Cities in Caribbean Literature: A Study of V. S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* and Jamaica

Kincaid's *A Small Place*

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Abstract

Caribbean literature shares a special concern with questions of identity, ethnicity, and language that rise out of the Caribbean historical experience. Understanding that experience is difficult but it can be attempted by seeing the reflection of the culture and history in Caribbean cities. The representation of cities in literature helps us to have a glimpse of the history along with the socio-economic and cultural shifts in the lives of its inhabitants. Colonial education and cultural colonization has created an anxiety which is faced by all the post-colonial nations and Caribbean cities are not an exception. This thesis explores the changes that colonization brought in the socio economic and cultural aspect of the cities through V. S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place. A Small Place* is a work of creative nonfiction. It can be read as a reflection of the Antiguan government, the tourist industry and Antigua's British colonial legacy. On the other hand, *Miguel Street* is a collection of linked short stories that draw on the author's childhood memories of Port of Spain set in wartime Trinidad and Tobago. It depicts the instability of the West Indian society in which impelled by eccentricity, ambition or sheer romanticism, the individuals are always trying to get away. This thesis argues that the experiences and memories of cities are embedded in people's culture, background and surrounding through textual analysis supported by post-colonial theories.

Epigraph

"The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand."

- Italo Calvino

Introduction

The very bustle of the streets with large structures, hundreds of thousands of people of all classes jostling past one another as if they are on a race- this is the common scenario we make out of the word 'city'. For us city life is full of luxuries and opportunities. There is usually an immense attraction and unique glamour in the city that attracts people from remote and under-developed vicinity. City is a place that people seek to bring comfort in their lives; it is the social ladder which can earn you the title upper-class. City is not just only a space; it has become our identity, "city has become inseparable from our personal and national destiny" (Lehan 1). According to Mumford Lewis, "the city is the point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community" (3). It is fascinating how a space can hold such importance of human culture and history. However, historians and writers have different notion on city. While historians explain cities through conceptual systems, writers rely on their imagination. Nevertheless, both see city as an important unit of society.

A city is an embodiment of its crowd as it arises out of man's social need. It works as the spectator of the change of its crowd and history as it presents itself metonymically. "Cities are a product of time" (Mumford 4). The buildings, monuments and roads, all are witnesses of time which makes city a crucial tool in history. For historians city is a social unit which holds the key to its history, its culture and the norms that its inhabitants own. City and city dwellers is subject of studies which leads towards its origin of political and social structure. However, the concept of city which the people of Bangladesh have is the reflection of Western cities. This is the case with every city which was once colonized. "[P]ost-colonial cities refer to those cities in what were previously colonial societies" (King 1). Our cities are not only a place which reflects our culture but also have the glimpse of the history and culture of the colonizers. This duality which

the post-colonial cities carry can be seen in the literature very prominently. City as a matter of fact is an important factor of its history. Understanding the cities can be the pathway to those historical experiences, as a city is the reflection of its inhabitants, culture and history. The representation of cities in literature helps us to have a glimpse of the history along with the socio economic and cultural shifts in the lives of its inhabitants. We can claim that "the city and its literature share textuality- that the way of reading literary texts are analogous to the ways historians read the city" (Lehan 8). According to Lewis Mumford, city is "a theater of social action and everything else- art, politics, education, and commerce- only serves to make the social drama more richly significant" (92). Writers such as V. S. Naipaul and Jamaica Kincaid in their writings used city as a medium to give us a chance to look at the history, culture and the crowd of the societies they lived in, before and after colonization.

Hence, this thesis is an enquiry in two books titled *Miguel Street* by V. S. Naipaul and *A Small Place* by Jamaica Kincaid to interpret the history, socio-economic and cultural aspect of the cities. My major concern will be to scrutinize the reasons and the triggering factors behind the changes cities and its crowd goes under. I will also reflect upon the background of the selected books and author and how the cities are important in literature to understand its history. With the help of textual analysis these chapters will shade light onto the changes that the city has to go through due to colonization.

i)   City in Earlier Literary Genres:

'Space' was and is a dominant theme in literature as it is one of the primary aspect of man's culture. Scholars generally explored the way spaces in literary texts are experienced by the narrator or characters. If we look at the inner space of house it evokes the feeling of security, belongingness, comfort and assurance of existence. It is experienced as peaceful and intimate.

On the other hand, the outer space or the space outside the house (city or countryside) is a public space, unknown and distant, can be experienced as dangerous and threatening. However, some suggests space is "not static but subject to change in the course of a literary text or in relation to the human subjects who experience them" (Klooster and Heirman 5). One space can be comforting for one character and threatening for other, for example, the cave of Calypso in Homer's *Odyssey*. While the cave can be considered as an excellent place with flowery meadows and trees Odysseus feels grief as he wishes to go back to the barren Ithica. This is the case with city as well. The way city has been conceptualized in literature from its origin till now is subject to change according to the experience of its crowd. As urbanism is at the very heart of Western culture serving as the source of political power, social order and chaos; "city is also the source of intellectual excitement and challenge" (Lehan 1).

