Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Courtney Shin April 9, 2019

Who is the You?: Second-Person Voicing as Resistance in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* and Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*

by

Courtney Shin

Dr. Deepika Bahri
Adviser

Department of English

Dr. Deepika Bahri

Adviser

Dr. Valerie Loichot

Committee Member

Dr. Munia Bhaumik

Committee Member

2019

Who is the You?: Second-Person Voicing as Resistance in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* and Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*

By

Courtney Shin

Dr. Deepika Bahri

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of English

2019

Abstract

Who is the You?: Second-Person Voicing as Resistance in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* and Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*
By Courtney Shin

In this thesis, I aim to analyze how and why Jamaica Kincaid and Claudia Rankine use the second-person voice in *A Small Place* and *Citizen* respectively. The critic Brian Richardson claims the second-person voice inspires an "ontological instability" in the reader, held in the space when the addressed "you" and the reader's "I" overlap. Regardless of the level of familiarity between the reader and the second-person, the nature of the address itself amplifies a reader engagement. In this project, I argue that in *A Small Place* and *Citizen,* this engagement fosters a nearness between reader and text which consequently challenges a discourse that isolates colonization and racism to a specific time, a specific space, and a specific demographic. Across chapters analyzing the second-person "you," the first-person "I," and the possessive plural "we," I attempt to analyze how Kincaid and Rankine's use of the second-person voice illuminates how the space of the address complicates the very questions of otherness which root the institutional, systemic problems addressed in both their texts.

Who is the You?: Second-Person Voicing as Resistance in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* and Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*

By

Courtney Shin

Dr. Deepika Bahri

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of English

2019

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my adviser, Dr. Deepika Bahri, whose guidance has shaped not only this project but also all my years at Emory. I would also like to thank my committee members: Dr. Valerie Loichot, whose class inspired this research, and Dr. Munia Bhaumik, whose insights were invaluable. I would also like to thank Dr. Kathleen Leuschen, Dr. Erwin Rosinberg, Dr. Erica Bruchko, Ms. Sarah Morris, Dr. Lizzy LeRud, and Ms. Hannah Hjerpe-Schroeder, for their generosity in encouraging this research. Finally, I would like to thank my family – Umma, Appa, and Unni – and roommates – Dede, Timah, and Jordi – who made this all possible.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The final two pages of the poet Claudia Rankine's 2014 publication, *Citizen: An American Lyric,* contain no words. Rather, Rankine includes a reproduction of *The Slave Ship,* an oil painting by 19th century English painter J.M.W. Turner. The painting's focus is on the sky and sea and is often considered Turner's finest work, a grandiose illustration of nature as both harrowing and majestic. The actual ship is depicted in the distance; in the foreground, obscured bodies drown in the ocean. These two elements reveal the nature of Turner's depiction: the 1781 Zong massacre in which the captain of the slave ship Zong threw 132 enslaved Africans overboard to collect insurance money for slaves lost at sea (Walvin 2).

After a page including the entire painting, Rankine magnifies a detail from the painting's bottom corner. The image depicts a leg with chain attached at the ankle, protruding from the water. In her citations, it is described as "Detail of Fish Attacking Slave" (Rankine 166). Within this juxtaposition, Rankine shifts the subject, the gaze. The center of the painting is no longer the sun, blinding white, setting over the ocean, but rather the violence done upon the black body. Though in this case, questions of subject and centrality arise from a visual juxtaposition, this project attempts to analyze these questions within a narrative context.

In the introduction to her book, *Native Intelligence,* Deepika Bahri writes, "The care of the aesthetic in readings of postcolonial literature has for too long been the love that dare not speak its name" (Bahri 13). She proceeds to establish the essential relationship between form and content within postcolonial literature. Though postcolonial literature itself is a broad, often challenged categorization, Bahri's argument that an understanding of a literary politic cannot be distinguished from a literary aesthetic remains clear. To analyze what a text means, it is not beneficial but essential to analyze how it is constructed. Regarding this construction, narrative

theory offers key terms in situating literary form. These ideas include the relationship between story and narrative, the diversity of narrative voice and within this a further exploration of how this voice is focalized. Though my discussion is aggressively simplified, narrative theory at its core encourages an attention to matters including voicing and perspective in textual analysis.

Influenced by both a postcolonial relationship between aesthetic and politic and a narratological emphasis on voice, I will be discussing two texts in this piece: *A Small Place,* by Jamaica Kincaid, and *Citizen,* by Claudia Rankine. As referenced in thesis's title, I will focus on how both authors use the second-person to re-center and represent subaltern narratives through "your" identification and address.

The title of *A Small Place* refers to Jamaica Kincaid's birthplace, the Caribbean island of Antigua. An island fourteen miles long and eleven miles wide, Antigua had been under British colonial rule for 350 years before gaining official independence in 1981 (Lightfoot). Kincaid published *A Small Place* seven years later in 1988. *A Small Place* is a slim text, a non-fiction collection of four interlocking essays first meant to be published in *The New Yorker* where Kincaid had been a staff writer. In these essays, Kincaid presents a critique of contemporary tourism in Antigua and its vestiges in colonialism, illustrates her growing up in colonial Antigua, and describes individual frustration in returning to a struggling, post-independence Antigua as an adult.

To give a brief biography of the author, Kincaid was born in Antigua in 1949 as Elaine Potter Richardson. After finishing her secondary education under Antigua's British colonial education system, she immigrated to the United States at 16, initially sent to work as an au pair. After attending college in the northeast, Kincaid began her literary career as a staff writer for *The New Yorker.* Presently, she has returned to Harvard University as Professor in Residence in both

departments, and resides in Vermont. Though her literary status initially forged as a fiction writer, particularly of short stories, *A Small Place* is one of her earlier publications and her first non-fiction collection. Because of her individual history, the text uniquely encapsulates not only a greater discussion of Antiguan colonial history and post-colonial identity, but also a personal experience of returning to a birthplace after decades abroad.

Like Kincaid, Claudia Rankine was also born in the Caribbean – in Kingston, Jamaica in 1963, a year after its official independence from British colonization – and finished her collegiate education in the United States after immigrating as a child (Ulin). Though also a playwright, multi-media artist, and literary critic and editor, Rankine is primarily a poet and published four collections of poetry prior to *Citizen* in 2014. She is currently a university professor, having held the position of Iseman Professor of Poetry at Yale University since 2016.

As mentioned, *Citizen* is Rankine's most recent collection of poetry and was awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry and was a National Book Award finalist. In it, Rankine presents, analyzes, and deconstructs racism and anti-blackness as it exists within personal moments, institutional legacies, and communal history. This most prominently occurs through an interspersed description of incidences displaying intimate experiences of racial bias. Though she weaves together poetry, criticism, essays, and visual art, Rankine subtitles *Citizen* as *"An American Lyric."* Though I will mostly focus on the categorization of the lyric, Rankine's classification of *Citizen* as an American text merits particular attention as well. Unlike *A Small Place* whose title and content both represent a specific textual anchoring in Antigua, *Citizen* does not seem to be tethered to any one particular place. Though in general, Rankine engages with events and people from the United States – Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, the athlete Serena Williams, the murder of unarmed black men in the country – this is not always the case. Some

portions of *Citizen* represent international events and figures – Zinedine Zidane from France, Mark Duggan from England – and some sections negate description of place entirely. Thus, Rankine's use of the term "American" is not a national description; even on a technical level it encompasses two continents and multiple island nations. Rather, *Citizen: An American Lyric* seems to imply that the oppression, racism, and personal experiences as described within the text are rooted in a greater American culture and legacy which extends beyond borders.

Regarding the discussion of aesthetics and politics however, *A Small Place* more clearly fits within a postcolonial categorization than *Citizen.* As earlier described, while Kincaid discusses an individual and communal memory of English colonization in Antigua, Rankine presents a plural experience of racism not specific to any one country. Though these distinctions are important, my analysis of both texts will focus on their joined focus on subaltern experience. Beyond similar Caribbean-American women authorship, both Kincaid's descriptions of a colonized population and Rankine's descriptions of the black citizen as systematically oppressed illustrate subaltern identities, pushed to the periphery of power.

Finally, regarding the aforementioned influence of narrative theory, both *A Small Place* and *Citizen* present a parallel utilization of the second-person voice. Beyond contextual similarities, this voicing is the key reason I would like to look at both texts in dialogue. In his book, *Unnatural Voices,* narrative theorist Brian Richardson explains, "that second person narration is an artificial mode that does not normally occur in natural narrative or in most texts in the history of literature before 1919" (Richardson 19). Though discourse concerning specific definitions and sub-definitions of second person narrative continue to evolve, its general distinction from second person invocations such as the apostrophe or the authorial address to "a heterodiegetic narrate ('gentle reader')" is clear. Second person narrative is unique because it

does not represent an author outside of the narrative addressing characters "within the fictional world" (18). Second person narrative necessitates the second-person "you" to operate within the story itself.

Though neither *A Small Place* nor *Citizen* are works of fiction, Kincaid and Rankine's respective uses of second-person voicing parallel this distinction. For example, here are the two opening sentences from each text, respectively:

> "If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see." (Kincaid 3).
>
> "When you are alone and too tired even to turn on any of your devices, you let yourself linger in a past stacked among your pillows" (Rankine 5).

In each, the second-person pronoun does not exist outside of the text but within it, not as an apostrophe but as part of the content. Though neither sentence represents the second-person as it is utilized throughout the entire text, both sentences do serve as a precursor to its prominence. Because both feature the second-person significantly and as an embedded narrative figure, understanding the position and implication of "you" is necessary in understanding the texts' greater thematic arguments. In this thesis, I argue that in *A Small Place* and *Citizen* respectively, both Kincaid and Rankine use the second-person voice as a narrative device to represent the experience of subaltern subjection and critique a dominant power structure of Western, white influence. Though by nature, and by authorial intention, the second-person pronoun often occupies a fluid identity, the "you" in *A Small Place* most generally refers to the oppressor and the "you" in *Citizen* to the subjugated. Because Kincaid and Rankine's second-person reflects opposite figures, analysis of both texts concurrently further enhance understanding of how the second-person voice at large can be used to subvert power, sponsor resistance, and encourage solidarity. In this piece, I argue that the second-person voice, by nature of its address, inherently

fosters a nearness between reader and text. In *A Small Place* and *Citizen,* this nearness consequently challenges a discourse that colonization and racism only involve a specific time and a specific population and champions equality and solidarity. In my first chapter, "You," I discuss the second-person voice as it relates to themes of physicality, movement, and stillness. In my second chapter, "I," I discuss the relationship between the second- and first-persons. In my final chapter, "We," I discuss the final implications of community movement encompassing both a textual and contextual "you" and "I."

Before I begin analysis of each texts' second-person voicing, however, I would like to discuss their respective genres. As earlier mentioned, discourse on second-person narrative from theorists including Brian Richardson generally exists within the context of fiction, which neither *A Small Place* nor *Citizen* represent. Thus, it is important to first distinguish their respective genres within an exploration of narrative form and second-person voicing. Though at large, both texts are works of creative non-fiction, each also encompasses a type of genre hybridity which complicates conventional categorization. Understanding this hybridity and its implications, understanding the greater formal context of both pieces, furthers an understanding of the mechanism of the second-person voice in both *A Small Place* and *Citizen*.

