Affect in A Small Place: Jamaica Kincaid Reverses the Colonial Gaze

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Abstract

This essay uses Sara Ahmed’s theory of affect to analyze Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place*. I argue that Jamaica Kincaid uses anger to create a position for Western reader and to evoke emotions such as shame. Theorist Sara Ahmed argues that emotions have political dimension. Thus, I will use Sara Ahmed’s theory to examine what function anger and shame have in *A Small Place*. In her essay, Kincaid provokes her readers by attacking them for past injustice through anger. Because of this many critics have claimed that *A Small Place* has an angry tone. However, Kincaid’s aim seems to be to reverse the gaze by exposing the Europeans and Americans of exploitation, slavery, imperialism and colonization and this way reverse the traditional travel gaze, which allows us to see Antigua through the perspective of the third world.

Keywords: Affect, postcolonial theory, gaze, Jamaica Kincaid, Antigua, anger, shame.
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1. Introduction

There are moments in "A Small Place" when Ms. Kincaid's rage leads to somewhat cliched generalizations - for instance, she mocks the escapist fantasies of the tourist who has left behind a nice bourgeois house ("and all its nice house things") to take a vacation in the sun. Such moments, however, are rare. Ms. Kincaid writes with passion and conviction, and she also writes with a musical sense of language, a poet's understanding of how politics and history, private and public events, overlap and blur. (Michiko Kakutani *The New York Times*)

Jamaica Kincaid is an Antiguan-American novelist and essayist, who was born Elaine Potter Richardson in St. John’s, Antigua, in 1949 (Garis 1). At the age of seventeen in 1966, she moved to New York to work as an au pair (Garis 1). She did not return to Antigua until she was 36. By then Elaine Richardson had changed her name to Jamaica Kincaid and was a writer for *The New Yorker* (Garis 1). Her first book, *At the Bottom of the River*, a collection of short fiction, was published in 1983, and according to *The New York Times* writer, Leslie Garis “made her an instant literary celebrity,” (1). Her first novel, *Annie John*, followed two years later and also became successful (Garis 1). *A Small Place*, published in 1988, received mixed reviews and was labeled “an enraged essay about racism and corruption in Antigua” (Garis 1). Moreover, *A Small Place* “was the only one not previously published in *The New Yorker*” because *The New Yorker* considered it to be too harsh and angry in tone (Garis 1). The text is considered nonfictional and an autobiography that uses social and cultural criticism combined with history of colonization to describe postcolonial Antigua (Edwards 77).

Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* examines the challenges Antiguans deal with trying to build national ideologies and politics after an oppressive European colonization. Through the essay, Kincaid emotionally, with anger and disappointment, reveals how European colonization has left Antigua with injustice, corruption and poverty. She claims Europeans and Americans who travel to Antigua are blinded by its beautiful scenery, which is not a reflection of the Antiguans lives. Kincaid's anger in *A Small Place* might be a call for change in the Antiguan political system. The narrator, addressing her readers through emotions are the grounding of
social movements and can become the space of political work. In *A Small Place*, I argue that Jamaica Kincaid uses anger to construct a position for Western readers and to elicit emotions such as shame. Theorist Sara Ahmed discusses emotions have a political dimension. In this essay I use Sara Ahmed’s affect theory to examine the rules of emotions in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*.

2. Previous research: Jamaica Kincaid and *A Small Place*

To the best of my knowledge, scholar Carolyn Pedwell is the only one that has focused on affect reading of *A Small Place*. The essay has been analyzed by scholars and critics mainly through post colonialism and travel gaze perspective. In this section I will present how Jamaica Kincaid’s essay *A Small Place* have been read by reviewers after it was published in 1988, and how scholars since then have analyzed the essay in order to understand Jamaica Kincaid.

Soon after it was published in 1988, *A Small Place* received mixed reviews, both positive and negative. The publisher for the *New Yorker* for instance, Robert Gottlieb, refused to publish *A Small Place* because “he considered the tone to be too angry and hostile for the largely white audience of the magazine” and a writer for the *New York Times Book Review*, Alison Hill argued that the essay was “distorted by anger” (Edwards 78). However, other critics were very positive. For example, Milca Esdaille, a writer for the *Black Issues Book Review*, pointed out that, “in masterfully lucid language…Kincaid draws you into her world, imbuing ordinary language with extraordinary textured and multilayered meaning” (Edwards 78). Furthermore, another writer, Diane Simmons, stated that critics do not understand Kincaid's “Painfully frank portrait of the postcolonial Caribbean” moreover, critics only pay attention to the beginning of the essay, and because of this they misunderstand “the works emotional and political complexities” (Edwards 78). I agree with Diane Simmons, that after it was published, critics misunderstood Kincaid because they only focused on the first section of the book, where Kincaid seems to attack the readers. And, because of this they could probably not fully understand that the emotions are linked to political issues in Antigua.

