



The (Un)Silencing of The Subaltern in Kincaid's Lucy

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ABSTRACT:

A name represents a person. Their name provides them a voice, an identity to call their own. In Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*, the "voice" of the novel has no name until sixteen pages prior to the end of the book. Before the voice provides the reader her name, the reader assumes the female voice is named Lucy, because of the title of the book. But none of the characters call her by name. This nameless narrator is an immigrant and a subaltern. A subaltern is a marginalized person who has agency over nothing, not even their name. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" claims that "The subaltern cannot speak," but Kincaid has found a loophole (104). I argue that Kincaid, an immigrant from Antigua and former subaltern, joins the debate, of whether or not the subaltern can speak, by not bestowing a name to her protagonist until the end of *Lucy*; hence letting the subaltern speak for herself.

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A name represents a person. Their name provides them a voice, an identity to call their own. In Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*, the "voice" of the novel is not given a name until sixteen pages before the end of the book. Before the voice provides the reader her name, the reader assumes the female voice is named Lucy, because of the title of the book. But none of the characters call her by name, and why should they? The voice is the narrator; she is telling her story, in her own words, for only her eyes. This nameless voice is overlooked by scholars. Jennifer J. Nichols, an American Association of University Professors member, interprets Kincaid's "Lucy as a work of American feminist fiction" in her article "Poor Visitor": Mobility as/ of Voice in Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*" (187). Nichols finds Kincaid's Lucy's "commentary on US domestic politics and culture...as it considers these phenomena in a transnational context" a "refreshing change from other immigrant literature that reveres US cosmopolitanism" (187, 204). Even though Nichols recognizes that the protagonist voice is a transnational immigrant, Nichols does not notice that the voice is without a name. In fact, Nichols names the voice in her second paragraph when she discusses "Lucy's scornful rejection" of daffodils, but Lucy has no name at this point in the novel (187). Gary E. Holcomb, from Emporia State University, also does not notice that Kincaid's protagonist is unnamed in his article "Travels of a Transnational Slut: Sexual Migration in Kincaid's *Lucy*." Holcomb finds that "What permits Lucy her agency is a strategic use of sexuality" (298). Becoming a "slut" gives Lucy freedom and agency over her body, something she did not have in her homeland. Interestingly though, Kincaid's protagonist labels herself a slut before giving herself a name, which Holcomb does not catch. Veronica Majerol, on the other hand, searches "for the source of Lucy's disidentification"

through exploring “the relationship Lucy shares with her employer, Mariah” in her article “Jamaica Kincaid’s Lucy and the Aesthetics of Disidentification” (18). Majerol follows Kincaid’s protagonist’s voice through her journey of disidentification without noticing that the climax of Lucy’s disidentification is the claiming of her name.

Kincaid not bestowing a name to her protagonist until the end of Lucy, I would argue, is a way to let the subaltern speak. A subaltern is a marginalized person who has no agency over anything, not even their name. Postcolonial scholars decided to name these marginalized people subalterns, because they had no name in scholarship. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a postcolonial scholar, claims in her 1988 article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that scholars have to speak for the subaltern, because they cannot speak for themselves, and if they could then they would no longer be a subaltern. Ania Loomba, in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, discusses the debate that ensues through postcolonial scholarship, because of Spivak’s article, of whether or not the subaltern can speak (196). I contend that Kincaid, an immigrant from Antigua and former subaltern, joins this debate with her novel Lucy, where she uses her nameless protagonist, an immigrant and a subaltern, in position against Spivak’s scholarship; insomuch that Kincaid has found a loophole, and lets the subaltern speak for herself.

In 1990 Kincaid published Lucy, a novel with an unnamed protagonist’s voice who represents that the subaltern can speak. Kincaid does not assert that Lucy is an autobiography, for if she did the book would not exemplify a subaltern speaking. In order for a subaltern to speak, I argue, the subaltern must not have any identity, or agency. Claiming an identity, a voice, or a name is claiming agency, which is a means to exert power over oneself. The subaltern is in a marginalized position, and has no power over anything. Kincaid uses Lucy to affirm “how their [subalterns] voices can be articulated” (Loomba 193). I presume that many scholars will baulk at me for saying that Lucy is a subaltern speaking, because she is realizing her place as a subaltern, but I maintain that she continues to be a subaltern speaking until she claims agency over her name. When Lucy claims her name, and only then, is Lucy no longer a subaltern (Kincaid 149).

