

Transcending Borders: A Diasporic Perspective on Andrea Levy's *Small Island*

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Abstract: In the context of increasing global migration, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds navigate processes of negotiation and assimilation with the host society, as well as within their own communities. Andrea Levy's *Small Island* serves as an exemplary text for examining the diasporic experience, as it articulates various dimensions of displacement, alienation, the divergence between expectations and reality, racial discrimination, linguistic challenges, gender inequalities, nostalgia, and cultural hybridity. This study emphasizes the characters' profound sense of estrangement from the host land, as they grapple with cultural disparities, racism, and gender biases. Moreover, this paper examines the ways in which the characters ultimately integrate into hybrid identities, acknowledging the inevitability of change and the impossibility of returning to their original states prior to migration.

Keywords: Diaspora, Hybridity, Displacement, Nostalgia, Alienation, Gender

Introduction

The term "diaspora" is originated from the Greek word "dia" (through) and "speirein" (scatter). Until recently it has been restricted to the dispersion of Jewish community, which have been stateless since Biblical time and encountered discrimination and oppression. Currently the term refers to the dispersion of a group of people who shares a common sociocultural identity to various parts of the world. William Safran's definition of diaspora in his essay "Deconstructing and Comparing Diasporas" (2004) asserts that "the label (diaspora) has been stretched to cover almost any ethnic or religious minority that is dispersed physically from its original homeland, regardless of the condition leading to the dispersion, and regardless of whether, and to what extent, physical, cultural or emotional links exist between the community and the home country" (9). For some diasporas, homeland remains as myth even though their homeland exists. This land is not politically, ideologically, socially coinciding with them which is very evident for American Jews after Second World War. Paul Gilroy, a British cultural critic, introduced the concept of the "both – and" logic in his book *The Black Atlantic; Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), reviewed by Dale Tomich. He argued that diasporas often occupy a position that is 'both' inside 'and' outside the cultures and societies rather than 'either – or.' This provides a double consciousness on the cultures he/she acquired. He believes the concept of ethnic diaspora or homeland is constantly changing and they no longer able to return to the original country with the full essence of home.

Throughout the history, there have been hundreds of migrations that have led to the creation of numerous diasporic populations, often resulting in sizeable and diverse communities dispersed across different region of the globe. This dispersion often entails profound trauma as individuals are uprooted from their familiar surroundings

which contributes to the enduring impact on the collective as well as individual psyche. The challenges they often face between homeland and host land encompasses issues such as identity crisis, cultural disparity, alienation, homesickness, feeling of displacement and othering. These diasporic individuals strive to integrate into the sense of belonging, yet this pursuit almost ends in the blending of their identity, creating a hybrid self. The kinds of diaspora include Indian diaspora, African diaspora, Jewish diaspora, Palestinian diaspora, and Caribbean diaspora, each associated with the countries of origin. The current major diaspora can be traced back to the colonial era of the British, marked by the establishment of the slavery system, where individuals were captured and forcibly made to work like cattle, in colonized lands. After the abolition of slavery, the system of indentured labour emerged, in which a significant number of people being taken from their land based on agreements. This practice was eventually discontinued.

Literature also extends space for the experiences of individual living outside their native land, highlighting the uncertainty of being uprooted from home land and planted in host land. There are writers among them, often descendants of immigrants, who aim to preserve ancestral traditions and also immigrant experiences in their writings. Thus, they provide a new genre in literature - diasporic literature – by exploring the various paths covered by the migrants. Andrea Levy (1956-2019), a distinguished British author of Jamaican descent, was a key figure in diasporic literature. Her work extensively explored the diasporic connection between Britain and Jamaica and she gained international recognition as a best-selling author. Her novels include *Small Island* (2004), *Every Light in the House Burnin'* (1994), *Never Far from Nowhere* (1996), *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999) and *The Long Song* (2010). Levy's writings deal with the lives of immigrants, particularly Jamaicans in Britain and how they navigate the complexities of social, cultural and national identities.