Since then, scholars have analyzed the essay through different theories such as postcolonial and travel gaze in order to understand the essay. Suzane Gauch who writes from a postcolonial perspective, in her article “*A Small Place*: Some Perspectives on the Ordinary”, writes:
A Small Place disappoints even such readers when it undermines the authority of its own narrator by suggesting that she is hardly representative of average Antiguans. In other words, the narrator not only points out the flaws in the way in which readers look at Antigua and Antiguans, she also interrogates the authority of her own look, never establishing any correct way of looking. (3)

What Gauch is suggesting here is that Kincaid cannot represent the Antiguans because she came back to Antigua after 19 years of living abroad. And, because of this, Gauch argues that Kincaid cannot fully understand the past or the present of Antigua, its history or current political issues. Moreover, her lack of knowledge and more importantly by admitting that she is barley a representative of her people makes her argument in A Small Place unreliable.

Gauch claiming that Jamaica Kincaid is not experienced enough in the historical or political situation in Antigua, or that she cannot represent her people, because she has lived outside Antigua for two decades is a simplistic perspective. For example, scholars Iyunolu Osagie and Christine N. Buzinde the authors of “Culture and postcolonial resistance: Antigua in Kincaid’s”, validates that it is in fact that Kincaid “having lived both inside and outside Antigua, she is better able to articulate the dilemmas of Antigua’s history. Consequently, she understands why her island is an integral part of the colonial endeavor to accumulate capital, no matter the price to the exploited Others” (222). Buzinde and Osagie here, demonstrates that it is actually that Kincaid having lived abroad and in Antigua that gives the essay a strong point of view. Accordingly, Kincaid is perhaps then able to describe the suffering of her people as well how their pain is connected to the global economy.

Gauch further insists that Kincaid ending her essay by bringing both the oppressor and the oppressed to reconcile, after she had attacked and insulted the tourist throughout the book is reversing her demand for justice in Antigua (3). This is supported by Lesley Larkin who from a gaze view point, states in her essay “Reading and Being Read: Jamaica Kincaid’s A Small Place as Literary Agent” that Kincaid, “appears to offer readers an escape from the relentless identification with tourism, racism, imperialism, and slavery” that she “have thrust upon them” (207). Larkin here, seems to be worried that by Kincaid changing her direction at the end, she may undermine her accusation of exploitation and imperialism in Antigua.
In contrast to Gauch and Larkin reading the conclusion of *A Small Place* as Kincaid rejecting Antigua's history of oppression, slavery and imperialism, critics such as Buzinde and Osagie have instead examined the conclusion of the essay as:

Her observation that when one ceases to be a master or a slave one is just a human being synthesizes the entire constructed nature of the colonial enterprise. In ratifying the vertically-defined master-slave relation to a horizontally-understood, mutual, human relationship, Kincaid evokes the possibility of change, a change which can come with a re-definition of the present political institutions. (223)

In this excerpt, Buzinde and Osagie seems to have understood the conclusion as a call for political change by Kincaid. First, the authors seems to indicate that Kincaid through deconstructing such as master and slave, she is able to guide her readers to accept their historical connection to Antigua. Second, it is only through recognition of past injustice that responsibility can take place by the tourists. Finally, for reconciliation to occur both the natives and tourists needs to come to terms of their historical connection.

Another scholar who seems to disagree with Guach and Larkin is Anthony C. Alessandrini who in his study “Small Places, Then and Now: Frantz Fanon, Jamaica Kincaid, and the Futures of Postcolonial Criticism” states that Kincaid is at the end asking her readers, “to take part in a shared project, which we might see as the necessarily shared project of decolonization and the concomitant goal of creating new forms of postcolonial subjectivity” (563). Here perhaps, Alessandrini seems to be suggesting that Kincaid's final statement is an invitation to a collaboration between the natives and the readers. Moreover, he argues that Kincaid's strategy at the end may be a new way of solving postcolonial issues. And, that actually Kincaid's narrative reading of colonialism may work to bring change.

