

Transmogrifying Home in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* and Kacen Callender's *Hurricane Child*

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Abstract

Kacen Callender's 2018 novel for adolescent readers, Hurricane Child, illustrates how literature for young people can be employed to leverage formidable critiques against European colonial ideologies and the neocolonial policies in the contemporary United States. This paper explores Callender's re-visioning of Jamaica Kincaid's semiautobiographical Annie John (1985) and ways that the two novels push past easy definitions as bildungsromane and home as haven for the nuclear family to comment on the tourist industry as a continuation of colonial systems of domination.

Keywords: children's/young adult literature, spirits, LGBTQ+, Caribbean, Virgin Islands, homespace

While literature for children and young adults (YA) is not typically given center stage in theorizing postcolonial subjectivities, taking up this body of work gives adult readers crucial insights—*not* into how ideas are actually interpreted by youthful audiences, but instead how young people are taught to absorb information about themselves and the world: beliefs about what it means to be a 'proper' child; cultural, gender, class, and sexual identities; the dynamics of (neo)colonialism; concepts of what makes a 'good' home. Kacen Callender's middle-grade (MG) novel, *Hurricane Child* (2018), awarded a Stonewall literary prize in 2019 for exceptional merit in the field of MG or YA literature, illuminates how a genre frequently considered superficial, or even vapid, by readers outside the field can be employed to deliver formidable anticolonial critiques. In previous scholarship, I have explored Callender's novel as a Gothic text, symbolically 'haunted' by Jamaica Kincaid's semiautobiographical *Annie John* (1985)—a foundational work of Caribbean literature. Here, I investigate how the two novels push past easy definitions as bildungsromane and home as haven for the nuclear family to comment on the tourist industry as a continuation of colonial systems of domination.

Homespace in *Annie John*

Kincaid's *Annie John*, set in Antigua in the 1950s, portrays the rapidly changing dynamic between an African Caribbean mother and daughter: two women who significantly share the same name. Young Annie adores her mother when the novel begins and cannot bear to be apart from her; her mother, in turn, showers her with affection and lessons about how to be a 'proper' young woman: to care for herself, an imagined husband and children, and the domestic space. The family's home "on Dickenson Bay Street, [is] a house my father built with his own hands" (Kincaid 3), but it is Annie's mother who has made it 'home' with her cooking, sewing, gardening, cleaning, laundering, and shopping, as well as the frequent kisses and caresses she bestows on her daughter. Pre-pubescent Annie details "[h]ow important I felt to be with my mother" when she is on holiday from school and can "spen[d] the day following my mother around and observing the way she did everything" (Kincaid 15); however, as the narrative progresses, the narrator grows increasingly rebellious towards her mother and everything she represents—the colonial model of feminine propriety.

More crucial for my argument here is Annie Senior's centrality to the domestic space, both displacing the male patriarch, who hovers on

the margins of the protagonist's world, and as a Black woman, displacing notions of the African woman derived from the slave era. The dominant colonial class portrayed enslaved women as hypersexual temptresses, flighty lovers, and apathetic mothers. Positioned as the crux of the degenerate Black family, they bore no say in her children's lives, not only because they could not 'own' them; framed as more animalistic than human, they were alleged not to care about their children. [1] 'Home' was also largely inaccessible to women compelled to work for their owners from sunrise to long after sunset.

The homespace portrayed in *Annie John* challenges this history. But instead of being represented as a type of prison for the Victorian "Angel of the House," it is established as a type of fortress where the mother, not the father, and her female friends are the ones responsible for its protection, upending conventional Western gender hierarchies. When teenaged Annie falls seriously ill near the end of the narrative, Kincaid contrasts the female healer—Ma Jolie, brought in by Annie's mother—against the male physician—Dr. Stephens, formally trained in Western/European medicine, and favored by Annie's father. Dr. Stephens has prescribed "compounds of vitamins and purgatives" (Kincaid 117) to strengthen and cleanse the narrator's body, while Ma Jolie attempts to heal the narrator's body *and* soul in addition to fortifying the home with Caribbean folk practices. She employs "cross marks on the soles of my feet, on my knees, on my stomach, in my armpits, and on my head," incense, special candles, a gris-gris bag, and "little vials filled with fluids to rub on me at different times of the day" (Kincaid 116-117). The obeah woman asserts that danger will not enter the house from the yard, suggesting her belief in the power and cooperation of the natural world: "with all the rain," it was "impossible for anything meaning me harm to be living outside in the yard" (Kincaid 117). She does, however, labor to expunge from the home the energies of people who might wish to hurt young Annie: "most of them [were] women my father had loved a long time ago" (117). The line echoes an earlier scene, in which mother and daughter take special baths—baths infused with a variety of flowers, tree bark, and special oils, taken in a

darkened room with a peculiarly scented candle burning:

