

## **Jamaica Kincaid and Antigua Quest for Identity: A Post Colonial Reading of Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place***

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### **Abstract**

This work uses postcolonial tools to examine the depiction of Antigua society's identity in order to highlight how Jamaica Kincaid struggles to resist the identity crisis engendered by colonisation. The exploration of *A Small Place* reveals the influence of colonisation through oppression, cultural encounter, hybridity, education and language influence. It also sheds light on the author's quest for original identity in Antigua.

**Key-words:** postcolonial, identity, language, otherness, displacement, loss, crisis, resistance, quest.

### **Résumé**

Ce travail se sert d'outils postcoloniaux pour examiner la représentation de l'identité de la société antiguaise dans le but de mettre en évidence la lutte de Jamaica Kincaid pour résister à la crise d'identité engendrée par la colonisation. L'étude menée sur *A Small Place* révèle l'influence de la colonisation à travers l'oppression, la rencontre culturelle, l'hybridité, l'éducation et l'influence de la langue. Elle met également en lumière la quête de l'auteur pour retrouver l'identité originelle d'Antigua.

**Mots-clés :** postcolonial, identité, langage, altérité, déplacement, perte, crise, résistance, quête.

## Introduction

Any culture seems to be in reality multicultural and shapes its features through its relation to other cultures. This contact between cultures may be what forms the diversity in identities which overlap and result in a new society holding different potentials. However, all human beings, besides bearing their individual identities, hold an identity connected to their societies and countries. These fields of identity are principally concealing with human beings, their thoughts and beliefs, the ways in which they interact with one another and the structures and systems within which these interactions take place. Identities are intricately bound up in each of these concerns. In this perspective, Stephen Mennell (1994) points out:

Identities are multifaceted and layered. They range from the intimately personal and unique to the broadly collective and binding. Identities are a way of making sense of which we are and as such may be the result of a very individual process of reflection and choice and an empowering expression of beliefs, tastes and values. However, identities are also socially constructed and determined by wider social, cultural, political and economic contexts. They may be reinterpreted or even imposed upon certain groups or individuals by others, often as a result of inequalities of power and authority. In this case identities may be divisive and repressive or even rebellious and subversive.

(Mennell, 1994, p.1)

If identity refers to a way of making sense of whom one is, then to lose its originality simply means to be uprooted, and losing the very essence of one's existence. In other words, being without original identity makes people feel strange. After a very long time of experiencing suffering and a brutal contact with colonisers, Antigua finds itself unconsciously incorporating aspects of the colonial ways in their original identity. This indignation leads Jamaica Kincaid to write *A Small Place*<sup>3</sup>, her famous essay.

*A Small Place*, published in 1988, is an essay about a British colony, a small island called Antigua that is located in the West Indies. The book is divided into four parts in which the author motivates her views and justifies her resentment towards globalisation, exploitation, tourism, colonialism and identity crisis. In her novel she deals with Antiguan's grievances after encountering the British coloniser's. The author exposes her people cultural dispossession and strangeness before the new created way of living. She ends by resisting colonisers' heritage and claiming the "old" Antigua. In the first half of the novel, the narrator describes typical tourists, and the ignorance they have as well as the hate of the natives. In the second half, the narrator discusses Post-Colonialist Antigua as Kincaid remembers from her troubling childhood experiences and the impacts of colonial practices today.

The notion of identity is shaped and constructed through the works of some scholars. British philosopher such as David Hume deals with identity issues in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). He questions common notion of personal identity and argues that there is no

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<sup>3</sup>Jamaica, Kincaid. (1988), *A Small Place*, New-York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, From this page on, *A Small Place* will stand for (*ASP.*) and further references to this novel will appear in the body of the work followed by the page number of the quotation.

such thing as a permanent self' that last over time. David Hume's assertion matches the notion of identity search. In his turn, Ayla Kiran (2005) tackles identity issue in *A Small Place*. His main focus is that Antigua has no motherland, no fatherland, no tongue, and then the quest for Antigua identity becomes a paramount point. Arundhati Sethi (2018) deals with the issue of remapping a Small Place in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*. Margherita Moro (2016) sees tourism in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* as Neo-Colonialism.

