

Communion of the Three Heroines (Annie, Lucy, And Xuela) in Jamaica Kincaid's Novels *Annie John*, *Lucy*, and *the Autobiography of My Mother*

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ABSTRACT

Jamaica Kincaid is an Antiguan-American modern writer in the field of Caribbean Literature in the present age. Kincaid has also won critical praise for her novels such as *Annie John* (1985), *Lucy* (1990), and *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1995). As a writer, she deals with the concepts of the relationship among the family members in her works. She knows the values of the relationship. Her novels are also considered as an autobiography of her. Most of the heroines of her novels are resemble her own character. Kincaid's novels give voice to the women of the British West Indies. Through her female characters, Kincaid explores the long-lasting effects of slavery and colonialism. As a writer, Kincaid is interested in a mother-daughter relationship. A relationship that begins with an abundance of unconditional love that then abruptly changed into hate. This is a dynamic Kincaid explores within *Annie John*, *Lucy*, and *the Autobiography of My Mother*. These three novels are the reflection of every Caribbean girl's nature and mind. In this paper, we discuss the communion or harmony of the heroines' life.

KEY WORDS: Communion, Harmony, Caribbean, Autobiography, Relationship, etc.

Introduction:

“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.” Maya Angelou

In Kincaid novels, the readers truly like the characters and their formation. Shakespeare was the best example of making the female protagonist character formation. His female characters were very strong in their thinking and power. The entire story is based on their characters. For example Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Cordelia in *King Lear*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Like Shakespeare, Kincaid also gives importance to the female characters.

Kincaid novels *Annie John* (1983), *Lucy* (1990), and *the Autobiography of My Mother* (1997) are the type of Bildungsroman or coming-of-age novel. These novels only portray the plight of the characters and their life. Most of Kincaid's works are characterized by an exploration of mother-daughter relationships, which serve as a metaphor for the relationship between the colonial powers and the countries they rule. Kincaid is very much aware of the status of women's writing. “Everything it's mostly women who are writing anything interesting” (164). All of Kincaid's novels deal with some aspect of the female coming of age process. All of her main characters are females from the Caribbean land.

Kincaid's first novel *Annie John* is a fully developed psychological study. *Lucy*, is her second novel as the development of an individual protagonist study. In *Annie John*, the heroine Annie is loved and brought up by her kind and caring mother. In her early teens, Annie has suddenly withdrawn from her mother's comforting embrace. Now is the time to learn how to become a lady. In her next novel *Lucy*, the heroine Lucy does not present her mother's caring side. She only portrays the domination and unsupportive figure of a woman. Then, in her third novel, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, the heroine Xuela wanders eternally through her life with the emptiness of losing her mother at her own birth. She can never become a complete woman due to the absence of the mother-daughter

bond. In this novel, the character is alienated but not forlorn. The communion of the three heroines' of these novels grows up in British colonial Antigua among an oppressive society.

COMMUNION OR HARMONY OF THE THREE CHARACTERS:

Any woman who understands the problems of running a home will be nearer to understanding the problems of running a country. Margaret Thatcher

Women think of all colors except the absence of color. I have said that black has it all. White too. Their beauty is absolute. It is the perfect harmony. Coco Chanel

Kincaid's work is regarded as unique among the various schools of the Caribbean writing neither fully feminist nor Afro-centric, and she is one of the most respected of all women authors from the area. Mostly Kincaid's novels are bildungsroman type. Her acclaimed coming-of-age novel *Annie John*, which explores the personal networks of family and friends experienced by the heroine on the island of Antigua. In the novel, *Lucy* explores nineteen-year-old Lucy leaves her home in Antigua to become an au pair in the United States. The narrator of *the Autobiography of My Mother* is Xuela is a motherless girl and her feelings, the way the legacy of colonialism, a common history of suffering, and humiliation.

In these three characters, we found similarities. The characters in her works travel the same linear path, with the three heroines in the three novels expecting real, sincere love. Although these three heroines grow up in three different atmospheres, their purpose is the same and that is true love. Annie and Lucy have a love-hate relationship with their mother. This is the common communion for the two heroines'. Xuela has never the opportunity to feel a mother's love and affection. But she didn't love her foster mother. However, these three heroines are combined in their thoughts and actions. Their feelings are same. Their struggles against the colonial world are same. They are same in colour, race, problem, identity, and culture. They reflect only the black side of the Caribbean land. Each of the Kincaid characters has unique obstacles that they must overcome.

The Character of Annie in *Annie John*:

Annie is the narrator of the novel *Annie John*. She dominates the entire novel. So that she explains all the characters as her wish. Particularly she depicts her mother very clearly and narrates the story of her life. She is the clean observer of the novel and also her bond of love portrays entirely in the novel. At the beginning of her youth, she struggles against the separation from her mother. Her fears about being left alone in the world dominate her early days and when they are not entirely resolved transform into bitterness and hatred. At the same time, as she grows into her adolescence, she learns to harden herself against efforts to restrict her personal freedom and articulation.