We took these baths after my mother had consulted with her obeah woman, ... her mother and a trusted friend, and all three of them had confirmed that from the look of things *around our house* ... one of the many women my father had loved, had never married, but with whom he had had children was trying to harm my mother and me by setting bad spirits on us. (Kincaid 14-15, emphasis added)

Home is not inviolable; romantically discontented women have the power to invade the space and ruin the family's domestic bliss by means of "bad spirits." A formidable collective defends the children and the home, however, and this community is also all-female. Annie's father is identified in the passage, but he has been rendered a commodity, subverting notions of women as objects of exchange in the sexual marketplace.

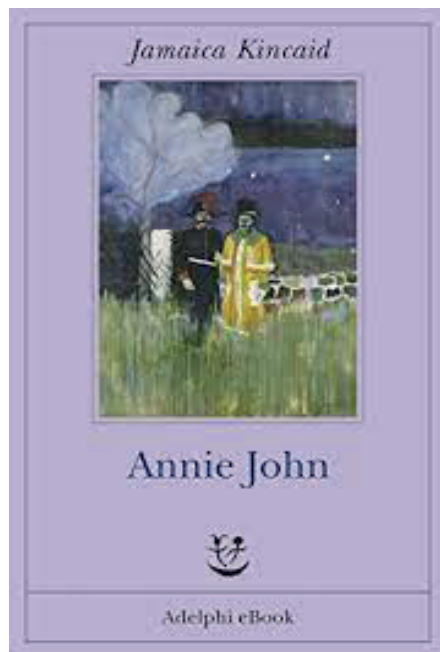
I would like to note here that the majority of scholars have approached *Annie John* with an eye to mother-daughter relationships, gender roles, and rebellions against colonial and patriarchal authority, neglecting the protagonist's descriptions of a world filled with ghostly presences. Young Annie states:

I was afraid of the dead, as was everyone I knew. We were afraid of the dead because we never could tell when they might show up again. ... [S]ometimes they would show up standing under a tree just as you were passing by. Then they might follow you home, and even though they might not be able to come into your house, they might wait for you and follow you wherever you went; in that case, they would never give up until you joined them. (Kincaid 4)

Kincaid reinforces the notion that the ideal Caribbean homespace must be kept safe from incursions by spirits—perhaps even more so than living, tangible beings.

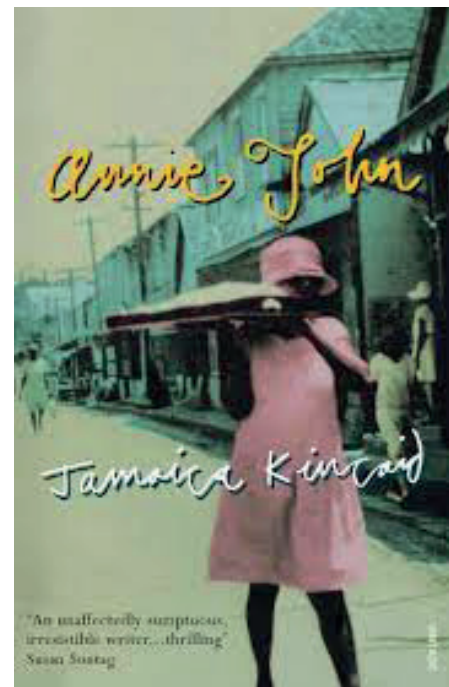
Notably, only the Italian publication of the novel alludes to specters from beyond the grave

in its cover art: two skeletons in formal wear stand in tall grass near a stone fence:



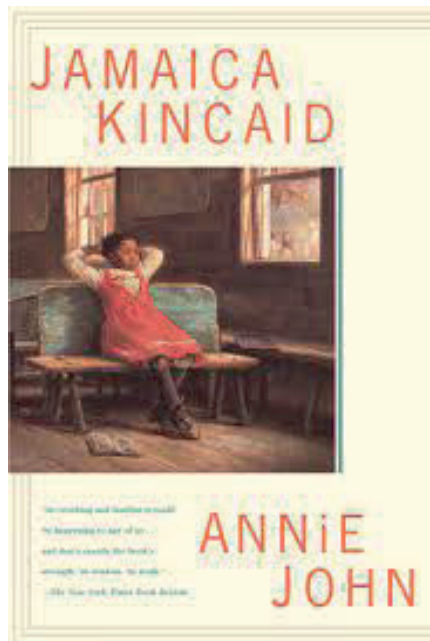
In striking contrast, most covers use images of brown-skinned girls of a variety of ages, but lack any other reference to the otherworldly. A website advertising lesson plans and interactive notebooks for high school educators preparing to teach *Annie John*, for example, features a close-up of an adolescent girl's face. [2] This marketing choice suggests the novel's relevance to contemporary readers from around the world, in that any sign of location is cropped out of the shot. This lack of specificity also signifies the erasure of a culturally and geographically Caribbean homespace, rendering the region a type of nowhere.

The cover of the 1997 Vintage paperback suggests the strict gender norms of Annie's world in the colorized pink hat and dress of the woman on the cover, but the everydayness encapsulated by the image of a street-vendor fails to capture any sense of the spectral or the cultural belief systems that Kincaid illustrates in the novel.



Furthermore, the vocation represented on the cover lacks recognition of the distinct socio-economic status of Annie's family. Besides challenging gender norms, Kincaid carefully dispenses stereotypes of the African Caribbean home as the site of poverty and deprivation. She identifies the Johns as distinctly middle-class: Annie Senior stays home to care for house and child while her husband goes into the public sphere to work as a carpenter. The family can afford to rent other accommodations while the roof on the Dickenson Bay Street house is being repaired (Kincaid 3); the items stored in young Annie's trunk include an abundance of "special" outfits (Kincaid 20) made from expensive fabrics such as linen, wool, and lace, and a christening dress worn only once. The trunk also holds a pair of Annie's old gold earrings, a gold necklace, and gold bracelets—all imported—and luxury items like straw hats and baskets (Kincaid 20-21). Additionally, Annie is sent for etiquette classes and piano lessons when she reaches adolescence (Kincaid 27-28)—all markers of relative affluence. These signs of prosperity make one of the most popular cover illustrations for Kincaid's novel a strikingly odd choice: a girl of African descent sits on a worn wooden bench, staring wistfully out of a classroom window. She

wears torn stockings, a patched white shirt, and a red jumper-dress; her hair is as unkempt as her clothing:



The image aligns more with descriptions of the Red Girl, who climbs trees and hates soap, than Kincaid's narrator, whose mother is deeply invested in teaching her child to master the skills need to establish and run an immaculate home and operate as a respected—and respectable—member of her community. The work of art selected for this cover was painted by U.S. artist Edward Lamson Henry in 1888. It was meant to address U.S. racial tensions circa the U.S. Civil War, not Antiguan society of the 1950s. Again, the repeated lack of Caribbean connections indicates a U.S. publishing industry disinterested in catering to Caribbean readers' sense of home—whether that be in terms an architectural structure or individualized islands/territories/nations or a more generalized Caribbean landscape and culture. Instead, the frontpiece gratifies those who view the region in terms of stereotypical Black poverty and deficiency, perpetuating notions of the Caribbean as a site needing aid-relief: incursions from outside businesses, tourist dollars, missionary work, and the like.

Annie John as Bildungsroman

Kincaid adheres to the model of development and structure of the conventional coming-of-age novel in which the protagonist matures physically and emotionally, eventually leaving home to strike out independently. She subtly undermines Western trajectories of 'progress' and 'order,' however, by allowing the adolescent Annie to return home even after she has emotionally separated herself from her mother. Adoration turns to disgust across the course of the narrative, and the two women become absorbed in a battle of wills and wits. A poignant scene of distrust and attempted manipulation occurs when Annie Senior attempts to discover where the narrator has hidden her stash of marbles after being forbidden to engage in this activity 'for boys.' Adolescent Annie rebels against her mother's authority and mid-twentieth-century gender norms not only by playing a game in which she must squat in a dress, in the dirt, with members of the opposite sex, but by secreting her prized marbles in the crawlspace under her home. "I had stored them in old cans, though my most valued ones were in an old red leather handbag of [my mother's]" (Kincaid 66-67). She has turned ordinary domestic items and objects associated with conventional femininity into shells for an ostensibly masculine endeavor, and she has done so in the literal shadow of her home—her mother's dominion.

