

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND POWER

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Summary

The Caribbean is characterized by a certain divided, or hybrid, identity created by the colonial situation. In her book, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, Jamaica Kincaid introduces us to a story of a young woman in search of her identity and native tongue, held back because she doesn't know her mother, because of a careless father and a colonized nation. Inflicting one's language is the key way in which to inflict power and control, a means used by colonizers. The presence of the English language and the language of French *patois* in Antigua, the author's birthplace, and the relationship between these languages serves to reflect, albeit at a micro-level, the relationship between the dominance and subordinateness that arises in most colonial and post-colonial situations. In a cultural sense, the problems of dominance and subordinateness are most directly linked to the question of language. Dependant on the local circumstances and personal needs or tendencies, the post-colonial writer can decide to either renounce or adopt the colonial language. Adoption and application of the language to novel needs is a process in which the language is accepted and «burdened» with one's own cultural experiences. However, even colonialism has its end. «The former winners», or the colonizers, must not only face defeat but also realize the dialectic relationship with the other culture, that has resulted in alterations on both sides. The winner-loser relationship has brought about the typical multicultural, if not also an intercultural situation.

Key Words: *identity, colonial situation, language, dominance, subordinateness, culture, power, adoption.*

1. Introduction

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