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Metamorphosis From Innocence Into Experience: Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* From a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective

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***Abstract*—A passionate and outspoken advocate of female assertiveness, Antiguan-American author Jamaica Kincaid writes from her personal observations of the injustices of colonial subjugation and patriarchy. An overall reading of her fiction shows that most of her books defend oppressed and devalued women against the historical atrocities enforced by both colonial and androcentric communities. Most significantly, Kincaid's oeuvre holds colonization liable for entrenching patriarchy in Caribbean culture. *Annie John* is no exception since its eponymous character, rebellious and defiant Annie, vehemently rejects the passivity and victimization assigned to Caribbean women by both white colonialists and the patriarchal society where she lives. Since its publication in a book form in the *New Yorker* in 1985, *Annie John* is often analyzed from a postcolonial perspective. However, an in-depth reading of the text shows that it intertwines gender relations, women's sustainability, and unfettered sexuality, along with colonial and postcolonial realities for non-white, non-Western women.**

***Index Terms*—*Annie John*, gender discrimination, Jamaica Kincaid, patriarchy, postcolonial feminism**

I. Introduction

Since its publication in 1985, Jamaica Kincaid's novella *Annie John* has often been analyzed from different perspectives. However, the present paper approaches this book from the perspective of postcolonial feminist theory. This relatively new discipline is mainly concerned with examining the problems of women in the Global South, who are often branded as the 'Other'. While Edward Said did not explicitly talk about women as the 'Other,' his analysis of Orientalism in his seminal book *Orientalism* reveals how the Western representations of Eastern women are often stereotypical and superficial—something that reduces non-Western women into the inferior and exotic "Other" which justifies Western dominance (Said, 1979, p. 118). This way, this theory is simply a critique of mainstream Western feminist thought that excludes non-Western women from their scope and exclusively prioritizes the experiences of white, Western women.

Similarly, postcolonial feminists vehemently argue that colonization had its own tremendous impact on the lives of women in the Third World and that their experiences cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration colonization and its implications. Postcolonial feminist theorists highlight and bring to light the need to include and represent the experiences of women of color and other marginalized groups who, in years gone by, were living in colonized countries and, therefore, considered inferior and subordinate to their white, Western counterparts. The concept of the "Otherness," or what Spivak terms the "Subalternity" (Spivak, 2010, p. 25), is deeply related to both postcolonialism and feminism: it is the product of colonial discourse, especially those who are doubly marginalized by both colonial power and their social and cultural contexts. This makes the task of the postcolonial feminist more complicated than that of the postcolonial theorist, as Ritu Tyagi puts it. Tyagi opines that the mission of the postcolonial feminist is to illuminate "double colonization," which he attributes to "the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. She has to resist the control of colonial power not only as a colonized subject, but also as a woman" (Tyagi, 2014, p. 45). This very specific point is applicable to most of the women characters depicted in Kincaid's *Annie John*, more specifically, the eponymous character who defends herself against the yoke of the double colonization of both colonialism and patriarchy. As will be cited later, she is always seen grappling with the constraints of two conflicting forces: the gender roles of the Antiguan society in which she lives and the expectations of the British colonial culture.

Most of Jamaica Kincaid's early writings, including *Annie John*, are written from a fictional-autobiographical lens, as both fiction and reality are blended. A brief autobiographical note right here is sufficient to show the tremendous impact of Kincaid's early life and personal experiences in the Caribbean on her writing career. In different interviews, Kincaid admitted to the personal dimensions of her oeuvre, particularly her maiden novel*, Annie John,* and its sequel, *Lucy*. For instance, in an interview conducted by Allan Vorda for the *Mississippi Review*, the interviewer asks her if *Annie John* appears to be an autobiographical novel or has any personal content. On her part, Kincaid confesses to the autobiographical dimensions of her book and states that *Annie John* abounds in incidents derived from "my personal experiences. I only write about myself and about the people connected to me or the people I'm connected to" (Vorda, 1996, p. 62). Kincaid's fantasy narratives palpably revolve around young heroines whose view of the world around them arises from their child or burgeoning woman psychology, as with *Annie John* and *Lucy*. To some extent, this argument

may be true. However, as in *Annie John*, indeed there is a young protagonist, but she is surcharged with adult problems. Though young, Annie is depicted as an unchaperoned rebel who vehemently struggles with societal patriarchal mores and refuses to bow to colonial realities in Antigua, a British Crown colony at the time. And this is the crux of the ensuing argument.