The last paragraph of the chapter in which this story is found begins "Soon after, I started to menstruate, and I stopped playing marbles" (Kincaid 70). Although the character's physical development is progressing as expected, readers might notice that the narrative is being rendered as non-linear: Annie described "the first day I started to menstruate ... the first step in coming of age" (Kincaid 51), in the previous chapter—about twenty pages prior. The author's choice to disrupt the linearity of the timeline reinforces her destabilization of the traditional bildungsroman form.

Similarly, later in the novel, Annie communicates an occasion in which she ran into a childhood friend, Mineu, with a group of his school friends—also all male. She thinks:

I had better get home quickly, for I began to feel alternately too big and too small. First, I grew so big that I took up the whole street; then I grew so small that nobody could see me—not even if I cried out. (Kincaid 101)

Her adult self has started to emerge, both physically (breasts, menstruation, acne, etc.) and socially, but Kincaid suggests that the process is not undeviating. Like Alice wandering through Wonderland—eating a bite of cake here, nibbling on a piece of mushroom there, and sipping from the bottle labelled “Drink me”—Annie feels as if she is growing and shrinking out of control. Instead of growing from ‘little’ to ‘medium’ and then remaining permanently ‘big,’ she shifts back and forth between “too big and too small” (Kincaid 101). And despite the antagonisms with her mother, home remains a place of respite for her—one to which she can escape in times of distress. It is a complicated space, not easily definable, according to Western constructions, as the source of peace, happiness, nurturing.

Homespace in *Hurricane Child*

Twelve-year-old narrator Caroline Murphy lives in the present-day US Virgin Islands (USVI), traveling back and forth between tiny Water Island and the more densely populated St. Thomas for school, church, and social interactions. Contrary to the nuclear family unit portrayed in *Annie John*, Caroline resides on Water Island only with her father; her mother has disappeared about a year before the book opens, and readers bear witness to the protagonist’s feelings of physical and emotional abandonment.

Caroline is born during a hurricane and, near the end of the novel, almost dies during another one. At one point, she casually remarks that “most houses in the Virgin Islands are made of concrete so they won’t be blown away by the hurricanes” (Callender 54), signaling to young readers that the islands’ residents are far from incompetent. After the final storm, Caroline notes that her “house is still standing, the same way it always has been. Maybe the storm couldn’t see us here on Water Island either. We go inside, and absolutely nothing has changed,

which is disappointing and thrilling all at the same time” (Callender 194). One can read the storm as emblematic of the neo/colonial powers that have blown through the region, decimating Indigenous people, enslaving millions, and destroying natural landscapes with oil rigs, commercial fishing, deforestation, and other industry. Just as Annie’s home was vulnerable to malicious spirits in Kincaid’s novel, so too, is the larger homespace of the archipelago vulnerable to violations from external forces.

Hurricane Child occupies uncharted space as an LGBTQ+ novel for adolescents set in the USVI—an area not as well known in the Caribbean for literary production as islands like Martinique (Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, Patrick Chamoiseau), Jamaica (Claude McKay, Marlon James), Trinidad & Tobago (V.S. Naipaul), St. Lucia (Derek Walcott), Antigua (Jamaica Kincaid), or Cuba (Alejo Carpentier, Reinaldo Arenas). The archipelago was purchased by the United States from Denmark near the end of World War I, after being owned by Great Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and the Knights of Malta. Since then, the islands have not been made independent, but rather held as an unincorporated, organized territory: residents are classified as US citizens but do not have the right to vote in federal elections. As has been argued of Great Britain in Kincaid’s colonial Antigua landscape, the imperial nation plays the role of a (geographically) distant parent in colonial propaganda: ostensibly loving and protective, a disciplinary force that governs the colonized territory until the colonized society matures ‘properly.’ Through this lens, young Annie’s psychological struggles against the mother she once adored mirror Antigua’s struggle for independence from its so-called Mother Country.

Although the role of the United States as twenty-first-century colonial power is frequently eclipsed in everyday discourse, [3] the spectral presence of the US as “Mother Country” in Callender’s novel not only strongly resembles the roles of Britain and France during the height of their colonial endeavors in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but it is also embodied in the lurking presence of Caroline’s mother in *Hurricane Child*.

