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Violence, Bondage and Trauma through the Lens of Selected African American and Caribbean Works

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Abstract

African-American and Caribbean literatures have aroused critical comments from scholars bordering on slavery and its impact, colonialism, bondage, neo-colonialism, loss and search for identity, racism and rootlessness, among other related issues. However, adequate attention has not been given the selected works for this study with regard to violence, bondage and trauma. This paper therefore engages the narrative of slavery, violence and bondage through the lens of African American and Caribbean literature. Texts used for the explication of this research include Douglass' Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass and Stockett's The Help Movie. The study equally looks at colonialism, struggle for independence and violence in Martin Carter's 'This Is The Dark Time My Love', Derek Walcott's 'A Far Cry from Africa' and Jamaica Kincaid's A Small Place. The theoretical framework adopted for this work is New Historicism. The study concludes that slave narratives and other African American and Caribbean literary works are some of the most significant documents on slavery, bondage, war and violence since they document the bitter experiences of the slaves with their masters and the colonized with the colonizers.

Keywords: Violence, War, Bondage, Slavery, Trauma, Colonialism,

Introduction

African American writings have explored the diversity and complexity of the African American experience and have often helped illuminate extensive social, political and economic concerns, from slavery and segregation to systemic racism, including police brutality and voters' oppression. African American literature is centred on people of African descent. Slave narratives were mostly autobiographical in nature and give account of the personae's experience, their escape from slavery, and their lives after slavery. To present the true reality of slavery, a number of former slaves such as Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass wrote slave narratives which soon became mainstay of African American Literature.

The civil war has long served as a powerful, organizing division in American history; it has provided a nearly unquestioned periodization for

students, teachers, and scholars of American literature. Civil war literary culture includes a wide range of both popular and highbrow forms, from news of the front lines to account of emancipation to patriotic songs and poems as well as countless works of fiction. This literature investigates the violence and trauma of slavery and the war.

After the end of slavery and the civil war, a number of African American authors continued to write non-fictional works about the condition of African Americans in post-civil war American society. Though African Americans have been free from slavery after the civil war, the colour line has kept them segregated and marginalized. This is largely why, the reconstruction era, which came immediately after the American civil war, prompted the literature of racial uplift and the theorization of double consciousness.

The Caribbeans have a similar historical background. The Ciboney, Arawak, and Carib (from mainland America), a group of hunters and farmers were the first to settle on the Caribbean island (extending from Northern American border to Southern America). The Ciboney migrated from Florida (South America to the Islands of Cuba and Hispaniola while the Arawak (the Taino) from Northern South America before the arrival of the Carib people. The Spanish led by Christopher Columbus arrived the island in 1492.

In essence, the first Europeans to settle and claim the Caribbean Islands were the Spanish led by Christopher Columbus. Other European Nations and colonisers that struggle to dominate the island include: Britain, France, Portugal and Netherlands. The arrival of the Europeans undoubtedly destroyed the Island cultures. The Arawak and other early settlers were forced to work in the mines for gold and on the plantation though the Carib resisted this enslavement.

The demand for plantation labour increased with the high demand for sugar (product of sugarcane) and as the Arawaks who were the original slaves were being exterminated, Africans became the target. From the African continent, slaves were captured and forcefully taken to the Caribbean islands to work on the plantation and they were equally made to accept the European culture and language as standard. The African slaves were disconnected from their homeland as they no longer had strong or any contacts with their linguistics or cultural backgrounds. They accepted the European ways to the detriment of their own rich traditional values and therefore preserving African values and their cultural identity became herculean.

Moreover, the European culture (Western Education and Christianity) imported to West Indies replaced African tradition (Superstitious beliefs, African music, dance, e.t.c). Consequently, the Caribbeans were not able to assert themselves as they were culturally bonded having been diverted from their oral traditions. The struggle for political emancipation by the colonised is a phase after colonialism which resulted in violent clashes as mirrored in

the selected poems. The themes of cultural colonialism, imperialism, struggle for emancipation, war and violence among others are appropriately portrayed in the works of Caribbean authors. European imperialism (of enforcing the white man's culture and authority) equally gave rise to the negritude movement where the writers attempt to assert the beauty and validity of African culture. Thus, Caribbean authors condemn colonialism oppression, violence, neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism.

