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Educational Archipelago:  
Alternative Knowledges and the Production of  
Docile Bodies in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*  
and Marjane Satrapi's *The Complete Persepolis*

*With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun. Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. How could they be the initiators, if they themselves are the result of the violence? How could they be the sponsors of something whose objective inauguration called forth their existence as oppressed? There would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation.*

—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Critical pedagogue Paulo Freire introduces his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by reflecting on *conscientização*, or “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire 35). Responding to fears of a perceived rise in fanaticism due to *conscientização*, Freire argues, “On the contrary, by making it possible for people to enter the historical process as responsible Subjects, *conscientização* enrolls them in the search for self-affirmation and thus avoids fanaticism” (36). Of particular note is Freire’s use of *subjects*, which as his translator notes, Freire used “*Subjects* to denote those who know and act, in contrast with *objects*, which are known and acted on” (36). Drawing on his subjective experiences teaching laborers and middle-class workers to read and write, Freire schematizes subjects—those who exercise knowledge—and objects—those upon which knowledge is exercised. Concisely, Freire claims traditional education positions students as *objects* ready to both receive knowledge and have knowledge created about them.

Freire’s use of his subjective experience teaching laborers and middle-class Brazilian adults to read challenged dominant educational discourses—in this case, what he calls the “banking model”—and laid bare the mostly western economic ideologies inherent in educational systems. Postcolonial life writing, too, exposes the ubiquity of such imperial ideologies, particularly in the post-colony era, by producing

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alternative, testimonial knowledges about educational practices that question the production of docile bodies invested with economic and political use. This is of singular importance because postcolonial life writing not only reveals the often abstruse and unseen capillaries of power exercising contemporary imperial discourses over subjects, but also because postcolonial life writing often locates such reticulated networks of contemporary imperial discourses in educational institutions, where subjects are disciplined and rendered docile for economic utility.

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Postcolonial life writing calls attention to the surfeit of disciplining institutions established in the global South during colonial rule and that redoubled in the wake of independence movements, the collapse of formalized imperial power, and the rise of neoliberalism. Indeed, much postcolonial life writing emerging in the latter-half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century emphasizes the role of colonial and postcolonial schools in disciplining both the minds and the bodies of students in order to yield economically productive subjects. Both traditional life writing and educational systems function to reinforce dominant nationalist and economic discourses. Often in life writing—and postcolonial life writing is no exception—the economic success of a powerful person—usually male—is yoked to that of the nation. These singular autobiographies and memoirs, such as that of Benjamin Franklin, reinscribe nationalism and progressive capitalist development as pedagogy: Readers can glean from such “Great Man” narratives the lessons of individual and national success. Yet contemporary postcolonial life writing typically places less emphasis on the individual and more on how underrepresented communities navigate different types and scales of power, discourse, and discipline: local, national, and international. By focusing on such communities and discursive power, postcolonial life writing often draws attention to disciplining institutions, such as educational systems.

Perhaps the most effective and affective subgenre of western life writing employed by postcolonial authors to examine schools as disciplining institutions is the *bildungsroman*, which foregrounds the early

formation—educational, political, and spiritual—of the subject. As coming-of-age narratives, postcolonial *bildungsromane* often scrutinize the formal and informal educational experiences of the writer and the discourses informing the power exerted and discipline practiced by educational institutions over subjects' minds and bodies. Yet much of postcolonial life writing consists of deliberate blending different life writing subgenres, which often challenges western generic hegemony. Such is the case with Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988). Kincaid blends her own educational experiences under British rule using *bildungsroman* with the bitter lamentations of a jeremiad and the ecological and geographic cataloging and mapping of travel writing—all under the guise of memoir. Kincaid's purposeful combining of life writing subgenres enables her to link masterfully Antigua's historic slave-based economy with its current tourism and service-based economy. The point at which slavery and service intersect is the Hotel Training School, which conditions Antiguan to participate in globalized discourses of tourism. For Kincaid, this is slavery by another name, and she challenges her readers to reconsider their role as either modern master—or modern slave.

In the same way, Marjane Satrapi's *The Complete Persepolis* (2007) incorporates her educational experiences under both Shah rule and the Islamic Republic using *bildungsroman* in juxtaposition with the impactful black and white visuals of a graphic memoir and the conventions of traditional conversion narratives. By synthesizing these predominantly western—and often Christian—life writing subgenres, Satrapi fractures readers' decades-held binary narratives of the Islamic Revolution by drawing readers' attention to the experiences of her middle-class, Muslim family who neither supported the Shah nor the theocratic government established by the Constitution of 1979. As she recounts the experiences of her family before, during, and after the revolution, Satrapi sketches out a narrative space in which she reflects on the shifting discourses informing education in Iran, and more importantly, that the means of discipline and control exercised over students' minds and bodies continued much in the same way with the notable exception of the theocratically-imposed veil.

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Rather than being emancipatory, educational institutions produce disciplined subjects, reify nationalism and national economic interests, and undergird globalization. Less objective and more a linguistic shifter, globalization may seem to connote progressive notions of development and social justice, but as Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff explain, globalization continues to rely on former colonies or “old margins [that] are becoming new frontiers, places where mobile, globally-competitive capital finds minimally regulated zones in which to vest its operations” (121). With newly opened, minimally regulated zones in the global South, the global North continues to exert its discursive and material power under the guise of progressive notions of development and globalization. This is most clearly seen in Kincaid’s *A Small Place*, again, in which she deftly maps the historical practice of slavery onto the modern institution of the Hotel Training School and the discourses informing the school—western tourism and service.

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Through his genealogical and archeological excavation of power and knowledge production, Michel Foucault makes an observation similar to Freire that the subject-object positioning of teacher and student “guaranteed the movement of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil, but it extracted from the pupil a knowledge destined and reserved for the teacher” (“Means” 198). The transference of knowledge from teacher to student and the production of knowledge about students not only positions the teacher as subject and student as object, but also ensures that dominant ideologies and imperial discourses are transferred from teacher to student. Ania Loomba, reflecting on Gauri Viswanathan’s groundbreaking *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989), notes “educational systems are important means for the dissemination of dominant ideologies” (Loomba 77). Through the conveyance of dominant ideologies and imperial discourses from teacher to student, Loomba contends that the colonial classroom became “one of the testing grounds for developing attitudes and strategies which became a fundamental part” of disciplining students in order to create docile bodies for economic use (76). Edward Said, too, draws on Viswanathan’s foundational work on the construction of English literary education as a

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discipline. Summarizing Viswanathan's central argument, Said writes, "that what has conventionally been thought of as a discipline created entirely by and for British youth was first created by early-nineteenth-century colonial administrators for the ideological pacification and re-formation of a potentially rebellious Indian population, and then imported into England for a very different but related use there" (Said 42). And while Viswanathan's thesis relies on socio-cultural and geographic specificity, it is possible to understand her claims and those of Loomba and Said as metonym for educational institutions in the colonial and postcolonial: Said's characterization of the Viswanathan's scholarship as creating a *discipline* works both in a literal sense—the formation of a field of study—and in another less tangible sense. The second sense of *discipline* is exactly what both Said and Loomba have laid out—one of an exercise in control over populations and a means to disseminate dominant ideologies and imperial discourses.

