

## ABSTRACT

This thesis maps the different trajectories of migration, settlement, assimilation and return migration in the work of Caribbean American Women fiction writers. Issues of displacement and challenges to the migrant identity while common to all migration literature, acquire nuances and fissures peculiar to Caribbean migrants in Caribbean American fiction. Some of the texts chosen here narrativize flight(s) from politically turbulent places and include accounts of return, periodic or permanent, in the Caribbean context.

The thesis examines the concept of hyphenation in the Caribbean American context. The chapters address through the selected novels, the problematics of ‘Caribbeanness’ in America at the workplace, in the residential spaces, in matters of cultural assimilation and identity. Migration from the Caribbean does not affect the culture of the immigrants: in fact, it is at their hands, because of exposure to the media and the market, that Caribbean culture is constructed for global construction.

Chapter 1 offers a critical frame for the examination of issues of migration and settlement in the host land. It looks at the counters of accommodation and resistance as far as the role of migrants in the job sector, as consumers in the market, as part of a larger black community whose relevance is contextual and contingent, is concerned.

Chapter 2 examines the different levels and types of displacement the Caribbean migrants in America face, including the threat of possible deportation of Green Card holders if they get into legal problems. The problems of the undocumented are part of their daily lives as they live in fear of arrest, imprisonment followed by deportation at some time. Apart from this physical reality, migrants from the Caribbean countries have to negotiate cultural, emotional and psychological displacement in America as shown in the chapter.

Chapter 3 examines the predicament of those migrants who had to leave behind violent and turbulent lives in the Caribbean and were trying to start a new life in America. The chapter shows that while the host country looks accommodating and benevolent to the migrants, their present and future remain fraught with challenges and uncertainty. Despite the risks involved, people continue to migrate in search of new but uncertain destinies in Caribbean American fiction by women.

Chapter 4 examines the fluidity of migrant identities as they experience resistance from the mainstream society and their own community. As the novels used in the chapter show, Caribbean Americans are forced to accept their hyphenated positions and identities which retain some fluidity depending on the forces of marginalization and resistance.

Chapter 5 examines the resistance strategies adopted by the migrants when pushed into difficult positions at home and in the host land. In some cases, the resistance is cultural and spiritual, drawing upon the folk traditions of the Caribbean; at others it is ideological and political, not necessarily restricted to the personal.

Chapter 6 examines the reasons both personal and social, for the return migration of Caribbean Americans to their erstwhile Caribbean homeland. This chapter focuses on migrants reconnecting with their roots through return migrations, temporary or permanent. It shows that while it is a case of direct return for older generations, for the younger descendants of migrants, it is an attempt to reconnect with the past, the culture and the people of the Caribbean.

The thesis shows that migration is an ever-present reality in the lives of the Caribbean people, with America being the most common destination for higher education, job opportunities and career advancement. This is addressed in Caribbean American fiction by women in a variety of ways. A hyphenated identity, the possibility of return migration to the Caribbean and a strong sense of Caribbean culture govern their lives.