

The Postcolonial Scenario in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*

 Hatem Saadoon Mohsin

Department of Sharia - College of Islamic Sciences -University of Diyala - Iraq

Corresponding Author Email: hatemmohsan@uodiyala.edu.iq

Important Dates

Received:2026/4/5 ,Accepted:2026/5/9 Published: 2026/6/30


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Abstract:

Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988) is a non-fictional book that perfectly highlights the postcolonial scenario in Antigua. It can be adequately described as a travelogue, for it is a book about travel and its experience. It deals with Antigua from the perspective of place, culture and other experiences. Besides, it is described as a polemic non-fictional book for the attack of the postcolonial image Jamaica Kincaid found in Antigua. The present paper aims at examining the postcolonial scenario presented in *A Small Place* (1988). It will review the way Jamaica Kincaid has put her view towards colonialism and its effect on the postcolonial society of Antigua. It will also provide the scene of postcolonialism with reference to different critics such as Bill Ashcroft and M.A.R. Habib, whose postcolonial views has put certain standards to the understanding of postcolonial texts. Thus, the paper will have clear portray of the postcolonial set-up in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988). The current research will be analytical as well as descriptive. It will analyze the scenes provided in the text based on M.A.R Habib's views on postcolonial literature in his book *Modern Literary Criticism and Theory: A History* in which he quotes Robert Young's ideas on the aims of postcolonial criticism. It will also have a touch on other postcolonial critics to highlight the postcolonial scenario clearly in the non-fictional book. Thus, the paper will come out with the clear postcolonial scenario in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988).

Keywords: Postcolonial Scenario , Post colonialism , Jamaica Kincaid , Antigua

سيناريو ما بعد الاستعمار في رواية "مكان صغير" لجامايا كينكيد

 حاتم سعدون محسن

قسم الشريعة - كلية العلوم الإسلامية - جامعة ديالى - العراق

ايميل الباحث المرسل hatemmohsan@uodiyala.edu.iq

ملخص:

كتاب "مكان صغير" لجامايا كينكيد (1988) هو كتاب غير روائي يسلم الضوء ببراعة على سيناريو ما بعد الاستعمار في أنتيغوا. يمكن وصفه بدقة بأنه يوميات رحلة، فهو كتاب يتناول السفر وتجربته. يتناول أنتيغوا من منظور المكان والثقافة وتجارب أخرى. علاوة على ذلك، يوصف بأنه كتاب غير روائي جدلي يهاجم صورة ما بعد الاستعمار التي وجدتها كينكيد في أنتيغوا. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى دراسة سيناريو ما بعد الاستعمار المقدم في "مكان صغير" (1988). ستستعرض الطريقة التي عبرت بها كينكيد عن وجهة نظرها تجاه الاستعمار وتأثيره على مجتمع أنتيغوا ما بعد الاستعماري. كما ستقدم مشهد ما بعد الاستعمار بالإشارة إلى نقاد مختلفين مثل بيل أشكروفت وإم. إيه. آر. حبيب، الذين وضعت آراؤهم ما بعد الاستعمارية معايير محددة لفهم نصوص ما بعد الاستعمار. لذا، ستقدم هذه الورقة صورة واضحة لإطار ما بعد الاستعمار في رواية جامايا كينكيد "مكان صغير" (1988). وسيعتمد البحث الحالي على التحليل والوصف. وسجل المشاهد الواردة في النص استناداً إلى آراء م. أ. ر. حبيب حول أدب ما بعد الاستعمار في كتابه "النقد الأدبي الحديث والنظرية: تاريخ"، حيث يقتبس أفكار روبرت يونغ حول أهداف نقد ما بعد الاستعمار. كما ستتناول الورقة أعمال نقاد ما بعد الاستعمار الآخرين لإبراز سيناريو ما بعد الاستعمار بوضوح في الكتاب غير الروائي. وهكذا، ستقدم الورقة سيناريو ما بعد الاستعمار بوضوح في رواية جامايا كينكيد "مكان صغير" (1988).

