonial idiosyncrasies. Ideas and concepts that negated the colonial subject resurface as commonplace within the colonising setup, thus questioning some motives of the imperial agenda. For example, Mariah’s bitter complaints about the destruction of nature and the countryside, and her devotion to environmental preservation are juxtaposed with her inability to make a connection between her life of affluence and the rape of this very land she is dying to preserve. Undoubtedly, her purpose is phony for she condemns in others what she herself is guilty of. Significantly, she is confronted with this truth by her daughter’s sardonic enquiry, “Well what used to be here before this house we are living in was built?” (72). Mariah’s complicity with colonial expropriation of land is revealed here and the fact that this connection is exposed by a younger generation of white society speaks positively to an eventual re-negotiation of the boundaries of race, class and the conquered/conqueror binary. This will further allow for a reconciliation of old spaces and a reconstruction of new identities.

Lucy’s relationship with her lover Paul plays out another shift in the colonial gaze. He gives her an exotic position from which she watches the other guests leave his party. From this position, she too is able to see, in the same way as she is viewed, through reflections of an ethnocentric gaze. Much more interesting is Paul’s concern for freedom, which gives another perspective to race and class superiority/inferiority. He tells of ‘great explorers who had crossed the great seas, not only to find riches … but to feel free, and this search for freedom was part of the whole human situation’ (129). Though at this point Lucy can only think of the cost of this quest for freedom to the underprivileged members of society, it is implicit that the sophistication of the metropolis does not necessarily provide fulfillment. Pleasure and freedom are more gratifying when obtained away from the everyday and out of the ordinary, living the experience of other cultures and spaces. This is why Hugh can afford to ask:

Isn’t it the most blissful thing in the world to be away from everything you have ever known – to be so far away that you don’t even know yourself anymore and you’re not sure you ever want to come back to all the things you’re a part of? (66)

When Lucy felt stifled by the stringent atmosphere of home, it was her greatest wish to go as far away as possible from home. Here she is, way across the Caribbean waters, on this other side of the Atlantic, meeting people who also express the same wish; people found in an area she hitherto thought provides fulfillment. Migration then becomes a plausible means by which humans shed off the ugly situations that threaten individual liberties both from within and without. It provides a kind of framework for understanding self and other while at the same time, creating new points of interconnectedness and relations. Lucy must fit herself into this fabric to be able to form the identity she so much desires.

Other truths begin to unveil themselves before Lucy, which push her to reconsider her historical past and her family situation as void of the natural human order. One of such truths is the untruth about family life, seen in the relationship between Lewis, Mariah and their children.
Lewis’ cruel injustice to a farm rabbit and his treacherous arrangement of a burial ceremony simply confirm the lack of sympathy inherent in human nature. His treachery continues into his love affair with Dinah, Mariah’s best friend, and it goes unnoticed by Mariah whose rosy existence closes her off from the realities of life. As would be expected, Lewis’ infidelity disintegrates his family and nullifies the picture of an ideal family structure associated with white standards. This is juxtaposed with Lucy’s own family situation in which her father comes and goes between women, fathering children by them and creating rivalry and conflict amongst them. Sexual adventurousness therefore has its roots in the individual mindset and does not respect race, class and gender hierarchies.

This situation further presents limitations in Mariah’s, and by extension, western understanding of gender behaviour. The wife, Mariah, focuses on the happy and perfect side of life so much that the opposite side of it seems almost nonexistent. When Lewis betrays their love, she feels the heavy weight of disappointment. Lucy on the other side sees it before it happens but because Mariah has ready and subjective answers to a situation like this, Lucy does not warn her in advance. To Mariah, the fact that all men behave that way would have been a cliché but women from a colonial background like Lucy understand this cliché well. Lewis’ attitude is an everyday happening to them and this awareness makes them emotionally stronger: ‘a man like Lewis ... would not have cast a pall over a woman’s life’ (141-2). The argument here is that rules are made by males to suit their whims and caprices and this fact is the core of gender bias. It is not surprising that Mariah is unaware of this and even if she were to be told, ‘she would only show ... a book she had ... which contradicted everything ... a book most likely written by a woman who understood absolutely nothing’ (142). It can be judged, from Mariah’s ignorance about gender inequalities, that there are also inadequacies in white ethnocentric interpretations of women’s experiences. However, what one learns from a particular socio-cultural context does not necessarily apply to another. This knowledge helps Lucy in better positioning and redefining her gender identity.