Theoretical Framework - New historicism

The framework adopted for the study is historicity of text that is cultural specificity; it is actually the rootedness of the texts within the socio-cultural, historical and political ambience of the production. It is in this respect that the historical and cultural backgrounds of African-Americans and Caribbeans have been given.

New Historicism is an interpretive strategy and a form of culture analysis that considers how cultural products (literary works) participate in their historical contexts. Stephen Greenblatt, a proponent of the theory supports a transition away from Historicism towards New Historicism because he feels that there is an emotional void that exists when historical events are disconnected from the reality within which they already happened.

In a similar vein, H. Aram Vesser supports the idea of pulling historical considerations to the centre as the new historicists combat empty formalism. Scholars of New Historicism include Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Adrian Montrose and so on. They have resisted identifying their approaches with a single methodology

Louis A Montrose comments on reciprocal concern of new historicism with the historicity of texts and textuality of History. J. McGann in *Historical Studies and Literary Criticism* states that the concern of New Historicism is with the relationship between history and text, the commonality between historical and literary texts. In a similar vein, H.A Vesser has made a commonly accepted summary of new historicism's theoretical assumptions in his *The New Historicism* where he argues that literary and non-literary texts circulate inseparably.

New Historicism is quite relevant to the study as both close reading of the chosen texts and the historical experiences of the ex- slaves in America and the Caribbean islands captured in the works aid our interpretation/analysis. Moreover, since African American and Caribbean literary works document slavery, bondage, war, violence and the bitter experiences of the slaves with their masters and the colonized with the colonizers, New Historicism which lays emphasis on historical context and text is apt for this study.

Conceptual Clarification

According to Kristine M. Jacquin, 'Violence is an act of Physical force that causes or is intended to cause harm. The damage inflicted by violence maybe physical, psychological... (Jacquin 1). Jacquin contends that violence can culminate in physical injury and psychological harm as seen in the experience of the colonised blacks; the post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from violence has been explored in the chosen works. The blacks who experience the violence perpetrated by the whites are depressed, a situation that is symptomatic of violence.

'The World Report on Violence and Health' defines violence as:

the intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological maldevelopment or deprivation (Krug et al. 4).

The World Report emphasizes that for the act to be classified as violence the group or person perpetrating the act (violence) must intend to use power or force. Therefore, violence involves the use of physical force and power against another person who may be less privileged. The use of physical force and power against the slaves, by the owners was a common practice during the era of slave trade and this violence has resulted in psychological harm, maldevelopment and of course deprivation. The result of this violence is the scar or wound that has not healed even after the abolition of the obnoxious trade. The memory remains fresh in the minds of African American and Caribbean authors.

A typical example of a type of violence is collective violence which is the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group against another group in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives. For instance, collective violence is obviously perpetrated on the blacks; white slave masters collectively use force to capture the slaves and force them to work hours as slaves subjecting them to different forms of humiliation and torture. The force must be used to keep the blacks in servility. Any action taken by the privileged to harm or suppress the less-privileged equally constitutes violence

Bondage, on the other hand is a state of being bound most often by compulsion. Types of bondage include serfdom and chattel slavery or enslavement. Those under bondage are not free. The Cambridge Dictionary defines bondage as: 'the condition of being someone's property and having to work for them.(www.collinsdictionary.com)

The colonised who have limited freedom are in bondage as they are made to serve the colonialists; they are not free since they do not have the rights to express themselves freely, interact or exercise other fundamental human rights. Individuals under bondage are often traumatised as they are subjected to serious traumatic experiences. The paper looks at trauma from the perspective of disordered psychic/behavioural state of the depressed blacks subjected to physical abuse by the white overlords. The traumatic events like slavery and racial discrimination among others often result in emotional trauma even after the abolition of slave trade. The white overlords adopt the strategy of involving psychological or emotional and physical abuse to keep the blacks in servitude. It should be noted that the discrimination against the blacks is a structural violence as there is psychological harm owing to the unjust colonial practice where the blacks were evidently marginalized.