الكلمات المفتاحية: سيناريو ما بعد الاستعمار - ما بعد الاستعمار - جامايا كينكيد - أنتيغوا

Introduction:

Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988) is a postcolonial non-fictional literary book, which highlights the story of a nation in Antigua. It illustrates the socio-political and economic situations of Antigua in a critical commentary targeting the conditions of Antigua after the colonialism examining the situation of tourism, the loss of cultural identity, political and economic corruption and the alienated character of the island of Antigua, which is Jamaica Kincaid's homeland. J. Kincaid addresses the reader directly illustrating her personal reflections in a confronting tone and reflecting a cultural critique. The cultural critique goes to the colonial effects on the nation and the alienated culture that has immersed the local culture. It deals with different elements in addressing a postcolonial scenario. It starts discussing the corruption resulted after granting independence with those elites of the colonizer to function as new colonizing power following the colonizer's plans of rule and control. The scenario of the neocolonization is a continuing serve for the interest of the colonizer where the indigenous people remain marginalized in their own land and the colonizer entertain more freedom. The illustration of Jamaica Kincaid is definite portray of what a postcolonial writer attempts to reexamine while writing about the situation in the postcolonial society. The text is an excellent critique to enlighten the indigenous people for the ways of decolonization; besides, it is a relocating mental map to recentralize the voice of the colonized versus the colonizer's voice. The challenge of the indigenous to emphasize its status of the right to freedom and the right to decide what should happen in their land is what Jamaica Kincaid has put it clear in the text.

The text is prosaic with descriptive format that makes it different from the traditional narratives. The book does not really narrate events rather it pictures the way life is going versus how it had been going on during the colonial times. It is a first personal voice where Jamaica Kincaid herself seems to be the speaker who writes down in ways of flashback versus the present reflecting Antigua lifestyle before and after independence. Taking the voice of the colonized, she does not reflect a simple life story rather she makes it a note recording in a critique way to have her voice heard and reached to both the colonizer and the colonized. It is written in a confrontational tone where J. Kincaid addresses everyone that Antiguans have decolonized themselves and now should recover themselves of the colonial effects and

practices. The purpose of making the text look as such is the intended critique J. Kincaid aimed at while introducing her address to the reader without any conversational tone of fictional characters or conflicted plot rather she produced a polemic critique against the colonial legacy and its continuing effects on the nation in Antigua. J. Kincaid in her direct address dis-parallel the unequal scene of poor nationals with wealthy tourists; she intensifies the view of injustice that belonged to the colonial empire globally. The dis-parallel of the text seems to be similar to Kincaid's reality herself as she moves back and forth between the time she lived in Antigua during the British colonization and the current time where she feels as an outsider to the real place of the non-fictional narrative. The parallel of the events paradoxes J. Kincaid feelings of belonging to the Antigua people and the current condition of the Small Place, i.e., Antigua.

Methodology:

A Small Place (1988) is divided into four different sections. It is critically organized as to emphasize different ideas for the book. The first section is to be seen as an irony to the situation of Antigua and the political and economic corruption; besides, it dis-parallel the natives of Antigua with the tourists coming from Europe and America. It illustrates the scenario of how the government ministers serve their own interests, and how things are to be facilitated for the European and American tourists, but potentially difficult for the indigenous people of Antigua. The second section of the book serves as an autobiographical section of Jamaica Kincaid. It portrays the times of the British colonization, and how she grew up during that time. She illustrates the time of the British colonization to be the cause that led to the current time corruption where she feels that the Antigua she knew does not exist as the English themselves do not exist. The third section goes between flashbacks and the contemporary time of Kincaid. Kincaid, here, condemns the government of Antigua, which she exposes them to be the neocolonial government responsible for the corruption happening in the country. Section four describes the natural landscape of Antigua and its beauty for which J. Kincaid is more optimistic for the promising future for the country. This is how the book can be briefed to have its analysis in the further part of the present study where it will be illustrated how *A Small Place* (1988) can illustrate the postcolonial scenario. It will be below reviewed with the different scenes with reference to the different critical remarks of the referred critics to be mentioned for the study.

The Postcolonial Scenario in *A Small Place* (1988):

A Small Place (1988) as a non-fictional book can be read as a perfect manifesto for a postcolonial reading. It is an adequate illustration for the colonial and postcolonial society by a postcolonial writer. Jamaica Kincaid successfully could portray the reality of the English colonization who could rule and colonize quarter of the Earth. She subtly describes how the English could turn everywhere they went to be English and failed to see everybody of those places they turned into England to be English. This is how the story in the non-fictional *A Small Place* (1988) is read. It is a critical illustration with harsh attack to everything that could be reflected through colonization as not to be purely indigenous. People are described to lose nativity, yet nativity itself is questioned when everything is needed to serve the nation turns for the interest of the foreigner with some parts to the government officers or ministers who serve the interest of the foreigner who could be the colonizer. For this sense, the scene in the book does not look like a natural conflict of colonizer-colonized formulation when reading a postcolonial

non-narrative text, yet it portrays how the conflict can naturally sequenced with another next view for the neocolonial scenario. This scenario is clear with the first section of the book where Jamaica Kincaid introduces the reader to the corruption of the government ministers and the status of the European and American when receiving them in their country. This is illustrated in the scene below as:

You disembark from your plane. You go through customs. Since you are a tourist, a North American or European—to be frank, white—and not an Antiguan black returning to Antigua from Europe or North America with cardboard boxes of much needed cheap clothes and food for relatives, you move through customs swiftly, you move through customs with ease. Your bags are not searched. You emerge from customs into the hot, clean air: immediately you feel cleansed, immediately you feel blessed (which is to say special); you feel free. (Kincaid, 1988, pp. 4–5).

Here Kincaid introduces the reader to the way of welcoming the White American or European in the Airport of is stamped to the indigenous Antiguan by the British colonization since the time they traded Antigua. She explains how these people enjoy more freedom in the Antiguan customs. She exposes how they simply go with ease without much checks and searches in the bags; however, when it comes to the native Antiguan, things become harder. The cheap boxes of clothes and food brought buy these black Antiguan coming to their country from America and Europe are well-searched and checked in the customs. J. Kincaid describe the Antiguan with the skin complexion as being black which is a racist description that for slavery where Antigua had been an important center for such trade. This division of black and white, introduced by J. Kincaid, puts the illustration in parallel with Bill Ashcroft's idea of binary logic. Ashcroft *et al.* in their book *Post-Colonial Studies: Key Concepts* (2000) illustrates the distinction of the different tendencies that the Western Colonizer put forward to celebrate superiority over the colonized nations. This is how things have gone with the people in Antigua. Whites of Europe and America enjoy more freedom than the Antiguan nationals themselves in their country. It is an internalized idea where the colonizer could successfully create in such country even though they had been no more in the country. Ashcroft et al. put it in their book *Post-Colonial Studies: Key Concepts* (2000) as:

The binary logic of imperialism is a development of that tendency of Western thought in general to see the world in terms of binary oppositions that establish a relation of dominance. A simple distinction between centre/margin; colonizer/colonized; metropolis/empire; civilized/primitive represents very efficiently the violent hierarchy on which imperialism is based and which it actively perpetuates. Binary oppositions are structurally related to one another, and in colonial discourse there may be a variation of the one underlying binary – colonizer/colonized – that becomes rearticulated in any particular text in a number of ways, e.g.

colonizer : colonized

white : black

civilized : primitive

advanced : retarded (Ashcroft, 2000, p. 19)

In this idea of binary logic through the search of establishing dominance for the colonizer, it is seen how the colonizer develops the tendency of superiority making themselves in the center looking better. This is illustrated when the European and American celebrate more freedom in the Antiguan airport than those natives of Antigua who are described as black. The white European is well-treated outside his country by the Airport officers of Antigua, for the only reason being white. Jamaica Kincaid mentions this as to emphasize that the relation of black and white are being distinguished in the sense of superiority and dominance right from the beginning of the beginning of the text where she discusses the postcolonial society of Antigua who needs to get rid of the inferiority feeling to the centrality of the Europeans and Americans. The binary logic opposition is usually created by the colonization, yet it is here illustrated paradoxically by J. Kincaid putting the colonized speaks about the colonizer to be in the main center. Even though there is an excellent countering voice by J. Kincaid to resist the master voice of the colonizer, it is seen that the colonized is put again inferior to the colonizer, which is a reference to the neocolonial system that Antigua suffers from. The conflict does not really exist in the non-fictional book rather it illustrates existing reality that revolve around the life system in the supposed to be free Antigua.

Results and discussion :

Therefore, what J. Kincaid tries to do is what M.A.R Habib describes in his in his book *Modern Literary Criticism and Theory: A History* (2005) with his reference to Robert Young where he describes the fundamental aims of postcolonial criticism.

Postcolonial criticism has embraced a number of aims: most fundamentally, to reexamine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized; to determine the economic, political, and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonized peoples and the colonizing powers; to analyze the process of decolonization; and above all, to participate in the goals of political liberation, which includes equal access to material resources, the contestation of forms of domination, and the articulation of political and cultural identities (Young, 11). Early voices of anti-imperialism stressed the need to develop or return to indigenous literary traditions so as to exorcize their cultural heritage of the specters of imperial domination. Other voices advocated an adaptation of Western ideals toward their own political and cultural ends. (Habib, 2005, p. 739).