Our literary imagination of city is largely shaped up by the Western cities or representation of Western cities in various genres. If we are to focus on any particular era when city became an important theme in English literature we can start from eighteenth century or more specifically Victorian era. London was developed during this time as a world city. From then to now we can see how the portrayal of city has changed from western experience to colonial experience. Nonetheless, there are mentions of city in literature of earlier genres as well. William Blake in his poem "London" wrote:

> I wander thro' each charter'd street,
>
> Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
>
> And mark in every face I meet
>
> Marks of weakness, marks of woe. (1-4)

To Blake "people from London were suffering from a spiritual malaise" (Weitzman 469). Writers of that time had a similar fear and bewilderment of the city. When the Romantic Movement was all about returning to the roots and leaving the concrete jungle, fear of the city is understandable. However, things were different for the Victorian writer Daniel Defoe (1659-1731). Defoe "welcomed the city as offering a new way of life to a new class of people" (Lehan 4). "Wealth, in Defoe's day, was being accumulated by common English men and women, both at home and abroad, in far greater quantities than ever before" (Macey 99), which explains the voyage of Robinson Crusoe. His voyage to London was successful as he was financially benefited. "In Robinson Crusoe, Defoe deals with major points of Western civilization like trade, mercantile capitalism" (Hasan 20). In Defoe's another work *Augusta Triumphans* he made suggestions for the improvement of London. Even his novel *A Journal of the Plague Year* is about the great plague of London in 1665, which works as a warning and practical handbook of the epidemic. These literature pieces focused on city as an important part or rather central part. "He was the one of the first writers to rely on the growing market of the middle class to earn his living" (Hymer 30). All these capitalism and growing market is another product of urbanism and very much city centric. City in his literary works served as a mean to express the hope of a better future which was created due to then social-economical circumstances.

On the other hand, Charles Dickens, another prominent writer of Victorian era had different notion on city. He saw city, which was entirely held together by commercial needs, as an overly materialistic space. He believed it "hardened the heart and diminished compassion, altering our sense of human scale, our sense of community" (Lehan 4). This is why his representation of city was different from the former. In Dickens's *Great Expectation* we can see London through Pip. When he first sees London streets and markets, particularly Smithfield, he

called it "the shameful place". "[B]eing all asmear with filth and fat and blood and foam, seemed to stick to me" (Dickens 212), Pip further says, describing Smithfield. In Dickens's other novel *Oliver Twist*, he portrayed the London which was full of crime and danger. In the preface of 1841 Dickens gave a statement of his characters' precise criminal roles:

> It is, it seems a very coarse and shocking circumstance, that some of the characters in these pages are chosen from the most criminal and degraded of London's population; that Sikes is a thief, and Fagin a receiver of stolen goods; that the boys are pickpockets, and the girl is a prostitute.

In this novel the city is repeatedly described as a maze, as a prison; it's filthy, foggy, and crime-ridden. The crimes were one of the prominent problems in Victorian London due to the rapid growth of population. Another popular novel of Dickens that is centered on cities is *A Tale of Two Cities.* The story is set in Paris and London. The end of the novel suggests the end of the old regime in France creates a path for renewed Paris through Sydney Carton's death for saving other lives. Dickens's representation of city is not what we generally expect from city. It is gloomy, not exciting, in fact threatening and also the opportunities are not great either. While Defoe uses cityscape to ignite the hope for a better future, Dickens's cityscape talks about the unattractive history of London. Through these literary pieces we get to see a London which we might not have thought about. Dickens fiercely satirized various aspects of society and failed legal system through his novels and all with the help of his description of cityscape.

Robert Browning in his poem- "Up at a Villa—Down in the City", talked about city life and how it is better than the country-

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,

The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city square;

Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there! (1-3)

Through this poem he idealized city life as comfortable and exciting unlike the life in country or village. He says, "There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast" (Browning 5). Here the narrator voices out the thought of all the country dwellers who dreams of a better life and for them city is way.

If we move on to American Literature, the city can be seen as one of the dominant themes in the literary works. One of the famous writers of 1920's F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gats*by is a beautiful novel which portrays the time in America after the First World War. The novel portrays the individuals living in the roaring 20's, a time when these individuals are seen to chase the American Dream. James Turslow Adams coined the term The American Dream in his book named *Epic of America.* American dream is defined as someone working hard to be prosperous staring from low on the social or economic level. This novel shows how the materialistic influence of high societies and over consumption was pushing American people to pursue the American Dream as if without having it their life holds no meaning. "The American Dream, or myth, is an ever recurring theme in American literature…" (Pearson 638). Post war time is always challenging as it is mostly a new place to settle, new society and nation needs to be shaped. The political and economical situation of the society gets affected. This novel is the reflection of the then America when people seek comfort in Jazz, money, alcohol and party. It is a fact that society shapes a character. In roaring twenties money was the way to value a person or measure the social class, this is that reason that people were obsessed with earning money. The American dream was succumbed into the economical position of man. The portrayal of city life shows the then political and social circumstances and also what people aspired to be out of it. For

poems we can look at "The Great City" by Walt Whitman, which is a poetic piece indicating his thoughts on a great city. For him a great city does not need to have all the finest facilities, rather where people are happy is the greatest city of all. He states in his poem, "Where a city stands that is belov'd" and "healthiest fathers", "best- bodied mother". He also talks about equality and anti slavery. He states, "Where the slave ceases/ and the master of slaves ceases" (Whitman 1). His portrayal of city is actually a model of the ideal city.

As the literary techniques transform the older view of the city also transforms with it. "As the modernists move toward new forms of subjectivity, the meaning of the city becomes more dense" (Lehan 5). The more materialistic and complex the city becomes the more hostile its literary imagination becomes. Writers like Joseph Conrad and T. S. Eliot saw the city as a dismal space which has no spiritual energy left. Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* is a detective story set against a baffling liquid London. Conrad described the descent into the street as "like the descent into a slimy aquarium from which the water had been run off" (108). His London is aquatic not solid. In E M Forster's *Howards End,* London means different for different characters. It is home to the Schlegel Sisters, but for Leonard Bast, it is a place of deprivation. For T. S. Eliot the city he suggests in *The Waste Land* is 'unreal city' as he wrote:

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,

I had not thought death had undone so many.

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,

And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (60-65)

As for James Joyce he made the city a second-rate place in *Dubliners,* where the city is "wearing a mask of a capital" (Joyce 31). This is how city was seen differently by different authors in different times.