The novel *Small Island* sets in post-World War II Britain, exploring the lives of Jamaican immigrants and the British people they encounter. The story is told from the perspectives of four main characters: Hortense, a well-educated Jamaican woman with dreams of a better life in England; Gilbert, her husband, who served in the Royal Air Force during the war and struggles with racism and disillusionment in post-war London; Queenie, a white British woman who rents a room to Gilbert and Hortense; and Bernard, Queenie's emotionally distant husband, who returns from the war haunted by his experiences. The novel shifts between the past and present, offering glimpses into each character's background and the events that brought them together. Hortense and Gilbert face the harsh realities of post-war Britain, where they encounter prejudice, discrimination, and a society unprepared to embrace immigrants. Queenie, more open-minded than many of her peers, tries to navigate the complexities of a changing world, while Bernard grapples with his own trauma and confusion. Through the characters' interwoven stories, Levy highlights themes of identity, race, migration, and hybrid space, while also exploring the personal struggles of individuals trying to find their place in a rapidly transforming society.

Review of Literature

Irene Perez Fernandez's article titled "Representing Third Spaces, Fluid Identities and Contested Spaces in Contemporary British Literature" (2009) analyses the novels of three expatriate writers – Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, Monica Ali's *Brick Line*. This paper underscores the pivotal exploration of distinctions between insiders and outsiders, showcasing how characters' interactions at different levels of life result in the emergence of novel spaces. Moreover, this paper asserts that these novels illustrate the diverse ways in which individuals from various ethnic backgrounds reside, articulate, and comprehend their multicultural encounters. Andrea Levy's *Small Island* deals with transformation of first-generation immigrant characters from mono-ethnic to multi-ethnic.

Corinne Duboin's article "Contested Identities: Migrant Stories and Liminal Selves in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*" (2011), takes an incisive look at how gender and racial biases faced by migrants intricately influence identity formation in the novel *Small Island*. The paper highlights Levy's formal approach in her fictional writings set in the context of migration. It explores how the two main concepts: insularity and liminality, along with endeavours to traverse national, cultural, and textual borders, contribute to the success of her work. Moreover, it examines the impact of first-generation migration on the evolving sense of nationalism in Britain.

Another article titled "Diaspora in Two Caribbean Novels: Levy's *Small Island* and Phillip's *A State of Independence*" (2005) by Thomas Bonnici, embarks on the deconstruction of the concept of diaspora in these two novels. This analysis shows the new ways of portraying displaced communities within the globalized societies in the light of post-colonial theories. It unveils the problems related to home and identity of colonized subjects in a foreign land. This study poignantly exposes racial episodes and the complexities of dislocation within the diaspora in *Small Island*.

The Diploma thesis of Bc. Katerina Jaskova from Masaryk University, "Jamaican Immigrants' Experience in *Small Island* by Andrea Levy" (2018), meticulously explains the reflection of post-war London, along with the clashes related to cultural disparities. It offers a profound study of the redefinition of identity among Caribbean immigrants in *Small Island*, focusing on the difficulties that have to be faced in the process of assimilation. The thesis addresses the contradiction between expectations and the harsh realities faced by the main characters in the novel.

Diasporic Imagination in *Small Island*

This section delves into adeptness with which author Andrea Levy conveys the various facets of diaspora within the novel *Small Island*. Prior to exploring other dimensions, it is imperative to analyse the importance of history in understanding how diasporic populations are thrust into a novel spatial context. After the Second World War, the United Kingdom faced several economic hardships, having suffered financial losses and loss of individuals in the war. In dire need of assistance to rebuild the economy, the UK government sought workers, acknowledging the prior contributions of men from the colonies who had served as volunteers in war. To attract immigrants UK government offered affordable tickets, lucrative job opportunities, and improved living conditions. In accordance with the 1948 Act, citizens from former British colonies were granted passports equivalent to those of native Britons. Many individuals from the West Indies perceived this as a chance to enhance their future within the esteemed British Empire. Furthermore, they had a profound assessment about the western country, which they called Mother Country, comes from the English education imparted to them during colonial era.

Consequently, on June 22, 1948, the Empire Windrush, a cruise ship, previously known as Monte Rosa, arrived with the largest group of West Indies, particularly Jamaicans who had volunteered during the war, at Tilbury. Since they have taken part in the Britain's Military forces, they hold an emotional connection with their new or old Britain. So, after the war ended, some of these individuals chose to migrate to the United Kingdom. They considered their arrival at England as a return to home. In the subsequent years, immigrants' wives and children reached Britain with the aim of settling as families there. So, this sequence of events equals with the arrival of the Jamaican couple, Gilbert and Hortense in England in the novel. Gilbert, an ex-serviceman in the RAF of Britain, believes he can seize the opportunities "ripened in England as abundant as fruit on Jamaican trees" (98). Comparing opportunities to 'ripened fruit' suggests that the opportunities are ready and available for the taking. So, Gilbert holds a positive outlook and confidence in the opportunities available in England, which is seen as a place where favourable conditions for personal and professional growth exist. Hortense, desiring a better

settlement in the Mother Country, provides him with travel expense as their marriage evolves into a business proposal. He returns to London on the Empire Windrush and settled in the house of Queenie, who keeps a sympathetic nature towards West Indies. Six months later, to keep his word, he brought his wife, Hortense to London. So, this is the way the couple arrived in England.