II. Discussion

Annie John can be read as a bildungsroman or a coming-of-age novel about the character development of a young Caribbean girl from Antigua who is chastened by suffering rather than by any academic institution. However, this book differs somewhat from male or traditional bildungsromans such as Charles Dickens' well-known books like *Great Expectations* or Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Any polished reader of Kincaid's bildungsromans, such as *Annie John* or *Lucy*, can categorize them as *female* bildungsromans. One way or another, Kincaid, the hardcore feminist, vehemently refuses to conform to this pure male genre and pushes her thumb into it. The net result is a reworking of the genre or a new type of bildungsroman that is somewhat different from the ones we are familiar with. Louis F. Caton argues, "Of course, this coming-of-age literary convention differs significantly among nationalities and periods, but some broad characteristics do seem to cross cultural lines" (Caton, 1996, p. 125). Then, he further defines one of such genre's *broad characteristics* as a "male-gendered…white, male, and European" convention (Caton, 1996, p. 126). Also, literary critic Justin D. Edwards, thus, may not be mistaken when she states that "Kincaid adds her own ingredients to the white, European tradition of the bildungsroman." Edwards goes further to add, "This genre is often associated with male writers such as Charles Dickens, James Joyce, and Mark Twain" (Edwards, 2007, p. 42). In the words of Professor Harold Bloom, Kincaid has broken with the canonical standards written by distinguished male authors:

> Ideologues insist that Kincaid has broken with all Western canonical standards, which they associate with such patriarchal malefactors as Shakespeare, Milton, and Dante. Were this true, Kincaid's audience would consist of academic feminists and postcolonial rebels. Since her public is rather larger than that, it is likely that Kincaid's fictions, however original, extend canonical traditions even while attempting to subvert them, which is one of the oldest and most prevalent of literary procedures. (Bloom, 2008, p. 1)

A number of factors distinguish this type of bildungsroman from the male/traditional genre and help chasten the protagonist's individuality. As a committed feminist, Kincaid does not adhere to the specificities of this male genre and, as stated earlier, adds her own contribution to the field. First, her protagonist is a female, non-white character who lives in a specific milieu in the Caribbean. Furthermore, the heroine is encompassed by so many social, cultural, and political factors that help to impede the development of her individuality. Chief of such are the imperialist subjugation and patriarchal constraints represented by the gender roles of the Antiguan society and traditions represented here through both Annie's mother, Mrs. John, and the British colonizer.

Annie, the protagonist, lives in an androcentric community that degrades and commodifies women, a society in which women come miles after men. Ironically enough, this dogma is represented by Annie's mother, Mrs. John, who wants to bring her sole daughter in a way that adheres to the societal mores and norms followed. Initially, the mother-daughter relationship is idyllic, particularly as long as young, unsophisticated Annie is naïve and does not question such social customs or object to the societal gender roles. In a sense, this strong bond has sometimes been interrupted and disrupted by some insignificant things, but soon it comes back. Annie still remembers the day she went to attend the funeral of a hunchbacked girl and forgot to fetch her mother the fish she requested. She fabricated a lie, but her mother knew she was lying. As a punishment, she was forced to have her supper outside and was deprived of her mother's daily night kiss. However, her mother gave her a good night kiss before she slept.

The character of Annie is haunted by death, which "borders on an obsession" (Edwards, 2007, p. 44). Death, which denotes the termination of life, symbolizes Annie's rupture with innocence and her admission into the realm of corruption or, euphemistically speaking, experience. This topic has been introduced many times in the text. No wonder the very opening chapter is aptly titled "Figures in the Distance," and it mainly speaks of death. The protagonist speaks retrospectively of her fear of death, especially when she is told that everybody on earth is mortal and that even children sometimes die. This epiphany or revelation opens Annie's eyes to the world of the adults, another world with which she is not familiar yet. As life is associated with her mother, who gave her life, death is too related to her mother as Annie is informed that Nalda, a brickmaker's daughter, dies from fever in her mother's hands. From that time onwards, young Annie looks at her mother differently:

> I then began to look at my mother's hands differently. They had stroked the dead girl's forehead; they had bathed and dressed her and laid her in the coffin my father had made…I could not bear to have my mother caress me or touch my food or help me with my bath. I especially couldn't bear the sight of her hands lying still in her lap. (Kincaid, 1985, p. 6)

The association of death with Mrs. John ruptures the robust tether between mother and daughter, too, as it helps in a sense to distance Annie from her mother. Mrs. John has often been taken as a token of warm rupturing care for her daughter. However, this image is somewhat shattered now. Likewise, this denotes Annie's growing awareness of her identity and her desire for autonomy from both colonialism and patriarchy, which are epitomized here through her domineering mother.

