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Genre Crossing in Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl': From Short Fiction to Poetry

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ABSTRACT

The paper intends to reread Jamaica Kincaid's short story, 'Girl' (1978) and provide new insights into its understanding. It aims to analyse the poetic qualities, word choice, and structure of the text that are left not fully discussed by recent scholarship. The structure as well as the poetic language of 'Girl' make it an unconventional piece of writing falling between two literary categories and so hard to classify. 'Girl' apparently violates rules and transgresses conventions by being both poetic and going beyond the traditional fictional structure of a short story. The paper argues that 'Girl' is an unconventional piece of literature that crosses the borders of a short story to poetry. First, it obviously lacks the traditional structure to be classified as a short story. Second, the text embraces several poetic techniques which reveal it as poetry written in prose. Therefore, the paper purports to carefully consider the poetic techniques and rhetorical devices found in 'Girl' and make it much closer to a prose poem than a short story. The story depicts a pre-adolescent female being dictated by the instructions of a sharp-tongued mother who teaches her how to become a lady- both in the private setting of the house as well as in public- in contrast to what it is like for a woman growing up in Antigua. The paper's considerations of Kincaid's depictions of mother, daughter, and their relationship illuminate the poetic traits found including repetition, sound devices and word choice. The paper's interpretation of 'Girl' reveals its poetic nature for being thoroughly repetitive and alliterative piece. The text's repetitive quality does not only stimulate the reader's intellectual appreciation of the text's thematic notions and meanings but also promotes an overall unifying effect.

INTRODUCTION

As a point of departure, it is not insignificant to direct the reader's attention to Kincaid's life and works. Kincaid (1949) is one of the most predominant writers of the twentieth/twenty-first century. She is a contemporary Antiguan-American writer whose writings including essays, novels, and short stories are reminiscent depictions of personhood, family relationships and colonial Antigua. She was born as Elaine Potter Richardson, but in 1973 she took the name Jamaica Kincaid as a pseudonym part of her wish to remain anonymous for her writings. Kincaid left Antigua when she was only sixteen and worked as an au pair in Manhattan while settling in New York City. In 1976, Kincaid started to publish her writings subsequently. Her first book, *At the Bottom of the River* (1983), is a collection of lyrical short stories, personal recollections and reflections. Kincaid's subsequent works are autobiographical in nature and deal with themes of personhood, family relationships, and colonial Antigua. For example, *Annie John* (1984) and *Lucy* (1990) are novels centre on mother-daughter relationships. *The Autobiography* of My Mother (1996) and *My Brother* (1997) are two autobiographical accounts which recount the author's fraught relationship with her mother and the death of her younger brother. Her latest evocative novel *See Now Then* (2013) revisits the end-of-marriage theme through depicting the life of a neglected wife who struggles to find love in marriage.

Kincaid grew up in a small Caribbean island, Antigua, which historical and social landscape has a profound impact on her fiction; that rewrites the history of the Caribbean from her perspective as both an indigenous Antiguan and a woman. Kincaid's fiction and characters' experiences are coloured by the social and historical context of Antigua. Kincaid's short narrative, 'Girl' (1978), the first story of the collection, *At the Bottom of the River*, is a notable example of Kincaid's autobiographical writing. Justin D. Edwards (2007) considers Kincaid's 'Girl' as the first example of "Kincaid's lyrical and hypnotic tone" in the way this brief narrative makes use of the rhythms of oral communication to explore the complex layers that makes up a character's psychological life developed in her later writings (17). The mother delivers instructions to her daughter on how to accomplish domestic and house chores. She gives her some practical advice and codes of behaviour that will help her live in this environment and maintain traditional gender and sexual roles.

The text's portrayal of the mother-daughter relationship provokes different interpretations and significances. The

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mother's direct speech to her daughter and her commanding voice indicate how much difficult to be and grow as a girl in the Antiguan culture, which remained under the British control until 1967. Moreover, the portrayed tensions between the conforming mother and the resisting daughter represent tensions between coloniser and the colonised as Kincaid notes. In her interview with Vorda (1993), she indicated: "I've come to see that I've worked through the relationship of the mother and the girl to a relationship between Europe and the place I'm from, which is to say the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. The girl is powerless and the mother is powerful" (86). Kincaid interestingly notices the mother-daughter relationship tension's semblance to colonial power relations –coloniser-colonised relationship– where the mother is privileged because of being a mother. The privileged status of the mother makes the daughter assumes an inferior position. The daughter is subjugated and strained to the point of bitter silence by the privileged status of the mother. She can hardly talk back to justify her position and even when she has the chance to reply or resists she whispers and almost talks to herself.

From a feminist perspective, the text also provides the implication about feminine roles and how gender and race play a part in the way people are supposed to act. In a similar vein, Edwards (2007) notes that the mother "tries to help her child adapt to the reality of an oppressive and restrictive place, a world that is always judgmental and that will define the girl by her actions" (19). In addition, 'Girl' depicts the Antiguan society's expectations of what a proper woman should be and anything less is considered a slut.

