A Small Place: Re-Looking Universals and Distinctions

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ABSTRACT

The theme of universals and distinctions in discourse is particularly relevant to our contemporary times when globalization has impacted on every aspect of life and living. Borders, both literal and metaphorical, have become porous, admitting easy exchange between the universals and the distinctions, the local and the global. However, despite the fluid movement of things, people and ideas, we cannot overlook the reality that on many fronts, borders are precarious and smaller countries are swallowed up by the global culture. This paper looks at some of the tensions that emerge within the overlap of the local and global. In this context, Jamaica Kincaid’s (1989), A Small Place is a riveting narrative which reveals the importance of viewing and placing the smaller places of the world against the larger, more powerful countries. In this text, Kincaid (1989) speaks passionately about her country which she feels has been swept aside and forgotten. The paper hopes to show that by acknowledging the transformative effects, sometimes positive, sometimes crippling, that come out of the universals-distinctions exchange, the smaller, often formerly colonized nations of the world, can find and define themselves and not drown in the tide of sameness, a quotidian feature of global culture.

Keywords: Globalization, Kincaid, place, tourism, travel

INTRODUCTION

The theme of the conference, Universals, Distinctions and Cross-disciplinary Perspectives, is particularly relevant to our contemporary times. Today, we cannot move away from global systems of cultural interactions and the way in which local/distinct locations and cultures engage with forces of globalization and its universalising mission. This paper looks at the theme of “distinctions” and “universals” in terms of the dialogic between the local and the global. More than ever, as a result of globalization,