Discipline, then, allows for the creation of docile bodies invested with political and economic discourses. As Foucault posits, "Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism" ("Means" 192-3). This relational power connects back to Freire's claim about the teacher as active subject and student as passive object. The relational power results from schools becoming "a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that duplicated along its entire length the operation of teaching" and "increasingly perpetual comparison of each and all that made it possible both to measure and judge" ("Means" 198). The perpetual measurement and judgment of students resulted in disciplinary coercion that "establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination" ("Docile" 182). With increased aptitude of and domination over students, the body becomes bound up with political investment "in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use" ("Body" 173). Moreover, in educational institutions "it is largely a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination," and "its constitution of labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection [...] the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" ("Body" 173). To state this again for emphasis: Bodies only

become economically productive through subjection, which relies on the creation of a subject rendered docile and enmeshed in dominant ideologies and imperial discourses.

However, productive and subjected bodies still live experiences not recognized by dominant ideologies and imperial discourses. As Robert Young observes in his concise contextualization of postcolonialism, “Everyone has informal education, and the boundary lines between the formal and informal are more than fluid. The knowledge that you need is the knowledge you learn informally. From your own family and environment. The knowledge you learn formally is someone else’s knowledge” (Young 14). In other words, the knowledges exercised on and deposited into students in educational institutions reflect those dominant ideologies and imperial discourses, but silence those lived, everyday experiences of students. This informal education suggests an “alternative culture, an alternative ‘epistemology,’ or system of knowledge” (Young 17-18). Perhaps more interestingly, Young asserts, “Most of the writing that has dominated what the world calls knowledge has been produced by people living in western countries in the past three or more centuries, and it is the kind of knowledge that is elaborated within and sanctioned by the academy, the institutional knowledge corporation” (Young 18). Here is where postcolonial life writing can challenge dominant ideologies and imperial discourses: Postcolonial life writing, like the project of postcolonialism, “begins from its own knowledges, many of them more recently elaborated during the long course of the anti-colonial movements, and starts from the premise that those in the west, both within and outside the academy, should take such other knowledges, other perspectives, as seriously as those of the west” (Young 20). Again, it may be important to return to Foucault in order to examine the discursive consequences of life writing generally and elucidate the manner in which postcolonial life writing, as Young suggests, demands to be taken as seriously as those of the west.

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For Foucault, writing about one's individual day-to-day life was a privilege that bestowed in the writer an individual sovereignty and power. But with the rise of disciplinarity, this relationship between man and his story changed. Discipline disciplined, so to speak: it "lowered the threshold of describable individuality, and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination" ("Means" 203). No longer did life writing solely preserve heroic and heraldic life stories for future generations. Rather, it became a "document for possible use," as an everyday tool to document and discipline daily lives (203). The discursive describability of lives in the context of disciplinary frameworks initiated "the turning of real lives into writing" and was "no longer a procedure of [individual] heroization" (203). Life writing began to function as "a procedure of objectification and subjection. The carefully collated life of mental patients or delinquents belongs, as did the chronicle of kings or the adventures of the great popular bandits," to particular political and economic functions of writing ("Means" 203-4). By focusing on what informal and collective knowledges, authors of contemporary postcolonial life writing often make interventions in the reticulations of dominant ideologies and contemporary imperial discourses informing educational institutions where the subjected bodies of students are rendered docile, ready to be economically productive members of the nation.

Much of contemporary postcolonial life writing, too, fractures hegemonic and often calcified notions of nationalism by incorporating informal and collective knowledges into narratives in which the subject is positioned in relation to education institutions and the nation. While not the focus of this project, more work needs to be done looking into the gender and discourse analysis as evidenced in postcolonial life writing. Anecdotally, female authors of postcolonial life narratives appear to exhibit more collectivity and plural "I"s whereas many male writers still tie their individual successes—particularly with respect to movements of revolution—to that of newly independent nations. Said describes nationalism as "defensive, reactive, and even paranoid" and laments that such conservative discourses are "frequently woven into the very fabric of education, where children as well as older students are taught to venerate

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and celebrate the uniqueness of *their* traditions (usually and invidiously at the expense of others)” (Said xxvi). Echoing Loomba’s reflection on Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquest*, Homi K. Bhabha proposes a “cultural construction of nationness” as a “social and textual affiliation” (Bhabha 201). Such constructions of nationalism rely on narrative pedagogies, which through educational institutions deliver disciplined and disciplining, unified national texts of pre-colonial and colonial exchanges and dominance. It is in the postcolonial, for Bhabha, that “the disjunctive time of nation’s modernity—as a knowledge caught between political rationality and its impasse, between the shreds and patches of cultural signification and the certainties of a national pedagogy—that questions of nation and narration come to be posed” (Bhabha 204). Examining Fredric Jameson’s spatially disciplined discussion of Knowledge, Bhabha observes that for there to be a “social determinative relation” among members there has to be an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’” (Bhabha 315). It is in this modern national disjuncture—the postcolonial—when those silenced by or erased from—those outside—national narratives can challenge the pedagogy of state-run educational systems, which are responsible for disseminating dominant ideologies, through life writing.

The inside-outside dialectic nature of nationalism expounded by Bhabha has traditionally been continuously reinscribed by life narratives connecting the economic and political success of mostly male citizens with the prosperity of the nation, but postcolonial life writing disrupts such dichotomies to expose the seeming homogeneity of nationalism and the national boundaries that appear to reinforce such binaries. According to Julia Kristeva, national borders—and I would argue narratives of nationalism—“are constantly faced with a double temporality: the process of identity constituted by historical sedimentation (the pedagogical); and the loss of identity in the signifying process of cultural identification (the performative)” (Anderson 219). Education and traditional life writing depend on performances of nationalism, which themselves rely on thick place-based sociocultural histories. Postcolonial life writing contests such performances, often drawing on the same sedimentary histories to recast them not as dominant narratives, but as narratives of continued domination by the nation. In *Imperial Eyes: Travel*



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*Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt posits the (post)colonized “undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the (post)colonizer’s own terms” (Pratt 7). However, complicating the (post)colonizer’s own terms, for writers such as Kincaid “the ‘I’ is often representative of a larger group’s experience at powerful moments of social change and an articulation of the desire for transformation as a social group” (Smith and Watson 46). The collective “I” not only challenges western notions of the autobiographical subject, but it also produces a “polyphonic site of indeterminacy rather than a single, stable truth” (Smith and Watson 16). Postcolonial life writing situates individual and collective narratives in a “geography of other identities, peoples, cultures,” as these texts navigate increasingly larger scales of readership and influence from the familial and local to the national and transnational (Said 330). For Smith and Watson, “The authority of the autobiographical, then, neither confirms nor individuates notions of objective truth; rather, it tracks the previously uncharted truths of particular issues” (Smith and Watson 16).