Kincaid employs her novel Lucy to rebuff Spivak’s idea that the subaltern cannot speak by letting her subaltern protagonist not claim

her name until the end of the story. Kincaid utilizes her book as one vast narrative with little narratives of oppressive experiences within. Narratives are one way to let the subaltern speak, because they are using their own words, and nobody is speaking for them. Unfortunately, by overlooking the function of Kincaid leaving her protagonist unnamed until the last few pages, Nichols, Holcomb, and Majerol are missing an important part to their own arguments. The voice of Lucy is considered by Nichols as an agency on American feminism, by Holcomb as an agency over her body, and by Majerol as an agency of her identity, but without considering the function of the subaltern protagonist's voice being left unnamed, until the end of the novel, leaves out the agency of her voice. The function of the nameless protagonist in Kincaid's *Lucy* is to let the subaltern speak, but when the protagonist's voice claims her name as Lucy she is no longer a subaltern, because she is claiming agency over her voice. Thus, Kincaid is giving a voice to whom Spivak claimed could not speak, the subaltern.

The nameless subaltern protagonist in Kincaid's *Lucy* happens without any concern in scholarship. Nichols, Holcomb, and Majerol either completely miss that the protagonist has no name, or they choose to ignore it. There does not seem to be any scholarship on the fact that the protagonist does not claim her name until much later in the novel. Nichols does find that "Mariah and Lewis...coin the term 'poor visitor' to describe Lucy" [emphasis added] (190). I am not sure describe is the appropriate term here. Mariah and Lewis name the protagonist poor visitor instead of calling her by her given name, which demonstrates that the poor visitor is being marginalized, making her a subaltern. Holcomb also illustrates the nameless protagonist being marginalized, because she labels herself a slut. The label of "slut is entirely passive, an object of action" according to Holcomb (305). A subaltern is also a passive object, since they have no agency in their oppressed life. When the protagonist labels herself a slut she does so passively in a letter to her mother, where she tells her mother that "life as a slut was quite enjoyable" (Kincaid 128). Therefore, the nameless protagonist is not giving agency to her subaltern status, only taking agency over her passive body, because she labels herself a slut so passively, which is a step to unsilence herself. Majerol finds that "Lucy's experience of riding this train ultimately exposes her to the ways in which she cannot assume the assimilated

position that Mariah would like her to" (20). Observing that the protagonist cannot assimilate shows her marginalized position, which gives her subaltern status. Nichols, Holcomb, and Majerol find that the protagonist is a marginalized person who is silenced often throughout the novel, but they do not see her lacking in a name, which I find resonates her subaltern position.

An immense part of the subaltern speaking is uncovering their past to learn how it is different than other culture's pasts; whereas Lucy is not an autobiography, Kincaid blends her past experiences with the protagonist's life to let the subaltern speak. In Marcia Aldrich's article "Kincaid's Bite" she discusses that "Kincaid calls 'Biography of a Dress' a work of fiction, but the black-and-white photograph that accompanies the story is of Kincaid on her second birthday" (166-167). "Biography of a Dress" is another one of Kincaid's stories that blends her past with her protagonist's past; accordingly, the stories in her books are experiences that she elaborates on to let the subaltern speak. Postcolonial scholars "are interested in recovering subaltern voices because we [the scholars] are invested in changing contemporary power relations" (Loomba 203). Kincaid recovers her subaltern experience through Lucy, which in turn teaches and "decenters the (US) readers" about the different power relations between cultures (Nichols 190). One of these power relations is found in the protagonist's daffodil story:

I remember an old poem I had been made to memorize when I was ten years old and a pupil at Queen Victoria Girls' School. I had been made to memorize it... then had recited the whole poem to an auditorium full of parents, teachers, and my fellow pupils... everybody... told me how nicely I had pronounced every word... and how proud the poet, now long dead, would have been... outside I made pleasant little noises that showed modesty and appreciation... inside I was making a vow to erase from my mind, line by line, every word of that poem. (Kincaid 18)