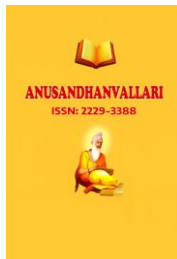
As William Safran stated in his article "The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective" (2005) that "Millions of people do not live in the countries in which they were born and raised" (39). They are migrating for reasons such as employment and business opportunities, seeking a better quality of life, and the most importantly with sense of homelessness. They maintain a belief that they could easily identify their home somewhere else other than their native land. Returning to home after serving the British RAF, Gilbert perceives in the novel that "Jamaicans are small islanders too" (Levy, 196), experiencing a feeling of displacement as he is met with pity from his Mummy and Auntie May for his misfortune "of finding myself once more

back in their yard" (197). These suggest a sense of returning to a familiar but a strange land. The expression of pity from his loved ones highlights a disparity between Gilbert's anticipations and the reality of his homecoming, generating a feeling of unease or homelessness for him. He does not feel like a hero returning home after the war.

Moreover, his financial setback due to his cousin Elwood's imprudent honey business leads to: "We lose the bees, we lose the hives, we lose a mule. I lost all my money" (206). In the face of these challenges, he wishes for the outside world, noting that "The world out there is bigger than any dream you can conjure up. This is a small island" (207). One of the reasons for his strong confidence is the support he received in Britain when he was a serviceman. Despite their Caribbean origin, he and his fellow Jamaican friends were treated well during the war. So, he wishes to migrate to Britain. Similarly, Hortense, finding limited opportunities in Jamaica, envisions "England became my destiny" (100). Because of colonization, people in the colonies follow the English education system for many generations. As a part of it, Hortense had acquired English education. However, the purpose behind this system was not to enhance the intellectual capabilities and well-being of the colonized people but to benefit the colonizers and serve their own interests. So, Both, Gilbert and Hortense consider that Britain, which they called their Mother Country, would treat them better as what they realize from their colonial education and experiences.

Yet, as James Clifford, in his article "Diasporas," (1994) observes, "displacement and violent loss cannot be "cured" by merging into new national community" (306). This is true in the case of Gilbert and Hortense, since after their arrival in England. For instance, Gilbert's fervent quest for residence in London is vividly portrayed: "So how many gates I swing open? How many houses I knock on? Let me count the doors that opened slow and shut quick without even me breath managing to get inside. Man, these English landlords and ladies could come up with excuses" (Levy, 215). The mention of English landlords and ladies coming up with excuses implies that Gilbert encounters discrimination or reluctance from potential landlords based on his background. The passage reflects the frustrations and obstacles that individuals from marginalized or immigrant communities may face when trying to secure housing, highlighting the discriminatory practices that some may experience in their quest for residence. Furthermore, he faces rejection in numerous interviews, lamenting, "In five, no, in six places, the job I had gone for vanished with one look upon my face" (313). These expressions reflect a sense of discouragement among Britons towards outsiders, portraying them as sources of fear and implying a tendency to view them as outcasts in their country.

Similarly, Hortense's aspiration for England as her dream destination met with disappointment when expelled from the education authority, realizing that her envisioned heaven "is a very cold country" (466). Hortense grasps that England, a place where she hoped to fulfil her dreams as a kind of paradise or utopia, is not as warm and welcome as she had imagined. Due to this indifferent attitude, she feels no more attachment with her dream land. Both characters grapple with a profound sense of displacement, existing in a nowhere land with the



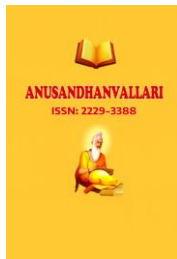
feeling of exclusion from both lands. Though they voluntarily sever ties with their past, they are unable to establish a stable foundation in their new surroundings.