In collective violence, war and acts of terrorism are common place in African American literature. The manner in which the whites coerce the blacks, in the era of slavery to work on plantation subjecting them to different forms of discrimination is an act of violence.

Racial discrimination perpetrated by the white is a form of violence. Again, there is sexual violence as most black ladies were sexually molested by the whites who used physical force to have sex with them. Domestic violence against the less privileged blacks was equally predominant and this manifests in the verbal or social abuse.

Slave Bondage and the Road to Freedom: The Civil War Twist to *the Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass*

One of the factors that influenced the writer and the text is ignorance of the slaves ensured by the whites in order to continue to subdue the victims. The slaves were denied education and rarely enrolled in schools for formal education. Ralphs Erickson writes on the laws of ignorance stating that: ‘... the African Black populations were typically illiterate’ (Erickson 1). The whites are aware that the blacks who had lost their roots could be easily moulded into a docile servant that would always obey the master. The major control instrument of slavery then was ignorance... ‘every master realised that he had to know almost everything, and the slaves had to know almost nothing. An educated Black might realise how horribly he was treated and revolt’ (Erickson 1).

The United States who value the blacks more for their muscles than brains began to adopt compulsory ignorant laws beginning from 1740 by South Carolina. However, there are blacks who struggled to be educated and one of them is Frederic Douglass taught to read by his mistress in spite of the restrictions. Owing to the restrictions of the blacks from acquiring formal education, many blacks remain illiterate until the early 20th century. This

deliberate efforts to keep the blacks ignorant was the first issue that motivated Fredric Douglass.

The knowledge or awareness of the harrowing experiences the slaves passed through aid our interpretation of the text though a close reading is equally crucial. The slaves were subjected to different forms of abuse, restriction, and denials and Fredrick Douglass has reflected these experiences in the text. The new historicists emphasise the importance of historical background which often throws light on what the author intends to convey since the work itself is the product of history. With the background knowledge and close reading of *The Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass*, we can deduce the motif of ignorance, since the slave masters, then, ensured that the slaves were denied any form of education that could liberate their minds; literacy was actually equated with freedom and the whites ensured that the blacks do not become enlightened in order to keep them in bondage

The Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass tackles some important issues, one of which is ignorance. Ignorance or denial of access to education was used as a tool to preserve the slavery enterprise. The spread of ignorance was doctored by the white slave masters. It was a perfect strategy to keep the slaves contained; it helped keep the slaves under the control of their masters coupled with the physical abuse. Slaves were not permitted to read and write. As a result, they were isolated from the happening outside the plantations having realised that exposing the blacks meant freedom from bondage. All this was an attempt to quell any form of rebellion by the slaves.

Literacy brought with it the realization of and understanding of the concepts of freedom and justice and this was what the slave masters feared the most. Literacy made Fredrick Douglass become aware of himself and his condition. According to Douglass: It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy it opened my eyes to the horrible pit.... (Douglass 35)

Also, during the period of fights against slavery Fredric Douglass considered himself a delegate for the political cause. With literacy, The African American author tried to refute every-single argument against slaves and it was clearly seen through several episodes of his narrative. One of these is with the wife of the slave master, Hughes Sofia who taught a slave the art of reading. She started teaching him how to read until Master Hughes opposed. According to Hughes:

If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master, to do as he is told to do. If you teach that nigger how to read...it would be forever unfit for him to be a slave; he would at once become unmanageable and of no value to his master as to himself... (Douglass 29)

Master Hughes did not want his wife to teach the slaves how to read because the slaves might become so politically aware that they would revolt and be free from bondage. The education of the slaves is hence noteworthy and as the slaves acquire literacy and Christian doctrines thus becoming armed and empowered to challenge the morality of slavery having also imbibed 'the ideals of universal brotherhood of humanity', (www.encyclopedia.com.16 August, 2023).