The poet was not a poet of the protagonist's native land, nor was the poem written in her native tongue. The poet was a British poet, and the poem was written in the English language. The protagonist's homeland had been colonized by the British, and her ancestors were exploited as slaves. English was still the primary language taught in school, and British history was the only history taught. This angered the protagonist;

she “had forgotten all this until Mariah mentioned daffodils, and now I [the protagonist] told it to her with such an amount of anger I [the protagonist] surprised both of us” (Kincaid 18-19). Here the subaltern is speaking. She is angry with “a recognizable form of West Indian anger against an unquestioned metropolitan dominance” (Holcomb 296). The subaltern protagonist is voicing her experience at the unquestioned metropolitan English school, where she is silenced from speaking her own native language and learning any of her native history; this makes her very angry. The dominance over the subaltern protagonist only lasted so long, because she “had realized that the origin of my [her] presence on the island – my [her] ancestral history – was the result of a foul deed” (Kincaid 135). A subaltern’s origins are just as important as a Westerner’s origins. It is no wonder that the West Indians are angry, along with all the other people who have colonized ancestors, because “It is precisely because of the colonial education system that Lucy does not have a (national) history, at least not one she learns about in school” [emphasis in original] (Nichols 198). The colonial education system only taught their (European, French, etc.) history. Through this angry story Kincaid lets the subaltern protagonist speak about the colonized people’s oppressive history, which demonstrates to the Western reader how different their past is from a subaltern’s past.

Kincaid’s narrator in *Lucy* is a subaltern, because she is a transnational immigrant, from a land that was colonized, who was hired by a wealthy white family to be an au pair, and is given a “new” name. Whereas Mariah and Lewis, the wife and husband of the wealthy family, say that she “should regard them as my [her] family and make myself [herself] at home,” they do not treat her as such (Kincaid 7). Shortly after the protagonist comes to stay with the family “they began to call me [her] the Visitor. They said I [she] seemed not to be a part of things” (Kincaid 13). A family member is not called a visitor. A family member is made to feel at home by the rest of the family, not made to feel like an outcast, because the person will not assimilate. Kincaid’s narrator is being marginalized by her “new family” like her colonized relatives were. Mariah and Lewis are “consistently attempt[ing] to assimilate Lucy,” but they are doing it in all the wrong ways (Majerol 18). Trying to assimilate someone tells the person that they are not good enough the way they are. Later in the novel, Mariah tries to assimilate the Visitor by providing her with new

experiences, like riding on a train. Mariah was positive that the Visitor was going to love the train, but this assimilation experience backfired without Mariah even realizing it:

We went to the dining car to eat our dinner... The other people sitting down to eat dinner all looked like Mariah's relatives; the people waiting on them all looked like mine... Mariah did not seem to notice what she had in common with the other diners, or what I had in common with the waiters. (Kincaid 32)

Therefore, Mariah was trying to assimilate the Visitor by providing her with a genuine "American" experience, but the Visitor felt more marginalized, because she noticed that the diners were white in skin color, like Mariah, and the waiters were black in skin color, like herself. Subsequently, Kincaid shows how the narrator finds her identity marginalized by her new employers, Mariah and Lewis, who place her in a subaltern status within their home (Kincaid 13).

Different cultures interpret life experiences in various ways; Kincaid demonstrates in *Lucy* that part of letting a subaltern speak is to learn about these diverse interpretations of life from marginalized cultures. Dreams are something all humans have, whether or not they remember them is another story, but different cultures have different ideas of what dreams are and where they come from. In Kincaid's *Lucy*, after Mariah and Lewis place the Visitor into a subaltern status, the protagonist articulates to the family a dream that she has had recently: Lewis was chasing me around and around the house, and though he came close he could never catch up with me. Mariah stood at the open windows saying catch her, Lewis, catch her. Eventually I fell down a hole, at the bottom of which were some silver and blue snakes. (Kincaid 14) By communicating her dream the Visitor is trying to convey that from her life experiences "only people who were very important to me [her] had ever shown up in my [her] dreams" (Kincaid 15). This is a very important part of the Visitor's past story, because in her culture dreams were only places that important people appeared. In America, though, dreams are interpreted differently. Mariah and Lewis fall silent after the visitor conveys her dream, and eventually "Mariah said, Dr. Freud for Visitor" in a joking manner (Kincaid 14-15). Dr. Freud is a very well-known psychologist in America who interpreted dreams as unconscious thoughts. But the Visitor "did not know who Dr. Freud was," nor does

she realize that Mariah is joking (Kincaid 15). Part of this “joke” is Mariah “universalize[ing] the conditions of her own experience to Lucy” (Majerol 21). Mariah, coming from white privileged America, does not realize that the Visitor has no clue who Dr. Freud is. Therefore, she universalizes her experience onto the Visitor, but this marginalizes the Visitor, once again, because she has not had the white privileged schooling and experiences that Mariah has had. Thus, showing that every culture has different interpretations of life experiences. From the Visitor telling this story, Kincaid lets the subaltern speak by showing how her culture understands dreams, which is very different than how Americans understand dreams.