Another reading of 'Girl' by Amanda Schader (2016) focuses on language by analysing the story form a syntactical point of view. She considers closely the writer's unique usage of syntax and particularly parataxis which she defines as: "literally placing side by side or using a series of independent clauses. This effect puts all clauses on the same level of importance versus subordinating some to others" that creates a meaningful story (1). Schader notes the writer's usage of parallel structure as in the lines; "Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clotheslines to dry". She contends that the "parallel structure of these lines combined with the connections by the conjunction 'and' and a semicolon illustrates through syntax how the mother's advice came by a mind-numbing beat" (2).

From another perspective, the story has been considered poetic and poetry like rather than a short story. Lizbeth Goodman (1996) notices the literary subtleties of 'Girl' that makes it largely seen as a "diverse genre" and more like a prose poem (85). Goodman contends that the "narrative strategy of 'Girl' crosses genres: the language is poetic, the voice of the poem is so direct, so internalized that no narrator can be identified" (90). However, Goodman's reading of 'Girl' does not manifest the many poetic qualities found in the text. Although written in a prose form, the narrative is interestingly noted for its lyrical nature and use of poetic techniques; such as sound devices, emotional and imaginative heightening, and some patterned structure. In the light of this usage of some of the literary and technical qualities of poetry, 'Girl' is arguably read as a prose poem. 'Girl' is a short prose poem which crosses the borders of two distinct literary genres; prose and poetry. Although read like prose, 'Girl' follows the rules of conventional poetry, and violates the conventional rules of short story; that it has no introduction or exposition, no action and no description of the setting. It almost seems to be a poem written in prose. Kincaid seemingly does this to highlight the implicit meanings of the mother's verbal orders and advices that are represented in almost a poetic form.

In order to analyse 'Girl' as a prose-poem, it is first necessary to define this literary genre "that was only becoming established as such in the 1830s and 40s" (Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, 2003, 122). According to Wettlaufer the prose poem "is essentially a hybrid form, combining elements of both poetry and prose while confirming to the standard definition of neither" (122). David Lehman (2003) provides also definition of the prose poem as "poetry that disguises its true nature" (13). He focuses on explaining its characteristics which makes it as hybrid genre. Lehman notes that the prose poem is "a poem written in prose rather than verse. On the page it can look like a paragraph or fragmented short story, but it acts like a poem" (2003, 13). Analysing 'Girl' as a prose poem, this paper aims to understand the importance of the text's vivid use of specific poetic devices and discuss their implications. The next sections illustrate the poetic qualities found in 'Girl', particularly its intense use of repetition both at the word and phrase levels. Also, the text's observable alliteration is exposed by the discussion and clarification of specific examples. Furthermore, the analytic illustration of the story's poetic nature explores the elements of cacophony and euphony as are used variably and in different situations.

'GIRL': POETIC QUALITIES

The mother-daughter conversation in 'Girl' is a one long running sentence that consists of 650 words, and a series of independent clauses that are strung together with semi-colons to hold the narrative together. In 'Girl', Kincaid sets out to deliver a long series of instructions, advices and orders on certain issues and concerns important to the daughter. This includes advices on how to do specific domestic chores, including preparing some Antiguan dishes as well as more assertive advices on how to be a respectable woman upholding sexual purity. It also comprises some directions of how to interact with different sorts of people as well as how to behave in a romantic relationship. The daughter almost passively follows her mother's oral expression and only interrupts her twice; the first to defend herself and the second to ask a question. Nevertheless, her responses go unnoticed by her mother and written in italics by Kincaid in order to highlight the trivial participation of the daughter: "*But I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school"* and "*But what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?*"

'Girl' is immensely rich in poetic language, and this is what will be explored in this paper through highlighting some poetic devices that Kincaid employs. In the pursuit to study Kincaid's work as a prose poem, line breaks and capital letters are added to make the sentences look like a poem,

nevertheless the words and punctuation are incisively present as in the original copy.

'GIRL'