Along with displacement, discussing the contrast between expectations and reality is crucial in the diaspora. The slogan 'better life in the Mother Country' misled many colonized individuals. In the article "Representing Third Spaces, Fluid Identities and Contested Spaces in Contemporary British Literature" Irene Perez Fernandez notes that "the idea underlying the logic of the newcomers was that of coming to the 'Mother Country'; a country that was waiting for them; a country portrayed in the colonial imaginary as a place of opportunities; country immigrants from British colonies were eager to defend" (149). The promises extended by the so-called Mother country encourage outsiders to migrate to their motherland. Thus, it is unfair to blame them for the segregation they might experience in there. In the novel, Hortense dreamed of English life after her marriage with Gilbert as:

England become my destiny. A dining table in a dining room set with four chairs. A starched tablecloth embroidered with bows. Armchairs in the sitting room placed around a small wood fire. The house is modest – nothing fancy, no show – the kitchen small but with everything I need to prepare meals. We eat rice and peas on Sunday with chicken and corn, but in my English kitchen roast meat with two vegetables and even fish and chips bubble on the stove. My husband fixes the window that sticks and the creaky board on the veranda. I sip hot tea by an open window and look on my neighbours in the adjacent and opposite dwelling. I walk to the shop where I am greeted with manners, 'Good day', politeness, 'A fine day today', and refinement, 'I trust you are well?' A red bus, a cold morning and daffodils blooming with all the colours of the rainbow (Levy, 101).

This conveys Hortense's hopeful and optimistic dreams of a charming life in England, reflecting the aspirations and expectations she associates with her future life in this new setting. Unfortunately, she is supposed to live in a filthy place in London where she "saw were dark brown walls. A broken chair that rested one uneven leg on the Holy Bible. A window with a torn curtain and Gilbert's suit – the double-breasted – hanging from rail on the wall" (20). These details suggest a lack of comfort, care, and proper living conditions, illustrating the challenges she faces in her new life in London. So, Hortense is supposed to live in a place in London that is far from her ideal. Besides, her dream of teaching at the Church of England school in Kingston is also shattered when she realizes that England does not employ Jamaicans as teachers. She acknowledges, "The letter don't matter, 'she told me. 'You can't teach in this country. You are not qualified to teach here in England'" (454). Despite her attempt to strengthen her case by acquiring letters from her previous educational institutions, it failed to make any significant outcome in her favour. Hortense, raised in a better environment, holds a wide concept of English lifestyles, but her perception changes upon entering English society. She observes that "not one person was dressed in a colour bright enough to cheer me up", and "so many different complexions were placed before me that my mind become perplexed" (330). Meanwhile, she is shocked at the untidiness of Britons when buying bread touched by the shopkeeper's dirty hands as she expresses "my mind couldn't believe what my eye had seen" (332). Hortense's dreams of her residence, employment, dignity, and life in England crumble with each passing moment after her arrival in London.

Similarly, Gilbert, with high regard for England, describes it as "paved with gold, no – but, yes, diamonds appear on the ground in the rain" (209). However, his perspectives shift during and after the war. He is shocked by the treatment of the Mother Country, describing it as "ragged, old, and dusty as the long dead...She offers you no comfort after your journey. No welcome. No smile" (139). These examples highlight how migrants' expectations and dreams often collide with the harsh reality in host land, where they may not be recognized as inhabitants. The agony of realizing that transforming their dreams into reality is challenging. They are persuaded to accept the reality in spite of their inner struggles and protests.