The nature of London, unlike Paris or New York, is difficult to represent and comprehension. As Humpherys mentioned, Julian Wolfreys puts it as, "one can have the illusion of order with New York or Paris. But London remains unknowable and ineffable" (601). As the city was transformed according to its change of subject, both population and work became diversified. This diversity led to the "otherness"- an element of urban. Here it means a stranger, outside of the community who comes and disrupts the city within. And we look through the crowd and see the crowd reading the city. Lehan says:

> Each crowd offers a way of reading the city… The ways of reading the city offer clues to ways of reading the text, urban and literary theory complementing each other. Thus we can look to the city from its very origins to reveal a special meaning. (9)

Through the crowd we can find different aspect of city as the crowd represents the city. A city without its crowd is nothing. City is not just the physical space but also its people and their life. This is why authors focused in the crowd along with the cities.

ii)   City in Colonial and Post-colonial Literature:

Colonialism is a historical phenomenon, a policy that was followed by number of European countries. The word colonialism, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), comes from the Roman 'colonia' which meant 'farm' or 'settlement', and referred to Romans who settled in other lands but still retained their citizenship. Ania Loomba describes it as:

a settlement in a new country … a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a

community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed,

consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the

connection with the parent state is kept up. (7)

Colonialism is the process of conquering other people's land and property. This definition

however fails to give any reference to people as it only focuses on the process. It also lacks the

understanding of the colonized people's situation and the effects on their lives due to the process.

The grave history of oppression and trauma cannot be deciphered only from this definition.

However, "it has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history" (Lomba 7).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, post-colonialism is "A theoretical approach in

various disciplines that is concerned with the lasting impact of colonization in former colonies."

The after effect of colonialism is the root of the word 'Post-colonialism'. "A country may be

both post-colonial (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of

remaining economically and/or culturally dependent) at the same time" (Lomba 12). These

dependencies gave birth to 'first world' and 'third world' countries. The countries and its people,

which were once colonized, still suffer in limbo even after so many years of independence. With

the complex colonial history, domination, exploitation, migration, displacement and dislocation,

the issues like identity and nationality come into contact with the idea of city as well. For

example, in the novella *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, we can see that how Antoinette and

her husband struggles to have their own place. Antoinette struggles in England, and her husband

keeps on thinking how England is better than this and how he hates the place for being

mysterious. He says, "I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the

sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know" (Rhys 172).

The history of colonial Caribbean starts from 15th century with the voyage of Christopher Columbus. After Columbus's second voyage, the Spanish came to the Caribbean to initiate the process of extending the European trade. They colonized Hispaniola in 1493, Puerto Rico in 1508, Jamaica in 1509, Cuba in 1511, and Trinidad in 1530. Their expansion started with agricultural cultivation. However, the principal aim of these colonizers was to find and extract silver and gold, hence, the traders moved to the mainland in search of gold, silver and other precious metals. They took slaves with them to Europe where a large number of slaves died as the natives of the islands lacked immunities to European diseases. This led to increased demand of additional slaves, and to meet the demand the Spanish settlers started trading slaves from Africa. After the Spanish settlers, the Dutch, the French and the British settlers came one after to another to the Caribbean Island. The Dutch settlers played an important role in turning these Islands into commercial trading station. However, the history of slavery came to an end due to slave rebellions. "Haitian Revolution freed about half a million people in 1793, and perhaps another 110,000 the following year…" (Geggus 85). In 1807 the British abolished the transatlantic slave trade and slaves eventually gained emancipation in 1838 which was a result of the continued pressure in Britain and ongoing slave resistance in the Caribbean, while slaves in the Dutch Caribbean were freed in 1863. However, the "British Caribbean sugar production continued to increase until the late 1820s" (85). The abolition of the slavery did not end the tensions and confusions resulted from colonization among the colonized. This cruel history of slavery, displacement raised the question of identity and belonging.

These issues were the truth of the then Caribbean and writers as Naipaul and Kincaid responded to these issues. They brought these issues in front with their writings, whether through fictionalized version of childhood memories of Port of Spain or through creative nonfictions as a reflection of the Antiguan government and its British colonial legacy with the help of the landscape of city and its crowd. With the help of the cities the writers were able to bring forth the history of its people. "In the 1930s and 1940s the colonial literature of the Caribbean was challenged by various authors who identified themselves with the descendants of the ex-slaves" (Bonnici 11). They wrote in the context of the anti –colonial feeling of the time. They used the language of the colonizers to express their experience and history of colonization. The post-colonial literature, like the post-colonial time is a product of the brutal history of slavery and oppression. While some writers wrote from their anti-colonial perspective some wrote their sufferings that they still faced. The aching history of slavery is passed through the next generation of the Caribbean Islands. As a result we can say that the Caribbean literature is the result of the loss of history or culture and roots. Through the process of colonization these people were provided with the colonizers language, culture and values. On one hand, they were weighed down with the history of their ancestors and on the other hand, they were forced to accept colonizers culture. Caribbean literature is thus molded with double consciousness. Double consciousness is a term describing the internal conflict experienced by subordinated groups in an oppressive society. It was coined by W. E. B. Du Bois. The Caribbean people both the historical and the contemporary suffer from displacement and double consciousness. As a result, in Caribbean writing these two themes are prominent.

Displacement and double consciousness is something that is engraved deep into the heart of colonized countries. It is in the social norms, architecture, the history with those structures that

carries legacy of both the colonizer and colonized. The literary cities in post-colonial texts also subject to these themes. Post-colonial theory and literary texts discuss about various kinds of experiences such as migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, race, gender, place and many more. Along with these experiences it also responses to the influential imperial discourses such as philosophy and history of the West. By taking the Western discourses into consideration, the post-colonial writers represent and criticize the continuing process of imperial suppression and describe and address the dreadfulness of imperialism and its consequences. "E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* pictured colonial India from European perspective; degrading it to the level of a land of mystery, muddle, inactivity and lethargy" (Hossain and Rahman 129). The novel starts with the description of Chandrapore city. With the description we get to see the differentiation and distance between the people of Chandrapore and the English people staying there.