Annie associates her mother's hands with death, especially when she sees her mother and father having sex in bed. Annie could never forget that the same hands that dotingly caress her are the same hands that sexually cuddle her father:

> When I got to the door, I could see that my mother and father were lying in their bed. It didn't interest me what they were doing—only that my mother's hand was on the small of my father's back and that it was making a circular motion. But her hand! It was white and bony, as if it had long been *dead* and had been left out in the elements. It seemed not to be her hand, and yet it could only be her hand, so well did I know it. (Kincaid, 1985, p. 30; italics added)

Though the author does not explicitly describe this scene, it is alluded to through Annie's eyes. This scene is of paramount significance here as it marks a turning point in Annie's already fraught relationship with her mother, and most significantly, it reveals Annie's sexual awakening. In a sense, it marks her metamorphosis from innocence into experience. At the same time, it obliterates and disrupts her sense of innocence. It is no wonder that Annie does her best to infuriate and embitter her mother from that time onward.

One of Annie's close friends at school is Gwen, whom Annie befriends and takes as an alternative to her mother's love, especially when the relationship between mother and daughter becomes strained and tense. The two girls are inseparable as they spend much time at school together. Annie says, "I told her that when I was younger I had been afraid of my mother's dying, but that since I met Gwen this didn't matter so much" (Kincaid, 1985, p. 51). However, Annie's perception of Gwen as docile, weak, and willing to conform to the social order makes Annie abruptly sever this relationship. Rebellious Annie alienates herself from her staunchest friend at school simply because the latter adheres to societal norms and is willing to get married and have children.

The author's representation of Gwen is significant here. As cited earlier, she represents and abides by the expectations of the colonial society. She is portrayed as beautiful, obedient, and loved by all those close to her. Therefore, Mrs. John wants Annie to follow her as a model. This is the reason why Mrs. John does not object to her daughter's friendship with Gwen. As for Annie, she is rebellious and independent. The contrast here between the two is meant to show and reinforce Annie's insistence on the path of resistance and self-discovery.

Afterwards, Gwen is replaced by a new acquaintance about Annie's age, nicknamed the Red Girl. The presence of this newcomer in Annie's life, especially at this crucial time of the rift between mother and daughter, is significant as it shows Annie's rebellion against the constraints of both the patriarchal system represented by her mother and the British colonial order. Without a name, the Red Girl is described as a wild and untamed girl of very unruly behavior, the sort of girl whom her mother would not like or call ladylike: she does not wash regularly, climbs trees, and is always dirty. Furthermore, she plays marbles, which Annie's mother always associates with boys. She represents freedom and independence for burgeoning Annie. In a sense, it is the Red Girl who helps awaken and foster as well the rebellion that resides innately inside Annie. She inspires her to break free from the constraints of both the Antiguan society and the colonizer. This is why Annie keeps her relationship with this new friend secret.

Annie relishes the secrecy of her relationship with the Red Girl because she is sure enough that her mother will never accept or approve of it. And the symbolism of this is significant. Out of her rebellion against her mother, Annie makes friends with the Red Girl and eulogizes her as "an angel," though they are the very antitheses of each other (Kincaid, 1985, p. 58). Annie is sure that there is nothing gorgeous about this girl since everything about her seems dirty and unpleasant:

> She had big, broad, flat feet, and they were naked to the bare ground; her dress was dirty, the skirt and blouse tearing away from each other at one side; the red hair that I had first seen standing up on her head was matted and tangled; her hands were big and fat, and her fingernails held at least ten anthills of dirt under them. And on top of that, she had such an unbelievable, wonderful smell, as if she had never taken a bath in her whole life. (Kincaid, 1985, p. 57)