Not only is Kincaid’s subaltern protagonist oppressed by her American employer, she is also oppressed by the colonizers and her own patriarchal culture. Patriarchy is something that is common in most cultures, but in a colonized culture women suffer twice over. Oppression from the colonizers, as well as the oppression from the patriarchal society, put women in a double oppression. Women are silenced into existing forever in a loop of the “woman’s role.” They are expected to do “women” jobs and to not contradict this stereotype. In Lucy, Kincaid’s protagonist is silenced by her mother, because of this double oppression. She feels like her mom has betrayed her when her mother’s “eyes fill up with tears at the thought of how proud she would be at some deed her sons had accomplished” (Kincaid 130). These “deeds” that her mother tears up about are for the male children to “go to university in England and study to become a doctor or lawyer or someone who would occupy an important and influential position in society” (Kincaid 130). But for her daughter the only “deed” she can imagine is in a “nurse’s uniform” (Kincaid 93). The only nurse that the subaltern protagonist knows is the woman who delivered her. She observed that her mother respected the nurse “to her face but had many bad things to say about behind her back” (Kincaid 92-93). Therefore, a nurse in the protagonist’s eyes: was a badly paid person, a person who was forced to be in awe of someone above her (a doctor), a person with cold and rough hands, a person who lived alone and ate badly boiled food because she could not afford a cook, a person who, in the process of easing suffering, caused more suffering (the badly administered injection). (Kincaid 92)

This is not what the protagonist wants to do with her life, but she was pushed by her mother, and her society, to take this career path even though she “was not good at taking orders from anyone, [and] not good at waiting on other people” (Kincaid 92). Kincaid is illustrating to the reader that her protagonist is a subaltern, because she did not have a choice of careers in the country that she grew up in. Obviously being a nurse was not something the protagonist wanted to be. This is the subaltern speaking. She is identifying how she sees her experience, and how this experience makes her feel. She is slowly removing her subaltern status though, because she decided that she “would not attend school at night anymore or study to become a nurse” (Kincaid 92). Her decision is a “lateral mobility rather than upward mobility, which results in a ‘destabilization of the world’ rather than a step up in the world” [emphasis in original] (Majerol 18). Thus, the protagonist remains a subaltern, because she is moving laterally; she is not claiming agency over anything, nor is she making a decision to move up in the world by quitting nursing school. While the subaltern protagonist is starting to see that she is being oppressed, she does not claim agency over her life yet. She only moves laterally through the oppression, which lets Kincaid continue to let the subaltern speak.

Kincaid shows that part of the lateral movement through oppression is recognizing the oppression and finding a voice against the oppressor. The subaltern is angry, and is without the means to understand why they are angry, but that does not mean the subaltern cannot figure it out. Once the subaltern figures out why they are angry, they can start voicing their condemnation, as the protagonist does in Kincaid’s *Lucy*. At first the subaltern protagonist ignores the letters from her mother. She does not read them, nor does she write back. She gives her mother the silent treatment, because she is choosing to ignore the oppression from her mother instead of voicing why this oppression angers her. Ignoring the problem does not make it go away. Although, while she bestows her mother with the silent treatment, the protagonist figures out why she is so angry with her mother. Subsequently, the subaltern protagonist does not voice the reason she is angry until she is made to do so. Since her mother is getting no response from the protagonist, she sends someone to find her and tell her that her father is dead. Maude, a daughter of her mother’s friend, is sent to give the

protagonist the news. Maude voices to the protagonist that she reminds Maude of the protagonist's mother. The subaltern protagonist does not take kindly to this, and rebukes in anger:

I am not like my mother. She and I are not alike. She should not have married my father. She should not have had children. She should not have thrown away her intelligence. She should not have paid so little attention to mine. (Kincaid 123)

This voicing of anger moves her latterly through the oppression she is in, because she “performs mobility as a source of resistance against authority—familial, patriarchal, racial, and national” (Nichols 190). Resisting authority is the beginning of breaking free of the subaltern status. By this short commentary the subaltern protagonist is resisting her familial authority, because daughters are supposed to follow their mother's footsteps. She is also resisting the patriarchal authority by condemning her mother for marrying, having children, and throwing away her intelligence. In essence, she is angry at her mother for being a subaltern and not trying to rise above the status quo that her mother was obliged to follow. She is also angry with her mother for continuing the status quo by oppressing the protagonist. Being oppressed by the family, by the patriarchy, by the color of one's skin, and by the nation, for being a colonized person and/or an immigrant, definitely situates a person into subaltern status. But how a person reacts to that status depends on whether or not they stay a silenced subaltern. If they ignore the oppression then the subaltern has no voice against it, but if they recognize it, as Kincaid's protagonist has, they can rebel against the oppression.