Other readings focus on affect reading of *A Small Place*. One, such analysis is by Carolyn Pedwell who in her research “Affect at the margins: Alternative empathies in *A Small Place*” states that:
*A Small Place* offers a pertinent site through which to consider how history, power and violence shape the meanings and effects of empathy. It illustrates how the affective afterlives of decolonisation shape contemporary subjectivities in ways that are not easy to penetrate, nor possible to undo, through the power of empathetic will alone….exploring alternative empathies might open out to affective politics which do not view emotions instrumentally as sources of – or solutions to – complex social and political problems, but rather examine diverse and shifting relations of feeling for what they might tell us about the affective workings of power in a transnational world. (18)

Here, Pedwell argues that empathy alone cannot solve social or political problems, however, through alternative empathies, sympathy or care for another person can lead to affective politics. Moreover, through imagination or by putting oneself in another person’s shoes may lead to compassion, which might open up to understanding and a move towards equal rights in a developing country such as Antigua. There are no possibilities for the oppressors or the descendants of the oppressors to understand the pain they have caused on the oppressed. However, through understanding the painful feelings like anger that the natives are expressing are affects of the colonizers abuse, the colonizers might feel guilty. As a result, feel empathy or maybe feel shame for what they have done. This shame usually leads to reconciliation with the natives, which Sara Ahmed discusses in her study *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* which Pedwell seems to support.

Other readings also focus on Jamaica Kincaid's anger. One such reading is by Keith E. Byerman who in his article, “Anger in *A Small Place*: Jamaica Kincaid’s Cultural Critique of Antigua” seems to agree with Pedwell that part of Kincaid's anger is because she has to express herself through the language of the oppressor, and that “she concedes herself caught in the prisonhouse of the colonizer’s language” because there is no Antiguan language (93). Most Antiguans, Byerman adds, choose not to speak the colonizer’s language and instead chooses silence (93). He further pays attention to Kincaid's strategy of attacking and objectifying the tourist by offending them through their own language, reversing the power (93). Moreover, in contrast to Pedwell who focuses more on empathy and affect, Byerman focuses more on
Kincaid's critique of Antiguans failure to take responsibility for their society and culture which is a result of British colonization. Byerman writes:

Independence produced no real changes in the dominant order. The silencing of the people has continued, even though the leaders are now from among them. Wealth and power are in the hands of a very few, all of whom, in Kincaid's view, are corrupt and indifferent to the welfare of the people. The people's resignation of voice is evidenced by the fact that the very politicians who keep the people poor in order to make themselves and their friends rich are regularly reelected to office. (93)

Byerman observes that because British domination is still an influence in Antigua, neither the corrupt government nor the people who keep electing them can be held responsible. According to Byerman, this is the main reason why Kincaid criticizes the culture.

Since the book was published critics have analyzed the essay through many perspectives. It is important to study the essay through different theories as it bring more understandings and collectivity. However, it is necessary to read narratives through new ideas for the purpose of transformation to occur. As I mentioned in the previous criticism section of this essay, Carolyn Pedwell is as far as I know the only scholar that has worked on affect reading of A Small Place. Nevertheless, Pedwell has focused more on empathy which is not enough. Yet, as Pedwell’s study is important, I will use some of her study to support my argument. Still, I will mainly use Sara Ahmed's theory of affect for the means of understanding what emotions do in A Small Place.

3. Theoretical Framework: Anger and Emotions

In order to analyze Jamaica Kincaid's use of anger in A Small Place I will use Sara Ahmed's theory of affects.

Sara Ahmed's The Cultural Politics of Emotion examines what emotions do and what they produce and how they might shape a nation. Ahmed examines, how the cultural politics of emotion creates "others" by "working through signs and on bodies to materialise the surfaces and boundaries that are lived as worlds" (191). Ahmed provides a close reading of emotion and affect
within the structures in which they are lived and felt. She approaches her study through, rhetorical theory, queer theory, feminist theory, marxist theory, cultural studies, and poststructuralist theories. Ahmed’s study explains how emotions provide bodies with values and ideologies.