Doreen Hendricks Murphy no longer lives in the protagonist's domestic homespace, but she haunts the girl's thoughts and daily existence. Thus, when Caroline befriends Kalinda Francis, the new girl at school, and Kalinda asks, "Does it feel like your heart is split between two homes? Between Saint Thomas and Water Island, I mean?" (Callender 71), Caroline must pause: "I have to stop to think about this one, because I realize then that I don't think of either Saint Thomas or Water Island as home. How can I? My mother isn't on either island" (Callender 71). On the surface, the narrator's anxiety stems from feelings of maternal abandonment: "[H]ow do I begin to explain ... Having a mother that's left me behind? Would Kalinda begin to accuse my mother of being a bad woman ...? Would Kalinda think I'd done something to deserve being deserted?" (Callender 72) Caroline's narrow conceptions of 'home' and rigid gender norms do not allow her father—or any caregiver besides a biological mother—to define the homespace.

Significantly, Loretta Joseph, or "Miss Joe"—the principal of Caroline's school—tries to steer the narrator away from her maternal preoccupation and the simplistic equation of home = mother: "[S]ometimes ... life can't afford us everything we want or need, so while you might not have a mother, you have a father who loves you very much, and a home and food and clothes" (Callender 59). Her attempts are unsuccessful, but it is no coincidence that Callender constructs her as a woman who loves women—including, in her school days, Caroline's own mother. Miss Joe lives in a home that is not envisaged as lacking a man/husband, but rather as part of her maternal inheritance: "This house you sit in now was my mother's house" (Callender 57); it is the house she had planned to reside in with Caroline's mother during their youthful romance. Women stand at the center of this homespace, much like in Kincaid's *Annie John*.

Initially, Caroline is too overwhelmed by loss to be able to embrace Miss Joe's message. Symbolically, she is the colonized territory longing for the love, attention, and approval of the colonial power. Her yearning for mother[land] is subtly juxtaposed against a growing awareness of herself as both a racialized subject and a

'less than' American citizen living outside of the continental United States. Readers perceive how colonial ideas of white superiority—fomented during the occupation of the Virgin Islands by European powers and continuing into the present moment, with economic survival dependent on the US dollar—permeate her experiences. Of the apparitions that Caroline frequently sees during her day-to-day routines, she is particularly disturbed by visions of "the woman in black" (Callender 4). The protagonist's description of this specter conveys her awareness of the significance of her own dark complexion: "[The woman in black] was black, blacker than black, blacker than *even me*" (Callender 4, emphasis added). The phrasing gestures towards the trauma of being a girl with dark skin—even in communities that are predominantly Black. Just a few pages later, Caroline's description of one of her teachers demonstrates how colonial aesthetics trickle down into educational spaces: "Missus Wilhelmina" constantly speaks about her "white great-great-great-grandpa from Saint Martin ... because he made her clear-skinned" (Callender 9) and she dislikes Caroline, who is "the darkest student in the school with the thickest hair" (Callender 10). Believing that the Caribbean is "no good, seeing that [it's] filled with so many black people" and "almost as bad as Africa itself" (Callender 10), this teacher indoctrinates students like Caroline, even though the narrator has also seen "paintings of African queens hanging in tourist shops [... with skin] painted with black and purple and blue, ... remind[ing] me of the night sky, or of black stones on the side of the beach, rubbed smooth by the waves" (Callender 10). Caroline believes "the women in those paintings are beautiful," but she must keep these thoughts secret. Meantime, Mrs. Wilhelmina tells her that she must behave especially well since "it'll be hard for me to get married with skin as dark as mine" (Callender 10). Callender identifies the gendered dynamic of colorism, as well as the power of words stated out loud, in public venues. These prejudicial messages are not just a part of adolescent taunting in the schoolyard, but lent credibility through Mrs. Wilhelmina's authority as an educator and adult.