She examined the history of the British colonialism perfectly and brought to the scene the perfect scenario of the colonialism that seems to have never ended with the declaration of the independence of Antigua. J. Kincaid questions the way that the British colonization brought knowledge to the Antiguan. She states that “you loved knowledge, and 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).” (Kincaid, 1988, p. 36). She seems to honestly confesses the good acts of the colonization of building schools and spreading knowledge, yet the way they spread knowledge is itself questioned, for the English did this for the purpose of glorying their own history as if to say to justify their acts of colonizing those nations. Meanwhile doing this act of glorification is, no doubt, followed by erasing the indigenous history of the Antiguan. This illustration from J. Kincaid is a good reexamination of the English colonial history on Antigua. It portrays the unsaid reality of the British. This ac of the British colonialization aimed specifically as J. Kincaid puts to erase the national history of Antiguan.

It dislocates the indigenous history of Antigua to be in the periphery and centralizes the colonizer's culture and history. Antigua questions this and puts clear to the reader's view to show the colonized perspective towards the colonizer's deeds of showing themselves to be the enlighteners who show themselves as being the constructors of knowledge in the colonized land. Here, it shows clearly how the British colonizer never serves for anybody's interest rather than their own. It is a process of foregrounding their own culture and history and backgrounding the colonized historical and cultural status. It is an act of manipulating the acts putting their efforts looking to be for the favor of the colonized while they intentionally spread the knowledge they want to impose in the colonized land. This is the way the British colonization does to create a nation who look to be indigenous, yet in fact mentally serves the British interests. As they did in India when they stated in Macaulay's Minute on Education (1835) when Macaulay stated to create a generation of white minds and brown skins indicating that they should raise up a generation of Indians who have the British mentality serving their own interest from the normal Indians with the brown skin. This is a similar view that Kincaid illustrates here in this part of the text.

Furthermore, Kincaid illustrates the ways the British colonization acted politically, economically and culturally. For example, she politically relates how the English colonizer cared for creating other places to be England, in other words, to belong to England, but could never accept to make the colonized place like England and its people English. She puts it in these words as:

(But the English have become such a pitiful they no longer have one quarter of the earth's human population bowing and scraping before them. They don't seem to know that this empire business was all wrong of their bad deeds, for no natural disaster imaginable could equal the harm they did. Actual death might have been better. for I can say to them what went wrong: they should never have left their home, their precious England, a place they loved so much, a place they had to leave but could never forget. And so everywhere they went they turned it into England; and everybody they met they turned English. But no place could ever really be England, and nobody who did not look exactly like them would ever be English, so you can imagine the destruction of people and land that came from that. The English hate each other and they hate England, and the reason they are so miserable now is that they have no place else to go and nobody else to feel better than) (Kincaid, 1988, pp. 23-24)

Here, J. Kincaid pities the status of the British losing the colonial power over the quarter of the Earth, and have no longer people to be under their control. She emphasizes the idea that the English has never thought that their acts of colonization have already created so much mess on the colonized peoples all over the earth. They made such mess on the people for the interest of their business and power and left people different disasters. Creating so many murders, injuries and harm to so many people. She even states that killing people by the British could have been better of leaving them in harm, for leaving them without home and taking everything for the interest of Britain created the harm for these people who they themselves could not accept them as British nationals. Therefore, politically here Kincaid questions the political act of the English when leaving their own land to occupy other people's lands, take their wealth, besides that put these people in the margin, and claim centrality and superiority is the act of hate to other people. They could never accept other people to be English even if they could speak English and act like English when taking from their learnings and raised up in their schools with their history and culture; they could not accept them for the reason of hate. They hate other people and

could not accept them because they needed to feel superior over them. Kincaid emphasizes the need of the English when they colonized other people's lands for the need of feeling themselves to be better than other people. This is how they acted politically and how Jamaica Kincaid illustrated it in her non-fictional text, i.e., *A Small Place* (1988).

Jamaica Kincaid also illustrated and reexamined the economic impact over the colonized. She puts it clearly, when she refers to both the Slavery Trade and Barclays Bank. The Barclays are British brothers, who lately started Barclays Bank, were slave traders. They actually made their money of trading black people. Bringing people from Africa to sell them as slaves in Antigua and other American lands. They actually stopped slave trade when they found banking could make them even richer. So, when they found banking make them richer they decided to oppose slavery trade. It is all a reason to serve their interest not the interest of the colonized people. Kincaid here highlights how the colonizer always puts things forward to serve their own need, be it in term of wealth or power. They never think of the colonized to be human or have a right to live as the English could live. She illustrates this as:

Do you ever try to understand why people like me cannot get over the past, cannot forgive and cannot forget? There is the Barclays Bank. The Barclay brothers are dead. The human beings they traded, the human beings who to them were only commodities, are dead. It should not have been that they came to the same end, and heaven is not enough of a reward for one or hell enough of a punishment for the other. People who think about these things believe that every had deed, even every bad thought, carries with it its own retribution. So do you see the queer thing about people like me? Sometimes we hold your retribution. (Kincaid, 1988, pp. 26-27)

She here intensifies the idea that why people can never forget what the colonizer usually did. She highlights that even though the Barclays Brothers are already dead, yet people could never forget them for the bad deeds already struck with them. She signifies the act of dealing with people as commodities who are to be sold and used. She concludes that such harmful people, i.e., should have never had the same end like other human beings, and heaven should never be a place for them to be rewarded of thereafter, and hell is not really an enough punishment for them. Kincaid here relates with the voice of the colonized who really suffered the acts of the colonizer harshly. She illustrates the contempt inside her as a colonized voice against the harmful acts of the British over them. This is how Jamaica Kincaid puts the scene of the colonizer's act over them economically and how badly they affected them. J. Kincaid subtly criticizes how the English were the reason for the suffering of so many people whom they traded as slaves and after that, they prohibited this for the reason that they found a better source of income through the bank. This is how she reexamined the scene and clarified to the reader how painful to have the experience of living under the colonization.

When Kincaid introduced the cultural identity of Antigua she emphasized the way the English brought their laws of abusive words, yet they themselves were impolite. She signifies the way in which they felt themselves superior to the English. In the way, they dealt with the Antiguans they were ill-mannered that made the Antiguans themselves think that maybe these people were not really English or even Christians. It is because such acts should not come from who seem to be civilized and justifies its colonization for the reason of enlightenment. The way Jamaica Kincaid discusses this is seen as a form of resistance to the claimed civilization of the British against the backwardness of the Antiguans. She puts themselves as actually better than those, who claim superiority and civilized.

These ways of introducing the British colonization impact over the colonized Antigua picture the intentional purpose of Jamaica Kincaid to the way of decolonization. She foregrounds the Antiguan scene and culture versus the English claimed civilization and culture. She illustrates the self-esteemed thought of superiority when it comes to manners showing how the English were ill-mannered. Jamaica Kincaid's illustration of the corruption caused by the Antiguan Politicians is also a call for correction and revolt against the neocolonial regime of Antigua that seems to follow the colonized power. Addressing such concept of corruption shows Jamaica Kincaid's awareness for the need of decolonizing the people's mentality of the colonizer's practices that can affect the indigenous people and reflect its effect over the whole nation.

Conclusions:

Jamaica Kincaid postcolonial *A Small Place* (1988) is an excellent scenario to picture the postcolonial view in any society. J. Kincaid could successfully hit the nail on the head of every single event that a postcolonial country may need. She discusses with her non-fictional text the realistic image of the colonizer and puts clear scene of different episode in every society for the colonial conflict and its ways of rule and control. She intensifies the scenario of the colonization of how to continue ruling even though they were supposed to be leaving the country for its independence. The way she discusses corruption is two-sided, for the first she continues introducing how the colonization cannot be easily ended when it has agents and elites serving its interests and needs even if they left. The other side is a call for the indigenous people themselves to start decolonizing themselves and start focusing to free themselves of the colonizer impact and power to construct social identity with their superior feeling and self-esteemed feeling of love and respect. The discussion here has reviewed the way of reexamining the colonizer-colonized conflict and the ways of relocating the colonizer's place, where the colonizer takes its place in the margin and colonized is centralized which is a way of counter-discourse technique the postcolonial writers use to intensify their critique against the colonial effects. It also brought ways of decolonizing the mind when Jamaica Kincaid highlighted the indigenous people high manners in comparison to the ill-mannered British colorizers. The image of the binary opposites of logic that the colonizer usually applies to emphasize their status is criticized and questioned to give the right to the colonized to glorify their own culture and ideology. This is how one can discuss Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988) as a postcolonial scenario that discusses the conflict of the colonizer-colonized in post-independence Antigua, which can be seen from different perspectives for postcolonialism. Jamaica Kincaid shifted the literary attention of the reader in her prosaic form to reading a text that is not a definite narrative rather it is a postcolonial scenario drawing the reader's attention to what it means to understand a postcolonial situation.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank the Ministry of Education for their continuous support. My gratitude also goes to Yarmouk University for providing a conducive academic environment. Their combined support greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

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