The idea that this new acquaintance is described by Annie herself as the *Red* Girl makes this girl diabolic as this conjures up the traditional demonic image of the devil, who is always described as having red, unruly hair and living in a big furnace. What strengthens this proposition is Annie's description of the girl: "Right away to myself I called her the Red Girl. For as she passed, in my mind's eye I could see her surrounded by flames, the house she lived in on fire, and she could not escape" (Kincaid, 1985, p. 57). Like the archdevil, the Red Girl is also described as rebellious and iconoclastic since she goes against the norms in her society. She rebels against the patriarchal society that fosters gender differences by assigning men some specific tasks not allowed for women. For instance, she climbs trees far better than boys and plays marbles—two tasks exclusively assigned to boys in a typical androcentric community like Caribbean society. This is once again reminiscent of Satan in the Garden of Eden, once he turned down God's word and decided to go against Him. In the words of literary critic Mary Ellen Snodgrass, the Red Girl is an "apostate" (Snodgrass, 2008, p. 36).

No wonder the Red Girl appeals to Annie, who protests against her mother's dominion and wishes to achieve her way into selfhood and maturity. Likewise, Annie, at the end of the narrative, leaves the paradisiacal place where she leads a carefree, idyllic life for the unknown, where she works as a nurse in a foreign land. Like Satan's oft-quoted statement in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven," the renegade Annie prefers to toil away and serve as a nurse in a distant land than become the darling of the household tended by doting parents in her own land. No doubt, the relationship between Annie and the Red Girl widens the growing gulf between mother and daughter. Simmons writes, "[t]he Red Girl and her marbles had helped to precipitate a crisis between Annie and her mother. Now mother and

daughter are acknowledged enemies in a power struggle over Annie's future and even her soul" (Simmons, 1994, pp. 111-112).

Nevertheless, Annie is not the only person in the narrative who turns her back on the constraints of colonial subjugation and patriarchy: her mother, Mrs. John, has once been a social rebel herself, fighting against the social conventions of her society when she ventures out of Dominica for Antigua to marry her husband, who is thirty-five years her senior. At sixteen, Mrs. John quarrels with her overbearing father about marrying the man she loves, leaving her family for good. However, it seems that life in colonial Antigua has domesticated her and made her willing to surrender to the social order handed down by both the colonizer and patriarchy. In time, she becomes a typical Antiguan woman who tries to inculcate the conventionalities of her community into the mind of her sole daughter, Annie. Nicole Willey notes, "[W]hen women are kept from self-definition due to the oppressions of race and class, it can become difficult or even impossible to pass on positive definitions of womanhood and motherhood to their daughters" (Willey, 2010, p. 17). And this is the case of Mrs. John right here: she suffers "self-definition" because of patriarchy and colonialization and, therefore, attempts to pass this over to her daughter.

Back to Nicole Willey's above words, Annie's problem is simply a problem of *self-definition*. Once she decides to live independently and define herself, she is encountered with a torrent of obstacles by both the colonial system and patriarchy, which are represented through her mother. And this is the reason for the fierce struggle between mother and daughter. The mother has voluntarily agreed to surrender to both forces, but the daughter adamantly refuses to submit her willingness to any of these two major forces. As the old saying says, she willingly chooses to swim against the current. This way, the relationship between the two, as cited earlier, is idyllic as long as the girl is still young. However, the tension escalates between Annie and her mother once the girl reaches adolescence and seeks independence and self-definition. Therefore, it will be oversimplified if one encapsulates this narrative into a simple coming-of-age story of a girl's passage into pubescence.

Annie has also been depicted as a maverick adolescent who goes against what is conventionally believed and deep-seated. She questions the cultural assumptions of her community in a way that seems rude and unaccepted. One traditionally held fact about history that Annie entirely doubts and takes lightly concerns the Italian explorer and navigator Christopher Columbus, whose fame rests on discovering the New World. Though the history books of the British colonizer require Caribbean students to exalt Columbus as one of Europe's most famous and flamboyant champions, Annie rejects and opposes this historical notion vehemently. In one of these history books, she finds a color picture of miserable Columbus held in captivity on his way to Spain. Though the picture is meant to inspire pity in students, Annie soon conjures up this man's involvement in the slave trade that entrenched slavery and subsequent colonization of her country. For her, Columbus is no more than "a mean-spirited man who unchained a series of disastrous events on the Caribbean region" (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999, p. 109). Therefore, she captions the picture with "The Great Man Can No Longer Just Get Up and Go", words which she has heard her mother use about her own overbearing father (Jamaica Kincaid, 1985, p. 78). This caption infuriates the British history teacher, Miss Edwards by name, who feels that Annie has committed blasphemy for writing this about one of Europe's most remarkable men. Ironically enough, Annie is forced to copy out the first two books of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. As Simmons writes, "For defaming one of the empire's great men, she is required to pay homage to another great man, John Milton, by copying out the first two books of *Paradise Lost*" (Simmons, 1994, p. 113).