Library books provide even greater weight to notions of African Caribbean inferiority. At one point Caroline reads: “the Caribbean is a place where spirits and ghosts exist *more than anywhere else in the world*” (Callender 96). She begins to envision that “that the air is so full of spirits that I’m breathing them in ... as I read” (Callender 96). The language of contamination, bodily invasion, and pollution frightens the narrator instead of giving her the necessary tools for processing her situation, as a young woman who has the power to see ghosts. Caroline’s schoolbooks also provide her with information that causes her to doubt her own experiences, culture, and sanity; she reads that supernatural beings “are made up completely in one’s own mind, and especially in the minds of those who are delusional and have been through emotional traumas to help them cope, which makes me fear that the woman in black isn’t real at all” (Callender 96). This knowledge ‘possesses’ her, in a sense, and her community’s knowledge is “ghosted,” a process Avery Gordon links to Michel Foucault’s work on repressed or subjugated knowledge: “‘disqualified,’ marginalized, fugitive knowledge from below and outside the institutions of official knowledge production” (Gordon xviii). [4]

Ghostly Traces of Violence—Tourism

In her analysis of gothic texts from the US South that “refuse monstrous hauntology”—narratives that delve into the effects of repressing centuries of racial strife—Patricia Yaeger interrogates the way that the exhilaration of Gothic spectatorship can be displaced by a sense of a “humdrum world”—one filled with remnants, scraps, disturbances, and ghostly traces of the “racial violence, unjust labor laws, and a habitus founded on the hard facts of discrimination” (99). In other words, it is not just “what haunts [people] in the aftermath” of the traumatic event, “but the almost invisible force of *everyday haunting*, the trauma of living neither in the epic nor the extraordinary but in the everyday [environment]” (Yaeger 97). The enduring presence of colonial exploitation is addressed in *Hurricane Child* through its gestures towards tourist involvement in the culture and economy of the USVI, and by extension, the rest of the Caribbean.

When Caroline asks Kalinda who she thinks the spectral white woman in the schoolyard is, Kalinda responds, “I don’t know, but she must have me mistaken for someone else. Someone she knew when she was alive. *Or maybe she knows my ancestors*” (Callender 109, emphasis added). The obvious points of contact would be slavery and the European colonial presence in the region, but another interpretation lies in a critique of the tourist industry. Tourism and related activities are the primary economic endeavors of the USVI and make up a large chunk of its gross domestic product (GDP), as is true of most Caribbean states. For comparison, 2012 World Travel & Tourism Council statistics indicated that tourist dollars constituted 27% of Jamaica’s GDP and close to 50% of the GDP of the Bahamas. [5] According to the US Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, the net export services (primarily tourism) in the USVI made up 24% of the GDP in 2007, and 32% in 2016. And while the estimated 2019 per capita income in the continental US was just over \$65,000, it was only \$36,350 in the USVI.

On more than one occasion, Caroline comments on the psychologically damaging presence of tourists in St. Thomas and the ways the trade is structured to make islanders feel inferior in their own homespace. Her first remark illustrates visitors’ carelessness and potential for destruction: “We had to be careful in that [small] boat ... because sometimes bigger boats carrying tourists would zoom by and almost hit us like a speedboat hitting a manatee” (Callender 5-6). This reference to the harm caused by relatively small boats can easily be extended to the devastation caused by cruise ships in the region. In the year 2000, 2.7 million cruise ship visitors landed in the Bahamas alone and dumped an average of 210,000 gallons of untreated sewage per week in open waters. One million gallons of gray water (from laundries, showers, sinks, etc.) were released into the ocean each week in addition to unknown quantities of exhaust from diesel ship engines, oily bilge, and other hazardous waste.

Caroline expresses distaste for the “[t]ourists [on Main St] smelling like sweat and sunscreen” who “swarm the street” (Callender

73). Callender does not simply invert the stereotypical animalization of people of African descent; she portrays the visitors as insects—perhaps bees, with their painful stings, flies as carriers of disease, or plagues of locusts. The narrator continues: “Usually, I hate this walk more than anything else. Too many tourists to dodge and too many blaring horns and too much heat beating down from the blazing sun with absolutely no shade” (Callender 73). The tourists are one in a long line of oppressive elements that make her home less of a paradise, and more a site of sensory overload.

Furthermore, on her way to school, Caroline notes that the local transportation economy caters to foreigners and ignores island residents: “Safari taxis don’t like to stop for locals, and the ones that stop for locals don’t like to stop for children” (Callender 7). The psychological damage is repeated when, later in the novel, at Havensight, a popular cruise ship landing, Caroline expresses consciousness of the irritated stares of local merchants who “don’t like too many locals in their stores when they are trying to sell to tourists” (Callender 157). In other words, the island’s residents are both hyper-visible *and* rendered socially invisible; they are ‘ghosted’ by foreign travellers and by their own people in favor of visitors with more money and cultural cache. As she and Kalinda walk through the shops, they must “ignor[e] the angry eye the shopkeepers give us,” especially as “children still in their school uniforms who aren’t going to buy anything at all” (Callender 157). Rather than being embraced as youth who need to be nurtured, or might be valuable future customers or employees, being welcomed as community members who add a vibrant presence to the locale, the adolescents are subjected to feelings that make them interpret their physical welfare as at stake. Thus, ethereal ghosts, demons, and ghouls are not the true sources of terror in this novel; instead, Caribbean subjects become the phantoms who are threatened with erasure and who are victimized by an exploitative tourist trade that lingers in the atmosphere even when actual tourists are not physically present.