> As for the civil station itself, it provokes no emotion. It charms not; neither does it repel. It is sensibly planned, with a redbrick club on its brow, and farther back a grocer's and a cemetery, and the bungalows are disposed along roads that intersect at right angles. It has nothing hideous in it, and only the view is beautiful; it shares nothing with the city except the overarching sky. (Forster 1)

The last line of the passage not only talks about the difference between the setting and structure of building but also the difference between the people. For the Europeans, India was nothing but a muddle and it appears that "Forster associated India with the Marabar caves, devoid of harmony and balance" (Hasan and Rahman 133). The lack of interest in the caves from the English people can be interpreted as the lack of interest in the exploration of the hearts of Indians. However, the caves hold the history of ancient India and it tells the secrets of India's architecture, society and culture. Another post-colonial novelist Amitav Ghosh, in his novel *The*

Shadow Lines, perfectly brings the changes a city goes under due to colonization through his writing. The character of grandmother was forced to leave Bangladesh in 1947 during the partition. She always believed that Dhaka was her home. However, coming to Dhaka after many years she fails to recognize her home, and she remarks, "Where's Dhaka? I can't see Dhaka" (Ghosh 193). This change led her to experience the identity crisis and also shows the affect of colonial influence upon the colonized. This shows how a change in the city can bring change into the lives of its inhabitants. Also the hazy history of slavery, oppression and displacement creates the same kind of impact.

iii)   Chosen Texts and Authors:

To explore city in Caribbean Literature in post-colonial ground, I have chosen V. S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* for my thesis. My thesis explores the changes that colonization brought in the socio economic and cultural aspect of the cities.

The first text I chose is *A Small Place* by Jamaica Kincaid. Jamaica Kincaid (1949) was born Elaine Potter Richardson in St. John's, Antigua. She is a Caribbean American writer whose works are evocative portrayal of family relationship and her native Antigua. Kincaid was educated in the British colonial education system, as Antigua did not gain its independence from England until 1981. "At seventeen she was sent to Westchester, New York, to work as an au pair to help support her family" (Vorda 49). She did not return to Antigua until she was 36. According to Justin D. Edwards, Richardson decided to legally change her name to Jamaica Kincaid in 1973.

Changing her name was, as Kincaid says, a liberation that gave her freedom to write whatever she wanted. She also states that she chose this name because it reflects her

complex identity as a Caribbean woman who was marked by a British colonial education

system. (Edwards 2)

Her name was an attempt in staying connected to her Caribbean roots. Jamaica takes pride in her

nationality as she expressed herself on an interview saying, "I can find nothing negative to say

about the fact that I come from the place I'm from. I very much like coming from there." (Vorda

50). This shows how much her birth place, Antigua, means to her. *A Small Place* was published

in 1988 and 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). *A Small Place* is divided into four loosely structured, untitled sections. It can be

read as a reflection of the Antiguan government, the tourist industry and Antigua's British

colonial legacy.

The other text I chose for my thesis is V. S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street*. Vidiadhar

Surajprasad Naipaul, popularly known as V.S. Naipaul was born in the West Indian island of

Trinidad to a family descended from U.P. in Eastern India. He lived in Trinidad which is a

former British colony. His parents migrated from India to Trinidad during the period of British

rule in India. He later migrated from Trinidad to England for his education. His dream to be a

writer bloomed at a very early age. His writings have many themes but the most prevailing

theme is depicting Trinidad where he was born. As he himself said, "To get started as a writer, I

had to go back to the beginning, and pick my way back- forgetting Oxford and London- to those

early literary experiences…" (Naipaul 15).

"His fiction is often highly autobiographical, returning again and again to the themes of

alienation, the burdens of the past, and the confusions of the present" (Ali and Gopal 1). Miguel

Street is of no difference. *Miguel Street* was published in 1959. It is a collection of linked short stories by V. S. Naipaul set in wartime Trinidad and Tobago. The stories portray the author's childhood memories of Port of Spain. Miguel Street appears to be a fictionalized version of Luis Street where the author lived with his family.

The purpose of this paper is to discover the socio economic and cultural changes, with the help of the cities, which colonization brought in. In the first chapter I will discuss Antigua before and after colonization with textual reference from *A Small Place*. In the second chapter I will discuss the how the Miguel Street is the gathering place of different people who are chosen by the place of living rather than the people choosing it themselves. Through these seventeen stories I will depict the instability of the West Indian society in which, forced by eccentricity, ambition or sheer romanticism, the individuals try to get away from reality and escape into fantasy. Lastly I will conclude my thesis summarizing the overall discussion.

Chapter One: 'St. John's' in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*

In *A Small Place,* "Kincaid reveals Antigua as a place- no matter how small- in its own right" (Gauch 910). *A Small Place* is divided into four untitled sections. It can be read as a memoir or a reflection of the Antiguan government, the tourist industry and Antigua's British colonial legacy. "Kincaid's essay is a journey through a present and past Antigua" (910).

Post-colonial cities are "constituted by the tensions and contradictions between the global, national and local concepts and practices of urban space" (Varma 14). The cities are subjected to multiple legacies. Every post-colonial city portrays "embeddedness in the histories of colonial and post colonial rules" (14). St.John's, the capital of Antigua has the same characteristics. Behind Kincaid's narrative of the place we can find the history of the place effortlessly. As I mentioned in the earlier chapter, the historians and writers interpret city in different ways. If we ask a historian to describe St, John's, Antigua, he would give us the facts such as dates of incidents. In geography books we would get the facts such as longitude and latitude. We will know that Antigua lies in the, outer row of calcareous islands and its area which is 180 square miles. However the St. John's Kincaid shows us consists of vivid imagery of the place. The description holds the history of its past struggles. Kincaid starts her narration with the description of the place one can see the moment the plane descends to land. She introduces the city as a place

> where the sun always shines and where the climate is deliciously hot and dry… while at
> the same time surrounded by a sea and an ocean—the Caribbean Sea on one side, the
> Atlantic Ocean on the other. (4)

This is how we the reader get the glimpse of true St. John's which has a history and a legacy, rather than just a place on earth. As her narration of the place continues the real Antigua and its state before and after colonization is exposed.

i)   **Structures- Physical Space of the City St. John's:**

Kincaid gives us the hint of the education system of the country through the narration of the landscape. She describes the school building which people might think of as a latrine. It is a building sitting in a sea of dust but if you look carefully you will be able to see the name Pigott's School.