Furthermore, having acquired literacy, Fredrick Douglass criticises the use of religion by the slave owner as a justification for slavery. In his narrative, he criticizes the slave holders of the South who used a side track form of Christianity to justify keeping of slaves under bondage especially when Douglas was living with Master Auld, and hoped that the attendance of Hughes Auld in the Methodists camp meetings would change him. Disillusioned, Douglass states:

It neither made him more human to his slaves, nor emancipate them. If it has had any effect on his character, it made him crueller and hateful in all his ways: for I believe him to have been a much worse man ... he found religious sanctions and support for his slave holding cruelty (Douglass 40)

Douglass observes that religion can make one cruel if the person uses it as a justification for slavery. Douglass decries the religion of the slaveholders who are hypocrites; they are not real Christians. Douglass is of the opinion that American's practices like slavery and racial discrimination contradict the Christianity they preach and brand republicanism as a sham, humanity as a pretence and Christianity as a lie since they fail to follow God's commandments.

Again, separating slaves from their families is another ploy used to keep slaves in servitude; invariably, slavery is characterised by its negation of communal and familial ties since the whites consciously dismantle all forms of relationship. Historically, the slaves were disconnected from their roots after leaving the shores of Africa for Europe; they lost contacts with their families and values. In this respect, separation from one's root or alienation is another major issue the author is concerned with. The separation of children from their families is a common element of campaign that seeks to impose foreign values and life styles into the slaves. Douglass describes this practice in this way:

My mother and I were separated when I was an infant before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at very early age frequently before the child has

reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off ... for what this separation is done I do not know unless to hinder the development of the child's affection towards its mother and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the inevitable result. (6)

It is obvious that this practice is first to break natural ties of affection and family bond and affiliations. Separating slaves from their families and the rest of the community is a form of violence: the slave owners did not want the slave to escape from bondage. Moreover, maintaining a relationship with family and friends creates competing obligations that interfere with the slaves' total involvement in the needs of his master. Community confers on people obligations, status, responsibilities and rights. The sense of duty and obligation that come familial ties rival commitments to the slave owners. This competition is unhealthy and dangerous; family separation is thus the logical outpost.

Domestic Violence and Racial Discrimination in Stockett's *The Help* Movie (2011)

The belief that human beings are not equal is age-long. The whites have since assumed supremacy over the blacks. According to Britanica [https://www. Britanica.com](https://www.Britanica.com), racism is “the belief that humans may be divided into separate...biological entities called race...that some races are innately superior to others” (1)

Racism has been promoted by the slave masters who maintained that the blacks should be relegated to the background. This notion has been echoed by Fredric who experienced racism, physical violence, verbal expressions of contempt and disrespect all of which have profound consequences on his psyche. Racism was established during the American slavery to magnify the division between the Europeans and Africans that were enslaved and considered lesser human beings.

The historical event (racism) has been reflected in the movie. *The Help Movie* explores personal and institutionalized forms of racial discrimination and violence. Aibileen is the major character in the movie. She is black and she inherits the house maid job from her ancestors. Aibileen said that her momma was a maid and so was her grandma - a house slave.

It is obvious that the colour of her skin conferred this job description on her coupled with a poor educational background. She doesn't stand a chance of getting a better job like the white people in the movie. The educational background of both parents and also their social classes and race can affect the work and life of their children in the future. This explains why a white woman

tells Aibileen that she might be a maid in future owing to the colour of her skin and demeaning background, and Aibileen concurs.

Aibileen spent her entire life caring for white children. She had raised seventeen white children in her life. She started at the tender age of 14, an age she herself needs to be taken care of. This, in essence, translates to domestic violence. Aibileen said that she had just turned fourteen and dropped out of school to help momma with the bills. Inferring from the dialogue between Aibileen and Skeeter, it's evident that Aibileen is forced to quit school because she has to help her parents pay bills. As a slave, there is a whole lot of chores to be done like cooking, shopping, washing and taking care of white children. Aibileen does all the cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing and grocery shopping. In this instance, the author reflects domestic violence against the black Americans

Domestic violence is also evident as the maid does not have a large wage. She barely had enough to fulfil her daily needs. Aibileen works at Elizabeth's house six days a week that is from Monday to Saturday and works for the Leefolts from eight to four, six days a week making ninety-five cents an hour.