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap;
Wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry;
Don't walk bare head in the hot sun;
Cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil;
Soak your little cloths right after you take them off;
When buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse,
Be sure that it doesn't have gum on it,
Because that way it won't hold up well after a wash;
Soak salt fish overnight before you cook it;
Is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?;
Always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach;
On Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming;
Don't sing benna in Sunday school;
You mustn't speak to wharf–rat boys, not even to give directions;
Don't eat fruits on the street—flies will follow you;
But I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school;
This is how to sew on a button;
This is how to make a button–hole for the button you have just sewed on;
This is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent Yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming;
This is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't have a crease;
This is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't have a crease;
This is how you grow okra—far from the house, because okra tree harbors red ants;
Then you are growing dasheen, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your Throat itch when you are eating it;
This is how you sweep a corner;
This is how you sweep a whole house;
This is how you sweep a yard;
This is how you smile to someone you don't like too much;
This is how you smile to someone you don't like at all;
This is how you smile to someone you like completely;
This is how you set a table for tea;
This is how you set a table for dinner;
This is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest;
This is how you set a table for lunch;
This is how you set a table for breakfast;
This is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well,
And this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming;
Be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit;
Don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know;
Don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something;
Don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all;
This is how to make a bread pudding;
This is how to make doukona;
This is how to make pepper pot;
This is how to make a good medicine for a cold;
This is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child;
This is how to catch a fish;
This is how to throw back a fish you don't like, and that way something bad won't fall on you;
This is how to bully a man;
This is how a man bullies you;
This is how to love a man;
And if this doesn't work there are other ways, and if they don't work don't feel too bad about giving up;
This is how to spit up in the air if you feel like it, and this is how to move quick so that it doesn't fall on you;
This is how to make ends meet;
Always squeeze bread to make sure it's fresh;
But what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?;
You mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread? (Kincaid, 1983, 3-5)

Repetition is one primary poetic device used effectively in 'Girl' not only to produce emphasis but also musical harmony and melody. Repetition is a rhetorical device commonly used in both prose and poetry and stands for the repetition of the same words or phrases several times to emphasise a specific point or to clarify an idea. Lisa Block de Behar (1995) refers to repetition as "the poetic device *par excellence*" found in poetry in the forms of alliterations, rhymes, repetition of words, phrases, verses, stanzas, etc. (78). As a poetic technique, repetition is used to attract the reader's attention to certain thoughts and emotions and emphasise its significance to the entire text through the repetition of a word, a phrase or a full sentence or a poetic line. Kincaid makes an effective use of repetition in 'Girl' which highlights the significance of the edgy mother-daughter situation and underlines the complicated relationship between mother and daughter. Several types of repetition are seen in 'Girl'. Kincaid's use of repetition is not limited to the repetition of words but also phrases and sometimes full lines.

In 'Girl', the mother uses the negative command repeatedly to direct orders and requests to her daughter. As it is clearly seen, the word "don't" is repeated about fourteen times throughout the text and seven times in direct negative commands. The repetition of the word "don't" accentuates the tension embedded in the dialogue and creates a memorable pressing rhythm. It is important to notice how the negative command "don't" is used when the mother commands her daughter on specific outside actions and conducts. The mother is more restrictive and even tough when she asks her daughter not to do things especially outside the house. The mother is seen more concerned with her daughter's life on

the exterior level. The dialogue gets more edgy and nervy when the mother discusses outside matters. Interestingly, the mother in this case is a metonymy for the society in metaphoric form. The mother, who fears society, is overcome by its expectations. She is worried that her daughter may not meet the conventional expectations of her society. Let us consider the following lines:

Don't walk barehead in the hot sun
Don't sing benna in Sunday school
Don't eat fruits on the street—flies will follow you
Don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know;
Don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something;
Don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all
Don't feel too bad about giving up

In the lines quoted above, the mother is instructing her daughter how to behave like a lady in public. For example, she orders the daughter to cover her head when it is sunny, avoid singing "benna" in Sunday school, not to eat street fruit, not to play marbles as it is boyish, and not to throw stones at blackbirds. It is noted that the writer lists those instructions using the word "don't" repeatedly and at a sequential level. This repetition of the word "don't" at the beginning of adjacent lines creates an initial rhyme that affects the thematic interpretation of the text. Also, the repetition of the "d" sound contributes to the cacophonic effect of the poem and provokes the reader's attention to the emotional state of the daughter. The girl finds herself speechless and crippled by the mother's demanding and commanding voice. The mother's demands hails on the girl like a hammer. This cacophonic tone conceived by using the sound "d" several times highlights the extent to which the girl is not only overwhelmed but also annoyed and frustrated by the mother's attitude. It also establishes the emotional state of the mother as well as her superior position.

Furthermore, the text's iterating nature is importantly highlighted with using specific words such as the word "slut". The mother's surmise of the girl's promiscuity is interestingly embedded in the word "slut". The word "slut" is mentioned four times in the whole text and at specific points. The mother's admonition about the dangers of becoming the slut constitutes the girl's movement, external looking, behavior, and action. This repetition underlines the mother's fears of her daughter at the peril of becoming the "slut" woman. The idea of the mother's cautionary advice of not becoming the "slut" that the girl is "so bent on becoming" is very central to the theme of the story. The mother is warning her daughter against becoming the slut and simultaneously scolding her of becoming the slut. This suggests that the mother is alarmed and fearful of her daughter's future. She apparently does not have trust in her daughter and perhaps certain that her daughter will not follow her advice and would contrastingly turn into the "slut" warned against.