Jamaica Kincaid may be seen as a prominent figure among the postcolonial writers who are interested in notions such as nation and identity through the literature they produce. She also reflects the experiences and relations of her society with the colonising power. Through her essay, the legacy of colonialism makes her deal issues in her quest for identity. She explores constantly this theme through her writing. In this respect, this work aims at highlighting that the ways Jamaica Kincaid resists to the influence of colonisers is for her a means of Antigua's identity quest. Hence, one can wonder how far Kincaid portrays identity in her work. Then, what strategies she uses to demonstrate the crisis of Antigua's identity? In other words, what impacts can colonisation have on the Antigua society in terms of identity alteration? Furthermore, how does she picture her resistance against the colonisers' influence and claim Antigua's own identity?

To answer the above questions, this work is conducted following two main parts. Framed into the postcolonial tools, the first part sheds light on identity crisis portrayal in *A Small Place*. This part depicts colonisers' influence on Antigua's society. Those influences alter Antigua's original identity. The second part argues that Jamaica Kincaid acts to claim original Antigua. Tracing patterns through symbols, action, time and space, this part emphasises the role the main character plays in questing Antigua's identity.

### **1- The Exploration of Identity Crisis in Antigua**

In *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid expresses her strong opinions concerning Antigua. She expresses about how she resents the Antiguan society because of the society queer appearance, corrupted system, and the colonisation's influences over Antigua. During and after colonisation Antigua society is affected and the colonial memory is implanted in the minds and hearts of Antiguan people. The book provides the opportunity to explore Kincaid's relationship with her homeland as well as her development of identity in light of cultural expectations. This part of the work demonstrates that Antigua is under the influence of colonisers' cultures.

This point deals with the identity alteration question. It explores items that influence Antigua people's identity. It analyses all the elements coming from the cultural encounter mostly from the colonisers' culture one that deeply impacts those of the Antiguan people. It deals with some factors such as colonisation, migration, hybridity, multiculturalism and language. The impact of these factors modify considerably the thoughts, beliefs, the actions and the original nature of local Antiguan people.

### 1-1- The Exploration of Education and Language Problem

“You are a tourist and you have not yet seen a school in Antigua, you have not yet seen the hospital in Antigua, you have not yet seen a public monument in Antigua” (*ASP. 3*). Colonisers may use education to control their colonies. Through education, colonisers can set and implement their language. Colonisers control the thoughts and ideas held by Antiguans through implanting colonial language and ideologies in their minds. As a matter of fact, the original culture and identity Antiguans are perceived as multicultural. Kincaid refers to the problem of language in Antigua. After the colonial experience, in Antigua the official language changes into English and it is the only language she can use to express the crime committed:

...is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? 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. (*ASP. 31-32*)

Kincaid deals the educational problem by symbolising the system with the old library which the reparation is still pending over time. The sign on the old colonial library in Antigua's capital reads, “THIS BUILDING WAS DAMAGED IN THE EARTHQUAKE OF 1974. REPAIRS ARE PENDING.” (*ASP. 9*) As Kincaid points out, both the sign and the damage to which it refers date back to the colonial period in Antigua. When Kincaid writes *A Small Place*, the repair is still pending. Clearly, says Kincaid, people who can wait for something that is pending for so long must have an unusual sense of time. The library stands on both a literal and a metaphorical fault line. Just as the earthquake shakes the ground under the building, so colonisation causes a seismic disruption in the Antigua's cultural identity. The old library building stands for the decaying system of education:

The library is one of those splendid old buildings from colonial times, and the sign telling of repairs is a splendid old sign of from colonial times...they go to church and thank God a British God, for this. But you should not think of confusion that must lie in all that and you must not think of the confusion that must lie in all that and you must not of the damaged library. (*ASP. 9*)

The library which literally symbolises the temple of knowledge is in ruins for more than a decade and its repair is still pending. For Kincaid, the status of the library is emblematic of the status of the island as a whole. From a double-headed point of view, one can perceive that education is in ruin whether it is the legacy of colonisation or that of the Antiguans; no education really interests the authorities who do not undertake rehabilitation of educational structures. The educational conflict shows through in this passage through the ruin of the library building and the lack of interest in its restoration.

Kincaid's book portrays a conflict between coloniser's language and her own personality through English language: “I met the world through England and if the world wanted to meet me it would have to do so through England.” (*APS. 33*) This passage explains that Kincaid as victim of colonisation is not able to separate herself from the language of the

coloniser, the criminal. Jamaica Kincaid points out how the colonisers dismaying a sad reality to Antigua and how those colonisers ripped out the language of Antigua. The natives have no true memory or knowledge of their own language, thus the loss of identity.