Indeed, as the history teacher puts it, Annie's defaming of Columbus, one of the British empire's great men, is symbolically significant as it shows her desire to correct and rewrite the history books written and dictated by the colonizer. As a Caribbean girl, she does not like Columbus, regards him as "a grandiose tyrant," and feels that it serves him right to be in chains (Simmons, 1994, p. 112). As she puts it, "What just deserts, I thought, for I did not like Columbus" (Kincaid, 1985, p. 77). Edwards comments,

> Columbus, then, is not portrayed as a hero but as a tyrant. He is linked to an overbearing parent (her mother's father), and instead of "creating" Antigua with his "discovery," he is presented as a key figure in the destructive force that has crippled the island. The spread of European empire, Annie implies, has shrouded the Caribbean in darkness, turning it into a lost paradise. As such, Annie demythologizes the "official" colonial history and challenges national metanarratives that perpetuate social control through an exertion of imperialist ideologies. (Edwards, 2007, p. 51)

Likewise, the novel is replete with many examples that show Annie's rejection of the British hegemony in the West Indies. She was born in a society that relishes and cherishes Western practices, especially English. For example, her father rejects traditional or local obeah practices and favors Western-style doctors once Annie falls sick. Annie suffers from a very severe depression or breakdown of both the body and spirit. The medication given by an English doctor proves a failure in her case. However, the traditional obeah treatment administered by her uneducated grandmother, Ma Chess, and obeah healer named Ma Jolie heals her. Therefore, one here may argue that the author herself favors local and conventional practices by making Annie recover from illness through her grandmother's knowledge. Paravisini-Gebert states, "Obeah as a set of African-derived religious and curative practices is a repository of resistance in the text" (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999, p. 109).

Ironically enough, despite her resistance to the idealization of British rule in the West Indies, Annie herself becomes enamored of this style, especially when she idealizes her mother, comparing her features to the English ideal:

> Her head looked as if it should be on a sixpence. What a beautiful long neck, and long plaited hair, which she pinned up around the crown of her head because when her hair hung down it made her too hot. Her nose was the shape of a flower on the brink of opening. Her mouth, moving up and down as she ate and talked at the same time, was such a beautiful mouth I could have looked at it forever if I had to and not mind. (Kincaid, 1985, pp. 18–19)

Nevertheless, Annie may not be mistaken in comparing her mother to England. Like England, Mrs. John is strict enough toward her sole daughter, whom she desires to drive into a lady-like girl, more specifically, after the English style. Following Western standards, Mrs. John sends Annie to a teacher who teaches her manners and deportment and another who teaches her piano, but Annie is dismissed from both classes for her ill manners and misbehavior. Also, the book closes with Annie venturing out of Antigua. Ironically, she flees for England, the very country she stigmatizes and the country whose people colonized and enslaved her ancestors.

As cited earlier, Kincaid is a committed feminist who herself has to fight against the societal patriarchal norms and the British colonizer before her departure to the United States at an early age. Though Kincaid has some reservations about the label feminist, her literary production, especially *Annie John*, resonates with feminist perspectives and dimensions. In an interview with Selwyn R. Cudjoe, the interviewer labels her oeuvre as written from the eyes of a feminist, and she replies:

> I don't really see it, but that's only because I don't really see myself in any school. I mean, there has turned out to be a rise in West Indian literature, but I wouldn't know how I fit in it. I am very glad that there is such a thing, but on the other hand, belonging to a group of anything, an "army" of anything, is deeply disturbing to me. I think I owe a lot of my success, or whatever, to this idea of feminism, but I don't really want to be placed in that category. I don't mind if people put me in it, but I don't claim to be in it. (Cudjoe, 1989, p. 401)

Nevertheless, whether or not Kincaid concedes to this description, *Annie John* is the exploration of female identity, female desire, sexuality, gender roles, women's sustainability, mother-daughter relationships, and many other themes that all fall within the scope of feminism. Most, if not all, of these issues are represented through the character of Annie. One way or another, this makes Annie the mouthpiece of the author. It is no wonder the significant characters depicted in *Annie John* are female. Of course, there are male characters, but they are portrayed as minor and, most notably, eclipse compared to their female counterparts. The world of *Annie John* is dominated and peopled mainly by women, especially the titular character Annie, Mrs. John, Ma Chess, Ma Jolie, Gwen, the Red Girl, and many others. Furthermore, like Kincaid herself, several women are portrayed as striving to achieve independence and selfhood.