Genre: A Small Place

Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* defies simple classification. Libraries catalogue the text as a mix of memoir, autobiography, and travel writing; the scholar Lesley Larkin names it, "an antiguidebook" (Larkin). Even more, some of Kincaid's passages ring with the type of lyricism that seems to stand at the edge of poetry. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I will align most closely with literary scholar Claudia Marquis, who states, "whatever their [*A Small Place's*

sections] autobiographical content, they warrant analysis first as essays, as acts of creative, non-fiction narration." In her article, "'Making a spectacle of yourself': The art of anger in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*," Marquis argues for a reading of the text as both a whole "social anatomy" but also as "individual essays." In support of reading *A Small Place* as essays, Marquis cites its publication history. Kincaid had intended her essays to be in *The New Yorker,* for which she frequently wrote. While the opening essay of *A Small Place* was printed as "The Ugly Tourist" in *Harper's Magazine,* September 1988, *The New Yorker* did not publish her pieces "for fear of the offence it might give" (Marquis). Thus, an understanding of its genre must acknowledge the genesis of *A Small Place,* not as a binding text but rather a series of four essays interlocking as a whole. *A Small Place,* like Kincaid's other essays, "raise questions… about voicing, point of view and especially the reliability of the narrator" (Marquis).

In summary, there are four distinct sections in *A Small Place.* While varying in tone and relative content, each section addresses racism, colonialism, tourism, political corruption, and more, in her native country of Antigua. However, rather than reject the multiplicity of her text – Kincaid writes whole pages in parentheticals and interweaves stories of her childhood with socio-political legacies of Antiguan colonization and inquiry of its history – the form of the essay encourages it.

In further support of this reading, the genre of *A Small Place* aligns with Theodor Adorno's definition of the essay, as it "neither derives from a principle nor deduces from coherent individual observations. It coordinates the elements instead of subordinating them…" and "as a result of the [essay's] tension between presentation and presented, [is] more dynamic than traditional thought" (Adorno, "The Essay as Form"). Kincaid's writing encapsulates this liminal space of coordination, placing the historic and the personal side-by-side. The critic Josh

Robinson elucidates Adorno's statements, furthering, "the essay, that is privileges and hypostatizes neither the whole nor the elements of which it is composed, but rather concerns itself with the reciprocal interaction that takes place between them, and in such a way that it calls into question the notion that their relationship can be conceived in static terms, or that the work can adequately be grasped with reference solely or even primarily to one or the other" (Robinson 128). For Kincaid, understanding colonization and post-colonization requires the juxtaposition of dualities: "you" and "I," the colonized and the colonizer, the historical and the contemporary, the close-to and the far-away. According to Adorno's arguments, the essay may perhaps be the best vehicle to represent these juxtapositions. Kincaid's truth is to be found in the tensions of the moments and the continuous, not in understanding one over the other. As she writes, "In Antigua, not only is the event turned into everyday but the everyday is turned into an event" (Kincaid 56).

Genre: Citizen

Similar to *A Small Place,* Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* encapsulates genre hybridity, interweaving lyric moments, socio-cultural criticism, visual art, and aspects of life-writing. In 2015, the National Book Critics Circle nominated the text in the categories of both poetry and criticism. Yet despite, or perhaps because of this hybridity, Rankine distinctly subtitles her text "An American Lyric." In his essay, "Notes on the Lyric, Adorno writes that lyric work "is always also the subjective expression of a social antagonism" (Richardson 201). This definition closely parallels *Citizen* which is both subjective as a composition of individual experiences of racial aggression and a response to the social antagonism of racism. Rankine invokes Zora Neale Hurston when illustrating this antagonism, or what it means to be black against a "stark white

background" (Rankine 25). Further, Adorno defines the lyric as embodying "the transformation of subjectivity into objectivity" but not as "a reduction of lyric to the expression of a transcendental subject that has been abstracted from individual, living humans" (Richardson 201). As in *A Small Place, Citizen* exists within the transitional space between the subjective and the objective, the individual and the collective, the momentary and the cyclical. Specifically, Rankine's lyric places bodies next to each other, in conflict, solidarity, observation, and suspicion. *Citizen* illuminates the relationship of bodies, or as Rankine states, "the ways in which we encounter and fail one another" (Lee).

Additionally, Rankine herself makes a case for using poetry as a medium to grapple with the questions of racism, aggression, and citizenship. In an interview with Public Radio International, Rankine explains, "Poetry allows us into the realm of feeling, and it's the one place where you can say 'I feel bad'... In poetry, feeling is as important as perception and description" (Frassica). By identifying *Citizen* as operating within a poetic tradition, Rankine shifts the focus of her text to experiential knowledge and the emotional response. And by weaving together criticism and visual pastiche spanning across cultures and decades, Rankine illuminates that larger historical events have individual, emotional impact. By pairing together criticism within the space of the poetic, Rankine illuminates how racism is both a macro and micro concept. It is both institutionally perpetuated and intimately experienced. Thus, Rankine describes accounts of "micro-aggressions" - an interaction at the grocery store or a suspicious glance on a subway - beside accounts of larger historical events - the national response to Hurricane Katrina or police brutality against unarmed black men - with a narrative voice that fluctuates between the poetic and the critical. With Adorno's definition, the lyric becomes the ideal form to present

juxtapositions, antagonisms, and the connection between the systematic and the singular without sacrificing either.

Genre and the Second-Person

Finally, I argue that the use of genre hybridity holds specific meaning within a subaltern context. In an interview with Guernica Magazine, Jamaica Kincaid explains, "Often the lines that define the traditional European arrangement of fiction, non-fiction, history, etc. are not useful. These lines can distort the world we, people who look like me, live in—and by the world, I mean our personal experience of it" (Alleyne) Here, Kincaid alludes to two general reasons why she shifts as a writer of both non-fiction and fiction, and to what these demarcations mean. One is that the categorization of genre itself is a European arrangement and holds within it the viewpoint of the colonizer. The second is that, "for people who have a memory of what happened, none of the categories that exist are useful" (Alleyne). There is an emphasis on who has "traditionally" written history and defined what is a non-fiction transcription of events. For those for whom these events exist as remembrance, the lines between fiction and non-fiction cannot encapsulate the world. Using Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* as an example, Kincaid illustrates how the text could easily be justified as a work of fiction, psychiatry, or politics. "The point is," she explains, "you can put it in all sorts of categories, but it does not sit comfortably" (Alleyne). Though *Citizen* does not necessarily speak back to a national experience of colonization, it does represent the subaltern experience specifically regarding black identity in America. And as Kincaid and Rankine write, racism is an underlying connection between both. Thus, in a parallel manner to Kincaid, genre demarcations between fiction and non-fiction, prose

and poetry, are not useful in encapsulating an experience that transcends boundaries of time and space.

Kincaid's emphasis on the notion of comfort - that a text "does not sit comfortably" within categories - is central to both *A Small Place* and *Citizen.* For both writers, a fluid genre allows for closer embodiment of the truth of memory and experience. By not adhering to any certain category, Kincaid and Rankine can emphasize the space of "feeling" in poetry or memoir, and also write pointed critique at larger political structures. The lack of genre clarity also serves to disarm the reader. For example, if Rankine defines *Citizen* as a lyric then intersperses her text with visual art, how does this manipulate a conventional definition of the lyric? Defying categorization necessitates a suspension in judgment, rather bringing the reader closer to a space of questioning and tension.

This disarming quality of genre hybridity mirrors the effect of the second-person pronoun in each of the texts. As utilized, the second-person voice in both *A Small Place* and *Citizen* do not adhere strictly to either the convention of second-person narration or lyric address. In *A Small Place,* Kincaid manipulates the frequency of "your" invocation, the network of "your" relationships, as well as the strength of "your" agency across her four essays. Yet regardless of its frequency or context, Kincaid's use of the second-person pronoun forges a direct connection with her reader. Whether the reader identifies with the "you" or not, this direct address invites, and challenges, the reader to enter into the space of Kincaid's world. This is also true of reader-address in Rankine's *Citizen.* "You" are most often a victim of racism, though sometimes "you" are a witness or an ally. Though "you" occupy different spaces and different positions, the nature of the direct address challenges a readerly connection to this pronoun whether or not "you" seem familiar.

Chapter 1: "You"

Though both *A Small Place* and *Citizen* feature a prominent second-person voice, Kincaid and Rankine are distinct in how they utilize this pronoun. Some of these distinctions include the identity of this "you," the context of address, and "your" relative narrative agency. Further, neither text illustrates a static second-person, but rather illustrates a character who ebbs and flows within each distinction. Despite their differences however, it is illuminating to look at *A Small Place* and *Citizen* comparatively because of Kincaid and Rankine's parallel use of the second-person address as a device to speak back to power and to speak to the experience of powerlessness. And by powerlessness, I do not imply a self-imposed victimhood nor inferiority, but rather the systematic, consuming oppression of colonization in Kincaid's text and institutionalized racism in Rankine's.

Within this device, I believe both Kincaid and Rankine's use of the second-person voice emphasize three themes: physicality, movement, and stillness. Regarding physicality, I allude to the amplification of physical, sensory experience via the second-person. Regarding movement, I describe the second-person's relative narrative agency and action. How are "you" moving and what is the narrative weight placed on "your" actions? Finally, with stillness I refer to Kincaid and Rankine bringing the second-person to a pause. This can be describing "you" literally coming to a rest, or it can be rescinding the second-person of narrative agency. As earlier mentioned, the second-person in both texts is a dynamic character and narrative device. Thus, in order to engage with this dynamism, it is important to discuss not only when "you" are active but also when "you" are made still. Within the tension between movement and stillness – not only

concerning a character's actions but also concerning authorial use of voicing – is the tension between subject and object central to how these texts engage with subaltern identity.

Before I present how Kincaid and Rankine's second-person voice addresses these three themes, however, I would like to discuss who exactly this "you" figure is. Identifying the second-person, or contrarily addressing its ambiguity, will contextualize further analysis of how both authors utilize this voicing. Further, in identifying this second-person, I will first be addressing the "you" in the opening sections of each text and then its broader positions throughout the text. In this chapter, I will be toggling between discussion of *A Small Place* and *Citizen* in an effort to address their concurrent themes and also to illustrate how both texts can be brought into dialogue.

"You": A Small Place

As mentioned in the introduction, Kincaid's "you" refers most generally to an oppressor and Rankine's "you" to the oppressed. Beyond the different positions, Kincaid's second-person is much more crystallized than Rankine's. In *A Small Place,* she makes "your" identity clear from her opening sentence: "If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see" (Kincaid 3). Concurrent with this identification, Kincaid's first essay most definitively parallels the form of a guidebook. "You" are a tourist, and she subsequently describes your experience arriving in Antigua as you land at the V.C. Bird International Airport, as you take a taxi to your hotel, and as you look out at the Caribbean Sea from your room. Later in her essay, she will specify that not only are you a tourist but also, "a North American or European – to be frank, white – and not an Antiguan black returning to Antigua…" (4).

The clarity of Kincaid's second-person figure, the clarity of address, is one of the more distinguishing factors between *A Small Place* and *Citizen.* However, a specific identification does not equate to a stationary identification. First, Kincaid adjusts both the frequeny
The second-person is incessant in her first essay; she addresses "you" twenty times in her opening paragraph alone. After describing "your" tour however, Kincaid switches to a confrontation with "you," relating tourism to a larger system of neocolonialism in Antigua. However, she does not maintain this high frequency across her text. In her second essay, she begins with memories of colonial Antigua only to end by connecting "you" specifically to a history of British colonization in Antigua. The second-person pronoun is even more absent in the third essay, in which Kincaid recounts returning to Antigua as an adult, perplexed and frustrated by its post-independence corruption. And though "you" return in the final essay – also the shortest – "your" relationship with the island, and Kincaid herself, has now been contested and challenged.