### **1-2- Hybridity, multiculturalism and Otherness in *A Small Place***

*A Small Place* itself is certainly a perfect example of what a hybrid writer is. According to Brettschneider Marla (2021, pp. 1-10), Jamaica Kincaid is born Elaine Cynthia Potter Richardson. At seventeen years old in 1966, she moves to New York to function as a live in housekeeper. She does not come back to Antigua until she is 36.

Kincaid admits to meet the world through England: “I met the world through England and if the world wanted to meet me it would have to do so through England.” (APS. 33) She is from Caribbean island principally from Antigua, a former colony of Great Britain. This presentation of the author makes her a hybrid character whose coloring shows not only an African-American but also an African-British. Despite Kincaid’s criticism of Western influences on her government ruling of Antigua she herself is a thoroughly westernised author even if she does not opt for hybridised identities and multiculturalism. Further on, *A Small Place* depicts multiculturalism in Antigua when Kincaid asserts that money for change and taxis are no longer in local currency but in foreign one:

You see a man, a taxi driver; you ask him to take you to your destination; he quotes you a price. You immediately think that the price is in the local currency, for you are tourist and you are familiar with these things, you feel even more free, for things are seem so cheap, but then your driver ends by saying ‘in U.S. currency. (APS. 5)

Also, one can read that Syrian and Lebanese nationals regularly lend the government money. Syrian and Lebanese nationals own large amounts of land in Antigua, and on the land they own in the countryside they build condominiums that they then “sell prices quoted in United States dollars” (ASP. 62.) Through the character of the author, the entire Antiguan people can be described as hybrid. The composition of the population effectively shows a cultural mix which obviously generates a hybrid culture: “The Syrians and Lebanese are called those foreigners even though most of them have acquired Antiguan citizenship. North Americans and Europeans are not foreigners; they are white people. Everybody is used to white people.” (ASP. 63) Here what Kincaid wants to say is that Antiguan people in a way or another become multi-cultural and hybridised in every aspect of their lives. They not only adopted western ways and replaced them with their own ways, but they also took from the western culture and ascribed it to their own culture:

Have you ever wondered to yourself why it is that all people like me seem to have learned from you is how to imprison and murder each other, how to govern badly, and how to take the wealth of our country and place it in Swiss bank ac is how to corrupt counts? Have you ever wondered why it is that all we seem to have learned from you our societies and how to be tyrants? (ASP. 34)

Corruption is for Kincaid a sign that people of Antigua are no longer the same; they adopt western ways of thinking and forget about their real identities. They become more material and forget about their values concerning collectivity. Soon after colonisation it seems that this idea is in fact implanted in their minds. This does not forcibly mean that they lost all their traditions and values, but they change some of them and add new strange ones. For Kincaid, her country is finding it difficult to stave off poverty for the simple reason that it takes it upon itself to learn how to run their economies from British ways. So people are taught the principles and system of self-interest and are told to forget the ancient notion of commonwealth and collective good.

Antiguan identities cannot deny the fact that they are hybridised. The language or the style used in that novel is forcibly a product of hybrid. After the colonial experience, in Antigua the official language changes into English and it is the only language Kincaid can use:

...is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? 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" (*ASP*. 31-32)

The fact for Kincaid to mention that the only language she knows is the language of the criminal is a way of pointing out that she feels foreign to the language she uses. She no longer has her own language to truly express her disgust with colonialism and British ideology. She is dispossessed of her maternal identity and she shows that she is another person who is forced to join the side of the criminal. Something she doesn't want but which imposes itself on her since she doesn't have the choice of another language. She feels alienated from her original language.

From this passage one can understand that Kincaid is not using authentic Antiguan language. She is writing and speaking in not an authentically Antiguan language even if she depicts her societies, traditions and identities. Kincaid in a way or in another rejects the use of English language but she does not use any other language for she is born during colonisation and the English language is already settled in Antigua. This is to say that people of Antigua lose their original identity. They no longer know who they are. They hold neither their traditional identity, nor the British's identity.