At the first quarter of the story, the mother is seen talking to the girl and asking her to "try" walk like a lady and not like a slut. The words "try" and "bent" can be interpreted in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, they reveal the mother's loathe and lack of confidence and trust in her daughter as well as her fears of her future particularly the risk of turning into a slut. On the other hand, they implicitly uncover the mother's deep love and concern for her daughter's future that makes her rough and overprotective. The mother, perhaps, trusts her daughter but has no trust in society or people surrounding. The girl's semi-passivity and shy response suggests that she hardly realises what the mother means. Positioning the daughter as vulnerable and defenseless figure in opposition to the mother's active and strong presence implies the daughter's innocence and unawareness of her sexuality.

A few lines later, the mother's voice gets louder and more intense while teaching the daughter on how to avoid turning into the slut by teaching her how to take care of her dress and outer appearance and so avoid looking like the slut. The mother repeatedly uses the phrase: "the slut you are so bent on becoming" which arguably underlines the mother's fears for the girl's probably disgraceful future that is seemingly and certainly happening. The mother's unfortunate foresight of her daughter's future is further highlighted in the third quarter of the poem. The mother teaches her daughter how to properly behave like a lady particularly with men who she does not know well so they will not mistakenly recognise her as a slut. At this point, the mother is not only speaking her fears of her daughter's possible unfortunate future but also seems to be certain of her fears. The phrase, "the slut I have warned you against becoming" implicitly underscores the mother's constant fear and tremendous anxiety of her daughter's possible becoming the slut woman even though there is no sign of promiscuity. Nevertheless, the previous phrase emphasises the mother's fears that her daughter will not listen to her advice and contrastingly will turn her fears into reality. This implies that her daughter will not follow the advice and will be the slut the mother is warning her against. This timing of this phrase does not go chronologically with the text. The mother seems to be reminding the girl of becoming the slut she warned her against which means that she has already become the slut. This becomes more obvious toward the closing of the poem. The last line of the text provides a clear affirmative sentence of the mother's fears of her daughter's future to be. It is obvious here the mother's attitude toward her daughter's future and how useless her advice is. Let us consider the two lines below:

But what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?;
You mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread?

The girl is given only two chances to talk back to the mother or perhaps she talks to herself. The mother does not give her daughter the chance to reveal herself except for two times in the whole conversation; in the middle and in the end. The daughter's two timid projections to the mother's accusations take place at two places in the text. The first when she denies that she sings "benna" in Sunday and never in Sunday school. The second is when the daughter defies herself against the mother bitter accusation that her daughter will fail her and be the "kind of woman" and, precisely speaking; the "slut" she is warning her against becoming. The words, "benna" and "slut", are closely related to the

daughter's sexual life. Words like "feel", "near", and "touch" implicitly convey meanings of proximity and closeness to something taboo in the mother's terms. Apart from the mother's instructive piece of advice on how to become a lady, the mother is fearful of the girl's discovery of her sexuality. The mother puts a limit on the girl's curious nature, implicitly telling her that her sexual life has to remain secret, distant and better avoided. The girl's prompt reply, "*But what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?*" opens with the word but. The conjunction, "but", introduces a point of departure and shift in the whole speech and a clear contradiction to the mother's talk. The use of the word "bread" is metaphoric. The girl is being compared to a sort of dirty or unsatisfactory woman whom the baker will not allow near the bread. The bread is also symbolic of something holy, pure, clean, and fresh. The writer uses the word "bread" to signify and conceive the perilous, sensitive and fragile nature of innocent femininity and virginity getting spoiled and damaged by the filthiness of society.

The mother's concern for her daughter's behavior and suggestions of promiscuity is further emphasised in the closing lines when she advises the girl, "Always squeeze bread to make sure it's fresh". The daughter then innocently questions her mother that what she should do if the baker will not let her. Perhaps the baker normally would not let anyone touch or squeeze the bread to keep clean. Nonetheless, the mother's exploding reply, "You mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread?" – which suggests the baker's possible refusal – implicitly demonstrates the type of person whom the baker would not let near the bread. This line makes a clever closing to end the situation, hinting the girl's undisciplined and ill behavior as the only type of person a baker would not let near the bread would be one who is disreputable, notorious or dirty.

It is interesting how the word "bread" is repeated at the end of the two last lines of the text, creating a couplet and a rhyming pattern. The two closing lines of the text are rhymed together. The word bread is a good example of cacophony. It starts with the sound b and ends with the sound d, both of them are cacophonic. This adds to the noise, tense, and overcrowded atmosphere of the story. Also, it comes as a confirmation of negative feeling from the mother's point of view. Whether the daughter is given the chance to be the slut warned against or not, the mother seems to be certain that she will not listen and will turn into the slut.

Repetition is used extensively and in different forms in 'Girl'. Kincaid makes an excellent use of repetition which is not limited to the repetition of letters or words but also extends to the repetition of whole parts like phrases and sometimes full sentences. Parallel structure, anaphora, epiphora, alliteration, cacophony, and euphony are among the stylistic and poetic devices that create repetition and are utilised by Kincaid to achieve rhythmic and musical effect. This repetition also creates structure and meaning that makes the reader concentrates on a specific emotions, thoughts, and ideas and highlights the importance of the subject matter.