The pedagogy of life writing from underrepresented groups teaches “students to become more sensitive, sophisticated, and patient readers of others’ narratives” (Smith and Watson 233). Moreover, Linda Anderson observes that readers “takes on, as it were, the ethical responsibility of bearing witness to what testimonial writing cannot directly represent, and breaking down the isolation imposed by the nature of the event” (Anderson 132). Postcolonial life writing, then, exposes students and readers to voices and knowledges ignored or silenced by monolithic national histories, establishing new multivocal—and occasionally multimodal—narrative spaces producing previously suppressed knowledges.

In order to examine the reticulated network of dominant ideologies and contemporary discourses that inform educational institutions, this project juxtaposes postcolonial life writing from two diverse socio-cultural and geographic regions. First, in her canonical memoir, *A Small Place* (1988), Jamaica Kincaid deftly contends the Hotel Training School, which produces disciplined and docile Antiguan workers for work in the island’s tourism industry, is rooted in the west’s historic practice of slavery and is a logical continuation

of such exploitation. Second, in the more recent *The Complete Persepolis* (2004), Marjane Satrapi graphically—both visually and violently—bears witness to the shifts in educational institutions in Iran between western capitalism and distinctly theocratic before and after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

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In *A Small Place*, Kincaid invokes categorical rage, despair, and unexpected hope by fixing a relentless gaze on her readers resulting from recurrence of the pronoun *you*. Such staccato repetition of *you* has a twofold effect on both her readers and the genre within which *A Small Place* is situated. First, she levels an assertively honest gaze at her readers, which is discomforting and causes her readers to consider their role as tourists in the continued exploitation of Antigua. Moments after she lands *you*—her readers—in Antigua, Kincaid points out that “since you are on your holiday, since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought, and so has to watch every drop of fresh water used [...] must never cross your mind” (Kincaid 4). And a bit later, “The thing you have always suspected about yourself the minute you become a tourist is true: A tourist is an ugly human being” (14). Over and over, Kincaid confronts her readers with her unflinching gaze, cornering them and forcing her readers to recognize their complicity in western capitalism’s now over 500-year exploitation of Antigua, which began with the island’s “discovery” by Cristóbal Colón in 1493 and continued through Antigua’s independence from Great Britain in 1981 (80).

Second, the rage and despair with which Kincaid catalogues the now over 500-years of capitalistic exploitation coupled with her focused gaze on *you*—her readers—challenges the generic conventions of *A Small Place* as solely a memoir. While memoirs “situate the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant, the memoir directs attention more toward the lives and actions of others than to the narrator” (Smith and Watson 274). Further, Smith and Watson note that contemporary memoir generally depicts a “segment of a life, not its entirety, and focusing on interconnected experiences” (274). In *A Small Place*, Kincaid does indeed situate her subject, though she is not her subject; in fact, *you*—her

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readers—are her subjects, as she inscribes what *you* see as she takes *you* around Antigua. And Kincaid does utilize the conventions of memoir to narrate a slice of life—that of her constructed tourist-readers—paying particular attention to the interconnectedness of slavery and contemporary western capitalism. Kincaid infuses her descriptions of the entangled discourses of slavery and capitalism with aforementioned rage and despair, which seemingly transcends the generic conventions of memoir. Her bitter lamentations elevate *A Small Place* to that of a jeremiad, which seriously grieves the state of society. Again, though, Kincaid's *A Small Place* is not wholly a jeremiad because rather than prophesizing the downfall of society, Kincaid ends her *slim* text with a hope-filled plea suggesting “*you* throw off your master's yoke,” so that *you* as tourists and those Antiguan serving *you* can recognize each other as “just human beings” (Kincaid 81). But, again, neither memoir nor jeremiad seems to fully describe what is at work in Kincaid's *slight* piece of life writing.

Kincaid ushers her readers around the island, shuffling them through different tourist experiences. Her attention to place and movement through space lends itself to travel writing, a subgenre of memoir. Travel writing, which has been used historically by the west particularly as a discursive tool of imperialism (Pratt 168), “chronicle[s] or reconstruct[s] the narrator's experience of displacement, encounter, and travail and his or her observations of the unknown, the foreign, the uncanny” (Smith and Watson 284-5). Interestingly, travel writing does not quite characterize Kincaid's project, as the experiences she chronicles are those of *you*—her readers. Though, it should be noted, she does point out that which is unknown, foreign, and uncanny to her readers. This is all to say that Kincaid's deliberate blurring of life writing subgenres not only decolonizes historically colonial discursive practices, but also, and more importantly, constructs a decentered space within which she critiques the contemporary imperial discourses informing educational institutions in Antigua.

Primary and secondary education in Antigua, according to Kincaid, was used as a way both to judge subjects—producing categories for those students worth admitting into the educational system and

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those pathologized as inadmissible—and to produce objects. The goal of appraising admitted students is to form useful bodies for further economic development and service—in this case, the Hotel Training School and Antigua’s tourism industry. Those students left outside of the educational system include girls born outside of marriage. Kincaid explains that excluding girls born out of wedlock is not simply a moral decision, but instead a racialized one: “[I]n Antigua it had never dawned on anyone that this was a way of keeping black children out of this school” (29). Kincaid observes this in her own experiences and those of others in primary and secondary education. Such a racialized pathologization placed these girls outside of not only educational institutions, but also outside of an economy dependent on linguistic and economic imperialism interlaced with discourses of western capitalism and tourism. Only later in her lifetime were such girls permitted to enroll in primary and secondary schools. Said makes a concurrent observation while critiquing Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquest*. Said writes, “No area of experience was spared the unrelenting application of these (racial) hierarchies. In the system of education designed for India, students were taught not only English literature but the inherent superiority of the English race” (Said 101). Similarly the teacher from Northern Ireland in *A Small Place* demands her active (black) female students “stop heaving like monkeys just out of trees” (Kincaid 29). This racially-charged rhetoric allows Kincaid to argue that good behavior is synonymous with *docility*. Moments later, she takes her argument a step further, “(Of course, I now see that good behaviour is the proper posture of the weak, of children.)” (30). Here, Kincaid keenly links good behavior with weakness and *docility*. Kincaid suggest that *good* people—that is, good adults—at least in the colonies and post-colonies—act childlike, weak, obedient, and docile. For Foucault, a docile body is one that “may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (“Docile” 179). Moreover, “Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body [...] and turns it into a relation of strict subjection” (“Docile” 182). Kincaid seems to

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bitterly lament the weakness and *docility* required of students, which she later connects to Antigua's history of slavery and its present tourism economy.

One strategy for producing docile—subjected, transformed, improved—students that Kincaid pays particular attention to is language instruction, which is informed by Antigua's economy. As with the creation of English literary studies in colonial India—delineated by Loomba, Said, and Viswanathan—language becomes a tool of colonial authority, imposing a master language onto a colonized population.