"[C]olonial buildings, spaces, trade networks, social rules and street names constitute the postcolonial city as a palimpsest of a messy colonial history" (Varma 16). For example, Curzon Hall in Dhaka, named after Lord Curzon, which was intended to be a town hall, or the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, India, dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria, carry the legacy of colonial Dhaka and Kolkata. In St. John's the buildings- the Government house, the Prime Minister's office, the Parliament building, the American embassy with a splendid view of St. John's Harbour - give testimony of the period of colonization. There are mansions which tell the story of a merchant family who came to Antigua from the Middle East. They used to sell dry goods door to door and now "they own a lot of Antigua; they regularly lend money to the government, they build enormous (for Antigua), ugly (for Antigua), concrete buildings in Antigua's capital, St. John's, which the government then rents for huge sums of money" (Kincaid 11). Even the Library of the city tells the story of its past. The building was damaged due to the earthquake of 1974 which was yet to be repaired. "The library is one of those splendid old buildings from colonial times and the sign telling of the repairs is a splendid old sign from

colonial times" (9). This also shows how so many years after colonization, the traces of that event still remains in the space and its structures.

Kincaid then pointed out the structure of Barclays Bank which leads the readers to the history of slavery. The Barclay brothers, who started Barclays Bank, were slave-traders. "When the English outlawed the slave trade, the Barclay brothers went into banking" (Kincaid 26). This Bank carries the grave history of slavery. "From the early days of slavery, cultural clash and miscegenation formed the brutal texture of Caribbean life" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 144). The history which depicts the time when sugar became Antigua's main crop in about 1674 with Christopher Codrington being settled at Betty's Hope plantation, Antigua's first full-scale sugar plantation. Slaves were moved from Africa to America, and one of the most brutal forced slave transportation occurred in the 17th century to the 18th century, known as the Middle Passage. The journey started from Africa to America and ended in The West Indies. They produced sugar and raw cotton for consumption of colonizers. "This African 'frontier' of slave trading followed a violent historical dynamic recurrent throughout the world's history, including the contemporaneous northern Atlantic" (Cole 121). The conditions of the slaves were inhuman. The slave trade voyages took six to eight months.

> In Antigua, people speak of slavery as if it had been a pageant full of large ships sailing
> on blue water, the large ships filled up with human cargo— their ancestors; they got off,
> they were forced to work under conditions that were cruel and inhuman, they were
> beaten, they were murdered, they were sold, their children were taken from them and
> these separations lasted forever, there were many other bad things, and then suddenly the
> whole thing came to an end in something called Emancipation. (55)

This history was such a wound which left scar that will remain till the end of the world.

As the narration progresses Kincaid bought us to the post-colonial Antigua. Just like any other post-colonial writer, Kincaid also projects the uncertainty of the present situation. The place after colonization is not the place that was before. It cannot give the security like before, which makes her think that whether they were better back then. The old yet to be repaired library was perhaps better in its disfigured shape than the present one above a dry goods store. "The place where the library is now, above the dry-goods store, in the old run-down concrete building, is too small to hold all the books from the old building, and so most of the books, instead of being on their nice shelves, resting comfortably, waiting to acquaint me with you in all your greatness, are in cardboard boxes in a room, gathering mildew, or dust, or ruin" (Kincaid 43).

Then she bought our attention to the streets. St. John's had streets named after "an English maritime criminal, Horatio Nelson, and all the other streets around were named after some other English maritime criminals" (23). The names were all after English people. This is not only a simple matter of naming streets of the city but it is the indicator of imperial oppression. It is one of the effects of colonization where the colonizers turn every place into their place or try to bring that familiarity, "and so everywhere they went they turned it into England" (Kincaid 24).

ii)   **Corruption- Economic and Social Space of the City St. John's:**

Kincaid weaves into her narration such information which an outsider can never acquire the knowledge of. Critics Osagie and Buzinde validates 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). Through her narration she

points out the government's corruption. She draws our attention to the roads where expensive Japanese cars can be seen running with "awful sound, like an old car- a very old dilapidated car" (Kincaid 7). She also states that the cars are of latest models which Americans and Europeans won't dream of buying. However, the Antiguans are driving those cars though their lifestyles do not match with their rides. The car owners live in a house, which is far beneath the status of the car. Kincaid explains this situation with the information that the banks are encouraged by the government to issue loans available for cars, when the loans for houses was not so easily available. Also "the two main car dealerships in Antigua are owned in part or outright by ministers in government" (7). Not only the roads but the structures, such as hospital, are also a reminder of the corruption of Antiguan society. Kincaid describes the hospital as a place which is "staffed with doctors no actual Antiguan trust… that when the Minister of Health himself doesn't feel well he takes the first plane to New York to see a real doctor" (8). These are the indicators of the corruption of Antiguan government. Colonialism has effect on corruption. Neanidis and Angeles argue that corruption of post-colonial countries have deep historical roots that go all the way back to their colonial experiences. "In all colonized countries Europeans placed themselves at the top of the social structure" (Angeles & Neanidis 7). However, this does not ensure that the control and profit the colonizers were getting from a country's resource was similar everywhere. The greater the population of the country, the more difficult it was to have control over. The power then had to be shared between the European elite and the local leaders. "A more powerful elite is also more likely to engage in acts of corruption that procure a benefit for itself at the expense of the rest of society" (9). This is how corruptions bloomed in colonial cities and St. John's is not different.