'Girl' obviously includes several examples of parallel structure that makes it meaningful. Parallel structure refers to the repetition of the same pattern of words or phrases within a sentence or a passage to show that repeated words or ideas are of equal importance. This technique is meaningful in the way it helps the writer highlight key points and significant thematic concerns and show their importance. In addition, this literary device helps the writer better organise ideas, make them easier to understand, and create satisfying rhythm. Part of the rhythm found in this text is made by this constant repetition. It also helps the reader to apprehend what is being written.

The text begins with the domestic rhythms of everyday life. The repetition of words such as "wash" as in line one and two signifies the mother's instructive and demanding voice. The mother's oppressive tone also indicates how the girl who is the addressee is overwhelmed by her commanding speech:

> **Wash the** white **clothes on** Monday **and put them on the** stone heap;
> **Wash the** color **clothes on** Tuesday **and put them on the** clothesline to dry; (Kincaid, 1983, 3)

The previous two lines contain similar words and about the same pattern or grammatical structure. They are almost identical. The mother gives her daughter orders on how to do house chores. Here, the writer repeats the words "wash the clothes" in order to emphasise her message and give the listener an overwhelming sense how difficult to live and grow as a girl in an Antiguan setting and culture. The mother's repetition creates a kind of rhythm that works well in this context of a mother-daughter conversation.

The repetition of full phrases noticed in 'Girl' helps to draw the reader's attention to the central theme of the text and clarify the writer's viewpoint regarding the necessity of becoming a lady and a proper housewife fulfilling the domestic expectations placed upon a woman. The mother's constant and effortful attempt to fulfill her maternal advice is seen through the repetition of phrases as well as full sentences. For example, phrases like "This is to" and "This is how you" are used in a repeated mode to emphasise the central situation and highlights the mother's attitude towards her daughter's future of womanhood. The mother repeats the phrase "This is how to" fifteen times and similarly repeats the phrase "This is how you" fifteen times. The previous phrases are used to teach the process of things and manage house matters. The mother is teaching her daughter the process of doing domestic matters like sewing and fixing clothes, house chores like ironing, sweeping, setting a table and gardening matters and planting.

Moreover, the repetition of phrases observes a specific structural pattern which moves from the part to the whole. See for example the lines below:

> **This is how you sweep a** corner;
> **This is how you sweep a** whole house;
> **This is how you sweep a** yard;

Those lines quoted above also show the mother's way of thinking and reveal the daughter's overwhelmingness, stress position and submission in opposite to the mother's pressing, persuasive and oppressive instructive tone.

More examples of repetition of phrases are found in the text. See below:

This is how you smile to someone you don't like too much;
This is how you smile to someone you don't like at all;
This is how you smile to someone you like completely; (Kincaid, 1983, 4)

The lines quoted above show how the mother's repetition of phrases is used with long phrases in a subsequent pattern. The words used and the way they are used worth consideration. The mother teaches her daughter some behavioural concepts and how to show her true feelings to people through smiling. She also divides the people into three groups. To recap, the mother notably creates a specific pattern with wording. She starts with "too much", then "at all" and last "completely".

The phrase "This is how to set a table for" is repeated five times in a subsequent pattern. It also shows a specific pattern of moving from the part to the whole or more precisely from the smallest piece to the biggest one:

This is how you set a table for tea;
This is how you set a table for tea;
This is how you set a table for dinner;
This is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest;
This is how you set a table for lunch;
This is how you set a table for breakfast;

The previous lines observe the employment of anaphora; the repetition of the phrase "This is how" at the beginning of successive clauses. The overt repetition of the phrase -about thirty times in the whole text- provokes plenty of meaning and fulfills a sense of poetic coherence and unique rhythm. The repetition articulates the daughter's emotional state which reaches its peak and provides harmony as well as unity to the entire conversation.

Repetition of full sentences is also seen in the text. Notice the two lines below:

This is how you iron your father's khaki shirt **so that** it doesn't **have a crease;**
This is how you iron your father's khaki pants **so that** they don't **have a crease**;
In the two lines quoted above, the writer creates a specific structure by the repetition of two full sentences. The two sentences are almost similar except for the two words, "shirt", and "pants". The mother teaches her daughter how to iron her father's clothes specifying colours and differentiating clothes by type. This dull repetition implies the mother's exaggerated desire that her daughter lives the life she has planned for her regardless of the girl's preferences which are clearly perceived as insignificant. It also asserts the mother's opinion of what is essential for her daughter's daily living.