Once a subaltern learns that they do not have to be silent about the oppression pushed upon them, they usually start pushing back and rebelling, as Kincaid's protagonist begins to do. Rebellion is another step to breaking free from subaltern status. Kincaid has her protagonist, in Lucy, rebel in a way that rebels against every aspect of society. She becomes a slut. In her experience a slut is not a prostitute; a slut is someone who has sex before marriage, and has sex with multiple partners whom she is not in love with. She decides that she does not want to be like everyone else, and she does not want to be assimilated. The protagonist realizes that her mother “has subordinated herself to her husband's will, thus submitting to patriarch and thereby surrendering

her 'sexual autonomy' as an independent black woman to colonialism" (Holcomb 301). The subaltern protagonist refuses this subordinate position venomously when she finally writes back to her mother after her father's death:

I reminded her that my whole upbringing had been devoted to preventing me from becoming a slut; I then gave a brief description of my personal life, offering each detail as evidence that my upbringing had been a failure and that, in fact, life as a slut was quite enjoyable, thank you very much. (Kincaid 127-128)

Being a slut is not really a movement up from being a subaltern, but to Kincaid's protagonist it was a choice; it was her choice, and no one pushed her to make that choice. Making the choice to be a slut furnished her with agency over her body. She could now use her body anyway she wanted to. After she made the choice to be a slut, she was sure to tell the number one person that was oppressing her, her mother, because being a slut was an act of rebellion against her oppressor. Having agency over her body does not automatically transport her out of being a subaltern. This is only one step of several. She is still speaking as a subaltern, because being considered a slut is just as oppressive as being considered a subaltern. Thus, showing why she made this choice is the subaltern speaking. Choosing to be a slut is not something every person would do, because it is frowned upon in most societies. But the protagonist chooses to be a slut, because it was a choice that only she was in charge of. Therefore, Kincaid utilizes the protagonist's claim of becoming a slut very ingeniously, because this demonstrates the choices that a subaltern makes and why. Although, rebelling is just one rung on the ladder for Kincaid's subaltern protagonist to unsilence herself.

Once the subaltern begins to see that they do not have to remain a subaltern for life, they can start making plans to be free of their subaltern status, which can be seen through Kincaid's protagonist. One way to break free of being a subaltern is to remove the ties that bind. Kincaid's protagonist, in Lucy, effectively removes her ties of oppression from her mother by providing her with an address that she has "made up off the top of my [her] head" (140). The only ties that bind her now are the ones to Mariah and Lewis. She has started "to feel like a dog on a leash, a long leash but a leash all the same" working for Mariah and Lewis (Kincaid 110). This leash is keeping the protagonist tied to being

a subaltern, which makes her start thinking what it would be like if she “no longer had to live in Mariah and Lewis’s apartment and take care of their children” (Kincaid 110). Plus, how it would feel if she “could have a life of my [her] own and come and go at my [her] own convenience and when it pleased me [her]” (Kincaid 110). So she puts a plan into motion to untie herself from the subaltern status at Mariah and Lewis’s apartment. The protagonist finds that “her liberation depends upon her ability to paint new visions of the world and herself” (Nichols 195). Thinking about what life would look like if she lived elsewhere, and if she had a different job, is Kincaid’s way of illustrating how the subaltern makes plans to find liberation from the subaltern status.

Only the subaltern can liberate themselves from their silent subaltern status, but they have to find a method to unsilence themselves before they can be free. Kincaid positions how her protagonist unsilences herself very well. First, she breaks the ties to her mother and the oppressive land she was born in. Then, she begins to think for herself. Next, she breaks ties with her oppressive employers by quitting and moving out of their apartment, and into an apartment with her friend Peggy. Her last step to break free of her subaltern status is claiming her name. Up until this point in Kincaid’s novel *Lucy* the protagonist is a subaltern speaking about her experiences. Where she cannot speak for the masses (and who can) she does speak from her experiences by imparting a narration of what she has lived through. At the end of the novel Kincaid does not just name the subaltern; the protagonist, in fact, names herself. Before she claims her name nobody calls her by her name. The first person to use Lucy’s name is Lucy. Thus, providing Lucy with the resources to claim her own name, but only when she was ready to claim it:

I reached into the top drawer and retrieved a small stack of official documents: my passport, my immigration card, my permission-to-work card, my birth certificate, and a copy of the lease to the apartment. These documents showed everything about me, and yet showed nothing about me... These documents all said that my name was Lucy—Lucy Josephine Potter. (Kincaid 149)

Lucy is no longer a subaltern at this point in the novel, because she claims agency over herself, encompassing her body, voice, and name. Lucy unsilences herself by claiming her identity, which transforms her

lateral mobility to an upward mobility. Lucy does not assimilate to who her mother, her previous employers, or society thinks she should be; thus, Kincaid shows how Lucy unsilences herself and breaks free of the subaltern ties that bound her.

Finding a way out of being a subaltern does not mean the fight is over, nor is it the end of Lucy's story, because there is a new job waiting for her. Lucy's new job is to be the personal assistant of a photographer. Unfortunately, her new boss is quite sexist, and tries to call Lucy other names, but Lucy does not give up her name. Lucy is very clever, and when she finds that "The man I [Lucy] worked for was named Timothy Simon. I [Lucy] called him Mr. Simon, not Tim, or even Timothy, as he begged me [Lucy] to do; this made him not call me [Lucy] 'honey,' or 'darling,' the two endearments he used when addressing any woman (Kincaid 158). Lucy refuses to be put back into the subaltern status that she has finally pulled herself out of, by not letting Mr. Simon call her "honey" or "darling." Even though Lucy has unsilenced herself, and brought herself out of the subaltern status, she still has to fight for her right to have agency. Since Lucy does not let her new boss nickname her with terms of endearments, this also gives her agency over her name; unlike her first job with Mariah and Lewis when she let them name her the Visitor. At that time Lucy was a silenced subaltern, but now she has agency over her name, and she is unwilling to give that up.

Unsilencing the subaltern is not the only thing Kincaid accomplishes with Lucy. It is also a guidebook for other subalterns. Kincaid exhibits ways to move out of being a subaltern. Claiming agency over one's body is one way to break free of being a subaltern. Exerting power over how a subaltern uses their body and how they think about their body moves them in the right direction to overcome their subaltern status. Lucy did not have time for love, because love had always oppressed her and kept her in a subaltern status. Sex was the only thing she wanted from a man, and maybe a woman, because she was rebelling against her mother. Lucy's mom felt the "need to regulate her daughter's sexuality," according to Holcomb, "because it is perceived as shameful" [emphasis in original] (303). As in most Christian countries, sex is looked at as a shameful act if it is not in the right context, i.e. marriage, but Lucy rebels against this perception. She does not find sex shameful, and uses it to claim agency over her body. Thus, rebelling against the

oppressive forces in a subaltern's life and claiming agency over their own body helps them break free of their subaltern status. Making plans for the future is another way the subaltern loses her ties. Majerol claims that the journal Mariah gives Lucy provides her with the "suggestion that Lucy must move beyond her past (history) and ultimately forge a future for herself" (26). I would argue that Lucy has already moved beyond her past, because in her past she has no name. Lucy forges herself into the future by claiming her name and not letting anyone take it away from her.

Kincaid utilizes her novel *Lucy* to show that the subaltern can speak, and how a subaltern can find a way to become unsilenced. The use of a nameless protagonist gives Kincaid the means to let the subaltern speak through the narration of the book. Since a name represents a person's identity and the subaltern has no identity, this works in Kincaid's favor. Entering into the postcolonialism debate with a narrative novel, I think, is an innovative way to argue that the subaltern can speak. Kincaid's loophole was a book with an unnamed protagonist who functions as a subaltern, because she has no identity. Having a nameless protagonist narrate her experiences in the novel lets the subaltern speak in her own way and with her own words. Thus, Kincaid has effectively given a voice to a subaltern whom Spivak claimed could not speak. Narratives are a great way to let marginalized people speak. It gives them a context to speak about their life, and other stories weave themselves through the narrative. I am sure a good portion of Kincaid's books are based on her own experiences, but not claiming the stories as autobiographies provides the characters in the story the power to tell their own story. Kincaid is just the person letting the subaltern speak. The subaltern is the voice of the novel, and has control over where the novel goes. Spivak may claim that the subaltern cannot speak, but I can hear the subaltern speaking in Kincaid's work.

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