

The gap between the  
childhood image of  
england and the  
perceived reality of  
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## The Gap Between the Childhood Image of England and the Perceived Reality of England in Kincaid's Story: " On Seeing England for the First Time" Jamaica

Kincaid is a West Indian American writer. Born in Antigua, a former British colony, she carried the post-colonial experience of the West-Indians in her heart. In many of her works, there is spontaneous rumination of the colonial experience that fuels her works and gives it a fierce power. Our heritage is the cultural framework on which our personality expresses itself. Generally when Caribbeans went to England they went with the smug satisfaction they are visiting only their own heritage. However, Amaica Kincaid's " On Seeing England for the First Time" shatters this myth and lays bear the painful unfolding of the reality of the post-colonial experience.

Her essay is an exploration into her own self to unravel the cultural identity of her existence. The essay is strewn with images of England, which were planted in her psyche early in life. In her naivet she believed these images to be true and never questioned their validity. However, her visit to England carrying these images formed early in childhood, made her totally unprepared for reality of England that unfolded before her. She encountered her un-Englishness not only from the hue of her and their skins but also from the deeper experience as the child of ancestors who have been taken captive and taken to a new land to work for the white. She finds that the distrust between her and the English is one of the rallying points in their experience. " they didn't like me, and it occurred to me that their dislike for me was one of the few things they agreed upon"(357).

The virulent hatred of the institution of colonization is based her experience of being robbed of her identity. The conquistadors and the colonial masters

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are the object of her revenge. She has been disenfranchised, exiled from her heritage and she fantasies of revenge by a "reversal of fortune". "if I had the power to simply banish them from their land, send boat after boatload of them on a voyage that had no destination"(357).

Kincaid 's predicament is unimaginably painful; she cannot identify either with her own people or their conquerors. Has she a past and a connection with the past people. She has come to the conclusion that she is nowhere. However, "On seeing England for the First Time" is an evidence of a search to find out where she belongs. What is English in her heritage and what is African in it is her main course of her enquiry. Passage of time might bring in a synthesis in her search. Though much of her work has an autobiographical tilt, the experience that she portrays in her work is the universal experience of search for identity amidst the rootlessness. Many Caribbean writers have aired their childhood experience in the Geography class, where they gathered the notion that England was the center of the earth. The actual encounter with the real England is an inward journey, remedial at the same time and shocking, as it unfolds in their consciousness between an imposed ideal and perceived reality.

The overwhelming sense of having no roots and the debilitating feeling of alienation those are typical to much of post-colonial experience in literature cannot be considered to be objective assessment of the English race. Most cultures, extinct or surviving today, at some point of time have also been masters over others. Empire building and colonization are rather unconscious process and in the establishment of hegemony some excesses do take place. Though they cannot be justified are unavoidable part of

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human race's journey through history. While literary expression can be subjective the language of history has to be based on objective realities. The colonizing countries do carry with them the burden of the past but former colonial subjects do have the duty of the present to allow a time to heal. Kincaid's, " On seeing England for the First Time" should be judged in this frame of mind.

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