Just as the frequency and positioning of the second-person pronoun shifts, so too does the narrative structure. In his article, "Why you can't speak: Second-person narration, voice, and a new model for understanding narrative," Matt DelConte defines second-person narration as "a narrative mode in which a narrator tells a story to a… narratee – delineated by you – who is also the… principal actant in that story" (DelConte). *A Small Place* accesses various points on this spectrum of a definition. If Kincaid begins with "you" as protagonist, the third essay exists within first-person narration with an occasional address. However, despite these fluctuations in narrative strategy and relationships, "your" identity remains the same: a tourist in Antigua working within the history of a colonial legacy.

This second-person identity again necessitates an understanding of the text's publication history. Kincaid's originally intended audience was the readership of *The New Yorker,* which Claudia Marquis describes as "a kind of (cosmopolitan) American." Further, the book was first published in New York, Canada and London, making apparent that "Kincaid's first audience was by no means Caribbean, even if diasporic writing like hers is typically characterized by a double address that includes the home reader" (Marquis). There is a restructuring of power when Kincaid places the tourist – and by extension the colonizer, both historic and contemporary – in the position of the second-person. In the introduction to the seminal postcolonial text, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures,* Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, delineate the development of post-colonial literatures. Under imperial rule or imperial license, literature describing an indigenous culture maintains a "primary identification with the colonizing power," "inevitably privileg[ing] the center" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 5). This center, the colonizer, reflects the construction of a first-person pronoun. "I" am the center and in describing a culture, "I" designate "you" as the second-person whose identity can only be validated in relation to "me." In *A Small Place,* Kincaid speaks back to this "center" by reversing it. The tourist is the second-person who must be identified in relation to Kincaid's "I."

"You": Citizen

Contrary to Kincaid, Rankine rarely clarifies who "you" are in *Citizen.* As described, *Citizen* includes stories of racist encounters, often described as "micro-aggressions," narrated in the second-person. Although the individual person differs across passages, the most common definition of "you" is that "you" are the victim of racism, specifically anti-blackness. Sometimes

"your" race is mentioned and sometimes it is not. Sometimes "you" are gendered and sometimes "you" are not. For example, Rankine writes of an encounter in which, "the woman with the multiple degrees says, I didn't know black women could get cancer" (Rankine 45). Though Rankine never writes, "You are a black woman," this identity is made clear through dialogue. Contrariwise, on the following page a friend, "tells you he has seen a photograph of you on the Internet and he wants to know why you look so angry… Do you look angry? You wouldn't have said so. Obviously this unsmiling image of you makes him uncomfortable, and he needs you to account for that?" (46). In this passage, neither "your" racial identity nor gender are made clear. Thus, identification of the second-person must operate within the space of assumption. When she ends the passage asking, "If you were smiling, what would that tell him about your composure in his imagination?" Rankine extends this question to the reader.

In an interview with Guernica Magazine, Rankine explains part of the intention behind the ambiguity of the second-person. On an ethical level, Rankine decided against the first person "because some of the situations were mine and some belonged to other people… I didn't own them, factually" (Sharma). Further, Rankine explains that the second person "disallowed the reader from knowing immediately how to position themselves… obviously [the reader] will assume – 'She's black, he must be white,' etc. – but I wanted those assumptions to be made" (Sharma). Rather than invocate a specific addressee, Rankine's "you" creates an environment. As Rankine describes, "I think of the described dynamics as a fluid negotiation" and the second-person pronoun brings the reader near to the experience whether or not it feels identifiable. If "poetry has no investment in anything besides openness," the second-person pronoun challenges a distinct positioning within dialogue (Sharma).

"You" & Physicality: A Small Place

Though who "you" are and how the second-person is used differs between *A Small Place* and *Citizen,* and within individual texts, both Kincaid and Rankine emphasize a second-person physicality. As mentioned earlier, this physicality refers to the emphasis on bodily, sensory experience within each narrative. The question might then be, if physicality is an important aspect of either text, why couldn't it also be focalized in a more conventional first-person or third-person narrative? Though it is true that this emphasis is not dependent upon voicing, I argue that the nature of the second-person voice creates a space that intrinsically enhances narrative physical experience.

In his earlier mentioned book, *Unnatural Voices,* Brian Richardson describes that the second-person is "unsettling," "threatens ontological stability," and is "epistemologically a more dubious pronoun than the traditional 'I' or 'she'" (Richardson 20). Again, though he writes within a fiction narrative context, his analysis aligns even with non-fiction works such as Kincaid's and Rankine's. The reason for this instability is the seeming implication that "you" could refer to both the reader and the central character. Thus, the nature of the second-person demands positioning. Richardson describes this positioning as, "a continuous dialectic of identification and distancing… as the reader is alternately drawn closer to and further away from the protagonist" (21). Regardless of how close or how far away the narrative "you" feels, the second-person demands a closeness, a nearness between the "you" and the reader. Within the realm of physicality, identification with the "you" depends upon imagining oneself as the protagonist: Can I imagine myself acting like "you," moving like "you," experiencing what "you" experience? Again, regardless of the answer, the nature of the address already facilitates an approximation of physical experience. This nearness between text and reader is essential in

both texts as it combats a readerly distancing, critiquing the notion that colonization and racism only affect certain people, a certain place, and is only a certain people's responsibility.

In *A Small Place,* Kincaid begins with a hypothesis: "If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see" (Kincaid 3). Within this hypothesis, Kincaid almost invites the reader into the space of the second-person, into the space of her "small place." Once establishing this connection, Kincaid delineates what you see and feel the moment you land on the island. Her sentence structure is declarative with every action revolving around the tourist: "You disembark… You go through customs… You emerge from customs… You see a man… You immediately think… You are driven… You are feeling wonderful" (Kincaid 4, 5). Kincaid describes objects in the possessive: "your bags… your driver… your own books…" (5, 7), and even nature serves to please as you enjoy "a sun that is your personal friend" (13). In conjunction with physical movement, she tracks "your" thoughts, concerning "What a beautiful island Antigua is" (3). However, even this beauty is a subjective concept: it is beautiful precisely because it is "more beautiful than any of the other islands you have seen" (3). Thus, the physical experience, the natural qualities of Antigua are all filtered through this second-person.

Antigua is seen by "you," consumed by "you." By placing the second-person at the center of experience, Kincaid emphasizes the inherent self-absorption of tourism. People and place are meant to be ingested: "You are looking out the window (because you want to get your money's worth)" (6). In her article, "Reading and Being Read: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* as Literary Agent," Lesley Larkin equates this tourism to a reading practice. This "tourist-reading," according to Larkin, is selective and "productive discourse" constructing "not only the tourist site and its inhabitants but also the tourist himself" (Larkin).

However, if the tourist reads Antigua, Kincaid uses the second-person pronoun to reverse this structure and read the tourist. Within her charged language in these opening paragraphs, especially by representing the tourist's high-tempo physical movement, Kincaid focuses primarily on what the tourist sees and does not see of Antigua. Through this selective readership, Kincaid presents her critique of tourist consumption.

In the middle of the essay, Kincaid presents a tonic volta: "The thing you have always suspected about yourself the minute you become a tourist is true: A tourist is an ugly human being" (Kincaid 14). After assuming the tourist gaze in what Claudia Marquis describes as a "ventriloquizing" voice, Kincaid gazes directly upon the tourist with an unfiltered anger. In the span of a sentence, she begins with the tourist's experience and ends with the Antiguan's:

> An ugly thing, that is what you are when you become a tourist, an ugly, empty thing, a stupid thing, a piece of rubbish pausing here and there to gaze at this and taste that, and it will never occur to you that the people who inhabit the place in which you have just paused cannot stand you, that behind their closed doors they laugh at your strangeness (you do not look the way they look); the physical sight of you does not please them; you have bad manners (it is their custom to eat their food with their hands; you try eating their way, you look silly); they do not like the way you speak (you have an accent); they collapse helpless from laughter, mimicking the way they image you must look as you carry out some everyday bodily function. (17)

In a single sentence, "you" are no longer the subject; "you" are the object of attention and comparison. By disrupting the distribution of agency, Kincaid disrupts the privilege of the tourist. The important physicality to consider is not only the tourist's, but those of the driver, the resort workers, the people working on the very beach upon which "you" bathe.

Though powerful on its own, this accusation is made even more destabilizing when succeeding more than ten pages describing an immersive, physical experience. Prior to this sentence, "you" have been the narrative protagonist. Kincaid describes the cars you will see, the building you will pass, how, "you see yourself lying on the beach… taking a walk on that

beach… eating some delicious, locally grown food" (13). By fully describing the physical nature of tourism within a second-person narrative, Kincaid seems to instill a sense of experiential knowledge within the reader. After moving "you" around and giving "you" an experience, Kincaid challenges a reader disassociation from the second-person. Only after establishing this nearness does she challenge your privilege, shifting "you" from gazing upon Antigua to Antigua gazing upon "you." Even in her criticism, Kincaid emphasizes a physical manifestation of the second-person. She describes, "you are… a person at home in your own skin… in your own house…on your street, your church, in community activities" (15, 16). By amplifying the second-person pronoun's ability to establish a physical, experiential knowledge with the reader, Kincaid both illustrates the consumer nature of tourism and challenges a disassociation when she critiques "you."

"You" & Physicality: Citizen

Like Kincaid, Rankine emphasizes physical experience in the second-person specifically as it regards to the bodily memory of racism. *Citizen* is oft cited as a "timely" book, dealing with racial injustice and the personal politics of anti-blackness in a potent cultural context. Its 2014 publication concurred with the protests in Ferguson, Missouri against police brutality and the exoneration of officials who had killed Michael Brown, an unarmed black man. Emerging at a central time for the Black Lives Matter movement, Rankine's work addresses racism as it relates to contemporary high-visibility issues including Hurricane Katrina, Serena Williams's career, and the murder of Trayvon Martin. However, Rankine juxtaposes these passages with stories of individual incidences of racism – nebulous in both exact time and space – which might be classified as micro-aggressions. Even *Citizen*'s cover presents the complexity between the macro

and micro. Within a contemporary context, the photograph of a shorn black hoodie against a stark white background might first invoke memories of Trayvon Martin even though David Hammon created the artwork in 1993. The poet Holly Bass posits that this juxtaposition of connotation, "seems to be part of Rankine's conceit: What passes as news for some (white) readers is simply quotidian lived experience for (black) others" (Bass). Then, it is perhaps telling that *Citizen* does not begin with a historic incident of racial violence, of anger, of sorrow, of injustice. Rather, *Citizen* begins with its aftermath. Rankine begins her lyric with a depiction of fatigue: "When you are alone and too tired even to turn on any of your devices, you let yourself linger in a past stacked among your pillows" (Rankine 5). In this opening sentence, Rankine does not explicitly allude to the weight of racism. Rather, she portrays the question: what does it mean to feel tired? To feel lonely? In her opening lines, she thus implies that whatever events are to follow incur a physical manifestation and bodily consequence.