Mary Louise Pratt argues that

empires are translinguistic force fields: the language of the imperializing power lands on spaces already territorialized by other languages, perhaps other imperial languages. Yet empires depend absolutely on communication. Bringing an empire into being requires trying to control or manage this translinguistic force field and shape it around the imperial power's interests. Imperial powers must intervene on the linguistic landscapes they encounter and seek to redistribute linguistic capacities according to their needs. At the same time, they must deal with the fact that total control over the force field is unachievable. (Pratt 351)

Indeed, not only did colonial authorities create the discipline of English literary studies to disseminate dominant ideologies, but also as a means of shoring up linguistic and political hegemony to meet imperial needs of administration and subjectification. For Pratt, *administration* “refers to organization and management of economic extraction through regulated hierarchies of command, and judicial processes” and *subjectification* “refers to the production of imperial subjects by organizing knowledge, identities, and desires through schooling and religious indoctrination” (Pratt 352-3). Pratt illuminates the relationship among economic management and the production and propagation of knowledge.

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Kincaid penetratingly critiques the imperial discourses enmeshed in linguistic education in Antigua. She writes in terms of the crimes of the colonial authorities and imperial language's inability to accurately reflect those crimes. Kincaid writes,

For the language of the criminal can contain only the goodness of the criminal's deed. The language of the criminal can explain and express the deed only from the criminal's point of view. It cannot contain the horror of the deed, the injustice of the deed, the agony, the humiliation inflicted on me. When I say to the criminal, 'This is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong,' or, 'This deed is bad, and this other deed is bad, and this one is also very, very bad,' the criminal understands the word 'wrong' in this way: It is wrong when 'he' doesn't get his fair share of profits from the crime just committed; he understands the word 'bad' in this way: a fellow criminal betrayed a trust. That must be why, when I say, 'I am filled with rage,' the criminal says, 'But why?'" (Kincaid 32)

Kincaid, too, connects the slippage between those who must use the colonizers' language to communicate and survive and those who impose an imperial language on an indigenous populous with economic extraction and profit. The economic extraction and linguistic imposition are the horrible deeds Kincaid says cannot be fully expressed.

Perhaps Kincaid's clearest, most unambiguous critique of the contemporary imperial discourses informing educational institutions is her contextualization of the Hotel Training School, which disciplines Antiguan and produces bodies ready to work in Antigua's tourism industry. For Kincaid, the Hotel Training School is just the latest manifestation of the west's investment in enslaving bodies in the name of capitalism. She begins,

In Antigua, people speak of slavery as if it had been a pageant full of large ships sailing on blue water, large ships filled up with human cargo—their ancestors; they got off, they were forced to work under conditions that were cruel and inhuman, they were

beaten, they were murdered, they were sold, their children were taken from them and these separations lasted forever, there were many other bad things, and then suddenly the whole thing came to an end in something called emancipation. (Kincaid 54-5)

Kincaid contrasts the imprecise, romanticized nature of historical memory with the harsh, lived experiences of African ancestors trafficked across the Atlantic into the Caribbean on an oceanic conveyor belt designed to produce human capital—slaves. The Caribbean, according to Antonio Benítez-Rojo, functioned as a sort of laboratory that allowed imperial countries to develop and refine the plantation system based on human capital, which was then deployed throughout the rest of colonized world (Benítez-Rojo 5). Interestingly, this process of honing and then disseminating the plantation system would have coincided historically with the rise of the modern prison and development of disciplinary techniques attentively expounded by Foucault: “The growth of a capitalist economy gave rise to the specific modality of disciplinary power, whose general formulas, techniques of submitting forces and bodies, in short ‘political anatomy,’ could be operated in the most diverse political regimes, apparatuses, or institutions” (“Panopticism” 211).

Kincaid’s use of *pageant* in the above passage is particularly interesting. While a pageant does not necessarily evoke relational power and discipline, it is usually considered a benign act consisting of a procession of subjects to be objectified by the gazes of others. Kincaid’s usage complicates its seeming benignity by implying the human cargo within the large will be appraised, assessed for economic use. This particular pageant changes the African ancestors from subjects to objects in service of a distant imperial power. Foucault notes, “[T]he subjects’ were presented as ‘objects’ to the observation of a power that was manifest only by its gaze. They did not receive directly the image of the sovereign power; they only felt its effects—in replica, as it were—on their bodies, which had become precisely legible and docile” (“Means” 199). The pageant, but more importantly the institution of slavery relied on the accumulation of objects—those viewed in the procession and slaves—that were both human and capital. Again, Foucault observes,

“In fact, the two processes—the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital—cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them; conversely, the techniques that made the cumulative multiplicity of men useful accelerated the accumulation of capital” (“Panopticism” 210).

Kincaid’s use of *pageant* exposes another aspect of Caribbean culture that has its roots in the milieu of African and Christian beliefs underlying the plantation economy: carnival. Benítez-Rojo observes that “Of all possible sociocultural practices, the carnival—or any other equivalent festival—is the one that best expresses the strategies that the people of the Caribbean have for speaking at once of themselves and their relation with the world, with history, with tradition, with nature, with God” (Benítez-Rojo 294). According to Benítez-Rojo, the carnival exists both within a diachronic and transhistorical order that always exists in the present (303). By way of example, Benítez-Rojo draws on Afro-Cuban slave celebrations of *Día de Reyes* during colonial rule. He asserts that colonial authorities permitted slaves to enjoy temporarily their “liberty” as a means of preserving the “violent order of plantation society” (306). This allowed the slaves to perform the “pantomime of snake-killing in order to take the violence out of tomorrow, when they would have to reintegrate themselves as within the order set by the planter” (306). Drawing upon the individual carnival theories of Umberto Eco and Mikhail Bakhtin, Benítez-Rojo argues that carnival is a double sacrifice, “endeavoring to reaffirm the old order (Eco) or focusing only on the momentary degradation of official power (Bakhtin)” (307). Moreover, “the groups in power channel the violence of the oppressed groups in order to maintain yesterday’s order, while the latter channel the former’s violence so that it will not recur tomorrow,” though he cautions that “the complexity of the Caribbean carnival cannot be reduced to binary concepts” (307). Benítez-Rojo culminates his study of the Caribbean and postmodernism by declaring, “Thus, the violence of plantation/colonial/neocolonial society, on being processed by the carnival’s machine, has been converted into the Caribbean’s travesty mirror that at



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once reflects the tragic and the comic, the sacred and the profane, the historical and the aesthetic, Prospero and Caliban, death and resurrection” (311).