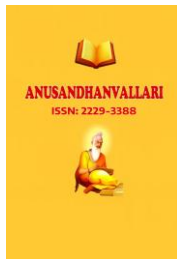


Racism, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is “a belief or ideology that all members of each racial group possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially to distinguish it as being either superior or inferior to another racial group or racial groups”. Paul Gilroy argues in his book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) that racism originates in certain forms of “the struggle between capital and labour – specifically in the modern period, the employment of migrant labour” (13). Western countries are always considered as capitalists whereas labourers are from their former colonies. Instead of words like “nigger” or “black”, those people are now addressed as “coloured people”. The story provides glimpses of how race operates in two societies: Jim Crow-era America and post-imperial Britain. Jim Crow laws were a collection of laws which designed to discriminate African Americans by denying them their basic rights. These laws were in effect for nearly a century, from the post-Civil War era until 1968. Jim Crow laws frequently imposed arrest, fines, jail terms, assault, and even murder for those who dared to disobey them. In the novel, Gilbert, a more socially prominent character than Hortense, experiences racism in America before 1948 while serving in the RAF. One of the most racist encounters he faces is when he goes to watch a cinema with Queenie and her father-in-law, Arthur Bligh, who is eventually murdered by the American Military Police as a result of a fight between black and white individuals. The incident begins when Gilbert refuses to sit in the back rows as the usherette tells him, “‘It is the rules. All niggers -’ she stopped and began again. ‘All coloureds up the back rows’” (Levy, 184). The reason for segregating “all niggers”, which she accidentally says, is because white Americans do not want to sit next to them, leading to a fistfight. The idea of Black individuals socializing with white or sharing the same privileges seems inconceivable to the latter, even though Black people are making significant sacrifices for their host country. Whites have instituted regulations to segregate Blacks, excluding them from places such as theatres and pub. These rules serve as justifications for the enforced separation when questioned by those subjected to segregation.

Similarly, in Britain, since his second arrival, Gilbert continuously confronts issues and comments related to racism. Employment possesses another difficulty for Gilbert because, as a black man, he would not be given a job in Britain. For instance, when he applies for a position as a store man, the interviewer tells him, “‘You see, we have white women working here. Now, in the course of your duties, what if you accidentally found yourself talking to a white woman?... I am afraid all hell would break loose if men found you talking to their women’” (312). This is a recurring idea in other job interviews as well. “‘We can’t use your sort, the girl at another office looked at me with such horror’” (313), etc. were the phrases Levy clearly used to indicate the racial prejudices prevailing in England. The irony in these incidents lies in the fact that the country, which welcomes individuals to serve in its military during times of war without any resentment for their valour, now denies them job opportunities in the name of their skin colour.

Like Gilbert, Hortense, who takes pride in her light complexion, is dumbfounded when a little child yells at her “black” and three men address her as “Oi, sambo” (334). This makes it clear that racism exists among privileged individuals regardless of their age, gender and creed. Queenie’s neighbour Mr. Todd is a fine example of those who turn their faces away from blacks, believing they come to England for a better health service - “For the teeth and glasses” (111). Similarly, toward the end of the story, Queenie’s husband, Bernard accuses Gilbert as “it has everything to do with you. You and your kind” (487), when Queenie gives birth to a biracial child. Bernard has been away at war, but that does not change his attitudes about outside world. In fact, racism is the root cause of all types of problems in the diaspora. It is multifaceted issue that influence how diaspora members navigate their identity in a new environment, and the instances of discrimination may impact their sense of belonging.

Mikhail Bakhtin stated in his essay “Discourse in the novel” in his book *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981) that “Verbal discourse is a social phenomenon” (259). Language serves as a means to share feelings, thoughts and ideas. However, at times, it fails to facilitate human connections and may even complicate them. In the novel, Jamaican Creole becomes a distinctive feature of Caribbean Britons like Hortense and Gilbert. Although

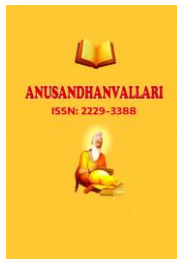


their Creole is more refined than that of other migrant characters, with Hortense having received colonial education and Gilbert being an ex-serviceman, they still grapple with communication problems when interacting with Britons. The challenges in communication are evident from the start when Hortense attempts to convey the address to the taxi driver when she says: “I need to be taken to number twenty-one-NeVERN Street in SW five. Twenty-one NeVERN Street. N-ev-e-rn S-t-r-e-e-t. I put on my best accent.... But still, this taxi driver did not understand me” (Levy, 16-17). Similarly, she encounters difficulties while buying groceries with Queenie. Despite excelling as a bright student in Jamaica, she is taken aback when trying to purchase condensed milk: “Condensed milk, I said, five times, and still he looked at me bewildered. Why does no one in this country understand my English?” (331). Hortense even struggles to convey a simple word like “basin” (228) to Queenie, an English woman who has been hosting Jamaicans for more than seven months. So, this implies that Hortense took pride in her ability to speak English in a polished and sophisticated manner. However, she came to the realization that in England, her English, which bore the influence of Jamaican accents, was not considered important. This might suggest that in the larger social or cultural setting, some ways of speaking, like those influenced by a specific region or background, could be seen as less important or not as widely accepted compared to a more commonly used form of English.