In her analysis of hate speech, Ahmed claims that, “hate is involved in the very negotiation of boundaries between selves and others, and between communities, where 'others' are brought into the sphere of my or our existence as a threat” (51). This threat has a history, where emotions of damage have turned into bitterness towards others (Ahmed 15). Here, Ahmed suggests that injured feelings turn into hatred. For Kincaid, it seems that past injustice has turned into anger but has not yet turned into hate. Furthermore, Kincaid is not necessary hateful, instead her anger might be a response to injustice caused by colonization and she probably wants to confirm through her anger that something is wrong. However, as hate and anger are similar emotions and an affect of injustice, I will use Ahmed's theory on hate and anger, to analyze what emotions do in *A Small Place*.

Moreover, according to Ahmed, emotion has power to produce meanings through the histories and circumstances that signs invoke. It is these circumstances that sticks to bodies and creates other:

> The fact that some signs are repeated is precisely not because the signs themselves contain hate, but because they are effects of histories that have stayed open. Words like 'Nigger' and 'Paki' for example tend to stick; they hail the other precisely by bringing another into a history whereby such names assign the other with meaning in an economy of difference. (Ahmed 59)

Here, Ahmed show that the repetition of the word is not hateful, instead signs have a painful history that have not been resolved in the present. The repetition of the word is effective because it reminds the other, of the pain that the word contain. This device of repetition will be used in this essay to analyze Kincaid's style of addressing her reader as “you” throughout her essay.

Furthermore, Ahmed states that emotions have affective power; they produce and create meaning and values in society:
Some words stick because they become attached through particular affects. So, for example, someone will hurl racial insults ... precisely because they are affective, although it is not always guaranteed that the other will be 'impressed upon' or hurt in a way that follows from the history of insults. It is the affective nature of hate speech that allows us to understand that whether such speech works or fails to work is not really the important question. Rather, the important question is: What effects do such encounters have on the bodies of others who become transformed into objects of hate? (60)

This passage demonstrates that negative words stick because they are insulting, and this insult is what produce power over the other. Furthermore, negative words are affective because they provoke the other to submission. In *A Small Place*, Kincaid uses insulting words to address her readers who are the descendant of colonizers. What affect hateful words have will be discussed in the analysis of this essay.

In addition, Ahmed expands the analysis of power into emotion and questions, "Why are relations of power so intractable and enduring, even in the face of collective forms of resistance?" (12). Ahmed's connection of power with emotion allows us to understand, and participate in the cultural politics of emotion. These emotions works as social power, however, they may not be recognized as power. Instead, we should ask what emotions do, how they create objects and others and how they produce social affects. Similarly, why and how are these affects repeated as power?

In Ahmed's discussion of pain, she describes pain “as a bodily sensation” feelings that are injured on the “surface” of the body that create objects and others (15). These painful feelings are spread through stories in society, which shape the world, but may not be felt by others (Ahmed 15). For instance, Ahmed asks how can “the language of pain aligns this body with other bodies” if pain cannot be shared, how then can, pain become a "demand for collective politics, as a politics based not on the possibility that we might be reconciled, but on learning to live with the impossibility of reconciliation, or learning that we live with and beside each other, and yet we are not as one" (39)? Here, there is an understanding that sympathy for the oppressed is not important and that compassion is impossible. On the contrary, it is this understanding of impossibility that becomes the ground for collectivity. The West, the tourists or the readers,
Kincaid is addressing may not be able to feel her anger, however, there is a possibility that they may understand that crimes have been committed against the Antiguans. And, this understanding could turn to shame which can lead to reconciliation.

In her examination of shame, Ahmed illustrates that: ”shame becomes crucial to the process of reconciliation or the healing of past wounds. To acknowledge wrongdoing means to enter into shame; the `we`is shamed by its recognition that it has committed `acts and omissions`, which have caused pain, hurt and loss for indigenous others” (101). Here, Ahmed's theory of shame is crucial in order to understand Kincaid's use of shaming her readers. As, Ahmed mentioned shame is important for healing to be achieved. For instance, this can be achieved through recognizing crimes that have been committed on indigenous people. As a result of recognition reconciliation can begin between the oppressor and the natives.