The tourist souvenirs the girls see in one shop include “T-shirts reading I CAME, I SAW, I TOOK PICTURES! ST. THOMAS, USVI and photos

of naked women on beaches and postcards with men with long locks” (Callender 157). The imperial conquest is endlessly repeated, with the sex trade replacing the slave trade in the objectification of black bodies. Rather than blending horror and tourism in a narrative that “illustrat[es] fantasies of perilous danger in the foreign land” (Ibarra 120-121)—a discourse found in conventional Gothic fiction like Charlotte Smith’s “The Story of Henrietta” (1800), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), contemporary films such as *The Ruins* (2008), and even video games, as Johan Höglund asserts of *Dead Island*—Callender reverses notions of ghosts as the source of terror and renders Caribbean subjects as the apparitions who vanish (or are made to vanish), threatened with erasure and persecuted by a system that privileges outsiders.

Interestingly, the reference to cruise ships at Havensight conjures an important scene from *Annie John*: when the Red Girl departs Antigua suddenly, Annie dreams of their reunion in conjunction with cruise ships:

I never saw the Red Girl again. . . . I dreamed that the boat on which she had been traveling suddenly splintered in the middle of the sea, causing all the passengers to drown except for her, whom I rescued in a small boat. I took her to an island, where we lived together forever, I suppose, and fed on wild pigs and sea grapes. At night, we would sit on the sand and watch ships filled with people on a cruise steam by. We sent confusing signals to the ships, causing them to crash on some nearby rocks. How we laughed as their cries of joy turned to cries of sorrow. (Kincaid 70-71)

This passage, coupled with Annie’s allusion to the Anglican church bell that serves as her alarm clock each day (significantly, the Anglican Church is the official Church of England), speaks to the British hegemony in Antigua, and the protagonist’s resentment of that corrupting foreign presence in her homeland. Correspondingly, in *Hurricane Child*, Caroline notes that “Cruise ships pass by Water Island every morning. Their horns are my alarm clocks” (Callender 156). This is the colonialism that is not named as such. When the ships depart

at night, “It’s peaceful, watching them, until the horns go off like sirens, so loud they hurt my teeth” (Callender 164). Their presence is clearly associated with pain, not the pleasure experienced by the invading tourists.

Caroline also explains that new condominiums have been built near the dock and tourist shops, and “no one but celebrities from the States are rich enough to use [them].” She continues: “Right across the street are the housing projects, repainted to match the dull beige of the condos, with beautiful murals that were added to every single wall ... so when tourists and celebrities passed by the housing projects, they wouldn’t know what they were seeing” (Callender 158). Money is invested in superficial beautification projects rather than the people who need aid, and readers observe another case in which USVI residents are ‘ghosted,’ or made to disappear.

Although Caroline is rendered invisible, or ghost-like, at several points in the text, she holds some semblance of power and control in that she figuratively ‘ghosts’ herself in a scene near the novel’s conclusion. As the aforementioned hurricane starts brewing, she goes to her father’s boat and lies in it, “rest[ing] my hands over my chest like so, and [I] close my eyes, to listen to the water and the wind, and I think maybe this is really where I belong after all” (Callender 187-188). It as if she has placed herself in a coffin, embracing her death and what comes afterward, and then, revived after the storm, she returns from the land of the dead. She eventually decides, “There’s much more in this life to fear than just spirits, and if I let fear rule my every move, I will become nothing more than a little ghost child myself. I want to be brave. I want to live the life I was given. So what if the spirits hear us call their names. Let them hear it” (Callender 203). The narrative symbolically maps her progression to and back from a spectral identity.