One of the most powerful moments in the novel occurs when Gilbert passionately speaks about racial discrimination to Bernard. He is speaking with such an emotion he holds up since his arrival, but the cruelest irony unfolds in Bernard’s reply: “‘I am sorry...but I just can’t understand a single word you are saying’” (526). This response epitomizes how racism can make individuals deaf to the calls of justice. Moreover, communication challenges arise when individuals struggle to comprehend each other, posing heightened risks, particularly within diasporic communities. Expressing thoughts and emotions become arduous, with many facing a lack of deliberate efforts to understand them due to existing prejudices and stereotypes. Language, in this context, becomes an obstacle to, rather than a means of sharing, human connections and further reinforces racial and class differences in diasporic communities.

Levy also sheds light on the gender biases that existed in the post- imperial Britain. For instance, Queenie’s neighbours, Mr. Todd and Blanche, viewed her as a woman of ignorance who needed tending. Mr. Todd aspired for Bernard, Queenie’s husband, to come home “to put an end to her taking in all the flotsam and jetsam off the streets. Concern for me, he would say, a woman on her own in this great big house...He looked out for me as neighbours should, Mr. Todd said” (113). His arrogance shows how desperately he wanted to end Queenie’s business while lodging was her only means of making money. Gender prejudices have no exemption before and after war, although there are slight changes in some people’s perspectives. Considering women as passive and indecisive is not something new. In contrast to this, “‘No wife of mine will be on her knees in this country’” (319) are the words of Gilbert when he saw Hortense on her hands and knees on the floor. Being white doesn’t make one a worthy person; it defines how one behaves and treats others irrespective of their gender. Here, Gilbert has a profound knowledge gained from his experience that prompts him to preserve his wife’s dignity.

In the midst of the myriad challenges immigrants face, such as displacement, racism, language barriers and gender biases, the memories of their homeland keep them resilient in host land that often overlooks them. Drawing from memories and imaginations, they derive meaning for places, as Gupta and Ferguson noted in their article “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference” (1992) that “Remembered places have often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people. This has long been true of immigrants, who use memory of place to construct imaginatively their new lived world” (11). While fatigued with life in England, Gilbert dreams of his Jamaican land, “of walking in the heat of sun, nyamming a mango. Or sipping sorrel with Elwood on the veranda” (Levy, 318). These images symbolize his desire for the warmth, familiarity, and sense of belonging he associates with his homeland. He longs to be once more in Jamaica “as a drunk man for whisky” (314) when his co-worker refuses to work with him on account of his colour. His remembrance of his childhood



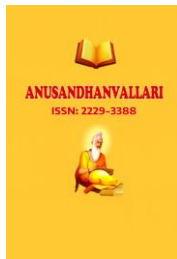
friend Elwood, “sitting on the veranda, he was watching the Jamaican sun as, lowering, the sky glowed purple orange blue pink...two men share a joke sitting there resting on the veranda after a long day. Chatting while supping, soon they are shaking laughter into the sweet Jamaican night air” (325), reveals his yearning for his homeland. There are occasions when he acknowledges his cousin’s correctness about England. He envisions the scenic beauty of Jamaica, which he left behind for the sake of a better living in London. Hortense is also triggered by the memories of her childhood with her cousin Michael Roberts, a silent fifth character in the novel. These nostalgic thoughts help them connect with a place when they feel placed in nowhere.

Hybridity stands out as a salient feature of the diaspora, a concept introduced by Homi. K. Bhabha in his work *The Location of Culture* (1994). In Bhabha’s theory, hybridization refers to the emergence of new and mixed identities resulting from the intermingling of different cultures operating in close proximity. This hybridity places individuals in an ambivalent space, results in the formation of ‘Third Space’. Moreover, the term ‘Mimicry’ related to hybridity “is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (122). These elements are vividly portrayed in the novels when Gilbert and Hortense take refuge in an in-between stance. Hybridity is visible in their language, dressing style, mannerism and so on.