The narrative of the French painter also demands critical inquiries into the ethnocentrically-based opposition between civilised/uncivilised, black/white and European/non-European. He defied the existing order of his time, ‘which he found corrupt’ and definitely constraining, and migrated to an ‘uncivilised’ and exotic land, where he found liberation and attained a high measure of creative inspiration. Lucy identifies with the yearnings of this European as she already understands from her own situation that ‘finding the place you are born in an unbearable prison and wanting something completely different … represents a haven’ (95). Though this painter’s situation is similar to Lucy’s in a way, she finds that they have a major difference; the emotional and psychological release that he experiences in his new place is not readily available to her in New York. One of Kincaid’s primary concerns is to expose systems of binary hierarchies and unequal privileges between coloniser and colonised which she explicitly satirises in her searing non-fiction work A Small Place.6 The once-colonised regions are used as exotic sites and even the sickening realities of the people of these places are part of the delightful scenery to visiting westerners. On the other side, these lovely places tend to be a source of difficulty to their inhabitants as they experience new forms of imperialism. However, whatever

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their motives for displacement, and the situations they encounter in their various conditions of self-exile, the bottom line is that migrants seek escape from their pasts and opportunities for better lives.

The same holds true for Mariah. The final collapse of her marriage propels her to migrate. ‘She was going away, she said, far away, to live in a place of uncommon natural beauty. Everyone who lived in this place, she said, was filled with love and trust and greeted each other with the word “Peace”’ (162). This place is suggestive of the West Indies, Jamaica precisely, birthplace of the Rastafarian movement whose holy word is ‘Peace’ (used also for greeting). It is somewhat ironical that Mariah chooses this part of the world as her point of redemption because the philosophy and culture of Rastafarianism which prevails here is born out of mysticism and a Pan-African political consciousness – ideals which would be condemned by the white imperial culture to which she belongs. However, Mariah’s choice of re-location simply confirms the fact that migration blurs linguistic, cultural and national boundaries; while Lucy leaves her native Antigua to America to find a sense of self, Mariah moves from America to the West Indies to find a life of fulfilment. There is an indication here that home is everywhere and anywhere.

**Reconciling Binaries and Creating New Spaces**

It is necessary that the above truths be revealed to Lucy so that she may be able to make an amalgamation of her past and her present. For this to be achieved, she must first block the gaze that stares at her from over the Atlantic – the shattering look from history epitomised by her mother and her letters. These letters not only remind her of the impossibility of having safety and comfort in an alien land but also carry with them the power, authority and control that home has over her, and which make home un-homely. After one of such letters, which come with a feeling of nostalgia she struggles hard to suppress, Lucy declares:

> The object of my life now was to put as much distance between myself and the events mentioned in her letter as I could manage. For I felt that if I could put enough miles between me and the place from which that letter came…would I not be free to take everything just as it came and not see hundreds of years in every gesture, every word spoken, every face? (31)

The subsequent letters she receives from her mother remain unopened and eventually destroyed. This translates into her successful reversal of the maternal gaze which threatens her selfhood and thwarts her ambitions. Her experiences with Mariah, Lewis and their class-conscious and affluent friends have also helped her in understanding and negotiating her colonial past. The positive imaginations she holds of white middle class life have been challenged; thus she begins to envisage other options of re-invention and identity affirmation.

Lucy leaves home with an identity that is essentially gender-based and partially colonial. Her female identity is informed by her experiences with her mother and Mariah, and further propelled by the story of the French painter. One of the things that differentiate Lucy’s narrative from this man’s is her feminine gender, and the distance is made more acute by her being from the fringes of the earth, who has the mantle of a servant wrapped around her shoulders (95). From a western perspective, his action will be considered as heroic (‘his life could be found in the pages of a book … the lives of men always are’) (95), while Lucy’s may only be looked upon as ordinary. By virtue of her gender, therefore, Lucy is kept out of certain privileges that men

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hold; and although her female body excludes and marginalises her, she still stands a chance of using this same body as a medium of empowerment. She seizes this chance and begins the process of self-discovery through sexual encounters.