The first story Rankine presents describes "you" as a twelve-year-old girl in Catholic school. She writes, "the girl sitting in the seat behind asks you to lean to the right during exams so she can copy what you have written" (5). After the act, "she tells you you smell good and have features more like a white person" to portray presumed gratitude. "She thinks she is thanking you for letting her cheat and feels better cheating from an almost white person" (5). Whoever is telling the story, whomever the "you" addresses, this moment is physically remembered. The act of leaning, the Catholic girl's "waist-length brown hair," the fact that "you smell good," all linger longer than the girl's name which "you can't remember" (5). Further, by placing this text of an adolescent school interaction right after a text of being too tired to get out of bed, Rankine establishes a connection between memory and physicality. Hurt stays in the body past the point of temporal immediacy.

Just as Kincaid emphasizes the physical consumerism of tourism, Rankine emphasizes the physical experience of racism. Rather than remain a cerebral question or emotional pain, the experience of racism is intrinsically tied to the body. This relationship between racism and physicality continues throughout *Citizen's* opening pages. As Rankine writes, racism provokes a bodily response: "Certain moments send adrenaline to the heart, dry out the tongue, and clog the lungs. Like thunder they drown you in sound, no, like lightning they strike you across the larynx" (7). Even as the text accumulates into a larger anthology of racial aggression, Rankine establishes her tone with a grounded physicality. Regarding racism, "an unsettled feeling keeps the body front and center" (8).

Rankine additionally writes of silent solidarity, a solidarity that exists within collective consciousness and physicality rather than in speech. One of *Citizen's* first representations of this occurs on the subway. In the passage, a mother demands a stranger apologize for knocking over her son, "to look at the boy and apologize" (Rankine 17). The story does not end with an apology and the exact response is nebulous. However, "a group of men began to stand behind me like a fleet of bodyguards, she says, like newly found uncles and brothers" (17). This moment, rather than the apology, is "the beautiful thing" (17). If the opening paragraph of Rankine's text depicts the fear of being lonely, the paralysis of being alone, here she introduces the emboldening power of being understood. Further, Rankine's exploration of physical memory aligns with the term, "bodyguard." It is as if these men are not only physically protecting the mother and her child, but also guarding the type of memory that manifests itself into the body. If as Rankine states, "the body is the threshold across which each objectionable call passes into consciousness," bodies can in turn offer alternative memory (28).

By joining the second-person's qualities of reader address with a heightened emphasis on physical manifestations of both tourism and racism, Kincaid and Rankine position their texts as existing within a bodily space. In relation to physicality, both Kincaid and Rankine raise a larger question of movement as it relates to postcolonial and subaltern identity.

"You" & Movement: A Small Place

Both Kincaid and Rankine build upon physical experience within the second-person voice to address a larger theme of movement. When describing movement, I refer to how and where the second-person character moves throughout each book. As with an analysis of physicality, analyzing a character's textual movement is a large, all-encompassing theme which is far from specific to second-person narration. However, there are two primary reasons why I find discussion on character movement central to both *A Small Place* and *Citizen.* The first is the importance of movement to the experience of both colonization and racism which Kincaid and Rankine present. Thus, how the second-person moves not only describes a character but also illuminates a broader, plural history. The second reason is that each text's emphasis on "your" movement combats a narrative of colonization and racism as confined to a certain space or time. Both *A Small Place* and *Citizen* encompass a variety of contexts. Kincaid's essays describe both the past and present, individual memory and national history. Rankine's lyric almost acts as an anthology of experiences in which "you" represent various people's stories. Within this contextual variety, the second-person voice is a unifying device, forging a relationship between different spaces. And as earlier mentioned, the second-person address inherently challenges a distancing between reader and text. Thus, as the second-person moves, the reader must also move.

The essence of movement within these texts is its relationship to memory. How does contemporary movement relate to historical movement; how does individual movement relate to a lifetime of movement? Thus, the second-person address does not only engage a momentary positioning but rather an accumulation of bodily experience. Within this accumulation, Kincaid and Rankine challenge the discourse of colonization and racism as systems singular to a specific space or time. Rather, they are systems that do not, and have not, stopped moving.

As previously mentioned, *A Small Place* opens with a constantly moving second-person character. Being that "you" are a tourist, Kincaid describes a tour of Antigua as "you" move across the island. At the end of her opening essay, Kincaid directly relates the freedom of movement to the aspect of privilege. The desire to travel itself is not what angers Kincaid. This desire is universal: "Every native would like a rest, every native would like a tour" (Kincaid 18). The tourist identity is not inherently negative, "for every native of every place is a potential tourist, and every tourist is a native of somewhere" (18). Rather, Kincaid's critique of tourism stems from its inequality as "most natives in the world cannot go anywhere" because "they are too poor to escape the reality of their lives; and they are too poor to live properly in the place where they live…" (18, 19). The movement of tourism is essentially a matter of privilege. Who gets to move? Who has the means to leave their home? As Kincaid ends her section, "when the natives see you… they envy your ability to turn their own banality and boredom into a source of pleasure for yourself" (19).

Further, Kincaid uses an emphasis on movement to relate this "you" with the larger history of colonialism. This is most evident in her second essay, when Kincaid shifts from a contemporary tourist context to a historical context of colonization. While the first essay reads from the tourist's point of view – tracing footsteps, thoughts, movement – the second begins

from Kincaid's point of view as she illustrates her own childhood growing up in colonial Antigua.

Occupying a space similar to a memoir, Kincaid's second essay seems to initially disassociate itself from a tourist, second-person figure. Rather, the primary characters in this section are Kincaid's "I" and a historic "they," used to represent foreign, colonial figures in Antigua. Kincaid delineates examples of English colonization in Antigua and their physical manifestations. The British naval captain Thomas Warner declared Antigua a British colony in 1632. Only on 1 November 1981, after 350 years of British colonial rule, did Antigua gain official independence. Kincaid published *A Small Place* a mere seven years after this independence. She writes of streets named after men including, "Horatio Nelson... Rodney.. Hood… Hawkins… and Drake" (24). She defines these men – in England lauded as naval heroes – as "English maritime criminals," and in this categorization makes clear she is telling her story, not England's. Kincaid describes the imperialist Government House, Barclays Bank and its genesis in the slave trade, and the North American built Mill Reef Club wanting to enjoy Antigua while simultaneously vilifying Antiguans. Woven into the stitch of everyday life are her primary school headmistress, "hired through the colonial office in England," holidays for Queen Victoria's birthday, and Princess Margaret's tour of the Caribbean (25). In these examples, Kincaid illuminates the historical mechanism of using Antigua as a space to promote imperial pleasure and reputation through the mechanism of colonization. And throughout these descriptions, Kincaid uses the pronoun "they" to describe the English colonizers. However, the pronoun shifts mid-essay, fraying the distinction between contemporary tourists and the third-person colonizer.

After invoking the second-person in interrogative interjection, Kincaid pointedly asks, "Have you ever wondered to yourself why it is that all people like me seem to have learned from you is how to imprison and murder each other, how to govern badly, and how to take the wealth of our own country and place it in Swiss bank accounts?" (34). The text's content, in its implications of political and economic power, seems to address the English colonizer, those who once governed Antigua. However, by shifting the pronoun from "they" to "you," Kincaid blurs the distinction between the colonizer and the contemporary tourist. Again, the "you" resumes its active, subject-verb sentence structure utilized in the first essay. They are the primary protagonist: "You came. You took things that were not yours… You murdered people. You robbed people. You opened your own banks and you put our money in them" (35). If previously, the distance of a third-person pronoun allowed Kincaid's tourist to voyeuristically listen to the history of colonization, its removal implicates the tourist within the story. Tourism participates in the vestiges of colonialism: the desire to consume, to utilize, to maintain. Additionally, in the paragraph prior to this pronoun shift, Kincaid argues that Antiguans did not consider racism as a factor in colonization. Rather, they deemed it a matter of ill manners; colonizers were crazy, puzzling, but "not racists" (34). Yet, operating in hindsight Kincaid makes racism clear. Consequently, the connection between the colonizing "they" and the tourist "you" is the racist denominator, one that permeates the present.

In forging a relationship between this "they" and "you," Kincaid fundamentally associates tourism with colonization through the current of movement itself. Speaking to the history of colonization, Kincaid charges, "There must have been some good people among you, but they stayed home. And that is the point. That is why they are good. They stayed home" (35). This parallels her first essay in which she describes that a tourist leaving home makes "a leap

from being that nice blob just sitting like a boob in your amniotic sac of the modern experience to being a person visiting heaps of death and ruin and feeling alive and inspired at the sight of it" (16). Within this privilege of movement, Kincaid draws a direct lineage between the power structure of colonization and tourism. The international tourist journey to leave home and consume Antigua for personal pleasure finds its reflection in British colonization. Further, Natasha Lightfoot illuminates the importance of movement as related to colonization in Antigua, a "small place."

In her book *Troubling Freedom,* Lightfoot writes that during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, "Antiguan enslaved people moved around the island under slightly less duress than their counterparts elsewhere" (Lightfoot 22). This was in part due to "the steadily declining numbers of white residents in Antigua… combined with the lack of financial resources for effective public policing" (22). Because Antigua is only fourteen miles long and eleven miles wide, physical closeness blurred the lines between the principal town, St. John's, and the surrounding countryside. However, cruel imperial force countered this relative mobility. Despite the fact that "enslaved people moved about the town with a remarkable degree of freedom," St. John's itself, "not only bore the signs of slaves' constant labor but also featured sites expressly intended for their punishment and torture" (41). Though slaves escaping plantation labor formed maroon bands during the late 1600s, Antigua's smallness, coupled with its mostly flat and arid land, enabled white settlers to recapture many groups (28). These examples of how colonization revolved around an axis of movement speak to Kincaid's critique of "you": Who gets to move where? For Kincaid, the self-serving privilege of the freedom of movement without regard for the indigenous population links colonization and tourism in Antigua.

"You" & Movement: Citizen

Similar to *A Small Place,* the second-person character's movement in *Citizen* combats a relegation of racism as an experience or entity that only exists within a certain time or space. While the aspect of physical movement in *A Small Place* highlights the neocolonialism of tourism, movement in *Citizen* heightens a feeling of displacement and accumulation. If in Kincaid's first essay, the second-person pronoun tracks the tourist's movement, Rankine's "you" exists in spatial fragments. Each passage of *Citizen* propels forward, often without clear resolution. Not only is racism a physical experience, it is also an accumulated physical memory.

In *A Small Place,* Kincaid writes within the context of Antigua, describing the island and its physical features. Contrariwise, Rankine does not contain *Citizen* to any certain space or time. For example, in *Citizen's* first section, the contexts of racist encounters shift rapidly. The first incidence occurs, as previously described, when "you" attend an all-girls Catholic school at twelve-years old (Rankine 5). Next, "you" remember a close friend "who early in your friendship, when distracted, would call you by the name of her black housekeeper" (7). Then "you" are in a car, remembering a colleague telling you "his dean is making him hire a person of color when there are so many great writers out there" (10). These incidences continue, moving from a United Airlines flight to a lunch on campus, from "your" front porch to a Starbucks, from a subway car to a therapist appointment. The underlying theme across these differing spaces is that in each instance, someone is racist to "you" or "you" witness racism.

This constant movement represents the impartial physical space of racism. The racial aggressions in *Citizen* happen regardless of space or time, no matter where you move, often without resolution. Moments of intimacy or community– whether a therapy session (18) or a book reading (48) – become contexts for hostility. For Rankine, the constant movement between

environments encapsulates the, "surprise of the intimate, or the surprise of the ordinary" (Sharma). By recounting racism as it occurs in quotidian spaces emphasizes the feeling of constant vulnerability, and in turn, fatigue.