This passage also shows that Kincaid is having an inner struggle to determine who she is in reality. She does not want to be English but she can do nothing about it. She has to make do with it. She is English outside with her way of speaking but she remains Antiguan from the inside. What people do is from another hybrid tradition, a tradition in transition between English and Antiguan not pure Antiguan's traditions. Even if Kincaid rejects the fact of hybridisation she can't propose another one for people are overthrowing their own culture and fully adopting the foreign one. Even if Kincaid in this novel seems to hold a position against the hybridisation of culture, she wants his people to remain culturally pure. She does not want her people to conflate traditional behaviors with British ways. She assumes in a way or another that she is a

hybrid character and her fellow citizens are hybridised too. Due to all the alteration in Antigua, Kincaid feels as foreigner in their own county.

Franz Fanon (2004, p. 182) asks “Who am I in reality?” this question translates the confusing being that Fanon can feel in his mind. The coloniser through his ongoing quest to negate the “Other” forces the colonised to become strange and uprooted. This is exactly the question which motivates Kincaid to struggle for her original identity. It is true that this hybrid feature comes from the multicultural atmosphere that produced Antiguan society but the split in the Antiguan world occurs because of the hegemony that the English creates towards the Antiguan. The concept of Otherness can therefore be applied in the context of Antigua.

According to Jean-Francois Staszak (2008, pp. 2-3), “the feeling of Otherness is implanted by the westerners into the mind of the other so as to perpetuate their ideologies...this Otherness is a part of identity since the postcolonial being has the feature of bearing a multicultural identity.” Kincaid is presenting the example of the educated woman who finds herself caught between two conflicting identities. This is to say that hybridity strengthens the feeling of Otherness. Kincaid herself is an “Other” to herself. So the world of Kincaid is divided into two worlds which are the old Antigua and the new one. This position may be perceived as the state of in-betweenness.

This state of in-betweenness is explained by Edward Woode (2001, p. 74) as follows: “In-betweenness of characters is the result of their having two or more other identities inhabiting their postcolonial subjectivity...” And this in-betweenness and expression of multiculturalism and hybridity reflects Kincaid herself. She mirrors Antigua, which she is not satisfied with, through her writings. Through the image of the church, Kincaid reveals the fact of the in-betweenness of the Antiguan society which finds itself roaming from the side of traditions and the imported God from the British:

Not very long after The Earthquake Antigua got its independence from Britain, making Antigua a state in its own right, and Antiguanians are so proud of this that each year, to mark the day, they go to church and thank God a British God, for this But you should not think of the confusion that must lie in all that and you must not think of the damaged library. You have brought your own books with you, and among them is one of those new books about economic history, one of those books explaining how the West (meaning Europe and North America after its conquest and settlement by Europeans) (ASP. 9)

Kincaid sees the Western culture as an “Other” one. Even if according to Bhabha (1994, p. 64), “the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity; never a self-fulfilling prophecy-it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image”, for Kincaid identity seems to refer to what determines the basic cultural values of her society.

### 1-3- Colonisation and Corruption as Catalysers for Antigua's Loss of Cultural Values

The book starts by informing the reader: "If you come to Antigua as a tourist this is what you will see." (ASP. 3) Kincaid describes her homeland, as an island in which corruption and the mimicking of British ways become an unquestionable part of life. She affirms: "As if, observing the event of tourism, they have absorbed it so completely that they have made the degradation and humiliation of their daily lives into their own." (ASP. 43) Kincaid presents a detailed description of the Antigua's landscape with the sad and bitter narratives. Kincaid discusses the external forces that plague Antigua and also points out the internal ones, namely corruption which exists and is inherited from colonisers:

AND SO YOU can imagine how I felt when, one day, in Antigua, standing on Market Street, looking up one way and down the other, I asked myself; Is the Antigua I see before me, self-ruled, a worse place than what it was when it was dominated by the bad-minded English and all the bad-minded things they brought with them? How did Antigua get to such a state that I would have to ask myself this? For the answer on every Antigua's lips to the question "What is going on here now?" is "The government is corrupt. They are thief, they are big thief." Imagine, then, the bitterness and the shame in me as I tell you this. I was standing on Market Street in front of the library. The library! But why is the library on Market Street? I had asked myself. (ASP. 41)

The narrator, to express her rage at seeing the disarray and dishonor in which Antigua is plunged following the arrival of the colonisers, describes the physical state of the island. This description is not only physical but also reflects the moral decay of the Antiguan who trample on their own identity and appropriate the corrupt identity of the colonisers:

Again, Antigua is a small place, a small island. It is nine miles wide by twelve miles long. It was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493. Not too long after, it was settled by human rubbish from Europe, who used enslaved but noble and exalted human beings from Africa (all masters of every stripe are rubbish, and all slaves of every stripe are noble and exalted; there can be no question about this) to satisfy their desire for wealth and power, to feel better about their own miserable existence, so that they could be less lonely and empty-a European disease. (ASP. 80)

Kincaid describes the loss of African valuable nature due to colonisation by affirming in her book that: "So, too, with the slaves...they are no longer noble and exalted [African] beings." (ASP. 81) She goes further by pointing out the very visible and disturbing side of corruption through the Japanese cars that invade Antigua. One cannot quickly understand the very significance of the Japanese cars spread all over the island. As tourist, one may think that it is a matter of preference amid many other brands of cars. Kincaid says that only a local can see the significance. Only government officials own all these cars and the deals that accompany them. The great number of Japanese cars is a means of making illicit money. For Kincaid, the Japanese cars throughout Antigua are a potent symbol both of the pervasive corruption and endemic in even the most mundane exchanges on the island. This connotation that Jamaica



Kincaid makes of the Japanese cars does not leave Arundhati Sethi indifferent. Arundhati Sethi (2018), in the same way, shares the point of view of Jamaica Kincaid when he states:

The picturesque sea that we perceive through the eyes of the tourist is transformed into a horrifying palimpsest carrying multiple narratives of its own land. She traces the incongruity of the dilapidated cars and the expensive car models running on them. Even the electric and telephone poles lining these roads and the cars running on them marked by power politics are shown to be perfect manifestations of corrupt postcolonial eco-political alliances. (Sethi, 2018, p. 3)

Through the image of the old Japanese cars with which the authorities do their business without worrying about the well-being of the populations, Kincaid shows the degradation of Antiguan social values. The relentless pursuit of money and individual comfort instituted by colonial capitalism ended up triumphing over the values of sharing, and the common well-being that abounds in Antiguan society before. Kincaid portrays tourists somewhere as neocolonists. Neocolonists under the façade of tourism replace colonists. Moro (2016, p. 47) argues that “while they lay in private beaches and stay in luxurious hotels, Antiguan remain poor citizens whose government is least concerned about improving their living conditions.” The narrator describes a society dived in the corrupted means of governance inherited from the big masters:

People close to the Prime Minister openly run one of the largest houses of prostitution in Antigua. Some offshore banks are fronts for bad people hiding money acquired through dealings in drugs, or the other bad ways there are to acquire money, though it seems to be true that in Antigua all the ways there are to acquire large sums of money are bad ways. It is not a secret that a minister is involved in drug trafficking. (ASP. 59)

*A Small Place* shows corruption and racism in Antigua. Throughout the whole book, Jamaica Kincaid expresses her outrage towards colonialism, where she then acknowledges the corruption left in its wake. The reader can acknowledge her anguish when she asserts: “The government is for sale; anybody from anywhere can come to Antigua and for a sum of money can get what he wants” (ASP. 47). The narrator shows through these acts of corruption that Antigua has lost its value of humanism, living together and sharing. Colonial capitalism is introduced and settled at the heart of decision-making bodies down to the average citizen. All these plausible confusion and chaos unveiled a country where “there is no culture...no culture” (ASP. 49) and no identity as the island motto stipulates: “A People to Mold, a nation to Build.” (ASP. 48) To crown the whole, there is not a “monument in Antigua” (ASP. 3) to represent the proper cultural identity of Antigua people’s spirit.

## **2- Resisting to Antigua’s Identity Alienation**

The former English colony Antigua may be thought to be free, but basically it is heading straight for cultural and identity alienation. Kincaid depicts a society that appears to be Antiguan in form but corrupt in spirit. The new identity that can be attributed to Antigua is a migrant identity. The appearance is Antiguan but the background is British and drains the traits of the coloniser. Kincaid then rebels against this strange appearance of her society and leads a literary fight for decolonisation. Bill Ashcroft et al. (1995) see this process as a continuous

process of resistance and reconstruction. The fight for decolonisation or even the fight for the quest for true identity led by Jamaica Kincaid in *A Small Place* is visible. Kincaid leads her fight first by claiming her African origins through the change of her name in African name. Later on, she affixes her new African's name to all her literary works. Through a well-structured and coordinated narrative, Kincaid extols the spiritual, humanitarian and identity wonders of a pre-colonial Antigua. She goes further in her fight by inviting her entire community's members to reject the ideology of the coloniser so as to become the true Antiguan.