Another example of white oppression and racial discrimination in the movie can be seen through Aibileen's son, Treelore who died after being hit by white foreman who throws his body at the back of a truck and dumps it at the colored's hospitals.

Aibileen's dream is equally quite significant in our exploration of violence. She has a dream that hopefully one of her family members would become a writer. This dream of hers materializes through Skeeter Phelan who chooses to write a book about the black's experience working in the white man's house. The book dwells on the bad treatment meted out to the blacks and also the good qualities the blacks possessed.

Trauma has equally been portrayed in the use of toilet and other amenities between whites and blacks. It is literally an offense to share the bath with Negroes because the whiteman believes they carried more diseases because of the colour of their skin. Hilly would not share a toilet with a nigger.

Even when white people share the same bus with the blacks, the blacks stay at the back and there is an exit for the blacks at the rear so they don't have to touch the whites. Aibileen is also a victim of institutionalized racial discrimination. She tells us about the rules set by the white government against the blacks which are arranged in the form of law called Jim Crow. The law contains different forms of discrimination against the blacks by the whites, some of which include education, hospital and employment inequalities. In addition, there is a new regulation proposed by Hilly; Hilly has the idea to separate toilet facilities, and the idea is approved by the Governor. Trauma is

therefore perpetrated through racial discrimination since the traumatic experience leaves the blacks depressed.

Martin Carter- 'This Is the Dark Time My Love'

The interpretive strategy of New Historicism's method of culture analysis in which cultural products (literary works) participate in their historical contexts has been employed in the analysis of Carter's 'This is the Dark Time my Love'.

Literature does not develop in a vacuum and every literary piece is often given impetus concern and area of direction by the society that produced it. 'This is the Dark Time my Love' is not far-fetched from this assertion since the poem is a cultural product of the society that produced it. Martins was a political activist and poet from Guyana, a country that struggled for independence from Britain. Having been arrested twice by the British government for inciting riots, Carter remained at the forefront in his writing for the independence of Guyana and it is in this quest that the poem explores the themes of colonial domination and violence.

Martin Carter is a renowned Caribbean author who has been politically committed in Guyana's struggle for independence and he has reflected this issue in his poem 'This is the Dark Time My Love'. Carter is concerned with the socio-political evolution of Guyana's transition from colonialism to post colonialism. He also dwells on the political turmoil and violence that characterize the colonial era when Africa struggled for emancipation. He is noted for his revolutionary spirit for being in the forefront (through his literary works) in the struggle for the creation of a free country.

'This is the Dark Time My Love' is an exploration of colonialism, struggle for independence, war and violence. It is equally a period of oppression. The use of the expression 'Dark metal and tears' reveals the pains the natives pass through. It is written in the context of pain and suffering associated with war and struggle for political emancipation; the struggle of Guyana during British invasion/domination and the violence that is typical of the era is noteworthy. The citizens are oppressed as carter personifies death as man trampling on the slender grass (the colonized are the slender grass). Carter's poem is characterized by protest as he seeks freedom for the citizens who had been dominated. He protests against colonialism and reflects British soldiers violently usurping the people's land, a common practice by the colonial masters. The first thing the imperialists do is to seize the land from the natives. No moment can be as dark (terrible) as when one is dispossessed of one's most precious property. Even flowers that should evoke happy and cheerful feelings bend their heads in awful sorrow as personified by Carter. Martin Carter deliberately employs this device to emphasize the sad moment.

The colonial era is again a period of violence, pain, suffering and oppression which the author aptly captures in the following lines; 'This is the dark time, my love, It is the season of oppression, dark metal, and tears' (line 1)

Carter creates an atmosphere of terror typical of the colonial era where people are traumatized through instruments of war like tanks and guns. The theme of oppression is also obvious in his personification of war and death as portrayed in 'who comes walking in the dark... whose boot of steel tramps down', (line 10).

The boot in this respect has been used as an image to further portray violence and the oppressive nature of the colonial regime noted for emasculating their subjects. The imperialists trample (oppress) the grass with outright disregard for nature. To further mirror how terrible the colonial era is, the author uses festival and carnival which should be associated with fun and festivity to refer to guns and misery. The era is that of the festival of guns, the carnival of misery and violence.