It is noted how 'Girl' relies heavily on repetition and obviously goes beyond any logical chronological development of a story. In contrast to a traditional narrative approach, the story, as Kincaid presents it, has no beginning, no middle, or end to the stream. The mother's continuous train of thoughts contains some practical and helpful advice that she believes will assist her daughter in becoming an independent housewife in the future. She informs her daughter how to do some household chores such as washing, cooking, sweeping, ironing, sewing and setting the table. The mother also tells the girl how to do other things she thinks she will need to know about, including how to make herbal medicines and catch a fish. These pieces of advice imply the fact that the girl and the others of her sex live in a poor, countrified setting, where passing on such words is essential for daily living.

That is to say that in the Antiguan culture, women have limited roles outside the domestic sphere. Woman's identity is almost hidden beyond the domestic life which is quite evident in the daughter's almost passivity and lack of voice in the story. Obviously, the primary role of a woman is to marry and be a competent housewife taking care of husband, children, and the house. It is important to notice how the mother is passing the domestic knowledge she has learned into her daughter. She is also concerned that her daughter be a proper housekeeper. The story provides portrayal of traditional gender role of women and demanding society they are obligated to adhere to which was prevalent during the Victorian period. In the mid nineteenth century, Abrams contends, in a similar vein, that a woman's place was in the home, as domesticity and motherhood were considered by society at large to be a sufficient emotional fulfillment for females (Abrams, 2014).

Epiphora is another form of repetition that is used by Kincaid, nevertheless, few examples are found. Epiphora or epistrophe is the opposite of anaphora. It is a stylistic device in which the same words or a phrases are repeated at the end of successive lines, clauses or sentences (Zhang, 2005, 123). As a rhetorical or stylistic device, it imparts a distinctive rhythm to the text. Examples of epiphora are found as in the following example:

This is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't **have a crease**;
This is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't **have a crease** (Kincaid, 1983, 4).
In the two lines above, Kincaid presents another important domestic household task in the Antiguan woman's domain. The mother teaches her daughter how to carefully do the ironing work differentiating clothes by type. The phrase "have a crease" is repeated twice and for a particular effect. The textual emphasis on well-ironed through the use of epiphora demonstrates the importance of doing this job, that is demeaned as "woman's work", with responsibility and great care. The mother's emphasis that ironing, father's clothes here, has to be done with ultimate precision provides the implication of the structure of Antiguan society and how men and women roles are clearly defined. It also perpetuates the idea of patriarchy and privilege in the relationship between women and men which results in female submissiveness and male dominance.

Kincaid also employs epiphora to put much emphasis on the importance of being a kind of a woman who should be near the bread to feel it through the baking process:

But what if the baker won't *let me feel the **bread**?*;
You mean to say that after all you are really going to be

> the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the **bread**? (Kincaid, 1983, 5)

In the lines quoted above, the word bread is repeated twice for particular effect. This example of epiphora underscores the mother's insulting accusation and suspicious thinking of the girl's "potential sluttishness" (J. Brooks Bouson, 2005, 26). The supposed girl's "sluttish" behavior is condemned as shameful and very painful fact by the mother.

Beyond the poetic device already discussed, Kincaid employ some sound techniques such as alliteration. Alliteration that refers to the "repetition of the same consonant sounds or of different vowel sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables", (Minkova, 2004, 78) heightens the integrity of the text. It also creates musical quality that leads to produce rhythmical pattern within the lines of the text. John Strachan and Richard Terry elucidate the effect of alliteration on the story structure which includes producing both the structural unity and formal connection to the poem:

> The effect of alliteration is to create a formal connection between the first and second halves of the line (or between the first half-line and second half line as it would originally have been). In this sense, it gives a structural integrity to the poem and also, as all sound patterns do, lends it a sort of musicality. Yet, the sound-patterning overall serves a functional rather than a descriptive purpose (Strachan and Terry, 2011, 50).

Kincaid makes an extensive use of alliterative patterns in 'Girl', such as in "way", "won't", "well", "wash" and "water"; "soak" and "salt"; "Sunday" and "school"; "such", "someone" and "stomach"; "like", "lady" and "like"; "slut" and "so"; "sing", "Sunday" and "school"; "fruits", "flies" and "follow"; "sing", "Sundays", "Sunday" and "school"; "how", "hem", and "hem"; "looking" and "like"; "This", "that" and "they"; "far" and "from"; "growing" and "gets"; "you" and "yard"; "smile" and "someone" (which are repeated three times at three successive lines); "table" and "tea"; "way", "won't" and "warned"; "every day" and "even"; "pick" and "people"; "blackbirds", "because", "be" and "blackbird"; "pepper" and "pot"; "make" and "medicine" (which are repeated twice at two successive lines); "way" and "won't"; "work", "ways" and "work"; "what" and "won't", and "be", "baker" and "bread" (Kincaid, 1983, 3-5). Alliteration in such cases directs the reader's attention on a specific part of the story and invokes a sort of rhythm and flow within.

