

Reading Journal #4: Jamaica Kincaid - A Small Place

Boy did this essay tear through my emotions. Kincaid was ever so successful with creating a depth of emotions regarding how tourists could be seen and depicted in a native's eyes. The use of "your" throughout this whole piece was very effective, it formed with me a personal feeling of attack, of someone wagging a finger in your face and saying "you this, you that, it's all your fault". The first paragraph alone, "If you go to Antigua as a tourist...", "You may be the sort of tourist who would wonder...", "You are a tourist and you have not yet seen...", and so on. It draws you in with this sense of fleeting pleasantries, and then immediately breaks you down and degrades you for the audacious attempt to relish as a tourist in a country that is known for treating its natives less than favorable.

Kincaid tends to practically leap over that carefully crafted line of what is deemed "socially acceptable" in terms of speaking to other human beings, and often creates very visceral reactions when describing tourists as "white", "incredibly unattractive", "fat", "pastrylike-fleshed woman/man", etc. Her distinct, visual demands throughout her writing only furthers her point in how tourists could be seen as an "amniotic sac of the modern experience to being a person visiting heaps of death and ruin and feeling alive and inspired at the sight of it;" (p. 16). And maybe it is just to Kincaid, that these tourists who parade their selves and their money in her country, are more dehumanized in her mind as this essay paints them so, but if a bigger majority agrees to some extent what tourists can be like in their own home, then this essay was successful in at least one thing: making me feel that more aware of how I would treat locals and their homesteads if and when I am able to travel to another country or foreign place.

At the end of *A Small Place*, Kincaid says, referring to the natives of Antigua, "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, which is the very place you, the tourist, want to go" (p. 19). I, on some level, can understand why she would focus on that specific outlook, as I tend to gravitate towards feeling like I am also too poor to escape the reality of my life here. Even if I am considered to have a more privileged, or even financially acceptable lifestyle, I still dream of leaving my own "banality and boredom" (Kincaid, p. 19) to find myself somewhere else, outside of what I would call my home. And I can see how that would infuriate those who have lived and breathed in those same places their whole lives, knowing that what I can do is not accessible to all.