Gilbert highlights the phrase “sugar and spice” (Levy, 445), a popular English idiom meaning behaving kindly and friendly. On the other hand, he cannot completely rid his narrative of Jamaican slang: “I thought to apologize but feared that do-do might fall from my careless mouth” (464). Here, ‘do-do’ is a phrase popular among Jamaicans and the rest of the sentence embodies the so-called standard English. Sucking his teeth and using expressions like ‘cha’ and ‘Nah, man’ assure Gilbert remains distinctly Jamaican. Parallel to him, Hortense also maintains two trends in her language. For instance, “To speak English properly as the high class, I resolved to the language at its finest. Everyday my wireless was tuned to the most exemplary English in the known world. The BBC” (449). She attempts to grasp London English at its maximum extent because she believes perfect English makes her perfect. However, though she deliberately ignores her root, she unknowingly tends to use Jamaican English. It often avoids auxiliary verbs such as she says: “why you waste money on cake?” (463). Her standard English, learned from colonial education in Jamaica, seems to falter on occasions like this. Her way of dressing – coat, gloves, and hat -which is unusual in the sunny Jamaica and her constant politeness and self-control which she believes are worthy of an English woman, are occasions showing the mimic nature of Hortense.

Facilitating the blending of diverse cultural elements from different societies, hybridity helps diasporic populations to ‘fit in’ or ‘belong’ in the society they reside. These characteristics differentiate these novels from the works of early Black American authors. This work redefines hybridity and assimilation as inherent parts of British society which contains numerous diasporic populations from different parts of the world. Towards the end of the novel, Gilbert assures the distraught Hortense that he “might find some work” (464) for her, when she is rejected from the Britain education authority. Moreover, he confidently says, “I have been driving lorries, but one day I will study the law” (465), indicating the enthusiasm they try to hold for their future. They decide to rely on each other in this stereotypical world. Though Hortense accuses Gilbert of “darkening up the place” (450), now she doesn’t mind being seen with him when she realizes the true nature of her dream land. So this realization of shared experiences, provides an understanding of each other which helps in the struggle for survival. This led Hortense to “pay them no mind” (463) by ignoring the whites the same way she is ignored. Additionally, they find a place to live among their Jamaican community without any aggression from white lodgers, thanks to their kind friend Winston, who says, “You can come live there with your wife. The other room we board to people from home. Not Englishwoman rent” (499). When the couples realize that they have no other choice but to move along with their host land, they decide to embrace the in-between space and thereby become a part of the society.

Unlike many in the diaspora, this novel concludes on a positive and optimistic tone. As a part of their assimilation process, Hortense and Gilbert relocate to his friend’s home in another part of London, bringing along



Queenie's baby at her earnest request. The biracial child will face severe consequences if Queenie didn't act prudently on time. Interestingly, the father of the child, Michael Roberts, happens to be Hortense's cousin and her past love. Unaware of this truth, Hortense takes on the role of nurturing the child. Both Gilbert and Hortense harbour the belief that they can provide a better environment for the child, shielding the child from the racial prejudices prevailing among certain white communities. As they embark on this journey, the couple envisions a future filled with promise and understanding, a stark departure from the challenges they have encountered throughout the novel.

Conclusion

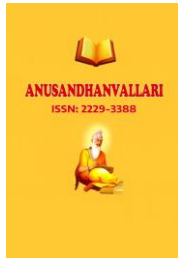
In conclusion, migration, driven by diverse motivations, often compels individuals to confront formidable challenges upon resettlement in a new land. These challenges arise from a fundamental lack of awareness regarding the stark differences in cultural, social, traditional, and political aspects between their homeland and the adopted country, as seen in the experiences of Gilbert and Hortense. The absence of familiarity and recognition they once had in their homeland leaves many migrants disillusioned, especially when their aspirations for a better life remain unfulfilled. By relinquishing ties to their country of origin in pursuit of new opportunities, and encountering a lack of recognition and emotional connection in the host country, these immigrants experience a profound sense of displacement.

The novel illustrates the profound impact of racism on the lives of immigrants, evident in the transformation of the initially optimistic Hortense into a more pessimistic figure, underscoring the detrimental effects of Britain's discriminatory attitudes. In contrast, characters like Queenie emerge as symbols of inclusivity, demonstrating acceptance of cultural, racial, and religious diversity in an otherwise prejudiced society.

Furthermore, the novel explores the characters' gradual processes of assimilation, where they come to terms with the reality that complete cultural integration may not be possible, yet they find ways to adapt and negotiate their identities in a hybrid form. This assimilation process involves not only adopting certain aspects of the host culture but also reconciling it with elements of their native heritage. Lastly, Gilbert, Hortense, and others ultimately reach a tentative agreement with the contentious social environment in which they reside, learning to navigate the challenges while maintaining a sense of self-worth and resilience in the face of ongoing marginalization.

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