Furthermore, each line almost invariably has an alliterative letter and an initial rhyme, which indicates that the rhyming occurs at the beginning of lines not at the end, as shown in the italicised and underlined words and consonants below. This helps to create harmony and percussion as well as music.

> **This** is how to sew on a button;
> **This** is how to make a button–hole for **th**e button you have just sewed on;
> **This** is how to hem a dress when you see **th**e hem coming down and so to prevent Yourself from looking like **th**e slut I know you are so bent on becoming;
> **This** is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so **th**at it doesn't have a crease;
> **This** is how you iron your father's khaki pants so **th**at they don't have a crease;
> **This** is how you grow okra—far from **th**e house, because okra tree harbors red ants;
> **Th**en you are growing dasheen, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your Throat itch when you are eating it;
> **This** is how you sweep a corner;
> **This** is how you sweep a whole house;
> **This** is how you sweep a yard;
> **This** is how you smile to someone you don't like too much;
> **This** is how you smile to someone you don't like at all;
> **This** is how you smile to someone you like completely;
> **This** is how you set a table for tea;
> **This** is how you set a table for dinner;
> **This** is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest;
> **This** is how you set a table for lunch;
> **This** is how you set a table for breakfast;
> **This** is how to behave in **th**e presence of men who don't know you very well,
> And **this** way **th**ey won't recognize immediately **th**e slut I have warned you against becoming;
> Be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit;
> Don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know;
> Don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something;
> Don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all;
> **This** is how to make a bread pudding;
> **This** is how to make doukona;
> **This** is how to make pepper pot;
> **This** is how to make a good medicine for a cold;
> **This** is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child;
> **This** is how to catch a fish;
> **This** is how to throw back a fish you don't like, and that way something bad won't fall on you;
> **This** is how to bully a man;
> **This** is how a man bullies you;
> **This** is how to love a man;
> And if **this** doesn't work there are other ways, and if **th**ey don't work don't feel too bad about giving up;
> **This** is how to spit up in **th**e air if you feel like it, and **this** is how to move quick so **th**at it doesn't fall on you;
> **This** is how to make ends meet; (Kincaid, 1983, 4-5)

'Girl' does not maintain a clear or specific orderly style of rhyme. A sense of chaos controls the text as rhyme is chaotic and noisy. However, it bears a distinctive rhythmic quality through the use of various poetic devices. The author relies on specific musical elements to add an emotional depth to the situation. Cacophony and euphony are used differently and are used in different situations.

Cacophony is used extensively in 'Girl'. In *A Glossary of Literature and Composition* (2003) cacophony is defined as "the result of a disagreeable combination of sounds [.] which is often employed deliberately to emphasize discordant idea or unpleasant image" (46). It refers to the use of words and phrases that imply strong harsh sounds within the phrase and creates a disturbing objectionable atmosphere. Cacophony is very common in poetry and is usually used by writers as a purposeful technique to set up a harsh and jarring scene for the reader. The use of harsh, dissonant, and inharmonious sounds is meant to highlight the uncomfortable situation of the girl who is pressingly ordered by her mother. The cacophony used in 'Girl' helps Kincaid to describe the tense situation and conveys an overwhelming tone of the dialogue felt by the girl. The emotional upheaval of the dialogue is resulted by the mother stressing tone who is delivering a set of orders. The girl is overwhelmed by the mother's commanding voice. It is importantly seen how the cacophonic tone is used to convey the emotional state of the mother who persistently instructs her daughter to do important chores or jobs. For example, she repeatedly uses the word "do" in the negative form. The use of the word "don't" does not only reveal the emotional state of the character, the mother, which lists a number of situations but also the psychological state of the girl who is stressed and overwhelmed by the mother's speech. In addition, the imperative word "Don't", which itself includes the cacophonic sound "d", suggests an overshadowing effect that dominates the entire conversation and fails any possible attempt of the daughter to defend herself. This cacophonic effect also reflects the harshness and the seriousness of the mother. The following lines are given as an example:

> **D**on'**t** s**q**ua**t** **d**own to **p**lay mar**b**les—you are no**t** a **b**oy, you know;
> **D**on'**t** **p**ick **p**eople's flowers—you migh**t** **c**a**tch** something;
> **D**on'**t** throw s**t**ones a**t** **b**la**ckb**ir**ds**, **b**e**c**ause it might no**t** **b**e a **blackbird** a**t** all;

'Girl' is characterised by a cacophonic tone and unpleasant rhythm used effectively to reflect and convey the heavy and oppressive presence of the maternal voice. The cacophonic succession of "p" sound in the second line conjures the daughter's shudder of fear emanating from the mother's ominous voice. Justin Edwards comments on the detrimental effects of the mother's words on the daughter's emotional state from the daughter's perspective in the way "love blurs into hate as protection becomes destruction" (Edwards, 2007, 18).