We can also see the dark moments (sad and terrible times) in line 6 as follows: 'season of oppression, dark metal and tears, man of death' which is the result of war and colonialism. 'All round the land brown beetles crawl about'(line 2) is again a reflection of the extreme sad moments as we see images of death in 'They crawl' to emphasize how a lot of dead bodies litter the environment and the shining sun that should bring hope and joy is actually hidden in the sky. The tense atmosphere of war (the terrible time) is evident in the following line: 'Everywhere the faces of men are strained and anxious'(9) to free from the claws of colonialism and oppression.

The poem is therefore a reflection of the colonial era characterized by the struggle for independence, war, oppression and violence. It is a season of oppression and tears, dark metal of machines of war (guns), tankers to intimidate Guyana. It is a period when white soldiers (man of death) inflict pains on the helpless citizens. The man of death, colonizers crush every plan by the colonized who strive for freedom. The man of death crushes nature under his steel boot and destroys the dream of the colonized to be independent. The soldiers mercilessly resisted attempts at the liberation movement.

Derek Walcott - 'A Far Cry from Africa'

New historicism also propounded knowledge of the author's background in the analysis of the work, hence the historical context of a "Far cry of Africa" is relevant in the analysis. Walcott's background was a source of motivation when he wrote the poem. During his sojourn, he encountered racism and Colonial domination. He witnessed the period when the colonialist evicted the natives from their ancestral lands and were relegated to subservient

positions and the subsequent violent clash when the kikuyu struggle for political emancipation.

'A Far Cry from Africa' therefore reflects the struggle for independence from the imperialists by the Mau Mau (Kikuyu) fighters. 'A Far Cry from Africa' is an example of revolutionary art exploring the Mau Mau revolution of the Kenyan people. The poet questions the land grappling strategy of the British imperialist which results in the war and the violence. It is quite unfortunate that the imperialists took the most fertile of the lands in thousands of hectares and employed the original owners of the land to work as cheap labour.

Walcott protests this economic and socio-political exploitation. He does not support the Mau Mau revolution because of the violence, rather he questions the colonial institution and the white man's display of audacity in Africa. It is a painful depiction of the anticolonial revolution of the Mau Mau uprising and the bloody battle between the European settlers and the Kikuyu tribe (Now Republic of Kenya). The colonialists evicted the native Kikuyu from their ancestral lands, relegated them to the background and took complete control. A section of the Kikuyu formed the Mau Mau (a terrorist group) aimed at antagonizing the colonialists, however, another less strident Kikuyu sided the colonialists hence the violent conflict.

The Kikuyu represents the Africans who fought for political emancipation. They are the Mau Mau fighters who battled with the colonialists to recover their lost lands from the whites. The period is characterized by violence and destruction of lives.

Walcott is bitter about the political domination and oppression of his fellow Africans with whom he is connected and condemns the horrible aftermath of colonialism through the use of vivid imagery as portrayed in the following lines; 'A wind ruffling the plain pelt of Africa, Kikuyu quick as flies batten upon the bloodstream corpses are scattered.' (line 1-2) Walcott portrays the violence and cruelty that are a fallout of colonialism. The first line reflects the uprising. The author frowns at the violence, the killings and maiming and uses rhetorical questions to condemn inhumanity of man to man. Even innocent children are 'hacked in bed' (line 10). He derides the wanton loss of lives, as he mirrors the violent struggle for freedom and the manhunt by the imperialists and the blacks.

Furthermore, Walcott opposes colonialism that causes the strife but he is averse to the extreme violence that claimed so many lives, that corpses are scattered. Walcott is worried about the violence that has claimed so many lives and properties. The author portrays the murder of an innocent four and a half year old white child; this is a prime example of violence and man's inhumanity to man. He further reflects violence when he compares the Kikuyu fighters

with “flies batten upon bloodstream”. The fighters are pesty insects sucking the blood of humans; this unfortunate situation is caused by the whites who seized the lands of the natives that results in the racial conflict which the author condemns. Owing to the brutal atrocities, this war scenario is indeed a far cry from Africa which was hitherto peaceful. Africa, then, was not known for such violence, killings and maiming.

