



# **No motherland, no fatherland, no tongue - Jamaica Kincaid's "A Small Place" and the quest for Antiguan identity**

*Ayla Kiran*

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Seminar paper from the year 2005 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, University of Hamburg (Insitut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), course: "I Could Tell You Stories" American Autobiography 1960 to the Present, 25 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Literature on the Caribbean, as Caribbean historiography, has been shaped by white, rich and powerful men: it mostly told the story of someone who had all means – economical, political and cultural, so basically all resources denied to the subaltern - to retell the tale in his favor. Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* provides a deeply satisfying response to until-then existing chauvinist, Eurocentric and often-times racist representations of Antigua and its people. The book describes Kincaid's native Antigua with highly critical perspectives on its colonial history, on its exploitation by the British, on its corruption after independence, and on the continuing exploitation through tourism today. The book, which made Kincaid persona non grata on Antigua for years after it was first published, is not afraid to attack all of those whom the "I"- narrator considers responsible for the deplorable state of affairs, both in the past and the present.

*A Small Place* consists of four parts, in which the narrative 'I,' a native of Antigua with a biography very similar to Kincaid's own, introduces the reader to the island. The first part concentrates on tourism, which is seen as a prolongation of colonialism, with the tourists merely replacing the British colonial power. The second part explores the island's colonial past, slavery, memories of the narrator's childhood under English rule, and the effects of colonial history still visible in Antigua today. Part three denounces the political corruption of the post-independence Antiguan government, and part four analyses the effects of colonialism on the minds of people who have come to believe they are living on the periphery of history. Using Spivak's thesis as the theoretical framework, I will analyze Kincaid's contribution to giving the subaltern a voice, and to formulating an Antiguan identity. In this paper, I am going to point out Kincaid's contribution to this endeavor, which, in my opinion, is bigger than an initial reading of the text, which is entirely addressed at a 'you', a secondperson tourist reader, would suggest. Where does *A Small Place* lead her reader, and where does Kincaid leave him?

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