The violence imbuing carnival not only keeps the social order of plantation and neocolonial societies, but also acts as a means of examination, discipline, and control. Again, Kincaid’s use of *pageant* as a way of describing ships filled with human cargo sailing across the Atlantic lends itself—as I noted above—to a reading in which the human cargo is then unloaded from the ships in order to be examined and judged under the gazes of colonial authorities before being deployed as plantation labor. The gaze inherent in Kincaid’s use of *pageant* produces a disciplinary power in the form of ceremony (or pageants or carnival). According to Foucault, it is the review, “the ‘parade,’ an ostentatious form of the examination,” which connects Foucaultian discipline with the Caribbean carnival (“Means” 199). In the parade, subjects “did not receive directly the image of the sovereign power; they only felt its effects—in replica, as it were—on their bodies, which had become precisely legible and docile” (“Means” 199). As Kincaid’s pageant occurs in the Caribbean, there is a geographic separation between the sovereign power and the subjects on parade, resulting in the “scarcely sustainable visibility” of the sovereign that is “turned into the unavoidable visibility of the subjects. And it is this inversion of visibility in the functioning of the disciplines that was to assure the exercise of power even in its lowest manifestations” (“Means” 200). The examination inherent in the parade made manifest the power of discipline in the plantation economy and laid the foundation of its continuation under new guises like the aforementioned Hotel Training School.

Plantations as formal disciplinary institutions began to collapse with the various abolitions of the slave trade and proclamations of emancipation. Though, much like educational institutions, the disciplinary techniques of the plantation system persisted through the collapse of colonial power and continue to reinforce contemporary imperial discourses although less immediately violent. What differentiates plantations from educational institutions is not the manner in which slaves were observed, documented, and categorized for labor. Rather the plantation system achieved control through extreme

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corporeal violence. Educational institutions, which can be locations of physical violence, tended to and continue to depend more on control through intangible power based on knowledge production about individual subjects. This is not to say that this version of control is less violent. Instead, it is more incorporeal, though the power as noted by Agamben is still reliant on subjects' bodies (Agamben 52). Schools, as less visibly violent institutions, continued through the collapse of colonial power through their seeming benignity and sustain their capillary control over subjects. Foucault contends, "The [disciplining methods] were different from slavery because they were not based on a relationship of appropriation of bodies; indeed, the elegance of the discipline lay in the fact that it could dispense with this costly and violent relation by obtaining effects of utility at least as great" ("Docile" 181). What's more, schools are justified by claims that they are beneficial to the state and society. Schools discipline—condition and normalize—subjects for citizenship and participation in economic systems. As Kincaid observes, formal slavery came to an end with emancipation. Again citing a collective misremembering, Kincaid writes, "Then they speak of emancipation itself as if it happened just the other day, not over one hundred and fifty years ago. The word 'emancipation' is used so frequently, it is as if it, emancipation, were a contemporary occurrence, something everybody is familiar with" (Kincaid 55). Even though emancipation denoted the end of formalized slavery, the discourses of capitalism and human capital had already been firmly entrenched on the island. Relationships of domination, such those generated by the institution of slavery, establish "marks of its power and engraves memories on things and even within bodies" ("Nietzsche" 85).

Further critiquing the period after emancipation, but before independence, Kincaid adroitly asks *you*—her readers—to consider your heritage as descendants of the Enlightenment. She writes that colonial authorities and tourists see themselves as "understand[ing] the meaning of the Enlightenment," which for Kincaid is exemplified by a love of knowledge. Moreover, she asserts that "wherever you went you made sure to build a school, a library (yes, and in both of these places you distorted or erased my history and

glorified your own)” (36). Then, Kincaid notes the irony of Antiguan’s celebration of the Hotel Training School, which she argues continues the practice of subjection through pageant and examination. She writes,

[F]or an institution that is often celebrated in Antigua is the Hotel Training School, a school that teaches Antiguan how to be good servants, how to be a good nobody, which is what a servant is. In Antigua, people cannot see a relationship between their obsession with slavery and emancipation and their celebration of the Hotel Training School (graduation ceremonies are broadcast on radio and television); people cannot see a relationship between their obsession with slavery and emancipation and the fact that they are governed by corrupt men, or that these corrupt men have given their country away to corrupt foreigners. The men who rule Antigua came to power in open, free elections. In accounts of the capture and enslavement of black people almost no slave ever mentions who captured and delivered him or her to the European master. In accounts of their corrupt government, Antiguan neglect to say that in twenty years of one form of self-government or another, they have, with one five-year exception, placed in power the present government. (Kincaid 55)

Not only is Kincaid linking the mass production of hospitality workers with the dark history of the plantation system, but also she brings her readers’ attention parenthetically to the related pageantry of the graduation ceremony, which is “broadcast on radio and television.” Normally, parentheses denote an aside, an idea not essential to understanding the sentence, but Kincaid uses this seemingly unimportant punctuation to great effect. By placing “graduation ceremonies are broadcast on radio and television” within parentheses, Kincaid momentarily reminds her readers that one page earlier she discussed the pageantry of slavery with its humiliating examination, discipline, and control of bodies. The eyes—as

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represented by the lens of the television cameras—of the nation are gazing at, examining the recent graduates of the Hotel Training School.

This mechanical gaze—the one represented by the lens of the television cameras—functions as a perfect disciplinary apparatus. The lens of the television cameras replicates the same remote, “scarcely sustainable visibility” of the sovereign and renders the subjects on parade in the ceremony unavoidably visible. Foucault argues a single gaze such as that of the lens of television cameras is the perfect disciplinary apparatus that allows everything to be seen constantly by a single gaze (“Means” 191). This “makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism and which, for the spectacle of public events, substitutes the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes” (“Means” 193). The mechanic gaze of the television cameras funnels the public spectacle of the graduation ceremony into the removed corporeal gazes of those Antiguan watching (or listening) to the proceedings remotely. In this way, the televised graduation ceremony places the subjects—the graduates—in a field of surveillance that constitutes a continued examination. Interestingly, the examination “situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them” (“Means” 201). In this case, the examination places subjects in a discursive reticulated network of the legacy of the violence of the plantation economy and contemporary tourism.

The Hotel Training School is a continuation of the same economic forces that exploited, broke down, and rearranged the bodies of slaves into objects. Education, for Kincaid, is not emancipatory. Rather, Kincaid argues educational institutions are the logical extension of slavery under the guise of progressive capital development. As Kincaid observes in the above passage, the Hotel Training School is designed to produce good servants—good nobodies. A servant, as with the slave, is changed from human subject to nonhuman object (a good nobody) through discipline and dissociation of power from the body. She concludes *A Small Place* with a radical and hope-filled plea. Kincaid writes, “Of course, the whole thing is, 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. So, too, with the slaves. Once they are no longer noble and exalted; they are just human beings” (Kincaid 87).