Contrary to her mother’s repeated warnings against becoming a ‘slut’, Lucy develops a subjective sexuality. She attests that she ‘had not known that such pleasure could exist, and what was more, be available to [her]’ (113). She attributes her sexual excitement to the fact that she is ‘so far from home’ (67); home goes with control and restrictions from patriarchal order. Whatever the case, this new space allows her freedom for sexual adventuring, which she welcomes with impunity, focusing mostly on her personal enjoyment and unceremoniously calling off relationships as soon as she loses interest. Her declaration that ‘life as a slut is quite enjoyable’ (128) counters her mother’s denial of her own sexuality grounded on the cultural necessity that women should reserve their sexuality for adulthood – adulthood being marriage, and marriage itself being bondage to men. By implication, female sexuality has been controlled by men while they accord themselves the privilege of sexual experimentation and exploration. Displacement from home therefore gives Lucy the opportunity to reject ‘her mother’s sexual prohibitions’ while at the same time ‘claiming her father’s sexual prerogative’ as a way of liberating and asserting herself.

The theory of universal womanhood that Mariah subscribes to and depends on for answers to women’s problems is for Lucy a farce not less than patriarchal domination of the woman. Lucy’s story of her troubled relationship with her mother is responded to with a lecture on ‘women in society, women in history, women in culture, women everywhere’ (132). Of course Mariah is right about the roles and responsibilities of women in the history of humanity but misses out on the fact that women have the right and need to lead their own lives free from men’s demands. Such a choice is guided by self-consciousness and interpretation of reality. As such, Lucy insists that her experiences with her mother are specific and do not necessarily translate into the general situation of women. She stands firm on the fact that her ‘mother was [her] mother … society … history … culture and other women in general were something altogether’ (131-2). As a proto-feminist, Mariah subscribes to the notion of universal sisterhood and assumes that Lucy will find solace as she comes to understand her position as a woman in Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex. But Lucy is disappointed to find that the opening sentence of the book limits the definition of woman to its biological essence and to a figuratively enclosed domestic space. Furthermore, it is evident that this general situation of the woman Mariah talks about has a Eurocentric background in which case there will be a conflict of interests and values based on individual and/or race/ethnic experiences. From this perspective, there is little chance that any category of white feminist discourse can explain and/or interpret Lucy’s experiences under a patriarchal mother and colonial authority. Racial, cultural and economic circumstances contribute to a diversity of women’s experiences, which makes it impracticable for a single ideological standpoint to be used as a framework for interpreting them all. This setback in early feminist discourse was fully exposed by narratives of migration wherein situations like Lucy’s (mother/daughter strife) demanded a completely different interpretation from general notions on women’s experiences. Recent trends in feminist criticism have therefore expanded to include all possible grounds open to the understanding of women’s experiences, as well as the intersections


of gender. This is why Lucy is resolute to re-invent herself within her own perception of the reality of the gender divide.

Lucy’s insistence on separation from both mother and motherland conflicts with her reluctance to let go of this same past. Her past is her mother and all her efforts at drawing a line between them comes to naught because as she says, she is not only like her mother, she is her mother. Because her identity is rooted in the same space that she seeks to obliterate, her attempts at a separate individuality become complex and ambivalent. Hence, Belinda Edmondson argues that ‘home and away must become the same place to make the [exile] whole’.\textsuperscript{8} Katherine Sugg, however, questions the fusion with the past as necessary to define and maintain a selfhood in the future. This assumption, to her, is founded on unsettling patriarchal discourses of women.\textsuperscript{9} Significantly, these discourses position even the female exile in the home/homeland sphere to build a cultural identity, but Lucy’s situation necessitates a delicate compromise of cultural and colonial genealogies. Her one-year experience in America prepares her to assert her independence. Her movement out of Mariah’s house to live on her own accordingly turns out to be a big accomplishment. However, when she attempts to write her own script, she only succeeds in writing her name and the statement, ‘I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it’ (164). The constant haunting intrusion of her mother’s love impedes her efforts at building a separate individuality, suggesting therefore that her mother’s narrative must be included in hers.