### **2-1- Jamaica Kincaid as Living Symbol of British Name Rejection**

According to Brettschneider Marla (2021, pp. 1-10), Jamaica Kincaid is conceived in St. Johns, Antigua, when it is still under British pioneer rule. At seventeen years old in 1966, she moves to New York to function as a live in housekeeper. She does come back to Antigua until she is 36. By then, Elaine Cynthia Potter Richardson changes her name to Jamaica Kincaid. *A Small Place* is an incensed essay about prejudice and defilement in Antigua. In *A Small Place*, she records her angry response to her homeland when she visits there after colonial period.

The change of her name from British origin is the beginning of the demonstration of her indignation towards the coloniser. She undertakes by this act the repossession of her original identity. More precisely, she undertakes the repossession of herself, her African affirmation and her conviction of identity which make her what she transcribes in her essay. Jamaica Kincaid's actions do not betray her writings. She declines the foreign patronymic identity and gives herself her true identity base. The change of her name gives her credit in her anti-colonialist fight and symbolises her as the cornerstone that supports all her people in the resistance against cultural identity alienation.

Kincaid carries the weight of the resistance on her shoulders. She has a great sense of responsibility and revolutionary combat. This is why she affirms: "we Antiguan, for I am one, have a great sense of things and the more meaningful the thing..." (*ASP*. 8) Even being unique among her people, she carries the torch of resistance without fear and for the glory of the anti-colonialist struggle.

### **2-2- Rebirthing "Old" Antigua's Values and Identity**

For Sherin Johnson (2019, p. 216), Kincaid "collapses binaries oppositions such as tourist/native and black/white to argue that tourism is implicated in this hegemonic process." This idea translates the very essence of her identity fight. She is therefore claiming the goodness of her own African identity which she deems valuable and superior to the white men's one.

Kincaid asserts that Antigua is an island "where the sun always shines and where the climate is deliciously hot and dry..." (*ASP*. 4) Kincaid argues that Antigua is full of living soul, goodness and good sense where people share common wealth and joy. The pleasures of her previous Antigua vanish with the implantation of the colonisers. Recalling the qualities of the old Antigua is a kind of supplication and appealing of the readers to bear together her struggle to rebuild her island so that it can regain its charms.

When she contemplates the beauty of her cultural identity, she can write that Antigua now possesses: “no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that an excess of love sometimes brings, and worst and most painful of all, no tongue” (*ASP. 31*) From there, Kincaid promotes the original Antiguan values bound with spirituality and humanisms. She revives these values with the aim of giving credibility and intensifying her struggle. She thus appeals to the reader’s conscience and invites him to embrace the unequalled humanitarian values that Antigua possessed before the coloniser comes to sow egocentric and capitalist confusion.

Kincaid, to give greatness to the esteem that she places in the African human being, attributes to Africans the qualifier of “Noble-mind men.” (*ASP.10*) She also addresses the colonisers by letting them know that “even if [she] really came from people who were living like monkeys in trees, it was better to be that than happened to [her], what [she] became after [she] met [them].” (*ASP.10*) Kincaid questions first the belief which stipulates that Africans live in the trees and then shows that even if this is true, this life is much better than the so-called civilised one. She prefers and resorts to her old Antigua than that of the present after meeting the colonisers.

### **2-3- Preventing Colonisers Ideologies Settlement**

Kincaid’s essay opens up Antigua’s long history of colonialism, and provides a counter history from a decolonial perspective. The binary opposition of the coloniser and colonised is reversed at the emotional core of *A Small Place*’s attack on the white tourist as Antiguan’s anger against the colonisers. She leads her readers into recognising all the injustices that colonisers commit, then countering postcolonial ideologies can be well justified. She uses the tourists as representative of the colonisers. So then, she pictures the tourists as a “collective Columbus, new colonists, brash cultural invaders.” (*ASP. 25*) She deconstructs the tourists gaze because according to her, the tourist is “an ugly human being, a piece of rubbish pausing here and there to gaze at this and taste that.” (*ASP. 13*)

Kincaid addresses the reader directly and says “And so you needn’t let that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination develop into full-fledged unease, discomfort; you could ruin your holiday.” (*ASP. 10*) Whether Kincaid talks about colonialism, the main feature of the narrator’s voice is her anger. She seems too angry to leave her past as she asserts: “But nothing can erase my rage-not an apology, not a large sum of money, not the death of the criminal-for this wrong can never be made right, and only the impossible can make me still: can a way be found to make what happened not have happened?” (*ASP.32*)