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For its part, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*—as with *A Small Place*—is a richly complex piece of life writing, blending centuries of Persian, Islamic, and western imperial histories with the story of Marjane's family and her own experience before, during, and after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Satrapi's graphic memoir relies on various subgenres of life writing in addition to its visual discourse to explore her own representation as a Persian girl—and later young woman—against a reticulation of capitalism, Marxism, Islam, and the nationalism of the Iranian state. On the surface, *Persepolis* falls into the tradition of *bildungsroman*, which in its traditional novel form, traces the development and social formation of the protagonist. Smith and Watson observe that ultimately the *bildungsroman* “culminates in the acceptance of one's constrained social role in the bourgeois social order, usually requiring the renunciation of some ideal or passion and the embrace of the heteronormative social arrangements” (263). However, Marjane decides to leave Iran twice during the narrative: once in the middle of her narrative for a Catholic boarding school in Switzerland and once at the end of her narrative for a less constrained life in the west. However, Smith and Watson also acknowledge recent developments in the tradition of *bildungsromane*. They argue “women and other disenfranchised persons” use *bildungsromane* to “consolidate a sense of emerging identity and an increased role in public life” (263). Satrapi's graphic memoir charts her own emerging identity within competing discourses and different educational institutions. Again, as with *A Small Place*, *bildungsroman* does not fully describe Satrapi's graphic memoir. In *Persepolis*, Satrapi confronts western readers' abstractions about the Islamic Revolution of 1979 by telling the story of her middle-class Persian family under Shah and Islamic rule. Combing *bildungsroman* with other life writing subgenres, Satrapi complicates the often-repeated narratives of the western capitalism and Islamic theocracy by focusing on her educational experiences in Iran and Austria as an elementary school student through her university studies. Before the

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revolution, Marjane attended a secular French school, and after the revolution, the school converted to an Islamic school; she leaves Iran to study at a boarding school run by nuns in Austria, but returns to Iran for her university studies. As Satrapi charts her educational experiences, the means of discipline—both secular and religious—used to produce docile subjects appear to remain the same whether in service of western economic interests or the interests of the newly-created Islamic Republic. Satrapi demonstrates that disciplining institutions such as schools function in much the same way regardless of the discourses informing them.

*Persepolis* as a graphic memoir offers a rich reading experience with its frames and gutters as the narrative not only plays with what is said textually and graphically, but also what is not said or left out through absences in the gutters between frames. As Smith, Watson, and Gillian Whitlock theorize, graphic memoirs have “become a site for telling complex stories of gender, sexuality, trauma, and the nation that reach millions of readers and potentially circulate worldwide as the ‘open up new and troubled spaces’” (Smith and Watson 168-9; “Autographics” 976). Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven pay particular attention to the multimodality—or “cross-discursive form” of graphic memoirs and argue the hybridity of graphic memoirs is “composed of verbal and visual narratives that do not simply blend together, creating a unified whole, but rather remain distinct” (Chute and DeKoven 769). The tension between read narratives and observed stories in conjunction with the white emptiness of the gutters in graphic memoirs offer sites for constructing memory and contesting official discourses—in short, producing complementary knowledges not acknowledged by contemporary imperial discourses. This opens what Whitlock observes as a “particular tension and dissonance” generated by “mixing codes from juvenilia into autobiographical narratives of history and trauma” (*Soft Weapons* 198). Further, Smith and Watson argue graphic memoirs such as *Persepolis* open up necessary space to explore the “personal and historical stakes of representation” and representation’s relationship with the narrative of the nation (Smith and Watson 171).

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Satrapı also draws on the conventions of conversion narratives. Though, *Persepolis* is less strictly a story of conversion and, perhaps, more accurately a chronicle of counter-conversion, as she resists whole conversion to the Islamic Republic's state religion. Smith and Watson define conversion narratives as "structured around a radical transformation from a faulty 'before' self to an enlightened 'after' self" (266). They do concede, however, that conversions "may be neither definitive nor final," which is where Satrapı's narrative lies (266). One of the thrusts of *Persepolis* is not conversion to Islam—that is to say, the more conservative Islam practiced during and after the revolution. Rather, Marjane resists the new religious, nationalistic, militaristic, and anti-western discourses imposed by the Iranian state through her education. While Marjane's teachers and some fellow students view Marjane as flawed and in need of conversion to become their version of an enlightened after self, Marjane resists such discourses and constructs a compelling counter-conversion narrative.

Her counter-conversion narrative relies on millennia of Persian, western, Islamic, and familial histories, which highlights yet another life writing subgenre permeating Satrapı's text. Genealogical stories chart family history and "authenticate identity by constructing a family tree of descent" (271). Moreover, genealogical stories "recover the recorded past" and "are interested in objective documentation of relationship, not the subjective stories people remember" (271). And while *Persepolis* traces Satrapı's lineage from the great Persian kings through her generation under the rule of the Shahs and the Islamic rule of post-revolutionary Iran, she spends much time recounting her own subjective experiences and the stories of her family. Satrapı's graphic memoir complicates western readers' interpretations of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 by narrating the experiences of her Marxist-leaning—though solidly bourgeois—family breaking the east-west narrative binary inherent in many discussions of the revolution and its aftermath. Satrapı depicts the liminal and complicated subject positions of a family brutalized by the Shahs and living under an oppressive Islamic government. Again, as with *A Small Place*, *Persepolis* demonstrates the complexity of postcolonial life writing, as it not only challenges (sub)generic western conventions of

life writing, but also through hybridized generic forms, complicates narratives of the nation, producing new alternative knowledges reliant on subjective representation.

Satrapi drops readers into Iran one year after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 when Marjane is 10 years old. In the first chapter titled “The Veil,” the veil immediately becomes a visual guide for pre- and post-revolutionary episodes in her narrative that occur in Iran. While at boarding school in Austria, Satrapi does not wear her veil. Petro-politics, militarism, and religious sentiment become bound up and made manifest in Satrapi’s veil. After the revolution, Marjane’s father presciently remarks, “In any case, as long as there is oil in the Middle East we will never have peace” (43). He makes this observation on the metaphorical eve of Iran’s decision to nationalize its oil industry and the start of Iran’s war with Iraq. Both nationalizing oil production and war with Iraq fostered an even more dramatic sense of nationalism, which was then layered into Marjane’s veil when she was mandated to wear it in public and at school.

The first image of Marjane, however, is of her in a small panel with arms crossed, wearing a veil, and looking quite forlorn. This image is captioned, “This is me when I was 10 years old. This was in 1980” (Satrapi 3). The second image of Marjane is a panel featuring a class photo in which only her left arm and part of her veil is visible, but depicts four other girls dressed exactly the same with arms folded and clad in veils with expressions varying from dejection to subtle smiles (3). This particular panel features the first of many examples of individuated, subjected, and disciplined bodies rendered homogenous wholes, reflecting the new nationalism of the Iranian state. The innocence and dejection of this school photo is juxtaposed with a third panel, which portrays Islamic revolutionaries en masse dressed in black, appearing angry with fists raised. Again and again, Satrapi communicates verbally and visually the production of docile and subjected bodies throughout her graphic novel, which underscores the means of discipline exercised by educational institutions. The third and fourth panels on Satrapi’s compelling first page position Marjane educationally and historically at the moment Iran’s schools reopened after the Islamic Revolution. The fourth panel depicts girls approaching the school and meeting a veiled teacher at the door who hands each



female student a veil before permitting them to enter (3). Satrapi writes above this panel, “Then came 1980: The year it became obligatory to wear the veil at school” (3). The final panel stretching across the bottom of this comprehensive first page shows most of the female students rejecting and mocking the veil, but with a lone student remarking, “Execution in the name of Freedom” (3). By the end of her first full page of text and graphics, Satrapi has demonstrated the violence the veil symbolizes for Marjane in the aftermath of the revolution.