Among the aforementioned passages, perhaps the most physically intimate experience is when Rankine describes "your" neighbor calling the police to "your" home. Despite assuring the neighbor that "your friend, whom he has met, is babysitting" for you, "he's called the police on… a menacing black guy casing both your homes" (Rankine 13). "You hear the sirens through the speakerphone" and return home to the neighbor apologizing to both "you" and "your friend" (13). In this passage, "you" are not the direct victim of the neighbor's racism; he has called the cops on the friend, not on "you." Yet the relatively banal act of asking a friend to "pick up your child from school" results in four police cars at "your" home (15). Racism, and its ensuing anxiety and danger, moves into the intimate space of "your" home. By writing through the second-person, Rankine amplifies this individual vulnerability. Further, her use of the present tense in conjunction with the second-person emphasizes the relentlessness of racism.

In the passage "Making Room," "you" are in a New York subway. Rankine describes a woman deciding to stand "all the way to Union Station" though there is an empty seat next to a seated man (131). "You" rush to take the empty seat as a form of resistance against "the woman's fear, a fear she shares" with other passengers (131). Rather than emphasize the singularity of this experience, Rankine's use of the present tense – "You sit," "You fill," "You wonder" (131) – keeps the moment from becoming isolated. Rather, the tense of the verbs implies an iterative nature. It is happening now, again and again. This temporal tension, between the momentary and repetitive, occurs in Rankine's descriptions as well. She writes of "Union Station," of the green-grey of her sleeve coat, details which seem to describe a specific

interaction in time. However, she juxtaposes this specificity with the line, "You sit next to the man on the train, bus, in the plane, waiting room, anywhere he could be forsaken" (131). The familiarity of the event does not reduce its singularity. This man is many men, this journey many journeys. Thus, the use of the present tense causes the story to exist within the space of repetition.

The physical movement of Rankine's subject leads to a "feeling of accumulation" (Sharma). Rankine states that this collection of moments attempts to create the "feeling of saturation," of racism affecting the body cumulatively (Sharma). Though each incidence is symptomatic of anti-blackness at large, they are singularly felt and collectively remembered. As Rankine writes, "each moment is like this – before it can be known, categorized as similar to another thing and dismissed, it has to be experienced, it has to be seen" (9). Just as Rankine uses the second-person pronoun to emphasize the physicality of racism, she also uses it to emphasize racism as bodily memory. In response to the question on how the stories in *Citizen* were collected, Rankine explained that they were "a collection in a sense that they were collected in my body" (Frassica). Regarding the accumulation of experience, the constant displacement, "You can't put the past behind you. It's buried in you; it's turned your flesh into its own cupboard… Who did what to whom on which day? Who said that? She said what? What did he just do? Did she really just say that?" (63). The ceaseless movement of the second-person illuminates the fatigue of racism. With the second-person, Rankine elevates the intimacy of this physical movement. Because Rankine describes "you" moving from place to place, she challenges a disassociation from a reader experiencing this movement alongside the second-person.

"You" & Stillness

In analyzing the second-person voice in relation to physicality and movement, I have been generally analyzing instances in which "you" act with narrative agency. What do "you" feel, where do "you" go, and how do these qualities facilitate a reader-text closeness? However, neither Kincaid nor Rankine employ the second-person voice in a single manner throughout their respective texts and consequently, "you" do not maintain a constant level of movement. The question then becomes, if Kincaid and Rankine illuminate themes of identity and power through "your" movement, what does it mean for both authors to make "you" stillness? In this section, I describe this stillness in two primary moments: when the second-person as a narrative device shifts from being active agent to stationary audience, and when the second-person as a character pauses. My discussion of second-person stillness *A Small Place* will largely focus on the former, and my discussion of *Citizen* will largely focus on the latter. Though Kincaid and Rankine utilize second-person stillness differently, within either manifestation, both present stillness as a counter narrative to oppression.

"You" & Stillness: A Small Place

This section on stillness began primarily as an attempt to integrate analysis of Kincaid's third essay in *A Small Place*. Compared to the opening essays, the third not only decreases the second-person's narrative activity but also the overall frequency of its invocation. Rather than dismiss this change as an anomaly, contextualizing it as a progression from earlier sections encourages a dynamic reading of the second-person. What does it mean for Kincaid to begin with "you" as protagonist only to later relegate "you" as infrequent addressee? In his article, "Why You Can't Speak: Second-Person Narration, Voice, and a New Model for Understanding

Narrative," Matt DelConte defines the second person narrative as, "any narration that designates its protagonist by a second person pronoun. The protagonist will usually be the sole focalizer, and is generally the work's narratee as well." While here, DelConte works within the context of fictional narrative, I think his definitions of narration are useful even in the context of a non-fiction text like *A Small Place.*

As described, "you" in Kincaid's opening essay is an active agent. Kincaid describes "your" movements and "you" inform the narrative action. In the second essay, though the frequency of the "you" diminishes, "you" still end as an active character. Though the second-person inhabits a space between interrogation and agency, Kincaid still eventually attributes movement to "you." For example: "You murdered people. You imprisoned people" (35). The third essay is decidedly different not only because "you" are much less frequently addressed, but also because when "you" are addressed, "you" are not active. Contrasting the previous sections, "you" do not initiate, dictate, nor describe. The responsibility of the verb is now "mine," or Kincaid's.

In summary, Kincaid's third essay depicts her return to post-independence Antigua as an adult. Rather than assuming a tourist or historic view, Kincaid describes a present-tense journey through Antigua. In it, Kincaid bemoans the dilapidated library and the lack of restoration efforts, contemplates Antigua's relationship with the Japanese car industry and Syrian and Lebanese economic presence on the island. She recounts her mother challenging the Minister of Culture and spends almost two pages examining a postage stamp scandal involving the uninhabited island of Redonda. Interwoven in the specific are sections describing "the people in a small place" as a larger conception. For example, Kincaid writes that "the people in a small place… cultivate small events," "cannot give a complete account of events" (53). And

throughout the section, Kincaid significantly decreases her invocation of the second-person, even writing several pages without addressing "you."

As an individual section, the third essay could be described as a first-person narrative. This is an Antigua after the colonizer has left and without the implication of the tourist presence. Rather, Kincaid individually attempts to reconcile Antigua's colonial history with the fractured, and to an extent self-inflicted, current reality. When "you" are mentioned, it is only in the space of occasional reflexive questioning. When Kincaid writes, "but let me just tell you something about ministers of culture" (49) or "and so again, can you see…?" (46), you are not necessary as a narrative agent but rather exhibit no clear use other than occupying the space of address. Essentially, "you" are brought to a place of stillness.

I argue that this stillness does not operate only within the context of the third essay, but represents a progressive re-centering of the text as a whole. The stillness of Kincaid's "you" comes after essays that include incessant invocation of the second-person. In her first two essays, she confronts "you," interrogates "you," and shifts "your" gaze. Though challenging and unforgiving - for example, Kincaid describing you as "an ugly thing" or categorizing "you" as murderers - "you" remain an active pronoun. Thus, Kincaid rendering "you" inactive in the third essay is a destabilizing choice. After being so heavily involved in the narrative action, what does it mean to be stripped of this physicality and movement? If "you" are no longer an active agent, what do Kincaid's personal reflections mean to "you" or why must "you" listen to this?

In her book, *On Giving an Account of Oneself,* Judith Butler examines Nietzsche, Adorno, Hegel, and Adriana Caverero among others and emphasizes the importance of address. She argues, "No account takes place outside the structure of address, even if the addressee remains implicit and unnamed, anonymous and unspecified" (Butler 37). Referring to Cavarero's

text, *Relating Narratives.* Butler explains, "If I have lost the conditions of address, if I have no 'you' to address, then I have lost 'myself.' In her view, one can tell an autobiography only to another, and one can reference an 'I' only in relation to a 'you': without the 'you,' my own story becomes impossible (32). Applied to Kincaid's third essay, then, the responsibility of the second-person is to occupy the space of the address in order for Kincaid to give an account of herself and of Antigua. When Kincaid writes, "But let me just tell you something…" or asks, "Have you ever heard…?," "you" are only addressed to service Kincaid's story. The second-person tourist is no longer the narrative center; Kincaid is the center.

This destabilization of second-person voice reflects the earlier discussion from *The Empire Writes Back* of imperial, colonial powers assuming the space of the center whenever describing a colonized nation like Antigua. Though the content, the description of her second-person figures criticized these powers, Kincaid's initial invocation of "you" as embedded within the narrative could be interpreted as maintaining the tourist "you" as the text's center. However, by the second-person from action to audience, from agency to address, Kincaid disrupts this form and complicates whether "you" – the tourist, the colonizer – were ever the center of narrative voice at all. Was this story always about "you," or were "you" only acting in service of a greater "I"?

"You" & Stillness: Citizen

Parallel to Kincaid, Rankine introduces a second-person stillness as a challenge to power. While in *A Small Place,* this stillness reflects the vulnerability of address, *Citizen* expands this argument by presenting stillness as a function of both personal resistance and communal solidarity. Further, Rankine directly relates the tension between movement and stillness to the

tension between the first-person and second-person, and extends an invitation and a challenge to remain still.

In *Citizen,* within the context of racism as physical vulnerability and displacement, Rankine extends an invitation to dwell. Beyond the second-person voice, this stillness relates directly to the form of the lyric. In an interview with Guernica Magazine, Rankine states that, "With poetry you can stay in a moment for as long as you want. Poetry is about metaphor, about a thing standing in for something else. It's the thing that opens out to something else. What that something else is changes for readers. So what's on the page—it falls away (Sharma)." Through her use of the second-person, Rankine amplifies this feature to stay in a moment, regardless of how familiar "you" are.

For those who relate with Rankine's "you," Rankine presents this stillness as a response to erasure. In an early passage, Rankine describes an instance in which a colleague, "tells you his dean is making him hire a person of color when there are so many great writers out there," She continues by introducing the term John Henryism. "John Henryism" describes "people exposed to stresses stemming from racism," and the medical problems from "trying to dodge the buildup of erasure" (11). According to Duke University researchers, John Henryism – taking its name from the folklore hero who worked himself to death – is a coping style, its hallmark being an intense desire to succeed (*'John Henryism' Key to Understanding Coping, Health | Duke Health*). Rankine ends her paragraphing stating, "You hope by sitting in silence you are bucking the trend [John Henryism]" (Rankine 11).

This moment of silence seems to encapsulate the overall implication of *Citizen* as an anthology of experience. "You" sit in silence, rather than achieving, rather than dodging. Rather than dodge these moments of erasure, Rankine transcribes them, acknowledging their pain and

reasserting "your" presence within them. However, I would like to distinguish this dwelling from the intention of re-opening trauma or exploiting it. Rather the stillness of the moment, the stillness of "sitting" and remembering speaks back to erasure. Through the second-person voice, Rankine reaffirms "your" presence combating erasure. Further, because the second-person voice blurs the distinction between narrative character and the reader, the "you" pronoun becomes a communal invitation, a space for plurality. Should the second-person figure feel familiar, its voice reasserts communal presence.

However, whether or not a reader identifies with the second-person, the nature of address facilitates a closeness with the text. Here, Rankine presents stillness as a response of solidarity. As earlier mentioned, the nature of the second-person voice encourages a nearness between text and reader regardless of who "you" are. Within this nearness, Rankine challenges the impulse to distance a moment by claiming it is meant for someone else.