4. Analysis
4.1 “You” A Direct Address to the Reader

I introduce this essay by suggesting that Jamaica Kincaid's use of repetition, anger and shame in A Small Place is perhaps to provoke her readers into recognizing past injustice that they have committed. In doing so, she counters postcolonial ideologies of self and other. Previous critics have for the most part, analyzed A Small Place from a postcolonial view point and some from a travel gaze perspective, and according to my research only one affect reading by Carolyn Pedwell was available. I argue that it is not enough to view A Small Place only from a postcolonial and a travel gaze perspective, and therefore neglect these emotions that Kincaid uses in her text. I will therefore use Sara Ahmed's theory on affect in order to examine what emotions do. I will also turn to Caroline Pedwell’s study in order to further support my argument.

One of Kincaid's important and clever devices is to address the reader as “you” with a bitter and sarcastic tone when she discusses Antigua's colonial history and tourism, and anger is usually the main mood. For example, in the first section of A Small Place, Kincaid addresses the reader directly with a sarcastic tone 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” (10). Kincaid here, seems to address a certain tourist, the kind of reader who has some education on Antigua's history of colonization and present tourism exploitation, however the reader is willing to ignore this fact so they can enjoy
their holiday. Furthermore, Kincaid is possibly aware of this “funny feeling” the tourists have which is that their vacation seems silly while they are knowledgeable of the oppression that they somehow are part of (10). Kincaid, knowing this, will use it to construct a position for the reader. Furthermore, Kincaid repeats the word “you” throughout the text to address the reader but also by repeating the word she seems to confront them and reminding them that injustice in Antigua has not ended and that the tourist are part of the problem:

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 though 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. (4–5)

Here Kincaid seems to explain to the North Americans and Europeans who arrives in Antigua, how they receive preferential treatment over the people of Antigua. It may seem that through repeating the word “you” ten times in this passage, Kincaid is attacking and accusing the tourists but it is probably her way of writing about different perspectives in order to allow the readers to understand different sides of Antigua.

To explain Kincaid's use of repetition in the text, I will turn to Ahmed's theory of repetition. Ahmed's study of emotion is based on the idea of language where words are repeated again and again. She argues that signs become sticky through repetition. For example, Ahmed explains when a word like “Paki” is repeated it becomes “insulting” (92). Because, the word is repeated, it accumulates value, in addition it will produce resistance (Ahmed 92). To take another example, Ahmed explains that, when the word disgusting is repeated it "generates a set of effects, which then adhere as a disgusting object” (93). The repetition of the word produces social value and generates affects. When words such as disgusting are repeated it creates social values that shapes a nation or the world. This might be why Kincaid repeats the word “you” to address the reader, because it is effective and it will probably stick on the tourist mind. The tourists may feel attacked by the word or feel insulted. However, because the word is repeated
throughout the text it will perhaps accumulate value and produce resistance from the tourists. It is likely then that the resistance the word “you” is producing will make the reader stay tuned and find out more of the situation in Antigua which Kincaid understands well, its history, different perspectives and political aspects. The anger the repetition of the “you” produce in the readers will possibly help the readers to see themselves through the natives perspective.

4.2 Function of Anger

Kincaid's anger throughout *A Small Place* can be explained by Sara Ahmed's study of anger which she explains as “the response to pain, as a call for action, also requires anger; an interpretation that this pain is wrong, that it is an outrage, and that something must be done about it” (174). Using Ahmed, I explain that Kincaid’s anger is an affect of oppression. This oppression and present difficulties in tourism and the exploitation that it entails “is wrong”… “and that something must be done about it” (Ahmed 174). Furthermore, Ahmed explains the process that it takes for an affective emotion such anger to be used in taking political action:

anger is not simply defined in relationship to a past, but as opening up the future. In other words, being against something does not end with ‘that which one is against’. Anger does not necessarily become ‘stuck’ on its object, although that object may remain sticky and compelling. Being against something is also being for something, but something that has yet to be articulated or is not yet. (175)