In an early scene, when Caroline angrily runs out of the house barefoot, she “cut[s] my toes on stones, ... sweating in the evening heat, and mosquitoes get tangled in my hair” (Callender 27). It as if the natural world is her antagonist, but not in the Gothic style of lurking danger. Instead, Callender subverts the notion of the Caribbean ‘native’ as closer to nature than the ‘civilized’ metropolitan visitor, and undermines ideas

of the Caribbean landscape as a welcoming ‘home’ to everyone who arrives from abroad. This is not simply a matter of racial opposition; the African diasporic tourist holds just as much responsibility for participating in the hegemonic power structure and the erasure, or ‘ghosting,’ of the Caribbean subject, as the white traveller.

Kincaid’s novel concludes with Annie outgrowing her bed, her parents, and her island home as she departs for England; Callender’s novel, in contrast, allows the reunion of mother and daughter, and attempts to explain a mother’s absence as a result of clinical depression—itsself a kind of ‘possession’ and a type of ‘ghosting’ of the unaffected self. Kathleen Brogan astutely notes that the turn to the “supernatural” is key for our turn-of-the-millennial cultural moment, in that ghosts highlight “the difficulty of gaining access to a lost or denied past, as well as the degree to which any such historical reconstruction is essentially an imaginative act” (6). *Hurricane Child* allows readers of all ages to access a story that should be able to be dug up from the archives—one including the lost and forgotten histories of queer Caribbean women that can help steer the way for the youth generation. In *Ghostly Matters*, Gordon describes “haunting” in the contemporary moment as “one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (slavery, for instance)” (xvi). Tourism and homophobia operate in similar ways to slavery: even once the offending individuals have departed, and the psychological violence of particular exchanges, or specific acts of physical damage to the landscape, seascape, Caribbean or queer or enslaved subject’s body have been enacted, the abusive systems of power continue to make themselves known in the lives of those who remain. A crucial element of Gordon’s conceptualization of haunting is its repetitive nature, when homes transmogrify into the unfamiliar and unsettling and subjects lose their bearings in the world. Island homes are no less prone to this process than the smaller structures identified as ‘homes’ for individuals and families.

Kincaid’s and Callender’s anticolonial projects involve placing their protagonists in Caribbean

spaces, which have long existed on the periphery of Eurocentric mapmaking and cultural productions; however, both authors reconfigure these island homes in their work as focal while portraying the experiences of their narrators as unerringly 'real.' By bringing the 'margins' to the center, the texts promote alternate ways of knowing and seeing the world.

Endnotes

[1] Numerous historians and Black Studies scholars (e.g. Roger Abrahams and John Szwed, Hilary McD Beckles, Donald Bogle, Angela Davis, Terri Doerkson, bell hooks, Gerda Lerner, Dorothy Roberts, etc.) have detailed the racial stereotypes that have haunted Black women from the early slave trade and into the present.

[2] See the cover of the book at the website *Teachers Pay Teachers* under "Novel Study Distance Learning World Literature / Annie John by Jamaica Kincaid." (<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Novel-Study-Distance-Learning-World-Literature-Annie-John-by-Jamaica-Kincaid-5862048>)

[3] See Anne McClintock's "Imperial Ghosting" essay for further discussion. As she posits, "The founding tenet of American empire is that it is no empire at all. The United States has an unbroken history as an imperial power in Mexico, Latin America, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere [i.e. the Caribbean], but it has largely been a covert empire, operating through client states, proxy armies, and subordinate allies: an empire in camouflage and denial" (826).

[4] Because Caroline is afraid of being labelled mentally ill, she hesitates to tell anyone about her visions and suffers in isolation. The revelation that Kalinda also sees spirits convinces not only the narrator but the reader that the apparitions are not symptoms of mental illness or individual trauma; they are part of an objective reality. The fact that this reality is denigrated in the settings of the school library and schoolyard evokes Elizabeth Marshall's study of depictions of girlhood and violence. Marshall posits that formal education is tied "to a larger cultural pedagogy in which learning and learning to be a girl means [sic] being subjected to violence" (2). The violence can be physical, but Marshall contends that it must be viewed in conjunction with the ways legal and educational policies "bar, segregate, and criminalize black, brown, and queer youth" (6). *Hurricane Child* speaks powerfully to the need for decolonizing knowledge by rewriting those literal and cultural texts that reiterate colonial viewpoints and relegate beliefs from outside Judeo-Christian traditions and the European educational system to the realm of superstition, ignorance, backwardness, and wickedness.

[5] St. Lucia – 39% of GDP; Bahamas – 48% of GDP; Antigua & Barbuda – 77% of GDP.

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