Finally, Lucy’s names represent an inner stronghold that she must break in order to complete her individuation process. Lucy, Josephine and Potter all symbolise both a matrilineal and a planto-cratic lineage that keep her within the barriers of patriarchy and colonial domination. Josephine is from her maternal grand uncle Joseph, a plantation owner, who, it was hoped, would be her benefactor, but who lost all his wealth and died miserable. Potter definitely comes from the slave owners of her forefathers. Lucy is the name given by her mother which she had never liked and which had considered changing to Charlotte, Jane and Emily (names of British female authors she read). She settled on Enid (after Enid Blyton), but soon finds out that it is the name of the woman who had wanted to kill her mother and her from jealousy over her father. In as much as the choice of the name points to the possibility of metaphorically killing her mother to create a separate identity, Lucy rejects this option when she declares that ‘even to hurt my mother I would not have wanted the same name as the woman who had tried to kill my mother and me’ (150). Moreover, re-naming herself after one of these women would have contradicted her whole cause since it would have meant compliance with empire. Charlotte Bronte, for example, creates a character, Jane Eyre, who lives in a house with a Caribbean woman locked up in the attic, while Enid Blyton is particularly noted for creating ugly blacks preying on white innocent children.

Lucy, a derivative of Lucifer as her mother provocatively tells her, is what Lucy finally claims to represent herself. Though she never liked the name, she develops interest in it when she knows its origin: ‘that my mother would have found me devil-like did not surprise me …. I


\textsuperscript{9}Katherine Sugg, ‘‘I would rather be dead’: Nostalgia and Narrative in Jamaica Kincaid’s \textit{Lucy}.\textit{Narrative} 10.2 (2002): 158.

did not grow to like the name Lucy … but whenever I saw my name I always reached to give it a strong embrace’ (152-3). Her new identity seems more like an extension of Annie John’s. Annie acclaims herself as a younger version of Lucifer as she leaves her maternal paradise to an endless loneliness and isolation. Kincaid uses this configuration of villainy to fiercely claim independent identities for her young protagonists, as Lucy especially employs its power to resist the emotional ties with her mother. Proof is that only her name ‘Lucy Josephine Potter’ remains on the blank page, the confessions of love having been blurred by tears. At this point, Lucy already has a measure of fulfillment even more so because she obtains final freedom from a patriarchal/colonial language of suppression and oppression as epitomised by the death of her father. On her own terms then, she merges and separates both her cultural and colonial identities from which she devises a postcolonial code that rewrites the colonial patriarchal paradigm. But after succeeding in rejecting all forms of limitations on her individuality, Lucy is unable to continue the script after her name. However, there is every indication that the script will contain her mother’s and Mariah’s alongside hers, all wrapped in the two cultures that identify her so that she can have a unique identity.

Conclusion
Jamaica Kincaid’s Lucy undoubtedly proves that migration carves out new spaces for identity reconstruction by creating that interconnectedness with home that permits a negotiation of cultural polarities. After achieving the most desired independence, Lucy brings in another opposition in the words, ‘I realized when I crossed the threshold that I did not think of it as home, only as the place where I now lived’ (156). When the domains of home, belonging and culture are contested, transnational identities are formed outside the limitations of place, gender and race. In an interview with Moira Ferguson, Kincaid posits that ‘people who look like [her] should not cling to their narrow definitions of themselves … what they ought to do is … take … Take Shakespeare. Just anything that makes sense.’ Therefore, any identity that suits individual aspirations should be claimed irrespective of leanings. With migration, hegemonic as well as national discourses are questioned. As a migrant writer, Kincaid herself oscillates between empire and colony, avoiding complete identification with one or the other. She believes that from middle position, she will be able to adopt the language of empire and use it to articulate the voice of the colony. This she achieves in Lucy as she successfully blurs the demarcations of gender, race and culture from an insider/outside position.

Eleanor Anneh Dasi was born in Cameroon. She studied at the University of Yaounde I, Cameroon where she obtained a Bachelor Degree in English Modern Letters, a Postgraduate Diploma, an MPhil and a PhD in Commonwealth Literary Studies. She is a Senior Lecturer of Literatures in English in the Higher Teacher Training College of the University of Yaounde I.