The veil, too, signifies the chaotic point between the pre- and continuously developing post-revolutionary narrative of shifting and confrontational discourses, which inform educational institutions. Clad in her veil, Marjane notes the year—1980—in which western-influenced, secular schools are shuttered in Iran to be retooled to support the Islamic Republic’s new religio-nationalism. Interestingly, the means of discipline remain relatively the same. Satrapi describes her education prior to 1980 at a French non-religious school as one “where boys and girls were together,” but with the freedom to interact with the opposite gender came a disciplined message of western-influenced capitalism and secularism (4). Then in a panel featuring a bearded, angry-looking man with arched eyebrows and wearing a thoroughly-buttoned oxford, Satrapi writes in the panel’s caption, “And then suddenly...” (4). Inside this same panel the man announces in a speech balloon, “All bilingual schools must be closed” (4). He continues by proclaiming such schools are “symbols of capitalism” and “of decadence” before Satrapi interrupts his speech with another panel caption explaining what this man is up to. She writes, “This is called a ‘cultural revolution’” (4). The “cultural revolution” marks the change in discourses informing educational institutions in Iran from global western capitalism to religious nationalism. In the subsequent panel’s caption, Satrapi writes, “We found ourselves veiled and separated from our friends,” which is followed by another panel with Marjane drawn similarly to *Persepolis*’s opening panel. It contains a speech balloon in which Marjane observes, “And that was that...” (4). In the span of two pages, Satrapi emphasizes the

tension between western and Islamic discourses, but shatters the dichotomy of these competitive discourses by positioning herself as an ambivalent subject to be acted upon.

Satrapi demonstrates Marjane's ambivalence as she quickly and deftly runs through several panels outlining the overlapping and oppositional discourses found historically and contemporarily in Iran: Persian, the era of the Shahs, and Islamic nationalism (11-15). What is of particular interest in Satrapi's quick history lesson is the layering of usurping and competitive discourses at each stage of history, which undergird the educational practices of pre- and post-revolutionary Iran. Satrapi's excavation of these sedimentary discourses illuminates her ambivalence as a member of a bourgeois Persian family alternately under siege from both the Shahs and the current theocratic government. Satrapi's apparent ambivalence might better explained by Young's characterization of Jean-Paul Sartre's nervous conditions, which conveys an existence "strung out between the incompatible layers of different cultures" (Young 23). As Robert Young further explains, "When an original culture is superimposed with a colonial or dominant culture through education, it produces a nervous condition of ambivalence, uncertainty, a blurring of cultural boundaries, inside and out, an otherness within" (Young 23). When readers meet Marjane sitting dejectedly in her veil in the very first panel of *Persepolis*, they are dropped *in medias res* into Marjane's ambivalent existence between western and Islamic discourses.

There is no more evident example of Marjane's ambivalence than Satrapi's depiction of the textbooks the students use in pre- and post-revolutionary Iran. For example, under the rule of the Shahs, the first page of Marjane's schoolbook proclaims that God chose the Shah. This divine origin story at the beginning Marjane's textbook highlights the manner in which education relies on narrative to disseminate prevailing notions of nationalism and establishes the ideological and theological struggle within Marjane and in the broader revolution. Marjane's parents participate in early protests against the Shah before the revolution became more religiously driven, which foregrounds the complexity of this particular revolutionary coalition. After one such demonstration, Marjane proclaims, "As for me, I love the king, he

was chosen by God” in disagreement with her parents (19). When her father asks who told her this, Marjane retorts, “My teacher and God Himself” (19). When pressed further by her father, Marjane exclaims, “He [God] did so [tell her]!” and refers to her pre-revolution textbook (19). This moment stresses the way in which education perpetuates representations and narratives of nationalism. In this particular episode, Satrapi shows her readers how national narratives are reinscribed to rationalize and legitimate new governments and different discourses: The first page of her textbook rewrote centuries of other competing rulers to legitimize the rule of the modern Shahs.

When the schools reopen after the Islamic revolution, Marjane and her fellow students are asked to participate in the erasing and rewriting of Iran’s national narrative. After the Shah and his family fled Iran, Satrapi narrates, there were large celebrations and the schools eventually reopened. Marjane and her fellow students are asked by their teacher to “tear out all the photos of the Shah from your books” effectively erasing him from Iran’s national narrative, and in so doing, crafting a new nationalism, a theocratic nationalism (44). The precocious Marjane questions this direction because the previous national narrative positioned the Shah as God Himself. Marjane is immediately put in the corner for questioning this erasure of the immediate past and the construction of a new national narrative (44). While not illustrated in the text, placing Marjane in the corner constitutes corporeal punishment for her enunciated question. Marjane would be moved from her seat in the classroom, made to stand, eyes gazing at the wall. The gazes of the other students and that of the teacher would be intermittently on her back, objectifying her for the term of her punishment. These gazes would be remote and unknowable to Marjane—like that of Foucault’s distant sovereign. But this all presupposes an elementary school discipline explicated by Foucault. He writes, “[A]ctivities were governed in detail by orders that had to be obeyed immediately” (*Discipline* 150). Without immediately obeying her teacher’s direction to tear out the newly offending textbook pages, Marjane is then subjected to a visual examination similar to the televised graduation ceremony in *A Small Place*. However, Marjane’s examination differs in scale.

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After a new constitution is approved by referendum in December 1979, the changes to educational discourses are swift and delivered in pronouncements from government spokesmen. In a panel spanning the top of the page, a government spokesperson speaks from Marjane's television in her living room announcing, "The Ministry of Education has decreed that universities will close at the end of the month" (73). He continues in a new, smaller panel, which again features the television set, "The education system and what is written in school books, at all levels, are decadent. Everything needs to be revised to ensure that our children are not led astray from the true path of Islam" (73). He continues, but this time the panel features the government spokesperson and all remnants of Marjane's living room have disappeared effectively placing readers inside the television set, "That's why we're closing all the universities for a while. Better to have no students at all than to educate future imperialists" (73). This decree—specifically the phrase "future imperialists"—illuminates the tension between the secular, capitalistic education available in pre-revolutionary Iran with that of the more dogmatic, religious education after the revolution. And though the discourses informing education in Iran change, the means of discipline remain similar. Satrapi breaks into the televised decree to write, "Thus, the universities were closed for two years" (73).