The corruption of Antigua is expressed through the description of various facilities that the Antiguans are supposedly enjoying. "The government is for sale; anybody from anywhere can come to Antigua and for a sum of money can get what he wants" (Kincaid 47). The old library will not be restored as "that part of St. John's was going to be developed, turned into little shops—boutique" for the tourists who will come to visit the state (48). Even the electric and telephone services are owned by government. "Some ministers in government have opened their own businesses; the main customer for these businesses is the government itself" (59). Then there are "people close to the Prime Minister openly run one of the largest houses of prostitution in Antigua" (59). These are the proofs Kincaid bring forth to expose the corruption of Antiguan government including misappropriation of funds, drug smuggling, and even political violence— all of which are known by the average Antiguan.

iii)   People- Mental and Emotional Space of the City St. John's:

Colonization was not only a matter of acquiring lands it was also an issue of colonizing the minds through various processes. Colonizing the mind is the intervention of an external source which is the colonizer in the mental sphere of the colonized. Both colonizer and colonized can participate in the process voluntarily or involuntarily. This process may take place through the transmission of social systems like - family, traditions, cultural practices, religion, science, language, fashion, ideology, education, etc. People of St. John's also went through this process. That is why when the Antiguans go to thank the God for being independent, "they go to church and thank God, a British God" (Kincaid 9).

People from formerly colonized countries are unable to establish order and govern their countries, which results into them to create a chaotic situation. Colonial experience has made the

colonized to believe that they are inferior to the colonizers. Even colonization in education and culture has caused the conquered nations believe that their culture, religion, custom and traditions are inferior to the colonizers. Neither they can associate themselves with the colonizers nor can they exclude the effect brought upon them due to colonization. The colonized suffer from displacement, loss of identity, and they also have to face anxiety all their life. They live in a limbo, without any definite identity or place. Moreover, when they look back to their past, trying to balance it with their present they fail miserably. They can't find similarities between what they had and what they have now. "Beyond their historical and cultural differences place and displacement…are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 8). In *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh, the narrator's grandmother goes through the effect of colonization, the displacement, the lack of identity, and she asks "I've never seen any of these. Where is Dhaka?" (Ghosh 194). Kincaid also goes through this painful reality which is reflected in her text. She states, "the Antigua I knew, the Antigua in which I grew up…no longer exists" (Kincaid 23).

Then there is the Mill Reef Club, which was built for North Americans as a holiday place, where "the only Antiguans (black people) allowed to go there were servants" (27). This club is the proof of racism which was brought by the colonization. The racism was evident; not only in these places but also in places like dentists' chamber where the dentist would send his wife to inspect the patients first or the school where only children outside of marriage would be accepted. "No one ever dreamed that the word for any of this was racism" (29). They took them as ill-mannered English. She states,

The English were ill-mannered, not racists; the school headmistress was especially ill-

mannered, not a racist; the doctor was crazy—he didn't even speak English properly, and

he came from a strangely named place, he also was not a racist; the people at the Mill

Reef Club were puzzling (why go and live in a place populated mostly by people you

cannot stand), not racists. (34)

Kincaid in her narration of the city pulls out the issue of 'otherness'. "Colonial discourse

produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable

and visible" (Bhaba 101). This social difference was very much visible and real for the

Antiguans which they had to go through.

Antigua is beautiful, so beautiful that appears to be 'unreal'. Kincaid states that the

beauty of their surroundings is a mixed blessing to the Antiguans. "The people in Antigua now,

the people who really think of themselves as Antiguan are the descendants of those noble and

exalted people, the slaves" (Kincaid 81). The slaves who were brought to Antigua by force were

victims, and therefore noble—but their descendants, today's Antiguans, are simple human

beings, with all the problems and contradictions of human beings anywhere.

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 decolonization shape contemporary subjectivities in

ways that are not easy to penetrate, nor possible to undo. (18)

Kincaid through her description of the city not only manages to portray the beauty of the city but

also the colonial past and present of Antigua are expressed. In the process of understanding the

tension between the past and the present, the narration helps us to recreate the real Antigua out of

the fragmented colonized Antigua.

Chapter Two: 'Port of Spain' in V. S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street*

A city is not just the buildings, the roads or the landscape. A city is also its inhabitants, their culture, their lifestyle and social infrastructure. Any space can be redefined by human activity. From a post-colonial perspective, space as a product of human activity is particularly relevant, for the activities of empires are involved with territorial expansions, emigration and confrontation of different cultures. These human activities shape the city and city becomes a medium to understand the relation between the past and the present. Through the city dwellers we get to know the city and through the city we get to see the glimpse of its history and legacy. The previous chapter of this paper was focused on city's physical space and how history is defined by that space. However, this chapter will focus more on city's people rather than the physical space. As I mentioned earlier a city is also its inhabitants and this is why it is important to read the crowd along with the space to get an insight of its history.

V. S, Naipaul's *Miguel Street* is a fictionalized representation of the life in the slums of Port of Spain in Trinidad. The story is narrated by a boy who left the Caribbean and is looking back. He is aware of the inhabitant's lives, their dreary and desperate conditions in the named street. 1940's Trinidad is a society emerging from its repressive past of colonization and the people of Miguel Street are the example of that transitional phase from colonization to dominion status. Naipaul has spent a lifetime pondering his place in the world, trying to connect his ancestral culture with England, the country he moved to. This is why his works often centers on identity and displacement. These themes can also be found in *Miguel Street*. The novel consists of seventeen sections; each section narrates a different story of a different person staying in the Miguel Street. These stories focus on their personal lives. The narrator creates a pragmatic picture of these characters in the frame of colonization. These characters are the product of

colonization and their lives are influenced by this historical phenomenon. With the help of their stories we get know about the colonial Port of Spain.