Here Ahmed suggests that anger has a connection to the past and the future. In Kincaid’s case, her anger in Antigua’s colonial past and present injustice is not enough by her being against it but needs to be able to articulate her anger to reach and find collective understanding. Which Kincaid has been able to do by using her anger creatively in a language where she is able to respond to what she is against. One way, Kincaid has been successful in her language is by making the oppressor the object of abuse. For instance, Kincaid writes that Antigua, “was settled by human rubbish from Europe, who used enslaved but noble and exulted human beings from Africa...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” (80). Here, insulting words such as “human rubbish” is used to describe the Europeans for enslaving the Africans for
the purpose of luxury and domination in order to escape their ordinary lives that they do not seem to enjoy (80). What gives the passage an angry tone is that it describes step by step historically how slavery started and it started when the Europeans arrived and enslaved the Africans in order to gain wealth while the Africans suffered. Further, the Africans are described as noble while the Europeans are described as “human rubbish” for committing crimes on the innocent Africans (80). The passage ends with an angrier tone when it considers the Europeans “a European disease” and it is likely that the colonizers have become this disease, this sickness, this headache to the Africans who have to suffer because of the Europeans atrocities (80). Passages such as this that are angry in tone can be found throughout the text. The angry tone in the text that portray the colonizers as a disease perhaps is for the means of making the oppressor angry. In addition, by turning the tables the text is possibly gaining recognition from the readers. Such a reverse can be understood as, in Ahmed's words “that one accepts that one’s own position might anger others and hence allows one’s position to be opened to critique by others” (179).

To explain further the function of anger I will turn to Pedwell who argues that: “anger or rage might, once interrogated, give way to shame” (23). Pedwell focuses not only how A Small Place invokes alternative empathies but also connects it to other affective emotions such as anger and shame. She argues that the English forced the Antiguans to speak English and left the Antiguans “with ‘no motherland, no fatherland … and worst and most painful of all, no tongue” and that this is a reason of anger not only for Kincaid but for all Antiguans (Pedwell 23). Pedwell further asserts that, for Kincaid this is a source of shame because Antigua is in a worse place now when it is self- governed than what it was when it was colonized by the British (23). And, this is something that the readers of A Small Place can never understand.

Furthermore, Pedwell states that Kincaid hope that by confronting, belittling and stereotyping the readers she will elicit an angry reaction by the readers (23). According to Pedwell, Kincaid provokes her readers by describing the tourist as “‘an ugly, empty thing, a stupid thing, a piece of rubbish pausing here and there to gaze at this and taste that….an incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed woman enjoying a walk on the beautiful sand, with a man, an incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed man” and this is a strategy, which Kincaid hopes that the readers anger at being abused might give them an idea “of what feels like to be the object of dehumansiation” and “for some readers, reactions of anger or rage might,
once interrogated, give way to shame” (23). Pedwell is suggesting that by Kincaid admitting her own shame she is opening the door for the tourist to acknowledge her own shame.

4.3 Function of Shame

Another one of Kincaid’s brilliant effective devices is to shame the readers by reminding them of their role in colonization and exploitation that they might be repressing so they can enjoy their holiday. *A Small Place* is perhaps seeking to turn the gaze around by exposing the tourist and objectifying them. Kincaid writes:

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. Eventually, the masters left, in a kind of way; eventually, the slaves were freed, in a kind of way. The people in Antigua now, the people who really think of themselves as Antiguans ... are the descendants of those noble and exalted people, the slaves. (80-81)

The passage here, describes how Antigua was discovered by Christopher Columbus and how the Europeans came and enslaved the Africans. The text seems to attack the readers by portraying the colonizers as “rubbish” and the slaves as “noble” and that this cannot be questioned. This style of explaining history and the hint of accusation of oppression in this text could be away of shaming the readers. Moreover, the text gives the feeling of that there is no escape from the pain that is described in this passage, and that there is nowhere for the tourists to hide because as Ahmed puts it:“shame in exposing that which has been covered demands us to re-cover, such a re-covering would be a recovery from shame. Shame hence conceals and reveals what is present in the present. Shame consumes the subject” (104). It is likely then that as shame consumes the
tourists they have no choice but to accept the accusation because: “shame implies that some quality of the self has been brought into question” and this might force some tourists to recognize themselves as shamed (Ahmed 105). Furthermore, as Ahmed argues: “in shame, more than my action is at stake: the badness of an action is transferred to me, such that I feel myself to be bad and to have been ‘found’ or ‘found out’ as bad by others” (105). There is a possibility that after the tourists have been caught of their crimes they may feel shame and this might lead to isolation that they cannot escape from.