By reversing the colonial gaze, she reduces the tourist to the level of humiliation and dehumanisation, thus putting them in inferior position and rebuking them. The colonisers are turned to an “ugly human being” (*ASP. 14*). She says:” Every native would like to find a way out...But some natives cannot go anywhere. They are too poor to escape the reality of their lives.” (*ASP. 18*) She tries hard to reverse things by opposing the English corrupted ways:

Every native everywhere lives a life of overwhelming and crushing banality and boredom and desperation and depression, and every deed good and bad, is an attempt to forget this. Every native would like to find a way out, every native would like a rest, and every native would like a tour. But some natives-most natives in the world cannot go anywhere. They are too poor. They are too poor to go anywhere. They are too poor to escape the reality of their lives; and they are too poor to live properly in the place where they live (*ASP. 18-19*).

When Kincaid turns against the English colonialists, she places herself with the Antiguan and with the colonised in general. By the way, she can aver: “But what I see is the millions of people, of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that an excess of love sometimes brings, and worst and most painful of all, no tongue.” (*ASP. 31*)

The loss of identity in Kincaid’s life contributes to illustrating her deep desire to cope with the colonisers’ ideologies. The never rebuilt library in Antigua, the anger in which having no native language but the colonisers, and the stolen culture of Antiguan contributes to the long list of why Jamaica Kincaid is angry. Constant ways of looking at Jamaica Kincaid’s past contributes to perceive how she writes. She seems to have points in her writing that are not easily seen. These entire uncountable losses make her “fill with rage [against] the criminals” (*ASP. 32*), the colonisers:

“I am filled with rage,” the criminal says, “But why?” And when I blow things up and make life generally unlivable for the criminal (is my life not unlivable too?) the criminal is shocked, surprised. But nothing can erase my rage- not an apology, not a sum of money, not the death of the criminal- for this wrong can never be made right, and only the impossible can make me still: can a way be found to make what happened not have happened? (*ASP. 32*)

Kincaid demonstrates that she is not able to forget the past because she feels betrayed. She catches the reader’s attention with her hostility towards the criminals. Her anger shows that she is not able to forgive or give up the anti-colonial fight. She goes from hating tourists and their oblivious ways, to anger about slavery and colonisers. *A Small Place* reveals Jamaica Kincaid’s resentment towards Antigua’s identity migration and affirms that Antigua does not belong to England for Antiguan are superior in human’s values than English:

England we were told about, not at all from the England we could never be from, the England that was so far away, the England that not even a boat could take us to, the England that, no matter what we did, we could never be of. We felt superior, for we were so much better behaved and we were full of grace, and these people were so badly behaved and they were so completely empty of grace. (*ASP. 32*)

Kincaid is so proud of Antigua that she can magnify her land in a kind of sublimation: “Antigua is beautiful. Antigua is too beautiful. Sometimes the beauty of it seems unreal. Sometimes the beauty of it seems as if it were stage sets for a play...” (*ASP.77*) Vaunting and praising Antigua in such a way is to appeal Antiguan’s mind to love what they are and to be what they are before the arrival of British powers. Kincaid claims a nationalist ideology and

she wants her people to choose the original identity, may be a very difficult status to achieve regarding the hybrid nature of the Antiguan's society. But for her it is not impossible.

## Conclusion

Our work tackles identity issue in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*. It highlights how identity is conceived in postcolonial literature such as *A Small Place*. Kincaid considers the whole process of writing as a quest for identity. That identity in her view is lost with the coming of the coloniser and has to be restored. She tries to highlight this loss of identity through her works but all she does is raising more questions about this issue of returning to the original identity. Kincaid reveals her hybrid and multicultural nature through her name and the use of English language to write and express speaking.

The work proves that Kincaid wants to reconstruct a pure national identity with all the goodness that the original identity encompasses. So Kincaid through her novel is in a quest to understand the new identities of her people, examine them, and try to find out solutions to reconstruct them on a stronger basis. But in fact this quest is not only for the sake of her people but is a quest for her own identity. She is in a quest to find out who she is, and determine who she wants to be. In fact, this quest is not only the quest of Kincaid or her people, it is the quest of any person on earth who is marginalised, displaced or who undergoes colonialism.

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