In order to deliver the intended powerful message behind the mother's advices, Kincaid chooses words carefully and arranges them to produce a harsh, jarring and unpleasant tone that corresponds with the strident subject matter. In her work, Kincaid uses hard and unharmonious consonants in order to create cacophony. For example, "k, *t, g, d, p,* and *b, ch and sh*" sounds are running throughout the work. For example, the mother's preventing her daughter to sing "benna" in Sunday school is expressed through deliberate selection of cacophonic words. Here the words with cacophony are shown in bold letters.

> Is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?;
> Always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach;
> On Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming;
> Don't sing benna in Sunday school (Kincaid, 1983, 3).

More importantly, the daughter's reply also has been conveyed through the use of cacophonic sounds:

> ***B**u**t** I **d**o**n't** si**n**g **b**enna on Su**n****d**ays a**t** all and never in Su**n****d**ay s**ch**ool* (Kincaid, 1983, 4).

The line quoted above provides another example of cacophony that represents the mother-daughter dialogue's unpleasant and harsh nature that directly affects the listener. The writer normally uses such sounds to invoke negative emotions regarding the mother, such as being nervous and anxious, and for the daughter as being afraid and worried. Cacophony here puts the reader at discomfort and makes the text more serious:

> Always s**q**ueeze **b**rea**d** to ma**k**e sure i**t**'s fresh;
> ***B**u**t** what **if** the **b**ake**r** won'**t** le**t** me feel the **b**rea**d**?*;
> You mean **t**o say tha**t** after all you are really **g**oin**g** **t**o **b**e the **k**in**d** of woman who the **b**a**k**er won'**t** le**t** near the bread? (Kincaid, 1983, 5)

It can be said that Kincaid uses cacophony when she aims to make an emphasis on important issues as discussed in the above examples. For instance, when she gives orders or commands to do things or not to do them. However, she uses euphony, which is defined as "the pleasing combination of the sounds of language" (Pfeiler, 2003,110). Euphony involves the use of harmonious and pleasing sounds, when things are less important, such as giving instructions to do some chores. A few examples of words with euphony are presented below in bold:

> **Th**is is how **you** **swee**p a cor**n**er;
> **Th**is is how **you** **swee**p a **wh**o**l**e hou**s**e;
> **Th**is is how **you** **swee**p a **y**ard;
> **Th**is is how **you** **sm**i**l**e to **s**o**m**eo**n**e you do**n**'t **l**ike t**oo** much;
> **Th**is is how **you** **sm**i**l**e to **s**o**m**eo**n**e you do**n**'t **l**ike at a**ll**;
> **Th**is is how **you** **sm**i**l**e to **s**o**m**eo**n**e you **l**ike co**m**p**l**ete**l**y;
> **Th**is is how **you** **s**et a tab**l**e for tea;
> **Th**is is how **you** **s**et a tab**l**e for di**nn**er;
> **Th**is is how **you** **s**et a tab**l**e for di**nn**er **w**i**th** an i**m**porta**n**t gue**s**t;
> **Th**is is how **you** **s**et a tab**l**e for **l**unch;
> **Th**is is how **you** **s**et a tab**l**e for break**f**a**s**t;

In the above-mentioned excerpt, Kincaid uses euphony which gives soothing and pleasing effects. Long vowel sounds like "sweep", "too", and "you", and semi-vowels like "s", "y" and "w" sounds are exquisitely used. Kincaid also uses soft and harmonious consonants to create euphony. For example, "s", "v", "l", "m", "n", "th", and "f" sounds are running throughout the text. Such succession of words are melodic in nature, hence they produce pleasant sounds.

It can be said that Kincaid utilises cacophony with important issues, particularly, with important matters that deals with the society because she wants the girl to be a good model in the society. Nevertheless, she utilises euphony with less

important issues as when she gives the girl some instructions related to chores or home tasks.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing discussion, it has been argued that Kincaid's 'Girl' transgresses the boundaries of generic labels which makes it read as a prose poem than a short story. Not only the unconventional structure of 'Girl', but also its employment of poetic language and poetic devices that interrogates its classification and observes its moving across various literary genres by collapsing generic codes. The paper has argued the presence of some poetic qualities which makes this piece of short fiction read as a prose poem considering the poetic devices and tropes found. There are some parallels between 'Girl' and poetry. 'Girl' features stubbornness for classification notably its use of some poetic devices and tropes. 'Girl' emulates poetry particularly in its use of repetition and certain sound devices and patterns used for specific effects. The repetitive nature of 'Girl' turns it into a poetic piece that is written in prose. The text's utilising of certain lyrical traits observes it as a hybrid genre of poetry and prose. The writer's use of repetition, alliteration, cacophony and other poetic devices is so effective that a reader can delve deeper into the story's meaning particularly the portrayed tension between the conforming mother and the resisting daughter. This brief fragment is noted for its complexity and remarkable use of poetic devices through which the writer portrays a vision of a real world for the daughter but from the girl's point of view. The text profoundly highlights the power of poetic language which also acts as a unifying feature.

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