In her article, "'I'll Tell You Something': Reader-Address in Louise Glück's Ararat Sequence," Jane Hedley summarizes differing views on the relationship between the reader and the poet. According to the theorist Northrop Frye, the lyric is a genre of self-communion and if the second-person is invoked, it is as an "interlocutor" for this dialogue. Poetry is "overheard" (Hedley). Contrariwise, the critic Helen Vendler states that the lyric is "an invitation to dwell… in 'the innermost chamber of another person's mind'" (Hedley). The lyric thus presumes, "that the reader resembles the writer enough to step into the writer's shoes and speak the lines the writer has written as though they were the reader's own," and is universal (Hedley). W. R. Johnson presents a third option of the lyric as dialogue between the poet and the reader, because lyrics are "implicitly social" (Hedley). However, in its invocation of the second-person, *Citizen* complicates each definition.

Regarding the notion of stillness, I would like to engage with Vendler's definition of the lyric. For Vendler, the notion of the lyric as being overheard fosters disinterest and voyeurism. Rather than overhearing a speaker, Vendler's definition of the lyric address implies the "words of the speaker become my own words." The lyric thus presumes, "that the reader resembles the writer enough to step into the writer's shoes and speak the lines the writer has written as though they were the reader's own," and is universal (Hedley).

Rankine's use of the second-person aligns with Vendler's proposed lyric invitation "to dwell" (Hedley). By presenting a collection of moments of experienced racism, Rankine invites the reader into a space of feeling. Rankine writes many of these anecdotes without further analysis. For example, Rankine uses four sentences to describe racism as it is experienced in an airplane. A mother offers to sit in the middle so the girl does not have to sit next to "you," because "you" are not what she expected (Rankine 12). The rest of the page is left empty, as if the white space visually demands contemplation. As with the aforementioned passage on John Henryism, "you" refuse to run away from "the buildup of erasure," rather choosing to sit in silence (11). For Rankine, this "sitting," this "dwelling," is an act of resistance. And whoever "you" are, Rankine clearly asks, "Anyway, sit down. Sit here alongside" (71). Whether certain experiences may be too familiar or discomforting, embodied or foreign, Rankine's use of the second-person is an invitation into the experienced moment.

However, this act of dwelling does not necessitate universality as Vendler presumes. Firstly, Rankine's "you" emphasizes racism as a physical experience, a bodily memory. This presents an impasse to the proposition, "to step into the writer's shoes and speak the lines the writer has written" (Hedley). If racism can be "locked in and coded on a cellular level," no amount of projected imagination by those who have not felt its pain can substitute its experience.

For Rankine, the "you" is an invitation into "the innermost chamber of another person's mind," but not an invitation to claim an unfamiliar experience. To explore this duality, I would like to turn to Rankine's section on Serena Williams.

Rankine's section on Serena Williams constitutes the second section of *Citizen.* In both content and form, it is distinct from much of the text. While most of the personal stories Rankine presents are at most a single page, this section spans fifteen. Neither a recollection nor a poetic interjection, this section presents the history of racist mistreatment towards Serena Williams and includes "your" response. Rather than presenting an experience of racism alone, Rankine's "you," though less frequently invocated than in previous sections, offers critical interjection.

The section begins by introducing the art tutorials of Hennessy Youngman, a performance persona assumed by Jayson Musson. Youngman suggests that black artists commodify their anger for their art, and Rankine criticizes his lack of addressing the real anger against the daily accumulation of racism. these opening paragraphs, Rankine's voice of social commentary is clear and frequent. From here, Rankine introduces "you," watching Serena Williams at the 2009 US Open Final, "overcome by a rage" in response to the unfair rulings of the umpire. Rankine presents the history of Williams's mistreatments, presenting dates and journalistic descriptions. There is the 2004 US Open, quotations from commentators, names of competitors and umpires, $82,500 fines. Rankine's "you" observes and analyzes these details. "You" are watching the match; "you" are the "viewer" (27). In this sense, Rankine's second-person reflects an invitation to observation. "You" can be a plural entity. However, "you" are also singular. Williams's "rage" is one "you recognize and have been taught to hold at a distance for your own good" (25). As "you" watch Williams, "you" understand her because, "every look, every comment, every bad call blossoms out of history, through her, onto you" (32). The second-

person becomes a conduit to understand “how racism feels” (30). But Rankine’s “you” is not universal. It does not necessitate, nor does it ask for resemblance. “You” is specific. “You” understand the history of the “built up through experience and the quotidian struggles against dehumanization every brown or black person lives simply because of skin color” (24). If the “you” is familiar, it gives voice to a bodily memory. If it is not, Rankine’s “you” facilitates solidarity, not identity assumption. Rankine asks “you” to dwell, not to impose.

Chapter 2: "I"

Just as how an understanding of stillness enhances an understanding of movement, I argue that an understanding of the first-person enhances an understanding of the second-person in both *A Small Place* and *Citizen.* In the previous chapter, I attempted to illustrate how both Kincaid and Rankine use the second-person voice as a device to illustrate and critique hierarchies of institutionalized privilege and subjection. Within texts which prominently address "you," what then is the meaning of an "I"? Again, *A Small Place* and *Citizen* are distinct in who the first-person represents and how often it is used but both texts use the first-person – and its implicit relationship with "you" – to access questions of memory and ownership as it relates to subaltern experience.

Though the term was not his own, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism – truth emerging from dialogue – crystallizes in both Kincaid and Rankine's work. In his analysis of Bakhtin's dialogism, literary scholar Michael Holquist explains: "Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole – there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (Holquist 426). Dialogism stems from heteroglossia, "the social diversity of speech types" or the "multiplicity of social voices" whose "links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized) inform meaning (263). While Bakhtin viewed the novel as the form which could most fully represent dialogic truth, both *A Small Place* – weaving together memoir, essay, and criticism – and *Citizen* – juxtaposing personal story and criticism within a greater lyric – encapsulate Bakhtin's heteroglossia.

Used within the context of a second-person narrative, Bakhtin's theory of dialogism encourages the question of who the first-person is in relation to "you." If the second-person occupies the space of the address, who is the speaker? In analyzing second-person narration,

Matt DelConte argues, "that we need to think about narration not in terms of the narrator alone (a limitation of many influential studies of narrative structure) but rather in terms of the relationships among the narrator, characters, and narratee." Examining these "different relationships… offers a new understanding of the rhetorical dynamics of narrative discourse" (DelConte). Analysis of a figure – whether the "you" or the "I" – cannot exist in isolation but rather must incorporate relational dialogue. Regarding the importance of the second-person pronoun in both of these texts, I would like to explore the presence, or relative absence, of a first-person pronoun. In both texts, the "I" is not completely avoided but rather invoked to different extents. Examining the first-person will further illuminate both Kincaid and Rankine's decisions to strongly invoke the second-person pronoun.

"I": A Small Place

In *A Small Place,* Kincaid clearly self-identifies as the first-person pronoun just as she clearly identifies the tourist as the second-person pronoun. Especially given the frequent categorization of *A Small Place* as memoir or autobiography, it is fair to attribute the first-person pronoun to the Kincaid's voice. Further paralleling her use of the second-person, Kincaid does not change the identity of the first-person but rather changes the frequency of its invocation and the nature of its relationships. In this first section, I would like to focus on the progressive presence of the first-person and how this represents a shift in power.

In *A Small Place,* the changing frequency of the first-person pronoun inversely reflects the frequency of the second-person pronoun. As the movement and agency of the second-person diminishes through the text, the presence and frequency of the first-person pronoun increases. Comparing the respective opening sentences of the first three essays encapsulates these changes:

"If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see" (3).

> "The Antigua that I knew, the Antigua in which I grew up, is not the Antigua you, a tourist, would see now" (23).
>
> "And so you can imagine how I felt when, one day, in Antigua, standing on Market Street, looking up one way and down the other, I asked myself: Is the Antigua I see before me, self-ruled, a worse place than what it was when it was dominated by the bad-minded English and all the bad-minded things they brought with them?" (42).

The first essay begins with an absence of the first-person and the first time Kincaid includes the first-person pronoun is within parentheticals: "(… we Antiguans, for I am one, have a great sense of things…)" (8). This first essay, as previously described, most closely aligns with a conventional definition of a second-person narrative in which "you" are the protagonist. "You" are the axis around which action revolves. However, this positioning destabilizes in the following two essays which operate primarily in the space of Kincaid's memory. Encapsulated by its opening sentence, the second essay positions Kincaid's memory of her childhood Antigua in relation to "your" colonial, or neo-colonial, presence. She describes how every aspect of the Antigua she grew up in – the bank, the library, street names, her school – traced back to imperial England. After describing Princess Margaret's visit to Antigua and the island's reception of her "as if she were God herself," Kincaid declares, "I met the world through England, and if the world wanted to meet me it would have to do so through England" (33). Kincaid repeats this sentiment in her third essay, when describing books in St. John's library. All the books concerned, "how we met you, your right to do the things you did, how beautiful you were, are, and always will be" (42). They were, "waiting to acquaint me with you in all your greatness" (43). However, in shifting narration from emphasizing the second-person to emphasizing the

first-person, Kincaid reverses this power dynamic. Whereas "you" - the colonizer, the tourist - used "I," or Antigua, to give account of "yourself," Kincaid reverses the space of the address. "I" am making "you" listen. "Your" identity is found within "my" story.

Within the discussion of the presence or absence of the first-person pronoun lies a larger question of ownership. In discussion of Rankine's *Citizen,* the critic Andrew Epstein analyzes that the ambiguity of the second-person pronoun, "blurs the firm lines of identity, and makes the protagonist of each vignette more plural than singular" (Epstein 282). Within this space of plurality, then, to whom does each experience belong? And how is this ownership further complicated with the introduction of a first-person?

Concerning *A Small Place,* by no means does Kincaid shirk away from the space of remembrance for the sake of objectivity. Though interwoven in her essays is a history of Antigua and its colonization and its postcolonial reality, Kincaid writes her essays through the lens of individual memory. For example, when describing a colonial education which included attending a school named after a Princess of England, Kincaid does so through remembrance rather than an objective statement of facts: "How well I remember that all of Antigua turned out to see this Princess person, how every building that she would enter was repaired and painted so that it looked brand-new…" (Kincaid 33). However, the space of individuality, of ownership shifts with the dynamic relationships between Kincaid's "I" and a collective "we" or "they."

As earlier quoted, Kincaid's first use of the first-person pronoun is firmly rooted within a larger community: "…we Antiguans, for I am one…" (Kincaid 8). She again references "I' within a larger community when describing, "people like me you see walking around you in Antigua" (10). Though the essay begins within a specifically Antiguan context, describing the specific airport and landmarks among others, Kincaid ends this first section implicating a broader

tension between tourists and natives "too poor to go anywhere" (19). Individually, this first essay could be interpreted as Kincaid representing a larger community not only of Antiguans, but also of native populations around the world for whom tourism represents a historic imbalance of power. Specifically, Kincaid speaks on behalf of the experience of formerly enslaved populations, writing, "isn't that the last straw; for not only did we have to suffer the unspeakableness of slavery, but the satisfaction to be had from 'We made you bastards rich' is taken away, too" (10).