Although the Caribbean society depicted here is male-dominated, a male character like Annie's father, Alexander John by name, pales in comparison to a strong-willed female character like his wife, Mrs. John. Snodgrass states, "As educator and disciplinarian, she [i.e. Mrs. John] wields power and influence lacking to a male who departs for work, leaving the two females together in a shared domestic domain" (Snodgrass, 2008, p. 43). For much of the book, Annie's dislike of her mother is apparent, especially when the relationship between them sours. Nevertheless, Annie cannot deny that her mother is beautiful, capable, and strong. At age sixteen, for instance, Mrs. John leaves her family and entire life in Dominica to marry an old man she favors in Antigua. We are told that she has gone against the will of her domineering father. Likewise, though Alexander John has been promiscuous and has many children born out of wedlock, he prefers Mrs. John and marries her legally, to the dismay of his other women.

Mrs. John has been described as knowledgeable about many things: she knows about death, etiquette, and the traditional obeah rituals. In the opening chapters, a neighbor's young girl dies in her mother's hand, and she bathes and dresses her. Likewise, the neighbor, Miss Charlotte, dies while having a conversation with Mrs. John. Death, then, seems to have an intimate association with Mrs. John. As literary critic Diane Simmons puts it, "Annie's own mother seems to be on strangely intimate terms with death, a kind of priestess of death" (Simmons, 1994, pp. 106-107).

As far as Alexander John is concerned, he is depicted as a perfect example that epitomizes unequal traditional gender roles in the androcentric community of the West Indies. As a typical patriarchal society, the Caribbean is privilegedly biased against women: men and women are assigned specific tasks to perform. Annie's father, for example, represents this theme. As a man, he has been portrayed as a promiscuous person who has had many sexual encounters with several women. Though he has many children born out of wedlock out of these liaisons, he does not marry any of the women whom he is involved with. When he decides to marry legally, he chooses Mrs. John, a beautiful young girl who is thirty years his junior from Dominica. Such things are exclusively restricted to men and are seen as scandalous if committed by women.

Of the other examples that show the injustices of gender difference occur when Mrs. John unfairly insults Annie as "a slut making a spectacle of [herself] in front of four boys" once she sees her daughter harassed by some older teenage boys in the street (Kincaid, 1985, p. 102). Though Annie is the one molested by the boys, she is the one scathingly blamed for this by her mother. Defiantly, Annie retorts angrily, "Well, like father like son, like mother, like daughter" (Kincaid, 1985, p. 102). Annie takes some comfort right here from the ability to fight back against her mother, though she knows perfectly well that this will widen the gulf between her and her mother. However, this moment, which illuminates the unequal gender relations between men and women, affects Annie to the core. Edwards comments, "She is thus, under the tyranny of the male gaze, defined as a sexually available object and humiliated by the experience" (Edwards, 2007, p. 54).

III. Conclusion

This paper presents a reading of Jamaica Kincaid's debut novel, *Annie John*, from a postcolonial feminist perspective. *Annie John* has often been interpreted from a postcolonial perspective as a book that tackles the atrocities committed by British colonizers against West Indian people. However, this paper amalgamates feminism and postcolonialism together and deals with the rights of the oppressed and devalued West Indian women against the historical atrocities of both the colonial and patriarchal systems. As a hardcore feminist, Antiguan-American author Jamaica Kincaid holds both the European colonizer and patriarchy responsible for the oppression and inferiorization of Caribbean women. This is mainly introduced through the sour relationship between Annie, the eponymous character, and her mother, Mrs. John. The relationship between mother and daughter is seen as idyllic and peaceful as long as young Annie does not seek independence and self-definition. Once defiant and rebellious Annie reaches adolescence and pursues independence from both patriarchal and colonial subjugations, the once strong tether between her and her mother becomes strained and abruptly severs. However, the narrative ironically ends with Annie venturing out to England to carve a niche away from these two forces.

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