Moreover, if the tourists are not able to escape from their shame, the likely response is probably that they have no other option than to identify with the pain of the Antiguans. In shame the object and the subject of the feeling are the same (Ahmed 106). This entails that shame requires an identification with the object who “as witness, returns the subject to itself” (Ahmed 106). After the tourists are shamed and feel shame, the view of the Antiguans might become important, because the tourists perhaps starts to see themselves as they were the Antiguans. The readers through shame are possibly going to feel like they have not only failed the Antiguans but also themselves. As Ahmed suggests, in shame the subject exposes to itself that it is “a failure through the gaze of an ideal other” (106). Therefore, as the Antiguans view could start to matter to the tourists, the tourists as a result are possibly going to evaluate themselves and their values.

Furthermore, by evaluating their values through recognizing their shame, the tourists failure in living up to an ideal becomes crucial to moral development. According to Ahmed, “the fear of shame prevents the subject from betraying “ideals”, while the lived experience of shame reminds the subject of the reasons for those ideals in the first place” (106). The fear of shame is probably what prevents the tourists from betraying their values. It may well be then that shame allows the tourist to avoid further shame by seeking social norms. Moreover, shame can be restorative if the tourists can prove that their “failure to measure up to a social ideal is temporary” (Ahmed 107).

The text style of provoking the readers through the use of anger and shame reverses the gaze and this perhaps allows the tourist to see it from the perspective of the natives. The readers are placed in the natives world and are enlightened to the atrocities caused by their ancestors on the Antiguans. The tourists may also understand the implication of their vacation. The readers through the essay have possibly become witnesses to history and present exploitation, that they
contribute to, through tourism, that is connected to global economy that only benefit the tourists, the West and the corrupted Antiguan government.

5. Towards Reconciliation

For all Kincaid's rage about the devastating after-effects of slavery and colonialism on Antigua. A Small Place nevertheless concludes with a direction towards reconciliation. As it moves towards its ending, Kincaid's direct address changes with a shift in tone:

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? (41)

It is almost as Kincaid had to put the readers through punishment all through the second half of the essay before she could make a shift towards addressing the readers as part of the solution to the issues in Antigua. The turn here could entail that the truth of slavery and colonialism needed to be heard and recognized by the readers so reconciliation can begin. The passage seems to invite the readers to listen to the narrators concerns. For example, the text use of addressing the readers as “you” have shifted to more of as a nice conversation where the narrator seems to assume that the readers feels her pain when she says: “so you can imagine how I felt” (Kincaid 41). Another example, the text also convey the impression that shame is not only felt by the colonizers but also by the natives as it is questioned if Antigua was in a better condition when it was colonized by the British than when it is an independent nation. To explain further, this excerpt here, I will use Ahmed again who claims that, “shame becomes not only a mode of recognition of injustices committed against others, but also a form of nation building. It is shame that allows us ‘to assert our identity as a nation’. Recognition works to restore the nation or reconcile the nation to itself by ‘coming to terms with’ its own past in the expression of ‘bad feeling’” (102). It is likely that the tourists have by now recognized the injustices they have contributed in Antigua, and can now begin to restore their relationship with the Antiguans and the nation.
Moreover, as the reader becomes a witness to “the past injustice through feeling ‘national shame’” that exposes its failure to live up to its on or national ideal has entered the process to recovery because exposure is a beginning to recovery (Ahmed 109). It may well be then that the text has exposed past injustice through emotions as a tool to reflect on different perspectives to reach understanding between the subject and the other, and uniting them.

Kincaid's concluding passage further shows that there can be a brighter future for Antigua when the natives and the tourists meets in the present. Kincaid writes:

Of course, the whole thing is, once you cease to be a master, once you throw off your master’s yoke, you are no longer human rubbish, you are just a human being and all the things that adds up to. So too with the slaves. Once they are no longer slaves, once they are free, they are no longer noble and exalted; they are just human beings. (81)

In this passage, after attacking the reader through the whole essay which might have been necessary for the sake of reconciliation, the text gives the feeling of an openness for a ground to reconciliation. The passage brings the tourists and natives, the descendants of the colonizers and the descendants of the colonized to meet each other in the present to possibly resolve what history have created because after all, “they are just human beings” (Kincaid 81). As Ahmed puts it, “Our shame is as necessary as their pain and suffering in response to the wrongs of this history. The proximity of national shame to indigenous pain may be what offers the promise of reconciliation, a future of ‘living together’, in which the rifts of the past have been healed” (101-102). Therefore, the tourists likely having acknowledged past wrong doings through feeling shame becomes as crucial as the pain of the natives, because now both the subject and the object have become one as both are in pain. In order to remove this pain both sides will come together because there is probably no other option than to reconcile.