In the second essay, Kincaid again focalizes "I" through the lens of a greater "we." In the space of personal reflection, including remembering the racist doctor "when I had whooping cough and I took a turn for the worse," Kincaid positions herself within a larger Antiguan community (23). When describing perspectives about the English citizens sent to Antigua, Kincaid writes, "We thought these people were so ill-mannered… We thought they were un-Christian-like; we thought they were small-minded; we thought they were like animals… We felt superior…" (29). Her memory of colonial Antigua and its culture is a shared memory. Her relationship to England, to the colonizer, is personal but not singular. Her image of England is not "mine" but rather an England, "we were told about… the England we could never be from… the England that, no matter what we did, we could never be of" (30). Within this relationship between an "I" and a "we," Kincaid establishes a distinct Antiguan identity shaped by colonization; the first-person acts within the space of legacy and history. Thus, when Kincaid begins to interrogate "you," the colonizer, she speaks on behalf of a people. She speaks for "people like me" and in response to what "you" did to "us" (34-35). More than a memoir, Kincaid's first two essays read like a manifesto on behalf of, "the millions of people, of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland…" (31).

Contrariwise, Kincaid's third essay breaks the conjunction between the "I" and the "we." Rather than associate herself with an Antiguan community, she distinguishes herself as an individual. Rather than refer to Antigua as "us," Kincaid refers to "them." As previously written, Kincaid's third essay describes her return to a post-independence Antigua and her feelings of frustration and dissonance with her homeland. To contextualize this essay, as earlier mentioned, Kincaid has not permanently lived in Antigua since the age of 16. Having lived in the United States since 1965, Kincaid based this essay upon her experience returning to Antigua two years before the publication of *A Small Place* (Marquis). There is a distance Kincaid places between herself and her birthplace, evidenced by the distinction of pronouns. Kincaid writes, "I look at this place (Antigua), I look at these people (Antiguans)," and rather than include herself within this community she disassociates herself. At the same time Kincaid's "I" separates from a "we," the "I" also distances itself from a "you." The point of address becomes more opaque; unlike the first two essays, this section does not end with "you" or "yourself." It is the most introspective and subsequently the most individual voice in the text because Kincaid's "I" does not, and cannot, stand for a greater community speaking to a greater audience.

Judith Butler writes that, "there is no 'I' that can fully stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence, no 'I' that is not implicated in a set of conditioning moral norms, which, being norms, have a social character that exceeds a purely personal or idiosyncratic meaning" (Butler 8). In constructing her first-person voice, Kincaid illustrates this relational "I," describing the context of history, of relation to a "you" and a "they" and a place. These relations are fluid, ebbing and flowing in frequency and invocation. They mirror the way Kincaid speaks of Time in a small place and how "the division of Time into the Past, the Present, and the Future does not exist" (54). This fluidity exists within the space of personal memory and within this

memory, Kincaid asserts ownership over her individual story. Even if her "I" is not representative, even if it is intensely personal, its voice is important.

"I": Citizen

In *Citizen,* the first-person is much less present than in *A Small Place.* When Rankine does use the first-person however, it is generally in one of three manners. The first use is when recounting a certain experience. An example is the sentence, "Hey, I am standing right here, you responded, not necessarily expecting him to turn to you" (Rankine 16). The second occurs in more lyric passages in which Rankine is not describing any one specific incident. For example, Rankine writes, "don't say I if it means so little, / holds the little forming no one" (143). The third occurs in *Citizen's* final passage in which Rankine utilizes a first-person narrative form. This passage begins, "I can hear the even breathing that creates passages to dreams" (159). However, even with these three categories, Rankine's use of the first-person is decidedly more infrequent than Kincaid's. In *Citizen*, the second-person "you" is not just audience or addressee, but the primary protagonist throughout the text.

However, Kincaid's use of the first-person in *A Small Place* to assert ownership of memory does not imply that Rankine's lack of a first-person in *Citizen* causes a distancing from memory. While as previously mentioned, Rankine defines an ethical motivation for not using the first person - "because some of the situations were mine and some belonged to other people… I didn't own them, factually" (Sharma) – on a textual scale, Rankine wrestles with the inherent privilege of the first-person. In a lyric passage, Rankine describes "a monumental first person, a Brahmin first person" (Rankine 73). The "'I" has so much power; it's insane" and in its power becomes "a symbol for something. / The pronoun barely holding the person together" (71). In

order to access vulnerability, in order to be closer to the truth of the experience of racism, "drag that first person out of the social death of history, then we're kin" (72). In *Citizen,* Rankine's absence of an "I" deliberately enhances an equalizing plane of vulnerability within the space of the address. In an interview with *The Spectacle,* Rankine clarifies that *Citizen* addresses, "What does black living look like, feel like? What does American living look like, feel like? What does it mean for people of color to interact with white Americans?" (Coleman). To enter this space of feeling, to approximate its experiential truth is to enter the space of vulnerability. Thus, rather than cause distance, the second-person pronoun and the consequent vulnerability of address is essential in describing this realm of feeling. To experience racism is to feel the vulnerability of the "you," not the power of the "I."

Rankine's response to the privilege of first-person ownership consequently responds to the theory of the lyric as self-communion overheard. To reference back to her article, "'I'll Tell You Something': Reader-Address in Louise Glück's Ararat Sequence," Jane Hedley describes two other schools of thought alongside Helen Vendler's. Building upon the work of John Stuart Mill and T.S. Eliot, the theorist Northrop Frye described "the lyric" as "the genre in which the poet…. Turns his back on his audience" to commune with the self (Hedley). However, *Citizen* complicates this notion in its lack of a singular speaker. Rather, a shifting, plural "you" are the subject of most of *Citizen's* stories. Rankine also introduces a type of potency to the very nature of the first person. There is power and privilege in using, "I," undermined and attacked through racism:

> And still a world begins its furious erasure –
>
> Who do you think you are, saying I to me?
>
> You nothing.

You nobody.

You (142).

In an earlier passage, Rankine remarks listening to the philosopher Judith Butler explain "what makes language hurtful" (49). According to Butler, "We suffer from the condition of being addressable. Our emotional openness… is carried by our addressability. Language navigates this" (49). Thus, Rankine writes, "Language that feels hurtful is intended to exploit all the ways that you are present. Your alertness, your openness, and your desire to engage actually demand your presence, your looking up, your talking back, and as insane as it is, saying please" (49). By situating the subject as "you," Rankine implicitly evokes this vulnerability of address. In a later passage, Rankine intersperses poetic reflections on the "you," on the pain and confusion of racism, with shouts of, "you there, hey you" (143). Even within Frye's self-communion, "you" never cease to be called out. You are the second-person. This interspersion then asks, who can claim the "I"? Who is the one with the power to address the other, to call out names without names? For Rankine, self-communion is privilege.

Without an "I" to contextualize the "you" however, the question is not only, "Who are you?" but "Whose are you?" (Rankine 76). In the following section, I would like to analyze how this absence complicates the notion of the lyric as dialogue. Contrasting both Vendler's statements that the lyric invites the reader to step into the poet's thoughts and Northrop Frye's statements that the lyric is self-communion overheard, Hedley describes a third option. W.R. Johnson, alongside recent critic William Waters, instead sees the lyric as dialogue between the poet and the reader (Hedley). Johnson elaborates that the concept of poet-reader dialogue is a larger formation of identity: "A self without another self or selves to aggress or to admire or to solace might not – I doubt it – be truly a self; but, without a doubt, when two or more selves

come together, their near likenesses and their absolute distinctions combine to promote *knowledge* of identity, even as they engender the sense of community" (Johnson).

To an extent, *Citizen* aligns with Johnson's theory of the lyric. Especially in its juxtaposition of micro and macro events, individual memory with societal criticism, *Citizen* abides by the greater concept of Bakhtin's dialogism and heteroglossia which Johnson's theory reflects. For example, Rankine includes a story of listening to an author promote his new book. In his answer to an audience question, he posits that context creates humor, adding that something might be funny when "you were with your friends," but not if spoken "in public where black people could hear what was said" (Rankine 48). "Only then," Rankine concludes, "do you realize you are among 'the others out in public' and not among 'friends'" (48). There is an explicit dialogue between audience and author, and subtexts between "your" inner dialogue, and representation of how meaning changes in context. In another story, when "you" meet the manager after a phone conversation, he "blurts out, I didn't know you were black!" (44). "I didn't' mean to say that, he then says. / Aloud, you say. / What? He asks. / You didn't mean to say that aloud" (44). Thus, in these interactions, Rankine presents a verbalized dialogue between two speaking voices, as well as the socio-cultural dialogue that relates a specific moment to a history of racism. This is Bakhtin's heteroglossia, that, "at any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions – social, historical, meterological, physiological – that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions…" (Holquist 428).

Perhaps the most literal juxtaposition of multiple voices is Rankine's section on French footballer Zinedine Zidane at the 2006 World Cup. In her section, Rankine includes stop-motion panels of the infamous event: in the World Cup Final, and the last match of an illustrious career,

Zidane headbutted the Italian defender Marco Materazzi in response to verbal provocation, causing his elimination during the 108th minute. Woven between these panels are quotations from Zidane himself, lip readers transcribing Materazzi's words, Ralph Ellison, Maurice Blanchot, Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, William Shakespeare, Homi Bhabha, and Frederick Douglass. The words, "Black-Blanc-Beur," watermark each page. By bringing these scholars in dialogue with this moment, Rankine illustrates the multiplicity of social languages present. Though without conclusive consensus, Materazzi's insults have been presumed to be racially charged, including calling Zidane, the son of Algerian immigrants, a "terrorist" (Rankine 126). This question of identity, insult, and racism inform Rankine's selection of quotes, illustrating that neither Materazzi's nor Zidane's actions are isolated moments, but rather exist in dialogue they with historic racial oppression and historic resistance. Although "you" are not present in this section, the collection of different voices illuminates the reality of Rankine's use of the pronoun. "You" experience a moment not isolated, but rather in conversation with a bodily memory, with an historic oppression, with a future resistance. Rankine's second-person furthers the regard of specific moments as they exist in a dialogic context.

Thus, Rankine's lyric illustrates both Bakhtin and Johnson's emphasis on dialogue and truth as it arises from multiplicity. However, Johnson conceives of the lyric as, according to Hedley, "pre-eminently an 'I-you' poem – addressed to readers either directly, or by way of a human interlocutor who serves as 'symbolic mediator… between the poet and each of his readers and listeners'" (Hedley). However, *Citizen* complicates this definition with the lack of an identifiable "I." For much of the text, when the first-person pronoun does occur, it is in quotation. For example, Rankine writes, "When he turns to you he is truly surprised. / Oh my God, I didn't see you. / You must be in a hurry, you offer. / No, no, no, I really didn't see you"

(77). Another example of the "I" in quotation are her "Script-for-Situation" videos, in which Rankine transcribes the narration of her video essays. There are two more invocations of the "I," once in a lyric passage and once at the closing passage of *Citizen.* Though I will analyze both instances in further detail, it is important to note that regarding the former passage, it is a reflection of the power and privilege of the first-person pronoun rather than a clear identification of the "I" voice. Regarding the latter, the invocation of the "I" in the text's last passage still does not clarify an "I" voice present throughout the text.

In his article, "Poetic Address and Intimate Reading: The Offered Hand," William Waters analyzes the lyric "you," supporting Johnson's conception of the lyric as poet-reader dialogue. However, Waters's analysis of the "you" depends on the presence of a first-person. Thus, the lyric passages analyzed – including Keats's, "This living hand," an unpublished Rilke fragment, and Frost's, "Directive" – include a first-person voice. The article's title alludes to Keats's line, "I hold it towards you" (Waters). "You" are the addressee, the invocated, the recipient. In contrast to Waters's analysis, Rankine's second-person pronoun is not addressee, but rather subject. "You" speak, "you" move. "You" are the recipient of action as well as its instigator. Thus, the formation of the second-person identity must form independently of a first-person. Additionally, there is a lack of quotations in Rankine's text. Dialogue bleeds together so that "you," "I," what everyone says seems to amalgamate without distinction. These moments act within the confines of memory; they act within the body. In the vulnerability of racism, what remains is that "you" were addressed. What remains is that "you" were seen, "you" were feared, "you" were made terrifying.