i)   **Colonial Mimicry in the City:**

Colonization controls the mindset of colonized people in such a way that makes them dependent on the colonizers. Through colonization, the feeling of inferiority is instilled in them which bring out the mimic tendencies among the colonized. "[C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhaba 122). People of Miguel Street also go through these experiences like any other colonized people. Aaron Eastley in his essay labels most of the inhabitants of Miguel Street 'mimic men' (Eastley 51). This mimic tendency can be observed in many characters of the Miguel Street. "The idea of the 'mimic' becomes an important trope for Naipaul to problematise the diasporic identity of the characters that inhabit his literary narratives" (Goswami 60). In chapter four of *Miguel Street,* we find B. Wordsworth, whose name is the most obvious mimicry in this book. "The man is so colonized that he abandons his native Trinidadian identity and chooses that of the pre-eminent English poet transmitted by empire, William Wordsworth" (Beck 175). The Wordsworth of Miguel Street had "Black" as his name which indicates that the poet has accepted the racist definition of himself given by his colonizers. He desperately tries to fit himself as same as the English poet- "White Wordsworth was my brother. We share one heart. I can watch a small flower like the morning glory and cry" (Naipaul 27). His ambition was to equal William Wordsworth which is why he tried to write greatest English poem of all times, but fails to do so. The narrator admits that he never saw the self proclaimed poet pen a single line. Wordsworth becomes the person who could not being able to live a life that has been forcefully thrust upon him.

Then there is Bogart, who was named after Hollywood actor Humphrey Bogart. After coming back to Miguel Street his accent became pure American. "To complete the imitation, he began expansive towards children" (10). He was a tailor but the narrator cannot remember him making a suit. He also like Black Wordsworth failed in the imitation. The mimic tendency can be found in Morgan as well, when he places his children in the street and punishes them for their 'crimes', mimicking the colonial magistrate. His purpose was to humor others but fails. They are the people who "adopt roles or titles such as those that might be held by professionals of various sorts in England and America, but who in various ways are revealed to be fakes or shams, unable to deliver on the implied promises of their occupational titles" (Eastley 51- 52). In their mimicry of the colonial culture, they develop an inferiority complex towards their own culture and involuntarily try to pursue the closest resemblance to the colonizers. However, no matter they try to be like the colonizers they can only be the shadow of them.

ii)   **Inferiority and Inequality in the City:**

Colonization not only caused mimic tendencies to be bloomed but also it gave birth to the sense of inferiority amongst the colonized. The colonized always feels inferior to the colonizers. They either try to be like them or try to appease them. In chapter three of *Miguel Street* we see George marries her daughter off to Razor. While giving a speech at the wedding reception he makes humiliating remarks about his daughter. "Dolly, you married, it true. But don't think you too big for me to put you across my lap and cut your tail" (Naipaul 18). He did this not to humiliate her daughter but to amuse the American soldiers and sailors who came to the wedding. His action was simply urged with the thought of appeasing the 'superiors'. George was not even ashamed of his actions as he thought it was his duty to amuse them even it means to demean own self.

Eddoes becomes a cart driver and for him it is glorious like any other Trinidadians. This job is considered as a high class job any Trinidadians can have. "There was certainly a glamour to driving the blue carts. The men were aristocrats" (19). The job of garbage collecting is glamorous for the inhabitants. In the seventh chapter the narrator describes the Americans reaction to his begging surprising. "He mumbled something about begging kids and I think he was going to slap me or cuff me. He wasn't very big, but I was afraid. I think he was drunk" (33). For the people of Port of Spain begging the Americans were a normal thing. For the narrator, the American behaved in a 'surprising' way, which indicates that begging was not surprising or shameful for the people of the city.

People of Miguel Street in Port of Spain are also deprived of basic rights like education. For the inhabitants, education was not for them as education is the colonizers tool to prevail power, a vital technology for social control:

> Education becomes a technology of colonialist subjectification in two other important and intrinsically interwoven ways: it establishes locally English or British as normative through critical claims to 'universality' of the values embodied in English literary texts, and it represents the colonized to themselves as inherently inferior beings- 'wild', 'barbarous', 'uncivilized'. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 371)

When Elias expresses his dream of becoming a doctor, the people of the street could not relate with his dream and expectation. The school Elias attended "didn't really look like a school at all" (Naipaul 20). However, Elias's possible success made them proud. The tests he took were a matter of pride for the people as the tests were marked in England. "Everything Elias write not remaining here, you know. Every word that boy write going to England" (20). "The school has always occupied an important place in the work of European colonization as one of the sites

utilized for the reproduction of colonial ideology abroad" (Strongman 83). For the colonizers school was the medium and language was the weapon to infuse their ideology among the colonized. The colonial domination was achieved by creating elites and the only way to do so was through education. This is why the school, its tests, even the whole education system was controlled from England.

When Elias fails his examination after numerous tries they blame it on colonialism. "What else you expect? Who correct the papers? Englishman, not so? You expect them to give Elias a pass?" (Naipaul 20). This statement indicates towards the corruption they faced due to colonization. The indication of corruption is also visible in Elias's statement when he fails for three years- "But what the hell you expect in Trinidad? You got to bribe everybody if you want to get your toenail cut" (22). As corruption is a product of colonization the people of Miguel Street also become the victim of it. Like any other colonized people they go through racial discrimination. They fail to achieve their dreams as they are denied of the rights like education. Their inferiority compels them to think that whatever they are getting they deserve that. This believe makes it impossible for them to fight for their rights, which is why they suffer.

iii)   **Lack of Social Conventions in the City:**

Miguel Street portrays the social life of the Creole Negro society. This is a society where relationships are casual; women and children suffer from illegitimacy and violence. This is a society where brutality of the strong against the weaker is evident. These characteristics are the lingering elements of the past slavery which is a common part of the West Indies life. The relationships are shown between the characters are casual. Masculinity is defined by showing force on women and children.

Beating is a recurring item in Naipaul's fiction. Characters either beat or are beaten. What

is interesting is that beating as a social phenomenon can tell us much about the society

and its habits. Beating becomes a ceremony, a ritual conducted at appropriate moments

for appropriate purposes. In this ritual there is an equilibrium between the protagonists.