***A Small Place* - Jamaica Kincaid**

A Small Place by Jamaica Kincaid is a memoir (non-fiction) that narrates events the author witnessed while growing up in Antigua; since Kincaid witnessed the events before and after independence (colonialism and post-colonialism), she aptly captures and compares the Antigua of her childhood and the present Antigua.

Slavery was introduced to Antigua by Sir Thomas Warner who started the tobacco and sugarcane plantations where slaves from Africa laboured for the Whites to satisfy their strong desire for wealth and power. The Island was again colonized by Warner in 1632. Slavery, bondage, violence and colonialism are in this respect recurrent themes in Kincaid's *A Small Place*. Using a bitter and disdainful tune, Kincaid reveals the discovery of Antigua by Christopher Columbus in 1493, and subsequent enslavement of Blacks from Africa. According to Kincaid, the Island was ‘discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493.... It was settled by human rubbish from Europe who used enslaved but noble and exalted human beings from Africa’ (Kincaid 80)

The theme of enslavement is evident as revealed in the quotation. The Europeans, according to Kincaid settled in Antigua, forcefully and violently seizing lands from the Antiguan before enslaving them. Kincaid is so bitter that in her usual angry and aggressive tune reveals how people in Antigua speak of slavery:

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 with their children taken away from them and this separation lasted or ever.... (Kincaid 1).

The traumatic and unpleasant experiences and violence that are characteristics of slavery have been portrayed in this instance. The violence associated with the forceful seizure of land is evident as the owners of the land are equally forced to work under cruel and inhuman conditions; they were beaten and their children taken away from them. This horrible experience had remained indelible in the minds of the Blacks; it is one of the worst experiences the Blacks passed through and Kincaid is filled with disgust and anger in

expressing man's inhumanity to man. The dehumanization is such that people still talk about the obnoxious trade long after its abolition.

After the abolition of slave trade, the slave masters left and the slaves were freed. In spite of the abolition of slave trade in 1834, the Blacks continued to remain under bondage as colonialism and cultural imperialism which equally ensure political, social and economic domination of the colonized persist. In essence, the Blacks were still under bondage. According to Kincaid, the Antigua 'she knew no longer exists' partly because the colonial masters who used to rule over Antigua turned the Country into England and everybody they met they turned English.

An unfriendly and violent behaviour is made obvious in the racist attitude of the Whites. Kincaid condemns racism in *A Small Place* as she narrates the white man's violent behaviours towards fellow human beings who are not of the same race with them. The white man derives pleasure in behaving wildly according to Kincaid. She narrates the story of a particular dentist who came to Antigua but hated the Blacks so much that he would instruct his wife to inspect the Blacks before he admits them into the Hospital. The inspection of only black people is discriminatory and unfair; the dentist's wife must ensure that the Blacks are not smelling and they are without dirt under their fingernails. Kincaid views this extreme discrimination as most embarrassing and the worst form of humiliation that can be given to a fellow human being.

Conclusion

The study has shown that African-American and Caribbean literary works are also lens through which violence, bondage and trauma can be projected. The study reveals that physical violence or domestic violence often results in depression or psychological harm as seen in the trauma the blacks were subjected to.

Using Fredrick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass*, and Stockett's *The Help Movie* (2011) the research has looked at violence, bondage and generational trauma, especially as it affects race relations after years of slavery. Caribbean literature is equally characterized by war, violence and oppression of the colonized by the colonizers. Walcott and Kincaid condemn the violence resulting from colonialism in 'A Far Cry from Africa', 'This is the Dark Time My Love' and '*A Small Place*'.

In essence, the memory of the obnoxious transatlantic slavery, the middle passage along with the horrors and violence that came with it and oppressive nature of colonialism informed African American and Caribbean Literature.

Finally, it is hoped that the study is a contribution to the ongoing discourse on violence as it reveals the negative effects of psychological trauma

on the victims condemning violence and war. Through the selected works, generational trauma especially as it affects race relations after years of slavery has been revealed.

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