In a complication of the televised mechanical gaze in *A Small Place*, Satrapi collapses the broadcasting distance between the government spokesman and his audience, which is composed of Marjane and her family in their living and Satrapi's readers. Initially, Satrapi provides readers safe distance from the government spokesman's decree, but as the gravity of what he says increases, Satrapi eliminates the distance between her readers and the government spokesman by slowly eliminating all traces of Marjane's living room and the delineations of the television set. By the end of this three-panel series, Satrapi's readers are confronted solely with the bearded and menacing face of the government spokesman. Unlike the televised graduation ceremony of the Hotel Training School in which the graduates are docilely paraded across the stage under the gazes of remote viewers, Satrapi has created a gaze that moves in two

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directions for a different purpose. In addition to the gazes of the Satrapi family and readers of the graphic memoir directed at the televised government spokesperson, Satrapi also creates a removed though inescapably direct gaze, which is emitted from the television. She achieves this almost two-way mirror effect by collapsing the distance between the spokesman and his audience, which effectively mimics the cold mechanical gaze of the television cameras in *A Small Place*. However, this gaze—as it's recorded in a studio by a television camera, is transmitted through the airwaves, and then broadcast onto Marjane's television set—is unflinchingly embodied by the government spokesperson now present in her living room. The government spokesman becomes at once a sinister object of examination for Marjane and her family and a subject seemingly capable of examining his audience. The spokesman's recursive gaze transmits new discourses of nationalism, which will filter into educational institutions to be used to discipline, condition, and make docile students in the Islamic Republic.

After the televised decree is over, Marjane's mother remarks, "You'll see they're actually going to force us to wear the veil and you, you'll have to trade your car for a camel. God, what a backward policy!" (73). Indeed, Marjane is mandated to wear the veil, which runs counter to her desire to be an "educated and liberated woman" like Marie Curie (73). Of particular interest in this moment is the discursive restructuring of Iran's national narrative and the addition of discourses enforcing the wearing the veil in public, which extends to schools. The veil, as Satrapi depicts it, functions as a sort of sartorial disciplining apparatus. Foucault observes that in order to obtain productive service from subjects,

a real and effective 'incorporation' of power was necessary, in the sense that power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behaviors. Hence the significance of methods like school discipline, which succeeded in making children's bodies the object of highly complex systems of manipulation and conditioning." ("Truth" 66-7)

One such form of conditioning was the requirement for female students to wear the veil, which exemplifies the new religio-nationalism informing Marjane's education. The veil demonstrates its effectiveness as sartorial disciplining apparatus during the Iran-Iraq War (1980—1988). In class, Marjane's teacher asks the students to "write a report about the war" (85). Marjane writes a four-page historical contextualization of Iran's war with Iraq that she titles "The Arab Conquest and Our War" (86). Satrapi interjects with an aside noting, "But the teacher didn't seem too impressed" because Marjane's essay uncovers the palimpsestic history of Iran from antiquity to the current war with Iraq and neglects Iran's new religio-nationalism (86). Highlighting these competing historical narratives, Satrapi brings readers' attention back to shifting discourses informing Marjane's education.

In perhaps the most stark and graphic panel in *Persepolis*, Satrapi underscores the relationship between the veil and discipline in education. In a rare full-page panel, Satrapi draws a battalion of veiled girls self-flagellating in observance of the boys and men who have become martyrs in the war against Iraq. In the caption to this brutal panel, Satrapi writes, "At school, they lined us up twice a day to mourn the war dead. They put on funeral marches, and we had to beat our breasts" (95). This arresting panel is filled with inky blackness. The background is completely black. In the foreground are five rows of female students dressed in black veils and dresses. Aside from their exposed white faces and hands, white is only otherwise used in this panel to differentiate between the blackness of the background and that of the students' uniforms much in the same way the white gutters of this graphic memoir are used to distinguish one panel from another. Not only does the sharp contrast between black and white individuate each student, but also it serves to highlight their oppressive sameness, which is further drawn out by the recurrence of the synchronized breast-beating. The regimented columns of schoolgirls beat their breasts under the watchful gaze of the teachers at Marjane's school, creating a more immediate and visibly violent pageant than those observed in *A Small Place*.

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This panel focuses the gaze of Satrapi's readers simultaneously on the individuating effects of corporeal coercion and on the homogenization that ironically results from the individuation. For Foucault, control works through scale from the individual to the national body. He argues that control works best by "exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds on it at the level of the mechanism it self—movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an institutional power over the active body" ("Docile" 181). Once a body has been individuated and disciplined and is among other individuated, disciplined bodies, Foucault argues that "the power of normalization improves homogeneity" ("Means" 196). Through black and white austerity, Satrapi at once shows the individuating effects of the veil and corporeal coercion exercised over the female students through their repeated breast-beating and depicts the homogenizing effects of the veil and bodily discipline by the repetition of seemingly identical schoolgirls lined up for the examining gazes of both teachers—and readers. In this way, Satrapi's pageant echoes that of Kincaid's in that the graduation ceremony, too, at once individuates each Hotel Training School graduate, but also places each graduate into a homogenized whole ready to serve western tourists. Unlike Kincaid's pageants, however, which reinscribe discourses of western capitalism, Satrapi's pageant circumscribes Iranian religio-nationalism.

Readers witness the ways in which Marjane's body becomes the site of new discourses through coercive practices such as donning the veil and controlled movements and gestures observed by her teachers in support of post-revolutionary Iranian nationalism, but readers also witness the ways in which Marjane and her friends resist such discipline, often using humor. In the caption of a much smaller panel a few pages later, Satrapi writes, "After a little while, no one took the torture sessions seriously anymore. As for me, I immediately started making fun of them" (97). She continues to reflect, "I think the reason we were so rebellious was that our generation had known secular schools. Obviously, they called our parents in: 'Your children have no respect for anything. No self-control! The basis of education comes from the family!'" (98). Marjane's teacher justifies the pageant of self-flagellation by telling a massed group of

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parents, “Listen, we’re at war. A lot of children don’t even have school these days. Yours have a rare opportunity, so you should make sure they’re well-behaved” (98). The response from Marjane’s teacher when addressing the students’ parents—specifically the term “well-behaved”—can and should be read as “well-disciplined” or “docile” in the Foucaultian sense and serves to call attention to irony of education as being emancipatory. The teacher’s final words to the parents on the matter are, “Anyway, that’s how it is. Either way they obey the law or they’re expelled!!” (98).

And that’s how it is.

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By blending different subgenres of life writing, both Kincaid and Satrapi create new, decentered spaces within which they decolonize knowledge production. They focus readers’ attention on the means by which educational institutions, informed by national and international discourses, discipline the minds and bodies of students, promoting nationalism and national political and economic interests, producing economically productive subjects. Through these new, hybrid narrative spaces, Kincaid and Satrapi provide readers with subjective, informal, and local knowledges that challenge globalized, contemporary imperial discourses. Kincaid and Satrapi question who authorizes the production of formal knowledges—those most often disseminated by educational institutions—and confront their mostly western audiences with the myth of education as emancipatory. Kincaid and Satrapi demonstrate the ways in which political and economic discourses emanating from—or in reaction to—the global North continue to inform educational institutions in the global South, creating disciplined and docile subjects. Subjects who are not disciplined and rendered docile through coercion, documentation, and examination in educational institutions are routinely segregated to other, more malignant disciplining institutions—such as prisons and detention centers—often indefinitely.





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