A Small Place seems to expose past injustice in order to call for change in the political system. For the Antiguans reconciliation is possibly a beginning but political solution is perhaps crucial as means to for them to heal. As Ahmed explains it “Within the politics of reparation, and in the truth commissions that have been set up in response to trauma and historical injustice, telling the story of injury has become crucial” and “testimony as a form of healing for
indigenous communities” is very important to be able to move on (202). Therefore, for the natives to move on they have to likely be able to tell their story in court and find justice. Furthermore, as Ahmed states:

The projects of reconciliation and reparation are not about the ‘nation’ recovering: they are about whether those who are the victims of injustice can find a way of living in the nation that feels better through the process of speaking about the past, and through exposing the wounds that get concealed by the ‘truths’ of a certain history. Feeling better might be an effect of telling one’s story, or of finding a more liveable way of sustaining silence, or of having those who committed the crime apologise, or of receiving material forms of compensation, or other modes of recognition of an injury. (201)

Even though Kincaid rejected an apology for past injustice, it seems like it was just to provoke the readers to pay attention to the plight of the Antiguans (Kincaid 26). However, as the text concludes with a nicer tone it appears as it was just a style of writing as a mechanism to provoke and shame the readers, for the purpose of maybe helping them to enter into reconciliation. Also, to possibly state that reconciliation is not enough but more is needed for the people of Antigua to heal. In this passage above, Ahmed implies that it is not about the nation but about the people who are oppressed, to recover and be able to freely tell their story in court so they can “feel better” through testimony as a way of healing (201). Alternatively, receive an apology and “compensation” for the pain they have endured (Ahmed 201). It may well be that the narrator has told the story of the pain of the Antiguans through A Small Place by using anger to construct a position for the descendants of the colonizers as means to elicit emotions such as shame which have political dimension.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of this essay was to demonstrate through affect theory that Jamaica Kincaid in A Small Place uses anger to construct a position for the descendant of colonizers and to call forth emotions such as shame. After the book was published many reviewers attacked
Kincaid because they assumed the essay had an angry tone. But never did they analyze what was behind this rage and what the text possibly tried to convey. However, Kincaid’s aim was perhaps not to get a positive response but to make critics talk for the means of turning the gaze to Antigua and eventually expose the West for its contribution of exploitation, colonization, slavery and imperialism. Nevertheless, A Small Place succeeded at the end and many scholars examined the essay through postcolonial theory and gaze theory which is a beginning. However, when the essay was attacked for having an angry tone, scholars never thought of studying it through affect theory other than Carolyn Pedwell who focused mainly on empathy. Critics in general have neglected the fact that it is the emotions in the essay that needs to be examined in order to understand the essay. Because, of the lack of affect reading of A Small Place, I have turned to Sara Ahmed's theory on affect for the purpose of understanding what emotions such as anger and shame do.

In the first part of the analysis I have examined why the narrator addresses the tourists “you” throughout the book. And, I have found through Sara Ahmed’s theory on repetition that the reason the word “you” is repeated is likely because words through repetition sticks and accumulate social value. Second it may produce resistance from the tourists.

In the second part of the analysis I have studied why the text uses anger to describe the readers through insulting words such as “human rubbish” (Kincaid 80). The use of anger here is perhaps to make the readers angry and the object of oppression. Accordingly, reversing positions can possibly lead to a recognition from the readers.

In the third part of the analysis I have discussed the function of shame. As shame according to Ahmed, is useful in exposing what has been hidden, therefore, shame can be used to shame the tourists to recognize past wrong doings. Second, the likely response then is that the tourists knowing they have been found out consumes them and in recognizing their failure they seek to restore their social ideal.

In the last part of the analysis I have examined why the text ends with a shift in tone and seems to be open to a reconciliation. As the readers at the end are possibly enlightened to their contribution of past injustice, the text seems to insinuate an invitation for them to collaborate in decolonization, in a goal to read postcolonial through a new narrative.

As a result, my conclusion is that perhaps Kincaid uses anger throughout A Small Place to construct a position for the reader and to provoke emotions such as shame, in order to expose the
West of their crimes. It may well be that the tourists in recognizing their failure seeks to reconcile so they can live up to their ideals.
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