Those who beat do not find any resistance from those who are beaten as they are usually

either women or children. (Hedi 53)

In *Miguel Street* Popo and Hat always beat their wives. George is another abusive character in

the book, who exploits his wife and children.

[...] he beat them all. And when the boy Elias grew too big, George beat his daughter and

his wife more than ever. The blows didn't appear to do the mother any good. She just

grew thinner and thinner; but the daughter, Dolly, thrived on it. She grew fatter and fatter,

and giggled more and more every year. (Naipaul 15)

People are considered man enough if they can leave their wives or beat them up. When Bogart

left his wife and Eddoes asked why he did so Hat answered simply saying, "To be a man, among

we men" (10). Even when Popo was not earning instead his wife was he was called a man-

woman. But when he came back from jail for theft he was really a man to the people of the

street. This portrays the general outlook on women of the colonial Port of Spain, where women

were tortured and neglected. They don't have any identity, as we can see that most of the woman

character does not have any name. They are someone's wife or mother. This shows how the

society fails to give women the recognition they deserves.

The street also lacks law and order and social norms. There is Laura who had eight

children from seven different men. Bogart is arrested due to bigamy. He left "his first wife in

Tunapuna and come to Port of Spain… He go away, find a girl in Caroni and he give she a baby"

(10). Then there is George who runs a brothel after his wife's death. Popo is a thief who went to

jail for theft. Then there is Bolo who never trusted the newspaper. These incidents are the

indicators of a failed government and state. The government of Port of Spain failed to earn the

trust of its people. The incidents stated above throw light on the attitude of the people towards

life. Where they are indifferent, accepting to any change in their lives. Even when Man-man

came and claimed that he saw God they believed it as "Seeing God was quite common in Port of

Spain and, indeed, in Trinidad at that time" (24).

Then there is also manifestation of lies and propaganda. There are no laws in the land, no

moral, ethical standards to order the lives of the people. Big Foot went against an Englishman

who was supposedly boxer and a champion of the Royal Air Force. He loses the match. And

later on it was revealed that that man "had never been in the R.A.F., and as a boxer he was

completely unknown" (35).

All these people of Miguel Street failed in their lives. Popo could never make the thing

without a name, Morgan failed as a comedian. Elias failed to be a doctor, George failed in his

brothel business, B. Wordsworth could never wrote the greatest poem, Bolo failed to change his

luck due to lack of trust, Big Foot lost the boxing match, Hoyt failed to teach Elias right, Laura

failed to save her daughter. All these failures indicate towards the failed society Trinidad is. It

postulates the idea of Miguel Street as a world by itself, though the people of this world seem to

want to escape from it. The narrator at the end leaves Trinidad and escapes the barren land,

where there is no chance of flourishing. Miguel Street depicts a society which is the degrading

fact of the colonial society. This is the world without scientists, engineers and doctors. Without

tradition or standard which shapes the people of Miguel Street. This street is the representation of

the instability of the West Indian society. Miguel Street is a place void of hope which led the

characters to lead their lives aimlessly. The people and the street are part of a society with no

glorious past or noteworthy future. This hopelessness, this lack of optimism is evident in every

character's story. These characters help us to draw the image of the colonial Port of Spain from

their life stories which were full of corruption, violence and crime.

Conclusion

City is not just a space; it is much more. It holds the past and foreshadows the future. In literature city can be seen as the pathway to history. In attempt to trace the representation of cities in Caribbean Literature I have attempted to take a look at the physical space and the crowd of the city. As Caribbean history is largely influenced by the history of slavery, racial hybridity, and displacement, traces of these can be found in the cities as well. The cities change due to the territorial transformation, the political and social changes in the space and changes in people's lives. By analyzing the selected texts, I tried to discover the socio-economic and cultural changes the cities faced due to colonization through Jamaica Kincaid and V. S. Naipaul's narration.

In Kincaid's *A Small Place* we see the changes in the city through it structure and people. In St. John's the structures are mimicry of the colonizer countries. The structures reminds of the past history of slavery and colonization. The structures and roads are witnesses of the corruption that colonization brought. The city is the proof of its failed government. The roads are named after English people, which indicate that the English tried to make the Caribbean city like the city they came from. The damaged library shows the damage colonization brought upon the city St. John's. The people of the city are colonized to such extent that they even pray to the English God. They speak language of the colonizers yet denied of the basic rights like education. The city and its government are corrupted to the core. City as Kincaid narrates is *A Small Place* which was settled by "human rubbish from Europe" (80). This is what we get from Kincaid's City, a city found and ruled by English; which instilled all the disadvantages colonization brings with it in the system.

On the other hand, Naipaul's city is made of its people. In *Miguel Street* I focused more on the crowd rather than the physical space as without crowd a city is nothing. Through the

character's lives we get to see the history of Colonial Port of Spain. Miguel Street, a street in Port of Spain, is a world in itself for the characters that lives there. The street is void of any hope and optimism. It is a barren land which has no chance of flourishing. It is a place which holds failed lives of the characters. This place is proof of colonial discrimination which makes the people of Miguel Street think that they are only worthy of garbage collecting of cart driving. They fail in the exams and know that the English are responsible for it; still they don't act upon it. They try to mimic the English by naming them after Englishman like Wordsworth or Bogart. They feel so inferior to the colonizers that they degrade themselves just to appease them. The city has no law and order. There are crimes and the criminals become hero. Women and children are neglected and tortured. Standard of living has hit the rock bottom. Still the people are going on their lives accepting these as their fate. These characters are representing the colonial Port of Spain where government failed to make a living worthy space.

To conclude, we can say that colonial Caribbean cities are subject to colonial discrimination and displacement. The cities and its people are always in a state of limbo as they cannot connect their past with their colonial present. They suffer from hybridity, lack of identity, inferiority complex and hegemony. These features can easily be picked out from the landscape of the cities and lives of its people. Along with these complex themes the cities have played a large part in history. Through it we could interpret the past and see the journey of its past to its present.

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