For I could not be sure whether for the rest of my life I would be able to tell when it was really my mother and when it was really her shadow standing between me and the rest of the world.(107)

Annie is being stifled by her dominant mother. She grows into adulthood everything is taught by her mother to Annie. It is a kind of dependent and very eager to learn. From the beginning, she is very attached to her mother. She believes strongly in her mother and her bonding. She blindly believes that her mother was a role model of her life. Annie Goosebumps when seeing her mother's activity and her ability to buy things from the market and her bargaining style is very much attracted by Annie. So that she believes her mother so much and thinking that her mother's bonding is only to her. At last, she knows the originality of her mother's mind goes towards her father. The bonding love is diverted into other. She upset-minded and decides to leave her family. Here the characterization of Annie is so brilliant and magnanimous one. Kincaid's character always dominates society because of the colonial life of the author. The power of mother-daughter relationships takes up an eminent place in Jamaica Kincaid's work and has frequently appeared in her other novels such as *Lucy* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*.

The Character of Lucy in *Lucy*:

Lucy is a short novel or novella by Kincaid. Lucy is the novel's protagonist, and narrator. Here the homesickness is the main problem of the novel. She leaves from her native land, to work as an au pair in the United States. Lucy's relationship with her mother is mirrored in her relationship

with Mariah. Lucy admires and hates Mariah. She projects her ambiguities about her mother onto Mariah. When she observes Mariah performing the simple task of organizing flowers, she recalls her mother planting flowers. She comments,

The times that I loved Mariah it was because she reminded me of my mother. The times that I did not love Mariah it was because she reminded me of my mother. (58)

Mariah's maternal nature is too similar to her mother's to categorize as a mere friend. Mariah's continuous attempts to love Lucy like a daughter only make Lucy more distant. Lucy rejects Mariah's motherly affections, and Kincaid defends Lucy's cold behavior. Lucy does not want to love Mariah because she does not want the eventual hurt and rejection that will follow.

The Character of Xuela in *the Autobiography of My Mother*:

Xuela is the main character of the novel, completely alone from the moment she is born. The novel describes the life of Xuela Claudette Richardson in Antigua. The author tells the detail story of Xuela's life; she shares the story of Xuela's dead mother. The heroine of the novel Xuela is filled with loneliness.

My father's wife showed me how to wash myself it was not done with kindness. My human form and odor were an opportunity to heap scorn on me. I responded in a fashion by now characteristic of me: whatever I was told to hate I loved and loved the most. (32)

Xuela's loneliness is caused by her father. Her mother's abandonment was immediate, but her father's is continual. Her stepmother considers Xuela to be competition, she still teaches her about the basics of womanhood hygiene and housekeeping. Xuela realizes that there will not be any love between them. Her stepmother views being a wife and raising Xuela as a job. Xuela does not heed any of her advice. At last like Annie, here Xuela is hate her step mother and rebels against all that her stepmother attempts to teach her. So that, the communion of the character of Annie and Xuela clearly picturized by the writer.

CONCLUSION:

Through these three novels, Kincaid paints a picture of her mother's homeland, Dominica. Her language is often praised for its beauty, elegance, and power. Her novels exemplify the idea that a smooth representation of biological motherhood seems almost impossible for Caribbean women; her fiction goes round and round the problematic concept of motherhood, constantly reproducing a situation of loss, longing, lack, and undeniable desire.

In *the Autobiography of My Mother*, Kincaid addresses the pervading notion of inescapable bonds between mother and daughter. The idea of inescapable bonds to mothers and motherlands links the autobiography of my mother to the author's earlier novels. In *Annie John*, Annie seems to reject her mother completely, but at the end of the novel her mother declares, 'it doesn't matter what you do or where you go', I'll always be, mother and this will always be your home (147). She asserts that the mother-daughter relationship is an unfailing one; it cannot be ruptured by distance, words, or actions.

Similarly, the heroine of Kincaid's *Lucy* reads a letter in which her mother proclaims that no matter what, 'she would always be my mother, my home would never be anywhere but with her' (128). The notion of an inescapable mother-child bond holds serious implications for the nationalist political discourse. On the one hand, it suggests that the Caribbean subject's relationships with the island motherland are uncontestable and incorruptible. Lastly, the heroines of Kincaid's novels Annie, Lucy, and Xuela are the three forceful characters that dominated the Caribbean identity. The author cleverly depicts her thoughts on colonialism through her characters. The communion of the three heroines is leading figures of the Caribbean identity. Through these three heroines, Kincaid not only speaks of love but also depicts feminism and the effects and change of colonial domination.

All these heroines love their mother; this is the common communion of its characters. That is never a problem. The problem is their desire to find a place where they completely belong. Next, the communion is, none of Kincaid's heroines are obedient and none will return to their mother permanently. Although the three characters have different personalities, the novelist has handled the way the three characters are portrayed wonderfully. First of all communion of the three characters are

Caribbean black colour from the African descent. Patience and endurance are their personal identity. One thing that these three heroines look forward to is honest love. One thing that sticks in my mind, characters of Kincaid has obviously portrayed the calamity of the colonial rule in Caribbean land through her heroines. So the three heroines Annie, Lucy, and Xuela are very important creations and they mirrored the African-Caribbean society in front of us.

In short, the three heroines of Kincaid deal with issues surrounding their mothers and them. Other similarities are their lives and their development under the control of colonial rule. Then, physically they are struggling with puberty. Puberty has often mentioned a struggle or crisis. Kincaid's heroines overcome the hardships posed by puberty, society, and the self to venture toward the hard-earned title of the woman. Xuela, Lucy, and Annie represent the common struggle that women experienced. In the end, the three heroines successfully achieve the status of women through their struggles and frustration.

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