Chapter 3: "We"

"We": A Small Place

Though both the ending of *A Small Place* and *Citizen* include similar discussions of the second-person "you" and first-person "I," I argue that the distinct tonal shift from their respective preceding sections merits separate analysis. Specifically, after describing the memory, the bodily experience of postcolonial identity and black citizenship in the space of oppression, both Kincaid and Rankine end their pieces presenting the potential for communal response. Thus, in this section, I will engage with the implication of a possessive plural "we." Though neither text necessarily ends with optimism, neither ends with stagnation. Rather, Kincaid and Rankine both end with a call to movement, to progress.

In her final essay of *A Small Place,* Kincaid complicates distinctions. In continuing comparative analysis of opening sentences, Kincaid's final essay does not begin with "you" or "I" but rather Antigua: "Antigua is beautiful. Antigua is too beautiful" (77). Yet even when describing a positive attribute such as natural beauty, Kincaid introduces a certain tension. What does it mean to be "too beautiful?" What is the distinction between either standard? This tension also reflects within Kincaid's use of the second-person voice.

Parallel to as in her third essay, Kincaid does not begin with a significant second-person presence. Rather than invoking a specific first-person, second-person, or even third-person narrative, Kincaid writes in declarative sentences describing Antigua: "No real sand on any real shore is that fine or white… no real earth is that colour brown" (78). When Kincaid does first invoke the "you," however, it remains under the guise of ubiquity. When she describes how "you are in the complete darkness of night" as the sun sets, this second-person position could potentially refer to anyone in Antigua, tourist or not (78). What begins as a broader depiction of

the island and a broader inclusivity of the second-person voice however, specifies as Kincaid continues.

In her next paragraph, Kincaid presents her brief history of Antigua. She describes its settlement "by human rubbish from Europe," arguing that "eventually, the masters left, in a kind of way; eventually the slaves were freed, in a kind of way" (80). Continuing the lack of finality of "in a kind of way," Kincaid's description of the motivation for colonization – "to satisfy their desire for wealth and power, to feel better about their own miserable experience, so that they could be less lonely" – mirrors her earlier descriptions of tourist mentality and consumption (80). Colonial mentality is not a historical event but a contemporary reality.

Yet, rather than end with this "kind of way," Kincaid ends with a challenge to concrete action. "Once you cease to be a master, once you throw off your master's yoke, you are no longer human rubbish, you are just a human being, and all the things that adds up to" (81). "You" – the vacationing tourist, the English colonizer, the maritime criminal, the economic exploiter – must throw off your yoke. Kincaid's final sentence ends, "Once they are no longer slaves, once they are free, they are no longer noble and exalted; they are just human beings" (81). Rather than offer an optimistic invocation of unity, Kincaid's final two words exemplify an equality borne of a fundamental restructuring of power. There is possibility for movement forward when the narrative center no longer prioritizes "you" but rather a collective consciousness.

<u>"We": Citizen</u>

In a shift from the rest of the text, *Citizen's* final passage begins with the first-person: "I can hear the even breathing that creates passages to dreams" (Rankine 159). For the first time in

the text, “I” recount a story. Thus, for Rankine to utilize the first-person here is, in a way, a rebuttal of erasure. This is not to say that her use of the second-person pronoun is an admission of it. To the contrary, the “you” was a vehicle for solidarity, a vehicle for emotional illustration, a vehicle for reader-address. However, in ending with the “I,” Rankine essentially brings her story back to the personal. There is a sense that this is Rankine’s story of which she is taking ownership. The “I” is a moment to place her own story, sans a second-person ambiguity, and own it.

Again, in giving an account of oneself, Rankine utilizes dialogue. In this scene, “I” talk to someone beloved who is “wrapping his arms around me” (159). In describing this person, Rankine says, “I want to interrupt to tell him her us you me I don’t know how to end what doesn’t have an ending” (159). Within this listing of pronouns – him, her, us, you, me – Rankine extends her story to an inclusive, collective “other.” This story is meant for people in every space; it will mean something to every reader. Rankine exemplifies that the space of the “you” in her text, the space of the listener, is not only reserved for those who share in pain. Rather, it is for everyone to listen.

In this story, “I” describe a woman who “pulled in and started to park her car facing mine,” only to back up and park “on the other side of the lot” (159). “I could have followed her to worry my question,” Rankine writes, but “I was expected on court” to play tennis. The content of this event rings similarly to the others in the texts as a microcosm of an action, of a silence, of a word, encapsulates the everyday weight of racism. Although a single moment, it exists within the memory of the body and the scope of the history of racism: “I don’t know how to end what doesn’t have an ending” (159).

How Rankine does choose to end is with a question and response: “Did you win? He asks. / It wasn’t a match, I say. It was a lesson” (159). In the story of this passage, this comment could refer to the tennis match itself. Perhaps this entire book is not a match, not a competition where one party beats the other. Rather, as Rankine states, it might be a lesson. What then is the lesson? Further, who is teaching and who is being taught?

Earlier in *Citizen,* Rankine writes of an encounter between “you” and an English novelist. When “you” ask the novelist if he will write about the death of Mark Duggan – a black British man – from police brutality, he responds with an irritated, “Me?” (116). Subsequently, Rankine writes, “How difficult is it for one body to feel the injustice wheeled at another? Are the tensions, the recognitions, the disappointments, and the failures that exploded in the riots too foreign?” (116). In ending *Citizen* with a first-person narrative, Rankine reemphasizes that the text is not just an anthology, a collection of stories, but rather a personal lyric. And within its individuality, it is an invitation and challenge for solidarity. For readers whose experiences mirror those relayed in *Citizen,* the second-person transcriptions contest a history of erasure. Rather, Rankine collects these experiences, transcribes them, makes them visible. For readers who might be unfamiliar with the experience of racism, the second-person address is a challenge to acknowledge and dwell in that space. In *Relating Narratives,* the theorist Adriana Cavarero writes that addressing a “you” assumes, “that there is an other before us whom we do not know and cannot fully apprehend… of uniqueness and” (Butler 31). To address “you” is not to assume identical reflection. Rather, within the space of” uniqueness,” Rankine’s use of the second-person necessitates personal engagement in response to her “lesson.” Her “lesson” is for all of us.

Conclusion

In an earlier passage from *Citizen*, Rankine illustrates solidarity on a subway. The speaker witnesses a woman refuse to take the last empty seat next to man, preferring to "stand all the way to Union Station" (Rankine 121). In response, "You step quickly over the woman's fear" and rush to fill the seat" (121). In this encounter, "you" are not the one of whom the woman is afraid. You are witness; you are trying to counteract this fear. As Rankine depicts, this resistance occurs in silence. Rather, the passage describes "your" imagining what the man might say to you, how the woman is afraid, and how this fear is shared. This entire action occurs without a single word being said between the three main characters. The recognition of suspicion, the attempt to counteract it, and the acknowledgement of solidarity all occur within looks and glances. Rankine again presents racism as physical space, in this case literally as an empty seat, and solidarity as physical movement. In a physical context, Rankine implicates the reader's positioning. Who are you? Are you the man, the commuter, or are you the ally? Whomever you are, this incident occupies your bodily space.

Through this paper, I have argued that the second-person voice, by nature of its address, forges a nearness between reader and text. Within this nearness, Jamaica Kincaid and Claudia Rankine use the second-person to destabilize power and connect the individual with the historic, the personal and the systemic. At its core, the second-person voice within *A Small Place* and *Citizen* is a challenge to engage. Neither colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, anti-blackness are fragments of history. They are present-tense institutions which involve "him her us you me I" (Rankine 159). For many, this does not need to be explained; colonization and racism are bodily memory, lived experience. For others, the second-person voice forges intimacy where there may have otherwise been a defensive distancing. It can influence vulnerability where they may have

otherwise been an assumed superiority. The address of the second-person is the address of intimacy, an intimacy which complicates the nature of otherness.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor. *The Essay as Form*. https://www.jstor.org/stable/488160?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents. Accessed 9 Dec. 2018.

Alleyne, Lauren K. "Jamaica Kincaid: Does Truth Have a Tone?" *Guernica*, 17 June 2013, https://www.guernicamag.com/does-truth-have-a-tone/.

Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back : Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002.

Bahri, Deepika. *Native Intelligence : Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature*. University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Bass, Holly. *Claudia Rankine's 'Citizen' - The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/28/books/review/claudia-rankines-citizen.html. Accessed 11 Dec. 2018.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M., and Michael Holquist. *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press, 1981. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=3443524.

Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. 1st ed., Fordham University Press, 2005.

Coleman, Aaron. "The History Behind the Feeling: A Conversation with Claudia Rankine." The Spectacle. Washington University, St. Louis, 23 September 2015. Web.

DelConte, Matt. "Why You Can't Speak: Second-Person Narration, Voice, and a New Model for Understanding Narrative." *Style*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2003, pp. 204-219,252.

Frassica, Matt. "Claudia Rankine's Citizen shows what racism really feels like." Public Radio International. OYZ Media, 17 August 2017. Web.

Hedley, Jane. "'I'll Tell You Something': Reader-Address in Louise Glück's Ararat Sequence." *Literature Compass.*, vol. 2, no. 1, Jan. 2005.

'John Henryism' Key to Understanding Coping, Health | Duke Health. https://corporate.dukehealth.org/news-listing/%E2%80%98john-henryism%E2%80%99-key-understanding-coping-health. Accessed 10 Dec. 2018.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. 1st edition, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988.

Larkin, Lesley. "Reading and Being Read: Jamaica Kincaid's A Small Place as Literary Agent." *Callaloo*, vol. 35, no. 1, Apr. 2012, pp. 193–211. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/cal.2012.0009.

Lee, Felicia R. "A Poetry Personal and Political." *The New York Times*, 21 Dec. 2017. *NYTimes.com*, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/29/books/claudia-rankine-on-citizen-and-racial-politics.html.

Lightfoot, Natasha. *Troubling Freedom : Antigua and the Aftermath of British Emancipation*. Duke University Press, 2015.

Marquis, Claudia. "'Making a Spectacle of Yourself': The Art of Anger in Jamaica Kincaid's A Small Place." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 54, no. 2, Mar. 2018, pp. 147–60. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, doi:10.1080/17449855.2017.1383299.

Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Graywolf Press, 2014.

Richardson, Brian. "Unnatural Narrative Theory." *Style*, vol. 50, no. 4, Dec. 2016, pp. 385–405. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/sty.2016.0023.

Robinson, Josh. *Adorno's Poetics of Form*. State University of New York Press, 2018.

Sharma, Meara. "Claudia Rankine on Blackness as the Second Person." *Guernica*, 17 Nov. 2014, https://www.guernicamag.com/blackness-as-the-second-person/.

Walvin, James. *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery*. Yale University Press, 2011.

Waters, William. “Poetic Address and Intimate Reading: The Offered Hand.” *Poetry and Dialogism: Hearing Over*, edited by Mara Scanlon and Chad Engbers, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014, pp. 97–122. *Springer Link*, doi:10.1057/9781137401281_6.